



INDIANA UNIVERSITY BLOOMINGTON OSTROM WORKSHOP

COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Ruth Meinzen-Dick

International Food and Policy Research Institute

Monday, October 18: 12:00 – 1:00 pm ET

Virtual via Zoom: [Click here for link to Zoom meeting](#)

Migration and Gender Dynamics of Irrigation Governance in Nepal



Nepal has a long history of irrigation, including government and farmer-managed irrigation systems that are labor- and skill-intensive. Widespread male migration has important effects on Nepalese society. How institutions such as Water Users' Associations (WUAs) respond and adapt is critical to understanding rural transformation and the likely impact on gender equality, food production, and rural livelihoods. This paper, coauthored with Prachanda Pradhan, and Wei Zhang, examines the effects of male migration on institutional change in WUAs, women's roles, technological change, and outcomes affecting effectiveness of irrigation systems based on a phone survey of 336 WUA leaders and qualitative data from 10 irrigation systems. Results indicate WUAs have adapted rules to increase women's participation, and to monetize contributions for maintenance. Women exercise agency in how they interact with WUAs. Mechanization has reduced the need for some male labor, though the ability to mechanize is limited by hilly terrain and small plot sizes. Overall, systems are adapting to male migration, with relatively low idling of land or labor shortages causing deterioration of the systems.

Ruth Meinzen-Dick is a Senior Research Fellow at the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI). She received her PhD in Development Sociology from Cornell University. Much of her work has been interdisciplinary research on land and water policy, property rights, governance arrangements, and gender analysis. She is past president of International Association for Study of the Commons and received the Elinor Ostrom Award on Collective Governance of the Commons 2019 Senior Scholar award.

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