AMRITA VISHWA VIDYAPEETHAM

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL & BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES AMRITAPURI

WHAT IF OUR METHODS COULD FINALLY MATCH THE COMPLEXITY OF REAL COMMUNITIES?

Ph.D. RESEARCH PROJECT

The communities we work with are dynamic, multilingual, relational, and constantly in motion. Yet much of the research methodology available to us still attempts to capture that reality through fixed scales, standardized forms, and periodic snapshots.

At the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences (Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Amritapuri), we believe the gap is not in the communities. It is in the methods.

OUR RESEARCH

Grounded in the AWESOME framework for women's empowerment and an active portfolio of field-deployed AI tools — is pushing toward something different. We are developing four research directions that take this problem seriously, and we are looking for Ph.D. scholars who want to help build the next generation of evidence.

SWIPE RIGHT →

- **BEYOND LIKERT SCALES: COMPUTATIONAL METRICS FROM REAL-WORLD DATA**

  What if empowerment indicators could be derived from how communities actually communicate?

  Standard measurement flattens lived experience into artificial numerical categories. This research explores how machine learning can generate rigorous empowerment indicators directly from unstructured, real-world data — audio narratives, participant drawings, multilingual field transcripts, and community observations — without forcing women's realities into fixed survey boxes. This builds on our published work applying generative AI to Participatory Rural Appraisal data across multilingual Indian communities.

- **ACCOUNTABLE AI IN CONSTRAINED-USE SETTINGS**

  How can AI in community settings be designed to protect and strengthen participant voice, rather than inadvertently constrain it?

  In rural development, AI tools are rarely voluntary. They are facilitator-mediated, embedded in group processes, and used by participants who may have limited ability to refuse, question, or correct what the system captures about them. This research focuses on governance — co-designing practical safeguards such as read-back verification, community-correction mechanisms, and low-literacy consent protocols so that AI remains accountable to the collectives it affects, not only to the programs that deploy it.

SWIPE RIGHT →

- **BRIDGING FIELD VOICES TO PROGRAM AND POLICY INSIGHT**
  What happens to knowledge that is generated at the frontline but never reaches the people who can act on it?

  A field worker witnesses something that matters — a moment of trust, a woman speaking cautiously about safety, an aspiration that took months to surface. She sends a message. No one responds. By morning, the moment is gone. This research investigates how human-centered AI can close that gap: translating frontline realities — including hesitation, adaptation, and early signs of change — into program and policy insights that help organizations listen better and respond faster, without stripping away local voice or context.

- **VULNERABILITY-MAPPED COMMUNITY DIGITAL TWINS**
  What if we could model a community's interconnected vulnerabilities the way engineers model a system?

  Empowerment moves through systems — not isolated data points. This research develops living, evidence-based community models built from participatory grassroots data: drawings, narratives, field observations, and group dialogue. The goal is to move beyond static dashboards toward dynamic representations that visualize how vulnerabilities connect, where constraints reinforce each other, and where the most meaningful leverage points for change exist within a community system.

SWIPE RIGHT →

WE ARE SEEKING SCHOLARS WHO SIT AT THE INTERSECTION OF:

SOCIAL & BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES
Social Work, Development Studies,
Gender Studies, or Public Policy

COMPUTATIONAL SCIENCES
AI/ML, Social Data Science, or
Human-Computer Interaction (HCI)

SYSTEMS & IMPLEMENTATION DISCIPLINES
Implementation Science, Rural Management,
or Engineering

READY TO APPLY?

SCAN HERE