Janina Steinert will present the results of a field experiment designed to better understand the impact of a "soft" commitment device on the financial behavior of low-income slum dwellers. The experiment was conducted among 1525 individuals in Maharashtra, India, using a variety of outcome measures. The findings suggest that increases in savings were not primarily realized through improvements in self-control, but due to reduced sharing obligations and the ability to hide individual savings from a spouse and others. Corroborating this, we document a significant decrease in past-month financial transfers to other household members. Our findings have implications for public policy, as well as non-governmental efforts to foster economic development and financial gender equality. They suggest that saving can be more effectively promoted by alleviating access-related rather than behavior-related constraints and by giving women access to a saving device of their own.

Prof. Dr. Janina Steinert is Assistant Professor of Global Health at the HfP/TUM School of Governance. Her research focus lies primarily in the fields of global health and development economics. Research topics include the examination of inter-dependencies between poverty and disease, the prevention of domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, and the identification of ethical challenges in development research. She has implemented randomized controlled trials as well as behavioral games in countries of the Global South and has conducted several systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Prof. Steinert studied Political Science at the University of Konstanz (Germany) and the Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne (France) and holds a Master’s degree and a DPhil (PhD) from the University of Oxford (UK). Prior to joining TUM, she was a Post-Doc in the Development Economics department at the University of Göttingen.