**Introduction**

Development programs rely on agents for last-mile service & information delivery, e.g. frontline workers in health. Agents often use groups as delivery platforms e.g. women’s self-help groups (SHGs), to ‘scale-up’ interventions. Caste is an important facet of identity in India; SHGs are generally caste-homogenous. This implies that the caste of the agent relative to that of the group could determine the effectiveness of the intervention.

**Research Questions**

We use a lab-in-the-field experiment with existing women’s SHGs to ask:

- How does provision of information affect an individual’s willingness to contribute (WTC) to a group-owned club good?
- How do shared agent-group caste identities affect information retention and individual WTC?

**Design**

We use two cross-randomized treatments to answer our research questions:

- First, randomly allocate SHGs to receive an information treatment that motivates the need for the club good. Information is scripted; agents intensively trained to ensure uniform delivery.
- Second, randomize the caste of the agent relative to the caste of the group. Agents’ caste is identified by name.

**Methods**

Interviewed 2238 women from 240 groups. Each SHG member given two bags, one with beads and one empty. She transfers to the empty bag (privately) beads = number of hours she wants to work on the club good, a kitchen garden. Exit survey to collect range of information:

- OLS models to estimate impacts on score on knowledge test and WTC labour hours

**Results**

Information is understood and retained; but does not impact WTC

- Being matched to a higher agent reduces information retention but raises WTC!

**Conclusions**

Information from lower caste agents retained better, but WTC higher when paired with higher caste agent.

Why? High caste agents might be perceived as having better connections, more able to deliver on their promises.

Important to note that soft skills and group cohesion matter – and, unlike caste, can be changed!