

VIDHYA SOUNDARARAJAN

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Contact information

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Academic affiliations

Research Director, Centre for Advanced Financial Research and Learning (CAFRAL) (2023-)

Assistant professor, Economics group, Department of Economics, Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (2021-) *on leave*

Research Fellow, IZA (Institute of Labor Economics) (2022-)

Fellow, Global Labor Organization (2021-)

Assistant professor, Economics area, Indian Institute of Management Bangalore (2016-2021)

Education

Ph.D., Applied Economics and Management, Cornell University, 2016

Masters in Science, Economics, Madras School of Economics, India. *Batch-topper (gold medal)*, 2008

Bachelor of Technology, Information Technology, Madras Institute of Technology, India. 2005

Research Fields: Labour economics, Development economics.

Topics: Firm behaviour, Productivity, Contract labour, Minimum wages, International trade

Publications

[Contract Employment as a Worker Discipline Device](#) (with Arnab Basu and Nancy Chau). *Journal of Development Economics*, 149 (2021): 102601.

[Political Activism as a Determinant of Clientelistic Transfers: Evidence from an Indian Public Works Program](#) (with Yanyan Liu and Nancy Chau). *European Economic Review*, 132 (2021): 103631.

[Estimating Small Area Population Density using Satellite Imagery: An Application to Sri Lanka](#) (with Ryan Engstrom and David Newhouse). *PLOS ONE*, 15(8): e0237063

[Wage Fairness in a Subcontracted Labor Market](#) (With Nancy Chau and Arnab Basu). *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*. 168 (2019): Pages 24-42.

[Heterogeneous Effects of Imperfectly Enforced Minimum Wages in Low-Wage Labor Markets](#), *Journal of Development Economics* (2019) 140 (2019): 355-374.

[Construction workers: amending the laws for more safety](#). *Economic and political weekly*. Vol -XLVIII No. 23, June 08, 2013.

[Regional inequality compared: the cases of India and Brazil](#) (with Alexandre de Freitas Barbosa and Gerry Rodgers) *Indian Journal of Economics*, Special Centennial Issue. Vol. XCVI, No. 383. 2016.

Books and Book Chapters

“[Contract Employment in Developing Countries](#),” (with Arnab K. Basu and Nancy Chau). Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics, K. Zimmermann (ed.). 2021.

Rodgers, Gerry and Soundararajan, Vidhya. 2016. Patterns of Inequality in the Indian Labour Market 1983-2012. *Academic Foundation and Institute for Human Development*.

Media writings

[Need focus on removing obstacles to ‘good’ jobs](#), Jan 20, 2021, *Hindustan Times*

[Disentangling the labour laws debate: What does the evidence really say?](#), May 25, 2020. *Hindustan Times*

[The MSME sector is critical in times of Covid-19](#), Apr 03, 2020, *Hindustan Times*

[How to Successfully Set a Minimum Wage in India](#), Oct 24, 2018. *Live Mint*.

Working papers

Import competition, contract labor, and the formalization of the work force (with Pavel Chakraborty and Rahul Singh). IZA Discussion Paper No. 15760. <https://docs.iza.org/dp15760.pdf>

Implementation of Labor Laws and Informality (with Ritam Chaurey and Gaurav Chiplunkar). SSRN working paper. Available at SSRN: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4204033

Chau, Nancy H. and Kanbur, Ravi and Soundararajan, Vidhya, Employer Power and Employment in Developing Countries. IZA Discussion Paper No. 15514, <https://ssrn.com/abstract=4204332>

Work in progress

Temperature Extremes and Labor Effort (with Niraj Bansal)

Do rural roads create inclusive entrepreneurship opportunities? (with Ananyo Brahma)

Antitrust policies and firm performance (with Jorge Ale-Chilet)

Teaching

2022 Spring Sole instructor for International economics-II for undergraduate students

2021 Fall, 2022 Fall Sole instructor for Public finance for undergraduate students

2017 - 2020 Sole instructor for Managerial Economics for MBA students

2017 - 2020 Sole instructor for Advanced Econometrics for PhD students

Grants and Fellowships

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| 2022 | Seed grant from Industrial Research and Consulting Centre, IIT Bombay |
| 2020-2021 | Ministry of Corporate Affairs (India) grant: USD 45, 179 |
| 2021 | Hanns Seidal Stiftung (with Gopal Naik): USD 46, 700 |
| 2016-19 | IIMB young faculty research chair |
| 2015-16 | Exploratory Research Grant, Private Enterprise Development in Low Income countries (PEDL), an initiative by Center for Economic and Policy Research (CEPR), (co-PI, with Nancy Chau): USD 24,600 |
| 2014-15 | Research Grant, IFPRI-3ie (Team member, with significant contribution to proposal writing; with Nancy Chau and Yanyan Liu): USD 21,733 |
| 2012 | Exploratory Research Grant, the Tata-Cornell Initiative (PI): USD 5,000 |
| 2016 | First prize for best manuscript award at Dyson School, Cornell University. |
| 2010-11 | Cornell Graduate School Fellowship (covers tuition and stipend for one year) |
| 2007-08 | Merit-fellowship at Madras school of Economics |

Referee service: Journal of Public Economics, Journal of Development Economics, World Development, PLOS ONE, Regional Science and Urban economics, Labour Economics, Macroeconomic Dynamics, Journal of Economic Policy Reform, Journal of Quantitative Economics, Economic Modelling, IIMB Management Review.

Presentations (including scheduled)

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| 2022 | 17 th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development, ISI Delhi Indian School of Business Indian Institute of Management Calcutta (virtual) |
| 2021 | Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi (virtual) Society of Labour Economics meetings (virtual) |
| 2020 | SAMVAAD India (virtual) CAFRAL seminar series (virtual) NEUDC (Dartmouth) (virtual) Delhi School of Economics seminar series (virtual) |
| 2019 | AEA Annual conference, Atlanta Midwest International Economics conference, St. Louis Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur 15 th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development, ISI Delhi |
| 2018 | Scripps College Population Association of America, Annual Conference, Denver Azim Premji University Indian School of Business NEUDC Boston University |

- 1st Bank of Italy - World Bank International Research Workshop (Building Human Capital for 21st century jobs)
Second annual economics conference, Ashoka University
14th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development, ISI Delhi
- 2017 Eastern Economic Association Conference (New York)
California State University Fullerton
Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, Workshop in Development Policy
Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi
Delhi School of Economics
International Economics Association Conference, Mexico City
Society for Economics Research in India, Ashoka University
IFPRI, Washington D.C
13th Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development, ISI Delhi
- 2016 PEDL Annual Research Conference, London
Indian Institute of Management Bangalore
- 2015 IADB/Cornell Conference on Size and Type Dependent Regulations
City University of New York Graduate Center
NYU Abu Dhabi
- 2014 NEUDC, Boston University
Western Economics Association conference, Denver
Pacific Development Conference, Los Angeles
Cornell symposium on size dependent regulations and informality
- 2013 Graduate Student Association Seminar Series, Cornell University
IZA/World Bank Conference on Employment and Development, Bonn

Discussion

CAFRAL annual conference 2022

SERI-D annual conference 2022

IIMB finance conference 2019

Doctoral supervision

1. Kamallesh Pahrukar (ongoing, main advisor, IITB)
2. Naina Chopra (ongoing, co-advisor, IITB)
3. Dhriti Mahadevan (2023, committee member, IIMB)
4. Garima Chaklader (2023, committee member, IIMB)
5. Rahul Singh. "Essays in International trade in Post-Liberalization India" (2020, committee member, IIMB)
6. Nayantara Dutt. "Essays on Returns to Skills and Migration of High Skilled Workers" (2019, committee member, IIMB)

Service

- Core committee member, [Society for Economics Research in India](#) (SERI) (2021-present)
- Organizing committee member, SERI 2nd annual doctoral students conference.
- Economics seminar co-organizer (Fall 2021 and 2022; Spring 2021), IIT Bombay.
- In 2018-2019, 2019-2020, 2020-2021, Brownbag organizer at IIM Bangalore.
- In 2016, 2017, co-organized the Workshop in Economics Research (WIER) at IIM Bangalore.
- In 2018, co-organized the Society for Economics Research in India (SERI) annual meeting at IIM Bangalore.

Policy Interaction/Experience

- (2019) Pre-budget consultations presided by the Minister of State for Finance and Industry, Anurag Singh Thakur, and the Chief Economic Advisor of India, K.V. Subramanian.
- (2009-2010) Prepared the mid-term review report of the eleventh five-year plan 2007-2012 - of planning commission (erstwhile). Contributed to the evaluation of the rural development schemes in India.

Continuing Education Programmes Conducted:

- (2012) Taught econometrics and data handling using the National Sample Survey (NSS) data for research staff at the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi
- (2012 and 2013) Taught Statistical Software at the Cornell Institute of Socio Economics Research (CISER), Cornell University

Professional Work Experience

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| 2012- 2014 | Cornell Institute for Social and Economic Research, Statistical software consultant |
| 2009-2010, 2016 | World Bank, Short Term Consultant |
| 2009-2010 | Planning Commission of India (erstwhile), Research Assistant |
| 2008-2009 | International Food Policy Research Institute, Research Assistant |
| 2005-2006 | Infosys Limited, Software engineer |

Languages: English, Tamil, Hindi, and Bengali