

Policy Consultation on Infusing Evidence in Rural Policy

Sehgal Foundation organized a virtual policy consultation in collaboration with J-PAL on October 21, 2020, bringing together stakeholders from government, civil society, and corporations. The overarching purpose of the event was to share evidence in rural policy-making processes. The event opened with a plenary session represented by Ms. Neelima Khetan, SMSF board member and Dr. Ramesh Chand, member, NITI Aayog. The plenary was followed by three thematic discussions focused on agriculture development, education and empowering women. The event was attended by 221 people. Following is a brief overview of the consultation:

Prof. Chand in his plenary shared his perspective on the national agricultural situation and highlighted its associated factors that should be duly considered to understand the sector's growth and development. Speaking about experience at Seva Mandir, Ms Khetan noted that institutional willingness is crucial for infusing evidence in rural policy. She stressed building a culture of data use that is key for overcoming barriers related to ideology, cost, and difficulties in measuring impact in case of more abstract outcomes.

Speakers for the discussion on agricultural development talked about ways in which their work helped to address the challenges faced by smallholder farmers using agriculture technologies/programs and using agriculture extension services to increase productivity.

In the education discussion, speakers discussed the need for urgent measures to ensure access to quality education during the COVID-19 pandemic and deliberated on the long-term needs of the education sector to realize the National Education Policy 2020.

A discussion on women's economic empowerment shed light on the need for improving women's access to meaningful and non-gender-stereotyped livelihoods. Speakers shared their respective views on what helps to achieve the same through their experiences in the social sector.

Listen to the session here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VQ1-3Tscg_XaJycsYNUuq8np-AnLt_Ko?usp=sharing

This collaboration between JPAL-South Asia at IFMR and Sehgal Foundation demonstrates the importance of growing partnerships in the social sector to understand the ever-changing dynamics of evidence and policy. As a rural development NGO, Sehgal Foundation is committed to more such collaborations to forward our mandate and establish thought leadership in the sector.