



Catherine Cheney [00:00:15]:

Why do some countries advance while others fall behind? Who benefits from economic growth and who doesn't? How do inequality and climate change affect people, especially the most marginalized? What role can data play in answering questions like these and informing policies that promote economic justice? Let's find out on voices in development. Hello, and welcome to our podcast. I'm your host, Catherine Cheney. We're coming to you from the Economic Growth Center at Yale University, which is focused on economics and data driven insights for equitable development. Today we're going to hear from Nick Ryan, an associate professor of economics here at Yale, about his work on energy and emerging markets and how climate change impacts the future of economic development. Nick and colleagues, including Rohini Pande, director of EGC, have worked with policymakers in the state of Gujarat, India, to improve environmental regulation. Their work could offer a model for other countries seeking new strategies to lower pollution. Nick talks about the trade-offs low- and middle-income countries face between expanding access to energy while also reducing the health and environmental costs of energy production.

Catherine Cheney [00:01:24]:

He says a critical role that development economists can play in supporting environmentally sustainable economic growth is to generate evidence on the impact different policy changes can have in order to inform decision making. Now onto the conversation.

Catherine Cheney [00:01:39]:

Nick, thanks so much for joining us.

Nicholas Ryan [00:01:41]:

Well, thank you for having me.

Catherine Cheney [00:01:43]:

You have a pretty unique focus on energy markets and environmental regulation. So how did you end up on this path?

Nicholas Ryan [00:01:49]:

I went into grad school knowing that I was really interested in economic development for a lot of the reasons many people are why are developing countries so much poor? What are the obstacles to growing rich and adopting technology from rich countries? And I was also interested in studying firms. I'd worked at the Federal Reserve, which regulates big banks. I had seen models of firm behavior that seemed to work very well. And there wasn't that much in development that was doing both of these things at once, even though when you look around, all of the highly developed countries have a lot of big firms that organize a huge amount of economic activity. Think of the Amazons, of the worlds that are growing seemingly without bound. So that is integral to the process of development. And those kind of big firms are also hugely important in energy markets. Energy markets are markets where the largest firms compete.

Nicholas Ryan [00:02:39]:

So I kind of wanted to try to fuse these things, and that was what caught my interest. And it so happened I had opportunities to work on that.

Catherine Cheney [00:02:46]:

I know that in graduate school you did some research in India, which, of course, led to a lot of continued work there. So can you talk more about that and how it influenced you?

Nicholas Ryan [00:02:55]:

I had a wonderful time in graduate school. And one of the opportunities I had was to go work in India on a project in environmental regulation, basically under my advisor, Esther Duflo and Rohini Pande, who at that time was at the Harvard Kennedy School. She's now a colleague at Yale. And that was very interesting. We had a connection to a policymaker in a state which was struggling to enforce environmental rules, to try to hold factories accountable for the pollution that they put out.