



The MIDS Monthly

November 2025

NEWSLETTER

Key Highlights

In November 2025, the MIDS faculty produced some significant research and popular writing.

An article by Rida Nongbri, one of the new faculty, on water poverty has been published in the journal *Water Resources and Economics*.

An interview on federalism featuring Kalaiyaran A and Yamini Aiyar was published in *The Hindu*.

M Suresh Babu, the MIDS Director, wrote in the *Indian Express* about the Economics Nobel prizes this year that returned to growth and innovation.

Dr D Subbarao, the MIDS Chairperson, wrote a column in *The Hindu* on inter-state rivalry that is fuelling India's growth.

A new project in which MIDS will be the Lead Knowledge Institute of Tamilnadu for activities under State Support Mission of NITI Aayog has been taken up by the institute.

Featured Research

Do political connections moderate the correlation between drought and households' water poverty? Empirical evidence from India

by Rida Wanbha Nongbri, Sabuj Kumar Mandal, Gauri Sreekumar, Alec Zuo



Water poverty is a global issue and it gets exacerbated by climate change-induced droughts. While the impact of drought on water poverty is well documented, we contribute to the literature by exploring the role played by political connection in shaping households' water poverty in the face of drought. We use two rounds of nationally representative household-level panel data from the India Human Development Survey (2004-05 and 2011-12) to generate a multidimensional water poverty index and a variable representing political connection. The long-term rainfall data from the India Meteorological Department is used to construct the drought variable. Our empirical findings show that drought is positively correlated with households' water poverty. However, the correlation between drought and water poverty is moderated by political connectedness: politically connected households affected by drought have lower water poverty than non-politically connected households who also face drought. An analysis with disaggregated water poverty measure indicates that politically connected households have lower deprivation from access, quality, storage and capacity dimensions of water poverty compared to their non-politically counterparts. A fractional regression analysis with district level data also provides evidence of the moderating impact of political connection proving the consistency of our empirical findings. We recommend initiating specific water poverty alleviation programmes that preclude political elite capture from the distribution of water utility services. We also recommend the Panchayat systems to become more inclusive such that the benefits of water related programmes reach the most vulnerable people to ensure water security.

Publications

Nongbri, R. W., Mandal, S. K., Sreekumar, G., Zuo, A. (2025). Do political connections moderate the correlation between drought and households' water poverty? Empirical evidence from India. *Water Resources and Economics*, 52(October), 100273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wre.2025.100273>

Subbarao, D. (2025, November 13). Inter-State rivalry that is fuelling India's growth. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/inter-state-rivalry-that-is-fuelling-indias-growth/article70271808.ece>

Suresh Babu, M. (2025, October 29). The Economics Nobel returns to growth: Why innovation still matters. *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/the-economics-nobel-returns-to-growth-why-innovation-still-matters-10333613/>

Yamini, A., & Kalaiyarasan, A. (2025, November 21). Is federalism in retreat under single-party hegemony? *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/podcast/in-focus-podcast-is-federalism-in-retreat-under-single-party-hegemony/article70303116.ece>

Review of Development and Change (RDC), the MIDS journal, Vol. 30 Issue 2, December 2025. <https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/RDC/current>

Tamilnadu Economy in News—TEN (Vol. 2 Issue 9), September 2025. https://www.mids.ac.in/assets/doc/TEN_Vol_2-9.pdf



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Academic Events

17 November 2025, Development Dialogues episode, Interdisciplinary Research on Environment and Development, Ajit Menon in conversation with Smruthi Bala Kannan and Aishwarya GVN

Ajit Menon is a political ecologist whose work examines conflicts over and governance of natural resources in the context of development and the epistemologies of environmental policymaking in India. This conversation engages with his experiences navigating interdisciplinary and socially grounded research, including negotiating theory and practice in political ecology, and addressing ethical responsibilities of research and knowledge production about environment and development.

21 November 2025, Training programme on Data Analytics for Development Practice organized as part of the Focus Block Development Programme (FBDP)



21 November 2025, Public Lecture: Who Gets To Move? Spatial Inequalities in Public Transport Access across Delhi, by Rahul Goel

Public transport access in urban India is shaped by geographic power relations. Rahul Goel's research asks: Who gets to move in Delhi, and how? He presents a current geospatial analysis of public transport access in the city, and relates it to the socio-politics of housing and transportation sectors through a mobility justice framework. The analysis reveals a strong spatial and socioeconomic gradient—public transport access declines both with distance from the urban core and with falling neighbourhood socioeconomic status. The study traces these spatial patterns to historical housing development that undersupplied affordable stock, and to slum evictions from the urban core. These processes, which continue to this day, shaped the peripheral growth of localities led by private developers, who bypassed municipal bylaws of street hierarchy, effectively undermining transit provision. The gaps left are being filled by informal and private operators such as e-rickshaws. The resulting patchwork of land use and transit infrastructure has fragmented the public transport system. The findings highlight how work towards mobility justice in Delhi requires transformations to the political economy of urban governance that go beyond equitable spatial development of transportation.

Upcoming Events

- 1 December 2025, Inauguration of the second batch of Certificate Programme with Malcolm Adiseshiah Fellowship in Public Policy and Management
- 3 December 2025, Book Launch and Discussion on *A Sixth of Humanity: Independent India's Development Odyssey* by Devesh Kapur and Arvind Subramanian, Published by Harper Collins
- 4 December 2025, Round-Table on Tariffs, Hikes and Tamil Nadu Economy & Book Launch of *India's Industrial Policy: A Reassessment* by Padmini Swaminathan, published by Primus Books
- 12 December 2025, Seminar—Bus, Benefits and Beyond: A study of transport equity through Karnataka's Shakti Scheme, by Prajwal Nagesh
- 18 December 2025, Founder's Day Lecture, by Dr C Rangarajan, former RBI Governor

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