

The Third Fuwa Award Comments

Recipient: Momoe Makino (Senior Research Fellow, IDE-JETRO)

For more than 20 years, Dr. Makino has devoted her research to questions of gender and development, mainly in South Asia. Her work advances our understanding of challenges to women's economic and social empowerment in South Asia, especially the functioning and behavioral consequences of institutions, such as seclusion and dowry, that govern women's economic life. She overcomes the inadequacy of data from standardized household surveys for quantitative analysis related to such institutions. Her most recent research goes further, using lab-in-the-field experimental methods.

Dowry remains ubiquitous in South Asia, even though it is prohibited in large parts of the region. Because of prohibition, data on dowry payments have been sparse and incomplete, and literature has relied on indirect evidence. Makino's paper "Marriage, dowry and women's status in rural Punjab, Pakistan" (J. Pop. Econ. 2019) exploits the fact that dowry remains legal in Pakistan to obtain direct measures of marriage expenses, by item and value, and deploys sophisticated tools to deal with endogeneity in observational data. Its findings convincingly reorient thinking around dowry, helping us understand dowry decisions as optimizing responses by atomistic households within a system characterized by systemic bias against women and coordination failure on institutional change.

In her study of "Female labour force participation and dowries in Pakistan" (J. Int. Devel. 2021), Makino uses a meticulously survey design and investigates the negative relation between dowry and female labor force participation. The paper concludes that lower dowries for working women are more likely to reflect appreciation of their earning potential than stigmatization of their behavior. It suggests that policies to increase women's earning potential, including female education, are likely to have direct benefits for women's economic and social empowerment and indirect benefits of reducing the importance attached to the dowry payment itself.

Makino's recent and current work is transforming from exploring the basis for women's differential economic and social status to proposing solutions. "Labor market information and

parental attitudes toward women working outside the home: experimental evidence from rural Pakistan” (EDCC 2024) reports results of a randomized controlled trial of giving information on earning opportunities for young women to parents (the key decision-makers) in households within commuting distance of export-oriented garment factories. Makino finds that even a “light-touch” intervention providing information to dispel misconceptions relating to women’s work in factories is effective in changing attitudes towards female wage labor participation.

These papers illustrate Makino’s focus on addressing problems of development by framing questions uncluttered by preconceptions, and by undertaking research that is empirically rigorous and leads to verifiable policy implications. Their findings reinforce the hope that women’s empowerment is possible if job opportunities exist, and if decision-makers have access to accurate information about those jobs. This body of research fits very nicely with the Fuwa Award criterion of “remarkable research achievements” in development economics in the areas of poverty and gender.

References:

Makino, Momoe (2019) “Marriage, dowry, and women’s status in rural Punjab, Pakistan,” *Journal of Population Economics* 32 (3), 769–797.

Makino, Momoe (2021) “Female labour force participation and dowries in Pakistan,” *Journal of International Development* 33 (3), 569-593.

Makino, Momoe (2024) “Labor market information and parental attitudes toward women working outside the home: Experimental evidence from rural Pakistan,” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 72 (3), 1041-1067.

The Third Fuwa Award Selection Committee

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