

3IE-IFPRI Joint Seminar

Gender and Technology Diffusion

February 26, 2015

[Florence Kondylis](#), Senior Economist at the World Bank, presented the paper “Gender and Technology Diffusion” at [the 3ie-IFPRI joint seminar series](#). Kondylis her co-authors explore how gender and social norms affect village communicators’ ability to understand and adopt new agricultural technologies, and to communicate and encourage adoption at the community level in rural Malawi.

The researchers encouraged half of the treatment villages to elect female communicators and the other half to elect male communicators. No gender-assignment was encouraged in the control communities. Researchers were only able to measure intent to treat effects as there was roughly 50 percent compliance in female-encouraged communities. Additionally, they addressed supply-side constraints by providing half of the communicators with incentives. Main outcomes of interest include communicator knowledge gains and adoption of technologies and their ability to teach technologies and encourage adoption at the community level.

Communicators in female-encouraged villages were significantly better at retaining information and adopting technologies but were much less successful in encouraging community members to adopt these technologies. Surprisingly, female farmers in female-encouraged villages interacted with communicators less than in male-encouraged villages. Providing incentives increased female communicators’ interactions with other farmers though it had no significant effect on male communicators. This suggests that easing supply-side constraints is an important aspect of successfully incorporating women into development projects.

[Sarah Tisch](#), a Gender Practice Leader at Social Impact, was the discussant. Sarah praised the authors’ work as an important contribution to fill knowledge gaps about the ways gender norms influence female participation in development efforts. Audience feedback focused on possible exogenous changes in gender norms introduced through gender-assignment encouragement, the role a spouse’s status female communicator selection, and a woman’s ability to encourage technology adoption within her household.

Kondylis said one key policy implication from the paper was the need to address the role gender biases play in limiting women’s effectiveness as agents of change.