

## **Session-5 (December 2, 2021), Paper-3:**

### **Abstract**

Information Campaign on Arsenic Poisoning: Unintended Consequences in Marriage Market

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Arsenic contamination of ground water, which has been the main source of drinking water in rural Bangladesh since 1970s has caused a major health emergency owing to multiple health problems associated with it, ranging from skin lesions to various types of cancers. However, until mid 1990s, the contamination remained largely unknown and became public knowledge only later through a nationwide information campaign. We study the impact of the information campaign on marriage patterns in Bangladesh. Using difference-in-difference model, we analyse the age at marriage (for males and females) and the bride price agreed at the time of marriage and find that both of them reduce in arsenic affected areas in comparison to non-arsenic affected areas in response to the information campaign. However, no effect is found on dowry payments. The effect on the age at marriage is primarily driven by younger cohorts who get married earlier. Additionally, we find that for females the likelihood of having the first child by early ages (between 16 to 20 years) increases. Using our analysis, we show that such information campaigns can have unintended social consequences