



DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT

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A monthly update of socio-economic developments in India by the IHDS research community

Happy New Year To All Our Readers!

Thank you for being part of our research community. We look forward to sharing new evidence, insights, and conversations in the year ahead. Wishing you a productive and fulfilling year.

Conditionality Matters: A Samaritan's Dilemma with In-Kind Transfers Targeting Educational Attainment

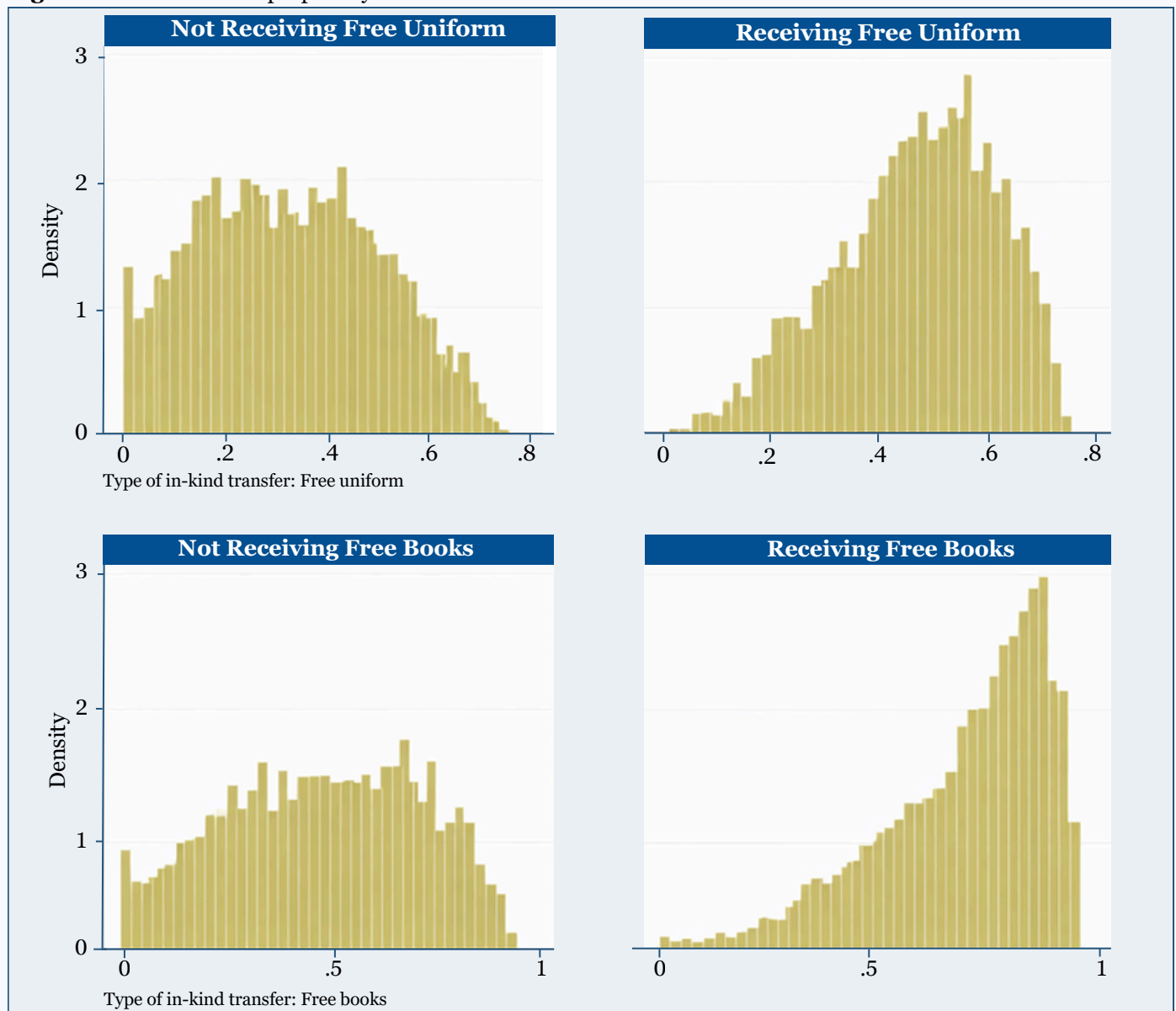
Somdeep Chatterjee, Oindrila Dey



The paper examines the possible existence of a Samaritan's Dilemma associated with in-kind transfers, specifically free books and uniforms distributed to elementary school students in India. Using data from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) Round II (2011–12) and applying propensity score matching methods, the study finds that, despite the transfer being in-kind, there are perverse effects on the learning levels of recipient children compared to non-recipients.

The results suggest that unconditional transfers may reduce incentives for effort, leading to poorer learning outcomes. A supporting theoretical model indicates that the absence of conditionality reduces the expected returns to educational effort. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of incorporating appropriate conditionalities in education-related welfare programs to ensure effective use of benefits, emphasizing that program success depends more on the presence of conditions than on whether transfers are provided in cash or in kind.

Figure 1: Distribution of propensity score



Source: Author's calculations based on IHDS-II (2011–12)



About the Authors



Somdeep Chatterjee is an Associate Professor of Economics at IIM Calcutta. His research focuses on development, labour, health, and education economics. He is a Research Affiliate at GAP, Northeastern University, and a Non-Resident Fellow at CDES, Monash University, and received the 2023 Prof. M. J. Manohar Rao Award. He holds a PhD in Economics from the University of Houston.



Oindrila Dey is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade. Her research focuses on behavioural industrial organization, development economics, and international trade. She is a Fellow at the Global Labor Organization and a former Visiting Fellow under the Ford Foundation-funded China India Scholar Program. She holds a PhD in Economics from Jadavpur University.

Harder Being Left Behind: Health Status of Indian Women from Migrant Households

Sana Tabassum, Chitwan Lalji

The paper examines the relationship between household migration status and women’s health outcomes in India using data from Round I (2004–05) and Round II (2011–12) of the India Human Development Survey (IHDS). Women’s health is assessed using objective indicators, such as body mass index (BMI) and the incidence of underweight. Using econometric models that control for individual, household, and state-level characteristics, the analysis compares health outcomes of women residing in migrant households with those in non-migrant households. The findings reveal a concerning pattern of poorer health outcomes among women in migrant households, characterized by significantly lower BMI levels and a higher likelihood of being underweight compared to their non-migrant counterparts. The results suggest that household migration is associated with adverse physical health outcomes for women left behind. Importantly, the study highlights the critical role of women’s empowerment and access to social networks in moderating these negative effects. Strengthening women’s agency and social support systems may help mitigate the health disadvantages associated with migration.



Table 1: Panel regression results for health outcomes of women

| Outcome Variable | Body Mass Index | | | Incidence of Underweight | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | Pooled OLS | Fixed Effects | Random Effects | Pooled OLS | Fixed Effects | Random Effects |
| Migrant household dummy | -0.173** (0.072) | -0.142** (0.068) | -0.136** (0.062) | 0.014* (0.007) | 0.028*** (0.008) | 0.017*** (0.007) |
| Observations | 40146 | | | 40146 | | |

Source: Author’s calculations based on IHDS-I (2004-05) and IHDS-II (2011–12)

Notes: The regression results are estimated using the balanced panel of IHDS, which includes the households that appear in both waves. The following controls are employed in this regression analysis: woman’s age, adjusted age squared, and marital status, caste, religion, highest adult education, households’ primary income source, household asset quintiles and region of residence. The analysis also includes state-level and survey-level fixed effects to capture variations across different states (Ss) and surveys (μt). The standard errors are clustered around the primary sampling unit (PSU). *, **, and *** represent statistical significance at 10%, 5%, and 1%, respectively.

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About the Authors



Sana Tabassum is an Assistant Professor of Economics at T A Pai Management Institute (TAPMI) Bengaluru with a PhD from IIM Kozhikode, focusing on migration in India. Her research covers women's health, household consumption, and rural development, with interests in development, health, labor, gender, education, and migration economics. She also serves as Co-chair of the Research and Publications Committee.



Chitwan Lalji is an Assistant Professor of Economics at the Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode. She holds a PhD in Economics from IIT Kanpur. Her research interests include applied microeconomics, health, labour, and development economics, and she is currently working on RCTs in India focusing on women's safety, wellbeing, and maternal and child health.

Recent Publications Using IHDS Data

Aydin, S. B., & Brandt, H. (2025). Advantages and limitations in the use of transfer learning for individual treatment effects in causal machine learning. arXiv (Preprint).

Barik, D. (2025). Obesity, Socioeconomic Transitions, and the Evolving Social Gradient of Non-Communicable Diseases in Low-and Middle-Income Countries. ARCH Women Health Care, 8(3): 1-2.

Barszczewski, J., Brochet, S., & Ramakrishnan, P. (2025). Moving for Marriage: When Does Migration Empower Women? SSRN (Preprint).

Shah, H. (2025). Essays in Applied Micro-econometrics. [Thesis, The Australian National University].

Singh, R., & Ranganathan, T. (2026). Does parental involvement improve learning outcomes of children? Evidence from India. Oxford Development Studies, 1-22.

Yadav, R. (2025). Targeted Electricity Subsidies and Rural Development: Evidence from India's RGGVY Program. 20th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development on 18-20 December 2025., Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), New Delhi.

About IHDS

The India Human Development Survey (IHDS) began as a nationally representative, multi-topic survey of 41,554 households in 1,503 villages and 971 urban neighbourhoods across India. The first round of interviews were completed in 2004-05; the Data is publicly available via ICPSR. The second round re-interviewed most of these households in 2011-12 (N = 42,152), and data for the same are available via ICPSR. Fieldwork for IHDS-III was undertaken in 2022-24, and data is currently being cleaned and processed.

The IHDS-III has been jointly conducted by researchers from the University of Maryland, the National Council of Applied Economic Research, Indiana University and the University of Michigan.

IHDS Principal Investigators

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