

Speaker:

Franziska Ohnsorge (World Bank)

**Date and Time:**

January 16th, 2026 (Friday), 11:00 AM

Venue:

Room 307, 3rd floor, Conference Room, A91 Eco Hub Building,
Department of Economics, IIT Bombay

Title:

Empower to Prosper: Women Working for Growth

Abstract:

Over the past three decades, South Asia has benefited from strong economic growth, accompanied by a shift toward the services sector, growing exports, and stronger legal protections for women. These changes have expanded opportunities for all, including for many women. And yet, women's employment remains a source of untapped potential. South Asia's female labor force participation remains among the lowest in the world: only 32 percent of working-age women in the region participate in the labor force, far below the EMDE average of 54 percent. This low participation rate represents a costly misallocation of resources: raising this rate to that of men could boost per capita incomes by up to one-half. A wide range of policies could help women enter the workforce. These include legal reforms to improve gender equality, faster job creation in the non-agricultural sector, and the removal of barriers to women working outside the home. Such measures will be more effective if accompanied by a shift in social norms toward greater acceptance of women's employment.

About the speaker:

Franziska Ohnsorge is the World Bank Chief Economist for South Asia. In this role, she is responsible for leading the research program on key economic issues in South Asia to inform the policy debate and World Bank lending. Before starting this position, she was the Manager at the Development Economics Vice Presidency where she spearheaded the flagship Global Economic Prospects report. Prior to joining the World Bank, Franziska Ohnsorge worked in the Office of the Chief Economist of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and at the International Monetary Fund. Her research has been featured in peer-reviewed journals as well as policy publications and has covered a wide range of topics in international macroeconomics and finance, including debt and financial crises, inflation and monetary policy, as well as growth and informal labor markets. Her work has been widely cited, including in the Economist, the Wall Street Journal, and the Financial Times. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Toronto.