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Applicant: Ashish Adhikari
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I started my PhD in Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics at The Ohio State University in Autumn 2022, and over the past four years my graduate study has grown from intensive coursework to a clearer sense of the questions I want to answer as a researcher. My training has included microeconomic theory, econometrics, quantitative methods, and a range of applied development and policy courses that shaped how I think about evidence and real-world problems. As I navigated through microeconomic theories to more applied courses, I got a better sense of what I am interested in and gradually shifted towards development economics, trade and agricultural economics. I am now in my fourth year, fully focused on my dissertation and working closely with my committee as I develop research that connects households, markets, and policy in developing-country contexts. Detailed information on my coursework is given below:

Graduate Coursework Summary

Core Micro / Theory / Econometrics / Quantitative Methods

- ECON 8711: Microeconomic Theory I-A
- ECON 8712: Microeconomic Theory I-B
- ECON 8713: Microeconomic Theory II-A
- ECON 8714: Microeconomic Theory II-B
- ECON 8731: Econometrics I
- ECON 8732: Econometrics II
- AEDECON 7110: Advanced Quantitative Methods I
- AEDECON 7120: Advanced Quantitative Methods II
- AEDECON 7130: Applied Econometrics I
- AEDECON 7140: Applied Econometrics II
- AEDECON 8102: Advanced Applied Econometric

Field Courses & Specialized Applied Courses

- AEDECON 8101: Applied Welfare Economics
- AEDECON 8103: Seminal Readings in Applied Economics
- AEDECON 8200: Frontiers in AEDE
- AEDECON 8402: Econometrics in Development
- AEDECON 8403: Finance in Economic Development

- AEDECON 8404: Program Evaluation
- AEDECON 8303: Economics of Climate Change
- ECON 8851: Labor Economics I
- AEDECON 6200: International Economics & Policy (audited)

Seminars, Workshops, and Research Credits

- AEDECON 8800: AED Economics Seminar (multiple semesters)
- AEDECON 8895: PhD Research Seminar (multiple semesters)
- AEDECON 8999: Research (multiple semesters)
- AEDECON 8193: Individual Studies
- EDUTL 5050: Classroom English for International GTAs
- EDUTL 5060: Special Topics in Spoken English

Research Interests, Dissertation Summary, Committee

Committee Members

- **Professor Leah Bevis (Chair)**
  Associate Professor,
  Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics,
  The Ohio State University

- **Professor Ian Sheldon**
  Professor,
  Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics
  The Ohio State University

Dissertation and Research Interests Description

My dissertation is organized around three empirical projects that explore how households, markets, and public institutions respond to economic shocks and structural change in developing countries. Although my work is grounded in development and agricultural economics, each project increasingly intersects with large survey or market datasets and use of robust econometric methods for data analysis motivating my interest in the NBER tutorial.

1. Planting, Harvest, and Hope: Agricultural Production and Migration Aspirations

This paper examines how seasonal variation in agricultural production shapes migration aspirations among rural households in Nigeria. Drawing on rich household panel data from the 2023–2024 wave of the Nigeria General Household Survey Panel (GHS Panel), we exploit within-season variation in harvest outcomes and migration intentions to estimate the short-run behavioral

response to realized agricultural productivity. Our findings reveal a robust inverted U-shaped relationship: migration aspirations initially rise with improvements in harvest value but decline once households reach higher levels of productivity. This non-monotonic pattern reflects the joint influence of rising capability and diminishing incentive to migrate. Further analysis identifies food insecurity as a key moderating mechanism. Households experiencing moderate- to-severe food insecurity are significantly more responsive to agricultural shocks, with migration aspirations rising more steeply following poor harvests. These findings provide new evidence and offer actionable insights for rural development and migration management policies. By linking food security, agricultural outcomes, and migration intentions within the same season, this study highlights the dynamic nature of rural mobility preferences in response to production-based livelihood risks.

2. Gender Norms, Fertility Behavior, and Child Health in South Asia

This paper examines how son preference shapes fertility behavior and child health outcomes across South Asia using recent Demographic and Health Survey data from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. We exploit quasi-random variation induced by the sex of the firstborn child: when the firstborn is a girl, latent son preference becomes activated, prompting parents to engage in fertility behaviors aimed at securing a son, which may subsequently affect children's health. We find that son preference, triggered by a firstborn daughter, leads women to express a greater desire for additional children and to use contraception less, in hopes of conceiving a son sooner, ultimately resulting in larger realized family sizes. These responses are strong in Nepal, India, and Pakistan, while Bangladesh exhibits a noticeably weaker pattern, indicating meaningful cross-country heterogeneity. Turning to child health, we examine whether this activated son-preference pressure translates into differences in early-life outcomes. Second-born girls preceded by an older sister are shorter and lighter than those preceded by an older brother, consistent with reduced parental investments. Conversely, second-born boys with an older sister exhibit superior height and weight outcomes and lower under-five mortality, consistent with parents reinforcing the "at-least-one-son" norm through heightened protection and resource allocation. These effects are statistically significant only in India and concentrated in its patrilineal states, highlighting son preference as a key mechanism behind gender disparities in child health. Overall, the findings highlight how cultural preferences continue to shape fertility behavior and child well-being across South Asia.

3. Import Shocks, Market Access, and Domestic Price Stabilization in India

This paper studies how India's large pulses import surge between 2016 and 2018 helped stabilize domestic prices after two years of weak monsoons in 2014 and 2015. When domestic production collapsed and prices spiked, the government reduced tariffs and expanded imports to ease the pressure on households. I examine whether these higher imports actually lowered prices on the ground and whether the level of price relief depended on a district's market access. Using data on trade, rainfall, and market connectivity, I find that prices fell more in districts that are closer to major import ports and better connected by roads. The paper shows that imports can play an important role in stabilizing food prices during climate shocks, but the benefits are uneven and depend on how easily imported goods can reach different parts of the country.