Husbands and wives' social networks and exposure to a new technology in India

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Although there is ample evidence of important differences in how and where men and women acquire information, most research on learning and household decision-making only considers access to information for a single household head, typically men. This assumption is especially problematic in agriculture, where women often play a fundamental role in production, consumption, and marketing. Using gender-disaggregated social network data and results from an experimental technology auction for laser land leveling (LLL) in eastern Uttar Pradesh, India, we examine husbands’ and wives’ information networks composition, formation, and overlap. We find that women’s networks of general agricultural information networks are 25 percent smaller than their husbands, but for relatively poor households they are of equal size. For all households there is very little overlap between husbands and wives’ networks. For information networks specific to LLL, we find that women’s networks of LLL-specific networks are nearly 80 percent smaller for both relatively wealthy and poor households, and that nearly half of wives contacts are the wives of their husbands’ contacts. Our results suggest that although female agricultural networks are generally smaller than male networks, they are distinct and therefore likely to bring new information to the household.