Almost all labor-abundant economies such as South Korea and Taiwan in the 1960s and 1970s and China more recently that have grown rapidly for a sustained period have seen poverty rapidly decline. With this evidence in the background, the Columbia Program on Indian Economic Policies recently carried out a set of studies analyzing how the opening to trade and other reforms have impacted poverty in India in not just the population as a whole but also among the socially disadvantaged Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes.

Our studies unambiguously vindicate the reforms. Contrary to the assertions by many that the reforms have left the poor poorer, we find no evidence whatsoever that any of the social groups in either rural or urban areas have been impoverished in the overall sense. Instead, with rare exceptions, the reforms have led to a positive decline in poverty within all social groups in urban as well as rural areas. As regards inequality, it has changed very little. More importantly, the wage and educational attainment gaps between the socially disadvantaged and the general population have significantly declined. In the same vein, the socially disadvantaged have been able to take advantage of accelerated growth as entrepreneurs.

The research at this conference will also looks at why employment in India continues to concentrate heavily in small firms and how reforms have impacted growth and productivity in small versus large enterprises and in the organized versus unorganized sector in both manufacturing and services. Finally, novel analysis of issues of private and public provision in healthcare and of malnutrition will be presented.

**ABOUT PIEP**
Under the auspices of the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) and the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy (ISERP), the Program on Indian Economic Policies (PIEP) supports scholarly policy research on Indian economic reforms. Funded by a generous grant from the Templeton Foundation, it brings together scholars from Columbia and other universities and think tanks around the world to produce cutting-edge research.

The program houses a data center on India’s economy; organizes lectures, seminars and conferences in the United States and India; brings out the working papers; and publishes articles and books. Research topics addressed by the program include poverty, inequality, and democracy; policies aimed at transforming India from a primarily rural, agrarian economy into an urban and modern one; policies to promote better health outcomes; and state-level policy reforms necessary to accelerate growth and poverty alleviation. (indianeconomy.columbia.edu)

**ABOUT CII**
The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) works to create and sustain an environment conducive to the growth of industry in India, partnering industry and government alike through advisory and consultative processes. CII is a non-government, not-for-profit, industry led and industry managed organisation, playing a proactive role in India’s development process. Founded over 117 years ago, it is India’s premier business association, with a direct membership of over 7100 organisations from the private as well as public sectors, including SMEs and MNCs, and an indirect membership of over 90,000 companies from around 250 national and regional sectoral associations.

The CII Theme for 2012-13, ‘Reviving Economic Growth: Reforms and Governance,’ accords top priority to restoring the growth trajectory of the nation, while building Global Competitiveness, Inclusivity and Sustainability. (www.cii.in)
ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

Reuben Abraham is founding Executive Director of the Centre for Emerging Markets Solutions at the Indian School of Business (ISB) and serves on its Next Gen Leaders Board. He is also a Member of the Board at the Soros Economic Development Fund and helped set up SONG, an SME fund in India, with Google and the Omidyar Network as co-investors. A 2007 TED Global Fellow, Abraham serves on the boards of the TED Fellows Programme, the Centre for Civil Society, the DLF Foundation. He was also a Member of the Clinton Global Initiative. Abraham has been an Associate Fellow in Global Economics at the Council on Foreign Relations, a Public Policy Consortium Fellow and a Sloan Foundation/CTI Telecommunications Fellow. He was named on Wired Magazine’s Smart List 2012 and has been an analyst on CNN’s emerging markets show, “Global Exchange”. Abraham received his MA, MPhil and PhD from Columbia University. Prior to Columbia, he was involved in co-founding two start-up companies in the media/telecom space.

Jagdish Bhagwati is a University Professor at Columbia University and a Senior Fellow in International Economics at the Council on Foreign Relations. He has been Economic Policy Adviser to Arthur Dunkel, Director General of GATT (1991-93), Special Adviser to the UN on Globalization, and External Adviser to the WTO. He has served on the Expert Group appointed by the Director General of the WTO on the Future of the WTO and the Advisory Committee to Secretary General Kofi Annan on the NEPAD process in Africa, and was also a member of the Eminent Persons Group under the chairmanship of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso on the future of UNCTAD. Five volumes of his scientific writings and two of his public policy essays have been published by MIT press. The recipient of six festshrits in his honor, he has also received several prizes and honorary degrees, including awards from the governments of India (Padma Vibhushan) and Japan (Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star). Professor Bhagwati’s latest book In Defense of Globalization was published by Oxford University Press in 2004 to worldwide acclaim.

Anusha Chari is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Professor Chari’s research is in the fields of open-economy macroeconomics, international finance and empirical corporate finance. Her most recent work uses firm-level data to examine the effects of financial globalization on topics such as outbound FDI from emerging-markets, cross-border M&A, the political economy of protectionism, the rate of return to capital in capital-poor countries and the evolution of India’s industrial composition following liberalization. In addition to teaching at the University of North Carolina, she has taught both international and finance courses at University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business, the University of Michigan, and the Haas School of Business at Berkeley. She is also a Faculty Research Fellow in the National Bureau of Economic Research’s International Finance and Macroeconomics Program.

John H. Coatsworth is a leading scholar of Latin American economic and international history. Coatsworth served as Dean of SIPA for four years before being named Provost of Columbia University in 2012. He previously served as the Monroe Gutman Professor of Latin American Affairs at Harvard University (1992 – 2007), where he was the founding director of Harvard’s David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and the chair of the Harvard University Committee on Human Rights Studies. Coatsworth is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Board of Directors of the Tinker Foundation and numerous professional associations. He is the former president of the American Historical Association and Latin American Studies Association. Coatsworth has served on the editorial boards of scholarly journals including the American Historical Review, the Journal of Economic History, the Hispanic American Historical Review and other social science journals published in Britain, Chile, Germany, Mexico, Peru, and Spain.

Rajeev Dehejia is an associate professor of public policy at NYU. He has been on the faculty of the Department of Economics and The Fletcher School at Tufts University and of the Department of Economics and SIPA at Columbia, and has held visiting positions at Harvard, Princeton, and the London School of Economics. Rajeev is a Faculty Research Fellow of the National Bureau of Economic Research, and a Research Fellow at the Institututzunck der Arbeit (IZA). He is a coeditor of the Journal of Human Resources, and an Associate Editor of the Journal of Business and Economic Statistics. Rajeev’s research spans econometrics, development economics, labor economics, and public economics, with a focus on empirical microeconomic policy research. His research interests include: econometric methods for program evaluation, financial development and growth, financial incentives and fertility decisions, moral hazard and automobile insurance, religion and consumption insurance, and the causes and consequences of child labor.

Rajeev Dehejia is the Mizuho Financial Group Professor of Finance and Senior Associate Dean for Planning and University Affairs at Harvard Business School and Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. In 1994, he was a Fulbright Scholar to India. Professor DeSai’s areas of expertise include tax policy, international finance, and corporate finance. His academic publications have appeared in leading economics, finance, and law journals. His work has emphasized the appropriate design of tax policy in a globalized setting, the links between corporate governance and taxation, and the internal capital markets of multinational firms. His research has been cited in The Economist, BusinessWeek, The New York Times, and several other publications. His C.V. is available here. He is a Research Associate in the National Bureau of Economic Research’s Public Economics and Corporate Finance Programs, and served as the co-director of the NBER’s India program.

Mitul Desai is Senior Advisor for Strategic Partnerships in the U.S. Department of State’s South & Central Asian Bureau. In this capacity, he engages private sector, NGO, and diaspora organizations to build partnerships around a variety of issues impacting the region, including entrepreneurship, philanthropy, trade & technology. Mitul comes to government from the corporate arena, where he worked as an investment bank analyst, entrepreneur, and intellectual property attorney. Before joining the State Department, he was an entrepreneur in the international life sciences sector, and an equity research analyst at Piper Jaffray & Co., where he analyzed publicly traded companies for institutional investor clients. He began his post-law school career by practicing law as an associate at the New York offices of global law firms, and as a senior attorney at Merck & Co. He received his B.A. in chemistry and philosophy from Rutgers University, and his J.D. from the Boston University School of Law. From 2006-2011, Mitul was a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Shantayanan Devarajan is the Chief Economist of the World Bank’s Africa Region. Since joining the World Bank in 1991, he has been a Principal Economist and Research Manager for Public Economics in the Development Research Group, and the Chief Economist of the Human Development Network, and of the South Asia Region. He was the director of the World Development Report 2004, Making Services Work for Poverty. Before 1991, he was on the faculty of Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government. The author or co-author of over 100 publications, Mr. Devarajan’s research covers public economics, trade policy, natural resources and the environment, and general equilibrium modeling of developing countries. Born in Sri Lanka, Mr. Devarajan received his B.A. in mathematics from Princeton University and his Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago.

Anusha Chari is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Professor Chari’s research is in the fields of open-economy macroeconomics, international finance and empirical corporate finance. Her most recent work uses firm-level data to examine the effects of financial globalization on topics such as outbound FDI from emerging-markets, cross-border M&A, the political economy of protectionism, the rate of return to capital in capital-poor countries and the evolution of India’s industrial composition following liberalization. In addition to teaching at the University of North Carolina, she has taught both international and finance courses at University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business, the University of Michigan, and the Haas School of Business at Berkeley. She is also a Faculty Research Fellow in the National Bureau of Economic Research’s International Finance and Macroeconomics Program.

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Rajeev Dehejia is an associate professor of public policy at NYU. He has been on the faculty of the Department of Economics and The Fletcher School at Tufts University and of the Department of Economics and SIPA at Columbia, and has held visiting positions at Harvard, Princeton, and the London School of Economics. Rajeev is a Faculty Research Fellow of the National Bureau of Economic Research, and a Research Fellow at the Institututzunck der Arbeit (IZA). He is a coeditor of the Journal of Human Resources, and an Associate Editor of the Journal of Business and Economic Statistics. Rajeev’s research spans econometrics, development economics, labor economics, and public economics, with a focus on empirical microeconomic policy research. His research interests include: econometric methods for program evaluation, financial development and growth, financial incentives and fertility decisions, moral hazard and automobile insurance, religion and consumption insurance, and the causes and consequences of child labor.

Rajeev Dehejia is the Mizuho Financial Group Professor of Finance and Senior Associate Dean for Planning and University Affairs at Harvard Business School and Professor of Law at Harvard Law School. In 1994, he was a Fulbright Scholar to India. Professor Desai’s areas of expertise include tax policy, international finance, and corporate finance. His academic publications have appeared in leading economics, finance, and law journals. His work has emphasized the appropriate design of tax policy in a globalized setting, the links between corporate governance and taxation, and the internal capital markets of multinational firms. His research has been cited in The Economist, BusinessWeek, The New York Times, and several other publications. His C.V. is available here. He is a Research Associate in the National Bureau of Economic Research’s Public Economics and Corporate Finance Programs, and served as the co-director of the NBER’s India program.

Mitul Desai is Senior Advisor for Strategic Partnerships in the U.S. Department of State’s South & Central Asian Bureau. In this capacity, he engages private sector, NGO, and diaspora organizations to build partnerships around a variety of issues impacting the region, including entrepreneurship, philanthropy, trade & technology. Mitul comes to government from the corporate arena, where he worked as an investment bank analyst, entrepreneur, and intellectual property attorney. Before joining the State Department, he was an entrepreneur in the international life sciences sector, and an equity research analyst at Piper Jaffray & Co., where he analyzed publicly traded companies for institutional investor clients. He began his post-law school career by practicing law as an associate at the New York offices of global law firms, and as a senior attorney at Merck & Co. He received his B.A. in chemistry and philosophy from Rutgers University, and his J.D. from the Boston University School of Law. From 2006-2011, Mitul was a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations.

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of California, Berkeley.

Sadanaand Dhume writes about South Asian political economy, foreign policy, business, and society, with a focus on India and Pakistan. He is also a South Asia columnist for the Wall Street Journal. He has worked as a foreign correspondent for the Far Eastern Economic Review in India and Indonesia and was a Bernard Schwartz Fellow at the Asia Society in Washington, D.C. His political travelogue about the rise of radical Islam in Indonesia, My Friend the Fanatic: Travels with a Radical Islamist, has been published in four countries.

Nandini Gupta is an Associate Professor of Finance at Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business. She obtained her PhD in economics from the University of Pittsburgh. Her research is in the areas of corporate and international finance with a focus on reforms that facilitate the development of financial markets. She has looked at the design of these reforms, the political economy of the decision to adopt them, and their impact on financial market development and economic growth. In her work she considers the effects of the partial privatization of government-owned firms on the financial performance of firms, the political economy of the government’s privatization decision, the effects of stock market liberalization on growth, and the political economy of the elimination of restrictions on foreign direct investment. Nandini Gupta’s work has been published in the Journal of Finance, Journal of Financial Economics, Review of Financial Studies, and Journal of Economic Perspectives, and by Columbia University Press.

Jeffrey Hammer is a Charles and Marie Robertson Visiting Professor in Economic Development at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. Previously, Professor Hammer worked for 25 years at the World Bank. While there he held various positions related to public economics, the last three in the New Delhi Office, and was an author of the World Development Report 2004 “Making Services Work for Poor People”. Research interests include economic development, public economics and health in poor countries, particularly in Asia and Africa and more particularly in South Asia. Current research is on the quality of medical care in India, absenteeism of teachers and health workers, determinants of health status and improving service delivery through better accountability mechanisms.

Ph.D. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Rana Hasan is Principal Economist in the Asian Development Bank’s India Resident Mission. He heads the Country Program and Development Results Group, which works closely with the Government to develop ADB’s annual operational program in India and ensure that it aligns closely with the priorities and objectives of the country and ADB’s own long-term development framework. He previously worked in the Economics Research Department of the ADB and the East-West Center (USA) where he focused on issues relating to inclusive growth, the analysis of poverty and inequality, and the impact of market-oriented economic reforms on labor market outcomes and industrial performance. His research has been published in various journals including the Journal of Development Economic, Review of Economics and Statistics, and World Development. He has also co-edited two volumes on trade and labor related issues. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Maryland and a Masters degree in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi.

Arun Jaitley is a prominent Indian politician and a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), currently the largest Opposition party in India. He is the leader of opposition in the Rajya Sabha and has previously served as the Union Minister for commerce, industry, law and justice of the Government of India.

Farhan Khanna is Director of Harvard University’s interdisciplinary South Asia Initiative, and the Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor at the Harvard Business School. An expert in the areas of corporate and international finance, Khanna’s work has been published in numerous other journals and edited collections.

Pravin Krishna is a Chung Ju Yung Professor of International Economics and Business at Johns Hopkins University (School of Advanced International Studies and Department of Economics) and Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER). His research interests lie in the areas of international economics, political economy, economic development and the Indian economy. His articles have appeared in the American Economic Review, the Journal of Political Economy, the Quarterly Journal of Economics, the Journal of International Economics, the Journal of Development Economics as well as in many other journals and edited collections. He has served as a consultant to the World Bank, the IMF and the Inter-American Development Bank and is currently co-director of the Schwartz Globalization Initiative at Johns Hopkins University. Born in India, he received his B. Tech in Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and an M.A. and PhD in Economics from Columbia University.

Amartya Lahiri is a Professor of Economics at the University of British Columbia. His research focuses on International Economics with a secondary focus on Macroeconomics. Prior to his current appointment Lahiri served as a Senior Economist in the Research Department of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, and as an Assistant Professor at the University of California Los Angeles. He is the author of several papers and he was the recipient of UCLA Faculty Development Award in 1998. Lahiri is a member of the America Economic Association, the Society for Economic Dynamics, and the Econometric Society. Lahiri holds an M.A. in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics and a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Maryland.

Robert C. Lieberman is one of the nation's foremost experts on American political development, race and politics, and social welfare policy and the welfare state. Lieberman has served as Interim Dean of SIPA since February 2012. He previously served as Vice Dean (2009 – 2010 and 2011 – 2012), and Chairman of the Department of International and Public Affairs (2007 – 2012). Lieberman has taught at SIPA and in Columbia's Department of Political Science since 1994. Lieberman is the author of Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State (Harvard University Press, 1998) and Shaping Race Policy: The United States in Comparative Perspective (Princeton University Press, 2005), and the co-editor of Democratization in America: A Comparative-Historical Analysis (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). His work has been published in the American Political Science Review, the British Journal of Political Science, Studies in American Political Development, and numerous other journals and edited collections.

Mary E. Lovely is a member of the Faculty of Economics at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, where she
also serves as chair of the International Relations Program. Dr. Lovel's recent research projects focus on innovation in the Chinese solar equipment industry, the pollution intensity of Chinese exports, differences in China’s integration into American and Japanese production networks, and the influence of market access on the geographic dispersion of manufacturing wages. She has recently completed work on the role of provincial differences in environmental policy and labor conditions in directing foreign direct investment flows to Chinese provinces. Her work has been published in the Review of Economics & Statistics, the Journal of International Economics, the Journal of Development Economics, Regional Science and Urban Economics, and the Journal of Public Economics, among other journals. She serves as co-editor of the China Economic Review and recently was guest editor for an issue of the Journal of Asian Economics focused on deeper economic integration of the US, Japan, and China. She earned a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Michigan and an MCRP degree from Harvard University.

Rakesh Mohan is Professor in the Practice of International Economics of Finance, School of Management, and Senior Fellow, Jackson Institute of Global Affairs, Yale University from July 2010. He is also Non Resident Senior Research Fellow of Stanford Centre for International Development, Stanford University Stanford. He is Chairman, National Transport Development Policy Committee, Government of India, in the rank of Minister of State. In addition, he is Vice-Chairman, Indian Institute of Human Settlements; and Global Adviser, McKinsey and Company. During June 15, 2009 to December 15, 2009, he was Distinguished Consulting Professor at Stanford Centre for International Development at Stanford University. Prior to this, he was Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (September 9, 2002 to October 31, 2004 and July 2, 2005 to June 10, 2009). He was as the Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Government of India in 2004-2005. He is the author of three books on urban economics and two on monetary policy. His most recent book is, “Growth with Financial Stability: Central Banking in an Emerging Market” (OUP, 2011).

Megha Makim is currently a Young Professional at the World Bank. Before this, she was a Research Fellow at the United States International Trade Commission (USITC). Her research focuses on international trade and FDI, economic geography and economic development. She has taught at the School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC and at Columbia University in New York. She has a PhD from the London School of Economics and her graduate degrees are from the universities of London and Cambridge. Her professional experience has been accumulated in research departments of the World Trade Organization, World Health Organization, and at Yale and Columbia University.

Arvind Panagariya is the Jagdish Bhagwati Professor of Indian Political Economy in the Department of International and Public Affairs and of Economics. He was formerly a professor of economics at the University of Maryland, College Park, and the chief economist of the Asian Development Bank. In March 2012, the Government of India honored him with Padma Bhushan, the second-highest honor bestowed by the country for distinct accomplishments in any field. He has worked for the World Bank, IMF, WTO, and UNCTAD in various capacities. Panagariya has written or edited a dozen books, including India: The Emerging Giant, which has been hailed as the definitive work on Indian economy. His book India’s Tryst with Destiny with Jagdish Bhagwati is to be published in November 2012 by Harper Collins, India. His technical papers have appeared in the American Economic Review, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Review of Economic Studies, Journal of International Economics, and International Economic Review, while his policy papers have appeared in the Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, World Economy, Journal of International Affairs and Finance and Development. He writes a monthly column in the Times of India, the world’s highest circulating English language daily.

Sandhya Satwadi serves as the Director and Head of CII's overseas office in USA and is engaged in advancing US-India bilateral trade and investment relations and business linkages. She joined CII in December 1997 in Bangalore, Karnataka and went on to head the CII Karnataka State office in 2006. In 2007, Sandhya moved to Mumbai to head CII’s Western Region operations overseeing CII activities in Goa, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. She has a post-graduate degree in Economics from University of Mumbai and also holds a post-graduate Diploma in Journalism and Mass Communications.

N.K. Singh is currently a Member of Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of Parliament) from the State of Bihar. Mr. Singh has held senior civil service positions in the Ministries of Finance – Economic Affairs, Expenditure & Revenue Secretary- as well as in the Ministry of Home Affairs. He served as Secretary to the Prime Minister and was a Member of the National Planning Commission as well as Deputy Chairman of the Bihar State Planning Board. Mr. Singh has held advisory and leadership positions at the United Nations. He represented India in successive delegations to the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank, World Intellectual Property Organization and United Nations Development Programme.

Rangarajan (“Raghu”) Sundaram is Yamaichi Faculty Fellow and Professor of Finance at New York University’s Stern School of Business where he teaches derivatives pricing and risk-management. He was formerly at the University of Rochester from 1988-96. He received his B.A. in Economics from the University of Madras, India, in 1982; his M.B.A. from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, in 1984; and his Ph.D. in Economics from Cornell University in 1988. Professor Sundaram’s research in finance covers a range of areas including agency problems, executive compensation, corporate finance, derivatives pricing, and credit risk & credit derivatives. He has also published extensively in mathematical economics, decision theory, and game theory. Professor Sundaram is the author of A First Course in Optimization Theory (Cambridge University Press, 1996) and Derivatives: Principles and Practice (Mcgraw-Hill, 2010). He was Co-Editor of the Journal of Derivatives from 2002-08 and has served on several other editorial boards. In 2007, he became the inaugural recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award from the Stern School of Business.

Eric Verhoogen is Associate Professor of International and Public Affairs and Economics. His main research area is industrial development – applied microeconomic research on firms in developing countries. This area overlaps with the fields of development economics, international trade, labor economics, and industrial organization. A recurrent theme in his work is the process of quality upgrading in the manufacturing sectors of developing countries – its causes, consequences, and broader implications. Verhoogen holds a BA from Harvard College (1991), an MA from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst (2001), and a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley (2004).