

Gendered risks, poverty and vulnerability in India

**Case study of the Indian Mahatma Gandhi National Rural
Employment Guarantee Act (Madhya Pradesh)**

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* Disclaimer: The views presented in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of DFID.

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List of acronyms and definition of terms used

BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BPL	Below the Poverty Line
CPRC	Chronic Poverty Research Centre
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EPWP	Extended Public Works Programme (South Africa)
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GC	General Caste
GDI	Gender-Related Development Index
GPD	Gross Domestic Product
HDI	Human Development Index
IIPS	Indian Institute for Population Sciences
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International NGO
ISST	Institute of Social Studies Trust
LIPWP	Labour-Intensive Rural Public Works Programme (Botswana)
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MPU	Micro-Project Unity (Zambia)
NAWO	National Alliance of Women
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NSS	National Sample Survey
NSSO	National Sample Survey Organisation
OBC	Other Backwards Caste
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programme (Ethiopia)
RMP	Rural Maintenance Programme (Bangladesh)
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
<i>Adivasi</i>	Tribal community
<i>Antodhaya Yojana</i>	A food-based assistance programme
<i>Dalit</i>	Scheduled caste
<i>Gram</i>	Village
<i>Gram Panchayat</i>	Village assembly
<i>Gram Sabha</i>	Congregation of all village members above 18
<i>Indira Awas Yojana</i>	Nationwide house construction programme for STs, SCs, free bonded labourers and non-SC/ST rural poor households
<i>Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana</i>	Public works programme to create rural village infrastructure
<i>Ladli Laxmi Yojana</i>	Programme to reduce disparities between boys and girls in Madhya Pradesh
<i>Lakh</i>	One hundred thousand
<i>Panchayat</i>	Local government
<i>Panchayati Raj</i>	Local government system
<i>Purdah</i>	The practice of separating women from men
<i>Sarpanch</i>	Head of the Panchayat
<i>Sarpanch Pati</i>	Spouse of the sarpanch

Executive summary

This study is part of a larger research project that involved a number of different countries in Africa (Ethiopia and Ghana), Latin America (Mexico and Peru), South Asia (Bangladesh and India) and Southeast Asia (Indonesia and Vietnam). All the research partners had the same goal of assessing the gender dimensions of social protection programming as well as its impacts on people's well-being. This report specifically examines the gendered dimensions and impacts of the Indian public works programme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA).

Poverty is highly concentrated in rural areas in India. The poor largely rely on daily wage labour, and many are landless. An overall decline in agriculture is of particular concern given the sheer number of people – more than half the population – dependent on the sector for their livelihoods. Although the Indian economy has enjoyed substantial growth rates, second only to China in the Asian region, inequality has been increasing. The challenges to poverty reduction in India are not just economic, but are also strongly influenced by social inequalities based on caste, ethnicity, gender, age and religion, for example. For instance, in 2000, the poverty headcount in rural areas was highest among scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) at 45% and 37%, respectively, compared with 21% among non-SCs/STs. Women also face specific gendered risks and vulnerabilities: they receive up to 30% lower wages than men in casual labour – and 20% lower for the same task (World Bank, 2009). Women constitute two-thirds of the agricultural workforce but own less than one-tenth of agricultural lands (NAWO, 2008), and they spend a disproportionate amount of time compared with men on domestic activities – women work 457 minutes per day compared with men who work 391 (ibid).

The government of India has taken an 'inclusive growth' approach to poverty reduction, with one of the main flagship programmes being MGNREGA – a public works programme reaching up to 45 million households aimed at supporting a transformation in rural livelihoods and agricultural productivity in India through public works.

Drawing on a mixed methods approach, our research was conducted in four research sites (villages) in two districts in Madhya Pradesh (Khargone and Betul). This paper assesses the extent to which MGNREGA incorporates an understanding of gender inequality to support the inclusion of women, especially those from marginalised communities, in India's poverty reduction and growth processes.

Looking at the design of MGNREGA using a gender lens shows that it incorporates a number of features that explicitly tackle some of the challenges women face in the rural economy and, to some extent, women's differential experiences of poverty and vulnerability. MGNREGA promotes women's participation in the workforce through a one-third quota in each state; provides crèche facilities and preference to women, especially single women, to work close to their residence; promises equal wages to both men and women workers under the provisions of the Equal Remuneration Act of 1976; suggests that banks or the *Panchayat* (local government) should consider both individual and joint accounts (where household members are co-signatories) to avoid crediting household earnings solely to the male household head, which would leave women with no control over their earnings; suggests that adequate representation of women among worksite facilitators be ensured; and recommends that women be represented in local-level committees and the social audit process, as well state and central level councils.

While these are important first steps, an analysis of the impact of MGNREGA at the individual, intra-household and community levels suggests that there is room for improvement in the concept and design of MGNREGA to better address gendered risks and vulnerabilities, and also that significant investment is needed to build the capacity and awareness of the local government implementing body to ensure that these features are adequately implemented.

Our findings demonstrated that the higher wages women receive from MGNREGA represent a significant improvement in terms of women's earning opportunities and increased contribution to the household income. However, despite the fact that the act stipulates that households are entitled to 100 days of employment and equal wages, a closer look at the number of days of work and the actual provision of wages suggests a rather more unequal picture of the gender dimensions of MGNREGA. Entrenched ideas about the gender division of labour affect the type of work seen as acceptable for women to do. Women receive fewer days on MGNREGA because they are not involved in all of the types of work available. Women are often given 'soft' work such as moving the soil when wells are dug, which requires fewer days. Single women are excluded when earthwork depends on family-based couples working together.

It is not just cultural and institutional barriers that restrict women's demand for and participation in MGNREGA: lifecycle vulnerabilities are also an influencing factor. There is provision for the allocation of different types of work to the physically challenged but no official provision for different types of work to be allocated to pregnant women or women who have recently given birth.

Women's roles and responsibilities in domestic and care work also influence their demand for and participation in MGNREGA employment. Although programme design and manuals stipulate the need for crèche facilities in reality these facilities are not provided, which reflects a serious implementation challenge with regard to women's equal participation. Our research found no child care facilities in MGNREGA worksites in the four villages. The result of this is that many breastfeeding mothers do not go to work on MGNREGA sites, and some women are forced to leave their younger children (above one year) with their in-laws or with older daughters.

At the intra-household level, our research suggests that women's employment in MGNREGA has improved some women's economic status and decision-making power slightly in some households, mostly in terms of their own decision making on what food items they prefer to be bought for household consumption. For other women, their contribution to the household income from MGNREGA employment has been negligible. In some cases, women's employment in MGNREGA has exacerbated household tensions where it has put pressure on women's time allocated to household duties. Even though women work more hours than men, combining domestic and productive work, MGNREGA has no provision for flexible working hours for women to mitigate time pressures arising in their dual responsibilities for market and non-market activities.

At the community level, MGNREGA attempts to support improvements in local governance and democracy through 'social audits,' which have been instigated to promote public accountability and programme relevance to the needs of the local population. Our study found that the participation of men and women in community meetings to discuss the planning of MGNREGA works varies. Women are less likely to participate in village meetings, and therefore play a limited role in deciding what types of work are to be carried out in the village through MGNREGA. In all four of our research sites, community members tend to agree that explicit social discrimination across caste and/or ethnic groups is low. It is in this context that the majority of respondents reported that there is no discrimination during participation in MGNREGA works.

An important indirect effect of MGNREGA has been its contribution to increased social capital, albeit limited to existing caste groups. Our research suggests that there is a general perception that social networks have strengthened as a result of MGNREGA, leading to improved relationships where men and women work together, as well as supporting/strengthening informal safety nets by borrowing small amounts of money from each other.

In conclusion, our analysis of MGNREGA through a gender lens highlights specific progressive gender-sensitive design features which support women's participation in employment – through the one-third quota, the provision of equal wages for women and men through the Equal Remuneration Act and the promotion of women's active engagement in the planning and evaluation of community

assets through, for example, the social audit forums. However, our findings also suggest that both the conceptual design of NREGA and its implementation need to be strengthened to further support gender-equitable outcomes of the act. Specific recommendations include:

- **Ensure programme design considers lifecycle vulnerabilities**, for example by providing options to transition from public works to direct support or less physically demanding work during pregnancy and nursing.
- **Recognise unequal division of labour in the household and intra-household bargaining power**, through flexible working hours and ensuring the provision of bank accounts in women's name.
- **Pay attention to the differential impacts of the structure and demography of the household**, as this influences access to NREGA and the benefits gained from employment. An approach which entitles appropriate works for single women is needed to ensure that single women within households can access NREGA days. Similarly, men suggested that, when more than one family is living in an extended household, the benefits of NREGA are diluted. These reports suggest that reconceptualising the 'household unit' by providing job cards to families or individuals within a household would be beneficial to the rural poor.
- **Think creatively about the role of community assets to reduce gender-specific vulnerabilities**, for example public works activities aimed at reducing women's time poverty, such as improving fuel wood and water collection sources, or, more broadly, addressing discriminatory access to common property resources and sources of drinking water for SC/ST women. Broadening the scope of types of works appropriate to rural productivity could also include a focus on health care, nutrition and literacy/skills programmes, as well as improving market access and infrastructure for women and supporting investments and training in other agricultural activities.
- **Promote the participation of women in community planning and monitoring of NREGA works**, by putting in place quotas for women's representation, flexible meeting times, awareness raising about the importance of women's participation and mechanisms to strengthen their confidence to raise their voice and opinions in community decision-making processes.
- In terms of implementation, **technical capacity building for staff at all levels of government**, including in the Department of Women and Child Development, is needed to effectively articulate the importance of gender equality for rural development and poverty reduction.
- **Institutionalising inter-sectoral coordination** is also vital to promote understanding of and attention to both gendered economic and social risks and vulnerabilities and the way they intersect.
- **Strengthening the existing monitoring and evaluation of data collection and analysis** on gender-related dimensions of the programme would be beneficial to support changes in programme design and implementation. Improvements in data collection could include: a focus on the gender-related benefits of the types of assets created; participation in decision-making structures; and budget allocations for capacity building on gender-related programme dimensions.

1. Introduction

The importance of social protection mechanisms in low- and middle-income countries has received considerable attention in recent years, even more so in the wake of the recent world food price crisis and global economic crisis. Although the gender dimensions of poverty and vulnerability are relatively well understood across countries, it is often assumed that gender inequality is already being addressed in social protection initiatives because many transfer programmes and public works programmes target women. Such a focus has been a result largely of evidence that women are more likely to invest additional income in family well-being as well as of a concern to promote greater representation of women in employment programmes. However, the role that gender relations play in social protection effectiveness is likely to be much more complex, affecting not only the type of risk tackled but also the programme impacts, reflecting pre-existing intra-household and community gender dynamics. Moreover, gender norms and roles may shape the choice of social protection modality, awareness-raising approach and public buy-in to social safety net programmes.

A vast range of social protection interventions – often referred to as social security, social safety net, poverty alleviation or social welfare programmes – are implemented in India, with the objectives of reducing poverty, vulnerability and social inequalities. As the only country in South Asia where 100% of the poor have access to either national or state-led social assistance programmes (Baulch et al., 2008),² India has a long history of implementing social safety net interventions, dating back to Independence. Over the years, the array of programmes has expanded to include health and nutrition programmes for women and children, social safety nets for vulnerable groups and disabled persons, labour market interventions, pensions and social funds and a public distribution system (of food) (Vaidyanathan, 2006).

In 2005, the government of India launched its flagship safety net programme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Even though India has a history of safety net programming, MGNREGA is a pioneering public works initiative for a number of reasons: its legal enactment; its provision of equal wages for men and women; its national coverage; and its decentralised implementation structure through local government institutions. The scheme has dual objectives: providing a safety net for poor rural households through the provision of wages, while simultaneously transforming rural livelihoods through the creation of productivity-enhancing infrastructure.

MGNREGA provides 100 days of employment (unskilled, manual work) to all rural households on a self-selection basis and is cognisant of existing social inequalities that lead to the exclusion from economic growth opportunities of women and marginalised castes and ethnic groups, as identified in the 11th Five-Year Plan (Planning Commission, 2008). Nationally, over 40 million households have taken up MGNREGA employment. Almost 50% of workers are women, 30% of households belong to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and over 20% belong to Scheduled Tribes (STs). Assets created through MGNREGA employment are based on local demand on both community and individually owned land: an important priority of the act is the opportunity to improve the productivity of land owned by households belonging to SC/STs, of that of the beneficiaries of land reforms and of land of below poverty line (BPL) families in the *Indira Awas Yojana* house construction programme (Ministry of Rural Development, 2008).

The aim of this report is to analyse the extent to which MGNREGA addresses gender-specific economic and social risks to support the inclusion of women, specifically from marginalised

² Currently, the government of India spends approximately 4% per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) on social protection programmes. The majority of this spending is on social insurance, with 20% spent on social assistance (Baulch et al., 2008).

communities, in India's poverty reduction and growth processes, in order to inform continued efforts to strengthen the programme's effectiveness.

1.1 Research methodology

The research methodology involved a mixed methods approach of qualitative and quantitative work (see Annex 1). It was structured around the following four areas (see Table 1):

1. Understanding the diversity of gendered economic and social risks;
2. Gender analysis of social protection policy and design;
3. Effects of the social protection programme with regard to gender equality, food security and poverty/vulnerability reductions at the household, intra-household and community level;
4. Implications for future policy and programme design to improve social protection effectiveness.

Research was conducted in four research sites (villages) in Khargone and Betul districts of Madhya Pradesh. Sites were selected drawing on a purposive matched sampling technique. This involved selecting two communities from each region with a similar poverty ranking, neither transient nor extreme poor: approximately 'middling poor' and covered in the first phase of implementation of MGNREGA in 2006 (see Annex 2). Within the districts, two blocks were selected for having representation of SC and ST households. In Bhagwanpura block, two villages were selected (referenced as Village 1 and Village 2). In Betul block, two villages were selected (referenced as Village 3 and Village 4).³

Table 1: Overview of research methodology

Methodology	Details
Desk review	Secondary data and programme document analysis
Key informant interviews	National (policymakers, donors, international agencies, civil society, researchers); sub-national (government and non-government implementers)
Household questionnaire	Total of 100 households
Focus group discussions	Eight FGDs with beneficiaries (two male and two female groups per block)
Life histories	16 life histories (eight men and eight women) at different life/social stages: adolescence; married; single household heads (divorced, abandoned or widowed); elderly

The main objectives of the desk review were to: map out key gender-specific vulnerabilities in the country; identify how gender is (or is not) already discussed and integrated within the context of social protection policies and programmes at country level; carry out a gender audit/mapping of the main social protection programmes and the extent to which they integrate gender considerations; and contextualise MGNREGS within the country's broader national social protection framework and related policy debates.

Using semi-structured questionnaires, key informant interviews were carried out at the national level in April 2009 during a scoping visit, and again in September 2009, to provide a broader understanding of social protection design decision-making processes and to explore the political economy dimensions of the integration of gender into social protection policies and programmes. At the sub-national level, key informant interviews with implementing agencies aimed to provide a better understanding of the key challenges in implementing social protection at the local level and the implications/impacts of implementation challenges on households and individuals.

The household survey asked programme beneficiaries to identify two main quantifiable trends: 1) dominant vulnerabilities and risks among BPL households and the extent to which these risks are gendered and generational; and 2) both household and individual coping strategies in the face of

³ We have not used the names of the villages in this report to ensure confidentiality.

the above risks, including both informal and formal social protection mechanisms. FGDs were then used to tease out the details of the social protection programme impacts, both direct and indirect, at individual, household and community level.

Finally, the use of life histories (with beneficiaries representing different life/social stages from adolescence to old age) allowed for a more in-depth exploration of individuals' gendered experiences of risk and vulnerability, and of the individual, household, community and policy factors that shape available coping/resilience strategies. They also provided insights into the relative importance of MGNREGS in diverse individuals' lives.

1.2 Report structure

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the conceptual framework that underpins the analysis, highlighting the importance of understanding gendered economic and social risks at individual, household and community levels. It also reviews the extent to which gender considerations have been integrated into public works programmes in developing country contexts. Section 3 maps out the patterning of gender-specific risks and vulnerabilities in India, focusing specifically on Madhya Pradesh and our research sites, including an analysis of existing coping strategies used at the household level. Section 4 discusses the extent to which gendered economic risks and vulnerabilities have been integrated into the design of MGNREGA. Section 5 then turns to an analysis of our fieldwork findings with regard to the effects of MGNREGA on gender dynamics at individual, household and community levels. Section 6 explores the drivers of programme impacts and Section 7 concludes and highlights key policy implications of our findings.

2. Conceptual framework: Gendered economic and social risks and social protection responses⁴

Social protection, commonly defined as encompassing a subset of interventions for the poor – carried out formally by the state (often with donor or international non-governmental organisation (INGO) financing and support) or the private sector, or informally through community or inter- and intra-household support networks – is an increasingly important approach to reduce vulnerability and chronic poverty, especially in contexts of crisis (see Box 1). To date, however, the focus has been mainly on economic risks and vulnerability – such as income and consumption shocks and stresses – with only limited attention to social risks. Social risks, however – such as gender inequality, social discrimination, unequal distributions of resources and power at the intra-household level and limited citizenship – are often just as important, if not more important, in pushing households into poverty and keeping them there. Indeed, of the five poverty traps identified by the 2008-2009 Chronic Poverty Report, four are non-income measures: insecurity (ranging from insecure environments to conflict and violence); limited citizenship (a lack of a meaningful political voice); spatial disadvantage (exclusion from politics, markets, resources, etc, owing to geographical remoteness); and social discrimination (which traps people in exploitative relationships of power and patronage) (CPRC, 2008).

Box 1: Conceptualising social protection

Drawing on Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler's (2004) framework of social protection, the objectives of the full range of social protection interventions are fourfold:

- *Protective*: Providing relief from deprivation (e.g. disability benefits or non-contributory pensions);
- *Preventive*: Averting deprivation (e.g. through savings clubs, insurance or risk diversification);
- *Promotive*: Enhancing real incomes and capabilities (e.g. through inputs transfers); and
- *Transformative*: Addressing concerns of social equity and exclusion by expanding social protection to arenas such as equity, empowerment and economic, social and cultural rights, rather than confining the scope of social protection to respond to economic risks alone through targeted income and consumption transfers.

Social protection refers to a set of instruments (formal and informal) that provide:

- Social assistance (e.g. regular and predictable cash or in-kind transfers, including fee waivers, public works schemes, food aid);
- Social services targeted to marginalised groups (e.g. family counselling, juvenile justice services, family violence prevention and protection);
- Social insurance to protect people against risks of shocks (typically health, employment and environmental);
- Social equity measures (e.g. rights awareness campaigns, skills training) to protect against social risks such as discrimination and abuse.

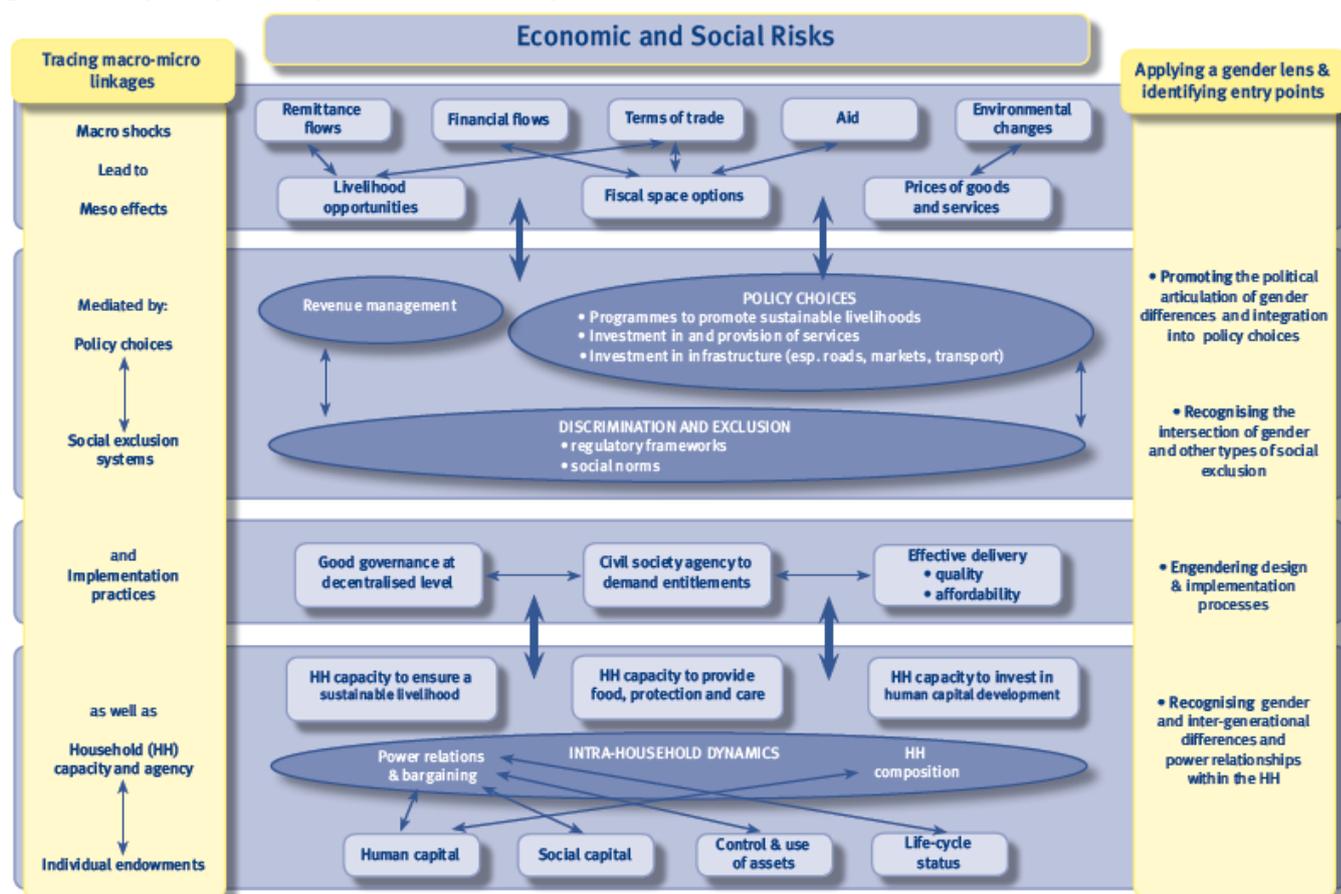
2.1 The gender dimensions of economic and social risks

Poor households typically face a range of risks, ranging from the economic to the social. Vulnerability to risk, and its opposite, resilience, are both strongly linked to the capacity of individuals or households to prevent, mitigate or cope with such risks. Both economic risks (including the economic impact of environmental and natural risks) and social risks are influenced by gender dynamics and may have important differential impacts on men and women. Because they are socially constructed, gender roles and responsibilities are highly varied, and infused with power relations (WHO, 2007). Figure 1 maps out the ways in which economic and social risks can

⁴ This section is based on Holmes and Jones (2009a).

be reinforced or mediated from the macro to the micro level through, for example, policy interventions, discriminatory practices embedded in institutions (e.g. social exclusion and discrimination in the labour market) and community, household and individual capacities and agency. Opportunities to enhance the integration of gender at each of these levels are highly context specific, and depend on the balance between formal and informal social protection mechanisms within a country as well as on the profile of the government agencies responsible for the design and implementation of formal mechanisms.

Figure 1: Impact pathways of vulnerability to economic and social risks



Source: Holmes and Jones (2009a).

2.1.1 Gendered economic risks

Economic risks can include declines in national financial resources and/or aid flows, terms of trade shocks or environmental disasters. Stresses might include long-term national budget deficits and debt, lack of a regulatory framework and/or enforcement of health and safety standards at work and lack of an economically enabling environment. Given men's and women's differential engagement in the economy (i.e. the labour market), the impacts of macroeconomic shocks are highly gendered. For example, in times of economic crisis, women are often the first to lose jobs in the formal sector, such as in Korea during the financial crisis of 1997/98 (World Bank, 2009). In other parts of East Asia, including Indonesia and the Philippines, women gained in overall employment because of their lower wages and lower levels of union organisation (ibid). Cuts in public expenditure are also likely to affect women more (in many contexts) because they tend to have greater responsibility for household health and education access. The effects on men and male identities of economic malaise are also increasingly recognised. Silberschmidt (2001), for instance, highlights the way in which rising unemployment and low incomes are undermining male breadwinner roles and resulting in negative coping strategies, such as sexually aggressive behaviour and gender-based violence, in a bid to reassert traditional masculine identities.

At the meso or community level, the impacts of economic shocks are mediated by, for example, gender-segmented labour markets and institutional rules and norms (e.g. absence of affirmative action to address historical discrimination of women and marginalised social groups), which lead to poor access and utilisation of productive services by women. Women in general have less access to credit, inputs (such as fertiliser), extension services and, therefore, improved technologies (World Bank, 2009), which undermines their resilience to cope with stress and shocks.

How poor households are able to cope with and mitigate the impacts of shocks and ongoing stresses also depends on a number of factors at the micro or intra-household level. Household members' vulnerability is shaped by household composition (e.g. dependency ratios, sex of the household head, number of boys and girls in the household), individual and household ownership and control of assets (land, labour, financial capital, livestock, time and so on), access to labour markets, social networks and social capital and levels of education. Women typically have lower levels of education, less access, ownership and control of productive assets and different social networks to men, leading to lower economic productivity and income generation and weaker bargaining positions in the household. In times of crisis, moreover, underlying gender biases may mean that women's or female-headed households' assets are more vulnerable to stripping than those of men, the impact of which may be lengthy if what has been sold cannot be replaced. Women's bargaining position and entitlements may also be reduced more rapidly than those of male members of households (Byrne and Baden, 1995).

2.1.2 Gendered social risks

Social sources of vulnerability are often as or more important barriers to sustainable livelihoods and general well-being than economic shocks and stresses (CPRC, 2008). At a macro level, social exclusion and discrimination often inform and/or are perpetuated by formal policies, legislation and institutions (e.g. low representation of women or minority groups in senior positions). In many countries, however, efforts to ensure that national laws and policies are consistent in terms of providing equal treatment and/or opportunities to citizens irrespective of gender, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexuality and disability are often weak or uneven, and hampered by a lack of resources to enforce such legislation, especially at the sub-national level.

At the meso or community level, absence of voice in community dialogues is a key source of vulnerability. For instance, women are often excluded from decision-making roles in community-level committees, and this gender-based exclusion may be further exacerbated by caste, class or religion. Some excluded groups are reluctant to access programmes or claim rights and entitlements, fearing violence or abuse from more dominant community members. Another critical and related variable is social capital. Poverty may be compounded by a lack of access to social networks that provide access to employment opportunities but also support in times of crisis. It can also reinforce marginalisation from policy decision-making processes.

At the micro or intra-household level, social risk is related to limited intra-household decision-making and bargaining power based on age and/or gender, and time poverty as a result of unpaid productive work responsibilities and/or familial care work. All of these can reduce time and resources available for wider livelihood or coping strategies, and may contribute to women tolerating discriminatory and insecure employment conditions and/or abusive domestic relationships. Life-course status may also exacerbate intra-household social vulnerabilities. Girls are often relatively voiceless within the family, and a source of unpaid domestic/care work labour. The elderly (especially widows) also tend to face particular marginalisation, as they come to be seen as non-productive and in some contexts even a threat to scarce resources.

2.2 Applying a gender lens to public works programmes

Public works – a subset of social protection programmes involving public labour-intensive infrastructure development initiatives that provide cash or food-based payments to beneficiaries – have a number of technical and political benefits. They provide income transfers to the poor and are often designed to smooth income during ‘slack’ or ‘hungry’ periods of the year.⁵ They address shortages of infrastructure (rural roads, irrigation, water harvesting facilities, trees, school and health clinic facilities). And they are typically self-targeting, owing to low benefit levels and heavy physical labour requirements (Subbarao, 2003).⁶ As such, they entail more limited administrative costs than many other social protection interventions. They are also politically popular, as programme beneficiaries have to work and are seen to be helping themselves (Bloom, 2009): it can sometimes be challenging to generate support for cash transfers, for instance, especially those which are unconditional, particularly from middle-class voters (e.g. Behrman, 2007).

There are, however, a number of common challenges, including how to balance the objectives of quality infrastructure development with poverty reduction goals, and the level at which to set benefit levels so as to be adequate to make a difference in people’s lives and not stigmatise participants, but not so high as to necessitate quotas, which are more complex to administer and manage (Subbarao, 2003). Support mechanisms also need to be developed for those unable to work, so as to ensure a minimum of equity (Bloom, 2009).

A review of historic and existing public works programmes in developing country contexts and the extent to which issues of gender equality are embedded in programme design indicates that a range of approaches have been developed to facilitate women’s participation, as discussed in Box 2. What is noteworthy, however, is that most programmes include only a limited number of these mechanisms in their design, thus limiting their potential impacts on gender equality at the intra-household and community levels (see Holmes and Jones, 2009b). Key concerns that have been identified relate to: inadequate attention to women’s care work responsibilities (Kabeer, 2008); tokenistic representation of women in programme-related decision-making structures (Dejardin, 1996); gender-biased payment modalities (Antonopoulos, 2007); targeting of household heads, which tends to marginalise women living in male-headed households (ibid); and reinforcement of gendered norms of work (Quisumbing and Yohannes, 2004).

Indeed, Antonopoulos (2007) argues that, because the design of public works programmes has focused largely on the productive sphere of work, there has been little attempt to redistribute the costs of social reproduction, thereby limiting the transformative potential of such programmes. Part of the problem is that the dominant type of community assets built through public employment guarantee programmes has been infrastructure, with little attention paid to projects that provide social services or those that target the efficiency and enhancement of public service delivery, and that could lighten women’s unpaid care work burden (Antonopoulos and Fontana, 2006). Antonopoulos (2007) expands this line of argument and maintains that poor women could be remunerated for their care work by expanding public works programmes to include social sector activities. Given that social services are by their nature highly labour intensive, such activities would be well suited to workfare schemes. ‘It is reasonable to make the assumption that in comparison to infrastructural projects, [social service activities] use more labor and fewer machines or other intermediate inputs’ and are also well suited to ‘unskilled’ women workers (ibid). After all, many poor unskilled women are already carrying out such work, but unpaid and within the household.

⁵ Note that, in middle-income countries, a 2009 World Bank review found that workfare programmes were typically initiated to cope with one-time large macroeconomic shocks. By contrast, in low-income countries, they are typically motivated by poverty relief and seasonal unemployment concerns.

⁶ Other targeting methods include self-selection in combination with other approaches and geographic targeting (World Bank, 2009).

Box 2: Mechanisms to enhance gender equality in public works programmes

Early public works initiatives suffered from low levels of female participation, but over time a range of approaches have been adopted in an attempt to address this gender imbalance, including the following:

- Institutionalisation of explicit quotas for female programme participants (Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), India's old *Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana* infrastructure public works programme and current MGNREGS, South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP));
- Provisions for gender-specific lifecycle needs, including allowing women time off for pregnancy and breastfeeding (Botswana's Labour-Intensive Rural Public Works Programme (LIPWP), Ethiopia's PSNP, India's MGNREGS), provision of work close to participants' homes (India's Employment Guarantee Scheme of Maharashtra) and of crèche facilities (Ethiopia's PSNP, India's MGNREGS) and flexibility in terms of women's working hours so they can balance their domestic and care work responsibilities (Ethiopia's PSNP, permanent part-time employment in South Africa's EPWP in KwaZulu-Natal);
- Consideration of the particular circumstances of female-headed households, including household-level contracts for female-headed households (South Africa's EPWP) so that work can be shared more flexibly, and quotas for female-headed household participants (Ethiopia's PSNP);
- Guarantee of equal wages for men and women (Ethiopia's PSNP, India's Employment Guarantee Scheme of Maharashtra, MGNREGS);
- Provisions for women to take on programme supervisory roles (Bangladesh's Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP), Botswana's LIPWP);
- Support so that women participants are better able to save through the establishment of savings groups (Nepal's Dhaulagiri Irrigation Project) and have access to credit (Bangladesh's RMP, Ethiopia's PSNP) in order to be able to graduate from public works programmes;
- Linkages to complementary services that will empower women more generally, including provision of adult literacy classes for women (e.g. Senegal's Agence d'Exécution des Travaux d'Intérêt Public);
- Mechanisms which ensure that the type of work undertaken benefits women, either because of the nature of the community asset created (e.g. improvements in transport and roads which ease women's time burden in collecting water or fuel-wood, as in Zimbabwe's Rural Transport Study or Zambia's Micro-Project Unity (MPU)) or through provisions for women's involvement in decision-making processes about what types of community assets should be built using public works labour (e.g. Ethiopia's PSNP, India's MGNREGS, Zambia's MPU).

3. Gendered risks, poverty and vulnerability in India

In this section, we look at the key gendered economic and social risks in rural India at a national level and then focus on the key risks and vulnerabilities facing men and women – and the main coping strategies used in response to these – in rural Madhya Pradesh, particularly in our research site locations.

3.1 Economic risks and vulnerabilities in the rural sector

India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Second only to China in the Asian region, India's GDP grew by 9.5% in 2007 (IMF, 2009), averaging 8.7% between 2003 and 2007 (Planning Commission, 2008). The government has set high growth targets for the country in the coming years: the 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) has a target to achieve an average growth rate of 9% per year (ibid). Unlike other countries in the region, India escaped a severe recession resulting from the recent global economic crisis, although growth rates have slowed. India's GDP is set to grow at 5.4% percent in 2009, increasing to 6.4% in 2010, boosted by a large policy stimulus that is increasing demand from domestic sources (IMF, 2009).

India's economy is not only growing rapidly but is also transforming. Agriculture remains the largest economic sector in the country in terms of employment and livelihoods, with more than half of India's workforce engaged in it as the principal occupation (Planning Commission, 2008). However, its contribution to GDP is declining, whereas growth in the industry and services sectors has been increasing over the past five years. The share of these sectors in GDP has grown to 26.4% and 55.1%, respectively, and growth in the services sector contributed more than two-thirds of the overall growth in GDP between 2002-2003 and 2006-2007 (Ministry of Finance, 2007, in IIPS and Macro International, 2007).

The agriculture sector has faced a number of challenges over the past decade or so. Growth of agricultural GDP decelerated from over 3.5% per year during 1981-1982 and 1996-1997 to only around 2% during 1997-1998 and 2004-2005 (Planning Commission, 2008). Despite a slight upturn in performance since 2005, the sector as a whole, across most states, faces significant challenges, including: widening economic disparities between irrigated and rain-fed areas; increased vulnerability to world commodity price volatility following trade liberalisation, which has had a particularly adverse effect on agricultural economies of regions growing crops such as cotton and oilseeds; inefficient use of available technology and inputs; lack of adequate incentives and appropriate institutions; degradation of the natural resource base; and a rapid and widespread decline in the groundwater table, with particularly adverse impacts on small and marginal farmers (ibid).

The decline in agriculture is of particular concern given the sheer number of people – more than half the population – dependent on the sector for their livelihoods. Despite recent economic growth, poverty rates continue to be high, particularly in rural areas and among agricultural labourers. Using the international poverty lines of \$2 and \$1.25 a day, it is estimated that 75.6% and 41.6%, respectively, of India's population of over 1 billion are living in poverty (UNDP, 2009). The national poverty line puts the number at a lower 28.6% of the population (over 300 million people). Poverty is highly concentrated in rural areas: 75% of the poor live in rural areas, mostly consisting of daily wage labourers, self-employed households and landless labourers. Poverty is also highly correlated with social and ethnic discrimination. Given the hierarchical and unequal nature of the caste system, groups at the lower end of the hierarchy – the SCs – are denied access and entitlement to economic, civil, cultural and political rights, and poverty is highly represented among them. Ethnic exclusion is another form of discrimination: groups like the *Adivasis* (tribal communities) experience similar outcomes as *Dalits* in terms of exclusion and deprivation. Data

from the 55th Round of the National Sample Survey (NSS), 1999-2000, shows that, in 2000, the poverty headcount in rural areas was highest among SCs and STs (45% and 37%, respectively) compared with 21% among non-SC/STs (NSSO, 2000).

With the decline in agriculture, opportunities in the non-agriculture sectors that account for increased economic growth hold the most promise for poverty reduction in India. For example rapid growth in rural services has been estimated to have contributed at least as much towards reducing poverty in recent years as growth in agriculture has (World Bank, 2007). However, the effects on poverty reduction from rural non-farm employment have been mainly indirect (as upward pressure on agricultural wages has benefited the poor), given that relatively few of the poor gain access to non-farm jobs (ibid). Indeed, 'while slower growth of GDP in agriculture than non-agriculture is expected, the main failure has been the inability to reduce the dependence of the workforce on agriculture significantly by creating enough non-farm opportunities to absorb the labour surplus in rural areas and equipping those in agriculture to access such opportunities' (Planning Commission of India, 2008). Similarly, the World Bank (2007) highlights that, in transforming economies like India, the transition of people out of agriculture and rural areas is not keeping pace with the restructuring of the economy away from this sector. The low levels and quality of education of most rural workers are the main factors responsible for their inability to find jobs in the booming services economy (ibid). In India, this is also compounded by existing social norms and discrimination which prevent certain social groups from entering new types of employment.

India's 11th Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) aims to address these challenges by focusing on measures of 'inclusive growth' through a three-pronged strategy: economic growth, income poverty reduction through targeted programmes and human capital formation. One of the government's flagship programmes is MGNREGA, which is seen to have an important role to play in transforming rural livelihoods and agricultural productivity in India.

The Five-Year Plan recognises that economic and social inequalities prevent the poor from taking up opportunities in productive sectors and, by extension, this negatively impacts the growth potential of the economy. In the renewed policy focus on agriculture, the impact of growth on poverty will depend on the poor being able to take up opportunities in new growth processes (such as high-value crops), either as smallholders or as labourers (World Bank, 2007). Importantly, the government recognises that the barriers to these opportunities are affected strongly by social group and gender: 'a major weakness in the economy is that the growth is not perceived as being sufficiently inclusive for many groups, especially SCs, STs, and minorities. Gender inequality also remains a pervasive problem and some of the structural changes taking place have an adverse effect on women' (Planning Commission, 2008). The 11th Five-Year Plan represents a significant step for gender equality in Indian policy and planning processes – for the first time in the history of Indian planning, there is 'an attempt to move beyond empowerment and recognize women as agents of sustained socio-economic growth and change' (ibid).

Nevertheless, women and marginalised social groups continue to be vulnerable to a number of economic risks which prevent their take-up of economic growth opportunities. First, women face a distinct disadvantage in the labour market compared with men. At national level, women are less than half as likely as men to be employed: data from the fifth Economic Census (2005) show that, nationally, women represent only 19.3% of the total workforce (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). Even within this, social discrimination plays a compounding role with regard to influencing women's unemployment and underemployment rates: in non-farm employment, a 2005 study across three states showed that women from higher caste groups were more likely to be employed than females from SC, ST and Other Backward Caste (OBC) groups (Sukhadeo et al., 2005). Yearly employment for this group varied from a minimum of 73 days for ST females to a maximum of 148 days for SC females compared to a high level of 290 days for high caste women.

Moreover, when women are employed, they are adversely incorporated into the labour market in a number of ways. They are less likely than men to receive cash wages, or indeed to receive any

earning at all (IIPS and Macro International, 2007). When they do receive wages, these are unequal: wages for casual labour are 30% percent lower for women than for men – and 20% lower for the same task (World Bank, 2009). To some extent, the type of work that women are employed in explains this discrepancy: the majority of employed women (56%) are self-employed and 25% are casual labourers (ISST, 2007). Women are overrepresented in casual wage labour in the agriculture sector, but there is still inadequate recognition of the role that women play in agricultural decision making – an increasing concern, given slow growth in agriculture (ibid). Moreover, 'women's mobility out of agriculture is far lower than male mobility and agriculture is increasingly dependent on women farmers. This feminisation of agriculture is reflected in the fact that 85 percent of rural women workers are in agriculture. The growing female face of agriculture is captured in the fact that close to 40 percent of agricultural workers are women' (ibid). *Dalit* (scheduled caste) and tribal women are predominantly agricultural labourers: in 2001, approximately 57% per cent *Dalit* and 37% of ST women worked as agricultural labourer in rural areas as compared with 29% among non-SC/STs (NSSO, 2000). The textile and clothing industry is the second largest source of employment in India after agriculture, providing direct employment to almost 35 million people, including a substantial number of women (ISST, 2007).

Younger women (less than 25 years old) are further disadvantaged in the labour market, in a number of ways. Younger women are less likely to be employed; even when they are, they are less likely to earn cash and more likely not to be remunerated (IIPS and Macro International, 2007). For younger men, however, there is very little variation in terms of employment and employment for cash in comparison with older men.

Second, women face particular discrimination in terms of ownership of and access to productive resources. Although women constitute two-thirds of the agricultural workforce, they own less than one-tenth of the agricultural lands (NAWO, 2008). This is identified as a key challenge in India's 11th Five-Year Plan, where it is recognised that, with the share of the female workforce in agriculture increasing, and increased incidence of female-headed households, there is an urgent need to ensure women's rights to land and infrastructure (Planning Commission, 2008). In other words, as Agarwal (2006) explains, 'while 11 percent of rural households are landless, a likely 85 percent of women from landed households are landless' (in ISST, 2007). The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act 2005 was an important step towards addressing this inequality, by removing the gender discriminatory clause on agricultural land in India, but it is as yet unclear how far this legal change has been supported by other measures, such as awareness raising and government implementation in order to be effective (ISST, 2007).

Third, gender bias in rural institutions is also a key source of economic vulnerability. A major challenge facing small and marginal farmers is lack of access to major agricultural services, such as credit, inputs, extension, insurance and markets. Again, this is even more problematic for female farmers, because of a pervasive male bias in the provision of such services. The proportion of women with banks accounts, savings and loans is marginally higher for women who are employed for cash earnings, on average, but only 10.7% of rural women have a bank or savings account that they themselves use. And, although 35.8% know of a microcredit programme, only 4.4% have ever taken a loan from one (IIPS and Macro International, 2007). Meanwhile, women belonging to STs are much less likely to have access to these financial resources compared with women belonging to the other caste/tribe categories (ibid).

3.2 Social risks and vulnerabilities

Economic risks and vulnerabilities interact with and are highly affected by social risks and vulnerabilities. Although social empowerment is a central theme in India's 11th Five-Year Plan, and investing in social development – particularly health and education – is recognised as central to achieving overall economic growth and poverty reduction objectives (IIPS and Macro International,

2007; Planning Commission, 2008), investment in the social sector has lagged behind progress in economic growth (ibid).⁷

India ranks relatively poorly on gender-related indicators. India is the lowest ranking country in the South Asian region on the Gender Equality Index, which measures progress in women's economic activity, empowerment and education (ISST, 2007). On the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI), India is placed at 114 out of 155 countries (2007 data) (UNDP, 2009). The GDI is a composite index measuring average achievement in the three basic dimensions captured in the Human Development Index (HDI) – a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living. India's low ranking on both measurements demonstrates the continued inequalities between men and women with regard to basic human development indicators, economic activity and status. Indeed, although India's literacy rate has been increasing, there is a substantial gender gap: in 2007, 54.5% of females were literate compared with 76.9% of males (ibid). There are also large disparities across social and ethnic groups (Planning Commission, 2008). In terms of school attendance, data from 2005-2006 show that 43% of boys aged 11-17 did not attend middle, secondary or higher secondary school; among girls, this proportion is even higher, at 54% (IIPS and Macro International, 2008).

Health-related indicators have been improving, but the rate of progress has been slow, and a number of indicators are a cause for concern. The maternal mortality rate decreased from 400 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1997-1998 to 300 in 2001-2003, yet women's access to health care during childbirth continues to be limited. Fewer than 40% of births in India take place in health facilities and more than half take place in the woman's own home – poor women are even less likely to be attended by medically trained personnel during delivery (ISST, 2007). Infant and child mortality rates have been declining,⁸ but mortality rates among children are highest among SC and ST households. In rural areas, girl children have a higher mortality rate than boys, increasing with age up to five. Part of the reason behind this is continued sex discrimination against girls. Women's low status and a preference for sons are a driving force behind the unequal sex ratio in India and fuel female infanticide and girl child mortality rates. Rates declined from 972 females per 1,000 males in 1901 to 930 in 1971 and now remain stagnant (IIPS and Macro International, 2007).

Low human capital development, together with discriminatory socio-cultural norms, leads to multiple other sources of risk and vulnerability for women and girls. Early marriage continues to be prevalent in India, leading to teenage pregnancy and motherhood. Young women who become pregnant at an early age are likely to experience a number of health, social, economic and emotional problems. Nationally, more than one-quarter of Indian women aged 20-49 were married before age 15 and over half were married before the legal minimum marriage age of 18. In comparison, only 4% of rural men were married between 15 and 19. The proportion of young mothers is higher among the rural poor and also among women from SCs and STs. Over the past few years, data have shown a declining trend of early first marriages, but this is changing only at a very slow pace. A considerable proportion of women still marry below the legal minimum age.

A woman's status and perceived status in the household have important implications for her ability to access and control resources. Status is often dependent on a number of factors – including position in the household (e.g. age, marriage status) as well as household structure and demography, assets owned at the time of marriage and income. Simply earning a cash income is therefore not likely on its own to be a sufficient condition for empowerment, which also requires control over the use of earnings as well as entailing the perceived relative importance of these earnings to the household. The potential for women's empowerment is therefore interlinked with women's ability to make decisions about their own earnings (alone or jointly with their husbands). Indian Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) and Macro International (2007) data show that,

⁷ This section draws heavily on IIPS and Macro International (2007)

⁸ Infant mortality: 57 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2001-05; child mortality is 18.4 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2001-05 and under-five mortality has declined from 95.4 deaths per live births in 1991-95 to 74.3 in 2001-5 (NFHS-3, 2007).

although a relatively small proportion (21%) of women in rural areas decide how their own income is used, over half (57%) jointly decide with their husbands. Variations exist between religion and caste/tribe groups, with husbands more likely to be the main decision maker in the case of Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist and Hindu families and those belonging to STs.

While joint decision making in the household is relatively common, women tend to have limited say in decisions other than those on small household expenditures. However, employment of women increases the likelihood of their participating in decision making (but only if they are employed for cash). Non-nuclear household residence is associated with much lower participation in household decisions (IIPS and Macro International, 2007).

Freedom of movement outside the home is also linked to women's decision-making participation, autonomy and empowerment. Many parts of India see the practice of *purdah*,⁹ which limits women's mobility and their ability to access health services and to engage in market activities. Only just under half of married women are allowed to go the market on their own: 40% are allowed to go with someone else and 15% are not allowed to go at all.

Again, age, employment and household structure are important influencing factors. Employment (for cash) is associated with greater freedom of movement, as is nuclear residence. Muslim women (26%) followed by Hindu women (34%) have less freedom of movement than women of other religions, but there is little variation by caste/tribe status.

Cultural norms and accepted attitudes towards violence are also an important source of vulnerability and a key factor in women's empowerment – but one which is often invisible in policy debates. Violence, including domestic violence, has a detrimental impact on the economy of a country through increased disability and medical costs and loss of labour hours. Because women bear the brunt, they disproportionately bear the health and psychological burden as well. Meanwhile, although domestic violence was recognised as a criminal offence in 1983, only recently (2006) was a comprehensive civil law put in place – the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) – which recognises the specific complexities associated with domestic violence, including its embedded nature within familial networks, the need for protection and maintenance of abused women and the fact that punishment and imprisonment for the husband may not be the best resolution in every case (IIPS and Macro International, 2007).

The main reasons for gender-based violence tend to be 'disrespect for in-laws' and neglect of the house or children. Surveys show that violence remains relatively common for rural women: a third of women living in rural areas have experienced violence and 21% had experienced violence 'often' or 'sometimes' in the 12 months prior to the survey (IIPS and Macro International, 2007). Reports of violence are slightly higher among employed women. Prevalence of violence is also much higher among women belonging to SCs and STs and among the poorest: 45% of women in the poorest quintile have experienced violence compared with 19% of women in the highest wealth quintile.

Violence does not just occur within the household but is also shaped by social status. Evidence from 500 villages indicates that, across all states, *Dalit* women are subjected to constant harassment and violence from non-*Dalits* (Shah et al., 2006). Harassment takes numerous forms, including verbal and sexual assault in the community, workplace and/or market.

In terms of participation and decision making at community, state and national levels, the representation of women in government offices at the state level and in the national Parliament is low – between 4% and 10% for all offices – even though women's groups have been engaged in creating public opinion and mobilising women and men to campaign for reservations for women in the Parliament and State Assemblies (ISST, 2007). The notable exception is in *Panchayati Raj*

⁹ The practice of separating women from men.

(local government) institutions, for which a quota for women was introduced in 1993 and representation is approximately 31% (Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2007). The Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST, 2007) highlights two major challenges, however. One is that, even though decisive women leaders have emerged, in many places decisions are made by men in the family, with the '*sarpanch pati*'¹⁰ accepted as the authority, albeit informally. In addition, there are significant limitations to the extent of actual devolution of resources and authority, 'which limits the ability of elected men or women to influence decisions at the local level' (ISST, 2007).

3.3 Overview of risks and vulnerability in Madhya Pradesh research sites¹¹

The above sections discuss key gendered economic and social risks at the national level in India. Here, we focus on the context-specific economic and social vulnerabilities experienced by men and women in Madhya Pradesh. Drawing on our survey data, as well as on the life history interviews, we provide an overview of the key risks facing households in our two districts – Khargone and Betul (see Table 2) – which provide the context for our analysis on the gendered impacts of MGNREGA in Section 4 below.

Madhya Pradesh is one of India's poorest states, with a number of factors contributing to this. These include governance challenges, environmental challenges and low agricultural productivity – Madhya Pradesh is largely a rain-fed semi-arid agro-ecological region. There is a high concentration of ST/SC households, the majority of which consist of agricultural labourers who receive low wages and are highly dependent on migration as a livelihood strategy.

As in other states in India, poor rural households are highly vulnerable to both covariate and idiosyncratic risks, mainly production-related, health and social shocks and stresses (see e.g. Narayan et al., (2009)). Indeed, domestic and social shocks and stresses impact seriously on the productive capacity of the people as they cope with shocks such as ill health, or more predicable stresses, such as marriage (DFID India, 2006). Drought, floods, pests, diseases and the market generate the main sources of production risk (ibid).

Gender and social group inequalities prevail at household and community levels. In terms of human capital development, literacy rates are low, particularly for women: 74% of men aged 15-49 are literate and only 44% of women. In rural areas, 69% of children attend school, with significant gender disparities apparent the higher the education level: 80% of boys and 78% of girls aged 6-10 attend school, but by age 15-17 49% of boys and only 24% of girls are attending. Although infant mortality rates have declined in the state in recent years, they are still the third highest of all the 29 states of India (estimated at 70 deaths before the age of one per 1,000 live births in the third National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) (IIPS and Macro International, 2007), down from the NFHS-2 estimate of 88 (IIPS and Macro International, 2008)). The under-five mortality rate, at 94 deaths per 1,000 live births, is the second highest in the country and is higher for girls (113) than for boys (104). And, despite significant improvements in immunisation coverage for children, Madhya Pradesh has the ninth lowest level of full immunisation coverage for children aged 12-23 months of all the Indian states. Children from STs, SCs and OBCs are also at greater risk of dying than children not belonging to any of these groups. Furthermore, malnutrition is a serious concern: 50% of children under age five are stunted (too short for their age), which indicates that they have been undernourished for some time. Some 35% are wasted (too thin for their height), which may result from inadequate recent food intake or a recent illness. And 60% are underweight, which takes into account both chronic and acute under-nutrition.

¹⁰ Husband of the *sarpanch* (head of the *Panchayat* (local government)).

¹¹ This section draws heavily on data from 2005-6, IIPS and Macro International (2008)

Early marriage continues to be a challenge in Madhya Pradesh. More than half (57%) of women aged 20-24 years were married before the legal minimum age of 18. Among young women aged 15-19, 14% have already begun bearing children – a little lower than the national average (16%).

Madhya Pradesh has one of the highest rates of physical violence against women. The national average in India is 26.9%, but in Madhya Pradesh it is 37%, second only to Bihar (38.9%).

In terms of mobility at the community level, a little less than half of women are allowed to go by themselves to the market or to a health facility, and only about a quarter of women have the freedom to travel alone outside their own village or community.

In terms of economic participation, in 2004-2005 56% (of currently married women aged 15-49) were employed (compared with 99% of men in the same age group), but women were less likely to be paid in cash for their work. Women working as agricultural labourers in our research sites received approximately Rs20-30 less than men per day.

Intra-household relations and women's decision-making power indicators show that the majority of women who earn cash decide how their earnings will be spent alone or with their husbands, but almost one-third of women have little decision-making power in the household (e.g. about household expenses, mobility). Only 9% of women have a bank or savings account that they themselves use, and only 1% of women have ever used a microcredit programme.

Table 2: Overview of research site characteristics

District	Khargone		Betul	
Block	Bhagwanpura		Betul	
Population	1,529,562		1,395,175	
SC population (%)	11		11	
ST population (%)	39		35	
Main livelihood sources	Agriculture, agricultural wage employment, migration		Agriculture, agricultural wage employment, migration	
Poverty rank*	12		26	
Main language	Nimadi		Nimadi	
Main religion	Hindi		Hindi	
Start date of MGNREGA	Phase 1, 2006		Phase 1, 2006	
Households employed	166,873		144,700	
Women employed (%)	33.27		48	
SC employed (%)	21.28		14.94	
ST employed (%)	47.51		54.99	
Panchayat/ research site	Village 1	Village 2	Village 3	Village 4
Households	650	254	119	121
Main livelihood sources	Own cultivation and wage employment	Own cultivation and wage employment	Own cultivation and wage employment	Own cultivation and wage employment

Note: * Rank (monthly per capita consumption expenditure 2004-2005) among the 45 districts.

Just over half of our respondents are agricultural labourers, with 57% owning their own land, 8% renting their land and 2% practising share cropping (whereby the cultivator retains 75% and gives 25% to the owner of the land). The main crops cultivated are soybean, cotton and corn, once a year, offering approximately three to four months of employment. The majority of our respondents (78%) identified that a lack of regular employment is the most significant economic risk they face. Out of these households, 66% ranked this vulnerability as of medium or high importance. Almost half of our respondents further stated that lack of adequate pay is a problem, with female-headed households ranking this as slightly more important. Approximately one-third of survey respondents reported lack of credit as another key economic vulnerability. Meanwhile, in Khargone especially, limited access to land was also identified as a source of economic vulnerability. In Khargone, land

ownership among the poor is much more limited than in Betul, where many households have access to small plots of land.

The second largest economic risk, reported by just under half of the respondents, is lack of access to health services, with female-headed households identifying acute illness of a family member as a key vulnerability more prominently. Indeed, the cost of health expenses for family members was reiterated strongly across the life histories in both districts, regardless of age or gender. Many households take on loans or take on extra work to pay for health treatment, apart from a few households which have assets to sell (livestock and land).

Among lifecycle vulnerabilities, wedding expenses were reported to be the most important, followed by the birth of another child. Again, the significance of marriage expenses was reinforced in the life history interviews: when asked about the key challenges facing households, respondents commonly cited wedding expenses. Although in ST communities the groom's family traditionally pays the 'dowry' for the bride, this seems to be changing, and both sides of the family cover the wedding expenses. Wedding expenses are significant for any poor household:

'Generally, how much money is spent during the marriage of daughters? Rs10,000-150,000, apart from the food items, which are cultivated on the land' (Elderly female (ST), Betul Village 4, 2009).

In terms of environmental vulnerabilities, an unsurprising quarter of our respondents reported that drought is a key risk. This was more common in Betul, where more households cultivate their own land. Our research was carried out in September 2009, immediately after a poor monsoon: the life history interviews in Betul specifically remarked on the dependence of their livelihoods on rainfall and the negative impact that inadequate rains – reinforced by inadequate irrigation infrastructure – have created by reducing soybean and corn production.

In terms of social risks and vulnerabilities, many of our respondents identified that tensions within the household, most notably between husband and wife, are the most significant social risk. With regard to the source of tension and conflict, 63% of households cited decision making on expenditure, 53% the distribution of domestic responsibilities and 46% care for dependents (children, elderly, sick). Fewer tensions were reported in relation to decision making over mobility and control over resources. There was little difference between female- and male-headed households in terms of the sources of social risks but some variation according to the age of the respondents. Younger respondents (15-19) said that the major social risk is related to the distribution of domestic responsibilities (see Box 3).

Box 1: Risks and vulnerabilities faced by young people

Interviews with both the younger and the older generation highlighted important changes in the opportunities that young people – particularly girls – have today in rural India. Two significant changes were identified for girls: reduction in early marriage and provision of bicycles, which has enabled girls to go to secondary school.

The average age for girls' marriage has increased, and early marriage is reportedly less prevalent:

'Child marriage is not prevalent. Only one case in the village was found of child marriage and the police came and matched up the record of age in the school and took them to the police station. Also, when a family was planning to marry their two daughters, the second one aged below 18 years, the villagers asked that the latter not be married' (Adolescent boy (General Caste (GC)), Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

Two girls specifically commented on the recent scheme which provides bicycles to girls to continue on to secondary education:

'I went to Bistan [approximately 5km away from the village] to join Standard 9 but could not continue. At that time, girls were not provided with a bicycle' (Adolescent girl (SC), Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

'Very few girls studied further before the provision of bicycles' (Adolescent girl (OBC), Betul Village 4, 2009).

However, not everyone can take advantage of these changes and opportunities. Interviews with both boys and girls highlighted the deep concerns that they have, specifically with regard to continuing their education. Boys and girls are often pulled out of school early to support family income. Girls drop out of school if they are needed for domestic responsibilities, and many girls do not remain in school past Standard 8 because of the distance they need to travel to secondary school.

Interestingly, there were very few reports of caste-based discrimination in our survey (4% of respondents reported facing discrimination because of social group status). One reason for this may be that the selected research sites are predominantly SC or ST. However, the qualitative research through life histories also sheds some important light on the changing nature of caste- and ethnic-based discrimination in the selected villages:

'We do not discriminate between ourselves as we are Bhilayas (ST) and the Harijans living in the community. We eat together and work together' (Married woman (ST), Bhagwanpura Village 2, 2009).

[Is there any discrimination between SCs, STs, OBCs?] *'They work together and eat together. If somebody does not have curry, then others share. In this respect, our village is better than others. Whenever I go to other villages, I feel like coming back to my village.'* [Is there discrimination in other villages?] *'Yes, people eat separately.'* [Do general category people with a higher position in caste terms discriminate against people belonging to other castes?] *'Yes, they do not allow them to enter their kitchen. They give food and water using different utensils. We do not discriminate between our community members. Generally, people doing wage employment do not discriminate among themselves'* (Elderly female (ST), Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

[Was there discrimination in the village when you were young?] *'Yes. People did not eat together. But nowadays people work together and participate in religious and marriage functions. Previously, there was discrimination at public drinking water places and temples. But now this is not the case'* (Married man (SC), Betul Village 4, 2009).

However, other life histories demonstrate that caste-based discrimination – although perhaps not as visible – does continue to exist:

'There is discrimination between women of the village when fetching drinking water. GC people with high economic status, like possessing land, discriminate against the caste groups falling below them' (Adolescent girl (SC), Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

[Is there discrimination between women belonging to SCs, STs and OBCs?] *'GCs and STs are preferred [for MGNREGA work].'* [Do you eat together?] *'Yes, but we sit on different sides so as not to touch each other. All of them [SCs/STs] do the same type of work, like sowing, weeding and harvesting'* (Single female (GC), Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

With regard to social capital, the majority of respondent households (81%) do not belong to any kind of formal or informal groups. Only 12% belong to a self-help group and 5% to a savings/credit group. Limited access to formal or informal groups is reflected in the number of other strategies that households employ to cope with economic and social vulnerabilities. Almost 40% of households receive no form of government support (36% hold BPL cards and a small number participate in *Antodhaya Yojana* food-based assistance programme or receive a pension), and the majority of households do not have savings (only 8% save some money every month). The main coping strategy reported is indebtedness: 57% of respondents take loans to meet their basic needs. The maximum loan amount taken was Rs1 lakh and the lowest was Rs3,000. Apart from this, other major coping mechanisms are migration for men, reducing the quality of food consumption for women closely followed by men (girls are also slightly more likely than boys to have their quality of food consumption reduced) and relying on social networks. The main sources of support are immediate family members or neighbours and, to a lesser extent, work colleagues or extended family members.

There are some differences between male- headed households and female-headed households in terms of the main coping strategies used. For male-headed households, the major coping strategies are indebtedness and migration (of males). For female-headed households, the major coping strategies are also indebtedness but then reduction of food consumption quality (of adult females). Differences between social groups were also identified: most SC respondents said that their major coping strategy is migration, whereas ST, OBC and GC respondents cited indebtedness. There were also differences between the two districts. Respondents in Khargone said that the major coping strategies used are indebtedness and relying on social networks. Those in Betul also use loans as a coping strategy, but migration is more common, as are reductions in the quantity and quality of food. This is perhaps because Betul is located in a mountainous area, with the population relatively more dependent on own production for food. Moreover, cultivation takes place only during the rainy season: for the rest of the year, people migrate in search of employment.

4. MGNREGA policy and programme design

4.1 MGNREGA design

India's investment in public works programmes has a long history, with coverage increasing significantly during the late 1980s. Implementation was at the state level, with assistance from the centre (national level). Programmes were mainly self-targeting, with the objective of providing enhanced livelihood security, especially for those dependent on casual manual labour in rural areas, as well as creating assets which had the potential to generate second-round employment benefits (Planning Commission, 2008).

The concept and objectives of MGNREGA are based on the historical legacy of public works programmes in India, but its actual design departs from its predecessors in a number of important ways. Overall, the new features in the design of MGNREGA demonstrate a transformative approach to poverty reduction in relation to its rights-based approach. First, and most importantly, MGNREGA is an act enshrined in India's Constitution, entitling any poor rural household to 100 days of employment. In this way, the legislation goes beyond providing a social safety net and guarantees employment as a right.

Second, this is the first public works programme that has been national in coverage, organised and mainly funded from the central budget but implemented at the state level by the village assembly – the *Gram Panchayat* – rather than private contractors. MGNREGA began in 2006 in 200 districts, and from 2008 was implemented in all rural districts in all states in India. Recent data show that almost 45 million households have accessed MGNREGA employment to date (Dev, 2009). In 2009-2010, the central budget allocated Rs300 billion (\$6 billion) to MGNREGA. This is around 0.5% of GDP, 3.3% of budget expenditure and 10% of planned expenditure (ibid).

At least 50% of the works are implemented by the *Gram Panchayats* with no private contractors¹² (see Box 4 for details of the types of works). An indirect goal of MGNREGA is to strengthen grassroots processes of democracy by means of transparent and accountable mechanisms such as the social audit and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

Box 2: Types of assets created by MGNREGA work

There are eight categories of works in which assets can be created through MGNREGS employment days:

1. Water conservation and water harvesting;
2. Drought proofing;
3. Irrigation canals;
4. Provision of irrigation facility on the lands of disadvantaged sections: SCs and STs and others;
5. Renovation of traditional water bodies (e.g. tanks);
6. Land development;
7. Flood control and protection works;
8. Rural connectivity to provide all-weather access.

The ninth category is 'any other work which may be notified by central government in consultation with state governments.'

Over the past three years, the majority of works has been in water conservation (30.5% in 2006-2007 and 21.3% in 2008-2009) and rural connectivity (21.2% in 2006-2007 and 18% in 2008-2009), and increasingly in provision of irrigation on other people's land and land development (Dev, 2009).

¹² Other implementing agencies include intermediate *Panchayats*, district *Panchayats*, line departments and NGOs. Private contractors are banned (Dev, 2009).

Third, MGNREGA marks a shift from allocated work to demand-based work. Employment in MGNREGA is dependent on the worker applying for registration, obtaining a job card and then seeking employment through a written application for the time and duration chosen by the worker.

Under the law, there is also a legal guarantee that the work requested has to be given by the *Panchayat* within 15 days. If not, the state has to provide an unemployment allowance at a quarter of the wage for each day employment is not given, thereby providing the *Panchayat* an incentive for effective implementation.

4.2 Integration of gender dimensions in programme design

The design of MGNREGA is aimed at transforming rural livelihoods through its rights-based approach to employment. An important indirect impact of the act is to 'empower rural women' (Ministry of Rural Development, n.d.). As recognised in the 11th Five-Year Plan, the barriers that women face in the rural economy are barriers to achieving the full potential of agricultural growth (Planning Commission, 2008). The extent to which gender inequalities are addressed through MGNREGS is therefore important to effectively achieve both the direct and indirect goals of the programme.

The design of MGNREGA incorporates a number of features which explicitly tackle some of the challenges women face in the rural economy and women's differential experiences of poverty and vulnerability. First and foremost, the act aims to promote women's participation in the workforce through a quota to ensure that at least one-third of all workers who have registered and requested work under the scheme in each state are women. To support women's participation, crèche facilities are to be provided by the implementing agency when five or more children below the age of six are brought to the worksite. Women, especially single women, are given preference to work on worksites close to their residence if the worksite is 5km or more away (Ministry of Rural Development, 2008).

Second, the act states that equal wages are to be paid to men and women workers under the provisions of the Equal Remuneration Act 1976. This is an important measure, given prevailing wage disparities in the rural sector between men and women. The guidelines also suggest that, when opening bank accounts for the labourers, the bank or the *Panchayat* needs to give a considered choice, between individual accounts for each MGNREGA labourer and joint accounts (one for each job card holder – normally the male head of household). It is suggested that, if joint accounts are used, the different household members (e.g. husband and wife) should be co-signatories. Special care should be taken to avoid crediting household earnings to individual accounts held by the male household head which would leave women with no control over their earnings. Separate individual accounts for women members of the household may be opened in the case of male-headed households.

Third, for the supervision of work and recording worksite attendance, 'mates'¹³ can be designated for each piece of work. The guidelines suggest that adequate representation of women among mates should be ensured. Mates must have been educated up to either Standard 5 or Standard 8 (Ministry of Rural Development, 2008).

Fourth, women should be represented in local-level committees, social audit process as well as state and central-level councils. Local Vigilance and Monitoring Committees, which monitor the progress and quality of work while it is underway, comprise nine members (at least 50% of whom are MGNREGA workers). The *Gram Sabha* (congregation of all village members above 18) is responsible for electing committee members and to ensure that SCs/STs and women are represented. Social audit forums also requires representation of women, although the guidelines

¹³ Mates are responsible for e.g. supervision of employees and works, maintenance records and calculating payments.

clearly state that lack of representation by any of the required categories should not be taken as a reason for not recording queries and complaints through the forum process.¹⁴ Nevertheless, they do suggest that the timing of forums must be such that it is convenient for people to attend – in particular for MGNREGS workers, women and marginalised communities.

At the state level, for purposes of M&E, every state government has a State Council in which women should have one-third representation (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2005). The headquarters of the Central Council in New Delhi, consisting of up to 15 non-official members representing *Panchayati Raj* institutions, organisations of workers and disadvantaged groups, includes the provision that 'not less than one-third of the non-official members nominated under this clause shall be women' (ibid).

¹⁴ Social audits are conducted by *Gram Sabhas* of all works taken up within the *Gram Panchayat*.

5. Effects of MGNREGA on individuals, households and communities

The above section outlines the main areas where considerations of gender equality have been integrated effectively into the design of MGNREGA. In this section, we look at how the implementation of MGNREGA impacts in practice on individuals, households and communities through a gender lens. We draw on the quantitative and qualitative results of our fieldwork in Madhya Pradesh to examine both the direct and the indirect impacts of the employment scheme.

The Ministry of Rural Development (2008) states four main direct objectives of MGNREGA, as well as a number of indirect objectives. At an individual/household level, the two main ones are to provide:

- A strong social safety net for vulnerable groups by providing a fallback employment source when other employment alternatives are scarce or inadequate;
- Empowerment of the rural poor through the processes of a rights-based law.

The indirect objectives include reducing rural-urban migration and empowering rural women (Ministry of Rural Development, n.d.).

At the community level, the two main direct objectives are (Ministry of Rural Development, 2008):

- To be a growth engine for the sustainable development of an agricultural economy. Through the process of providing employment on works that address causes of chronic poverty such as drought, deforestation and soil erosion, the act seeks to strengthen the natural resource base of rural livelihoods and to create durable assets in rural areas;
- To support new ways of doing business, as a model of governance reform anchored in the principles of transparency and grassroots democracy.

Indirectly, one of the key objectives is to foster social equity (Ministry of Rural Development, n.d.).

We discuss these objectives and their effects in turn below.

5.1 Impacts at the individual and household level

5.1.1 Direct effects: Providing a social safety net

Women's employment in the labour force in Madhya Pradesh is slightly above the national average. However, women's rate of employment (wages paid in cash) in the private agriculture sector relative to men is much lower. Nevertheless, women's representation in MGNREGA in the state is almost equal to men's. The most recent data (2010) show that 43.5% of women are employed in MGNREGA, just below the national average (48.25%), demonstrating relatively high access to MGNREGA employment in the state.

Moreover, given the prevailing inequality in wage payment in Madhya Pradesh between men and women, one of the most important reported positive impacts of MGNREGA for women is the provision of equal wages. The act stipulates that the wage rate be set at the minimum unskilled agricultural wage in each state for both men and women. In private agricultural employment, women receive approximately Rs30 a day and men receive up to Rs45 a day; under MGNREGA, they both receive approximately Rs90. The higher wages from MGNREGA therefore represent a significant improvement in terms of women's earning opportunities and increased contribution to household income.

Access to employment days from MGNREGA and higher wages have important benefits for immediate household economic security. Women in Madhya Pradesh are mainly responsible for day-to-day expenditure on household items and consumption, and respondents reported that money from MGNREGA is spent mainly on meeting these small household needs.¹⁵ Apart from this, MGNREGA income is also spent, to a lesser extent, on improving economic security in the medium to longer term. Wages are also spent on health and education as well as agricultural inputs, such as seeds and fertilisers.

MGNREGA provides a source of income during seasonal slack periods (Female FGD, Betul Village 4, 2009). This is especially important given that farming in Madhya Pradesh, as in other states in India, is highly seasonal and vulnerable to precarious weather conditions. Crop production in the research sites takes place during the monsoon period, and employment on farms is available only for approximately three to four months a year.

Another household-level effect of MGNREGA is that it has enabled some households (9%) better access credit. Our research found that, although MGNREGA income is not seen as sufficient to make a large financial impact on households, because of the limited number of employment days, MGNREGA has helped some households to access loans, as well as assisting them with loan repayment. In all four research sites, FGDs showed that, for most households, income from MGNREGA days is simply not sufficient to have any impacts other than in meeting immediate consumption needs. Moreover, generating collateral against future income requires predictability, but the demand side of MGNREGA is not yet functioning effectively in our research sites. Receiving employment days from MGNREGA is still largely at the discretion of the *Panchayat*, rather than being the result of a demand-driven application process (discussed in more detail below). This reduces income reliability.

A small number of survey respondents (12%) reported that one of the problems with MGNREGA is that it benefits only one family member in the household. Our qualitative research highlighted that household structure (especially with regard to extended families) plays a large role in determining the potential benefits of MGNREGA employment (see Box 5). Another important complaint relates to the few days of MGNREGA work provided. Many households reported that 100 days of employment – fewer in practice – is not sufficient to meet their needs throughout the year.

Box 3: Impact of household structure on MGNREGA opportunities

Household demography has important implications for the benefits of MGNREGA. The conceptualisation of the 'household' as the targeting mechanism for MGNREGA has been discussed as problematic on a number of levels (see Bhatti, 2008). On the one hand, larger households (e.g. joint families with a higher number of adults) are better able to demand employment in MGNREGA because of labour availability in the household; on the other hand, the benefits are diluted because of the large size of the household – only 100 days are given per household. In our research sites, men in particular said that, in extended families, each brother's family should receive a job card. Women, however, said that each individual adult should receive a job card (see also Gupta, 2009). Indeed, many single women, in particular in extended families, are unable to claim their entitlements to MGNREGA independently. Female-headed households with limited labour availability (either because of permanent female headship or because of seasonal migration (transitory)) are often not able to take full advantage of employment opportunities, especially when the type of work requires men and women to work together in teams or the provision of work depends on contact with the *Panchayat* within the community – of which poor women tend to have very little (authors' interviews, 2009).

¹⁵ Survey results showed that, for 17% of respondents, MGNREGA helps improve household consumption, especially in terms of expenditure on food items. The second most important positive impact of MGNREGA is the provision of livelihood security, in terms of obtaining employment for some days in a year. For 5% of respondents, MGNREGA, along with improving livelihood security and household consumption, MGNREGA helps in getting access to credit.

5.1.2 Direct effects: Empowerment through the process of a rights-based law

The rights-based approach of MGNREGA is not yet fully functioning, in a number of ways. In all our research sites, FGDs highlighted that the *sarpanch* and/or secretary decides on the work to be done and allocates days, rather than members of the household applying for work on a demand-driven basis when employment is needed (this is discussed further in relation to community impacts in Section 5.2).

Although the act stipulates that households are entitled to 100 days of employment and equal wages, a closer look at the number of days of work provided and the actual provision of wages that this translates into suggests a rather more unequal picture in relation to MGNREGA's gender dimensions.

Participation rates for women in MGNREGA generally exceed the one-third quota, but women continue to face more limited employment opportunities. In some states, cultural norms prevent women from working outside the home or working with men, which are reflected in household decisions to send only men for MGNREGA work, thereby denying women's rights within the household to access employment days (Samarthan Centre for Development Support, 2007). Even though this is not the case in our research sites, entrenched ideas about the gender division of labour do affect the type of work seen as acceptable for women to do. Studies have also shown that, even when women want to work, they have been excluded by the *Panchayat* because of social norms around 'appropriate' work for women (Khera and Nayak, 2009). In Madhya Pradesh, for example, our research shows that, despite women's representation overall being above 40%, in practice women receive fewer days because they are not involved in all the types of work available. Women are often given 'soft' work such as removing the soil when wells are dug, which takes fewer days.¹⁶

Single women are particularly affected when earthwork depends on family-based couples to work together (Gupta, 2009; Palriwala and Neetha, 2009).

'Men are always preferred to women. Single women are excluded, as some works demand the participation of both men and women as a pair' (Female FGD, Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

Moreover, in Bhagwanpura Village 1, more women than men are requesting to work on MGNREGA. This has been particularly problematic for single women, as one worker, a young widow explains:

'[Women] were sidelined and men were given preference – there were more women than men preferring to work in MGNREGA. As women fought among themselves, it was decided that women had to accompany men' (Widow, (GC), Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

It is not just cultural and institutional barriers that restrict women's demand for and participation in MGNREGA: lifecycle vulnerabilities are also an influencing factor. Although provision is made for different types of work to be allocated to the physically challenged, there is no official provision for different types of work to be allocated to pregnant women or women who have recently given birth. This reportedly happens on an ad hoc basis (authors' interviews, 2009), but this is at the discretion of the implementing agency, usually the *Panchayat*. In one life history interview in our research site, a young woman who had recently given birth was working on MGNREGA when she was eight months pregnant. She explained that she experienced problems carrying out the hard manual labour (Married woman (GC), Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009).

Women's roles and responsibilities in domestic and care work also influence their demand for and participation in MGNREGA employment. Crèche facilities are provided for in MGNREGA design

¹⁶ Some key informant interviews in Madhya Pradesh also suggested that women receive lower wages because of piece-rate payments, where productivity is measured by 'male norms,' but we did not find evidence of this among participant respondents.

and programme manuals, but in reality these are lacking, which reflects a serious implementation challenge in relation to women's equal participation. In a recent study of four states, provision of child care facilities at MGNREGA worksites was found to vary from 17% to 1% (Jandu, 2008). Our research found no child care facilities at MGNREGA worksites in any of the four villages visited. The result of this is that many breastfeeding mothers do not go to work on MGNREGA sites, and some women are forced to leave their younger children (above one year) with their in-laws or with older daughters (Female FGD, Betul Village 4, 2009).

5.1.3 Indirect effects: Migration

MGNREGA has not displaced existing employment for most respondents; rather, it has 'added to their diverse portfolio of livelihood strategies.'¹⁷ Only 32% of respondents reported that they have given up other work to work in MGNREGA – most households stating that this is work on agricultural farms and, to a lesser extent, other wage employment.

Our qualitative research found some reports of a reduction of migration (see similar findings in e.g. Jandu, 2008, Samarthan Centre for Development Support, 2007). Although migration is still an important source of income for households in our research sites, if not the main source of income for many, the availability of MGNREGA employment in the local area has enabled some families to reduce the number of days they migrate and the number of household members taking part in migration. Whereas before whole households migrated, often only the men migrate now, for seasonal work within the state, such as to Betul, Malwa and Hoshangabad, or to neighbouring states, such as Maharashtra and Gujarat, to take part in farming and brick making. In a recent study in six villages in Madhya Pradesh, Deshingkar et al. (2010) found indications that those undertaking distress migration have taken up MGNREGA employment, and that MGNREGA has provided an important safety net, especially for widows who may not have the confidence and the ability to migrate in search of better work. Overall, however, the authors find that MGNREGA has had little impact in reducing migration. One of the key reasons for this relates to implementation problems, as well as the small number of work days provided – poor households cannot rely on MGNREGA to provide enough work for them to forgo migration, which is much more certain and also more remunerative in a majority of cases (ibid).

5.1.4 Indirect effects: Women's status and empowerment

Another important indirect objective of MGNREGA is women's empowerment. The links between women's status, bargaining power and decision making in the household and improvements in both family welfare and economic productivity are well researched, and there is an assumption that women's greater earning power leads to increased empowerment. Women's status and decision making in the household in India varies according to local customs, social group and religion but, overall, women face similar inequalities and discrimination at the household level. Low social status, low levels of human capital, limited ownership of assets and weak control over resources are key factors which constrain women's bargaining power and participation in decision making.

Our research suggests that women's employment in MGNREGA has improved economic status and decision-making power slightly for some women in some households, mostly in terms of their own decision making on what food items they prefer to be bought for household consumption. For other women, their contribution to the household income through MGNREGA employment has had no impact on relations within the household. In line with NFHS-3 data (IIPS and Macro International, 2008), women stated that decision making rests with the men in the household and that, at times, women and men make decisions together. However, men in our FGDs were more likely to state that women have more decision-making power in the household, suggesting that both the husband and wife take the majority of decisions together.

¹⁷ Priya Deshingkar, Research Fellow, ODI. Personal communication, February 2010.

Our research found no explicit correlation between the recent emergence of bank accounts for MGNREGA employment and women's empowerment. The rollout of bank accounts in the name of women has been uneven, and is entirely dependent on the local *Panchayat*. In one site, no bank accounts have been opened in women's names; in another, joint accounts have been opened; in another, individual bank accounts have been opened in both men's and women's names.

Spousal domestic violence is relatively widespread in Madhya Pradesh (compared with other states), and is especially prevalent along wealth and religious lines, with the poorest households most likely to experience it. The data above show that wives who work are more likely to experience domestic violence. Consumption of alcohol is also fairly prevalent in Madhya Pradesh (2.1% of women drink alcohol compared with 30.8% of men (IIPS and Macro International, 2007) and also in our research sites: *'mostly men spend money on drinking alcohol'* (Female FGD, Betul Village 4, 2009). Violence in the home is often associated with alcohol, and women from our FGDs and life histories suggested that, in a number of instances, women's income from MGNREGA has had no effect on the regular domestic violence and abuse they face, often fuelled by a husband's alcohol consumption. As one woman stated, *'most of the men spend money on drinking. They beat their wives and snatch money away from them'* (Female FGD, Bhagwanpura Village 2, 2009).

In some cases, women's employment in MGNREGA has exacerbated household tensions, whereby women's work has put pressure on her time allocated to household duties (Female FGD, Bhagwanpura Village 1, 2009). As highlighted earlier using NFHS-3 data, neglect of the house or children is one of the main causes of domestic disputes. Even though women work more hours than men, combining domestic and productive work (women work 457 minutes per day compared with men who work 391 (NAWO, 2008)), MGNREGA has no provision for possible flexible working hours for women to relieve their time pressures in their dual responsibilities of market and non-market activities.

5.2 Impacts at community level

5.2.1 Direct effects: MGNREGA as a growth engine – creation of community assets

In our four research sites, the most common types of works created through MGNREGA are road construction, digging of wells (and other related water management such as water conservation and water harvesting) and tree plantation.

These MGNREGA-created community assets have had varying degrees of impact. There were some reports that community assets have improved, for example community buildings, plantations, watershed development and irrigation and roads. In our research sites, some households reported that watershed development created through assets has supported greater crop production, and that infrastructure (e.g. roads) has helped in marketing products. However, there was some criticism by both men and women in the village, not only that not all households in the community benefit from the infrastructure (especially the landless) but also that wells in particular are not always appropriate. For example, MGNREGA guidelines state that wells must be dug to a maximum depth; in one of our research sites in Betul district, this was not deep enough to allow water through, so wells have not been utilised.

This criticism reflects a larger challenge: more broadly, assets created are not benefiting the rural poor to the extent that they could be, and therefore are not harnessing the potential for rural change and poverty reduction originally conceptualised under MGNREGA. There is a general sense that MGNREGA has been focusing on employment at the expense of development (Mahapatra et al., 2008). Proponents of women's empowerment and gender equality have also called for a refocus on the types of works that are offered under MGNREGS and suggest that health care, literacy and skills programmes, nutrition and sanitation are some possible alternative types.

5.2.2 Direct effects: Local governance and democracy

A main aim of MGNREGA is to improve local governance and democracy. As the Ministry of Rural Development (2008) states, MGNREGA's fourth goal is new ways of doing business, as a model of governance reform anchored on the principles of transparency and grassroots democracy.

An innovative mechanism putting into practice improved local governance and democracy is the 'social audits' – a means of continuous public vigilance (Ministry of Rural Development, 2008). Social audits aim to ensure public accountability in the implementation of projects, laws and policies, and refer to the periodic assemblies convened by the *Gram Sabha*. A social audit is seen as an ongoing process by means of which potential beneficiaries and other stakeholders are involved at various stages of the planning, implementation and M&E of MGNREGA. This is to ensure that the activity or project is designed and implemented in such a way as to reflect local needs and priorities.

Our study found that the participation of men and women in community meetings to discuss the planning of MGNREGA works varies. In Bhagwanpura Village 2, a FGD with men showed that, though the villagers vote, they rarely participate in *Gram Sabha* meetings (Male FGD, Bhagwanpura Village 2, 2009). In Betul Village 4, however, men reported that the villagers attend *Gram Sabha* meetings and participate in decision making about the type of work to be done in village through MGNREGA (Male FGD, Betul Village 4, 2009). Women are less likely to participate in *Gram Sabha* meetings and play a relatively negligible role in deciding on types of work to be carried out in the village through MGNREGA: '*women do not attend Gram Sabha meetings and it is generally men who go to the meetings*' (Female FGD, Bhagwanpura Village 2, 2009).

Despite limited involvement of men and women in the MGNREGA planning process, our research found that villagers are well aware of their rights in relation to MGNREGA (in terms of the application process for 100 days of employment, participation in decision making around the assets created and the provision of child care facilities). However, there is a limited ability to claim these rights:

'Although people know about the MGNREGA provisions, they do not have a major say in deciding about the type of work to be done in the village, nor about the provision of crèche facilities' (Male FGD, Betul Village 4, 2009).

[Do you know that everybody has the right to demand 100 days of work?] *'If they fight with the sarpanch there will be no work. They know that they should have it'* (Married woman (ST), Bhagwanpura Village 2, 2009).

[Is there any child care facility in MGNREGA work?] *'No.'* [Do you know that if there are five children or more in the work site, there must be a crèche facility?] *'Yes, I know that the government has provision but this is not provided.'* [Do you try to demand this before the sarpanch?] *'No-one listens to poor people. After the elections, no-one hears, be this sarpanch or ministers'* (Married woman (ST), Bhagwanpura Village 2, 2009).

5.2.3 Indirect effects: Social equity and community relations

In all four of our research sites, community members tend to agree that explicit social discrimination across caste and/or ethnic groups is low (see Section 3.3 above).

It is in this context that the majority of respondents reported that there is no discrimination during participation in MGNREGA works. A total of 94% of respondents reported that they are not discriminated against in terms of receiving fewer days in MGNREGA employment, and 89% of respondents reported that they do not face discrimination at MGNREGA worksites. For those who did report discrimination, the survey showed that this relates mainly to *Dalit/Adivasi* workers eating separately at the workplace. However, our qualitative research highlighted other factors too,

including some reports of community tensions in terms of the allocation of employment. As one respondent noted, '*as STs are in the majority, privileges are given to them in terms of employment in MGNREGA*' (Married woman (SC), Betul Village 4, 2009).

However, the overwhelming majority, in both male and female FGDs, report that villagers work and eat together. Indeed, even though it is not the presence of MGNREGA per se that has contributed to reduced social marginalisation and discrimination over time, but rather other existing factors, there is a positive perception of MGNREGA in the community because of high participation rates of SC and ST households in MGNREGS employment. This is no exception in our research sites in Madhya Pradesh, where SC and ST households are overrepresented in MGNREGA works (see Table 2 in Section 3.3).

An important indirect effect of MGNREGA has been its contribution to increased social capital. Our research suggested that there is a general perception that social networks have strengthened as a result of MGNREGA, leading to improved relationships whereby men and women work together, as well as supporting/strengthening informal safety nets by borrowing small amounts of money from each other. One of the reasons cited for this was that, since the implementation of MGNREGA, people have been able to access credit from either their neighbours or their relatives, as there has been increased security of repayment.

Importantly, however, we note that, although certain aspects of social capital have increased, this continues to be along existing caste lines. MGNREGA has not challenged existing caste/social group divisions, where they exist. Indeed, other respondents from outside the majority caste in our community sites suggest that social discrimination is still prevalent (see Section 3.3 above). In one life history, a woman belonging to the SC in Betul Village 4 told us that she had been employed to cook the midday meal in the local school. After seven months, she was thrown out of the job without receiving any remuneration and suspects that this is because she is SC. She further elaborated that discrimination exists particularly between SCs and STs. Social discrimination takes its form in the segregation of SCs during cooking and eating, especially during cultural and religious ceremonies, at which SC households '*eat last, although they contribute funds for those ceremonies*' (Married woman (SC), Betul Village 4, 2009).

6. Drivers of programme impacts

MGNREGA is the key flagship safety net programme in India. The act, which was passed in 2005, was the result of political party commitment and civil society campaigns to create a rights-based approach to the public works programme. MGNREGA marks a significant shift away from its predecessors. The legislation goes beyond providing a social safety net to guarantee the right to employment, and MGNREGA remains one of the main pillars of rapid poverty reduction in the 11th Five-Year Plan (Planning Commission, 2008). The legislation has received wide support from political parties, civil society and the public at large.

Madhya Pradesh was one of the first districts to implement MGNREGA in 2006 and, since its inception, has been one of the higher performing states in terms of delivering MGNREGA employment and works. As Drèze and Oldiges (2007) suggest, the implementation of MGNREGA is political: three of the best performing states in terms of employment generation under MGNREGA all had Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) governments in 2006-2007 (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh). Indeed, the BJP government in Madhya Pradesh has also shown broader commitment to implementing pro-poor programmes as well as to addressing gender inequality – for example, the government started *Ladli Laxmi Yojana* in 2006, which aims to reduce the significant gender disparities between boys and girls by providing financial support to families with daughters to help them send the girls to school and prevent early marriage.

In terms of gender, the design of MGNREGA has a number of gender-sensitive features: ensuring a minimum level of participation among women (30%); ensuring equal wages for men and women; and supporting women's participation in village-level democratic processes (the *Gram Sabha*). The implementation of these components has been variable across the state. The level of women's participation in MGNREGA has been relatively high – partly because many women in Madhya Pradesh were already engaged in wage labour and because MGNREGA provides women with higher wages than they receive in private agricultural employment. The state's Department of Rural Development has also actively promoted the use of women as mates at MGNREGA worksites, partly to encourage women workers and to ensure a more gender-sensitive workplace (authors' interviews, 2009). The extent to which this mechanism has been taken up varies according to women's level of education (mates must be educated to Standard 5 or Standard 8) as well as *Panchayat* preferences (ibid).

However, evidence from our research sites suggests that implementation challenges at the local level mean that, in practice, women receive fewer work days than men, because of prevailing norms associated with the type of work deemed appropriate for women, because their opportunities for work are limited as a result of failures to provide proper child care facilities and because women are rarely involved in community committees or meetings in the planning and monitoring processes of MGNREGA works. A number of factors explain these implementation challenges. For example, MGNREGA funds have given the *Panchayati Raj* institutions more financial responsibility and power than they previously experienced. Although this is a positive step towards strengthening decentralised powers in India, capacity at the local *Panchayat* level has been identified as a key weakness in the implementation of MGNREGA in general (authors' interviews, 2009) and of gender-sensitive design features in particular.

Moreover, in the context of local-level governance structures, India potentially offers significant opportunities for gender-sensitive implementation as result of affirmative action through the reservation of seats for women at local levels. This been a significant and transformative approach in India, but its translation into improved awareness of gender inequality or action has been varied. Low levels of literacy among women, physical and verbal intimidation and violence and women standing as 'proxies' for their husbands have all been identified as limiting the effectiveness of the reservations (Jayal, 2006). Nevertheless, evidence does suggest that reservations may lead to

women's empowerment and better representation, eventually (Chattopadhyay and Duflo, 2004), providing scope for improved gender-sensitive implementation of MGNREGA in the future. Importantly, this suggests that, in order for the implementation of MGNREGA to go beyond individual motivation to ensure a more gender-sensitive approach, capacity building on gender issues at the *Panchayat* level is necessary.

To date, however, there has been limited attention to and resources for supporting gender awareness capacity building at all levels. Where training is given, it is focused largely on MGNREGA implementation processes, as well as rural development issues such as watershed management, irrigation, etc. The importance of strengthening linkages to support gender equality for improved effectiveness of rural development has not yet been adequately understood.

The overall data collection process in MGNREGA is impressive, as a result of improved accountability and transparency mechanisms, and the M&E system goes some way to include relevant sex-disaggregated data. Gender-specific M&E includes questions on: 1) whether registration is refused to female-headed households or single women; 2) the average proportion of women working on MGNREGA in a village; and 3) whether there are different task rates for men and women. However, improvements could be made in collecting, analysing and using sex-disaggregated data, which could include monitoring of the use of community assets and assessment of the appropriateness and benefits of these using a gender lens, as well as the extent to which women are participating in the various social audit processes at the community level.

Currently, inter-ministerial coordination between the central Ministry and state Departments of Rural Development and the Ministry and Departments of Women and Child Development is limited. The Department of Women and Child Development has a gender policy aimed at mainstreaming gender issues throughout the state's different departments, including rural development, but there is no explicit attention to MGNREGA. Furthermore, our interviews with the Department of Women and Child Development suggested that other mechanisms aimed at strengthening gender within other departments, such as gender budgeting and gender cells, suffer from weak capacity and coordination. The most important avenue for the department's contribution to MGNREGA policy and programming in Madhya Pradesh currently appears to be based on individual motivation rather than institutional structures (authors' interviews, 2009). However, improved coordination between the two ministries could support a broader conceptualisation of the linkages between gender and MGNREGA, including integrating the creation of gender-sensitive assets, minimising women's time burden (e.g. through the provision of flexible hours), mitigating women's lifecycle vulnerabilities (e.g. offering alternative less labour-intensive works during pregnancy and nursing) and expanding the types of works under MGNREGA to directly and indirectly support rural growth (e.g. linked to skills training, health and nutrition, etc).

Finally, the transformative approach of MGNREGA has wider implications for the notion of state-citizen relations and offers potential gains in terms of the political, social and economic empowerment of the poor through the act. As well as the weaknesses in implementation identified above, it is also important to recognise the challenges on the demand side: that is, of the poor to exercise their right to employment. An overwhelming challenge is the rate of illiteracy among the poor, and especially among women – yet gaining MGNREGA employment requires a potential participant to go through a multilayered written application process. Our research also highlighted that entrenched power relations between the community and the government are prohibitive of a more transformative change which would enable villagers to channel suggestions and recommendations to the *Panchayat* for improved implementation of the scheme. In this regard, civil society and local NGOs are playing an important role in raising awareness, mobilising the community to demand employment from the *Panchayat*, strengthening vigilance committees and setting up public hearings for grievances.

7. Conclusions and policy implications

Public works programmes have been a popular safety net intervention in India since Independence. The development and implementation of MGNREGA is partly a result of decades of learning from previous public works interventions, but importantly also marks a significant shift away from its predecessors in a number of ways. MGNREGA uses a rights-based approach, providing legal entitlements to all poor rural households in India: to date, over 40 million households have claimed employment days from local *Panchayats*. The objectives of MGNREGA are twofold: 1) to provide an effective safety net for the poor who are mainly dependent on agricultural wage labour by supporting access to income, especially to ease the problem of seasonal unemployment and migration; and 2) in the longer term to ‘transform’ rural livelihoods through investment in agricultural and rural infrastructure to improve production.

Evidence from our research sites in Madhya Pradesh suggests that employment in MGNREGA has contributed to achieving the first goal to some extent. Most notably, respondents reported that income from MGNREGA mainly goes towards household food expenses, other basic household expenses and children’s education. In some cases, households have slightly better access to credit, and MGNREGA has changed the pattern of migration in terms of reducing the number of household members who migrate and reducing the number of days of migration. Overall, however, our research shows that the biggest vulnerability that households continue to face is ‘a lack of regular employment,’ indicating that, although income from MGNREGA employment supports small household expenditure, livelihood opportunities for poor households remain limited.

Our analysis of MGNREGA through a gender lens has highlighted specific progressive gender-sensitive design features which support women’s participation in employment, through the one-third quota, the provision of equal wages for women and men through the Equal Remuneration Act 1976 and the promotion of women’s active engagement in the planning and evaluation of community assets through, for example, the social audit forums. The findings from our research sites in Madhya Pradesh demonstrate a number of important effects of MGNREGA in terms of addressing women’s practical needs by supporting household income for small household expenditure, including food and education expenses. Our findings also point to a number of areas for improving both the conceptual design of MGNREGA and its implementation, in order to further support gender-equitable outcomes of the act and the achievement of MGNREGA’s goal to promote rural women’s empowerment.

7.1 Policy and programme design

At the **household level**, the provision of equal wages to women is an important design feature of MGNREGA, which recognises – and attempts to address – prevailing gender disparities in the agricultural labour market in rural India. Similarly, the provision of child care facilities at MGNREGA sites potentially addresses an important gender-specific vulnerability, whereby responsibility for children can prevent women from participating in economic activities. However, women in Madhya Pradesh, despite enjoying relatively high participation rates in MGNREGA, face a number of challenges that prevent their full participation in MGNREGA employment. These could be addressed by strengthening the gender-sensitive design of the programme, as discussed below.

Greater attention to lifecycle vulnerabilities is needed. Currently, pregnant and nursing women engage in hard manual labour during pregnancy or immediately after, or lose the opportunity for income by not working during these months. Experience from public works programmes in other countries suggest that options to transition from public works to direct support or less physically demanding work during pregnancy and nursing, such as taking on a childminding role at a worksite crèche or acting as a mate, could represent successful alternatives.

By recognising existing intra-household inequalities in terms of the gendered division of labour and bargaining power, MGNREGA could relieve some of the time constraints put on women by their double workload of productive and domestic responsibilities, by making flexible working hours available on MGNREGA sites. This would be particularly beneficial especially, as our research indicates, where women's employment in MGNREGA has exacerbated household tensions by putting pressure on women's time allocated to household duties. Promoting the provision of bank accounts in women's names is another key feature which could be strengthened to potentially support women's position within the household.

Evidence suggests that more attention should also be given to the structure and demography of the household, as this influences access to MGNREGA and the benefits gained from employment. Where work depends on family-based couples working together, single female-headed households have been excluded, suggesting that a more sensitive approach to ensuring appropriate works for single women is needed. Other evidence suggests that single women within households are often unable to exercise their right to employment and to independently access MGNREGA days. Similarly, men suggested that, when more than one family is living in an extended household, MGNREGA benefits are diluted. Reconceptualising the 'household unit' by providing job cards to families or individuals within a household may be beneficial to the rural poor.

At the **community level**, the option for public works activities to be carried out to improve productivity on private SC and ST lands reflects a commitment to addressing social caste and ethnic inequalities. However, there has been little consideration of the types of assets that could be created to ease gender-specific vulnerabilities, for example public works activities aimed at reducing women's time poverty, such as improving fuel wood and water collection sources, or more broadly addressing discriminatory access to common property resources and sources of drinking water for SC/ST women. In particular, as a result of the focus on rural infrastructure, the types of employment opportunities created have to some extent served to reinforce existing stereotypes of the type of work deemed socially acceptable for women. And women have been given 'soft' work rather than being provided with alternative employment opportunities.

Many authors have proposed that the conceptualisation of MGNREGA's asset creation be widened to improve effectiveness on the goal to transform rural livelihoods. Broadening the narrow scope of the types of works appropriate to rural productivity could also include a focus on health care, nutrition and literacy/skills programmes, as well as improving market access and infrastructure for women and supporting investments in and training on other agricultural activities. Indeed, lack of access to and utilisation of health, education and financial services were identified in our research sites across gender, age and social group as important sources of risk and vulnerability.

In terms of programme **governance**, the social audit is an important component to promote community-level involvement in the planning and monitoring of MGNREGA works, and pays explicit attention to women's participation in the process. However, although the guidelines suggest that the timing of social audit forums must be such that it is convenient for women and marginalised communities, they also state that lack of representation by any of the required categories should not be taken as a reason not to proceed with the forum process. In order to ensure that women are better represented at the local level, there is an urgent need to put in place mechanisms that ensure that women are able to participate, for example quotas for women's representation, flexible meeting times, awareness raising on the importance of women's participation and mechanisms to strengthen their confidence to raise their voice and opinions in community decision making.

In Madhya Pradesh, the decision to appoint women mates across the state is an important way to support women's opportunities for alternative skills development and to take on more of a supervisory role, despite this being dependent on women having an education level to Standard 5 or Standard 8. Facilitating lesson learning from villages that have successfully put in place women

mates would be an important way to share best practices and promote greater attention to the gender dimensions and potential of MGNREGA works.

Technical capacity building of staff at all levels of government, including in the Department of Women and Child Development, is needed to effectively articulate the importance of gender equality for rural development and poverty reduction. Institutionalising inter-sectoral coordination is also vital to promote understanding of and attention both to gendered economic and social risks and vulnerabilities and to the way they intersect. MGNREGA has an excellent basis for M&E, and strengthening reporting and analysis of gender-related dimensions would help support changes in programme design and implementation. Improvements in data collection could include a focus on: the gender-related benefits of the types of assets created; participation in decision-making structures; and budget allocations for capacity building on gender-related programme dimensions.

7.2 Implementation issues

The government of India, with the collaboration of NGOs, has achieved considerable success in scaling up MGNREGA to over 40 million households in the space of three to four years. All districts across all states are now implementing the programme. As discussed above, MGNREGA has specific design features to address gendered vulnerabilities, but the implementation of these has faced a number of challenges. These urgently need to be overcome in order to be able to realise the full potential of this flagship programme to address rural poverty in the country.

First, much more attention to improving awareness on gender equity at the *Panchayat* level is needed to break down cultural norms that perpetuate the socially accepted gender division of labour, which allocates 'soft' work to women, which often results in fewer days of employment, lower wages based on male productivity norms and/or preference of employment of men.

Second, investment in the provision of adequate child care facilities is urgently required to support women's participation in MGNREGA employment. Flexible arrangements such as mobile crèches are currently being explored in Madhya Pradesh.

Third, efforts to support women's participation and contribution to community meetings and social audit forums are needed to promote women's voice at the planning and monitoring level, as laid out in the grassroots democracy vision of MGNREGA. Low literacy, education and skills rates among women, particularly among ST and SC populations, limit their participation not only in community meetings but also in claiming their entitlements to MGNREGA employment through the written application procedure. NGOs have played an important role in raising awareness and simplifying application procedures, and there is an opportunity to strengthen their role to support women's access to MGNREGA in terms of building skills as well as raising awareness of the gender-specific features among local *Panchayats* as implementing bodies.

Fourth, strengthening linkages between MGNREGA, skills training programmes and access to agricultural inputs and credit would help maximise livelihood opportunities for rural men and women and, furthermore, build on opportunities at the grassroots level through the local *Panchayat* and NGOs to raise awareness about social vulnerabilities and risks facing women and girls, especially issues such as gender-based violence, early marriage, girls' education, female foeticide/infanticide and women's inheritance rights.

Lastly, raising the overall level of awareness on the importance of gender equality for programme effectiveness is needed from the grassroots level up to state departments. Providing opportunities for lesson learning both within and between states is a potentially important mechanism for generating buy-in and identifying and sharing good practices across villages. Other important mechanisms include monitoring gender-sensitive features, providing gender-sensitive training and promoting institutional incentives for the practical implementation of such components.

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Annex 1: Research instruments

Life history questions

Key information

Aims:

- To explore in-depth individuals' gendered experiences of risk and vulnerability, and the individual, household, community and policy-level factors which shape available coping/resilience strategies
- To gain an understanding of the relative importance of the focus social protection programme intervention in diverse individuals' lives

Scope:

- Eight life histories among participants per sub-national district for the following life stages:
 - Adolescent (m and f)
 - Married (m and f)
 - Single-headed hh (m and f)
 - Aged (m and f)

Data collection and other issues:

- Gift
- Recorded, transcribed and English verbatim translation
- Field notes on interview dynamics
- Interview to last between 60 and 90 minutes

Useful resources:

- 'Report on CPRC workshop: Panel Surveys and Life History Methods'. See especially page 8 (Figure 2, Life History Diagram, Bangladesh)

Life history interview questions for adolescent boys and girls

Country: India

Name of respondent: _____

Sex: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____

Social group: _____

Living area (rural/urban): _____

Site: _____ Region: _____

Name of interviewer: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

1. General

- What are some of the key challenges that girls/boys [choose the same sex as your interviewee] of your age in this village face? E.g. at the following levels:
 - Individual level (e.g. lack of schooling, discriminator practices in school, in health provisions, sexual violence and discrimination, harassment, health-related problems, hunger, violence, teenage pregnancy)
 - household level (e.g. lack of decision making in the household; unequal allocation of time doing tasks in and out of the household between siblings; unequal distribution of food)

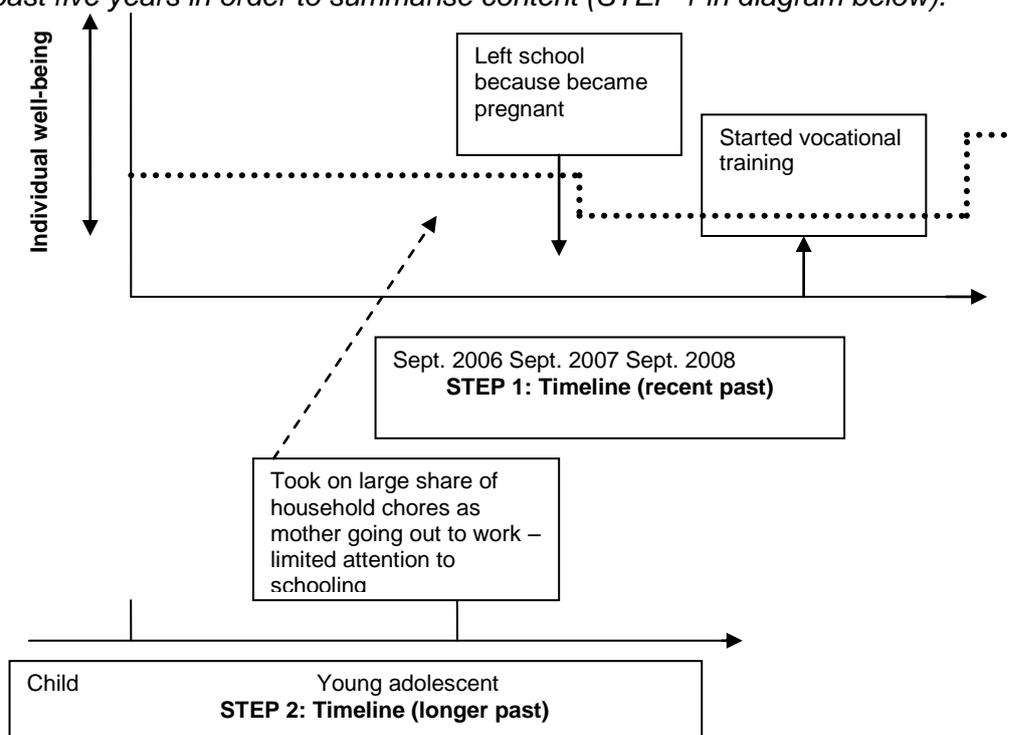
- Community (lack of participation in community decision making, lack of provision of basic services; lack of opportunities for young people; significant generational differences between old and young)
- Have they always faced these challenges?
- How do people tend to cope with these challenges? E.g.
 - Borrow money (from relatives, friends, micro-finance institutions)
 - Work in paid employment
 - Make different family arrangements (e.g. living with different family members)

2. Individual

A. Recent past

- Can you tell us about your life over the last five years? (e.g. schooling, health, relationships, food)
- Has anything gone particularly well during this period? What have been the positive changes? Who and what was responsible?
- What particular challenges have you faced over the last two/three years?
- Can you explain why you think you face these challenges?
- Have you/your family tried to overcome these challenges? What strategies have you used? How well have these strategies worked?
- Have other families in the village also used these strategies to overcome similar challenges?
- How do you think your options / strategies have been similar or different from girls/boys (opposite sex to interviewee) of the same age?
- Have you been involved in any government or non-government programmes/activities that have helped you overcome these challenges?
- Has MGNREGA provided specific support to overcoming these challenges? If no – why not? If yes - in what way?
- How does MGNREGA affect your education, time use (work/play), health and food consumption? Please give specific examples.

Interviewer summarises key events in a timetable below OR draws key events on a timeline over the past five years in order to summarise content (STEP 1 in diagram below).



B. Longer past

Interviewer summarises key events in a timetable below OR uses a longer visual timeline to prompt the discussion around the longer past (e.g. interviewer draws a longer timeline underneath the one above (shorter timeline) and draw arrows between the two to show connections) (STEP 2 in diagram).

*Thinking back to when you were younger, can you map out **key events** in your life up until now (positive and negative) that have influenced the type of choices you have made or the alternatives you've had?*

- Why have these been important? (please give specific examples)
 - At individual level (e.g. schooling, health)
 - Household level (e.g. livelihood opportunities; available household resources; decisions in the household to spend on schooling, health, income generating; changes in the family (birth, death, marriage, divorce etc));
 - Community level (e.g. discrimination/exclusion from community activities or resources; exclusion from participating in community decision making, violence)

How has the way you and/or your family lived life until now influenced the way you deal with the challenges you identified before?

- Do you ever think that if you had made a different choice before, your life would be different now? What would you have done differently?

3. Future plans/worries

Given your present circumstances what are you planning to do in the short term? What are your longer term plans?

- How do you think your options are similar or different from someone from the opposite sex of the same age?

Given your present circumstances, what are your worries and fears for the future?

- How do these worries affect your future life (e.g. schooling, work, health, family relationship)?
- How would you try to cope with these worries?
- To what extent can MGNREGA help you achieve your short term and long term plans? (E.g. in schooling, time use (work/play), health, food consumption, etc)
- How would you like MGNREGA to be changed to better meet your needs?
- Is your view the same as others in the household or do different members have different opinions? Why?

Summary of key events (to be used as reference in interview and for summary by the field researcher with age and year referred with each event)

Longer past (before 2005)	Positive events	
	Challenges	
Recent past (2005-2009)	Positive events	
	Challenges	
Future plans/worries (After 2009)	Hopes/expectations	

Life history questions for married/single/aged (male and female)

Country: India

Name of respondent: _____

Sex: _____ Age: _____ Occupation: _____

Social group: _____

Living area (rural/urban): _____

Site: _____ Region: _____

Name of interviewer: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

1. Introductions

- Basic background information (name, age, place of birth, living arrangements etc).
- Explain the objectives of this study and the format of the interview

General

- What are the some of key challenges that women / men [choose the same sex as your interviewee] your age in this village face?
 - Individual level (e.g. lack of schooling, at work place (working at farm), discriminatory practices in accessing services, in health provisions, , sexual violence and discrimination, harassment health-related problems, food insecurity, violence, lack of ownership of assets (e.g. land, livestock, housing)
 - Household level (e.g. lack of decision making in the household over household expenditure e.g. on productive activities, on health and education, on food; unequal allocation of time e.g. in domestic and care responsibilities and income generating activities; unequal distribution of food in the household)
 - Community (lack of participation in community decision making, discriminatory practices (caste atrocities and caste discrimination), lack of provision of basic services)
- Have they always faced these challenges?
- How do people tend to cope with these challenges?

2. Individual

A. Recent past

Can you tell us about your life over the last five years?

- Has anything gone particularly well during this period? What have been the positive changes? Who and what was responsible?

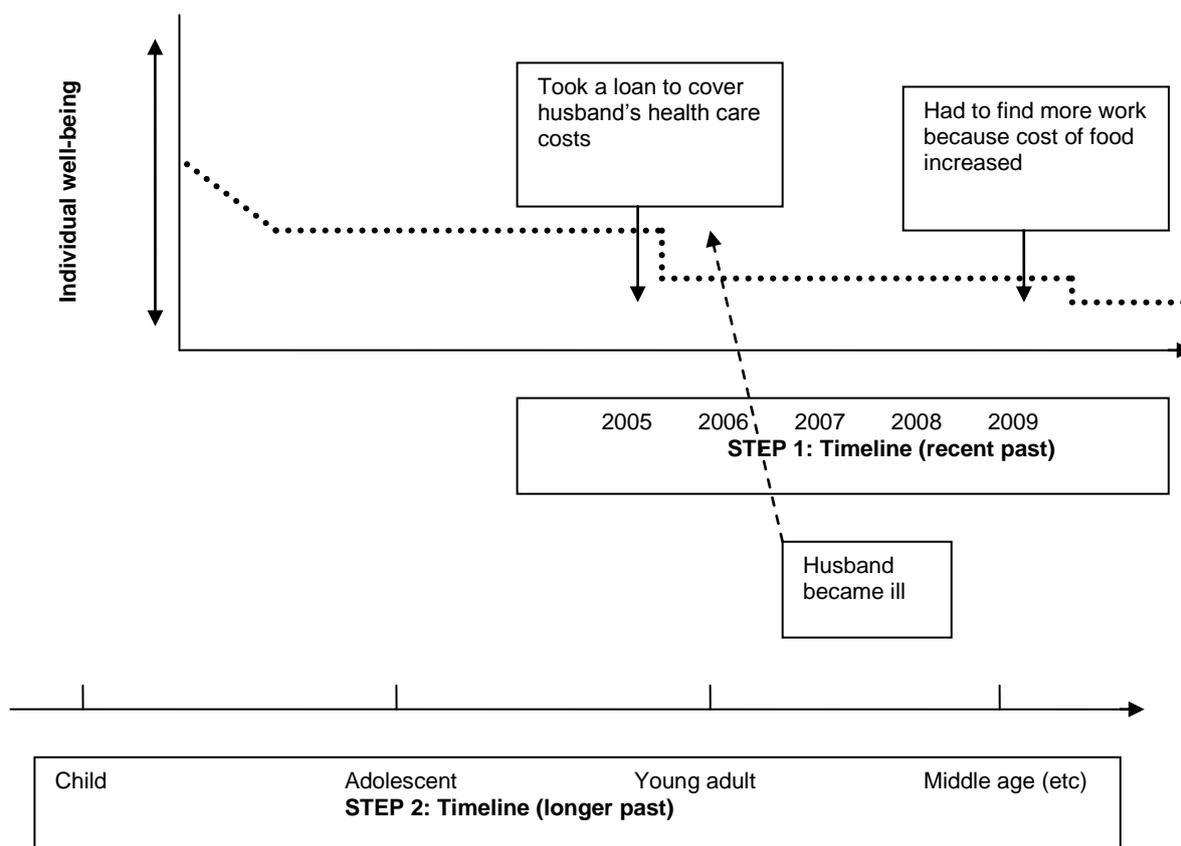
What particular challenges have you faced over the last five years?

- Can you explain why you think you face these challenges?
- E.g. Did you face a boycott from private employment from high caste due to some incidence related to caste atrocities/discrimination anytime in your lifetime? Describe
- E.g. Do you face boycott in other spheres (No access to high caste shop, others: Please specify).
- Have you tried to overcome these challenges? What strategies have you used? How well have these strategies worked?
- Have other families in the village also used these strategies to overcome similar challenges?
- How do you think your options / strategies have been similar or different from women / men [choose opposite sex to interviewee] of the same age?

Have you participated in any government or non-government programmes/activities that have helped you overcome these challenges?

- Has MGNREGA provided specific support to overcoming these challenges? If no – why not? If yes - in what way? **Please give specific examples**
- How does MGNREGA affect your family members? (E.g. schooling, work, food, health of your children, etc). Please describe both positive and negative effects

Interviewer draws key events on summary or timeline over the last five years in order to summarise content. STEP 1 in diagram below.



B. Longer past

Interviewer uses the summary box OR the visual timeline to prompt the discussion around the longer past (e.g. interviewer draws a longer timeline underneath the one above (shorter timeline) and draw arrows between the two to show connections). STEP 2 in diagram above.

Thinking back to when you were younger, can you map out key events in your life up until now (positive and negative) that have influenced the type of choices you have made or the alternatives you've had?

- At individual level (e.g. schooling, health)
- Household level (e.g. livelihood opportunities; available household resources; decisions in the household to spend on schooling, health, income generating; changes in the family (birth, death, marriage, divorce etc));
- Community level (e.g. discrimination/exclusion from community activities or resources; exclusion from participating in community decision making)
- Did you face a boycott from private employment from high caste due to some incidence related to caste atrocities/discrimination anytime in your lifetime?

How has the way you have lived your life until now influenced the way you deal with the challenges you identified before?

Do you ever think that if you had made a different choice before, your life would be different now? What would you have done differently?

3. Future plans

Given your present circumstances what are you planning to do in the short term? What are your longer term plans?

- How do you think your options are similar or different from someone from the opposite sex at the same life stage?
- To what extent can NREGS help you achieve your short term and long term plans?
- How would you like MGNREGA to be changed to better meet your needs?
- Is your view the same as others in the household or do different members have different opinions?

Given your present circumstances what challenges do you expect in the future?

- How will you deal with them?
- Is your view the same as others in the household or do different members have different opinions?

Summary of key events (to be used as reference in interview and for summary by the field researcher with age and year referred with each event)

Longer past (before 2005)	Positive events	
	Challenges	
Recent past (2005-2009)	Positive events	
	Challenges	
Future plans/worries (After 2009)	Hopes/expectations	
	Worries/challenges	

Focus group discussions

Key information

Aims:

- To understand the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation of the focus social protection intervention
- To understand the strengths and weaknesses of the focus social protection intervention in terms of shaping community experiences of inclusion/ exclusion and/or discrimination

Scope:

- 4 FGDs (2 men, 2 women) per sub-national unit with programme participants

Data collection required:

- Maximum 75 minutes
- Provision of snacks
- One person leading
- One person recording identity of participants and the sequence in which they speak
- One translator for ODI team
- Detailed notes from discussion around the four questions including areas of debate among participants and dominant opinion among participants for each question
- Observation of group dynamics

Useful resources:

- Slater, R. and Mphale, M. (2008) Cash transfers, gender and generational relations: evidence from a pilot project in Lesotho. See especially Annex 2.

Key questions/themes and suggestions for prompts

- 1. What have been the direct impacts of the social protection programme on the household?**
 - Improving economic security
 - Lower dependence on wage employment from the landlords resulting in lesser incidence of discriminatory practices
 - Improving food consumption (quality and quantity)
 - Helping to provide better protection and care for household members
 - Improving household human capital
 - Providing adequate protection from the impacts of shocks (e.g. community and idiosyncratic shocks)
- 2. What have been the indirect impacts of the social protection programme on the household?**
 - Has participation in the programme influenced power relations between men and women? Between generations? How and why?
 - Has participation in the programme influenced access to social capital (formal and informal)?
 - What impact does the programme have on child well-being?
 - Impact on access to credit services
 - Reduce impact of seasonality

3. What have been the direct impacts of the social protection programme on the community?

- Increased access to/utilisation/accumulation of community assets – for whom?
- Increased utilisation of social services
- Is there a difference in the development of community asset? Is there discrimination in development of community assets?
- Access to employment days

4. What have been the indirect impacts of the social protection programme on the community?

- Better quality basic social service
- Increased civil society agency to demand entitlements – representing which types of groups?
- Increased government responsiveness to citizen demands
- Reduced exclusion of marginalised social groups
- Negative impact on community E.g. exacerbating existing community tensions
- Tensions between women in different social groups

N.B. For analysis, refer back to conceptual framework levels: individual, household and community

Household Survey on Gender and Social Protection India

Instructions:

Interviewer to give brief description of the study and tell the respondent that all answers are confidential

1. Who? This questionnaire should be answered by participants in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme who are either:
 - a. Female heads of household or
 - b. Adult women or men who are either the household head or the partner of the household head.Please ensure proportion of respondents from categories in a) and b) is proportionate to the proportion of female-headed households who are programme beneficiaries in your block. Please also ensure proportionate reflection of SC/ST households.
2. How should households be selected? Based on the list of MGNREGA participants, select every 10th member on this list, but be sure to fulfil the quota of (a).
3. How much time? We envisage approximately 1 hour per survey (max 1.5 hours) and that one researcher can complete 5 surveys per day
4. Use the surveys to help you select the life history case studies – all life histories should be a member of a household who was surveyed

A. BASIC HOUSEHOLD PROFILE (defined by: sleep under the same roof/compound and eat from the same kitchen)

1. Name of the respondent _____
 - 1.1. Position of the respondent in the household (1= head; 2= wife/husband, 3= son, 4= daughter; 5=Other- specific)
 - 1.2. Sex of the respondent (1= Male; 2= Female)
 - 1.3. Social Group (SC= 1, ST = 2, OBC = 3, General Caste = 4)

2. Name of location
 - 2.1 State: _____
 - 2.2 District: _____
 - 2.3 Block: _____
 - 2.4 Village: _____

3. How long have you lived in this community? _____
 1. 01 = less than one year
 2. 02 = between one and five years
 3. 03 = more than five years

4. Have you participated in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme?
 - 1= Yes; 2= No

- 4.B. Do you receive any other support from the government:
 - 1=Antodhaya Yojana
 - 2=Pension
 - 3=Scholarship
 - 5=Kanyandhan Yojana
 - 6=Ladhi Laxmi Yojana
 - 7=Any other

5. Name of head of household _____

- 5.1 Sex of the household head (1=Male; 2=Female)

6. **Household roster:** For all household members please fill out this table:

Member id	Name of HH member	Sex 01=M 02=F	Age in complete years	Marital status (see code 1)	Highest education level achieved (see code 2)	Religion (see code 3)	What does each household member do? (list up to 3 activities in order of how much time is spent) (Use code 4)		
							Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

Code 1: Marital status: 01=single; 02=married; 03=divorced/ separated; 04=widowed; 05=cohabitation

Code 2: Education level Grade 1-12 (enter number 01-12 as appropriate); 13=Tertiary education; 14=vocational training; 15=religious education; 16=adult literacy; 17=illiterate

Code 3: Religion: 01 – Orthodox Christian; 02 – Muslim; 03- no religion ; 04 – protestant; 05- Catholic; 06- Hindu; 07-Buddhist; 08-Sikh; 09-Other (state)

Code 4: Activity

Agriculture	Non-agriculture	Unemployed or unpaid
01 – self-employed (food)	08 – self-employed (manufacturing)	15 – unemployed
02 – self-employed (non-food)	09 – self-employed (business)	16 – household chores
03 – aquaculture	10 – self-employed (services)	17 – care of HH dependent (sick, disabled, child, elderly)
04- livestock	11 – wage employment	18 – begging
05 – wage employment	12- regular waged employment	19 - other
06 – other	13 – other	

7. Do you own land? 1= yes; 2= No. If no, skip to Q9.

8. If yes, please fill the following table about the size and type of land

	Type of land	Size of land in bhiga
1	Own cultivated land	
2	Rented in land	
3	Rented out land sharecropped in land	
4	Share cropped out land	
6	Share cropped in land	
6	Other type of land (specify)	

9. Household assets (see Code 5 on next page):

- i) Livestock _____
- ii) Equipment (e.g. farming) _____
- iii) Transport _____
- iv) Communication tools _____
- v) Toilet type _____
- vi) Drinking water _____
- vii) Number of rooms in house _____
- viii) Savings (in bank, credit group) _____
- i. If yes, how much have you saved in Rupees? _____
- ix) Do you have loans? _____
- i. What is the value of these loans? _____
- x) Other _____

Code 5

Livestock – yes/no and how many of each?	Equipment	Transport	Comms tools	Toilet type	Drinking water	Rooms in house	Savings	Loans Yes/no. If yes, can you make the payments?
01= poultry	01= kerosene stove	01=working bicycle	01=working mobile phone	01= forest/field/ open place	01 bore well	01=1 room	01=yes	01=yes and can make payments
02=sheep	02=water pump (bore well)	02= animal and cart	02=working landline phone	02 neighbours or relatives – latrine	02 bought water	02=2 rooms	02=no	02=yes we have loans but can't make payments
03=cows	03=plough	03= horses	03=radio	03 own pit latrine	03 piped into dwelling	03=3 rooms		03=no
04=oxen	04=other (specify)		04=tv	04 none	04 piped into neighbours or relatives	04=4 or more rooms		
05= mules	05= water pump (well)		05=cable connection		05 public standpipe or tubewell			
06= donkeys	06= other, specify				06 protected well			
07= goats					07 unprot. well			
08 = other, specify								

SELF-OBSERVATION 11- 16 (RESEARCHERS)

- 10 Do you own the house you live in? (1=yes; 2=no)
If no skip to question 14
- 11 If yes, materials from which WALL of the house is made
1= Brick/concrete/stone
2= Adobe/mud
3= Wood/branches
4= Galvanized iron
5= Matting
6= Other: SPECIFY _____
- 12 Materials from which the ROOF is made
1=- Straw/thatch
2=-Earth/mud
3=- Wood/planks
4=- Galvanised iron
5=- Concrete/ cement
6=- Tiles/slates
7=-Other: SPECIFY @ _____
- 13 Materials from which the FLOOR is made
1=- Earth
2=- Wood
3=- Stone/brick
4=- Cement/tile
5=- Laminated material
6=- Other: SPECIFY @ _____
- 14 What is the main type of fuel you usually use for cooking?
1= Wood
2= Kerosene/paraffin
3= Charcoal
4= Gas/electricity
5= Cow dung
6= None
7= Other: SPECIFY _____
- 15 What is the main type of energy source you usually use for lighting
1= Wood
2= Kerosene/paraffin
3= Candle / chimney
4= Gas
5= Electricity
7= None
8= Other: SPECIFY _____
16. What is the main source of drinking water for members of your household?
1=Piped into dwelling/yard/plot
2=Public standpipe/tubewell
(Where is the source located)
3= In your own locality
4=In the dominant caste locality
5= Elsewhere
6= One in SC/ST colony, one in dominant colony
7=Unprotected well/spring/pond/river/stream
4=Other: SPECIFY _____
-

Social capital:

17. To what kind of groups do members of your household belong? (fill 1= if yes; 2= if no in each box)
Take member id from Q6

member id (from Q6)	Savings/ credit group	Women's association	Youth association	Peasants / agriculture association	Labour association /union	Self-help group	Other – please specify
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							
7							
8							
9							
10							
11							
12							

18. Who can you rely on for support (financial, personal, in-kind) in hard times? (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

Member id (from Q6)	Immediate family members	Extended family members	Neighbours	Religious organisation	Local NGO	Self-help group	Savings/ credit group	Women's Association	Peasant / agricultural association	Youth association	Community leader	Work colleague	Other
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
11													
12													

B. KEY TYPES OF RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

B1. Tangible/ economic risks

19. Has your household suffered from any of the following types of vulnerabilities over the last five years? Are particular family members more affected than others? If so, who?

Types of vulnerabilities (codes for risks)	1=Yes; 2=No	Extent of cost burden 1=small; 2=medium; 3=high	Which family members are affected the most (list up to three member ids from Q 6)		
			mem code	mem code	mem code
1. Environmental vulnerabilities					
1.1 = pollution					
1.2= deforestation					
1.3=droughts					
1.4=floods					
1.5= death of livestock					
1.6=outbreak of insect and pests					
1.7= Others (specify)					
2. Economic vulnerabilities					
2.1. =A lack of employment					
2.2=regular employment					
2.3=adequate pay					
2.4= access to credit					

Types of vulnerabilities (codes for risks)	1=Yes; 2=No	Extent of cost burden 1=small; 2= medium; 3= high	Which family members are affected the most (list up to three member ids from Q 6)		
			mem code	mem code	mem code
2.5=access to land					
2.6=access to productive assets					
2.7=access to markets					
2.8=access to extension services					
2.9=access to affordable education services					
2.10=access to affordable health services					
2.11=access to affordable vet services					
2.12=displacement					
2.13=previous or pending court cases					
2.14= Others (specify)					
3. Lifecycle events- Costs associated with:					
3.1= weddings					
3.2= religious festivals					
3.3=funerals					
3.4=birth of another child					
3.5=death of a family member					
3.6=serious acute illness of a family member (short term)					
3.7= serious chronic illness (long term)					
i. Discrimination					
4.1= Due to practice of 'untouchability', discriminatory treatment at various stages of life					
4.2=caste related atrocities over last two years which lead to loss of property income earning assets and employment.					

Vulnerability associated with discrimination in public work – only ask SC/ST

Employment: and Public Work

20 a) Do you get less employment in public work compared to other general caste/category women/men?
(Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

If yes then for how many days less do you get?

1= a week or less

2=one to two weeks

3=between two weeks and a month

4=more than a month

20 b) Do you face discrimination at the work place? (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

1. Do dalit/ adivasi labourers work in a group separately?

2. Do dalit/ adivasi workers eat separately at the work place?

3. Other forms of discrimination please specify.

Wages and Public Work

20 (c) Do you think that you get lower wages than the general caste labourers: (Mark 1 = yes; 2= 0)

If yes how and please specify?

20 (d) Is the wage payment (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

1. Given in your hand
2. put from the above in cupped hand
3. Placed on the ground.

20 e) What is the official time of payment?

20 f) Do you get paid according to official schedule: (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

Vulnerability associated with Discrimination in Private Farm and Non-Farm employment

Employment: and Private Work (Farm and Non-Farm)

Farm

20 (g) Are you denied employment in some agricultural activities due to your caste background? (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

20 h) Mention the agricultural activities you are denied work?

- a) Sowing,
- b) weeding,
- c) harvesting of
 - fruits and
 - vegetables,
 - threshing of grain,
 - any other harvesting operation
- d) plantation of tree sapling,
- e) any other agricultural activity

20 i) How many days of employment would you expect in a year?

- a) Expected days of employment for sowing,
- b) Expected days of employment for weeding,
- c) Expected days of employment for harvesting for
 - fruits and
 - vegetables,
 - threshing of grain,
 - any other harvesting operation

d) Expected days of employment for plantation of tree sampling,

e) Expected days of employment for any other agricultural activities.

20 j) Do you face discrimination at the work place in farm? (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

1. Do dalit labourer work in a group separately,
2. Do dalit worker eat separately at the work place.
3. Other

Non-Farm

20 k) Are you denied employment in any of the following non-farm work? (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)

1. Fetching water for drinking purpose,
2. Denial in Cooking,
3. For cleaning the house from inside,
4. Milking cow,
5. Other activities

20 l) If you did get this work how many days of employment would you expect?

- a) Expected days of employment for fetching water for drinking purposes,
- b) Expected days of employment for cooking,
- c) Expected days of employment for milking cow,
- d) Expected days of employment for other activities.

20 (m) Do you try for employment outside village/small town. If yes what are the reasons

- a) Denial of employment in the village due to caste bias,
- b) Denial of employment due to social boycott as a result of some incidence of atrocities,
- c) Others please specify.

Wages and Private Employment (Farm and Non-Farm)

20 (n) Do you think that you get lower wage than the general caste labourers: (Mark 1 = yes ; 2= 0)
If yes how and please specify?

- 20 o) Is the wage payment,
- i) given in your hand
 - ii) put from the above in cupped hand,
 - iii) placed on the ground.

B2: Social risks

21. In every family some household members are in need of more support than others. Do you have family members who fall into the following categories? In your family who is (are) the main care-giver(s) for the following and for how many hours a week?:

		Yes/No? If yes, how many?	Main care giver? (give code from q6)	Hours per week spent caring for this category of family member
1	Infants (0-3)			
2	Young children (3-11)			
3	Adolescents (12-18)			
4	Sick adults			
5	Disabled			
6	Aged			
7	Other			

22. In many families there are tensions and conflicts between men and women and young and old. In your household what are the key sources of these tensions/conflicts? Who are these tensions between?

Tension code	Types of tensions/ conflicts	1=Yes; 2=no	If Yes, between whom? 01 – husband and wife 02- children and parents 03 – children and grandparents 04 – daughter and mother-in-law 05 – son and parents in law? 07 – please specify
27.1	Control over resources		
27.2	Decision making on expenditure		
27.3	Care / responsibility of children / sick / elderly		
27.4	Distribution of domestic responsibilities		
27.5	Decision-making over mobility		
27.6	Decision making over labour allocation		
27.7	Decision making about government or NGO programme participation		
27.8	Other		
27.9	No tensions in household		

23. Do households in your community face any of the following types of social discrimination?

	1= yes; 2=no
Ethnicity	
Social group	
Ill health	
Poverty status	
Migrant status	
Female headed household status	

24. Has your household experienced any other big changes or events in the last few years?

- a. What have been the two most important changes? (positive or negative)
 - i. -----
 - ii. -----
- b. What caused these changes??
 - i. -----
 - ii. -----
- c. Have things got better or worse overall?
 - i. -----
 - ii. -----
- d. Have the changes had the same impact on all members of the household or have they been more significant for some members than others? If so for whom and why?

C. COPING STRATEGIES

25. Summarising from the previous section (see q19 in B1), what are the 2 most important tangible risks/challenges your family has faced over the last five years?

- a. (Risk 1)
- b. (Risk 2)

26. Summarising from the previous section (see qs21-23 in B2), what are the 2 most important social/intangible risks (e.g. time poverty, a lack of social capital, social discrimination, intra-household conflicts) your family has faced over the last five years?

- a. (Risk 3).....
- b. (Risk 4)

27. For each of your four biggest risks (2 tangible and 2 social), what three main coping mechanism did you employ? (1=yes; 2= no)
 (use code from question 25 and 26).

	Economic		Social	
	Risk 1 Code=____	Risk 2 Code=____	Risk 3 Code=____	Risk 4 Code=____
1. Received government / NGO support				
- Received a cash transfer [name]				
- Received an asset transfer [name]				
- Enrolled in public works programme [name]				
- Enrolled in social insurance programme (health, agriculture) [name]				
2. Undertook more paid work				
3. Undertook more unpaid work				
4.Reduced food consumption quantity for				
• Adult males				
• Adult females				
• Female children				
• Male children				
5.Reduced quality of food consumed for				
• Adult males				
• Adult females				

	Economic		Social	
	Risk 1 Code=_____	Risk 2 Code=_____	Risk 3 Code=_____	Risk 4 Code=_____
• Female children				
• Male children				
6. Relied on social networks for food, money or support				
7. Joined a group to which you previously didn't belong				
8. Joined a rights-based group				
9. Migrated				
• Adult males				
• Adult females				
• Female children				
• Male children				
10. Developed a new group				
11. Distress sale of assets. What was sold? To which family member did it belong? (use codes from question 6)				
12. Increased indebtedness				
13. Withdrew girls from school				
14. Withdrew boys from school				
15. In case of denial of employment migrated to town				
16. Other				

28. In order to cope with these risks, based on what we have just talked about your family has used the following main coping strategies [*summarise what interviewee has explained so far*].

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____

However, we know that in some cases these types of coping mechanisms are not available or do not work. For example, in some places, some individuals or families might be forced to break up, desert certain members, abuse certain members, agree to send children away to work or for marriage, perpetrate physical, sexual, psychological violence against girls.

a) What types of problems like this are you aware of in your community? List three key problems.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

b) How widespread do you think these behaviours are in your community?"

	Problem 1	Problem 2	Problem 3
01=not at all 02=a little 03=relatively widespread 04=widespread			

D. IMPACT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMING: MGNREGA

29. Which member of your family works on MGNREGA? (Refer to member id in Q6).

- 30. a) Was work given up in order to work in MGNREGA? 1= yes; 2= No
- b) What work and for whom?
- c) Did anyone else in the family take up that work, or was the income lost?

31. a) Who decided (code) who would work on MGNREGA in your family? (Refer to member id in Q6).

- b) How was the decision made?
 - 1=joint husband and wife
 - 2=elders in family

- 3=husband only
- 4=wife only
- 5=joint family decision

c) Why was that person chosen? E.g.

- 1= unemployed
- 2= earning a low wage
- 3= not needed for domestic activities
- 4= other

32. What impact has your involvement in the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme had on your household and household members' experiences of vulnerability and risk?

Member id (from q6)	Since when have you / family member been involved in MGNREGA 1= One month or less; 2= Six months or less ; 3= Up to one year 4=Up to two years; 5=Three years or more	To what extent has the programme made a difference to tackling the risks identified above for the following family members? 1=High; 2=Medium; 3= Low; 4=No impact	What have been the positive impacts of the programme? (use Code 16.3)	What have been the negative impacts of the programme? (use Code 16.4)	Do you think MGNREGA is more suitable for the following household members? 1=men, 2=women, 3=both, 4=children	Remark
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						
11						
12						

<p>Code 16.3 : positive impact the program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved livelihood security 2. Improved household consumption 3. Improved access to basic health services 4. Improved access to basic education services 5. Improved access to extension services 6. Improved access to credit 7. Decreased household tensions between men and women 8. Decreased household tensions between young and old 9. Reduced women's time poverty 10. Improved participation in the community 11. Improved women's decision-making power within the household 12. Reduced social exclusion in the community 13. Reduced instances of discrimination faced from private employer 14. Other 	<p>Code 16.4 : Negative impacts of the program</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. transfer is inadequate 2. conditionalities are too time-consuming to comply with 3. it only benefits one type of family member (not the whole household) 4. it provides a stop gap measure but does not lead to sustainable change 5. it creates tensions between men and women, children and adults 6. it aggravates existing tensions between men, women, adults or children 7. it aggravates time poverty 8. it is stigmatising 9. it is not flexible to existing household activities 10. it is not flexible to existing productive activities 11. it has not adequately addressed prevailing social norms/ attitudes 12. another type of transfer/programme would be more suitable <p>other</p>
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35) if you think that MGNREGA activities are more suitable for some family members than others, please explain.

Key informant interviews

Key information

Aims:

- To enrich our overview of social protection design and evaluation decision-making processes
- To explore political economy dimensions of the integration of gender into social protection policies and programmes
- To better understand implementation dynamics (of the above) at the sub-national level

Scope:

- National level GOs, NGOs, int'l agencies and donors
- Sub-national implementing agencies (GOs and NGOs)

Data collection required:

- Detailed notes about content of interviews in terms of our key questions above
- For issues relating to framing of social protection debates we require *verbatim* notes
- Recorded tape (preferable for back up purposes)
- Brief field notes describing interview dynamic and other relevant information
- Full list of key informants details – position, organisation name, where they fit in alignment influence matrix

Useful resources:

- DFID (2009) Political Economy Analysis How To Note

Key informant interviews at national level

1. Stakeholder analysis

- a. Map key social protection stakeholders according to the stakeholder analysis figure below (aligned and powerful). Include governmental, international and national agencies.
- b. Map women's agencies machineries – e.g. from national government level to local level (e.g. gender focal points)

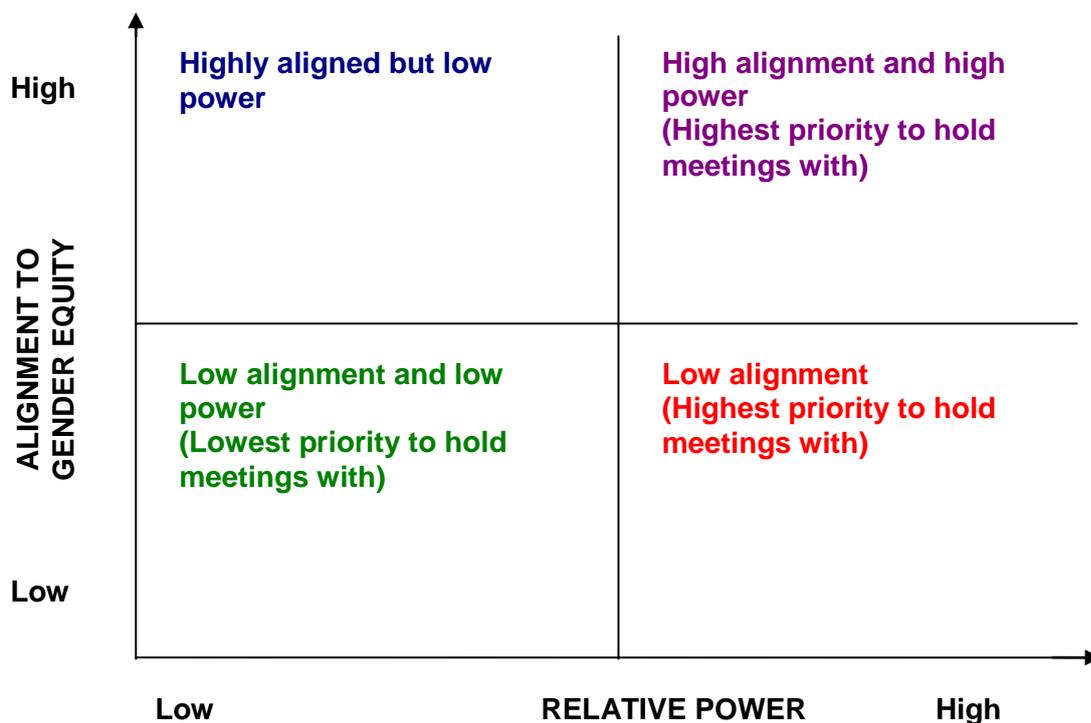
2. Key informant interviews – who to interview

- a. Refer to stakeholder analysis figure and prioritise meetings with “powerful” stakeholders (aligned and non-aligned)
- b. Identify who to talk to in an institution/organisation by starting with existing contacts and using the snowballing technique (asking them to refer you to other individuals in a given institution/organisation)

3. Semi-structured interview questions

- a. If you are unsure of whether the institution/organisation/individual is aligned or non-aligned, ask the non-aligned questions first to get an idea (then you can move to the aligned questions if appropriate)
- b. See matrix of questions below to give an idea of the types of questions we need to ask – please add in specific country-focused/specific social protection programme questions if/when appropriate

Key social protection stakeholders



Key informant questions at national level

N.B. In order to avoid standard answers on gender, it is important that interviewers refer back to the background work to identify key gendered risks and vulnerabilities and social risks which can be used to prompt the interviewee to think in more depth and more systematically about gender in social protection policy and design.

NOT ALIGNED Objectives: 1. To understand to what extent gender has been integrated in to the design of social protection policy and programme	Country/Programme-specific additions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main goals of your social protection programme / policy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors have been most influential in the development of social protection? (e.g. government priorities, attainment of MDGs, civil society pressure, donor funding). • What are some of the challenges which constrain the scaling up of social protection? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do you think that the types of vulnerabilities and risks your programme is trying to address (e.g. see goals above) have been considered by gender? Can you give some examples? (prompts can be used to refer interviewee to country specific risks and vulnerabilities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are social risks considered in social protection programmes in your context (can prompt with country specific examples of social risks and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

vulnerabilities)? What explains your view?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of evidence shapes the design and evaluation of social protection policy and programmes? (e.g. poverty data and analysis? disaggregated by gender? Programme M&E?) 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With which actors (NGO and GO) do you work most closely on this agenda? 	•
<p>ALIGNED Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To identify the pathways (recent and historical) in which gender has been successfully integrated into the design of social protection policy and programming at a national level; 2. To identify the key actors driving the social protection and gender agenda forward; 3. To identify the challenges which have been overcome (or still need to be overcome) to successfully integrate gender into the design and implementation of social protection policy and programme. E.g. political / ideological resistance from other Ministries/departments/organisations? Administrative challenges – e.g. resources, staff capacity, co-ordination? 	Country/Programme-specific additions
KEY QUESTIONS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways is gender integrated into the design of social protection policy and programming in your context? Can you provide some specific examples? (Prompts can be used to refer interviewee to country-specific gendered risks and vulnerabilities) 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies have been used so far to integrate a gender perspective into social protection design? 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges/ tensions involved in enhancing the integration of gender into social protection policies and programmes? 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the potential opportunities for strengthening gender sensitivity of social protection design and implementation? 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What factors (political economy, cultural drivers and historical legacies) have shaped policy choices about social protection? (in general and at specific historical junctures (e.g. 2008 food price crisis?). • To what extent have these factors in turn shaped the relative strength of a gender perspective in social protection policy decision-making? 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the role of research and/or programme evidence within this decision-making process? 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the constellation of actors (GOs and NGOs) which have influenced the decision-making process around social protection and gender? 	•
<p>INFLUENCE (ask to all interviewees)</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the relative influence of key actors in shaping the social protection agenda 	Country/Programme-specific additions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your role in informing / influencing the design / resource allocation to social protection policy and programming? How would you rate your influence in the social protection decision-making arena in comparison to other actors? What accounts for this? 	•
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of national / international civil society in 	•

shaping the social protection agenda in your country? • What is the role of the donor community in shaping the social protection agenda?	
• What role has research or programme evidence played in this process?	•
• What role has the framing of specific social protection debates played in this process? E.g. do different actors have different objectives for social protection? (E.g. rights based approaches? social protection for non-productive poor (children and elderly?) or social protection to contribute to economic growth / food security etc). What are these? Have different discourses on social protection this created conflict or tensions?	•

In addition, questions can be asked to plug specific knowledge gaps that were not addressed through the matrix or literature review:

- a) M and E systems
- b) Data collection systems especially with regards to gender indicators
- c) Learning from programme implementation

Key informant interviews at sub-national level: implementers, programme staff, local government

N.B. In order to avoid standard answers on gender, it is important that interviewers refer back to the background work to identify key gendered risks and vulnerabilities and social risks which can be used to prompt the interviewee to think in more depth about gender in social protection policy and design.

- A) Coverage (gendered and general)**
- B) Quality (gendered and general)**
- C) Underlying reasons for quality and coverage of implementation**

Implementing / coordinating agencies	Country/programme-specific additions
COVERAGE	
Are you satisfied with the implementation of the programme to the target population so far? Why (or why not)?	
Can you tell us more concretely the results of coverage to date? (disaggregated by sex, social group etc.)?	
Are there any barriers which women face in particular to participating (partially or fully) in the programme (e.g. timing of participation in the programme conflicts with domestic and/or income generating activities; women are not allowed to move freely to participate in programme meetings). Do these challenges differ by age? How can the barriers be overcome?	
If you want more coverage of specific target groups (e.g. women and girls) what are the constraints and how would you overcome them? (Explore the socio-economic constraints, and at different levels (hh, intra-hh etc))	
Do you think there are social groups which have not been included that should be included and why? (e.g. outside the scope of the existing social protection programme?)	
QUALITY	
To what extent do the people in charge of operationalising the programme have knowledge on gender or are sensitised to gender issues?	
To what extent have women been consulted in the design and implementation of the programme?	

Are there any complaints mechanisms which beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (excluded) can access?	
Does the programme's implementation consider gender vulnerabilities / constraints that might reduce its impact or reach? (e.g. women's time constraints, child care responsibilities etc). Please give examples.	
What measures have been put in place to promote a more equitable demand for the uptake of the programme e.g. communications / information?	
UNDERLYING REASONS FOR COVERAGE AND QUALITY	
What have been the roles of each level of government in the implementation of the programme? Which kinds of conflicts have arisen? e.g. resources, decision-making. How could these conflicts be resolved?	
To what extent are different agencies involved in delivering social protection? E.g. gender-focused organisations/government departments (e.g. women's affairs offices). To what extent are the gender focal points involved or briefed in programme implementation?	
How is staff capacity evaluated for implementation of the programme? What are the main limitations? (staff capacity number or quality)	
Are the resources available sufficient for effectively delivering the programme? Do the implications of resource constraints affect women and men differently? To what extent are the gender components outlined in policy/programme design documents budgeted and allocated? (e.g. child care facilities)	
Is there conflict between institutional objectives and programme objectives for the main implementer of the programme?	
To what extent has civil society been involved in the social protection programme?	
To what extent is there demand at the community level for the programme? Who has been taking the lead role in this?	
To what extent has the implementation of the social protection programme had spill-over effects to the implementation of complementary services (e.g. basic services).	

Annex 2: Madhya Pradesh district details

Sl. no	District	Total population	SC population (2001 Census)	%	ST population (2001 Census)	%	Rank (monthly per capita consumption expenditure 2004-2005)
1	Balaghat	1,497,968	116,070	8	326,540	22	39
2	Barwani*	1,081,441	68,426	6	724,735	67	12
3	Betul*	1,395,175	147,604	11	549,907	39	26
4	Bhind	1,428,559	306,786	21	6,720	0	7
5	Bhopal	1,843,510	258,173	14	60,561	3	24
6	Chhatarpur*	1,474,723	342,990	23	51,593	3	31
7	Chhindwara	1,849,283	214,201	12	641,421	35	20
8	Damoh	1,083,949	211,258	19	136,175	13	37
9	Datia	628,240	156,732	25	9,977	2	7
10	Dewas	1,308,223	238,934	18	215,151	16	4
11	Dhar*	1,740,329	112,976	6	948,434	54	10
12	Dindori*	580,730	33,848	6	374,447	64	44
13	East Nimar*	1,713,134	189,688	11	508,532	30	3
14	Guna	1,666,767	293,527	18	203,742	12	19
15	Gwalior	1,632,109	308,664	19	56,948	3	7
16	Harda	474,416	76,200	16	126,322	27	26
17	Hoshangabad	1,084,265	170,780	16	164,049	15	26
18	Indore	2,465,827	388,459	16	163,872	7	10
29	Jabalpur	2,151,203	273,953	13	322,890	15	21
20	Jhabua*	1,394,561	39,290	3	1,211,116	87	34
21	Katni	1,064,167	122,171	11	245,518	23	21
22	Mandala*	894,236	41,305	5	511,798	57	44
23	Mandsaur	1,183,724	212,262	18	37,526	3	1
24	Morena	1,592,714	335,728	21	12,974	1	17
25	Narsimhapur	957,646	154,552	16	126,139	13	21
26	Neemuch	726,070	91,088	13	61,790	9	1
27	Panna	856,558	171,353	20	127,120	15	31
28	Raisen	1,125,154	184,234	16	177,139	16	35
29	Rajgarh	1,254,085	218,706	17	47,370	4	4
30	Ratlam	1,215,393	163,001	13	314,704	26	15
31	Rewa	1,973,306	307,235	16	254,061	13	30
32	Sagar	2,021,987	415,374	21	196,472	10	37
33	Satna*	1,870,104	304,217	16	268,104	14	14
34	Sehore	1,078,912	221,077	20	116,122	11	35
35	Seoni*	1,166,608	120,657	10	429,104	37	39
36	Shahdol*	1,575,303	115,904	7	700,651	44	42
37	Shajapur	1,290,685	283,639	22	35,302	3	4
38	Sheopur*	559,495	90,420	16	120,482	22	17
39	Shivpuri*	1,441,950	270,864	19	161,393	11	29
40	Sidhi*	1,831,152	217,026	12	547,375	30	41
41	Tikamgarh*	1,202,998	292,171	24	51,957	4	31
42	Ujjain	1,710,982	422,882	25	53,230	3	15
43	Umaria*	515,963	35,126	7	227,250	44	42
44	Vidisha	1,214,857	241,131	20	59,323	5	24
45	West Nimar (Khargone) *	1,529,562	174,495	11	542,762	35	12