

Aswathi Rebecca Asok

Post-Doctoral Research Associate

Professional Profile

I am a Post-Doctoral Research Associate at the Global Plastics Policy Centre, University of Portsmouth, with formal training in Economics and Law. As a passionate, policy-focused researcher, I have nine years of experience in interdisciplinary, evidence-based research. My work is driven by a commitment to informing practical policy solutions for complex socio-economic and development challenges. Proficient in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, I specialise in mixed-methods research and have extensive experience in conducting complex fieldwork, community-based studies, and impact evaluations.

Nationality Indian

Languages English (proficient), Malayalam (proficient), Hindi (working knowledge)

Country experience India, United Kingdom

Education

2021 - 2025	PhD Economics: Debt Attitudes, Debt Literacy and Indebtedness Dynamics among the Rural Poor in Developing Regions: Insights from Kerala, India School of Accounting, Economics and Finance, Faculty of Business and Law, University of Portsmouth, UK
2018 - 2021	Bachelor of Laws (LLB) Government Law College, Ernakulam, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala, India
2013 - 2015	MPhil Economics: Trade Liberalisation and Agricultural Prices: A Study of Global and Indian Prices of Selected Crops Since 1990 Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
2011 - 2013	MA Economics School of Economics, University of Hyderabad, India

Employment

2025 - Present	Post-Doctoral Research Associate Global Plastics Policy Centre, University of Portsmouth, UK
2023 - 2025	Research Assistant School of Accounting, Economics and Finance, Faculty of Business and Law, University of Portsmouth, UK
2018-2023	Research Associate Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies, Kerala, India
2016 - 2017	Research Associate Sukhamoy Chakravarty Unit on Planning and Development (funded by the Planning Commission/NITI Aayog), Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India
2016 - 2016	Research Associate Centre for Development of Imaging Technology (CDit), Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India

Project Experience

2025-Present	External evaluation of the Global Plastic Action Partnership Role: Senior Evaluator Client: GPAP Location: UK The evaluation aims to provide an independent and objective assessment of GPAP projects, serving as a critical evidence base to inform the design and implementation of both current and future initiatives. It will assess project design, implementation, outcomes, and overall impact, with particular attention to the criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and sustainability.
2025-Present	Evaluating reuse policy: National case studies to inform best practice

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Role: Southeast Asia Lead Researcher | Client: The Flotilla Charitable Foundation | Location: UK

This research aims to develop a roadmap to guide reuse policy design by evaluating the effectiveness of reuse policy landscapes across various countries. The findings are intended to provide actionable recommendations for national governments and contribute to the ongoing negotiations of the UN Global Plastics Treaty.

2025-Present Rethinking responsibility: Understanding the role of evidence in Vietnam's EPR Policy

Role: Researcher | Client: The British Academy | Location: UK

This project investigates the design and implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) in Vietnam, with a focus on understanding the role of scientific evidence, as well as the integration of inclusivity and reuse within the EPR framework. The research aims to generate insights that can support Southeast Asian countries in developing their own EPR policies, particularly in light of anticipated obligations under the Global Plastic Treaty. Key responsibilities include conducting desk-based research, applying a structured evaluation framework to assess EPR policy, and undertaking and analysing expert interviews.

2023 - 2025 The intersectionality and EDI of the UK corporate boards

Role: Researcher | Client: The British Academy | Location: UK

The project examined Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) on UK corporate boards through an intersectional lens, exploring how overlapping social identities influence board composition and dynamics. The responsibilities included conducting a systematic literature review, analysing quantitative data, and analysing in-depth interviews.

2021 - 2024 Assessing the impact of crowdfunded microfinance on entrepreneurs in developing countries

Role: Lead Academic Consultant | Client: CARE UK/Lendwithcare | Location: UK

Provided academic support for a collaborative project between Lendwithcare (the microfinance wing of CARE International UK) and the University of Portsmouth, aimed at evaluating the impact of a microfinance initiative in Ecuador and developing recommendations to enhance project outcomes. Responsibilities included designing baseline and end-line questionnaires, overseeing data collection, cleaning and managing the dataset, performing data analysis, and drafting the final project report.

2022 - 2022 The decentralisation experience of Kerala in the school education sector

Role: Research Lead | Client: Government of Kerala | Location: India

The project, conducted for the Government of Kerala, India, examined 25 years of decentralised governance in the state's school education sector, identifying key strengths and weaknesses to inform policy recommendations aimed at improving educational outcomes.

2020 - 2021 Women's experience in male dominated professions

Role: Research Co-Lead | Client: Government of Kerala | Location: India

Using journalism as a case study, the project explored the challenges and barriers faced by women in male-dominated professions in Kerala, with the aim of developing policy recommendations to promote greater inclusivity.

2020 - 2021 The preparation of the Street Vending Plan for Kochi Municipal Corporation

Role: Project Co-Lead | Client: Kochi Municipal Corporation | Location: India

The project aimed to develop the first comprehensive and inclusive urban street vending plan for Kerala, designed to serve as a model for other cities across India.

2018 - 2019 The indebtedness pattern among rural poor households in Kerala, India

Role: Research Lead | Client: Government of Kerala | Location: India

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Funded by the Government of Kerala, the project explored the patterns of indebtedness among the rural poor. It aimed to develop policy solutions to address over-indebtedness and other debt-related challenges faced by this population group.

2019 - 2019 Social impact assessments of land acquisition for two major infrastructure projects in Kerala, India

Role: Project Co-Lead | Client: Government of Kerala | Location: India

The project evaluated the social impact of infrastructure initiatives, aiming to develop recommendations to mitigate any adverse effects.

2019 - 2019 The economic impact of the livelihood programme targeting people with disabilities

Role: Researcher | Client: Leonard Cheshire | Location: India

The project evaluated the impact of the livelihood programme implemented by the charity Leonard Cheshire in New Delhi, India, with the aim of providing recommendations to strengthen the programme's outcomes.

2018 - 2019 The impact of the livelihood improvement programme implemented by the Government of Kerala for tribal women

Role: Project Lead | Client: Government of Kerala | Location: India

The project evaluated the impact of the livelihood improvement programme implemented by the Government of Kerala, aimed at the socio-economic empowerment of tribal women in the state.

2016 - 2017 Demonetisation Decoded: A Critique of India's Currency Experiment (a book)

Role: Data Analyst | Client: Sukhamoy Chakravarty Unit | Location: India

Worked as a data analyst for the book co-authored by renowned economists Prof. Jayati Ghosh, Prof. C.P. Chandrasekhar, and Prof. Prabhat Patnaik. The responsibilities included collecting secondary data and policy documents relevant to the book and performing data analysis.

2017 - 2017 Nonperforming assets (NPAs) in the Chinese banking system

Role: Researcher | Client: Sukhamoy Chakravarty Unit | Location: India

Assisted Prof. C.P. Chandrasekhar with a research study focused on understanding the nuances of NPA in the Chinese banking system.

2017 - 2017 Regulatory changes in the Indian banking policies

Role: Researcher | Client: Sukhamoy Chakravarty Unit | Location: India

Assisted Prof. Jayati Ghosh and Prof. C.P. Chandrasekhar with a research study on regulatory changes in Indian banking policies since the 1990s. The responsibilities included analysing policy documents related to the Indian banking sector.

2017 - 2017 The self-help groups (SHGs) and co-operatives in the agricultural sector in Kerala

Role: Researcher | Client: Sukhamoy Chakravarty Unit | Location: India

This independent study explored the role of women-led cooperative agriculture in ensuring food security in Kerala, India.

Selected Publications

Asok, A. R., & Cox, J. (2025). 'Inclusivity' in Welfare-Oriented Microfinance: Lessons From Kudumbashree in Kerala, India. *Journal of Alternative Finance*. doi:10.1177/27533743251336258.

Asok, A. R., & Cox, J. (Forthcoming). Gendered dynamics in the subjective experiences of debt stress: An intra-household analysis. (Submitted to the *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*)

Asok, A. R., & Timothy, R. (In Preparation). Unveiling gendered dimensions of "volunteerism": The COVID-19 story of Kerala, India.

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Asok, A. R., & Cox, J. (2024). Debt attitude and debt Accumulation among rural poor households in a developing region: A Q-squared approach. Working Papers in Economics & Finance 2024-25. Portsmouth Business School. Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth. (This paper is currently under revision in the Oxford Development Studies)

Asok, A. R., & Cox, J. (2024). The gendered relationship between debt attitudes, debt literacy and debt stress: A case study of rural poor households in a developing country. Working Papers in Economics & Finance 2024-25. Portsmouth Business School. Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth.

Kumar, N. A., Asok, A. R., & Thambi, B. (2023). Decentralisation in school education: The Kerala experience. Research Report. Kochi: Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies.

Timothy, R., Asok, A. R., & Ramshad, M. (2022). Migration of women domestic workers from Kerala to the Gulf: Challenges and policy options. Research Report. Kochi: Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies.

Asok, A. R., & Timothy, R. (2021). Surviving a pandemic: Employment and indebtedness among rural poor in Kerala. Research Report. Kochi: Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies.

Asok, A. R. (2020). How did COVID-19 impact Malayalis: Findings from an online survey. Data Report. Gender Research Unit. Kochi: Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies.

Asok, A. R., Timothy, R., & Krishnakumar, K. (Eds) (2020). In Limbo: Reflecting upon COVID-19 pandemic. (Edited E-Book). Kochi: Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies.

Asok, A. R., Timothy, R., Mohanan, S. (2019). Indebtedness among the rural poor in Kerala. (E-Book). Kochi: Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies.

Asok, A. R., Thambi, B., & Mohanan, S. (2019). Tribal women breaking the barriers: Documentation of the livelihood improvement programme under tribal micro plan in Alappuzha. Gender Research Unit. Kochi: Centre for Socio-economic and Environmental Studies.

Asok, A. R. (2018). Faith, democracy and judicial verdict. Journal of Kerala High Court Cases, 1-14.

Selected Conferences

November 2025 (Upcoming)	Selected paper for presentation at the twenty-second annual Historical Materialism conference to be held at SOAS, London.
October 2025 (Upcoming)	Invited speaker at the Zero Waste Forum, scheduled to take place in Istanbul, Türkiye.
September 2025 (Upcoming)	Selected paper for presentation at the British Association for South Asian Studies (BASAS) Annual Conference 2025 to be held at Lancaster university.
June 2024	Presented a paper at the Research & Innovation Conference organised by the University of Portsmouth.
February 2024	Presented a paper at the Third Doctoral Conference on the Social and Political Constitution of the Economy organised by the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Societies, in Cologne, Germany.
October 2023	Presented a paper at the International Conference on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment in Time of Crisis organised by the FREE Network and the International School of Economics (ISET) in Tbilisi, Georgia.