

Inter-Generational Benefits of Improving Access to Justice for Women: Evidence from Peru

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Abstract : Domestic violence is a major concern in developing countries, with important social, economic and health consequences. However, institutions do not usually address the problems facing women or ethnic and religious minorities. For example, the police do very little to stop domestic violence in rural areas of developing countries. This paper exploits the introduction of women's justice centers (WJCs) in Peru to provide causal estimates on the effects of improving access to justice for women and children. These centers offer a new integrated public service model for women by including medical, psychological and legal support in cases of violence against women. Our empirical approach uses a difference in difference estimation exploiting variation over time and space in the opening of WJC together with province-by-year fixed effects. Exploiting administrative data from health providers and district attorney offices, we find that after the opening of these centers, there are important improvements on women's welfare: a large reduction in femicides and female hospitalizations for assault. Moreover, using geo-coded household surveys we find evidence that the existence of these services reduces domestic violence, improves women's health, increases women's threat points and, therefore, lead to household decisions that are more aligned with their interests. Using administrative data on the universe of schools, we find large gains on human capital for their children: affected children are more likely to enroll, attend school and have better grades in national exams, instead of working for the family. In sum, the evidence in this paper shows that providing access to justice for women can be a powerful tool to reduce domestic violence and increase education of children, suggesting a positive inter-generational benefit.

Keywords : access to justice, domestic violence, education, household bargaining

Conference Title : ICEPE 2018 : International Conference on Economics and Political Economy

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : January 18-19, 2018