

# Social Network, Political Engagement, and Collective Action: Evidence from Rural India

*We study the role played by social networks in facilitating effective group based collective action, especially for a group heavily underrepresented in politics across the globe, i.e., women. We look at participation in local village meetings in rural India (Gram Sabhas) as the context of our study. To overcome the usual endogeneity challenges we focus on a factor that affects women's social network formation and yet, is presumably not directly related to their political behavior - their membership in a Women Only Self Help Group (WOSHG). We first show that past membership in a WOSHG positively affects a woman's present meeting attendance rate, and that it is not driven by household selection on observables. Using past existence of any WOSHG in a village as an instrument for past membership we then show that the result remains the same, while there is no such effect on men's meeting attendance. At the village level, this significantly changed the gender composition of meeting attendees in women's favor, which in turn resulted in more women preferred public goods (such as water, sanitation, health) being provided. We provide evidence in favor of the social network story as opposed to other mechanisms driving the results. This work highlights an unintended benefit of expanding SHGs in rural India by looking at its effect on the local politics.*

Date: Fri, 11 Mar, 2016

Time: 04:30 PM - 06:00 PM

Venue: Conference hall, R&T building, NIPFP, New Delhi

[Directions](#)



Speaker: Sabyasachi Das,  
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[Detailed bio](#)

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