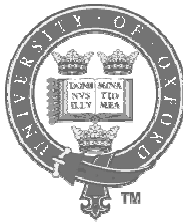


Process deficits or political constraints?
Bottom-up evaluation of
non-contributory social protection
policy for rural labourers in India

Sony Pellissery
April 2005



St Cross College, University of Oxford

E-mail: sony.pellissery@gmail.com

CPRC Working Paper 54

Chronic Poverty Research Centre
ISBN Number: 1-904049-53-2

Abstract

Often, the implementation of anti-poverty programmes has been evaluated on the basis of their outcomes rather than the process of implementation. Such methods of evaluation assume that good outcome indicators are the result of good implementation. This evaluation methodology assumes that the programme was 'prescribed' as a solution to a problem (the 'rational' approach), and better the outcome indicators, more is the problem reduction. However, with the emergence of public choice theories, 'policy process' has been the key point of inquiry. In developing economies, where the public authorities responsible for designing and implementing redistributive interventions are not sufficiently independent from the interests of the dominant sections of society, the approach of investigating policy process can yield to useful results. Such an approach also can help us to understand the deficit of theory and practice of social protection programmes.

This paper looks into process deficits of income maintenance programmes designed for agricultural labourers in the Indian state of Maharashtra, and its impact on people in persistent poverty. Process deficits have been studied not merely as 'lapses of government programmes'. They are critically examined in the contexts of the political conditions that perpetuate these deficits.

Loyalty to local elites over the span of one's work life increases the possibility of income maintenance at times when work is not available. This enables local elites to avail cheap and instant labour for their private works. Protesting voices of the poorest people are well-managed by elites through the provision of such incentives.

The conclusion of the paper is that anti-poverty programmes, at the implementation stage, strengthen local elites' capacity to wield power and support their own private interests. On the other hand, at the evaluation stage, outcome indicators are used to bolster the legitimacy of the state. Above all, the ability of local elites to manufacture outcome indicators point to a need for rethinking evaluation methods.

Note

An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Social Protection for Chronic Poverty Conference (23-24 February 2005) at the Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester. I am very grateful to the participants of this conference for their useful comments. I would like to offer special thanks to George Smith and Barbara Harriss-White for their suggestions at the stage of designing this study. Karen Moore provided insightful thoughts and language revision of the final manuscript. Any remaining errors are my own responsibility.

Table of contents

Abstract and note	2
Introduction	4
<i>Social protection in rural India</i>	
<i>Method of study</i>	
Process of income maintenance provisioning	8
<i>Preparing the application</i>	
<i>Submitting the application</i>	
<i>Decision-making</i>	
<i>Delivery mode of the benefits</i>	
The differential allocation: the reasons emerging from communities	15
<i>Prevention of receipt of benefit</i>	
Conclusion	17
References	19
Appendix – National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)	22

Introduction

Traditionally, project evaluations look into the number of people benefiting from a project, and high take-up is considered as an indicator of success of the scheme. This assumes that take-up is according to the guidelines of the project, and therefore whether guidelines have been maintained is perceived as irrelevant for study. However, in recent times, targeting has become a subject of evaluation, especially by academics and funding agencies that want to make sure their funds are reaching the needy. But these studies are not helpful for understanding the causal factors of targeting failures. Rather, they examine whether 'F-mistakes', where some of the poor are excluded from the benefits, or 'E-mistakes', where benefits are provided to the non-poor as well as poor (Cornia and Stewart 1995), are taking place. To understand the causal factors associated with F-mistakes and E-mistakes, process tracing associated with targeting needs to be done, using a mixture of methods. There is a dearth of studies of this kind, including in the context of social protection interventions, an emerging set of targeted programmes in developing countries. This paper aims to bridge this gap. By focussing on the issue of targeted programmes of social protection, the paper is an attempt to demonstrate the effects of process deficits on poor people.

Social protection in rural India

The World Summit of Social Development at Copenhagen in 1995 stated that provision of social security is one of the important parameters for social development of a country. Since then (along with a very few studies even before that), a good number of papers on the issue of social protection in developing countries have appeared. Common issues identified in these studies¹ are i) fiscal difficulties of developing countries to provide adequate social protection for its citizens, ii) availability of decent social protection only to workers in formal sectors, while workers in the informal sector outnumber the formal sector in high proportion, and iii) widespread nature of poverty and the need to consider the provision of social protection within the framework of poverty eradication. It is because of the third commonality that the distinction of 'protective' and 'promotive' aspects² of social protection, as suggested by Drèze and Sen (1991), became important. While *protection* is "the task of preventing a decline in living standards or the basic conditions of living" (Drèze and Sen, 1991: 1), *promotion* is about the enhancement of general living standards and the expansion of basic capabilities (e.g. education).

These two concepts of *protective* social security and *promotive* social security need further explanation³ because of the interrelated nature of these seemingly distinct concepts when

¹ There is an emerging consensus on using 'social protection' as an umbrella term to include the concepts of social security, safety nets and social insurance (Barrientos and Shepherd, 2003). I will use the terms social security and social protection interchangeably in this paper. The literature on social protection in developing countries has seen an unprecedented increase since the beginning of the 1990s. These studies present a largely common set of difficulties of providing social protection to citizens in developing countries. Some of these studies are: Midgley, 1984; Drèze, 1988; Ahmadi et al, 1991; Harriss-White, 1993; Guhan, 1993, 1994; Sen, 1996; Robinson and White, 1997; ILO, 1997; Singh, 1998; Jutting, 1999; Harriss-White, 1999; van Ginneken, 1998, 1999; Rajan 2001, 2002; Subramanya, 2002; Asher, 2000; OASIS, 2000; Goswami, 2002.

² Drèze and Sen (1991) have cautioned not to understand the terms 'protection' and 'promotion' in an ideological manner or as a paternalistic approach to poor people. The agency which provides the service is not the main point of reference, rather the objective of the programme is the main focus.

³ At this juncture it is useful to bear in mind a further classification made by Guhan (1994). Besides promotive and protective social security, Guhan points out the 'preventive' element in social security. The reference in 'preventive social security' is to all welfare programmes such as education, health, nutrition, employment, water supplies and housing. These do not aim at a particular section of the population who may be poor. Though the provision of these services is universal, their availability may not be universal. For example, take the case of the veterinary service in an agrarian village. When an epidemic is spread among the cattle of a village, the government veterinary doctor may be available

observed from a poverty reduction perspective. The distinction is illustrated by Harriss-White (1993): “protective social security has as its aim the prevention of contingent poverty, promotive security has as its aim the maintenance or increase of incomes and other capabilities in order to reduce poverty which is not contingent but structural”. The need for protective measures arises because of the failure of promotive measures. Education, employment, nutrition and health, which are targeted at vulnerable sections of population, come in to the category of promotive social security aiming at improving the general standard of living. Such promotive measures could be an indirect resource transfer (e.g. abolition of school fees or medical consultation fees) or a direct investment in poor people’s assets or to increase their skills and capabilities (Midgley, 1984). Protective social security becomes necessary to support people who are not able to improve their general standard of living despite the promotive measures.

Since the 1970s, the Government of India has begun a number of targeted programmes to reduce poverty, especially in rural areas in the form of employment provisions, elementary education for all children up to 14 years of age, minimum public health facilities integrated with family planning and nutrition for children, protected water supply, amenities for landless labour, slum improvement in larger towns, construction of rural roads and rural electrification.⁴ Rural Works programmes were important promotive measure. State governments ran various such programmes as well; for example, Maharashtra started its famous Employment Guarantee Scheme in 1972.

It was only in 1995 that the Government of India started a nation-wide comprehensive protective social security plan (National Social Assistance Programme, or NSAP). However, various protective social security programmes existed before 1995 at the state level.⁵ For example, the state of Maharashtra began to provide protective social security in 1980. The central government’s NSAP, along with state government programmes, are providing some sort of protective measures. However, the most important issue regarding these protective measures is that the benefits are very small (see Appendix I for details).

only to the privileged households (on the basis of wealth or political power), resulting in an asset loss for the poorer sections. The same phenomenon can be observed in the use of services such as the water supply, education or health. Access is not universal. Ideally (looking from a redistributive point of view), as poor households are not always able to use private veterinary services (due to high fees), the government veterinary service should have been first made available to poorer households. But, in reality, government investment in terms of infrastructure or salary for veterinary personnel disproportionately benefits the richer classes of society. The redistributive efficacy of preventive social security has to be studied in the context of taxation policies and various other economic variables. However, I do not intend to use this category of preventive social security. My particular interest is how the targeted social security schemes are allocated/provided. An opposite view, to provide all welfare services universally, that is as preventive social security only, can be found in Korpi and Palme (1998). Some scholars (Dasgupta, 2002) prefer to keep the distinction of social security vs. socio-economic security. Social security refers to contingency measures (protective) and socio-economic security refers to work based security (promotive security).

⁴ Annual plans of the late 1960s introduced the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) to ensure food security for the poor. The fourth five-year plan (1970-75) expanded this scheme. For the first time, redistribution received important attention in plan documents when the fifth five-year plan (1975-80) delineated a basic needs programme (Patnaik and Patnaik, 2001; Vaidyanathan, 2001). Prior to that, India’s development agenda was, first, to ‘catch up with the industrial world’ whereby the urban centres received disproportionate attention (Patnaik and Patnaik, 2001), and, second, to develop infrastructure in rural areas, from which the rural elites benefited disproportionately (Nayyar, 1998).

⁵ Social security is placed in the concurrent list of the Constitution of India, whereby both central government and state government shares responsibility for providing social security to citizens. See Dev (1998) for a list of state-level protective programmes.

How do poor people survive if the benefits are totally insufficient? It is here that we turn to different types of social protection available to poor people.⁶ Harriss-White (1999) and Jutting (2000) identified four organisations that are significant sources of social security provision: state, market, non-governmental organisations and civil society institutions, and households. The ideological orientation, resource availability, decision-making process, methods of provisioning, and eligibility criteria differ significantly between these organizations. It is a combination of benefits from all these agencies that allow a poor person to survive in the context of insufficient state provision. Although insufficient, for poor people the state programme is likely to be the main source of benefit since the state is the only agency accountable to the welfare rights of its citizens (Harriss-White, 1995; 1999).

Although the above agency-wise disaggregation is useful for analytical purposes, it is important to note that in close-knit communities (as in rural areas), the resources, roles, power structures, norms and legitimacy all overlap in multiplex relations between individuals and organizations (e.g. a poor household may relate to the same elite in his roles as political leader, landlord and volunteer in some group or religious activity at the same time) (Kabeer, 1994). Therefore, how networks⁷ between individuals in these agencies function, and how decision-makers involved in the agencies, in different roles, act differently in different relationships, becomes very important. It is in this triangular tension of state forces, market forces and societal forces (see the 'shadow state' and informal economy concepts of Harriss-White, 2003 and Meier, 1992) that policy formulation and implementation takes place. Therefore, the impact of redistributive policy and provision should be investigated within the framework of institutions and public authorities responsible for its implementation. Where the agents of triangular tension intersect, i.e. elites, the public authority has the potential to prevent or facilitate the policy process.

Therefore, in the context of this research in which the availability of social protection from multiple sources is examined, the role of the elite is of crucial concern for three reasons: i) the elite may be strategically placed at the critical state-society intersection point and become important actors in the implementation of any provision by the state programmes to rural communities, ii) the nexus of wealth and power makes the elite crucial actors in the market provision of social security and iii) the elite as formal or informal leaders are likely to take the initiative and control of any collective action. This probably leaves only the household where the elite has no influence over the provisioning of social protection.

In a given community, the elite may have multiplex relations and access to and control over more than one agency. This may allow them to use social security provision as a mechanism to expand their power in the community through the linkages they possess. It also allows the elite to create a network with other elite members of the community to strengthen their own position. For example, a 'market elite' person may, by using his network ability with another elite, prevent public provision or collective action such that a poor household is pushed to serve the market 'interest' instead (e.g. forcing the poor to provide labour at cheaper price at a landlord's farm, which an unemployed person might not have done if had he the opportunity to get public provision). On the other hand, a 'political elite' person may encourage collective effort by a self-help group, as long as the group interaction of the members is in his favour and may potentially reduce the power of the market elite on the community members.

⁶ There are various classifications of the sources of social security. 'Traditional vs. 'Modern', 'Formal vs. Informal', 'State vs. Private' are some of the common classifications. See Jutting (2000) for a critique of these classifications and the need of new classification dealing with developing countries. Rather than addressing the typological issue, my purpose is to identify the sources, which play contributory role of social security for the poor people.

⁷ See Meagher (2004) to see how the 'informality' concept has been taken over by the 'network' concept. "Networks of civic engagement embody past success at collaboration which can serve as a cultural template for future collaboration" (Putnam, 1993).

Method of study

This study operationalised 'protective measure' as non-contributory income maintenance provision, which is available when a person becomes old, disabled, or separated/widowed with dependent children.⁸ The study is based on data collected during fieldwork between October 2003 and June 2004 in the Indian state of Maharashtra⁹ as part of a D.Phil. project at Oxford University.

In order to examine the social protection measures, two villages from two different tehsils (a group of villages) of the Marathwada region of central Maharashtra were purposively selected controlling for socio-economic factors.¹⁰ The purposive selection was guided by the criterion of having a large number of eligible persons. The number of Below Poverty Line (BPL) households was thus considered. In one village, 20% of households (n=1211) were BPL, and in the other, 28% of households (n=498) were BPL. A main difference between the villages was that in one village a weekly market is held (this will be called Bajgaon henceforth), while the other was a non-market village (this will be called Saralgaon henceforth). Bajgaon is bigger with a population of about 7,255, while Saralgaon had a population of about 2,825.¹¹ The first two months of fieldwork were spent in Bajgaon, and the next two months were spent in Saralgaon; then we returned for three months in Bajgaon and one month in Saralgaon.¹² A research assistant accompanied the researcher through out the study, taking notes and at times interviewing independently.

These two villages were, however, only focus areas. The whole district was considered as a unit of study and visits to various villages were undertaken and interviews with different levels of officials conducted. Four phases of the fieldwork, which were conducted in the following order, can be distinguished in each community: i) familiarisation with the community, meeting people, introducing ourselves, making strategic friends and identifying key informants; ii) identifying community elites through reputation technique;¹³ iii) in-depth

⁸ Only those benefits that may be received from the state on a continued basis are examined here. There is big difference between one-time benefits (e.g. maternity benefit, relief for the death of primary bread winner) and continued benefits in terms of management and awareness among the people.

⁹ The state of Maharashtra was chosen primarily because of the researcher's previous research experience in the state and local language proficiency. It was not possible to include more than one state in the study since, as mentioned earlier, programmes vary between states and comparison is difficult.

¹⁰ Marathwada is one of the poorest regions in India (Mehta and Shah, 2001). All eight districts (Jalna, Aurangabad, Parbhani, Hingoli, Nanded, Latur, Osmanabad and Beed) in the region appear in the list of 'most backward 100 districts of India' (Gol, 1997). The districts are further divided into 77 *tehsils* and 7813 villages. The economy is predominantly agrarian, and in rural areas 84.5 % of population is dependent on agriculture. Of this, 40.5% are landless agricultural labourers. *Marathas* constitute the chief landholding and majority caste. *Mahars*, with 15% of the population are, though landless, a politically conscious lower caste community. *Marwaris* constitute the trading caste and moneylenders of villages. 25% of the population are Muslims. Communal tensions between Muslims and Hindus are common since the 1990s when the political parties *Bharatiya Janatha Party* and *Shiv Sena* made significant popular bases in the region, drawing on traditional supporters of the Congress Party.

Both villages were selected from the region of Marathwada. Selecting two villages from the same region is important in order to control for cultural variation. It was also ensured that no significant differences in other socio-economic characteristics existed between the villages.

¹¹ This difference is typical of the demographic composition of villages in rural India. The villages with a larger population normally have a weekly market, with 8-12 smaller non-market villages nearby. It is important to study both market and non-market villages to understand the rural situation in total.

¹² An extra month was spent in Bajgaon since it is a larger village needing more time for the survey in particular.

¹³ Reputation technique is preferred to other methods of identifying elites compared to positional identification, issue participation, or ecological approach. Elite status has been determined using a

interviews with elites and stakeholders of social protection provision from the sectors of state, market and civil society institutions; and iv) survey of the beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries of social protection.

Process of income maintenance provisioning

Unlike the universal systems of income maintenance provision, where all members in a particular situation are eligible for the benefit irrespective of their income levels, means-tested systems are based on the process of making an application, success of the application, and delivery of the benefit. In universal systems the first two processes may take place automatically or with little effort. The processes of making application and its success involve the applicant relating with a number of persons. Since the applicant is a very poor person these relationships tend to be unequal. Therefore, it is important to unravel the processes involved in order to understand the mechanisms that may facilitate or prevent the persons from obtaining their legitimate benefit.

Preparing the application

Making an application for income maintenance involves a substantial amount of effort, and is very time consuming. First is the process of obtaining the application form. The application form is expected to be available in the village office and tehsil office. However, this is usually not the case. The places where they are usually available are photocopier shops near the tehsil office or with 'writers' (*karkhoon*). The photocopying shopkeepers obtain a copy of the application form from the tehsil office and make copies of them to sell at a price of Rs.15 (about US\$0.35). The tehsil office will not admit to the fact that application forms are not available from the office, and it was even noted that a tehsil office was making official announcements that people should not buy the application form from private agencies since those forms are free of cost from tehsil office. This method of trumpeting the official version and practicing the contrary is most typical of all the processes involved in provisioning.

In fact, the application form *is* available from the tehsil office – to those 'who knows how to get things done'. To understand what is meant by this we need to further understand how the officials in the tehsil (or, for that matter, in most of the government offices) deal with poor people. When a villager wants to obtain an application form¹⁴ he/she goes to the tehsil office. The person would straight away be told that he could obtain the application form from a photocopying shop. If he/she insists on an application form from the tehsil office, he may be informally asked a few questions. The first question asked is the name of the person. The answer reveals the caste and religion of the person. The next question is which village she/he comes from. Outwardly, these two questions sound neutral and a preliminary question to establish a relationship. However, with the answers to both questions, the official will be able to place the person within a particular community and understand his social status and power linkages. (A tehsil is constituted of about 100 villages and the official knows who in each village is important and how each caste/religion is connected with powerful persons in each village.) Officials also take dressing style and mode of speaking into consideration to understand economic class, and then makes a decision whether to provide the application form or not.

A typical application form contains 15 pages. Most of the pages in the application form are statements to be certified by village level government officers. Poor people, especially those who are illiterate but even some with an average level of education, have to depend on someone else to get the application filled in the correct way. There is no one in the tehsil

score analysis of the reputation technique. More on reputation technique and other techniques to identify community elites can be found in Singh (1988).

¹⁴ This illustration is not only applicable to the case of obtaining an application form, but to any occasion when villagers deal with *tehsil* officials.

office to assist in this process. When asked about this lack of facility to assist poor people, one of the officials said that people take the help of their relatives or leaders from the village to get their application form filled. However, these officials are aware that such help is often not available to poor people and that it costs them.

There are two sources of help at this stage: i) 'writers' (*karkhoons*) with small offices near the tehsil office, and ii) brokers (also called 'agents'), operating at the village level.¹⁵ 'Writers' are often educated youth acting as para-legal professionals doing a variety of paper work ranging from land transaction papers to civil and criminal case paper preparations. There are about 40 such 'writers' near a tehsil office. Some of them operate with a single table positioned under a tree. Some others have a single-room office. They have most of the necessary forms required for government purposes, including the application forms for income maintenance, which are available for purchase. They charge an additional fee for filling these application forms 'appropriately'. This fee can vary from Rs.50 to Rs.250 (US\$1.15-5.75) depending on the writer's fame, the applicant, and his/her ability to pay. Based on their experience, the 'writers' are able to recommend to an applicant how to fill the application. For example, to avail an old age pension, it is advisable to present oneself as having 'no children, no land and no income', even though the case may be otherwise. However, the 'writer' does not take the responsibility of obtaining certification from village officers for the facts he records and this responsibility remains with the applicant him/herself.

On the other hand, the brokers operating at the village level do the jobs of 'writers' (selling application forms and filling them up appropriately), and additionally take the responsibility of getting certification from village officers. However, brokers do not operate in all the villages. They are usually found only in market villages. The main reason for the presence of brokers in market villages is the large population and the ability of these village hubs to act as access points for the people from smaller villages surrounding the market village. These brokers are mostly linked up with the main village elite and work in good understanding with them.

A broker bargains and strikes a deal does with a potential applicant regarding the fee payable to the broker. This fee varies from Rs.250 to Rs.1000 (US\$5.75-23.00). A critical point of bargaining is the extent of responsibilities that the broker will undertake. If the potential applicant is able to pay only a small amount, the broker would simply act as a writer and leave the responsibility of getting certification from village officials to the applicant him/herself. The fee also depends on the difficulty of the case or the ineligibility of the applicant. On certain occasions an extraordinarily high fee will be quoted if the applicant is not in good terms with the elite with whom the broker works in tandem. This is to discourage the applicant, because there is no point to the broker undertaking the responsibility for the applicant if ultimately the elite will not grant the application. The fee is payable after the success of the application, if an applicant is not able to pay the fee instantly.

If a deal is struck, it is the responsibility of the broker to see that the application is successful. He has to undertake a number of responsibilities. The broker does everything, including exerting influence on local elites, to get the application granted. When a broker was asked why he was doing this work, he posed himself as a 'social worker' involved in helping the people. But on further probing he admitted that during the process of helping people a lot of expense is incurred by him, such as travel to the tehsil office, giving necessary kickbacks, and photocopying application forms. By charging a fee to the applicant, he is able to make a living for himself. More interesting, in response to a question on why people were increasingly approaching him, he quoted a Marathi phrase: 'various locks, but just one key'.

¹⁵ The Government of Maharashtra has realised the need for helping poor people when they deal with government offices. A project called SETU (Bridge) has started at *tehsil* offices particularly for this purpose. However, applicants for income maintenance rarely use these facilities. Although the SETU office is run by an NGO, the space to run these services is given by the government. They function in a similar fashion to government offices. SETU's service is mostly used to obtain birth and death certificates and land record certificates.

This is correct: going through a broker to submit an application avoids delay and the expense of meeting various personnel involved in it. But more significantly, the emergence of brokers has literally ruled out other help that may have been available to the people. Previously people would go to an educated person in the village or a village official to get the application form filled in. Now people are directed to the broker, as it is claimed that he is more competent in writing application forms.

The main job of the broker is to obtain certificates from village officers. There are three major certificates needed:

Age certificate: The applicant needs to submit either a school leaving certificate or an attested extract of the Gram Panchayat birth register. Often, either these do not exist or are very difficult to obtain.¹⁶ Therefore, a third option is given as proof of age: an age certificate from a Government Medical Officer. Usually, it is this third option that is used by applicants and brokers to provide proof of the age. A medical officer is expected to examine the person's appearance to determine age. In practice, medical officers will often certify any age if given a small amount of money (about Rs.20/US\$0.45). The village broker already knows the medical officer and the medical officer also knows the broker and the broker's relationship with the main village elite. Therefore, a medical officer even gives certificates without seeing the applicant or taking any money.¹⁷

Income/property certificate: The *talathi* (village revenue officer) is the competent authority to give this certificate. Often the *talathi* examines the land records¹⁸ and states whether a person owns land and what the income from the land is. There is little room for making a wrong statement in this case. A *talathi* will give the certification for a fee of about Rs.20. However, it is not easy for an applicant to find and meet with the *talathi* and obtain the certificate, since a *talathi* usually has the responsibility of 5-6 villages. Here the broker's proximity to the *talathi* becomes helpful, and he can get the certification without any expense.

Certificate of residency: A person has to prove that he has been staying in the state of Maharashtra for past 15 years. The *talathi* or *sarpanch* (village council president) are competent persons to certify this. The difficulty here is the same as with the income certificates – to locate and meet with the *talathi* or *sarpanch* – and a broker is able to get things done quickly without paying any kickbacks.

These three certificates are mandatory for all applications. Applications for disability benefits require additional certificates, including a disability certificate, which are much harder to obtain and brokers charge excessively. A respondent explained to us that she was asked by a broker to pay Rs.3000 (about US\$70) to obtain a benefit on behalf of her mentally retarded daughter.

Poor people use a broker because of three factors. First, if the applicant has to go himself it can take several days to obtain one certificate. One respondent narrated her plight of spending six days to meet the *sarpanch*; when she finally met him he asked her to come

¹⁶ Even if the documents exist in the village office, they are not easily available. When a poor person approaches the village office for any of these certificates, village officers take it as an occasion to make the person pay any outstanding taxes, such as land tax, house tax etc. It is the responsibility of the village government to collect these taxes. Usually these taxes are not paid regularly and there may be large arrears (about Rs.500 or more) that are due by poor households. The village officer makes payment of arrears a precondition to providing any certificates. However, the village officer skips this precondition if a small bribe (Rs.20 or so) is paid. This results in accumulating the arrears on an individual basis and a resource loss to the village government.

¹⁷ During an interview with a medical officer, it was interesting to hear him complain about a broker who would pressurise him to certify a false age.

¹⁸ Land records are huge log-books and it is tedious to examine them. (However, Maharashtra is currently computerising all land records). Usually *talathis* appoint an assistant to do the routine jobs and pay a meagre salary. The assistant has to collect bribes to make a decent salary for himself.

back another day. Casual agricultural wage labourers cannot afford to miss a day's labour. Therefore, spending days to obtain certification proves more costly for them. Second, obtaining certificates from each officer means paying kickbacks to them individually.¹⁹ Third, there is a higher chance of obtaining the benefit when applying through a broker since he works in tandem with the elite of the village.

Submitting the application

It is not sufficient to deliver the application to the tehsil office – the completed applications have to reach the appropriate official at the tehsil office. This increases the power of the concerned official, and he gets to see the applicant in person. The official understands whether the application is coming through a broker or directly from the applicant himself, or even via a political elite. The officials usually do not accept an application without a small kickback (not less than Rs.10 (US\$0.23)) from the applicant. Brokers are very tactful and are able to efficiently handle the officials. One of the tehsildars said of the brokers:

...they know when the official is happy, when the official is angry, when it is a good time and when it is a bad time. The agents approach the officials looking at the situation and mood of the official, while the people bluntly go to the officials, and if the official is in bad mood, their application will go in the dustbin”.

There is no exaggeration in the tehsildar's comment. A good number of applicants who applied a second time were told that their first application was not successful because the official could not find their application. Thus he/she would be asked to make a new application. Taramati's experience is worth recounting here. Taramati applied for income maintenance for her minor children after her husband died in an accident. Her first application was not successful. She started working in a farm of village elite regularly on a daily wage basis, and the elite told her to apply for the income maintenance benefit. She told the elite that she had applied some six years back and she had not heard from the officials. The elite asked her to follow up the matter, and he would ask the officials to grant her application. She repeatedly went to the officials and they would direct her from one official to the other. After four journeys to the tehsil office, officials told her that her application was not found in the office. She was asked to submit a new application if she wanted income maintenance. She collected the certifications needed again and submitted a second time. She said:

I would not move from the office even after submitting application. I kept looking at the application, and the place where the official had kept it. The official was casual with my application. I had made the application with much difficulty. He kept my application amidst a heap of files. What certainty is there that he would find my application at the right time, when some decision has to be made on the application?

Another strategy used by officials is not to accept the application. Especially if the applicant is submitting the application directly, the official may glance through the application, point out a mistake, and ask him/her to bring back the corrected application form. The applicant gets worried about whether the application would be successful and takes back the application. Gangubai was a woman of great determination. When her husband died of tuberculosis, she decided to complete the application for income maintenance all by herself, although illiterate. Having four small children (ranging in age between two and nine years), daily wage labour was important to feed her children. It took seven months for Gangubai to get the necessary documents signed. Finally, when she took the application form to the tehsil, the official told her, “Look, I can't take this application, because where the talathi is supposed to sign, the Village Level Worker has signed”. She took back the application hoping that she may be able

¹⁹ The kickbacks may be higher if the individual who makes request is alone with the officer. If there is another community member present, the officer will often request the 'normal' fee.

to submit it again another time. The directive given to the tehsil officials is that the application form should be accepted and the supporting documents should be requested in writing from the applicants if any of the supporting documents are missing.

By refusing to accept an application, an official is making a double gain. First, he reduces the likelihood of having to face the applicant again, as often the applicants get disappointed and give up their attempt, or the difficulty of filing the supporting documents with the original application form. Attempts by bureaucrats to reduce their workloads affecting the rights of people have been well-documented in the literature on 'street level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 1980; Blalock, 1991). Second, by refusing to accept an application it can be shown that there were few rejected applications, and therefore the tehsil office was meeting demand. This also could have implications for allocation of funds for a particular scheme. When demand is perceived to be low for a scheme, there is little reason to allocate more funds. Besides, modification in eligibility criteria can be made only if the rejected applications are scrutinised. Therefore, by refusing to accept application forms the possibility of policy change is being blocked.

Decision-making

Officials are expected to scrutinize all the applications they receive, remind the applicants to present any missing documents, and to present the applications to the Social Security Committee (SSC, henceforth), which is expected to meet bi-monthly. Ideally the SSC should verify whether the applications presented to them meet the eligibility criteria, and inform the applicants about its decision. However, the actual practice of the SSC is different. We need to understand the composition of the SSC to understand the reasons behind actual practices.

The state government, in active consultation with the respective District Guardian Minister, appoints members of the SSC. The Guardian Ministers are from the ruling party, and consult local party workers regarding the appointment of various subcommittees at tehsil level. Ideally, this consultation should result in the appointment of a group of active members of civil society capable of checking the tehsil officials, to ensure the quality of service to poor people without bureaucratic red-tape-ism in their applications. But in practice, a group of party workers are ultimately nominated to the SSC with a minority of active members of civil society. At the same time, whatever the nature of the composition of the committee, its powers can be controlled through guidelines and enforcement of those guidelines.

The researcher's first interest was to know how many applications could be granted in a meeting by the SSC. To my question as to whether there is a maximum threshold number for the number of beneficiaries, the officials at all the levels – tehsil, district and State – said that there is no such number and "we could provide for any number of applications that meet the eligibility criteria". However, the actual practice at SSC meetings was different. The committee granted about 30 applications every time it met, from 100-150 applications received. How are these 30 applications picked? Were there applications other than the 30 selected that met the eligibility criteria? Did the selected applications meet the criteria? Are the applications granted on first come, first served basis? These are the most important substantive questions to be answered through observing an SSC meeting.

At the outset, let me remind readers about the way in which applications were submitted: either through writers or brokers. So, the applications came through experienced hands who knew what acceptable applications should look like. Thus, most of the applications looked almost the same. Most also had documentation attached. If the documentation went against the application, the document was missing. For example, if a person had land, that application missed the certificate of property. SSC members also recognised the problem of scrutinising a large number of carefully camouflaged applications.²⁰ The officials did not keep a record of the date when the application was received and therefore, practically, the

²⁰ It is doubtful whether SSC members would have adopted another method of selection even if the applications were not camouflaged.

principle of first come-first served could not be used. When a pile of applications was handed over to the SSC, it is not clear whether all the applications were handed over.

It was noticed that the SSC Chairman had a small piece of paper on which certain names were scribbled. He picked up the applications using the names on his list. Other members of the committee also picked one or two each of the applications. They asked the Chairman, 'how about granting this application?'. The Chairman would glance at each application and put them aside. There were two brokers present as informal observers in the meeting place, one of whom was linked with the Vice-Chairman of the committee. This broker had a list of 12 people whose applications needed granting and he would ask the Vice-Chairman to select these applications for consideration. Thus, from the 150 applications only those applications in which one of the committee member personally took interest were granted.

It is interesting that the Chairman decided to carry a piece of paper on which he had the names of those whose application had to be granted. Why did he make it obvious? Could not he have remembered the names? It seems there were quite a few names on the list, and perhaps many of these names were not familiar to him since they were recommended by brokers. Another reason is the Chairman's capacity to exercise power with the confidence that no one challenge him.

There were also about 20 applicants sitting in the meeting room (on the ground, while the SSC members were sitting on chairs, and the brokers standing near their respective elites). By the end of the meeting it was becoming clear which applications were being granted and which rejected. Therefore, there began to be some unrest among the applicants present.

Interestingly, during the entire meeting, only one application was granted in another way – an application submitted by a disabled person. Towards the end of the meeting one of the officials in particular pleaded with the Chairman about the case of a disabled person. The Chairman was irritated by this, and asked where the application was. In the application, when the disabled person's picture was seen by the committee members, one of the members said, 'today anyone could take a photograph like this' and laughed about it. Then the Chairman said, 'This application cannot be granted. Where is this person?'. The official, perhaps foreseeing such a situation, asked the disabled person and his relative to be present in the vicinity of the meeting. He brought the disabled person into the meeting room. The disabled person, who is blind, finds it difficult to walk and has twisted arms, gave a moving demonstration to the members to illustrate his disabilities. This changed the situation of the meeting and one of the committee members said 'yes, he should be given the benefit and we don't need any other proof', and the Chairman assented.

This brief episode points to the fact that the need of a person has to be directly perceived by an elite/committee member for her/him be eligible for the state benefit. In the first instance, the official may have taken interest in the case because the applicant may have frequented his offices, such that he was convinced of the applicant meeting the eligibility criteria.

It was also interesting to observe the applicants themselves observing how their applications were being treated. The response of one of the committee members about why applicants were allowed in the meeting was as follows:

If the tehsil officials conduct a meeting, they do not allow the people to come near the meeting. We are the people's representatives. We want to be close to the people.

What comes out of such an expression is that the political body wants to have a certain visibility in front of the applicants. This visibility does not, however, relate to the transparency of the process. Rather, the committee members want to assert their power and present themselves as decision-makers. It belittles the people's rights to the benefits, and engages people in a bargaining process with the members of the committee to obtain the benefits.

During the meeting there was continuous scolding and shouting at the officials by the SSC Chairman in front of those people present. This further underlined the fact that the success of

applications does not depend on officials but on the committee, which should finally 'grant' the benefits to the people. Thus, the committee was systematically drawing people's loyalty through its proceedings, not only to the SSC members but also to the ruling party. Thus, welfare rights were being made conditional on party affiliation.

Delivery mode of the benefits

Another important process deficit is in regard to communication with the applicants. Tehsil officials claim that they inform both the selected applicants and those whose applications have been denied through post. This is a very important step, but one that is not often done. Most of the applicants come to know the decision of the SSC informally through the broker or the delivery mechanism. Applicants will ask the postman repeatedly as to whether money has come for him/her. This puts the applicant in a bargaining position with another person in the link to obtain welfare benefits.

From 1980 when the scheme began, the benefit has been delivered to beneficiaries through the post office. The postman brings the money orders to a central place in the village and shouts out the names of beneficiaries for whom money orders have come. He gives the money taking a thumb impression or signature from each beneficiary. It is a normal practice to take Rs.20 (US\$0.45) from each person. The beneficiaries do not protest. One of them said: "We all decided amongst ourselves that Rs.20 should be given to the postman by beneficiaries". This may sound as though corruption has entered into the marrow of society and that people collectively decided to accept a corrupt system. But it is also a mechanism through which the people have decided the limits for the postman, rather than entering into a bargaining process every time.

It is important to note that money reaches the correct beneficiary and not someone else in the household. The postman insisted on meeting the beneficiary, and would not give the benefit even to a close relative. Given the importance of male household members within the patriarchal system, that the delivery agency ensures that money reaches the woman is to be appreciated.

But irregularities (discussed below) regarding postal delivery were so high earlier that the government had to make changes. Now most tehsils deliver the benefit through banks. The problems of delivering through banks have to be studied in further detail after some time as the new system has just begun, but it is clear that delivering through banks brings another set of problems. Most beneficiaries have their first bank account opened in order to receive welfare benefits, and hardly know how to handle an account. Two other problems have been noticed so far. i) The bank official decides to keep some amount in the beneficiary's account, so that the beneficiary thinks that the benefit amount is lower than usual. There is a possibility that bank officials can make a person sign for and receive a different amount, which was not possible through postal Money Orders. ii) Banks are not located in or near small villages like Saralgaon, making accessing benefits especially difficult for infirm beneficiaries. Postmen used to bring benefits even to the most remote villages.

Why do poor people put up with such irregularities in the delivery systems? First, it is not easy for people to identify whether they are given the correct amount due to two factors. i) Most beneficiaries do not know how much money they are entitled to receive. This was particularly due to the irregularity of benefit disbursement from state and central government headquarters. While central government disburses money once per year, state governments disburse every three months. People often find it difficult to calculate and understand their entitlement, so most beneficiaries 'trust' that the money given to them was the entire amount sent to them. This 'trust' emerges from the fact that there is no way for them to counter-check and argue about the actual amounts due. 2) Illiteracy and innumeracy meant that many people are unable determine the correct amount due to them. However, this is often overcome with the help of educated members of the community or household. Often beneficiaries would compare the money they received with another beneficiary, and if it were similar amount, they would be content.

Given these limitations to identifying irregularities, people were willing to part with a small amount of money because they knew that if they insisted on the payment of the full amount (including the Rs.20 given as a kickback) they would stand to lose the entire amount. Therefore, they made complaints and collective protests only when the postman stole the whole amount. One woman beneficiary explained:

You are getting something. Why ask for the full amount of money? Is this money from our home or ancestor's home? The government is giving something and you should be thankful rather than fighting.

Community elites and officials perpetuate this view. The head official of the IM at tehsil told:

It is so difficult to manage this office. All kinds of people come to this office. People are getting some free money so everyone gathers there like a bee on a sweet.

The response from the official and that of the beneficiary complement each other, suggesting the official is doing a tedious task of distributing free money and the beneficiary should receive whatever is given without giving any trouble to the official. Beneficiaries perceived the benefit given to them as 'free money' given by the government, rather than a welfare right.

The differential allocation: the reasons emerging from communities

Having seen the process of differential allocation, we need to further investigate the reasons for this. The reasons why a particular application is picked up by a particular committee member lie in the community in which the applicant lives and his relationships there.

What is obvious from the characteristics of the elites in both communities is that people with a political power base and a large amount of agricultural land occupy the top-most positions in both communities, irrespective of caste. Credit providers and shopkeepers are among the ranks of the community elite, but they appear at the bottom of the rank list. The researcher expected to find village-level government employees (such as village-level workers or revenue officers) on the 'elite list', but neither these, nor any other institutional employees (except those of non-governmental organisations in Saralgaon) were considered elite. It is likely that these institutions have been co-opted by community elites so that people do not see the institutions as centres of power.

How does such a description of elites help us to understand the differential allocation of benefits? The theoretical basis of this study is that a policy choice resulting in differential allocations of state provision is a residual from the kind of transactions that exist in private and civil society spheres. Therefore, it is important to study private sector and civil society transactions in the village and the transaction stakeholders.

The applicants for social security benefits, who are landless or small farm holders, tend to be involved in intensive transactions within the daily wage labour market in the agricultural sector. Many community elites, who are landlords, engage in bargaining with the daily wage labourers, especially over social security issues. There is not significant bargaining on issues of wages or jobs, but bargaining about security issues is significant. Bargaining for wages or demanding more jobs is seen as a threat against the power of the landlord, and a labourer can easily be replaced by another when labour is available in large supply. The labourer is aware of this situation, so tries to gain benefits by making demands in non-threatening ways. This can be through requesting assistance from the landlord when a member of the labourer's household falls ill, or there is a marriage or pregnancy and delivery, or when the labourer becomes old. These are non-threatening requests because the labourer communicates to the landlord non-verbally that he/she is at their mercy in such a situation. Verbally, the labourer tells that he would pay the requested amount back at a later point in time, or that the amount could be deducted from his wage.

Are these requests granted to every labourer? In order answer this question, it is important to first understand the different types of agricultural labourers. Broadly speaking, there are two types of agricultural labourers. First, the *ghadi* ('the man') of the landlord.²¹ Only males are appointed to this post. The landlord handpicks them at the beginning of the agricultural season every year. They are given half of the contractual amount (Rs.20,000/US\$460 per year, during the fieldwork period) when he is selected. Part of the payment comes in the form of grain. The ghadi is expected to carry out all kinds of work on the farm as determined by the landlord. The ghadi also organises daily wage labour when additional workers are needed. He may be asked to do additional non-farm jobs if there is less work to do on the farm. This is a job much in demand. The landlord often chooses to stick with the same ghadi if the person is reliable and a cautious worker. This in turn increases loyalty on the part of ghadi to the farm and to the landlord.

The second type of labourer is a the daily wage worker. They are employed on a day-to-day basis, and paid on weekly basis. It is the responsibility of the ghadi to bring enough daily wage labourers to the farm. However, the landlord interacts with the daily wage labourers and supervises the work.

Financial requests at a time of household risk and need often would be granted to ghadi, but rarely to the daily wage labourer. Most ghadis, when they stop working with the landlord, are able to gain a state pension through the landlord's influence. This becomes easier when the landlord himself is a member of the political elite. Therefore, there are more people who are ready to work on land owned by a political elite. Political elites pay about Rs.2,000/US\$46 less than other landlords, but workers are willing to forgo this amount given the higher chance of a state pension. The researcher noted one ghadi, aged 46, working on a political elite farm *and* benefiting from the state pension, for which one should be aged 60 or above. The chance of receiving such a benefit while working as a ghadi with a non-political elite landlord is very remote, and depends on the extent of the landlord's network links and whether he could take up the matter with an elite. However, when a daily wage labourer or ghadi is fulfilling all the criteria for receiving a benefit, s/he would approach a broker without going to an elite. On such occasions, it is the leniency on the part of the elite's political party that is crucial.

Prevention of receipt of benefit

The elite-official nexus has the serious implication of preventing the benefit reaching a beneficiary, even after the benefit is officially granted. The researcher came across a number of such beneficiaries. In fact, there is a provision to stop a benefit granted at one point when circumstances change. For example, when a young widow is granted an income maintenance benefit, the benefit can be revoked when her children are over 18. But in actual practice, what tends to happen is that a neighbour points out that there is a son who is above 18 years old (so the benefit should be revoked), but not that there other children below 18, for whom the woman remains eligible. In such cases, the elite takes a decision and directly asks the officials to stop the benefit. The law is that the talathi should undertake an investigation on such occasions and report to the tehsil official. But as a matter of fact the talathi's first point of inquiry is the elite, and the elite's decision prevails even when the talathi inquires about the matter.

The research has suggested that the most important reason for prevention is not that an eligible person falls out of the eligibility criteria. Instead, political reasons in the community lead to the beneficiary not receiving a granted benefit. When a change of government occurs, when the SSC changes, or when the village sarpanch changes, the persons belonging to the opposition parties are vulnerable to deletion from the list of welfare beneficiaries. The easiest way of doing this for an elite is to tell the official that the particular beneficiary is dead. It is an almost impossible task for a 'dead person' to prove that s/he is

²¹ See Walker and Ryan (1990) and Breman (1993) for details of landlord-worker relationships.

alive (Debroy, 2003). What is forthcoming from such cases is the fact that officials are extremely subservient to elites, and do not demand any proof of death certificate to protect the rights of beneficiaries.

The above narrative of the process also reveals that the effects on poor people are due not only to implementation deficits, but sometimes also to enforcing the letter of the scheme rather than the spirit. Both together are to be understood as process deficit. Policy process involves how the objectives of the policy are translated through programmes, and how in fact policy affects people. Various process deficits identified, and their effects on poor people, are summarised below.

Process deficits and effects of income maintenance programme

Process deficits	Possible effects
Obtain application form from informal sources	Additional expense. Easier to obtain than from government sources.
Complex application form	Dependence on middleman for completing the application.
Demand of proof of identity and certificates	Excludes the poorest people who are unlikely to have certificates/documents.
The official accepting application rather than the office	The individual and his/her affiliations become more important. No objective treatment of the applications.
Non-acceptance of partially complete applications	Given the difficulty of providing certificates, non-acceptance of applications blocks the chances of rethinking the criteria for benefits or methods of application. Administration is able to show that it meets demand since there are few applications.
Receipt of the application not acknowledged	Results in officials being able to discard applications from those who have not paid kickbacks.
Political body controls officials	Exclusion of eligible persons who are loyal to opposition parties.
Visibility of meeting to the applicants	Mechanism for drawing loyalty to political elites, so that they can further exercise power over officials.
Political backing for the success of application	Increases clientelistic politics in the community. The poor may be exploited to do favours or labour for the political elites.
Lack of review of the applications at district level	Complete discretion is given to the local authority, and this goes in favour of local politics.
Not informing the result of application	Power of informal stakeholders further strengthened.
Lack of mechanism to review the reason for stopping a benefit	Preventing of the benefit by a political elite through an official in order to settle scores of personal rivalry.

Conclusion

Social protection policy in India is still in its infant stage. This study has shown what works, and what does not work, when providing social protection. What emerges strongly from the study is the importance that must be placed on the concept of 'informality' while designing a programme of social protection in a rural setting. Both officials and claimants prefer to handle the processes in an informal manner, creating serious effects on the welfare rights of the claimants.

Introduction of protective measures by the state seems to be having a reverse influence on 'informal pensions' from the landowners to those labourers who have worked on the landlord's land over their entire lifetime. The landowner feels that the state needs to take care of the labourers rather than himself, so now the responsibility of the landowner is to help the labourer obtain benefits from the state system. This becomes easier if the landowner has political connections. Political elite landlords benefit by being able to get cheaper labourers to work on their farms. In other words, loyalty from workers can be drawn upon at the local level through distributing benefits according to the discretion of local elites.

The role of local elites is instrumental in creating and perpetuating process deficits, through overshadowing the local officer and presenting the view that without the wishes of the elite, obtaining social protection benefits is impossible. On the other hand, these process deficits do not impinge on the state's necessity to justify that social protection is being provided, since the records of outcome indicators are sufficiently in favour of the state.

References

- Ahmad, E., Drèze, J., Hills, J. & Sen, A. (Eds.) (1991) *Social security in developing countries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Asher, M.G. (2000) *Social security reform imperatives: The south east Asian case*. (Public Policy Programme Working Paper No. 2) Singapore: National University of Singapore.
- Banik, D. (2002) *Democracy, drought and starvation in India: Testing Sen in theory and practice*, Department of Political Science, University of Oslo.
- Barrientos, A. & Shepherd, A. (2003) Chronic poverty and social protection. Paper presented at Chronic Poverty conference, Manchester: IDPM.
- Blalock, H. M. (1991) *Understanding social inequality: modeling allocation process*, London: Sage Publications.
- Breman, J. (1993) *Beyond patronage and exploitation: changing agrarian relations in south Gujarat*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Cornia, G.A. & Stewart, F. (1995) Two errors of targeting. In van de Walle, D. & Nead, K. (eds.). pp.350-385.
- Dasgupta, S. (2002) *Organizing for socio-economic security in India*. Geneva: ILO.
- Debroy, B. (2003) Mritak sangh and Lal Bihari. *The Financial Express* (Jan. 7)
- Dev, S. M. (1998) Government intervention and social security for rural labour. In Radhakrishna, R. and Sharma, A. N. (Eds.) pp. 173-204.
- Drèze, J. (1988) Social security in India: a case study. Mimeo of the paper presented for the Workshop on Social Security in Developing countries held at the London School of Economics in July, 1988.
- Drèze, J. & Sen, A. (1991) Public action for social security: foundations and strategy. In Ahmad, E. *et al* (Eds.). pp. 1- 40.
- Gol (1997) India's most backward districts: list of 1997 Sarma Committee
- Goswami, R. (2002) Old age protection in India: Problems and prognosis. In *International Social Security Review*. Vol.55, No. 2. pp. 95-121.
- Guhan, S. (1993) Social security for the poor in the unorganised sector: a feasible blueprint for India. In Parikh, K.S. & Sudarshan, R. (Eds.).
- Guhan, S. (1994) Social security options for developing countries. *International Labour Review* Vol. 133 (1) pp.35-53.
- Harriss-White, B. (1993) *Economic reforms in India*. (Mimeo paper for UNRISD, Geneva)
- Harriss-White, B. (1995) Economic restructuring: state, market and collective and household action in India's social sector. *The European Journal of Development Research*. Vol. 7 (1) pp.124-147.
- Harriss-White, B. (1999) State, market, collective and household action in India's social sector. In Harriss-White, B & Subramanian, S. (eds). Pp. 303-328.
- Harriss-White, B & Subramanian, S. (eds.) (1999) *Illfare in India: essays on India's social sector in honour of S. Guhan*. New Delhi: Sage publications.
- Harriss-White, B. (1999) Socially inclusive social security in rural Tamil Nadu, India. *Mimeo*.
- Harriss-White, B. (2003) *India working: essays on society and economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- International Labour Office (1989) *Introduction to social security*. Geneva: ILO.

- Jhabvala, R. and Subrahmanya, R. K. A. (2000) (Eds) *The unorganised sector: work security and social protection*. New Dehi: Sage publications.
- Jayal, N. G. and Pai, S. (Eds.) (2001) *Democratic governance in India: challenges of poverty, development and identity*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Jutting, J. (2000) Social security systems in low-income countries: Concepts, constraints and the need for cooperation. In *International Social Security Review*. Vol.53, No. 4. pp. 3-24.
- Kabeer, N. (1994) Gender-aware policy and planning: a social-relations perspective. In Macdonald, M. (ed.) pp.80-97.
- Korpi, W. & Palme, J. (1998) The paradox of redistribution and strategies of equality: welfare state institutions, inequality and poverty in western countries. *American sociological review* Vol. 63 Pp. 661-87.
- Lipsky, M. (1980) *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public services*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Meagher, K. (2004) *Identity economics: Informal manufacturing and social networks in south Eastern Nigeria*. D.Phil. thesis at the University of Oxford.
- Mehta, A.K., Shah. A. (2001) Chronic poverty in India: an overview study. CPRC Working Paper 7. Manchester: IDPM.
- Midgley, J. (1984) *Social security, inequality and the third world*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Midgley, J. (1995) *Social development: the developmental perspective in social welfare*. London: Sage Publications.
- Meier, G.M. (1992) Do economists influence the developing world? In Sharma, S. (ed.) pp. 20-34.
- Nayyar, D. (1998) *Economic development and political democracy: the interaction of economics and politics in independent India*. New Delhi: National Council of Applied Economic Research.
- OASIS (2000) *The project OASIS report*. New Delhi: Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- Parikh, K.S. & Sudarshan, R. (Eds.) (1993) *Human development and structural adjustment*. Madras: Macmillan India Ltd.
- Patnaik, U. & Patnaik P. (2001) The state, poverty and development in India. In Jayal, N.G. & Pai, S. (ed.) pp.32-65.
- Putnam, R. (1993) *Making democracy work: civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Radhakrishna, R. and Sharma, A. N. (Eds.) *Empowering rural labour in India: market, state and mobilization*. New Delhi: Institute for Human Development.
- Rajan, I.S. (2001) Social assistance for poor elderly: How effective?, in *Economic and Political Weekly* Vo. 36. No. 8 (24 February) pp. 613-7.
- Rajan, I. S. (2002) Social security for the unorganised sector in South Asia. In *International Social Security Review*, Vol. 55. No. 4. pp. 143-56.
- Robinson, M. & White, G. (1997) *The role of civic organisations in the provision of social services: towards synergy*. Helsinki: UNU/WIDER.
- Sankaran, T. S. (1998) Social assistance: evidence and policy issue. In van Ginneken (Ed.). pp. 57-76.
- Sen, A. (1995) Political economy of targeting. In van de Walle & Nead, K. (eds.) pp.11-24.

- Sen, K. (1996) Old age security and pensions in India: A critique of the current paradigm. In P. Lloyd-Sherlock and P. Johnson (eds.), *Ageing and social policy: Global comparisons*. London: London School of Economics.
- Sharma, S. (ed.) (1992) *Development policy*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Singh, R. (1988) *Land, power and people: rural elite in transition, 1801-1970*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Singh, P. (1998) *Protection for the elderly, the disabled and the survivors in India at the threshold of the twenty-first century*. New Delhi: Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
- Subrahmanya, R. K. A. and Jhabvala, R. (2000) Meeting basic needs: the unorganised sector and social security. In Jhabvala, R. and Subrahmanya, R. K. A. (Eds). pp. 17-29.
- Subrahmanya, R.K.A. (2002) Income security for older people: An Asian perspective. In *International Social Security Review*. Vol. 55 No. 1. pp. 49-65.
- Vaidyanathan, A. (2001) Poverty and development policy. *Economic and Political Weekly* 36 (21) pp.1807-22.
- van de Welle, D. & Nead, K. (eds.) (1995) *Public spending and the poor: theory and evidence*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press.
- van Ginneken, W. (ed.) (1998) *Social security for all Indians*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- van Ginnekan, W. (1999) Social security for the informal sector: A new challenge for the developing countries. In *International Social Security Review*. Vol. 52 No.1. pp. 49-69.
- Walker, T. S. and Ryan, J. G. (1990) *Village and household economies in India's semi-arid tropics*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Appendix – National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)

Established in 1995, the NSAP is the first comprehensive social assistance programme initiated by the Government of India. This programme is 100% financed by central government, although state governments provide additional benefits (see below). The beneficiary eligibility is narrowly defined and means-tested, and benefits are provided through cash transfer.

The programme consists of three different benefits.

i) The National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) is meant for older persons (men and women above the age of 65 years) in households living below the poverty line, who are destitute in the sense of having no regular means of subsistence from their own sources of income or through financial support from family members or other sources. It provides Rs.75/US\$1.75 per month per beneficiary.

ii) The National Family Benefit Scheme (NFBS) is meant for households living below the poverty line on the death of the primary breadwinner. The 'primary breadwinner' has been defined as the member of the family whose earnings contribute substantially to the total household income. The benefit is Rs.10,000/US\$230 to the bereaved household.

c) The National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) is meant for pregnant women in households living below the poverty line, for the first two live births. The benefit is Rs.500/US\$11.50 per pregnancy.

There are three stages in the implementation of the NSAP. The state-level committee is headed by the chief secretary of the state. The district-level committee is headed by the district collector. The panchayat is responsible for identifying the beneficiaries. This is to make the programme cost effective and responsive. The central government disburses the fund on a quarterly basis to district headquarters, and the beneficiaries are paid either through a bank account, the post office, a money order, or direct cash disbursement at a village meeting. Publicity for the programme is the responsibility of all three committees.

A numerical ceiling for each state is calculated by the central government, taking account of the population, poverty rate, and proportion of the eligible group in terms of age, birth rate or mortality rate, depending on the programme. It is expected that 50% of eligible people below the poverty line will be covered within this numerical ceiling. Therefore, it becomes clearly evident that the panchayats have to somehow choose among many eligible members.

Table 1 gives the performance of the programme since its inception. Seeta Prabhu's (2001a) study has shown that the take-up rate is often low. The take-up ratio for NOAPS was 81.6% in 1996-97. However, for NFBS and NMBS the take-up rates were 28.9 and 27.6% respectively. A study of the Tamil Nadu government's social security schemes has revealed the inclusion of many ineligible cases (Harriss-White, 1999) resulting in resource wastage.

Table 1: Financial and physical performance of NSAP 1995-2001: India

Year	NOAPS		NFBS		NMBS	
	Expenditure (Rs. Crore)	No. of beneficiaries	Expenditure (Rs. Crore)	No. of beneficiaries	Expenditure (Rs. Crore)	No. of beneficiaries
95-96	109.88	2,937,677	43.44	284,260	24.50	657,891
96-97	319.55	4,760,327	92.00	266,090	52.63	1,282,025
97-98	365.19	5,087,830	130.56	218,486	54.70	1,557,292
98-99	467.15	5,080,821	188.02	266,411	70.43	1,562,072
99-00	456.25	5,017,542	194.98	215,815	73.40	1,299,719
00-01	476.66	5,148,226	200.93	202,999	83.90	1,456,079

Source: Planning Commission, 2002.

Although the eligibility criterion is narrowly defined, cases of misrepresentation of income, age, place of residence, lax administrative scrutiny and political interference are reported (Subrahmanya and Jhabvala, 2000). An empirical study conducted about the awareness of the scheme and availability of the NSAP in the states of Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat revealed that people came to know about the scheme mostly either through the sarpanch (village head) – 53% – or through friends or relatives who happened to work in the Block Development Office – 38%. The role of government officials was minimal, as only 5% of people came to know about the programme through them (Sankaran, 1998). This points to the possible importance of elite-elite linkages in obtaining welfare benefits. Another study done in Orissa (Banik, 2002) has revealed that many people eligible for the NSAP scheme were turned down by the village council despite repeated attempts. These findings have the implication that the availability of welfare benefits is crucially linked to political institutions and systems of governance existing at the local level.

Alongside NSAP exists state government provisions. The Government of Maharashtra started protective social security provisions in the year 1980. *Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana* was the first programme of non-contributory benefits of the Government of Maharashtra. When central government began NSAP, earlier Government of Maharashtra programmes were merged with NSAP. The Government of Maharashtra provides Rs.175/US\$4 (under the *Sravanbal Scheme*) to poor older people in rural areas, in addition to the Rs.75/US\$1.75 given from the NOAP. Thus, a total of Rs.250/US\$5.75 per month is the actual income support. There are other people who are as destitute as an NOAP beneficiary, but do not fall within the eligibility criteria of NOAP – for example, a young widow with dependent children. The Government of Maharashtra has created two different schemes for this purpose (*Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana and Indira Gandhi Bhumihin Vridha Shetmajur Sahaya Yojana*), under which the Government of Maharashtra pays Rs.250/ US\$5.75 per month to beneficiaries.