

# **Does Religion and Ethnic Identity influence Social Preferences? Evidence from Field Experiments in the Philippines**

Debbie Gundaya, Sun-Ki Chai, Catherine Eckel, Katerina Sherstyuk and Rick Wilson

## **Abstract**

We conducted field experiments in the Philippines to examine (1) whether Muslims and Christians differ in their economic behavior such as risk attitudes, time discounting and contribution to public goods; and (2) whether there are patterns of in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination among the two religions and various ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines. Our experiments were carried in three areas in Metro Manila with established Muslim settlements. Our results show that overall, there is no significant difference between our Muslim and Christian participants in terms of risk attitudes and time preference. Our Muslim participants, particularly those from the lowest income community among our locations, tend to send higher contributions to the public funds than their Christian counterparts. Generally, our data showed no sign of religious or ethnic in-group favoritism as evidenced by the amounts sent to a stranger in our four variants of the dictator game. However, when disaggregated by location, our data shows slight in-group favoritism among the lowest income and highly segregated Muslim community (Culiat). It appears that there is no strong evidence of in-group favoritism and out-group discrimination that follows religious or ethnic divide. The level of assimilation and degree of a community's segregation may have an impact on the in-group/out-group bias. One important caveat is that our experiments were conducted in relatively peaceful Muslim communities in Manila and not in the conflict zones of Moro Mindanao. Our results, however, bodes well for possible policies for negotiating peace among the conflicting regions in the South. Migrant Muslims in Metro Manila behave similar to their Christian counterparts and there is no strong evidence of in-group/out-group biases. Thus, modes of assimilation such as communication and contact among groups may have positive effect on peace negotiations.