

Md Amzad Hossain, University of Virginia
Essays on Development & Education Economics
(Dissertation)

My job market paper, "Performance Gains from Gender Match in Higher Education: Evidence from a Setting with Entrenched Gender Stereotypes," investigates whether female college students in a male-dominated discipline benefit academically from being taught by female instructors in a developing-country setting. I use a novel and confidential administrative dataset from a renowned economics program in Bangladesh to show that when matched with female teachers, female students gain in terms of both grade performance (nearly eight percent of a standard deviation) and longer-term outcomes such as degree completion time and the likelihood of enrolling in an economics master's program. I address endogeneity concerns using student, cohort, and teacher-by-course fixed effects. The quasi-random allocation of students to mandatory courses with no scope for selection of courses or instructors and double-blind final exams enable me to address selection further. I present suggestive evidence that the gain from matching is driven by the *role model effect* rather than bias in teachers' assessments.

In my second paper, "Unintended Consequences of a Well-Intentioned Policy: Impact of Credit on Child Labor in Bangladesh," I find a 7.1 percentage points increase in child labor in response to an agricultural credit expansion program in Bangladesh, based on a field experiment. I show that this increase in child labor is due to new opportunities for children to work in household self-employment activities. I also find that treated households with fewer working adults use more child labor and spend less on education. While I do not see any effect on schooling outcomes, the time budget survey reveals that children from treated areas spend significantly less time studying (17 percent less than the control mean of 20.7 hours per week). These findings raise concerns about the unintended inter-generational consequences of easing credit constraints to increase self-employment.

My third paper, "Access to Colleges, Human Capital, and Empowerment of Women," (co-authored with Sheetal Sekhri and Pooja Khosla, both UVA), uses the variation in college construction in India under a college construction grant policy to explore whether increased access to colleges in home districts improves human capital and the agency of women. Our estimates indicate an 11 percent gain in years of schooling (64 percent of which comes from college enrollment) for women in treated districts in the post-policy period over the baseline control mean of 8.6 years. The benefits accrue to the rural women but do not spill over to the neighboring districts. We also find suggestive evidence of changes in spousal quality in the marriage market.

JEL classification: I23, J16, O15, G21

Keywords: higher education, gender gap, human capital, child labor