Gender of Children, Education and Occupational Choice in Nepal

Magnus Hatlebakk, CMI
Do more children lead to poverty?
*Or, do poor people have more children?*

We used data from Nepal:

- At that time, the gender of the first born was random.
- Women had more children if the first born was a girl.
- Otherwise similar households differ only in the gender of the first born, and thus the number of children.

We found:

- Number of children had no effect on the education of each child.
- But the gender of the first born had a direct effect:
  - With a first born girl, you invest more in her younger brothers’ education.
  - She probably takes care of household chores.
- Thus, no quantity-quality trade-off.
- With fewer children, people take in other household members.
  - Thus, no impact on income per capita.
Related Research Questions

With more children, will there be more remittances?

NO - We found that migrants send less money, knowing that siblings also remit.

We know that son-preference leads to more children and better education for later born boys, if the first born is a girl.

Will female empowerment remedy this?

• Self-reported female empowerment:
  o This is correlated with more education for both girls and boys.

• Economic empowerment (measured by landholdings of the extended families)
  o If male side is landless, then fewer girls get education (boys are prioritized).
Policy Implications

One paper discusses formal land rights for women.

- It is unclear if this will be sufficient, due to
  - Additional fragmentation of father’s land
  - Right to husband’s land in cases of divorce

One will need to change social norms, which takes time.

- It helps that women have sole responsibility at home when husbands work abroad.
- The labor and marriage market both demand educated women, which also helps.
- Labor market participation and education help in general.
- Awareness campaigns may help, including commercial television.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-born-girl leads to more children.</th>
<th>With more children the household size is adjusted in other ways.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gulbrandsen (2013). South Asia Economic Journal (DHS)</strong></td>
<td>Income per capita not significantly affected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>More children do not lead to less education.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Libois and Somville (2014). CMI-WP (NLSS)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-born boys leads to more education for younger brothers.</strong></td>
<td>With more children, more migrants, and thus more income?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hatlebakk (2017). Review of Development Economics (Own survey)</strong></td>
<td>No, they free-ride on each other and remit less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Will female empowerment lead to more education for girls?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Libois and Somville (2014). CMI-WP, R&amp;R in a good development journal (NLSS)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, there is some (complex) evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gurung and Hatlebakk (2016) Journal of Developing Areas (Own survey)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>