Reshaping Social Norms about Gender: A New Way Forward

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Source: South Asia Economic Focus, 2022 using world development indicators
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Firstly, economic drivers, such as economic growth, rising education, and declining fertility, cannot adequately explain the levels and (stagnant to worsening) trends of female labor force participation (FLFP) in South Asia.

Secondly, a host of other forms of gender gaps related to economic participation—early marriages, freedom of movement, social interactions, asset ownership, and parents’ offspring preference—also show stagnant trends in South Asia.

Source: South Asia Economic Focus, 2022 using world development indicators
Deeply rooted social norms about gender can account for a large proportion of gender disparities.

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New research in our chapter suggests that deeply rooted social norms, especially those about household division of labor, account for a large share of these gaps in women’s economic engagement.
Attitudes towards gender in South Asia tend to be more conservative than in other regions and have become more conservative over time.
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And in most regions, people personal beliefs tend to be more liberal than what they think are the predominant social views.

Source: South Asia Economic Focus, 2022 using Survey on Gender Equality at Home
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Policies can improve women’s economic opportunities in the face of norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Policies can:

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- **Address norms directly**: Education policies where students are made aware of biases against women have shifted gender attitudes.
- **Correct misperceptions of norms persistence**: Information campaigns about the conservative views of society has led to improvement in female labor force participation and other gender outcomes.
Thank you!