

SDA **SOCIAL PROTECTION IN ASIA** **SPA**

A policy-research and network-building programme



Social protection in Asia: research findings and policy lessons

PROGRAMME SYNTHESIS REPORT 2010



Front cover
Livelihoods from
waste recycling, India

These pages
Aged villager, China

Social protection in Asia: research findings and policy lessons

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A brief history of the programme and current agenda



Social protection is once again high on the international policy agenda as the multiple crises of recent years have devastated the livelihoods of millions already living in or close to poverty, and increased vulnerability and uncertainty for millions more. The Social Protection in Asia (SPA) research and policy networking programme arose in similar circumstances, following the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s.¹ That crisis affected many of the countries in the region that had been held up as models of market-led development. It highlighted the risks of rapid but unequal growth, particularly when unaccompanied by state provision of basic social and economic infrastructure or by redistributive policies that could generate more inclusive development. The experience sent a clear message that residual *ex post* safety nets are inadequate responses in the context of a global economy in which economic crises of various kinds appear endemic (Cook et al., 2003). Instead, countries

seeking to compete in increasingly integrated global markets need well designed, broad-based *ex ante* measures which help their populations cope with the risks associated with market liberalisation and globalisation. These lessons paved the way for a shift from thinking about social protection as piecemeal and residual interventions, to envisaging it as a more systemic and inclusive response to risk and vulnerability.

The first phase of the SPA research programme (2000-2006) focused on the dynamics of poverty and social exclusion in Asia, identifying the major problems facing groups with little formal social protection coverage; those most likely to rely on informal safety nets (see contributions to Cook and Kabeer, 2010). The programme made a number of points that have since gained wider recognition. First, for the chronic poor in these countries, vulnerability to crisis is not limited to market fluctuations but endemic to their situation, often a product of their position within unequal

Above Beneficiaries huddle around BRAC staff during a meeting, Bangladesh

¹ The initial phase of the project was supported by the Ford Foundation through its offices in Asia. A second phase from 2007-2010, which generated the findings presented here, has been supported by the Ford Foundation and IDRC.



Children studying
by the road side in
Surat, India

“ Many excluded and chronically poor groups rely on informal safety nets which, as the East Asian crisis demonstrated, are often strained to their limits in times of generalised crisis.”

relations of class, caste, ethnicity and gender. The informal safety nets available to them have often reproduced these larger inequalities. Such groups need systems of social protection that help them cope with the shocks and stresses of their normal existence, not only with national, regional or global financial crisis. Second, it is possible to design social protection instruments that go beyond the immediate objective of addressing fluctuations in the income or consumption flows of vulnerable groups and achieve a wider range of impacts on livelihoods through asset-building, and the development of infrastructure and human capital. Third, well-designed social protection instruments can go some way toward empowering poor people and strengthening their capacity for voice. The transformative potential of social protection, and the conditions under which this potential might be realised, has been widely acknowledged (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Barrientos and Scott, 2008; Samson et al., 2007). It is a theme that has been picked up again in the current phase of SPA.

This current phase (2007-2010) retains the focus on informality.² It is concerned with the extension of social protection to those sections of the population who are excluded from formal social security systems and who must either work for their living in the informal economy or are dependent on others who do. These people constitute the majority of the population in Asia and pose a major challenge for conventional models of social security. They are often amongst the poorest sections of their country's population and therefore least likely to be able to contribute to the taxes which fund state provision of social protection. They are also least able to purchase their own forms of protection from market providers or build up the asset base that might provide them with a degree of resilience in the face of crisis. They rely largely on informal safety nets which, as the earlier East Asian crisis demonstrated, are often strained to their limits in times of generalised crisis.

The SPA research agenda therefore focuses on social protection interventions that have the capacity to address some of the barriers to the

establishment of more comprehensive social protection systems that address the needs of these difficult-to-reach groups. We were interested in going beyond evaluation of specific interventions to consider how they might contribute to this broader goal. The research has been carried out in six Asian countries: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Vietnam and China. It covers a variety of schemes and interventions in these countries, including:

- Keluarga Harapan Programme in Indonesia
- National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme³ in India
- New Co-operative Medical Scheme in China
- Disaster management and emergency social protection in China
- Targeting the Ultra-poor in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan
- Schemes for extending protection to migrants in China
- Community-based initiatives for the elderly in China
- Land regularisation schemes in Pakistan
- Tenure security in urban India

² A detailed list of research projects, institutions and researchers is provided in Appendix 1.

³ Now renamed the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Act. In this report the national-level employment guarantee programme (NREGA) is used synonymously with NREGS, the state-level schemes belonging to the programme.

HIGHLIGHTS

Phase 1 of SPA found that:

- For the chronic poor vulnerability is endemic to their situation. They need systems of social protection that help them cope with the shocks and stresses of their normal existence, not only with regional, national or global crises.
- It is possible to design social protection instruments that go beyond addressing fluctuations in income, and have longer-term impacts on livelihoods and security.
- Well-designed social protection instruments can contribute to empowering the poor and strengthening their voice.

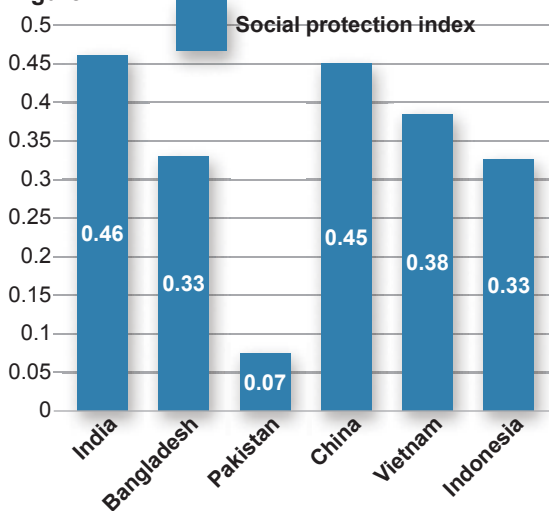
The current SPA research agenda focuses on how specific interventions can contribute to the establishment of more comprehensive social protection systems that can address the needs of people who are currently excluded from formal social security systems.

2

Social protection in Asia: the regional picture



Figure 1



Source: created using data from *Social Protection Index for Committed Poverty Reduction: Vol 2, Asia* by Baulch et al (2008).

Figure 1 shows the social protection index (SPI) for SPA partner countries. The index, which has been estimated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), is a weighted average of expenditure, coverage and proportion of poor people covered in the country in question. Table 1 (see page 6) shows that in 2008 the SPI in Pakistan was considerably lower than the regional average (0.36). Vietnam, Indonesia and Bangladesh are broadly in line with it, and India and China are somewhat above it (Baulch et al, 2008).⁴

⁴ It should be noted that the definition of social protection adopted by the ADB includes microfinance: exclusion of these interventions would reduce the social protection index of countries like Bangladesh considerably. It should also be noted that the situation in Pakistan changed sharply after the 2008 financial crisis when the fiscal allocation for social safety nets increased by more than three times.

Above Children in disaster areas, China

Table 1: Social Protection Index in Asia (2008)

Country	Social Protection expenditure as % of GDP	Coverage of key target groups	% of poor receiving any social protection	Impact on poverty*	Social protection index
India	4.0	0.33	100	26	0.46
Bangladesh	5.3	0.23	53	24	0.33
Pakistan	1.6	0.07	8	3	0.07
China	4.5	0.39	69	44	0.45
Vietnam	4.1	0.40	71	17	0.38
Indonesia	1.9	0.40	71	8	0.33
Asia	5.3	0.35	56	23	0.36

*Value of social protection to poor people as percentage of poverty line

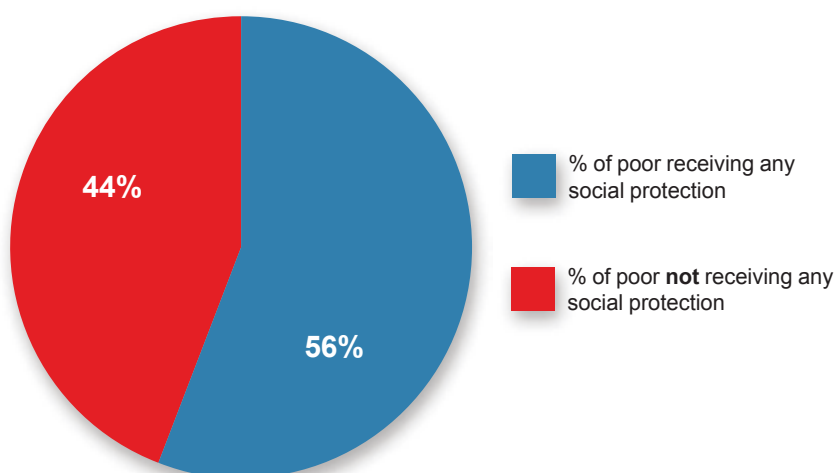
Source: *Social Protection Index for Committed Poverty Reduction: Vol 2, Asia* by Baulch et al (2008).

The data presented in Table 1 offer some clues as to why these variations between countries occur. The current extremely low coverage of programmes in Pakistan, for instance, seems to be associated with a very limited impact on poverty and a low SPI in 2008.

However, the data also raises a great many questions. Why, for instance, is the impact on poverty in India so low, when 100 per cent of people can expect to receive some kind of social protection? In China, on the other hand, only 69 per cent of people are covered by social protection programmes, yet their impact-on-poverty value is 44. This is in stark contrast to Indonesia where there is high coverage but a very low impact on poverty (almost five times lower than in China). While there are significant variations in proportional expenditure on social protection, this seems to have only limited impact on the final SPI outcome. While Indonesia spends only 0.3 per cent more of its GDP on social protection than Pakistan, its SPI is almost five times higher.

The answers to these questions lie in the detail of how social protection programmes are designed, implemented and adapted to the needs of the poor and vulnerable in each country; they are revealed by examining what is happening on the ground, by considering at whom programmes are targeted and how effectively, and by asking whether and how, in the day-to-day realities and struggles they constantly negotiate, people are able to access and benefit from the social protection.

The programmes and policies examined by the SPA programme represent only a tiny selection of the many interventions underway in these countries. By focusing on how these particular policies are conceived, designed, implemented and adapted in context, however, the work contributes to attempts to answer the questions thrown up by the aggregated data.

Figure 2: Asia average

Source: created using data from *Social Protection Index for Committed Poverty Reduction: Vol 2, Asia* by Baulch et al (2008).

HIGHLIGHTS

Disaggregated data from the Asia region shows great variation in social protection impact and coverage in SPA partner countries. A closer look at the context, design and implementation of interventions helps us better understand why these differences occur.

3

Dual narratives of change in relation to social protection: individuals and interventions



The collective research agenda undertaken for this programme has highlighted two narratives of change, which help chart the contribution of social protection interventions to the overall goal of building inclusive social protection systems. The first relates to change in the situation and life chances of vulnerable individuals and groups. The concept of *vulnerability* is important in the social protection literature because it adds a concern with *fluctuations* in living standards to the concern with *levels* of living standards that features in the conventional poverty literature. In addition, beyond the technicalities of poverty analysis, the concept draws attention to the precarious nature of the livelihoods that poor people pursue and to the shocks and stresses that are ever-present in their lives.

However, vulnerability does not merely reflect exposure to hazardous conditions, but also the adequacy of resources to cope with them. Certain

groups are more vulnerable than others because of the poverty of their resource base, because they do not have the social networks and political connections to tide them through difficult times, because they face discrimination on the basis of marginalised identities of caste, ethnicity, migrant status or gender, or because of some combination of all of these. If social protection interventions are to move beyond these symptoms of vulnerability and address their underlying causes, they need to strengthen the basic *capabilities* of vulnerable groups: first, to cope with and recover from various threats to their livelihoods; second, to escape the structural traps that keep them in poverty for prolonged periods of time, sometimes over generations; and third, to claim their rights and entitlements and take their place as citizens of their society. The first narrative of change is therefore concerned with the *transformative potential* of social protection interventions: how they can go beyond helping vulnerable groups cope with crisis

Above Village building, Indonesia

“Vulnerability does not merely reflect exposure to hazardous conditions, but also the adequacy of resources to cope with them.”



Above Collecting the haul, Indonesia

to the longer-term goals of building their capabilities and their rights as citizens.

The second narrative of change is concerned with the interventions themselves and their relationship to each other. To what extent do the *interventions* under study contribute to the development of inclusive social protection *systems*? Social protection interventions are not designed in a vacuum, nor do they emerge fully formed. Like other development interventions, each has its own life history. It starts as an idea for addressing a problem; a response to a perceived need. Some ideas are stillborn and never take off. Others take off but have a limited lifespan. Others build on pre-existing interventions; changing, adapting, extending or displacing them. Some retain the status of pilots or projects, some lie dormant for many years before coming to life again, and others evolve into programmes that are gradually incorporated into larger systems. It is, in other words, a profoundly non-linear process.

At any given time in any context, we are likely to find a variety of interventions at different points in their life history: some still in the early stage of ideas and advocacy, some in the making, some existing only at local level, others long established at the national level. They may be initiated or managed by a variety of different institutional actors, including NGOs, charities, trade unions and other civil society organisations, local and national state actors and private sector companies. While there is scope for a multiplicity of actors and interventions in the field of social protection, there is no guarantee that this will lead

to comprehensive coverage without proactive steps to make this happen. We argue that the state is the only institution that has the mandate – and very often the capacity – to assume this responsibility. The extent to which the state is willing and able to play an active role in integrating social protection schemes is therefore a crucial determinant of whether a country can claim to have comprehensive social protection systems that recognise the right of all citizens to a guaranteed minimum level of security.

Analysing the life history of interventions teaches us about the configuration of social protection needs in a particular context, about which – and whose – needs are recognised and prioritised, and about the roles of different institutional actors in translating ideas into interventions and interventions into outcomes and impacts.

In the next sections of the report we analyse the various interventions that have been studied in the SPA programme in terms of these two narratives of change, situating them according to where they are in their ‘life histories’. A list of all the reports and publications on which this is based is contained in Appendix 2. Section 4 examines the inception phase of some of the more established projects and programmes in order to understand the factors which led to their adoption. Section 5 focuses on interventions that have not yet become established but are still at the stage of advocacy and experimentation on behalf of excluded groups. It looks at the process of transforming tenuous forms of access to social protection into more established entitlements. Section 6 draws out lessons from the experiences of projects and programmes that are currently being implemented and the challenges they face in translating a set of ideas into good practice. Section 7 considers the implications of this discussion for the dual narratives of change that frame our analysis, focusing in particular on the key actors driving this change. Section 8 discusses the efforts of SPA researchers to act as agents of change in translating their research into policy influence.

HIGHLIGHTS

Two narratives of change frame our analysis:

1. The *transformative potential of social protection interventions to change the situation and life chances of chronically vulnerable individuals and groups by strengthening their capacity to cope with shocks, escape structural poverty traps and claim rights, entitlements and full citizenship.*
2. The *diverse and non-linear life histories of interventions: how the idea for an intervention emerges, how they take root or dwindle and how they contribute to the development of broader inclusive social protection systems.*

While many actors contribute to social protection, the extent to which the state is willing and able to play a role integrating and institutionalising interventions into national policy processes is a crucial factor in the development of comprehensive and transformative social protection systems.

🗨️🗨️ **Social protection interventions are not designed in a vacuum, nor do they emerge fully formed. Like other development interventions, each has its own life history.** 🗨️🗨️

4

The politics of programme inception



Identifying the moment of inception of a social protection intervention is no straight-forward matter. Many of the programmes under discussion draw from and build on previous interventions and there is often considerable overlap between their life histories. This can be both a source of strength, as programmes build on previous lessons and benefit from pre-existing administrative infrastructure, and weakness, as past mistakes and structural inequities risk being reproduced.

Close analysis of the inception phase reveals that domestic political considerations often play a key role in governments' decisions to take up a particular programme, a finding that has been noted in other research on social protection (see review by Kabeer and Ainsworth, 2010). While researchers and civil society activists may play an important role in drawing attention to the need for particular interventions, politics has most often been the catalyst for the actual introduction of a scheme.

However, our analysis suggests that political will can be ephemeral. Some programmes only last as long as the regimes that put them in place because they have failed to put down institutional roots and generate supportive constituencies within government or within wider civil society. The more broad-based the support a programme receives, and the deeper its roots in the domain of political and civil society, the more likely it is to become institutionalised. A discussion of the inception of some of the interventions that have been the focus of SPA research helps illustrate these points.

A narrow approach to the inception phase of the NREGS in India would equate it to the passing of the NREGA in 2005, which committed the Indian government to a nationwide programme that guaranteed employment to any rural adult who applied for work. A broader definition would encompass the groundswell of activism that led to the passage of the Act (Chopra, 2010). This activism began in the 1990s when it became clear

Above NREGS workers, Kerala

“The more broad-based the support a programme receives, and the deeper its roots in the domain of political and civil society, the more likely it is that it will become institutionalised.”



that neoliberal reforms, while perhaps contributing to rising growth rates in India, had also dramatically widened inequalities and done little to reduce the high levels of poverty in the country. A range of academics and civil society actors had begun to campaign around certain basic rights which they believed should underpin public policy. These included the right to food, which was a precondition to the enjoyment of all other rights; the right to education so as to improve the life chances of poor people; and the right to information so as to curb corruption and allow citizens to hold government officials to account. Civil society mobilisation around basic livelihood security was also supported by progressive political parties who saw it as an antidote to rising communal and caste tensions. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) participated in the coalition government that came to power in the 2005 elections and were influential in putting pressure on the leading Congress Party to adopt a Common Minimum Programme as a key election promise. The idea of an employment guarantee scheme to uphold the right to work was a central element of this programme.

The groundswell of support for a national employment guarantee was inspired by the experience of a more localised scheme which

had been introduced in the state of Maharashtra in the early 1980s. The Maharashtra Employment Guarantee Scheme (MEGS) was adopted by the state government in response to major droughts in the 1970s, as the result of pressure brought to bear by an alliance of progressive political parties and civil society activists. The MEGS became one of the most extensively researched of India's many social protection schemes. It was generally agreed that it had helped to avert some of the worst effects of drought and seasonal unemployment in agriculture, that the formal legal guarantee had allowed agricultural workers to mobilise to demand work, and that it had succeeded in reaching out to sections of the poor that were often marginalised: women from poor households, *dalits* and *adivasis*. The perceived effectiveness of the MEGS explained its popularity and its ability to outlast changes in political leadership. This experience helped to ground the demand for a national employment guarantee in a tried and tested approach.

The history of the NREGS therefore stretches back several decades before its enactment in 2005. It was based on an idea that gathered momentum over time and mobilised support from various sections of society, including political parties that

**Above NREGS workers,
Kerala**



subsequently came to power and were in a position to implement the idea on a national scale.

The land regularisation schemes in Pakistan documented by Gazdar and Mallah had a very different history. Residential security interventions targeting the poor in urban and rural areas were introduced in the early 1970s at a time when Pakistan had a democratically elected populist government in power for the first time since its independence in 1947. The government was overthrown in a military coup a few years later, leading to the abandonment of the rural intervention but the retention and extension of the urban one. This corresponded with the perceived political bases of the new regime. A second rural scheme was introduced in 1987 following several years of intense and bloody political agitation against an unpopular military government. This intervention was seen as a concession to the rural population in a particularly restive province in order to pave the way for a new civilian government to take over from direct military rule. While the urban scheme survived several regime changes, neither of the two rural schemes retained the political energy which was vested in their introduction for long enough to nurture their development. While some bureaucratic provisions were put in place for

purposes of implementation, actual implementation was ad hoc and piecemeal. Few within the population knew about the schemes, or believed that they could be taken to a bigger scale. There was little interest from either potential beneficiaries, from political constituencies, or from civil society groups. As a result these schemes have been largely dormant for many years. It is only now, with a new civilian government once again in power after several years of military rule and at a time when devastating floods have brought the question of rural reconstruction to the forefront of the policy agenda, that the issue of rural residential security has surfaced once again – this time as a stepping stone to greater regulation.

In China, the imperatives of electoral politics are less in evidence but a concern with political legitimacy remains. Although the country's focus in the early years of its transition from planned to market economy was on the promotion of growth, maintaining social stability as an underpinning of political legitimacy has always been a primary concern. This has come increasingly to the fore in recent years as a result of the widening inequalities that have accompanied dramatic growth rates, and which have enhanced fears of social unrest and political destabilisation. The rhetorical emphasis has therefore shifted to achieving a 'harmonious society' and 'balanced' economic growth, with a growing recognition of the role of social protection in bringing this about. At the same time, economic growth has helped to relax the budgetary constraints facing policy makers and has made investments in social protection appear more affordable. However, as SPA research shows, provision for the rural poor has generally lagged behind that for the urban population, and certain forms of vulnerability have been recognised before others. The rural elderly and migrants moving from rural to urban areas – two groups of concern in SPA studies – are among those that continue to be marginalised, although there is evidence of growing policy interest in both groups.

In contrast, the issue of rural health has been taken up in a major way by the Chinese government over the past decade. Three decades of reforms and market liberalisation had resulted in the commercialisation of basic services, including health and education. The results were rising costs, neglect of investment, particularly in remote or poor regions, and increasing gaps in access and quality between groups based on location and income. The health achievements of the collective era were being undermined and even reversed. Increasing evidence from the literature of the 1990s pointed to catastrophic health expenditures as a leading cause of poverty, and ill-health was shown to be undermining the ability of households to move out of poverty.

In recent years, as Zhang and her colleagues note, the Chinese government has recognised that providing social protection, including access to quality healthcare, is essential to further development and helps prevent the lack of such provision becoming a major cause of public unrest. It has not had to innovate from scratch.

●● The idea of a national employment guarantee in India gathered momentum over time and mobilised support from various sections of society, including political parties that subsequently came to power and were in a position to implement it on a national scale. ●●



Left Aged villager, China

Local county and city governments and village collectives had been trying to address the problems in different ways: some places had continued the collective care approach, others had tried and failed to reintroduce it during the 1990s. Central government officials opted in favour of an insurance-based approach and decided to pilot the New Co-operative Medical Scheme (NCMS) in 2004 in an attempt to extend health-related social protection to the rural population. This was rapidly scaled up and now covers a sizeable majority of the rural population.

In Indonesia, the decision to introduce a cash transfer programme was precipitated by a cut in the fuel subsidy in response to the sudden rise in fuel prices in 2005, which made the subsidy fiscally unsustainable. The move to cut the subsidy hit the poor hardest at a time when official data showed a rise in poverty. To offset a loss of political support, the government opted for a cash transfer programme to be targeted to those hit hardest by the cuts. A multi-donor support facility managed by the World Bank strongly advocated conditional cash transfers as the preferred option on the basis of its success in Latin America. However, the institutional arrangements for such a transfer were not yet in place and the newly elected government wanted to move swiftly to offset popular unrest. It opted for an unconditional cash transfer because it could be rolled out more rapidly. This strategy was criticised, however, for its inability to move families out of poverty on a more permanent basis. In 2007 the unconditional cash transfer programme was replaced by a conditional one closely based on the Latin American model, with policy makers visiting Latin

America to study it in greater detail.

The importance of political considerations in explaining why governments choose to adopt particular social protection programmes, as well as the kinds of programmes they are likely to adopt, has important lessons for policy advocacy efforts by civil society organisations and the research community. In particular, it suggests that such efforts are most likely to be successful if they are able to take advantage of a political window of opportunity.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The inception phase of an intervention can have a crucial bearing on its subsequent life history. The broader the basis of support it can mobilise, the more likely it is to become institutionally rooted and the less likely it is to be subject to political whim.
- While researchers and civil society draw attention to particular needs and interventions, political imperatives and concerns about social stability and political legitimacy are catalysts for ideas to be picked up and turned into policy.
- Regime change can lead to the introduction of new social protection schemes, cause the development of previous schemes to falter, and reawaken interventions that are dormant.
- External organisations, including international donors, can also influence the direction of social protection provision.
- Many social protection programmes draw on existing interventions. This can allow programme designers to learn from past experience and build on existing administrative structures – but there is always the risk that patterns of inequity and weak administrative processes will be replicated.

5

Reaching out to excluded groups: identifying problems, conceptualising solutions



Above Aged rural workers, China

The role of politics in states' responsiveness in the field of social protection draws attention to the nature of the contribution that civil society, research organisations, the media and other non-state actors can make in this field. While these non-state actors vary in their aims and motivations, the fact that they are not driven by electoral considerations or the need for political legitimacy allows them to highlight the needs of those who are excluded because they have little political power and to experiment with the design of interventions on the basis of perceived need rather than political expediency.

A number of studies in the SPA programme illustrate this role. They draw attention to groups that are excluded from existing provisions and suggest ways that their exclusion could be addressed. The groups in question are the rural elderly and internal migrants in China and the extreme poor, particularly women, in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. The reasons why these groups

have not been covered by existing programmes provide important insights into the underlying mechanics of problem identification and response.

The household registration systems in both Vietnam and China have been an important means by which policy makers sought to control the flow of labour between rural and urban areas during the collectivist era. Although economic reforms have led to increasing labour migration from the countryside in search of employment in the cities, the household registration system has remained in place. As research from these countries shows, migrants have been at a major disadvantage in relation to key forms of social provision in urban areas, including contributory pensions, unemployment schemes and subsidised housing.

Zhu tracks how this situation is gradually changing in the Chinese context. A series of studies since the 1990s have documented the problems faced by migrants, including their poor housing situation, the disadvantages faced by their children

Non-state actors [can] ... experiment with the design of interventions on the basis of perceived need rather than political expediency.

in accessing schools and their concentration in casual employment. The media and NGOs have also drawn attention to the discrimination faced by migrants. A great deal of this advocacy by non-state actors has been couched in the language of migrant rights and the need to 'citize' migrants.

This has gradually focused greater policy attention on the situation of urban migrants. Given the publicity generated by the adverse effects of the household registration system, it is not surprising that this system has been blamed as the major obstacle to inclusive social protection in urban areas. The solution consequently has been cast in terms of reforming the system and extending urban entitlements to the migrant population. This approach is based on the assumption that migrants are largely similar to long-term urban residents, and that they seek to settle in their destination cities and will therefore benefit from similar policy interventions.

In reality, migrants are not a homogenous group; nor do they necessarily share the characteristics, priorities and aspirations of the urban population. One factor that differentiates migrants from each other and from the rest of the urban population is the kind of employment they are able to find in urban areas. Migrants are not only far more likely to be informally employed than long-term residents, but in either formal or informal employment they are more likely to report shorter-term (or no) contracts. The uncertainty of employment and irregularity of income flows that many migrants experience make it difficult for them to make the regular contributions necessary to participate in urban pension or employment insurance schemes.

The other factor that differentiates migrants relates to migration strategies and whether or not they intend to return home. The extension of existing urban social protection schemes to this group implicitly assumes that they intend to remain on a more or less permanent basis in urban areas. The reality is that, at present, only a minority aspire to remain in the city. The majority remain mobile on a seasonal or longer-term basis. They retain strong ties with their families back home, maintain their obligations to support them and often aspire to accumulate resources to return to the countryside to settle. Pensions or other accumulated benefits generally lack portability limiting the incentives for migrant to contribute to such programmes. Others are reluctant to give up their rural registered status, especially if it means that they will lose their land. Contrary to much of the policy advocacy around migrant needs, therefore, migrants themselves do not necessarily perceive the registration system as the major factor constraining their mobility. Their greater concern may be with an entitlement system that is responsive to their distinctive needs.

The differences in the social protection needs of migrants who remain mobile and those who seek to resettle are clearly illustrated by their preferences with regard to state housing policy (see Table 2). Currently the majority of migrants either live in rental housing, often of very poor quality, or in dormitory housing provided by employers. They are generally too poor to buy their own housing and are excluded from state-subsidised low-rent housing

which is based on local registered status. Recent government efforts to extend residential security to migrants – a response to growing documentation of their poor housing conditions – has generally taken the form of efforts to include them in existing schemes. This is likely to benefit only the minority who aim to settle in the city. The rest who plan to circulate between locations or return to their place of origin would prefer lower-cost, shorter-term housing that addresses their mobile livelihood strategies.

For governments to pursue a uniform policy with respect to migrant housing overlooks potential differences in migrant needs and may waste resources and effort. At the same time, the task of persuading local government officials of their responsibility to ensure housing security for migrants remains a challenge. Despite central government pronouncements on this issue, many local authorities continue to see their obligations as optional and hence do not devote much effort to establishing responsive policies. As long as they fail to do so – whether in terms of housing or other needs such as healthcare, education and access to basic services – migrants will remain second-class citizens in urban China regardless of their residency status.

Stepping back from the specifics of migrant needs, it is also evident that the Chinese economy benefits from the mobility of its labour force – the emergence of labour shortages in the region under study testifies to the importance of a continuing flow of labour from the countryside. A stable and integrated social protection system that does not penalise those who choose to move in response to economic opportunities, regardless of whether they plan to return to their place of origin or not, would serve to promote rather than inhibit such movement of labour. The institutional base for such a system would require a strong coordinating role of the central state and the involvement of higher levels of government

 The extension of existing urban social protection schemes to [urban migrants in China] assumes that they intend to remain on a more or less permanent basis in urban areas. The reality is that only a minority aspire to remain in the city. 

Table 2: Housing needs of migrants in destination cities by their settlement intentions, China (%)

Housing needs	Settling down in the cities (n=168)	Circulating (n=179)	Returning to hometowns (n=253)	Total (n=600)
Commercial housing	19.05	6.70	3.56	8.83
Affordable housing	25.60	22.91	9.49	18.00
Low-rent housing	25.60	29.61	43.48	34.33
Free accommodation provided by employers	23.21	32.40	31.23	29.33
Housing for migrant couples provided by employers	2.98	5.03	8.30	5.83
No specific need	0.60	1.12	1.19	1.00
No idea	2.98	2.23	2.77	2.67
Total	100	100	100	100

Source: Lin, L. and Zhu, Y. (2010) 'The Diverse Housing Needs of Rural-to-Urban Migrants and Policy Responses in China: Insights from a Survey in Fuzhou', *IDS Bulletin*, 41 (4): 12-21.

in establishing and implementing an appropriate institutional and legal framework that would protect migrant rights and promote the portability of benefits.

A second group which is of growing concern in the Asian context in general, and in China specifically, is the elderly population. The combination of rapid structural change, migration, demographic transition and extended life expectancy means that the problem of an ageing population has hit China, along with many other Asian societies, before social provision for old age has had a chance to evolve. In China the rural elderly are of particular concern because they are for the most part excluded from any formal systems of social insurance or protection. While China has long had a social relief programme which provides minimal assistance to those termed 'Five Guarantee' (wubao) households, this is restricted to those elderly who have no income, family or other means of support. In the mid-1990s, the agency responsible for social assistance programmes including wubao (the Ministry of Civil Affairs) initiated a rural old age insurance scheme. This floundered within a decade for various reasons, including lack of trust by farmers in the programme, irregular incomes, weak fund management, and government restructuring. While some wealthier local governments have continued with the scheme, the vast majority of the rural population remains without any pension coverage. As with migrants, the lack of a stable income hampers regular contributions to such programmes.

Research by Pei and her team points to the emergence of a number of innovative community-based initiatives for supporting the rural elderly which provide possible models for future policy interventions in this field. These take somewhat different forms across communities and entail varying degrees of financial or organisational support from local government. In the wealthier of the communities studied, collective resources accumulated through economic development have been used to provide guarantees of livelihood security to all village members. This model is found where a combination of strong collective leadership and a strong economic base enables both the mobilisation and equitable allocation of resources. Underpinning such a model is accountable and transparent local governance with the involvement of the community.

A second case illustrates what can be achieved through self-organisation and economic activity in the absence of significant resources to distribute. In this case the local Old People's Association played a key role in promoting economic opportunities for the elderly, generating revenues both for those who could remain economically active as well as to support those unable to work. Enabling the elderly to make a substantial economic contribution to households and the community in turn improves the support and care received within their households, and in some cases improves intergenerational relationships. The third case is perhaps most unusual in that a group of elderly from a poor village, acting independently, reclaimed land and set up a self-sustaining community apart from the village and their families. They received limited governmental or



Above Retirement housing, China

other organisational support. Like the second case, however, it illustrates the potential for continued economic and productive activity by the elderly.

Such village arrangements in China highlight the potential for local government, community and self-help activities to support the elderly in ways which also benefit the local economy and community. While the longer-term national aims of a basic social pension will have a significant impact on the livelihoods of the elderly and their families, particularly in poor regions, these should be combined with the encouragement of local initiatives.

A third study that highlights the contribution non-state actors can make to the social protection agenda focuses on women in extreme poverty in South Asia. The poverty of these women reflects the intersection of various inequalities. They come from poorer households and socially marginalised castes or ethnic groups, but they face additional disadvantages because of their gender. Patriarchal norms, values and customs in South Asia mean that women generally inherit and own fewer assets than men from similar households and social groups. They are constrained in their search for livelihoods by purdah norms and unpaid domestic responsibilities and have to contend with the prejudices and biases of employers, landlords, moneylenders and other economic actors in their efforts to make a living. Given these disadvantages, it is not surprising that the most extreme forms of poverty are generally found among women who cannot rely on the support of an adult male breadwinner.

There have been a number of efforts on the part of the state in South Asia to reach out to destitute women. These have generally taken the form of cash transfer programmes such as social pension schemes and food subsidies. Research by the BRAC Development Institute (BDI) led by Hashemi and his team is concerned with a different approach. The Targeting the Ultra-poor programme (TUP) was initially pioneered by BRAC, the largest NGO in Bangladesh. The programme was a response by BRAC to a series of studies that showed that its mainstream microfinance programme, which was targeted to poor women, was systematically excluding the very poorest. Its response is tailored to the perceived constraints which keep these women trapped in extreme poverty. It is currently being piloted in nine different countries, including Pakistan and India -- the focus of the BDI study.

According to the life history framework of

🔴🔴 Village arrangements in China highlight the potential for local government, community and self-help activities to support the elderly in ways which also benefit the local economy and community. 🔴🔴

Women beneficiaries at a meeting with BRAC staff, Bangladesh



analysis, we can say that the inception of the TUP approach in Bangladesh lay in research evidence on the exclusion of ultra poor women from BRAC's mainstream microfinance programme – in other words, in the documentation of an aspect of programme failure and the need to innovate fresh approaches to address this failure. The TUP pilots in India and Pakistan, on the other hand, have emerged in a different way. They were conceived on the basis of research into the success of this approach in Bangladesh and an interest in finding out whether it can be transferred and adapted to other contexts. Here we witness the overlap of problem identification and design.

Rooted in the entrepreneurial values of the microfinance universe, what distinguishes the BRAC approach from straightforward transfer programmes is its attempt to combine 'safety nets' that allow women to meet their immediate consumption needs with 'opportunity ladders' which help them to climb out of extreme poverty and long-term dependence on transfers. Women are provided with monthly cash transfers for a predetermined period of time (18 months), asset transfers which provide the first rung of the opportunity ladder, as well as health advice and support alongside intensive training and mentoring by programme staff. This mentoring element is a key aspect of the TUP approach: it recognises that women in extreme poverty need more than tangible resources. They also need to build up their self-confidence, knowledge and the 'capacity to aspire' to a better future for themselves and their children.

The BDI contribution to the SPA programme synthesises research into these pilots as they are playing out in India and Pakistan. In India, the pilot in Andhra Pradesh is run by SKS, one of the country's leading microfinance organisations, and in West Bengal by Trickle Up, an international NGO, in collaboration with Human Development Centre (HDC), a local NGO which uses the self-help group

to organise poor women. In Pakistan, the initiative is being piloted in collaboration with the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund, which has selected five partner organisations to implement the project. The BDI research here focuses on the Sindh pilot carried out by the Orangi Charitable Trust, a microfinance organisations that lends to both men and women.

The main message that comes out of these efforts to understand and respond to the exclusions within existing social protection schemes is that an inadequate understanding of the situation, constraints, priority needs and preferences of excluded groups can lead to interventions that may be inappropriate, wasteful of resources and fail to address the underlying causes of their exclusion. The strength of civil society and community-based initiatives is their ability to experiment with solutions that address these shortcomings and suggest alternative models that can extend social protection to excluded groups. The main challenge, in turn, is to find creative ways of integrating these 'bottom up' initiatives with national efforts to create more comprehensive and integrated systems of provision.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In each context particular groups are more likely to remain excluded from formal social protection systems.
- An inadequate understanding of the situation, constraints, priority needs and preferences of these excluded groups can lead to interventions that are inappropriate and waste resources.
- Civil society groups and communities can experiment with initiatives that provide alternative ways of extending social protection to excluded groups.
- A key challenge is to find creative ways of integrating 'bottom up' initiatives that respond to real needs with national efforts to create more comprehensive and integrated systems of provision.

☞☞ Mentoring ... is a key aspect of the TUP approach: it recognises that women in extreme poverty need more than tangible resources. They also need to build up their self-confidence, knowledge and the 'capacity to aspire' to a better future for themselves and their children. ☞☞

6

Establishing entitlements, making claims



Expanding access to social protection is not only about expanding provision but also about strengthening the capacity of the poor to make demands and claim entitlements. SPA research illustrates that some needs may be ‘foundational’ in the sense of being a prerequisite for accessing other provisions. Security of shelter has emerged as one such need. Studies in the earlier phase of the SPA programme highlighted the multiple roles of housing as shelter, a site of production and a place of protection. These multiple features are particularly critical for women who are more likely to be engaged in home-based work, and for whom housing (or land) rights provide a critical asset to enhance their bargaining power in relation to family members or the wider society. The studies carried out in the current phase of SPA reinforce the significance of housing as a basic foundation for the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable groups. It features as a critical concern for rural-urban migrants in the Chinese context. It was also

cited as the most pressing need reported by the victims of the Wenchuan earthquake in China, taking priority over livelihood and health concerns. Research from India and Pakistan argues that security of shelter can underpin the ability to claim other entitlements. The lack of a stable residence or address is often a barrier to accessing other benefits, and reduces the likelihood of being reached by government or NGO programmes. In addition, as the Pakistan study shows, it can propel extremely marginalised groups into relationships of dependency with more powerful groups in order to secure their need for shelter.

Security of shelter is closely tied to questions of land ownership. Land redistribution played an important role in providing a minimum degree of security to rural populations in countries such as China and South Korea, but land reform efforts in South Asia have persistently foundered in the face of resistance from powerful landed elites. As processes of industrialisation and increasing

Above Housing pattern in a slum of Ahmedabad, India



inequalities of wealth inflate the price of land, the urban poor in particular are priced out of housing markets and pushed into marginal settlements, with scant infrastructure and poor livelihood opportunities. In contexts where market access is unaffordable, and where the right to land or housing has proven politically impossible to implement so far, what are the options? SPA research shows there may be more piecemeal approaches which, while they fall well short of a legal right to housing, nevertheless afford poor and marginal groups some degree of security of shelter and may act as transitional policies to legally constituted entitlements.

As we noted earlier, in Pakistan, state efforts to regularise settlements in rural and urban areas date back to the 1970s and 1980s. Such regularisation was seen as a precondition for the physical development of the locality. These efforts took place in a context where access to homestead and other land was governed by a complex cluster of individual property rights, customary rights and claims established through the use of force by more powerful sections of the village hierarchy. Social marginalisation in the context of Pakistan, as in the rest of South Asia, is generally closely linked to local rights and privileges relating to homesteads

and other residential and social uses of land.

While a legal and administrative framework for the regularisation process was set up, one of the distinctive features of these schemes was that they required residents of a locality to make a collective approach to the administration for such regularisation to take place. This meant that those who were better organised, and more knowledgeable about the schemes, were more likely to make such an approach, particularly if they believed that they would benefit from it. These were often, although not always, the more upwardly mobile groups among the marginalised. These groups were better able to meet administrative requirements that only those who could prove their claims through authenticated documents such as maps, physical surveys, national identity cards of applicants, as well as proof of continuous residence, had the right to apply for regularisation.

Despite this bias toward the upwardly mobile segments of the marginalised and exclusion of the most extremely marginalised the schemes had some transformative potential. The beneficiaries were often those who were already engaged in active contests with local elites or state authorities over entitlements to residential land. In a number of cases, it was a local NGO who acted on their

Above Home as a workplace: women preparing food for sale in a slum of Ahmedabad

Security of shelter can underpin the ability to claim other entitlements.

behalf. An important finding reported by the study was the extent to which the requirement of collective action to activate regularisation processes actually led to the strengthening of group identity and willingness to act collectively. Another finding was the existence of heterogeneity and disparity – even among those who might be considered socially marginalised.

The scheme therefore had the potential to subvert some of the customary privileges which had de facto benefited the rich and powerful at the expense of the marginalised. However, there

were some glaring exclusions: women who had no property rights within patriarchal family systems, and extremely marginalised groups who were simply too weak to articulate the demand for residential security. Such groups are more likely to benefit from forms of social protection that are not predicated on the capacity to mobilise around their claims. The new cash transfer scheme currently being rolled out in Pakistan and primarily targeting women offers an example of such a scheme (the Benazir Income Supports Programmes).

In the Indian context, a significant barrier to



“ The requirement of collective action to activate regularisation processes actually led to the strengthening of group identity and willingness to act collectively.”

Left At the water pump in a slum of Ahmedabad

Table 3: Factors impacting levels of tenure security in urban slums in India

Tenure	High <i>de facto</i>	Weak <i>de facto</i>	Insecure
External agency intervention	Yes		
Land document	Yes	Yes	
Land reservation in master plan	No	No	Yes
Administrative instruments	Yes	Yes	
Entitlement extension	Yes	Yes	Yes
Extension of basic services	Yes	Yes	Yes
Duration of stay	Yes	Yes	Yes

Source: Mahadevia, D. (2010) 'Tenure Security and Urban Social Protection Links: India', *IDS Bulletin*, 41 (4): 52-62.

addressing the poorer sections of the population, particularly migrants, has been the tendency on the part of national and state governments to conceptualise urban housing policy as a 'product' and to focus on increasing the supply of housing through construction as well as slum up-grading. However, for many poor people who cannot afford to purchase their own homes and who must rely on the informal rental market for their needs, such policies have little direct relevance. Equally, the growing discourse of land titles for the poor has little to offer those who have few other rights. If land titles are given in a society where other rights are not present, the poor will not be able to retain them. For these groups, security of tenure is an immediate need and can provide a stepping stone to the goal of legal rights.

Such security is provided by a variety of mechanisms which all fall short of a *de jure* right to housing, but that nevertheless afford a sufficient degree of residential security to help the urban poor address some of the other deficits in their lives. These mechanisms serve to construct a continuum of tenure security with *de jure* tenure security at one end and various forms of weak and strong *de facto* security at the other. As Table 3 illustrates, the mechanisms in question include forms of *de facto* recognition on the part of the local state: the extension of basic services, the issuing of property tax bills, voter ID cards and the below-poverty-line cards to identify households entitled to forms of social protection. Where the local state desists from undertaking slum demolitions and evictions, this absence of action, by extending duration of stay, can also serve to strengthen *de facto* tenure security. On the other hand, when slums are built on public land that has been reserved for public purposes, they are characterised by high levels of insecurity. Civil society organisations and NGOs have also played an important supportive role through the provision of information, the formation of women's savings groups and the extension of infrastructure.

A key point emerging from these findings is

that in a context where there is no strong political champion to ensure the right of marginalised groups to housing, a transitional strategy may be necessary for moving the urban poor from a situation of weak or no security of tenure to recognition of their legal rights in incremental stages. In other words, security has to be built up over time through a gradual process of accretion through the efforts of states, civil society and the poor themselves. The India study led by Mahadevia suggests that such incremental improvements in their security of tenure over time can provide the basis for access to other social protection entitlements as well as for improvements in quality of life. If, in addition, there is state action to support the extension of *de facto* tenure security to the urban poor, such progress is likely to be far more rapid.

👉👉 If land titles are given in a society where other rights are not present, the poor will not be able to retain them. For these groups, security of tenure is an immediate need and can provide a stepping stone to the goal of legal rights. 👉👉

HIGHLIGHTS

- Strengthening the capacity of the poor to make demands and claim entitlements is a core part of social protection expansion. However, achieving full citizenship rights requires strong political champions to protect the rights of marginalised groups.
- Gradual, incremental steps that strengthen security and access to rights can provide a transitional strategy towards legally constituted entitlements, providing the basis for claiming other social protection entitlements as well as improvements in quality of life.
- Programmes that require people to claim entitlements collectively can encourage transformative collective action which enables the poor to better negotiate their interests vis-à-vis powerful elites and to subvert customary privileges. Actions need to ensure that the weakest and least visible groups, such as women without property rights, are supported in mobilising to make demands.

The lessons of implementation



A different set of lessons emerge out of the experience of programmes that have been taken up by governments and are currently being scaled up. These lessons relate to the testing of assumptions contained in the conceptualisation and design of programmes. Clearly no programme is likely to embody a perfect fit between need and provision; but more successful programmes may be distinguished by the extent to which they incorporate scope for learning from experiences in the field. This will depend on the extent to which local officials are able to adapt and innovate on the basis of experience. It will also depend on the availability of mechanisms for feeding such information back into the system through monitoring and evaluation systems, responsive feedback loops and accountability mechanisms.

We begin our discussion of lessons from implementation with research findings from

the TUP pilots in India, West Bengal and Pakistan, since these were intended primarily as experiments. The pilots had differing levels of success, defined mainly by the extent to which programme participants were deemed to have 'graduated' out of extreme poverty within the stipulated 18 months of the programme cycle. The differences in outcomes and effectiveness reflect a number of factors, notably differences in the visions and priorities of the organisations chosen to design and implement the pilots, differences in familiarity of their staff with local conditions and attention given to replicating or adapting the elements that proved successful in the case of BRAC.

Box 1 (page 22) looks in more detail at the process of piloting TUP in three very different country and institutional contexts.

Above NREGS workers in Rajasthan, India

Successful programmes may be distinguished by the extent to which they incorporate scope for learning from experiences in the field.

BOX 1

Targeting the Ultra-poor Programmes (TUPs) in new contexts

The contrasting experiences of different TUP pilots demonstrates how much institutional context and local conditions shape the outcomes of an intervention. The TUP model, proven to be very effective in Bangladesh, fared very differently elsewhere.

The most successful of the pilots was carried out by *Swayam Krishi Sangam* (SKS) in India. This success was based on a number of factors. First, SKS is one of India's leading microfinance organisations and hence shares the same entrepreneurial values as BRAC. To that extent, it is likely to have understood the rationale for the TUP approach better than non-microfinance organisations. Secondly, the organisation had sufficient field-level experience to distinguish between the moderately and extremely poor and was able to invert its criteria for selecting microfinance clients (existing entrepreneurial activities, someone capable of guaranteeing payments, demonstrated self confidence) and focus on the ultra-poor. Thirdly, SKS lends largely to women and therefore understood their gender-specific constraints. Finally, it had a sufficiently strong set of organisational values and practices to *adapt* BRAC's TUP approach to reflect its own experience of what was likely to work. For example, it strongly encouraged TUP members to view cash support from the programme as a measure to address threats to their asset base rather than as a form of consumption support, and focused training efforts and weekly meetings on shaping livelihood strategies and visions rather than the kind of emotional support envisaged in the BRAC approach. SKS's strong interest in scaling up its TUP operations also led it to pay particular attention to standardising and simplifying programme design.

The experiences of the TUP pilot in West Bengal were more mixed. First of all, while Trickle Up, an international organisation, designed the local version of the TUP programme and provided the funding, it contracted in a local NGO, Human Development Centre (HDC) to implement the pilot. The local level of ownership that would allow the approach to have been adapted to local circumstances at the level of design was therefore missing. HDC is strongly influenced by the self-help group approach, pioneered by Indian NGOs, which places emphasis on encouraging savings by groups of women meeting on a regular basis and lending money to each other before being linked up to government lending programmes for the poor. However, the fact that not all their staff were familiar with the specificities of the local contexts in which they worked meant that their advice on assets and livelihood choices – a key factor in shaping participants' choices – were not always appropriate. While changes were made in programme practices, these were largely in reaction to problems encountered in the field rather than based on any *ex ante* analysis. Moreover, a failure to communicate the reasons for these changes led to considerable



Above Children, Indonesia

confusion among participants and some loss of trust.

Despite these difficulties a large number of participants were deemed to have 'graduated' out of extreme poverty at the end of the stipulated period. It is unclear how sustainable this graduation will prove to be, however the West Bengal study notes another more intangible set of impacts which are likely to be sustained over time. These include increased self-confidence among its members, some of whom come from the most socially marginalised groups in India, and their greater capacity to engage with the local state to claim their entitlements and, in some cases, to initiate collective action to protest injustices, such as male alcoholism, domestic violence and child marriage. The horizontal networks built through the self-help groups, as well as the steady support of field staff appear to lie behind these outcomes.

The experiment was far less successful in Pakistan where it was undertaken by the Orangi Charitable Trust, a microfinance organisation that has worked with men as well as women. There appear to have been problems with almost all the critical elements of the programme: failure to investigate local economic conditions; reliance on the views of project staff to identify the very poor rather than carrying out the recommended combination of participatory ranking and household surveys; distribution of livestock that did not appear to be suitable for local breeding; and uneven advice and support to participants. Although the project was proactive on some fronts, including education, little credence can be attached to its estimates of graduation success since there was no baseline data from which to estimate progress during the life of the programme. Self-evaluation by the participants included in the study suggested that less than half made any form of progress while of the rest, a sizeable number reported a deterioration in their circumstances. Nor did the research report any stories of individual or collective empowerment of the kind reported in West Bengal.

“ The contrasting experiences of TUP pilots demonstrates how institutional context and local conditions shape the outcomes of interventions. ”

In terms of its life history, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in India can be seen as the culmination of the lessons learnt from previous government experiences with public works programmes. It is also the start of a new learning process as the Indian government struggles to implement the world's largest experiment in a rights-based approach to employment generation for the rural poor. The lessons from previous limitations and shortcomings of public works programmes have informed programme design, particularly the elements that give substance to its rights-based approach. These encompass the procedures for applying for work and dealing with delays in response; the kinds of work covered; payment, transparency and anti-corruption measures; panchayat local involvement, and accountability. On the broader developmental front, there have been attempts to coordinate community infrastructure development with special targeting of provisions to poor and marginalised groups.

However, while there has been careful thought given to the design, the programme's achievements have depended on the extent to which its objectives and design correspond to local needs and conditions, and the efforts of the stakeholders involved in its implementation. As

Table 4 shows, there is considerable variation in the capacity of different states even to reach out to the marginalised groups who are among the key intended beneficiaries. According to ISST research led by Sudarshan in the states of Rajasthan, Kerala and Himachal Pradesh and IHD research led by Upendranadh in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar, a number of factors stand out in explaining variations in the quality of the implementation process.

The first important factor is variation in state-level governments' investment in ensuring proper implementation and differences in their willingness to innovate and adapt the centrally designed national programme. The Andhra Pradesh state government has been held up as a positive example of a proactive approach to the NREGS. The investment by this state is illustrated by the finding that among the states covered by SPA, government officials were most frequently cited by NREGS workers as their main source of information about the scheme in Andhra Pradesh. In other states, it was more likely to be locally elected officials at panchayat and village level. The Andhra government has also been extremely proactive in addressing potential 'process deficits', or implementation failure (See Box 2, page 24).

Table 4: NREGS: Share of employment by social and economic categories

Tenure	Andhra Pradesh	Bihar	Rajasthan
Average no. of days of employment per household per year	74	24	76
Share of employment by social and economic categories (%)			
Social group			
Scheduled Caste	45	69	33
Scheduled Tribe	5	7	23
Other Backward Castes	35	23	35
Others	15	0	10
Gender			
Male	49	71	28
Female	51	29	72
Economic status (ration card type)			
Above poverty line	3	11	49
Below poverty line	89	40	35
<i>Antyodaya</i> card (very poor)	7	36	11
<i>Annapoorna</i> card (destitute/old age)	0	1	1
Others	1	12	4
Land category			
Landless	22	80	20
Marginal	48	19.5	67
Small	24	0.4	9
Medium	5	0	3
Large	0	0	1

Source: Reddy, D. N., Tankha, R. Upendranadh, C. and Sharma, A.N. (2010) 'National Rural Employment Guarantee as Social Protection', *IDS Bulletin*, 41 (4): 63-76.

BOX 2

State government investment in NREGS in Andhra Pradesh

The state government of Andhra has been particularly active in the implementation of NREGS and has collaborated with a private sector company to develop a computerised Monitoring and Information System in order to allow 'real time' monitoring, deal promptly with process failures, flag anomalies (such as workers without bank accounts) and enforce a strict payment cycle to avoid delays.

Central government has encouraged all states to pay wages through banks and post offices in order to reduce the likelihood of 'leakages'. Andhra state government has not only adopted this practice but is experimenting with the use of biometric smart cards, using fingerprint authentication to reduce transaction costs and scope for corruption. In addition, the state has set up an independent group, the Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency, to audit the scheme. This group has invested in training village level auditors, played a key role in raising awareness of the scheme, initiated departmental inquiries when problems have arisen, dismissed officials found to be engaged in malpractice, and recovered considerable sums of money that had been diverted from the scheme by corrupt officials. As a result the Andhra social audit process is held up as a model of best practice in terms of public accountability across the country

It is not only the quality of implementation that matters for programme effectiveness, but also the 'fit' between programme design and local needs.

A second key factor impacting implementation is the extent to which village committees, which are responsible for planning local, needs-based works portfolios to be undertaken through the programme, are active and variations in how they function from area to area. The Indian state of Kerala is considered to have undergone the most genuine decentralisation process of all the states in India and the Kerala government has been working actively with women's self-help groups.⁵ The implementation of the NREGS has been entrusted to these women's groups, who work closely with the village committees to discharge their responsibilities. The active involvement of these groups has ensured a high level of participation by women in the NREGS in Kerala. Another effect has been to reduce the burden on government functionaries. In a number of states, a major limitation of the NREGS was the ability of the relevant government functionaries to discharge their obligations: this included their technical expertise, their existing workloads, incentive structures and work facilities.

A third factor has been variation in the role of civil society organisations in raising awareness about the programme, educating potential beneficiaries as to the procedures and their entitlements, auditing the process and demanding accountability from programme officials. Rajasthan has an active and engaged civil society and was the state in which a network of social movements and NGOs led the Right to Information movement. SPA research noted the presence of informal youth groups who kept up scrutiny of the work of local government and appear to have improved the functioning of formal institutional structures. The use of puppet shows and role play were used to sensitise workers about their rights and the specifics of the schemes, and a network of civil society organisations organised a day of protest

to draw attention to the faulty implementation of the NREGS. This provided workers with a forum to voice their concerns and difficulties and fill in complaint forms with the assistance of NGO staff. These complaint forms were forwarded to senior government officials in charge of the NREGS programme and the organisations followed up with demands for corrective action.

While women's self-help groups in Andhra Pradesh had not been co-opted as much into the implementation of the NREGS as they were in Kerala, the existing cadre of community facilitators of the women's self-help groups, organised under the Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP), were drawn on to facilitate mobilisation. In Himachal Pradesh, while local level *panchayat* and village committees were extremely strong, they largely excluded women's community-based organisations. This may have been one reason why women's participation in the NREGS in Himachal was extremely low. In Bihar, the state that reported the highest level of process deficits, there was neither a strong state commitment nor an active civil society. Nor were there interested elected officials championing the programme.

SPA research on the NREGS also raises broader questions about the extent to which a centrally designed programme can meet local needs, particularly in a country as large as India. It is evident from its findings that it is not only the quality of implementation that matters for programme effectiveness, but also the 'fit' between programme design and local needs. For instance, along with the active engagement of women's self-help groups, another reason for the much higher rates of female labour force participation, relative to male, in Kerala is the gender dynamics of local labour markets: the minimum wage rates paid on the NREGS exceed what women are able to earn through wage labour in local agriculture but fall short of what men are able to earn. In Himachal Pradesh, where most women are involved in agricultural work on their own fields and in the difficult tasks of collecting water and fuel in mountainous areas, there is very little tradition of female participation in waged work. This is likely to have been another factor driving the low levels of female labour force participation in the NREGS.

Local needs also vary by life course. A centrally designed programme that defines public works narrowly in terms of physical infrastructure is unlikely to meet the needs of those who cannot undertake heavy manual labour: the elderly, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, women with very young children and disabled people are least likely to benefit from such programmes. A different kind of programme, such as straightforward cash transfers, would be of greater benefit to these groups.

The Keluarga Harapan Programme (PKH) in Indonesia is also in an early phase of implementation. This programme, as noted earlier, was introduced in 2007 and was closely modelled on CCT programs in Latin America. CCT programmes have become the social protection intervention of choice by a large number of

⁵ These groups have been organised by the Kerala government under its Kudumbashree programme which gives women an active role in development activities

BOX 3

Implementing NREGS

Researchers have observed considerable variation in how NREGS is implemented in different areas. This in part reflects:

- Differing levels of proactive involvement of state governments;
- Different structures of programme implementation at local level, especially the participation of local groups;
- The involvement of civil society in raising awareness of rights, entitlements and the processes of the scheme.

governments and donors around the world, based in particular on their experience and apparent success in Latin America – although there has been some criticism that rapid scaling up and replication has occurred at times without appropriate adaptation to local conditions and with insufficient evaluation of their wider impacts. Research undertaken by Isdijoso and her colleagues at SMERU aims to provide an in-depth evaluation of the programme along a number of dimensions, focusing in particular on gender impacts, implications for intra-household relations and the allocation of the cash transfer.

The PKH is aimed at chronically poor households and has the dual objectives of promoting the human capital of children through greater utilisation of health and education facilities, and reducing poverty. Investment in the human capital of children from poor families is now widely considered to be an important means for breaking inter-generational transmission of poverty. Whether it does so or not can only be assessed in the longer term. In the meantime, its effectiveness has to be judged by the extent to which children from recipient households are attending schools and clinics.

The research explores how the cash transfer was used by households and the extent to which this is compatible with the design and objectives of the programme. It finds some variation in resource use across rural and urban areas with different economic structures, which is partly due to differing value of transfers. The transfer varies in magnitude from 20 to 80 per cent of household income. This variation reflects numbers of children rather than the poverty of the household or the local cost of living. Given that the cost of living is much higher in urban areas, a uniform transfer has far less value for urban than for rural households.

Other variations in the use of funds reflect parental preferences, household conditions and the role of field advisors. The design of the programme does not explicitly stipulate the use of the cash. The behavioural conditionalities focused instead on the utilisation of health and education facilities including pre- and post-natal check-ups, child immunisation and school attendance. Field advisors are found to be critical in helping households make decisions about the best use of the transfers, and appear to assist households in overcoming their specific livelihood constraints. Cash transfers are thus

found to be used not only to meet the direct costs of programme conditionalities, such as transport to facilities or school materials, nor only for the children within the targeted age range. Households also use cash for consumption purposes, and occasionally for investment. Resources are also spent on other children not explicitly targeted by the programme. While it is possible to narrowly interpret this as incomplete compliance with the programme, these expenditure choices are in line with the broad objectives: expenditures on consumption are essential for achieving improved nutritional, health and education outcomes. Where investments are possible, they may generate future income, thus reducing poverty, and enable older (not targeted) siblings to remain in school, which also contributes to the programme's goals.

There has been some suggestion that the use of funds noted above indicates a lack of rigorous compliance with programme conditions, and that tighter monitoring would improve implementation of the PKH. However, it could also be argued that giving households the flexibility to make the expenditure decisions most appropriate to their specific circumstances is a more effective way of achieving the programme goals. The SMERU researchers suggest that restricting the use of funds would entail higher administrative costs, while possibly undermining the broader, long-term poverty reduction objectives of the programme. The challenge in such circumstances, where programmes are being rolled out in fiscally constrained environments, is to develop appropriate evaluation criteria and mechanisms that recognise the wider benefits, to the households and communities, of more flexible arrangements.

A third programme that is currently in the process of being rolled out on a national basis is China's New Co-operative Medical Scheme (NCMS). The NCMS was piloted in a few counties in 2002 and rapidly scaled up. By 2008 it covered 95 per cent of rural counties and 92 per cent of the rural population in covered areas had enrolled in the scheme. Research carried out for SPA by Zhang and her colleagues was based on two rounds of survey data from 2004 and 2007. It showed not only that coverage had expanded, perhaps even more rapidly than official estimates suggested, but that there was growing understanding and trust in the scheme. Transparency of funding arrangements, clarity of reimbursement procedures and mechanisms such as individual accounts have contributed to this outcome.

The rural population is more likely to seek medical care, and average reimbursement rates have increased. However, NCMS has as yet had limited success in achieving its main goal of reducing 'catastrophic' medical expenditures by households. Here the fundamental problem is insufficient funding, but the difficulty is also closely tied to the structure of medical provision and reimbursement rates. To encourage the use of lower cost (and quality) township clinics, reimbursement rates are higher at these lower level facilities. Thus patients with more serious illnesses requiring more sophisticated treatment

●● The challenge ... where programmes are being rolled out in fiscally constrained environments, is to develop appropriate evaluation criteria and mechanisms that recognise the wider benefits ... of more flexible arrangements. ●●



face both higher costs and lower rates of reimbursement. Furthermore, as funds, and thus risks, are pooled at county levels, there is relatively limited scope for risk sharing or redistribution through the financing system.

To ensure that the system becomes more effective in addressing the health needs of the rural population, additional funding will undoubtedly be needed while coordination, financing and management (and thus risk pooling) will need to take place at higher levels of the administration. In addition, greater redistribution will need to be built in to ensure adequate access to quality facilities by the poor. While the expansion of the scheme has been impressive, and this may in part be attributed to flexibility among local governments in developing programmes in keeping with local circumstances, there will now need to be a balance between local flexibility and responsiveness in design and implementation, and the need for a more uniform, integrated and redistributive system.

A final SPA study, also based on research in China, looks not at a specific social protection

scheme *per se* but rather at the system that delivers social protection and its capacity to respond to the major challenge presented by a natural disaster. The disaster in question is the earthquake in Wenchuan in 2008. Measured by loss of life and other damage, this was the most serious disaster in the 60-year history of the People's Republic of China, leaving almost 90,000 people dead or missing, 375,000 injured, and 13 million homeless. Such devastation would overwhelm the capacity of most systems to cope.

China's disaster relief system is well-established under a unified structure with clear guidelines about which level of government is responsible depending on the scale and complexity of the disaster; it also entails twinning arrangements between provinces or other localities to provide various types of assistance. A range of channels of support can thus be mobilised at short notice. Nonetheless, rapid organisation, coordination and appropriate delivery to those affected also rely on local institutional arrangements, including at village and household level. A strong role is envisaged for community and volunteers: 'relying on the people and the

Above After the Wenchuan earthquake, China

“A key element in the responsiveness of the emergency social protection system after the Wenchuan earthquake was the high performance of officials.”

BOX 4

Emergency measures following the Wenchuan earthquake in China

The emergency response immediately following the Wenchuan earthquake included transfers of cash and grain to everyone in the area and the construction of temporary shelters. Follow-up assistance targeted the most needy, especially orphans and the elderly. At the end of the follow-up programme, those in need of continued government support were covered by China's basic income transfer programme (such as the minimum living standard guarantee) or other existing social assistance programmes. Additional measures included compensation for households with casualties, housing assistance, rebuilding of schools, policies to regulate and monitor the management and usage of the relief materials, fund, and donation and 'twinning' arrangements so that particular provinces or cities could take responsibility for a particular affected county by providing support for reconstruction and housing.

Table 5: Coping with the earthquake: Impact on physical and mental health of local officials

Mental health: score on CESD Scale (six months after)	%
<16	67.9
16-19	12.1
20 +	20.1
Average score = 12.9	
Physical health symptoms (six months after)	%
Chest pain	14.3
Stomach pain	9.9
Diarrhoea	11.2
Headache	36.6
Serious injury	0.7
Non-serious injury	3.9
Fever	4.9
Cough, sore throat	45.3
Palpitation	44.8
Other	17.2

Self-reported health status	Before earthquake	Six months after
Excellent	28.4	8.9
Very good	36.8	25.7
Good	29.5	43.9
Fair	3.9	17.2
Poor	1.4	4.4
Stress related behaviour: smoking	Before earthquake	Six months after
Occasionally	21.2	13.0
Daily	78.8	87.0

Source: adapted from Hu, X., Salazar, M.A., Zhang, Q., Lu, Q. and Zhang, X. (2010) 'Social Protection during Disasters: Evidence from the Wenchuan Earthquake', *IDS Bulletin*, 41 (4): 107-115.



collectivity'. While there is an extensive literature on various aspects of disaster relief and recovery, few studies have examined the factors that make these systems resilient and responsive. The research by Zhang and Salazar takes an innovative approach, starting with involvement in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, to assess both the needs of victims and the support received, as well as the situation of local officials and others involved in the delivery of relief and social protection.

The response to the earthquake evolved in the process of rapid implementation. While a general set of duties and structures had been established in the pre-disaster plans, specific measures had to be decided on the ground. The rapidity of the response needed meant that planning, design and implementation of response overlapped. In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the state council quickly allocated funds for social protection and passed a number of policies which 'provided the macrostructure of the reconstruction of the social protection system and its expansion as a mechanism to help the reconstruction of the wider affected region.'



Above After the Wenchuan earthquake, China

Overall, the research indicates a high level of satisfaction among respondents with the assistance they received, particularly in the early stages. Closer examination reveals that aspects of the system need to be strengthened to ensure ongoing resilience, particularly in the longer term. Financing remains a challenge: local governments had to shoulder the brunt of the financial burden of response and poorer counties had to engage in intense bargaining with central government to obtain additional necessary funding. This often led to delays and shortages. Increased lending by banks eased the situation but the need for a disaster insurance mechanism and better coordination between the central and local governments remain an issue for the future.

Differences in funding, facilities and infrastructure between different counties and locations also created problems of uneven distribution of relief. The time lag between the responses of different counties could be up to a month, with delays in even the most urgent forms of assistance in some areas. Other factors contributed to inequities in the distribution process. The criteria governing eligibility for subsidies and stipends varied from place to place; in a number of counties, only those with a local residence permit qualified for assistance which meant migrants from outside the affected area were excluded. The level of stipends also varied, leading in some cases to perceptions of unfairness.

Finally, one vital lesson from the study was the centrality of frontline workers to the success of the response. These cadres were bureaucrats, whose everyday duties were normally administrative, rather than frontline service delivery. A key element in the responsiveness of the emergency social protection system after the Wenchuan earthquake was the high performance of these officials during the emergency; their flexibility, resourcefulness and ability to take on new tasks (such as rescue and evacuation, building and managing temporary shelters, recording stats about deaths and injuries, sanitation and epidemic control, etc.). One suggested reason for their effectiveness was the fact that officials were very familiar with the overall mechanisms of social protection administration and were therefore able to adapt them to unexpected demands and new responsibilities. However, the surge of extra effort could not be sustained and

problems of burnout, ill-health and stress emerged after the first few months (Table 5, page 27). Using the Centre for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale to measure the mental condition of officials, the study found that 20 per cent had scores over 20, which indicates extreme depression while 12 per cent had scores between 16 and 19, a sign of moderate depression. The physical health symptoms reported by officials were evidence of general physical stress. Self-reported health status also worsened.

The demands placed on these individuals, many of whom had themselves suffered injury, loss of family members or damage to their homes, could only be sustained for a short period. The destruction of roads and buildings made their job more difficult, and the staff worked in very bad conditions – in different areas troughs of capacity appeared at different times. By the time immediate relief turned to longer-term reconstruction (estimated at around six months) this toll became particularly acute, seen for example in higher rates of illness, smoking and alcohol consumption among officials. Failure to address the burnout suffered by its staff left the system vulnerable after the initial relief stage was over, jeopardising the crucial transition period from immediate response and relief operations to longer-term reconstruction. The reconstruction phase appears to have been less successful – as the months went on people interviewed by researchers were increasingly concerned about their livelihoods.

These findings point to important issues for further investigation, in order to understand the circumstances under which weakened institutional resilience and capacity may result in systemic failure. They highlight the importance of strengthening systems ex ante as well as maintaining and rebuilding them during and following periods of extreme pressure. Given that natural disasters are a major source of generalised vulnerability across the world, and are likely to become more frequent as a result of climate change, the study has important implications concerning the need for and nature of resilient social protection systems as part of the ex ante response to risk and vulnerability.

Failure to address burnout ... left the system vulnerable after the initial relief stage was over, jeopardising the crucial transition period from immediate relief to longer-term reconstruction.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Successfully implemented programmes incorporate into their design lessons drawn from adaptation and innovation at the local level to meet local needs. Proper accountability mechanisms and effective feedback loops can help this happen.
- The capabilities of local service providers, their incentives and the resources available to them determine the extent to which they can innovate and adapt to local circumstances. Differences in outcomes and the effectiveness of programmes often depend on the quality and role of 'front-line' implementers and the investment of local and state governments.
- Success in implementation involves not just meeting narrowly defined objectives, but also in recognising the wider benefits that may be achieved through more flexible arrangements to ensure that variations in need and context are recognised.

Revisiting the dual narratives of change: key actors, roles and relationships



Vulnerability, capability and citizenship

The various interventions examined by the SPA programme offer a range of explanations for what motivates the introduction of programmes, how vulnerable groups are constructed and positioned *vis-à-vis* interventions and why certain strategies for change are selected in different contexts. Findings highlighted by SPA research suggest that social protection schemes can engender forms of change that contribute to building citizenship - both in terms of legal status and also as social identity and civic engagement - by 1] acknowledging the right of poor and marginalised groups to basic security of life and livelihood and 2] bolstering their capacity to struggle for other important rights.

Explicit attempts to promote the capabilities of vulnerable groups, and hence strengthen their capacity to claim and exercise citizenship, are evident in many of these interventions. Sometimes through straightforward material transfers: cash

and asset transfers (PKH, TUP) and waged work opportunities (NREGS). In other cases, through promoting the human capital and capabilities of vulnerable groups: health insurance (NCMS), conditionalities associated with children's health and education (PKH), livelihood training, confidence-building and mentoring (TUP), the extension of pension and unemployment insurance schemes to migrants in China and the promotion of productive roles for elderly people also in China. In the latter case, the central place given to the productive contributions of the elderly in the community-based schemes in rural China directly challenges the narrative of old age as a process of crossing the boundary between economic activity and inactivity. It suggests rather that when communities have a say in designing schemes for old age support, it is the capacity for continued productive engagement that motivates design, not the notion of old age as a period of total dependence. This transforms the position of the

Above Mobile kindergarten after the Wenchuan earthquake, China

●● Social protection schemes can engender forms of change that contribute to building citizenship. ●●



elderly in the social protection policy landscape.

Finally, there are examples of programmes which – intentionally or unintentionally - strengthen the *collective capabilities* of vulnerable groups. The land regularisation schemes in Pakistan required residents in particular urban and rural settlements to come together to lobby government officials for regularisation. As groups came to realise the benefits of this scheme, they were increasingly motivated to engage in collective action. In some cases, this greatly benefited upwardly mobile groups among the marginalised, particularly where they had been able to establish links with political parties, powerful patrons or a local NGO. In India, similarly, it has been through the collective action of urban slum-dwellers, often with the support of women’s organisations and NGOs, that security of residential tenure has been claimed in incremental steps. While falling well short of legal rights to housing, these *de facto* forms of security nevertheless pave the way for more legal solutions.

These processes that strengthen the capabilities of poor and vulnerable groups do not automatically translate into full access to citizen rights. But they do better position people to understand and claim them.

As well as strengthening capabilities, social protection schemes have the potential to proactively enshrine and operationalise rights and entitlements, and hence to strengthen the development of a social contract between the state and all citizens. NREGS is an explicit effort to extend the right to work to all citizens of India, emerging as a response to growing inequalities that have accompanied rapid economic growth, and to India’s integration into the global economy. It is also an attempt to build the common foundation of citizenship in a state that was characterised by rising communal tensions under the previous government (Chopra, 2010). NREGS is universal (any rural adult can apply for work) and puts into place various provisions intended to strengthen the relationship between participants and the state, and to subject the state to critical scrutiny. The legal guarantee of work contained in the NREGS has proven to be an important catalyst in promoting civil society action to mobilise workers and hold the state accountable. For all the process deficits uncovered by SPA and other research, the NREGS, and the Common Minimum Programme in which it is embedded, represent an attempt by India to build a new social contract between the state and its

Above Protection wall built in Koti Baunch, India

Interventions contain the seeds of citizenship when they promote the capacity of vulnerable groups to come together to demand recognition, claim their entitlements and hold states accountable.

citizens, and to include those who have traditionally been excluded, or only incorporated (or positioned) as welfare clients and passive beneficiaries.

Other interventions contain the seeds of citizenship when they promote the capacity of vulnerable groups to come together to demand recognition, claim their entitlements and hold states accountable. One example is the supportive role of fieldworkers in West Bengal, which empowers some of the most marginalised to claim entitlements that they were not aware existed, and to take action against social injustices. Such engagement can be seen as important steps in their journey towards greater equality of citizenship. The role of civil society in India and Pakistan in supporting the struggle for residential security is another example of collective routes to citizenship. Such struggles, as the research in question points out, often takes place in the face of state indifference – and even antagonism – to the basic shelter concerns of poor people. In the Chinese context, there is a new discourse of ‘citizenisation’ and migrant rights emerging out of civil society and research contributions, one that appears to be influencing the Chinese state’s efforts to extend social protection to migrants in a bid to promote greater equality of urban citizenship rights. At the same time, this new discourse is opening up a space for debating how a diversity of needs can be accommodated by a commitment to equality of rights.

Institutionalising social protection: ideas, interventions, systems

A fundamental assumption underpinning the SPA research agenda is that broad-based and comprehensive social protection systems are indispensable in an era in which long-standing forms of chronic poverty and vulnerability have been exacerbated by new kinds of threats. These threats include an increasingly integrated global economy and its accompanying market fluctuations and financial crises; patterns of economic growth which have led to widening economic inequalities and a rise in social conflict; and climate change and the growing risk of natural disasters. The process by which ideas about social protection needs are translated into practice – the second of our two narratives of change – provides insights into some of the barriers and challenges that complicate efforts to establish comprehensive systems.

First of all, it is evident that comprehensive social protection systems do not emerge fully formed with their key elements already in place. They are built up over time on the basis of past successful and failed efforts and are constantly evolving. In a world that is characterised by constant change and new challenges, the evolution of approaches to social protection is unlikely to have an identifiable end-point. The 1980s and much of the 1990s were characterised by the attempt to privatise social protection, devolving state responsibilities to markets, civil society and informal networks. This is changing. While there is continued contestation about what forms of social protection are best suited to conditions in different countries, the trend



today across the world is a steady expansion of large-scale social protection efforts (Barrientos and Hulme, 2009).

Secondly, social protection can be seen as a process of co-construction by a number of different institutional actors and stakeholders. On the supply side, we can identify national, local and municipal governments, non-government development organisations, community-based and informal associations, microfinance organisations, international donors and private philanthropic foundations. Private market providers, on the other hand, are remarkable by their absence. Vulnerable groups in the informal economy are by definition excluded from formal social security arrangements, and lack access to private insurance mechanisms. Where they do rely on the market for basic services (transport, health, education and housing) they can access only irregular, unregulated and low quality provision which does not meet basic needs, and indeed (as the case of commercialised health care in China shows) may push them deeper into poverty.

Perhaps because of the choice of countries and interventions, the ‘usual suspects’ among the external international community – bilateral and multilateral donors – feature only peripherally in SPA research. The World Bank appears in the Indonesian case study advocating (as it has elsewhere) conditional cash transfers as the optimal social protection response. The conditional cash transfer programme finally adopted is closely modelled on the Latin American approach, but it is too early to tell how well it will perform in Indonesia. The Ford Foundation and CGAP are also present. Their role has principally been to promote the piloting and experimental implementation of an apparently successful approach from one context to others. These experiments draw attention to the need to adapt programmes to the constraints and opportunities of the local context as no intervention is likely to succeed if it is treated as a mechanical transfer.

SPA research places strong emphasis on the role of the state, in the construction of comprehensive and inclusive systems of social protection. Given the leading role of the state in the Chinese economy and society, it is not surprising that it here that we see the role of the state in driving this process most clearly. While it has taken the Chinese state some time to recognise the need for new forms of social protection to replace the old collectivist arrangements, its nation-wide NCMS, its efforts to integrate and harmonise its approach to disaster management and its more recent endeavours to dilute the discriminatory impacts of the household registration system can be seen as attempts to construct a social contract for post-reform China. Each case bears out our earlier point that social protection systems build on what has gone before, selecting from ideas and approaches that have been around for some time rather than going back to the drawing board.

Similarly, the NREGS represents the nationalisation by the Indian central government of a programme that was tried and tested at

 **Social protection can be seen as a process of co-construction by a number of different institutional actors and stakeholders.** 

sub-national level. The programme also brings together around this preferred model other public works programmes that lacked the crucial ‘guarantee’ element, an important step in building a more systemic response to social protection needs. The Indonesian cash transfer programme also represents a national commitment on the part of the state, but the conceptualisation of the programme comes from a very different context to that of Indonesia. SPA research suggests that considerable attention will have to be paid to adapting the model to local conditions.

The process of going to scaling up with social protection programmes offers a number of useful lessons and points to a number of challenges. First of all, it raises the tension between universality and uniformity. The goal of comprehensive, perhaps universal, coverage should not necessarily imply uniformity: differences in the local structures of the economy, society and polity as well as differences in the causes of vulnerability among different groups point to the need to acknowledge and accommodate diversity. The problem of uniformity of treatment in the face of diverse needs was illustrated in the aftermath of the Wenchuan earthquake. The urgency of needs and complexity of demands led both officials and recipients of assistance to emphasise equality of treatment by social protection institutions as constituting ‘fairness of treatment’. However, this frequently meant that those in the greatest need were given the same degree of assistance as those far less badly affected.

Diversity in the provision of social protection can be achieved by introducing variations within a programme through a variety of mechanisms such as special targeting mechanisms, additional support structures, or simply translating guidelines and procedures into local languages. It can also be achieved by bringing together a variety of different programmes geared to different kinds of needs within a coherent system. The research on migrants in China clearly indicates the need for different approaches to housing support policies for migrants depending on whether they are a ‘floating’ migrant population or whether they intend to settle in the city of destination. It is also clear that the NREGS, with its emphasis on hard manual labour, is not equally suitable for all groups. Either there needs to be an expansion of the definition of work to include other less physically arduous but equally valuable forms of work – care work, social forestry and so on – or the work component could be combined with other forms of social protection such as conditional or unconditional cash transfers. In Pakistan, it is pointed out that programmes that require active group mobilisation for claims to be made – as is the case with the regularisation schemes – are likely to marginalise those who find it harder to engage in collective action, for example, women in a highly patriarchal society. Under conditions of extreme social marginalisation it is the implementation agency rather than the intended beneficiaries who would have to be more active in ensuring inclusion into the scheme.

A second challenge relates to the respective

roles of central and local governments. The strengths of local government responsibility for adapting provision to local needs and constraints explains some of the arguments in favour of decentralising implementation. A further argument relates to the greater ease of holding local officials responsible. However, decentralising programme delivery also raises concerns. Local governments are perhaps more prone to capture by local elites and to collaboration with local power structures. This is well illustrated by the ability of local landlords to influence local administration in their favour in land regularisation. It is evident in the history of land and tenancy reform in West Bengal, where local party officials influenced the distribution of land to favour their own supporters. It remains evident in the failure of the TUP to set up village development committees made up of local elites to provide support to programme participants: it was evident that such support was offered on highly partisan grounds or as a platform for forthcoming elections.

Moreover, there are certain roles that need to be undertaken at the central level. Coordinating social protection for a mobile population is one example highlighted in the China research. Where migrants pay their contributions to insurance schemes in one location but live for work purposes in another, there is a need for a central authority to integrate rural and urban schemes sufficiently to allow portability. Reliance on local government to raise finance for social protection also leads to the reproduction of inequalities between different localities, as in the various programmes identified in China. Central funding helps to reduce regional inequalities in resources and capacity to respond.

Despite its strong emphasis on the role of the state, SPA research demonstrates that civil society and other non-state actors have a vital role to play in the co-construction of a comprehensive social protection system. Non-state actors often expose hidden problems and draw attention to neglected vulnerable groups; they can experiment and innovate in response to perceived needs and the analysis of practical constraints and opportunities rather than on grounds of political expediency; they can disseminate information about programmes and projects to hard-to-reach groups, explain procedures and entitlements and mobilise groups to claim their entitlements. And they can promote the self-organisation of such groups to ensure that they can act on their own behalf. They can also carry out an auditing role and institute grievance procedures – within courts if there are no provisions available within programmes. Civil society, in other words, brings a set of institutions and interests to bear that can help to democratise the process of constructing social protection systems and strengthen the role of citizens.

What civil society and NGOs cannot do is supplant the overarching role of the state and take over its responsibilities – any more than can the private sector. Delivering on broad goals of social and economic security requires the involvement of all actors in synergistic relationships. To move towards a comprehensive and inclusive system,



🗨️🗨️ Civil society... brings a set of institutions and interests to bear that can help to democratise the process of constructing social protection systems and strengthen the role of citizens. 🗨️🗨️



Above Teachers and students with Qiang people, China

however, requires strong input from the state in setting policy frameworks, in regulating providers (particularly private ones), and in ensuring adequate financing, redistribution and risk-sharing. Without this the poor will remain marginalised.

A third challenge to overcome relates to the possible trade-off between quality and scale of provision. SPA research on the co-construction of social protection systems draws attention to one other group of actors that are critical to the quality and outreach of such systems but who are often taken-for-granted in the social protection literature: the field level staff responsible for the delivery of social protection and operate at the interface between programme and community. A number of SPA projects underscore the difference that these individuals can make to the success or failure of a programme. They also suggest that this role is often overlooked or treated an afterthought to the design of programmes.

It is worth noting, for instance, that responsibility for the NREGS is often added to the existing

workloads of already burdened local officials and very little investment is made to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge, skills and capacity to implement the programme effectively. The uneven capacity of local officials is cited as one factor explaining the uneven performance of the programme. The important role of field advisors was also noted in the case of the PKH in Indonesia. BDI research identified the quality of support provided by field-level TUP officers to women in extreme poverty – the mentoring and confidence building – as one of the key features that distinguished its approach and explained its success in Bangladesh. While the West Bengal adaptation of the TUP did not perform as well on economic grounds, the commitment of the local staff, many of whom had a thorough understanding of group dynamics because of their familiarity with the self-help group approach, appeared to have made a significant difference to the self-confidence and agency of poor women, possibly one of the programme's more long-lasting impacts. The

“It is those on the front line who shape how... measures are experienced by those they are intended to help.”

absence of such support in the Pakistani context and the failure to question local injustice meant that the Pakistan TUP did little to empower the women it worked with.

The research on China's response to the Wenchuan earthquake provides a vivid reminder of the human beings that make up a social protection system. Ordinary government officials were rapidly mobilised to shoulder the huge and urgent task of relief and then rehabilitation. The demands made on people who were given a very limited period of training relative to the task at hand, the traumatic circumstances of the situation they had to deal with, and the fact that they themselves may have lost family members and property all took its toll. The research notes the unsustainable levels of stress and burnout experienced by these officials as the process moved from relief to rehabilitation.

One of the lessons that we can take away from this set of findings is that any social protection intervention is likely to be only as good as the people who design and implement it. While this includes a wide range of actors, it is those on the front line who shape how these measures are experienced by those they are intended to help. It is their values, norms, motivations and behaviour that govern interactions between providers and recipients and that can make or break a programme.

One final factor that is extremely important in the process of co-constructing social protection systems is financing. Many of the formal programmes discussed in SPA research are social transfer programmes, based not on the financial contributions of the beneficiaries but funded through resources mobilised in other ways. These include national or local taxes, contributions from international donors and philanthropic foundations, funds raised through microfinance operations, resources generated within the community and out-of-pocket expenses of individuals. A major concern in the social protection literature is the affordability of programmes, and their sustainability, particularly when initiated by international donors.

Long-term sustainable social protection systems must, in the final analysis, rely principally on domestic resource mobilisation, while effective social protection requires a strong element of redistribution. The question of taxation, then, is the other side of the social contract to that of social protection but this requires those with the capacity to pay tax to recognise the need to do so. While the gradual regulation of the informal economy will help to expand the tax base, this is a long-term process. In the immediate term, it is the affluent elite in society who bear the main tax burden – and this is generally very low in most of the countries examined in the SPA programme.

Resource allocation to social protection is often opposed by elites as redistribution to what are considered 'welfare' programmes that promote dependency, while making no contribution to economic growth. Recent literature, including some of the evidence generated in this programme, points to the ways in which social protection programmes can have wider developmental impacts that offset some of the resources used to

finance it (see Kabeer, 2009 for a synthesis of the available evidence). These include investments in human capital leading to a more healthy, skilled and productive workforce; the creation of local infrastructure; increasing incomes that generate local economy effects through increased market activity; the relaxation of constraints which prevent labour force participation (particularly for women), or raise productivity in household production; and a reduction in coping strategies that undermines productivity and may lead to distress migration.

These broader developmental impacts have not yet been studied in any systematic way. What the various findings from a range of studies suggest is that, far from promoting the dependency of the poor on welfare handouts, well-designed social protection interventions can provide the opportunity ladders that people need to climb out of poverty, to participate in social and political life, and to contribute to wider processes of development and inclusive economic growth.

Well-designed social protection interventions can provide opportunity ladders to climb out of poverty, ... and contribute to wider processes of development and inclusive economic growth.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Social protection interventions can engender forms of change that enhance citizenship by strengthening the capabilities of vulnerable groups of people and explicitly acknowledging their rights and entitlements.
- Establishing comprehensive social protection systems is important, particularly in the new and uncertain global economy. Such systems develop over time, building on earlier programmes and schemes.
- Social protection systems are co-constructed by multiple institutional actors and stakeholders including government institutions at every level, the international community, civil society and beneficiaries themselves.
- One challenge is creating a system which is comprehensive, but accommodates diversity in living costs, needs and priorities of both different geographical areas and different groups of people. Special targeting mechanisms and additional support structures can help achieve this.
- A second challenge is defining the respective roles of central and local governments.
 - Only the state can coordinate and institutionalise the system, ensuring provision for all marginalised groups including migrants who move across local government boundaries, and creating mechanisms for equitable financial redistribution between poor and rich areas.
 - Local government officials are often better positioned to adapt programmes to the needs and constraints of their areas, but may be influenced by local politics and power structures.
 - Civil society and non-state actors can draw attention to neglected problems, disseminate information, experiment with innovative approaches and play an auditing role.
- A third challenge is ensuring quality of provision at scale. The capacity, health and commitment of frontline workers and field staff responsible for delivering programmes is a critical and often overlooked factor impacting the quality of implementation.

Translating research into policy influence: some lessons from the SPA experience



Policy-oriented researchers have a number of roles to play in the co-construction of social protection agendas. They can contribute to the debates about affordability, feasibility and desirability of interventions, they can challenge existing agendas, evaluate and assess process and impacts and amplify the voices of marginalised groups that might otherwise go unheard. We took a decision at the start of the SPA programme to track how our research partners – all of whom are embedded in the wider context of policy-oriented research in their countries – sought to use their participation in the programme to interact with policy processes. This section is based on interviews and discussions with SPA research partners reflecting on lessons of possible pathways of research to policy influence, an issue of considerable interest to the wider development community.

Influencing the life history of social protection policies

None of our research partners would claim a straight line from their research findings to policy innovation, adaptation or change. Instead, their engagement with policy makers has occurred at different points in the life history of policy interventions with varying degrees of discernible impact. A number of research partners have engaged with the ‘inception’ phase – entering debates and influencing the discourses surrounding decisions to introduce social protection interventions and how best it should be done. Some have tried to encourage policy makers to think differently about the problems and how they construct the needs and priorities of particular vulnerable groups. Research on migrants in China, for instance, has emphasised the diversity of their experiences and the need for flexibility in policy responses. Also in China, SPA research has

Above Vietnamese Government officials address the SPA Policy Conference 2009, Hanoi

pointed to the value that elderly people place on their ability to participate as productive members of their community.

Other research partners have sought to challenge the way that policy-makers think about solutions. Mahadevia's research on urban housing in India encourages policy makers to think about improving housing security in incremental steps rather than aiming for far-reaching and radical goals that are unlikely to be implemented. This view is echoed by Zhang who advises a patient, 'step-wise' approach to designing interventions, allowing time to pilot and test models. She notes that a key challenge for her institution has been persuading the central Government to wait until interventions are properly tested before implementing on a large scale. In China, once a strategy has been deemed successful, the roll-out process often moves extremely fast. This can result in the kinds of inadequacies in implementation found in the NCMS study, where funding arrangements could not meet reimbursement promises.

SPA partners also engaged with evaluation of the design and implementation of ongoing interventions. Work around NREGS, the NCMS and the study of pilots based on BRAC's TUP programme are part of accumulating bodies of evidence on the processes by which programme designs translate into practice. Evaluation of the TUP programme laid the basis for the pilots that were subsequently carried out in India and Pakistan, among other countries, and the study of these pilots will help to influence the extent to which the approach is subsequently scaled up. In the case of the NCMS, analysis of the implementation process has been used to influence specific design decisions, spurring an increase in the premium paid by the central government.

The studies on NREGS sought to identify the ways in which the programme is being implemented in different areas. ISST has tried to use its research findings to feed back evidence of good practice to local programme officials and encourage adjustments in implementation. Where there is an accumulation of evidence from different studies all pointing in the same direction, and when researchers are able to disseminate and explain their findings to field-level officials responsible for program implementation, it is possible to effect some 'tweaking' of the programme at ground level. The studies point to the greater attention currently paid to agricultural calendars when choosing the timing of worksites as an example of local level adjustment. The inclusion of crèches is another issue that could be pushed for more strongly at implementation level given that the legal requirement is already enshrined in the Act and the operation guidelines. On the other hand, lobbying for changes in fundamental design is more political, and requires access to high-level policy makers; because NREGS is set in law any significant changes to its functioning would have to go through parliament.

In many of these cases, one of the important roles played by researchers has been to bring the experiences and perspectives of those who are

frequently overlooked in the conceptualisation of social protection to the attention of policy makers: migrants and elderly people in rural China, slum dwellers in India, the residentially insecure in Pakistan, and the ultra-poor in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Position and credibility

The reputation and status of their institutions within the policy field and their personal position, experience and connections, were raised by SPA researchers as critical factors determining capacity for influence. All researchers emphasised the importance of building institutional and individual credibility through consistently rigorous work, national and international publication and regular attendance at conferences and seminars, and the need to make careful decisions around where and how you position yourself vis-à-vis policy-makers.

Researchers observed that dynamics between research and policy-making played out differently in different partner countries. A number of the Chinese researchers emphasised the usefulness of positioning themselves as partners, working with national and local government priorities and policy-building, rather than against them. The policy-making processes in which local governments attempt to tackle problems in experimental ways offer opportunities for such researchers to enter the field with pilots, testing different intervention models for achieving overall policy goals. According to Zhang, research institutions are able to take on pilots and experiments with local government authorities because – unlike politicians – they are able and willing to take the blame when experiments fail.

By contrast, researchers from India note that a great deal of academic research in India has taken a very critical position on what it sees as the government's turn to neoliberal policies. While such research may be picked up by activist movements calling for social protection and other pro-poor policies, it can lead to antagonistic relationships with the government of the day. For example, the decision by the Centre for Urban Equity to confront the city authorities over what it regarded as unfair slum evictions led to a period of suspicion and mistrust. At the same time, governments are not monolithic. There are many within the government who may agree with the criticisms made by the research community and look to it for evidence to support their own arguments.

Recent initiatives by the central government in India to engage more actively with academic institutions, and to provide funds for such engagement, has opened up new windows of opportunity for policy influence. As one of the two largest institutions in India working on urban planning, the Centre for Urban Equity, part of CEPT University in Gujarat, was an obvious choice to help the government with the development of a national housing policy. This has helped to allay some of the difficulties in its relationship with the state government. Research institutes using innovative methods in the study of the NREGS, such as the Institute of Social Studies Trust, have benefited



“An important role ... has been to bring the experiences and perspectives of those who are frequently overlooked in the conceptualisation of social protection to the attention of policy-makers.”



from the creation of a network of organisations interested in the programme by the Government of India, which has itself been supporting evaluative studies of the scheme. This has helped to establish access to policy-makers – the challenge now is to make sure that the findings from different institutions are examined and integrated so that there is a coherent policy message from the research community.

Indian researchers working in a collaborative relationship with government believe they have to maintain a fine balance. On the one hand, they have to work hard to retain independence, and ensure that they do not become fully reliant on government funding. On the other hand, criticism can only take researchers so far. According to Mahadevia, an emphasis on what is positive and achievable is more likely to promote the translation of ideas into policy.

In Pakistan and Indonesia SPA researchers encountered some resistance from policy-makers but were able to access and engage with them sufficiently to argue their case. In Indonesia, government officials challenged the value of the focus on gender dynamics adopted by the research. Targeted engagement and discussion with key officials at the beginning of the study, however, persuaded them of the need to examine the issue. Isdijoso notes that some are now taking gender differences into account in their analyses and evaluations of other programmes. In Pakistan a number of different players seek to influence policy-making, including research institutions and private entrepreneurs. The Collective for Social Science Research's engagement with policy-makers highlighted the issue of vested interests in terms of expertise. When research outcomes were used to argue the case for carrying out a more

Above Wenchuan earthquake taskforce anniversary, 2009

precise documentation and mapping of existing rural settlements, as a first step towards residential security in post-flood reconstruction, there was resistance from government officials already positioned as land, housing and census knowledge experts.

Finally the BDI research on the TUP experiments is engaged in policy influence on an international scale. The scale of BRAC's programmes within Bangladesh, the efforts invested in evaluating its performance combined with the extent that it is able to draw on international networks and expertise, mean that the findings of the research conducted by BDI have considerable international outreach. At the same time, policy makers have their own agendas and constraints and much depends on how these align with even the best proven models.

Personal credibility can be accrued in various ways. Being positioned within a well-regarded institution clearly helps. The status that the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy has won in the eyes of the government of China over the last decade means that its leading members are frequently contacted for their opinion on policy decisions. Publication in internationally or nationally recognised journals can also help to raise the profile of individual researchers. Mahadevia was approached to take on the development and testing of national housing policies in part because of her past contribution to the Indian Urban Poverty Report. Publication of SPA research in an international journal gave Gazdar and his colleagues a platform from which to present their research findings on rural settlement patterns in Pakistan to policy-makers at post-flood reconstruction meetings earlier this year. Connections and communications with the international community also carry weight; residential security was made a key component of Oxfam GB and their national partners' land rights and poverty programme as a result of inputs by the SPA researchers. This network (Oxfam GB and their partners) is actively engaged in advocacy work with governments.

Being 'recognised' and 'listened to' also depends on less tangible processes. How much and with whom individual researchers have previously worked and forged relationships was highlighted as important – all the SPA researchers have, to different degrees, taken on 'policy entrepreneur' roles and capitalised on their connections and expertise in both research and policy circles. In previous work Zhu had built strong relationships with the central and provincial departments for Population and Family Planning, which are responsible for migrant welfare. The current challenge has been to strengthen links with the department of Human Resources and Social Security, the ministry in which the social protection agenda is located.

Timing and timeliness

The timing of research and dissemination of findings has been clearly identified in the wider literature as a crucial factor in policy influence.

It was also emphasised by SPA researchers in a number of different ways. For Zhang and her colleagues, the priority is that data is 'fresh': her institution's reputation rests on their capacity to present up-to-date data that is relevant and in a form that is accessible to policy-makers. In 2008, they conducted follow-up work on the use of NCMS by farmers – a policy brief was produced within three months of data collection, signed off by the vice-premier and immediately forwarded to the Ministry of Health.

For others, policy influence may take patience and persistence. Pei noted how she and her colleagues had been seeking to persuade the government to take up the issue of old age support, particularly for rural widows, for a number of years. They met with little success because neither ageing nor gender were policy priorities. In recent years, however, social support for the elderly has moved onto the policy agenda; a National Working Committee on Ageing has been set up and a new rural pension is being rolled out.⁶ There has been a parallel growing interest in their research findings. The difference in these two experiences in China partly lies in the fact that the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy responds more directly to active policy issues (and in the case of NCMS to an existing government programme), while Pei's work at Tsinghua University has been advocating for a particular issue that has only now become fore-grounded in policy.

Mahadevia uses the term 'historical accidents' to describe the way different factors coincide to create favourable conditions for the promotion of a particular policy direction. Being in the right place at the right time with the right information has also pushed some SPA work into the policy arena. The research team collecting data on social protection following the Wenchuan earthquake were part of high-level policy meetings in the immediate aftermath, during which time the decrees that formed the skeleton of the relief and reconstruction response were issued (see Box 4, page 27). Their input was especially important in designing how to organise support for displaced people.

In Pakistan, SPA researchers have been able to participate in policy debates during the post-flood reconstruction this year – encouraging policy-makers to map settlements on the ground more closely, and take into account the complex living arrangements of different families and groups. Addressing the needs of migrants in China is currently a very important policy issue, the boundaries of which are not yet set. Zhu et al's study demonstrating the diversity of migration flows, needs and aspirations is therefore very timely.

A key lesson emerging from the collective experience of SPA researchers is that it is not always possible to predict when or why certain kinds of ideas will be picked up. It is therefore important, as Zhang put it, to ensure 'the accumulation of research [to] make sure [there are] good recommendations as soon as the 'policy window' opens.'

How much and with whom individual researchers have previously worked and forged relationships matters.

⁶ The appearance of old age as a policy priority occurred in the context of the new leadership trying to consolidate power by retiring old revolutionaries with compensation to stop them resisting the open market. The China National Working Committee on Ageing is directly controlled by the state council.

Reaching and communicating with policy-makers

Policy influence generally requires a proactive stance on the part of researchers, and cannot be taken for granted as a by-product of the publication of their findings. SPA research partners have engaged in a number of different activities in order to disseminate their research findings and engage with policy-makers, including conferences, seminars and policy workshops to share their work with local and national level government officials.

Following the completion of their study of village-level social protection provision for the elderly, for example, Tsinghua University organised a workshop entitled 'Old Age Support and Rural Community Development' in 2009 which brought together government policy-makers, rural community leaders, and academic researchers around the issue of old age support for China's rural population. The community leaders from the villages who had participated in the SPA research were given the opportunity to share their efforts to build community welfare programmes for the elderly with key officials from ministries and commissions. A major achievement of this workshop was recognition by public officials that the elderly still had major contributions to make to their communities and should not be positioned as dependents on their families or their communities.

Some researchers have linked their work to other established movements – notably the Centre for Urban Equity's involvement with World Habitat Day. Several projects have used national and local media to get their message into the public domain. The policy conference on social protection for migrants organised by Zhu et al at Fujian Normal University was covered by national television and also by the People's Daily (the biggest official newspaper in China). The principal investigator researching the NCMS has been invited to participate in televised talk shows on policy reform. All the projects have also disseminated their work through formal and influential publications (see Appendix 2 for a list of publications).

More informal channels of policy influence are more difficult to capture but may have considerable significance. Several researchers commented on the impacts of private conversations and exchanges. Pei noted how discussions about the situation of elderly relatives carried out with government officials at the dinner table allowed them to relate the issue to the latter's personal experiences. Both researchers working on urban housing in India and Pakistan report having pushed the issue further onto the social protection agenda through personal conversations with influential figures.

Finding and linking up with champions within relevant policy bodies is another enabling strategy. BDI, which is seeking to disseminate lessons from the TUP pilots on an international basis, has sought to systematically identify donors and government agencies interested in social

BOX 5

Homenet policy briefs

Homenet Philippines Policy Briefs on Social Protection, Occupational Health and Safety, Social Security and Health Insurance

These policy briefs are products of months of collaborative research and advocacy work among informal workers' networks (notably Homenet Southeast Asia, Homenet Philippines, and the Magna Carta for the Informal Sector Alliance) and academe (particularly the Department of Women and Development Studies, College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines) with the support of the SPA. They represent a continuation of past initiatives (mainly the research output produced by Homenet Southeast Asia, with funding assistance from the Ford Foundation and published as a book entitled *Social Protection for Homebased Workers in Thailand and the Philippines* in 2006), and have been enriched by the results of numerous conferences, workshops, and dialogues with representatives of concerned agencies (notably SSS, PhilHealth, National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, Department of Labor and Employment, Occupational Safety and Health Center, Department of Social Welfare and Development).



Homenet Thailand Policy Briefs on Social Security, Health Insurance and Legal Protection

The briefs discuss the country experiences of Thailand in extending social security cover to informal workers, increasing effectiveness of universal health coverage schemes, especially for informal workers' health problems and also ongoing advocacy for a Homeworker Protection Act in Thailand.



All policy briefs are available at www.socialprotectionasia.org/publications.asp

protection, and then identify key individuals within these who are particularly active in the policy field. The Deputy Prime Minister of Yemen, for example, has been a major champion for the TUP pilot in that country. Pei reported that the progression of the rural pension in China was closely associated with the ascendance of one particular mid-level official in the Human Resources and Social Security department. This official has played a positive role in disseminating the lessons of their research.

Finally, the form of policy communication helps to determine its impact. The importance of working towards common ground, suggesting practical and achievable actions and emphasising the positive have been noted as important elements in this. The Centre for Urban Equity looks for 'small, tactical

“For some the priority is that data is ‘fresh’ ... for others, policy influence may take patience and persistence.”

ways' in which to encourage policy makers to move forward; requesting them to extend water supply, for example, or to collect taxes, both of which are associated with increased *de facto* tenure security. BDI researchers emphasised the importance of short and succinct forms of communication. The Institute has used communications experts to develop its messages and has produced short videos which have been shown at high profile policy workshops. And when the central point and wording of the message has been decided, it must be 'hammered on' (Hashemi) or 'pushed and pushed' (Pei).

Reconciling interests and building consensus: the long term challenge

Although there have been many positive exchanges with policy-makers, SPA researchers also find that getting new thinking and research into policy-making can create friction. Policy processes encompass disparate, sometimes conflicting, interests and reflect a complex and dynamic interplay between a variety of different actors, contestations over conflicting agendas and diverse sets of interpretations of situations (Fisher and Vogel, 2008). Social science research necessarily questions existing assumptions and often challenges accepted practices. Constructing a consensus around new ideas is a long term endeavour, involving 'hammering on' messages from as many angles as possible, seeking out and working with allies within the policy domain, advocacy groups and other researchers, and seizing windows of policy opportunities whenever they open up in order to capitalise on the available body of evidence. SPA researchers have used a number of shorter-term strategies to begin this process: involving government officials from the start of the project, developing communication strategies that emphasise the positive and the doable, watching for policy windows and building their personal reputation through publication. However, all recognise that their work is only one part of the wider consensus-building process.

BOX 6

Examples of SPA dissemination activities

The Institute for Human Development, New Delhi: findings presented at high-profile national seminars including 'NREGA Seminar on Recent Evidences' and 'Unresolved Issues and Possible Innovations and Implementation of Social Protection Policies in India'.

Tsinghua University, Beijing: convened 'Old Age Support and Rural Community Development' workshop bringing together government policy makers, rural community leaders, and academic researchers. Community leaders from the villages that had participated in the SPA research shared their strategies for integrating old age support with local development with officials from the ministries of Human Resources and Social Security, and Civil Affairs, and the National Working Commission on Aging.

Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy, Beijing: research findings presented at international conferences for the International Association of Agricultural Economists and the Chinese Economists Association. Principal researchers regularly participate in policy-related televised discussions.

Centre for Population and Development Research, Fujian Normal University: convened national conference with more than 100 participants including key provincial officials and directors of the departments concerned with family planning and population. Televised and widely reported by popular print media.

CEPT University, Faculty of Planning and Public Policy, Ahmedabad: research dove-tailed into CEPT University's activities as a National Resource Centre (NRC) for the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation of the Government of India. As an NRC researchers were able to directly communicate their findings to decision makers.

School of Social Development and Public Policy, Beijing Normal University: direct input from research team to policy meetings immediately after the Wenchuan earthquake, particularly around how to organize displaced communities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- SPA researchers have acted as policy entrepreneurs, bridging research and policy circles and bringing the perspectives of beneficiaries and frontline workers to policy-makers.
- Institutional and individual credibility determines policy influencing capacity. Institutional and individual credibility can be accrued through publication and consistently accurate research and is reinforced by personal connection and interactions.
- Timing is crucial. Researchers cannot always know when policy issues will come on to the political agenda. It is important therefore to accumulate research and data in order to be ready to provide clear guidance and recommendations when opportunities arise.
- Clear, simple messages, which define practical positive steps for policy-makers are most effective. These messages must be repeated and 'hammered on' continuously, and in a wide range of contexts – from academic conferences, to the popular media, to informal conversations with policy-makers.
- Pushing forward new ideas can create friction. Constructing a consensus around new ideas is a long-term endeavour.

10

Conclusion: summary of key lessons





Conclusion: summary of key lessons

The main aim of the SPA programme was to investigate the key barriers to the construction of effective and inclusive social protection systems in the Asia region. It is evident from ADB's attempts to estimate social protection indices for Asia that social protection efforts vary considerably across Asia and that these variations are only partly related to per capita GDP. Other factors that matter are the level of resources devoted to social protection, the nature and design of social protection policies, and in particular the efforts towards inclusion of the most excluded, and the impact of these efforts on poverty.

The research carried out under the SPA programme helps to nuance this highly aggregated picture. It draws attention to the processes which give rise to social protection interventions in different countries, to the critical factors which contribute to the outreach and effectiveness of these interventions and to the role of the state in integrating them into a more systemic approach. While the findings point to the significance of informal safety nets as a source of security for poor people, the absence of the private sector is noteworthy. Profit-led provision of social protection is unlikely to make much headway among poorer sections of these populations.

This report has organised the main findings reported by the SPA programme in terms of the life histories of interventions. This approach underlines the fact that the assumptions made and actions taken at critical junctures in the life course of an intervention have important consequences for its subsequent trajectory. The conceptualisation of an intervention, its analysis of vulnerability and identification of vulnerable groups, will determine its relevance to meeting social protection needs in a particular context. The extent to which a particular conceptualisation of a problem is translated into a concrete plan of action will depend on the kind of support that is mobilized around it.

It is evident from SPA research that state support for social protection is frequently driven by political considerations – the need to win elections, to contain social unrest or to build political legitimacy. This suggests that non-state actors, particularly within civil society, can act as a driving force to bring socially marginalised groups – those who have very little political clout – onto the public agenda. Community-based organisations and NGOs have not only acted as advocates on behalf of such marginalised groups, but have developed innovative approaches which are responsive to their particular needs and constraints. These innovations offer useful models in efforts to extend the outreach of social protection. Such organisations have also played other roles in the field of social protection: disseminating information about programmes and procedures, mobilising intended beneficiaries, auditing programme performance and holding officials accountable.



The construction of inclusive and effective social protection benefits from the lessons of the past as well as from on-going experiences, whether locally or internationally. Some of the successful interventions investigated by SPA partners build on, and attempt to improve upon, past efforts. Careful piloting in the early stages can help to pick up flaws in design before programmes are taken to such a scale that such flaws would be extremely costly to correct. The integration of monitoring and evaluation systems into the design of programmes ensures that information can be gathered on a timely basis and used to improve programme design and adapt it to local contexts.

One major barrier to the extension of social protection has been the tendency on the part of policy-makers to view it in terms of social welfare and hence perceive it as a fiscal burden. There are also fears that it will promote dependency on the part of recipients. SPA research supports findings from elsewhere that counters this view. It highlights not only the productive use to which poor people put income transfers but also the value attached to being a contributing member of society. It also highlights the extent to which well-designed social protection programmes can promote more inclusive patterns of growth: it can provide individuals with the security they need to take risks and plan ahead; it can strengthen their human capital and ability to take advantage of new opportunities; and it can promote infrastructure development within local communities.

The concern with the question of the financial affordability of social protection leads to a tendency on the part of policy-makers to overlook the importance of human resources in the efficient and effective delivery of social protection. While SPA research suggests that a variety of different actors contribute to the evolution and expansion of social protection interventions, it provides fresh insights into the importance of those on the front line of service provision: ultimately it is the commitment of these individuals to their work, the support they receive, and their capacity to learn and innovate on the ground, that will determine the quality and effectiveness of the interventions in question.

Finally, SPA researchers have themselves contributed to the construction of social protection interventions in their own countries, offering insights into the pathways through which research can translate into policy influence. They have played a variety of roles – influencing the way that policy-makers think about problems, offering lessons from practice, making recommendations about design, articulating the claims of excluded groups, challenging state action when it impacts adversely on the poor and adding to the body of evidence supporting the need for comprehensive social protection systems.

Their collective efforts point to some of the reasons why states cannot afford to ignore this issue or to tackle it in a piecemeal way. These include the uncertainties of global market forces, the vulnerability of a poorly regulated financial system to periodic crisis, and the growing prevalence of natural disasters in the face of climate change, which together exacerbate the daily insecurities faced by the poor in many Asian countries. They also include the growing awareness on the part of the populations studied of their rights as citizens and their greater willingness to demand these rights from the state.

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The SPA research projects

RESEARCH PROJECT EAST ASIA

Assessing the new social protection programme for healthcare in rural China



The Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Beijing
www.ccap.org.cn/

Principal researchers

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Hongmei Yi is a post doctoral fellow at the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy, Institute of Geographical Sciences and Natural Resources Research, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). Her research interest is in areas of rural healthcare and rural education.

Scott Rozelle is the Helen Farnsworth Senior Fellow in the Food Security and the Environment Program of Stanford University's Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies. Rozelle's research focuses almost exclusively on China and is concerned with three general themes; a) agricultural policy, including the supply, demand, and trade in agricultural commodities, b) the rural environment; and, c.) issues of poverty alleviation with a focus on rural education. He is the chair of the Board of Academic Advisors of the Center for Chinese Agricultural Policy.

Project details

This study assessed the implementation, progress and impacts of a new rural healthcare scheme (New Cooperative Medical Scheme –NCMS) and provides recommendations for improving the system in delivering quality and affordable healthcare to the rural population.

The study used a nearly national representative data to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the

scheme including the programme impacts on helping rural individuals and families to cope with catastrophic medical payment, rural household healthcare demand, as well as rural healthcare service providers – both village clinics and township healthcare centers. The study found out that although the schemes has expanded rapidly and had achieved universal coverage in rural areas, the rate of reimbursements on medical expenditures were still very low. It has not been able to help rural households coping with catastrophic medical payment. The key constraint was the premium was too low to meet the expenditure demand. The study suggests that more efforts need to be made to increase the premium. The NCMS creates incentive for patients to use township health centers as the first choice of healthcare provider by the setting of different reimbursement rate. At the same time, the new scheme has not been able to bring economic benefits to village clinics – the primary healthcare service provider.

RESEARCH PROJECT EAST ASIA

The mobility patterns of rural-urban migrants and their complex and diversified needs of social protection in China: beyond the urban-based approaches



Centre for Population and Development Research, Fujian Normal University, China
www3.fjnu.edu.cn/contents/English/

Principal researchers

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Council Member of China Population Association, Member of CPA's Committee on Migration and Urbanization, and Deputy Director of the Committee on Population Geography, the Geographical Society of China. He received his PhD from Demography Program at the Australian National University, and his research interests straddle the two disciplines of demography and human geography, focusing on issues relating to migration and urbanisation.

Project details

This project aims to examine the complexity of mobility patterns of rural-urban migrants and its implications for their social protection through a survey of rural-urban migrants and

in-depth interviews with them, their employers and officials of relevant government departments in Fuzhou, China. It analyzes the characteristics of rural-urban migrants and their migration patterns, and their complex and diversified needs of social protection arising from such characteristics and patterns, and assesses the inadequacies of urban-based approaches in meeting such needs. It also explores the conceptual and policy implications of the above analysis, focusing on the limitation of the conceptual framework of urban inclusion and exclusion, and some practical issues such as the portability of social protection programmes and their institutional basis and financing mechanism.

RESEARCH PROJECT EAST ASIA

The impact of natural disaster on the social protection system: lessons from Wenchuan earthquake



School of Social Development and Public Policy, Beijing Normal University
www.ssdpp.net

Principal Researchers

Xiulan Zhang is a professor at SSDPP. Her main research fields are social policy, social welfare and health care. Her recent research projects focus on impact of the financial crisis on migrant workers, poverty reduction, major illness insurance for children and costs of smoking.

Miguel A. Salazar, associate professor at SSDPP. His work concentrates on the migration of professionals around the world, in particular the issues of transnational networks and identity changes. His interests include: sociology of identity, sociology of culture, migration, knowledge transfers, network analysis, social psychology, cognitive science, and linguistics.

Project details

Researchers at the School of Social Development and Public Policy (SSDPP), at Beijing Normal University, China, sought to learn the processes by which social protection organizations reboot after disaster and determine bottlenecks, cracks and blind spots

created by this process; learn lessons on how to prepare resilient organizations and how to enhance social protection service delivery during the reconstruction stage after a disaster.

RESEARCH PROJECT EAST ASIA

Social support for the aged in rural China



Tsinghua University, Beijing
www.tsinghua.edu.cn/eng

Principal Researcher

Xiaomei Pei is currently a professor at the Department of Sociology, Tsinghua University. She received her doctoral degree at University of North Texas in 1996 and her post-doctoral fellow training at the Duke University Medical School between 1996 and 1998 in the US. She has been teaching and researching in the areas of social gerontology, medical sociology, and social policy since 1999. Her recent publications have been concentrated on the issues of gender inequality and the social organisation of old age support in China. She also serves as the executive director of the Gerontology Center at Tsinghua University.

Project details

The study examines the potential of rural communities for generating and allocating resources for old age support during a process of rapid social transformation. In depth interviews with elderly people, their families, community leaders and government officials of three villages respectively located in three provinces provide us with evidence on existing local institutional arrangements for rural old age support and the role of both government and community in organising such programmes. They confirm the potential of rural communities to generate and distribute resources for old age support, to offer community opportunities for social inclusion through fair flows of resources to promote social harmony and stability, and to accelerate economic growth. The findings imply a need to link

the state effort for old age protection to rural community development, and encourage grassroots efforts in old age support.

RESEARCH PROJECT SOUTH EAST ASIA

Social protection for rural-urban migrants in Vietnam: current situation, challenges and opportunities



The Institute for Social Development Studies, Hanoi
www.isds.org.vn

Principal researchers

Le Bach Duong is the Director of the Institute for Social Development Studies, an independent research institute based in Hanoi, Vietnam. Previously, he worked as senior researcher for the Institute of Sociology and the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies of the Vietnam Institute for Social Sciences. His major areas of research include migration, development studies, and sexuality. He earned his PhD in sociology from the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1998.

Tran Giang Linh is the senior researcher of the Institute for Social Development

Studies. Her research interests include migration, sexuality and social inclusion. Linh's work foci are on impact of internal and international migration in the sending communities. She is the coordinator of an international research project on transnational migration for work and through marriage of Vietnamese women. Linh has received her MA in sociology from the University of Western Ontario (Canada)

Project details

This research project aims at examining how the household registration system (ho khau) and the residence-based social policies entrench vulnerabilities and marginalization of rural-to-urban migrants in Vietnam. It also traces the evolving of recent social protection policies developed by the government in response to challenges brought about by increasing geographical

mobility of the population unleashed by the market reforms (known as Doi moi). Using the policy life-cycle perspective, the research shows that the country is still in the early stage of policy development. Its legal framework and institutionalized measures remain limited by the government's sustained perception of unrestricted migration as being harmful to development and the state's need to control movement of their citizens. The research calls for a significant departure from current approach towards policies that rest first on the recognition of the legal status of the migrants regardless of their whereabouts and second on increasing migrants' access to key social and economic resources. Data for the research are drawn from quantitative survey and qualitative studies conducted in Hanoi as well as extensive review of literature.

RESEARCH PROJECT SOUTH EAST ASIA

Conditional cash transfer and intrahousehold gender relations: a note from Indonesia



The SMERU Research Institute, Indonesia
www.smeru.or.id

Principal researchers

Widjajanti Isdijoso, Deputy Director of SMERU Research Institute. An economist by training, she has an extensive experience in research, especially in combined qualitative-quantitative methods on poverty, decentralisation, poverty reduction policy, and crisis impacts. Her works have been published in numerous papers, including 'Indonesia's Transition to Decentralized Governance' in Coen J.G. Holtzappel and Martin Ramstedt (eds), *Decentralization and Regional Autonomy in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS (2009).

Sirojuddin Arif is a researcher at SMERU Research Institute. He has conducted numerous research and evaluation studies on issues related to poverty, social protection, development, and gender. His paper, 'Poverty Reduction in the Post-New Order Indonesia' was presented in 2009 GSPA and UNRISD International Conference on Global and National Strategy for Poverty Reduction.

Muhammad Syukri, researcher at SMERU Research Institute. He got his master degree in sociology from Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia. His research interest includes social protection,

poverty-environmental nexus, cultural capital, gender mainstreaming issues, and social research methods. His latest paper, 'Bisnis Priyayi: A Case Study of Keraton Cigarette Industry', appeared in *Jurnal Antar Budaya*, No 1, 2010, PSAP UGM.

Project details

Researchers at the SMERU Research Institute, Indonesia evaluated the effectiveness of the Government of Indonesia pilot conditional cash transfer (CCT) program to understand the gender impact through an analysis of intrahousehold decision-making dynamics.

Since 2007 the Government of Indonesia has initiated a pilot program of Conditional Cash Transfer—called Program Keluarga Harapan (PKH), that for the first time in Indonesia made the transfer of money to the mother (or women in the household). A qualitative study was conducted in four villages (one urban and one rural village in Cirebon District, West Java province; and in urban village in Kupang City and one rural village in Timor Tengah Selatan District, East Nusa Tenggara Province) from February to May 2009 to assess the impact of the program on intrahousehold gender relations, particularly the relative position and power of the mother, and the welfare dynamic of the recipient households in general.

The study revealed that the program

has not affected (at least in the short run) the relative position of women against their husband in decision making within the household. The program has not increased the burden of women, partly because the enforcement of the conditionality was still very loose. The program has not induced conflict and domestic violence; indeed it tends to reduce household tension because the cash assistance eases women's demand for money from the husband as women have more money in their own hand to meet the household daily consumption. The study, however, also revealed that the husband involvement in decision making regarding the use of the cash assistance as well as in the decision regarding children's schooling and birth delivery assistance is unavoidable; thus call for the program to involve husbands, particularly in reiterating the conditionality. Regarding the benefit, the study shows that the program has benefited all household members beyond those being targeted by the program. This is possible because of the recipient flexibility in using the money, a factor that sometimes is limited by the program's field advisor. The real benefit of the program, however, varies between urban and rural areas due to the differing value of money. This is possibly resolved by differentiating the cash assistance provided in rural areas than those in urban areas.

RESEARCH PROJECT SOUTH ASIA

Building pathways for the poorest: operationalizing the concept of graduation



BRAC Development Institute, Dhaka
www.bracuniversity.net

Principal researchers

Syed Hashemi is the founder-Director of the BRAC Development Institute at BRAC University. The Institute seeks to promote research and build knowledge on practical solutions to problems of the poor in the global South. Hashemi worked at CGAP (a global resource center for microfinance) from 1999 till 2008. At CGAP he focused on identifying pro-poor innovations and disseminating best practice lessons related to poverty outreach and impact. He was also one of the pioneers of the global movement to ensure a social performance bottom line in microfinance. Before joining CGAP, Hashemi directed the Program for Research on Poverty Alleviation at Grameen Trust and taught at the Department of Economics, Jahangirnagar University. Hashemi has a Ph.D. in Economics from the University of California at Riverside.

Karishma Huda is a senior research associate at BRAC Development Institute in London. She has worked extensively on the Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest (CGAP)/ Ford Foundation global graduation programmes in Bangladesh, Haiti, Pakistan, India, Yemen and Ethiopia. She is currently managing the Secretariat for the global graduation programmes, and is responsible for research, monitoring, and evaluation across nine pilots. Karishma's research interests include extreme poverty, social capital, gender and agency, microfinance plus and social performance, with several academic publications on these topics.

Farzana Islam is a Professor at the Department of Anthropology at Jahangirnagar University. Her areas of interest include gender and sexuality, particularly focusing on women's empowerment, violence against women, sexual abuse & exploitation against women and children, kinship and social organizations in Bangladesh, social exclusion and marginalization, the urban informal labor market. She holds a D Phil in Social Anthropology from University of Sussex in the UK.

Wamiq Umaira is a Research Associate at BRAC Development Institute (BDI). She has worked on issues of social protection and extreme poverty with a focus on Bangladesh and on collecting data on ethnic violence and Members of Parliament in South Asia. Prior to joining BDI, she worked as an Administrative Coordinator at the Initiative for Policy Dialogue at Columbia University, a think tank co founded by Joseph Stiglitz and José Antonio Ocampo. She holds a BA in Economics and International Relations from New York University.

Project details

Researchers at BDI sought to develop an analytical model of 'graduation', to provide answers to the following: What is graduation? What are the different stages of the ladder? What is the specific process of graduation and what are the indicators that tell us that graduation has occurred?

Conceptually, graduation is the process of helping ultra poor households to accumulate assets, capital and build resilience in order to help them reach an inflection point on their graduation pathway, after which the likelihood that they will slip back into extreme poverty due to external shocks is decreased significantly. The graduation model, based on BRAC's CFPR-TUP program provides both real achievable objectives of 'graduation' for those in extreme poverty and a road map on how graduation can be achieved.

The concept of graduation does not refer to a necessary linear progression into economic improvements and food security. Many beneficiaries are unable to improve their conditions and graduate. They face recurring emergency situations that push them down. These may be in the form of natural disasters, macroeconomic crises or the death of an income earning member. This is not to say that those who graduate are not vulnerable to these scenarios, some graduates have been at risk of losing it all.

The model is innovative in that it is a well-articulated, closely sequenced, multi dimensional strategy that lays out clear entry points. The interventions include a consumption stipend, skills training, transfer of an income-generating asset, compulsory savings, regular group meetings, links to village elders, access to healthcare, and intensive coaching

through weekly household visits by staff over a period of two years.

The criteria for assessing graduation and the specific pathway is context specific. In rural South Asia, for example, graduation refers primarily to food security. In Yemen on the other hand there is a far greater emphasis on schooling, access to healthcare and diversified livelihoods. Markets assessments, skills assessments and community assessments are used to determine specific pathways on how graduation can be achieved. In Bangladesh the route to sustainable livelihoods is often through raising livestock. In non-agrarian communities it could be petty trade or other activities.

The research paper presents the graduation model as a seminal contribution to the discourse on poverty but also shows how the process of 'graduation' is fraught with challenges, how it is ultimately limited by meso level constraints and how many will always require state level support.

RESEARCH PROJECT SOUTH ASIA

Inclusive urbanization – social protection for the slum and pavement dwellers in India



**CEPT University,
Faculty of Planning and
Public Policy, Ahmedabad**
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Principal researcher

Darshini Mahadevia is a Professor at Faculty of Planning and Public Policy, CEPT University, Ahmedabad, is member-secretary of Centre for Urban Equity (CUE) at CEPT University. The CUE acts as a National Resource Centre of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India. She has been researching on urban land, housing, finance, and transport in India and occasionally in China. She has published on these subjects as well as human development.

Project details

This research provides empirical evidence of the link between shelter security and social protection. Security of tenure is considered next only to food and water in importance in urban living; it meets the basic needs, provides an address to the household and through that extends citizenship. For the poor households it is a place of work and overall has intrinsic value of security against nature and society. This research shows that most urban households survive under the situation of de facto tenure security, which is created through pro-active local state in extending services and local taxes such as property tax, external agency intervention and in case of neither duration of stay.

In contrast, the aspiration of Indian policy-makers to extend property titles to the present slum dwellers would lead to displacements and gentrification. This research therefore strongly suggests a need to institutionalize mechanisms for extending de facto tenure, alternatively termed as intermediate tenure.

RESEARCH PROJECT SOUTH ASIA

Residential security, social marginalisation and social protection in Pakistan



**Collective for Social
Science Research,
Karachi**
www.researchcollective.org

Principal researchers

Haris Gazdar is a Senior Researcher at the Collective for Social Science Research. He is the team leader on the Social Protection in Asia project 'Residential Security as Social Protection in Pakistan'. He has contributed widely to social science research and social and economic policy debates in Pakistan and elsewhere.

Hussain Bux Mallah is a Research Officer at Collective for Social Science Research. He works on inequality, social marginalisation, poverty, migration, land rights and urban issues in Pakistan, and has particular expertise and experience in carrying out qualitative research on these and related issues across diverse communities in the country.

Project details

Housing is largely absent from the social protection agenda in most developing countries, even though it is a prominent concern in rich countries. This is surprising, given the close connection between residential security and social marginalisation, as shown in research in rural and urban areas of Pakistan. Qualitative investigation in rural communities in Punjab and Sindh – the two biggest provinces of the country – revealed that traditional arrangements for access to homestead land were based on social hierarchies based on kinship, caste, class and gender.

Insecure rights of ownership, possession or tenure over homes worked alongside exclusion from labour market opportunities, social services, safety nets and political voice to reproduce marginalisation and inequality. There had been government schemes in both provinces for extending residential security to the most marginalised. These schemes had very limited coverage and were aborted due to political pressures and elite capture, but where they operated they were found to have been effective in protecting beneficiaries from extreme forms of vulnerability. Migrants into urban areas (Karachi) also faced insecure rights of tenure, possession and ownership, which too were conditioned

by the prior political power of the groups to which they belonged.

Here too a government scheme for the regularisation of irregular settlements was an important empowering factor. Scheme implementation in rural Sindh and Karachi depended on prior collective action on the part of the beneficiaries. To a great degree in Karachi and to a lesser degree in rural Sindh, this model of implementation led the schemes to become effective instruments in the political strategies of some of the marginalised. In both rural Sindh and Punjab residential insecurity is an acute form of social exclusion, and there is need and scope for the reform and revival of government programmes directed at the socially marginalised. Other social policy and social protection interventions will need to work much harder to achieve their objectives if the marginalised are not secure in their homes.

RESEARCH PROJECT SOUTH ASIA

Designing implementation models for the right to work programme in India



The Institute for Human Development, New Delhi
www.ihdindia.org

Principal researchers

C. Upendranadh is currently Senior Fellow at the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi and is the Regional Coordinator for the Social Protection in Asia programme, managed jointly by IHD, New Delhi and IDS, Sussex. He has over 15 years of experience in the development sector in various fields with specific focus on policy research and advocacy, technical support and management functions in thematic areas of social protection and livelihoods, micro finance and education.

D. Narasimha Reddy is currently Visiting Professor at the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi. He retired as Professor of Economics and Dean, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad. His specialisation includes policy studies, political economy of development and labour economics. Most recently he was a member of the Farmers' Welfare Commission set up by the Andhra Pradesh Government to look into the issue of agriculture crisis and farmers' suicides.

Rukmini Tankha is currently working as a Research Associate at the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi. She has completed her Masters degree in Development Studies from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, India. Her research interests include globalisation and labour, the informal economy, gender and social protection.

Alakh N. Sharma is presently Professor and Director of the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi. He has made significant contributions to research in areas such as poverty, migration, employment and labour markets. He has authored/edited/co-edited twelve books and published over three dozen research papers in various journals on these issues. He is also editor of the Indian Journal of Labour Economics (quarterly Journal of the Indian Society of Labour Economics) and co-editor of the Indian Journal of Human Development (a bi-annual journal of the Institute for Human Development).

Project details

The Institute for Human Development (IHD) in Delhi, India explored mechanisms for increasing the impact of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) - a universal rights-based employment

programme for rural households from the perspective of institutions and governance.

While a national design and guidelines provide basis for the implementation, several adaptations and field level adjustments are expected to ensure effective delivery of the programme and such processes, in turn, are contingent upon the capacities of the stakeholders, support institutions, governance and facilitative mechanisms in place.

Acknowledging diverse initial conditions of governance in the three states studied – Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar – this study undertakes a process diagnostics in terms of fulfilment of scheme related entitlements, of processes and adaptations for enhancing effectiveness and impact.

The study identifies the need for rationalising certain processes that would ease the bureaucratic burden on the front line staff and the requirement of technical help and capacities at the ground level in order to enhance effectiveness. Adaptations and experience of institution building, use of IT, local technical help, political and bureaucratic commitment and mobilisation by civil society appear to be some of the factors that explain diverse trajectories of progress of the scheme across the three states.

RESEARCH PROJECT SOUTH ASIA

Examining the MGNREGA: women's participation and Impacts in Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan



Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi, India
www.isst-india.org

Principal researchers

Ratna M. Sudarshan is currently Director, Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi, a non-profit organisation engaged in policy relevant research and action programmes with special focus on women's work and well being concerns. ISST has Special Consultative Status with the United Nations. Prior to joining ISST, she was Principal Economist at the National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi. She has jointly edited four books and published several

papers, mainly on aspects of women's work, social protection, and education. She has an MA in Economics from the Delhi School of Economics, and an MSc in Economics from the University of Cambridge.

Project details

The Institute of Social Studies Trust, India, examined the gender dimensions of India's national rural employment guarantee programme instituted through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act - (MGNREGA) to assess whether the programme is enhancing women's well being and autonomy. Fieldwork was carried out in selected pockets of three

states (Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan) in very different contexts of local economy and labour markets; gendered roles and responsibilities; institutional arrangements for programme implementation; and role of civil society groups. The study finds that all of these factors influence whether and to what extent women participate, and that in all cases actual outcomes are mediated by pre-existing norms around care responsibilities and other unpaid work.

The SPA research project publications

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II. Centre for Population and Development Research, Fujian Normal University – The Mobility Patterns of Rural-urban Migrants and their Complex and Diversified Needs for Social Protection in China: Beyond Urban-based Approaches

1. Lin, L. and Zhu, Y. (2008) 'Housing conditions of the floating population under the status of circulation: a case study of Fujian Province' (in Chinese), *Renkou Yanjiu (Population Research)*, 32 (3): 48-56.
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6. Lin, L. and Zhu, Y. (2010) 'The Diverse Housing Needs of Rural-to-Urban Migrants and Policy Responses in China: Insights from a Survey in Fuzhou', *IDS Bulletin*, 41 (4): 12-21.

III. School of Social Development and Public Policy, Beijing Normal University – The Impact of Natural Disasters on the Social Protection System: Lessons from the Wenchuan Earthquake

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2. Pei, X.M. and Tang, Y.C. (2010) 'Old age protection in the context of rural development', *IDS Bulletin*, 41 (4): 22-30.
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VI. The SMERU Research Institute, Indonesia – Conditional Cash Transfer and Intra-household Gender Relations: A Note from Indonesia

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VIII. CEPT University, Faculty of Planning and Public Policy, Ahmedabad – Inclusive Urbanisation – Social Protection for the Slum and Pavement Dwellers in India

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