

UTTARA BALAKRISHNAN

Agricultural and Resource Economics
2200 Symons Hall
University of Maryland,
College Park, MD 20742

240-463-6777
uttara@umd.edu
Visa Status: F1

EDUCATION

Ph.D. Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland, College Park, MD (expected Spring 2018)

M.A. International Development Economics, Yale University, New Haven, CT, 2011

B.A. Economics (*First Division*), University of Delhi, New Delhi, India, 2010

DISSERTATION

Title: *"The Little Push: Role of Incentives in Determining Health, Human Capital and Household Behaviour: Evidence from India"*

Committee: Drs. Pamela Jakiela (Co-Chair), Kenneth Leonard (Co-Chair), Anna Alberini

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Development Economics, Applied Microeconomics, Experimental Economics

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

August 2013 - Present: Research Assistant. University of Maryland, College Park, MD.
Supervisor: Drs. Kenneth Leonard and Pamela Jakiela.

2012 - 2013: Research Assistant. Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER). Worked on identifying the 'High-Value Manufacturing Sectors in India.'

2011 - 2012: Research Assistant. Global Development Network (GDN). Worked on policy-cum-research briefs for 'Supporting Policy Research to inform Agricultural Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.'

2011: Intern. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Office, New York. Worked in the Research and Statistical team to issue the 2011 Human Development Report.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Fall 2017: Teaching Assistant. University of Maryland, College Park, MD. AREC 200: The Chesapeake Bay Ecosystem: Intersection of Science, Economics and Policy. Supervisor: Dr. Jorge Holzer Bilbao.

Spring 2016: Teaching Assistant. University of Maryland, College Park, MD. AREC 624: Applied Econometrics II (PhD Level). Supervisor: Dr. Anna Alberini.

Fall 2013: Teaching Assistant. University of Maryland, College Park, MD. AREC 365: World Hunger, Population and Food Supplies. Supervisor: Dr. Kenneth Leonard.

JOB MARKET PAPER

Balakrishnan, Uttara (2017), "Incentives for Girls and Gender Bias in India," University of Maryland, College Park, August.

PAPERS IN PROGRESS

Balakrishnan, Uttara, Johannes Haushofer and Pamela Jakiela (2017), "How Soon Is Now? Evidence of Present Bias from Convex Time Budget Experiments," NBER Working Paper, 23558, Cambridge, MA. June. (*Under Review*).

Balakrishnan, Uttara and Magda Tsaneva (2017), "The Effects of a Public Works Program on Mental Health in India," University of Maryland, College Park, MD. June. (*Under Review*).

Balakrishnan, Uttara (2017), "Income Shocks, Public Works and Human Capital Investments: Evidence from India," University of Maryland, College Park, MD. August.

Kathuria, Rajat, Mansi Kedia and Uttara Balakrishnan (2014), "Mapping the Future of High Value Manufacturing in India," Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER) Working Paper, 285, New Delhi, India. July.

Oyejide, Ademola, Abidemi Abiola, Olumuyiwa Alaba, and Uttara Balakrishnan (2012), "Agricultural Pricing and Public Procurement in Sub-Saharan Africa," Global Development Network. Policy Research Paper, 5. New Delhi, India. June.

Samaratunga, Parakrama, Binod Karmacharya, Meeta Punjabi, and Uttara Balakrishnan (2012), "Agricultural Pricing and Public Procurement in South Asia," Global Development Network. Policy Research Paper, 10. New Delhi, India. June.

PRESENTATIONS

2017: Midwest Econometrics Group (October); Population Association of America, Chicago (April); Royal Economic Society, Bristol UK (April); Midwest Economic

Development Conference, UW-Madison (April); American Agricultural Economic Association (AAEA), Chicago (July).

2016: Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi, India (December); Delhi School of Economics, Delhi, India (December); Eastern Economic Association, Washington DC (February); Population Association of America, Washington DC (March).

2014: Pacific Development Conference, University of California, San Diego (May).

2012: Panelist, "Sustainable Growth and Development in South Asia: Betting Big on the Smallholders". 12th Annual SANETI (South Asia Network of Economic Research Institutes) Conference, Colombo, Sri Lanka (December).

AWARDS

2016 & 2017: Jacob K. Goldhaber Travel Award, University of Maryland, College Park.

2016: Bruce and Mary Ann Gardner Dissertation Enhancement Award, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland, College Park.

2016: Graduate School Summer Fellowship, University of Maryland, College Park.

2015: Bessie DeVault Award for Best Second Year Paper in the PhD program, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland, College Park.

2014: Rhona Lantin Award for Best First Year Paper in the PhD program, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of Maryland, College Park.

2009 & 2010: Recipient of Academic Award for standing second in BA Economics (Honours), University of Delhi.

FIELD EXPERIENCE

2015 - 16: Nairobi, Kenya. Conducted lab experiment at Busara, Nairobi to understand how people trade off immediate and delayed consumption.

2015: Nairobi, Kenya. Conducted lab experiment at Busara, Nairobi to get measures of women's empowerment in the laboratory. World Bank Gender Innovation Lab.

2011 - 12: India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Malawi, Ghana. Interacted with officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, farmer groups and civil society activists. Supporting Policy Research to Inform Agricultural Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia Project. Global Development Network.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Computer Skills: Stata, R, Matlab, ArcGIS, Z-tree

Languages: English (fluent), Hindi (fluent), Tamil (intermediate), Spanish (beginner)

REFERENCES

Dr. Pamela Jakiela, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 2200 Symons Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742; 301-405-7502; pjakiela@umd.edu

Dr. Kenneth Leonard, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 2200 Symons Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742; 301-405-1267; kenneth@umd.edu

Dr. Anna Alberini, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, 2200 Symons Hall, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, 20742; 301-405-7502; alberin@umd.edu

JOB MARKET PAPER ABSTRACT

Incentives for Girls and Gender Bias in India (*Job Market Paper*)

Over 35 million women in India are estimated to be 'missing'. Rising male-biased sex ratios have been attributed to an increase in sex-selective abortions and excess female mortality at early ages. However, a more fundamental question that has not received enough attention is, what are the underlying motives that generate a preference for sons in the first place? In this study, I argue that high future costs of girls which stem from cultural traditions, yet which impose a large economic strain on households are a crucial driving force of discrimination. I hypothesize that the high costs of raising female children in India, may be an important determinant of whether a girl is born and the (differential) allocation she receives within the household.

This paper examines whether a *decrease* in the relative future costs of girls affects deficits of girls at birth and in early childhood. I study the *Bhagyalakshmi* program introduced in the state of Karnataka in 2006. Under this program, couples in Karnataka were given a long-term financial incentive at the birth of a girl. Using large scale Census data and retrospective birth history data, I show that a financial incentive that reduced the actual future costs of girls, led to an increase in the female-to-male child sex ratio by 19 to 25 additional girls for every 1000 boys. My estimates imply that 28,124 additional girls were born in Karnataka or survived up to age 6 on an annual basis because of the program. This paper uses temporal, geographic and compositional variation in a difference-in-difference and triple difference framework to show that the improvement in

child sex ratio stems from both, an improvement in the female-to-male sex ratio at birth *and* more girls surviving up to age one.

I find that the probability of giving birth to a girl rises by 9% both, due to new pregnancies and due to fewer sex-selective abortions. The reduction in the willingness to abort led to an improvement in the sex ratio at birth by 13 points. Further, I find that girls tend to do better even post-birth. The introduction of the program leads to an 81 percent decline in the excess female infant mortality gap in Karnataka and an increase in the duration of exclusive breastfeeding for girls. Height-for-age z-score, which is a long-run indicator for stunting and nutritional status increases by 0.4 standard deviations for girls relative to boys in Karnataka and relative to control states.

By relating long term conditional cash transfers at the birth of a girl to fertility and investment decisions of couples, my paper shows that policies that alter the relative costs of raising boys and girls can be effective at reducing son-biased fertility stopping, sex-selective abortions and post-birth girl neglect.