POLICY PAPER

Strategies for
Building Livelihoods for the Poorest of the Poor

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Ranu Kayastha Bhogal

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It has been an extremely fulfilling experience to work on this paper. It is an area that is personally very close to my heart and I am extremely grateful to Access Development Services for providing me the wonderful opportunity to work on this paper. My special gratitude to Suryamani Roul, Senior Vice President, Access Development Services, without whose patient support and generosity in sharing a range of documents, I would not have managed this task. My thanks to Ratnesh, Programme Analyst UNDP, Ved Arya, Managing Trustee, SRIJAN and Tejinder Singh Bhogal, Director, Innobridge Consulting Pvt. Ltd. for reviewing the paper and offering very useful suggestions. And last but not the least my thanks to Puja Gour from Access Development Services for her excellent co-ordination support.

I am aware that there is a lot more that needs to be captured and I take full responsibility for the shortcomings of the paper. One major handicap I experienced was the fact that I had to solely depend on secondary sources of information. I request the reader to take this as work in progress and contribute to the collective search for finding the solutions to this huge task for which there are no easy solutions. I sincerely hope that the paper will trigger the necessary interest in finding ways to enable the poorest of poor to climb out of chronic poverty and stay out of it. We have to succeed in creating space for a better future for the next generation of the children of the present poorest of poor.

Ranu Kayastha Bhogal
New Delhi
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ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Area Development Society
APARD	Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development
APRPRP	Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project
AWW	Angan Wadi Worker
BDA	Block Development Administration
BDFA	Block Disability Facilitating Agency
BMGF	Indira Kranti Patham
BNSK	Bhoomi Nyaya Sahaya Kendra
BPL	Below Poverty Line
BRLPS	Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society
CA	Community Activist
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDF	Community Disability Facilitator
CDS	Community Development Society
CGAP	Consultative Group to Assist the Poor
CPR	Chronic Poverty Report
CS	Community Surveyors
DFID	Department for International Development
DIRM	Destitute Identification Rehabilitation and Monitoring
DPIP	District Poverty Initiatives Programme
DPMU	District Project Management Unit
HLP	Household Livelihood Plan
IAY	Indira Awas Yojana
IFAD	International Fund for Agriculture Development
IKP	Indira Kranti Patham
IOP	Institutions of Poor
IWMP	Integrated Watershed Management Programme
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JSY	Janini Suraksha Yojana
LSGI	Local Self Governance Institution
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MMS	Mandal Mahila Samakhya
MTR	Mid Term Report
NGO	Non Government Organisation

NHG	Neighbourhood Group
NJNB	Nijo Griha Nijo Bhoomi
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NRLM	National Rural Livelihood Mission
NTFP	Non timber forest products
OAP	Old Age Pension
OTELP	Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme
PIP	Participatory Identification of Poor
PL	Paralegal
PoP	Poorest of Poor
PVTG	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
PwD	Person with Disability
RCT	Randomized Control Trial
SAPAP	South Asia Poverty Alleviation Project
SC	Scheduled Caste
SERP	Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty
SGSY	Swarna Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
SHG	Self Help Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TNEPRP	Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project
TSP	Block Disability Facilitating Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VO	Village Organisation
VOA	Village Organisation Assistant
VPRC	Village Poverty Reduction Committee
WSC	Women Support Center
ZS	Zilla Samakhya

I. OVERVIEW

Bu ilding livelihoods and assets for the poorest of poor (PoP) has been an area of serious concern for development practitioners the world over. This is an even bigger challenge for India as the poorest of the poor are what they are due to not just lack of economic opportunities but multiple deprivations. They suffer from discrimination based on their caste and gender, they are alienated from the 'mainstream' due to the difficult and sometimes remote geographies they live in (for instance, the PVTGs - particularly vulnerable tribal communities), many are simply invisible to development administrators (persons with disabilities, single unmarried women to name a few) and almost all of them feel intimidated by the system and people who run these systems (the Government, the Banks, the markets, the landlord, the money lender, the local trader). The PoP often suffer from deep psychological barriers to bettering their situation. Not surprisingly they suffer from very poor human development indicators - poor health, lack of literacy, poor asset base, lack of political voice. It is therefore not surprising that even in the best governed states of India, with much better human development indicators, several decades of poverty alleviation programmes have almost always left out the poorest of poor from their ambit.

Fortunately this issue has come center stage in the past few years. There have been attempts both by government and non-governmental organisations to address this challenge. They have tried to bring the poorest of the poor out of their state of chronic poverty and enabled such households to transition out of the vicious circle of inter-generational poverty.

This paper[1] documents a few of such attempts. Though mostly focused on efforts situated in India, the paper also documents some international experiences. The latter consists of documenting the experiences of the CGAP-Ford Foundation pilot of the **Graduation Approach** The latter

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[1] There are several successful models of working with the poor promoted by NGOs as well as donor promoted programmes across the country. However none claim to work with the PoP. More recently DFID supported PACS (Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme) has supported eight NGOs to scale up established livelihood models with the most marginalized and excluded communities, many of whom are PoP. However, this effort is just into its second year and results will take some time to come.

has been included as, to date, this is the only approach which is backed by comprehensive and rigorous research - a research conducted over the period 2006-2014. The research demonstrates that the PoPs have transitioned out of chronic poverty where the graduation approach was used. The approach is relatively expensive and the demonstration is on a small scale, yet in some senses it is the only approach that goes deep enough to address the psychological barriers the poor have. Recent behavioral research on **psychology of scarcity** by two professors[2] from Princeton and Harvard Universities, explores how people's minds are less efficient when they feel they lack something — whether it is money, time, calories or even companionship. This scarcity mindset consumes what Shafir calls "mental bandwidth" — brainpower that would otherwise go to less pressing concerns, planning ahead and problem-solving. This deprivation can lead to a life absorbed by preoccupations that impose ongoing cognitive deficits and reinforce self-defeating actions.

While keeping the Graduation Approach as some sort of a 'best practice' for effective work with the PoP, this paper examines in some detail the design elements for reaching out to the PoP in three large State Government led poverty programmes of India – IKP-SERP; TNEPRP and Kudumbashree. It also describes a model of an NGO - Landesa - facilitating

a large land access programme in two of the poorest states of the country - West Bengal and Odisha. Landesa supported the Revenue and Block Departments of the two State Governments to implement what is essentially a Government initiative. The Landesa case offers some good lessons on effective Government-NGO collaboration to reach out to a large number of landless poor[3]

The State Programmes of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and Kerala demonstrate some elements of the graduation approach. It must be mentioned here that while the Government programs are all built around **Institutions of Poor** (IOP) – SHGs, VO, Federations, the projects had to modify the strategy for working with PoP by bringing the **focus on household**. In Andhra Pradesh SERP realized after a decade of work that the PoP need very specific and specialized support to pull out of poverty and the members of IOPs who are themselves of poor are not in a position to offer this support[4]. The project had to create dedicated teams to work with the PoP. The same holds true for the interventions with the Tribals and PwD and vulnerable groups in Tamil Nadu.

Government programmes provide a facilitative environment (assets, credit linkage, technical support, market linkage etc.). However, the rest is expected to happen at the initiative of the PoP. The major missing element is the life skill support which

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[2] Princeton University psychology and public affairs professor Eldar Shafir, PhD, Harvard University economist Sendhil Mullainathan, PhD

[3] However, it must be noted that the cost of Landesa has not been picked by the Government but by donors like BMGF (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) and DFID (Department for International Development, UK Government)

[4] From a report prepared by the SC ST Unit of SERP

is very difficult to provide in a large government programme. Yet, despite this missing element, the Government programmes have demonstrated that but for the bottom-most of the PoP (destitute), most other poor are able to better their situation. There is enough anecdotal evidence from the mature programme states where the PoP have bettered their situation, however whether they have pulled out of the vicious cycle of inter-generational poverty is something that has not been researched.

An additional feature of all Government led poverty programmes is their thrust on facilitating the target groups to access their entitlements under various social security & welfare schemes, and other programmes of the Central and State Government. In places where this convergence has been successful, it has helped the poor to deal with shocks much better.

It must be noted that the human development indicators of the mature States like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu were far ahead and the ground was fertile for the pro-poor interventions to take off. Despite such good take off point, these states had to design special strategies for inclusion of PoP when they realized that they were getting left out.

The challenge for States[5] that are home to the largest number of PoP is enormous as these are also the regions where caste, gender and ethnic barriers as well as geographical alienation is much more. These states also have governance structures that perform poorly. These are also regions where a large number of poor have to bear the cost of development - mining, deforestation, construction of large dams resulting in displacement - and also live with increased vulnerabilities due to climate change (drought, floods, and cyclones). All this adds up to make the challenge of pulling households out of chronic poverty a very complex one. A simple economic approach is not enough and several social and political barriers too need to be addressed for enabling the PoP to move out of chronic poverty.

The good news is that even in the most difficult scenarios (as described above) collectivization of poor is an effective strategy and a good starting point to address the challenge of poverty. A study[6] of livelihood projects in India goes to show that-*All forms of social capital have increased substantially in the SHG-based projects. The projects have contributed to a greater awareness of entitlements and rights as well as practical means to lay claim on these. The scale of mobilization is significant and gender has been either a central organizing principle of the project or has been successfully mainstreamed and targeted in all projects. Similarly, the inclusion of scheduled tribes and castes was above the state and district averages. This mobilization has resulted in an improved quality of life and a general empowerment of the poor at the collective and household level owing to their organizational capacity.*

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[5] Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan
[6] Stocktaking of Livelihood Projects in India - A synthesis paper prepared under FAO/World Bank co-operative programme, 2012

Given the above experience, the strategy of NRLM to focus on creating social capital of Self Help Groups (SHG) and higher order Institutions of Poor (IOP) is good. Not surprisingly the States with a large proportion of poor and vulnerable are grappling with the first level challenge of creating the required social capital in terms of **robust IOP**. There is resistance from the local elite and often the most marginalized simply do not have the confidence to get organized and stay together. A recent World Bank Policy Research Report[7] based on a review of almost 500 studies on participatory development and decentralization argues that, "participatory development is most effective when it works within a 'sandwich' formed by support from an effective central state and bottom-up civic action". This argument is based on three main lessons (as described on page 11-14 of the report):

1. Induced participatory interventions work best when they are supported by a responsive state i.e. where the state is responsive to community demands and where the state ensures through proper monitoring that decision-making is not captured by local elite.

2. Local and National Context is very important i.e. local inequality, history, geography, nature of social interactions, networks, and political systems are crucial in determining the final outcomes of a project. Projects that do well have built-in systems of learning and greater

sensitivity and adaptability to variations in context.

3. Effective civic engagement does not develop within a predictable trajectory. Donor-driven participatory projects often assume a smooth linear growth in civic engagement. They are conditioned by bureaucratic imperatives, they often declare that clear, measurable, and usually wildly optimistic outcomes will be delivered within a specified timeframe. They fail to recognize that repairing civil society and political failure requires a shift in social equilibrium that derives from a change in the nature of social interactions and from modifying norms and social cultures. These much more difficult tasks require a fundamentally different approach to development - one that is flexible, long term, self-critical, and strongly infused with the spirit of learning by doing.

The paper goes on to illustrate that the challenge of livelihoods of the poorest has been addressed well in places where multiple stakeholders joined hands. The Bhoomi programme of SERP Andhra Pradesh and Telangana provides a good example where the programme was designed by an NGO - Landesa - and implemented jointly by the Revenue and the Rural Development department. Landesa's own work with the Governments of West Bengal and Odisha is another case in point where the Revenue Department and the development administration work in conjunction to identify the poorest of the poor and

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[7] Localizing Development-Does Participation Work? By Ghazala Mansuri and Vijayendra Rao, World Bank 2013

facilitate the process of regularization of land titles or distribution of land to the landless. This is followed by the convergence with other line departments for provision of basic services and social security and livelihood enhancement. Landesa's initiative of introducing a separate enumeration method that identifies a whole set of new and 'invisible' landless people, has been recognized as an innovation.

Going by the experience of the past five years in these three States, the results are very promising and improved access to land is helping families to slowly move out of chronic poverty[8].

This paper demonstrates that collectivization of poor combined with specific interventions to address the barriers to inclusion of the PoP is the only way forward. It further argues that the task cannot be achieved by one agency, programme or department but requires close **co-ordination and convergence across several stakeholders** - Government, Non-government and the poor themselves.

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[8] This conclusion is based on anecdotal references and not rigorous research

II. WHY IS SPECIAL FOCUS NEEDED ON POP?

The Chronic Poverty Report (CPR) 2014-15: The Road to Zero Extreme Poverty[9] brought out by ODI has made country projections where by India will be leading the World in the absolute number of chronic poor in 2030. There is an optimistic and a pessimistic scenario. Just to give the reader some idea of the magnitude - the report projects that there will be 256.4 million poor (pessimistic estimate) or 76.43 million poor (optimistic estimate) in India who will be living under $1.25 a day in 2030! To understand the magnitude of the task it will be instructive to look at one of the largest livelihood promotion programmes of India - NRLM. This program hopes to reach out to 70 million households in a span of 10 years. This is the fourth year of the programme and as on 31 March 2014, a total of 1,93,697 or 0.19 million households were brought under the fold of SHGs. Of these only 9% of the 6-month old SHGs have been credit linked with Banks.

According to the Annual Report[10] 2013-14, of Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India: *With the current pace of development, India will find it difficult to achieve the crucial UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) related to reduction in poverty, hunger and infant mortality. The poverty ratio is likely to be 26.7% by 2015 as against the target of 23.9%, while infant mortality rate (IMR) is expected to be 43 per 1,000 live births against the milestone of bringing it down to 27, according to the Statistical Year Book 2013 released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India. India is also required to reduce the mortality rate for children under-five years to 42 per 1,000 live births by*

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9   The projections presented in this report have relied on that The International Futures (IFs) model, a large-scale, long term data-modelling system developed at the Frederick S Pardee Center for International Futures at the University of Denver. A complete list of variables and data sources included in the IF data set can be found at: www. ifs.du.edu/assets/documents/theifsdatabase12.pdf

10 http://rural.nic.in/netrural/rural/sites/downloads/annual-report/Annual_Report_2013_14_English.pdf

2015. However, the current estimates suggest that it would be around 52 when the MDG deadline lapses.

The annual report of MoRD also states that- *A marked feature of rural poverty is its growing regional concentration in States like Jharkhand, Bihar, Assam, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. In 1993-94, nearly 50 per cent of India's rural poor lived in these states. This figure rose to 63 per cent in 2009-10 and 65 per cent in 2011-12 indicating increasing concentration in these states caused mainly by reduction in the number of rural poor in other States.*

The Chronic Poverty Report (CPR) too states that the challenge for eradication of extreme poverty in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal is particularly great as these are also the States where the poorest face discrimination based on their ethnic and other identities. A large percentage of the PoP belong to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities.

The CPR further states that "there are **three critical areas of policy** that are necessary to create an environment that enables people below the poverty line to make steady upward progress: **education, land and local or regional economic development**". A combination of policies is needed to achieve sustained escapes from poverty. "*A basic pro-poorest growth package would consist of agricultural, employment, and infrastructure (especially, but not only, energy access) measures, coupled with a strong emphasis on basic education. These kinds of policies will enable poor people to escape from extreme poverty in the first place. Then, to enable people who have made their escape to continue their upward trajectories, a more comprehensive investment in life-cycle education needs to be complemented by land policies that permit smallholders to accumulate land, and regional development policies and programmes that bring opportunities closer to home*".[11]

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[11] Page 84 of CPR 2014-15

III. EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMMES ON POP - THE CGAP-FORD FOUNDATION PILOTS 2006-2014[12]

Most of the world's extreme poor live in countries that offer neither adequate social protection nor opportunities for formal employment. Among the approaches aimed at reaching the extremely poor, one of the most successful has been the 'Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction/Targeting the Ultra Poor program' pioneered by BRAC[13] in Bangladesh. To gauge the universality of the BRAC model, CGAP and the Ford Foundation launched a partnership in 2006, testing and adapting the graduation approach through 10 pilot programs in eight different countries. The Graduation Approach combines elements of social protection, livelihoods development, and access to finance to protect participants in the short run while promoting sustainable livelihoods through self-employment for the future. The five steps followed in graduation approach are:

1. **Consumption support**: Soon after participants are selected into the program, they start receiving consumption support in the form of a small cash stipend or foodstuffs. This support gives them "breathing space" by easing the stress of daily survival. This support can be offered through a pre-existing government or other safety net program, in contexts where this is available. This component reflects the important lessons derived from the field of *social protection*.

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[12] Extract from Extreme Poverty to Sustainable Livelihoods- A technical guide to the Graduation Approach, Sept. 2014, CGAP and Ford Foundation
[13] http://tup.brac.net/

2. **Savings:** Once people's food consumption stabilizes, they are encouraged to start saving, either semi-formally through self-help groups (SHGs) or more formally through an account with a formal financial services provider. In addition to building assets, regular savings instills financial discipline and familiarizes participants with formal financial services. Most Graduation Programs have seen the need to offer financial literacy training, teaching participants about cash and financial management, and familiarizing them with savings and credit. This feature draws on emerging lessons about the importance of savings from the field of *financial inclusion*.

3. **Market analysis and asset transfer:** A few months after the program starts, each participant receives an asset (e.g., livestock if the livelihood involves animal husbandry; inventory if the livelihood is retailing) to help jump-start one or more economic activities. Prior to that transfer, the program staff will have thoroughly analyzed the local market's infrastructure and support services to identify sustainable livelihood options in value chains that can absorb new entrants. Once the staff has identified several viable options, the participant chooses from a menu of assets, based on livelihood preferences and past experience.

4. **Technical skills training:** Participants receive skills training on caring for an asset and running a business. While rudimentary, such training is essential in successfully managing small businesses. The training also provides information on where to go for assistance and services (e.g., a veterinarian, for the many program participants whose livelihood selection involves animal husbandry). The asset transfer and skills training incorporate lessons derived from the *livelihood development* field.

5. **Life skills coaching:** Extreme-poor people generally lack self-confidence and social capital. Weekly household visits by staff allow for monitoring but even more so for "coaching" over the 18 to 36 months of the program. During these meetings, programme staff helps participants with business planning and money management, along with social support and health and disease prevention services. In several instances, it has proven valuable to organize social support groups (such as "village assistance committees") or link up with a health care service provider, whether government clinics or nongovernmental options.

Graduation programmes adapt the building blocks of the graduation approach to the local context—prioritizing, sequencing, and shaping

the elements to the priority needs of the poorest and to the reality of the markets in the various program sites. The key is for the implementing partners, especially the participant-facing staff, to understand the core logic of the Approach and to know how and when to bring in flexibility. The overarching goal across all the pilot programs was to help people onto a pathway out of extreme poverty. This is captured very well by Vijay Mahajan[14] in the diagram below:

Pathway out of Poverty *

* Based on inputs from BRAC and CGAP

Income

Poverty Line

9 and 12. Ongoing support services for livelihood promotion – agri, livestock and non-farm

13. Overcome poverty and invest in education

11. Ongoing Credit with crop, livestock and asset insurance

7. Skill Training

8.& 10 Assets Transfer (e.g. Land, Water, Forest, Livestock, Infrastructure and institutional development –SHG Feds, JFM

5 Migrant (family) Remittances

6 Overcome food insecurity

Chronic Food Insecurity

2.No-frills Bank a/c

4. Social mobilisation (SHGs) and offer Life and Health Insurance through Group Policy

1. Food Aid

3. Govt Payments (e.g. NREGA. JSY. OAP)

Years→

0   5

indicators of improved nutrition, increased assets, and enhanced social capital. Early results from RCT impact assessments show very promising results. Beneficiaries served by BRAC (Bangladesh), Bandhan (India), REST (Ethiopia), and four sites in Pakistan increased total annual household consumption by 11 to 36 percent compared to control groups. Assets, including savings and livestock, increased as well.
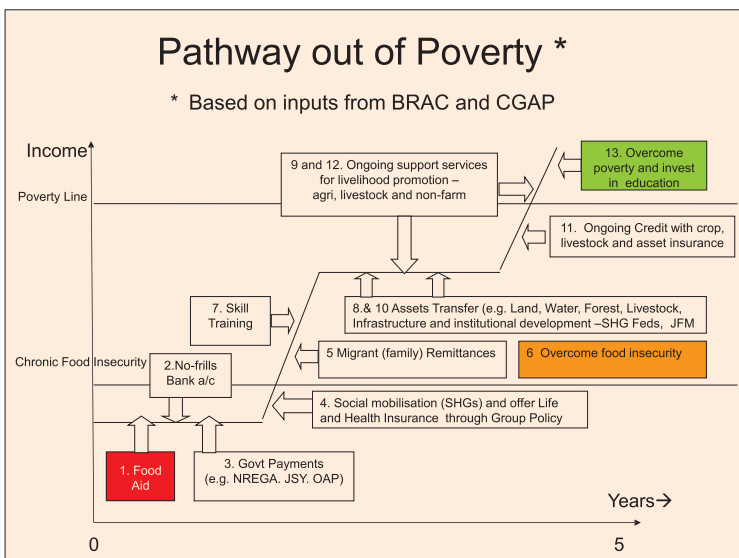
The total cost of running pilots has varied from about $330 to $650 per participant in India to about $1,900 in Peru. Costs include consumption support, asset transfer, staffing, monitoring, and head-office overhead. This wide range in costs reflects the differences in underlying cost structures from country to country (e.g., local salary scale, population density, and status of infrastructure), and from the emphasis placed on each of the building blocks (e.g., size and duration of consumption support). The upfront investment required by the Graduation Approach is high, but some economies of scale take effect when programs start scaling up.

Several pilot projects are scaling up: four pilots (one in Haiti, and three

The program has gone through two phases: a pilot phase and a scaling up phase. In the pilot phase a total of 5,376 participants were reached. Six pilots (one each in Haiti, Honduras, Pakistan, and three in India[15]) have been completed to date. By 2012, between 75 and 98 percent of participants at six of the 10 CGAP-Ford Foundation Graduation Pilots had met locally determined criteria for graduation into sustainable livelihoods, including

[14] Vijay Mahajan is an Indian social entrepreneur and the Founder and CEO of the BASIX Social Enterprise Group
[15] Bandhan and Trickle Up in West Bengal and Swayam Krishi Sangam(SKS) Ultra Poor Programme in Andhra Pradesh

in India) had already reached over 34,000 new participants by late 2013. Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) in Pakistan is reaching 50,000 households with a streamlined version of the Approach, and wants to reach 80,000 by the end of 2014, with a vision for reaching millions in the next few years. Development partners like the Ford Foundation, the MasterCard Foundation, Trickle Up, and others have stepped in to help organizations scale up the programs in Haiti and India. In India, Axis Bank, a private-sector player, has partnered with Bandhan with the goal of reaching 55,000 new extreme-poor households by 2015.

Lead implementers of Graduation Programs have historically been NGOs (BRAC, Fonkoze, Trickle Up, Plan International, etc.). However, to reach large numbers of the poorest, governments will likely play a lead role moving forward. Further research is needed (and is planned) on the effects of each element of the Graduation Approach, and especially of the extensive coaching component, to learn how the Approach can best be adapted to the constraints faced by government Implementers.

Another route is to establish a government-NGO partnership, in which a government agency provides the consumption support, generally in the form of a cash transfer, and the NGO takes on the livelihood support, financial literacy, and savings services. Regardless of the division of

In many villages of States like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh graduation approach may not do the trick on its own. These are villages where the oppression of the PoP, for instance of Musahars of Bihar or Dalits in Bundelkhand, on caste and ethnic lines by the local elite and an apathetic bureaucracy is so severe that unless a livelihood intervention targeting such groups is accompanied by a strong social and political mobilization of the PoP, it is not likely to take off. In such situations a partnership with a local NGO working on the rights of such groups may be the only way forward. In the absence of a local NGO - the case in many such areas - different context specific strategies will have to be devised. For deeper insights, interested readers may refer to a study carried out by Sajjad Hassan on the Musahar community in Bihar. From Misery to hope? Musahars, poverty and the State in India, 2012, Center for Equity Studies, New Delhi

responsibility for the various functions, one party must have overall project management responsibility (e.g., setting the project schedule and its critical path milestones along the way, preparing the project budget and monitoring variances, etc.). The government agency itself may act as project manager, or it may delegate that responsibility to the NGO partner, depending on respective staff capacities.

IV. EXPERIENCE OF
COLLABORATIVE PROGRAMS

A. Landesa with Governments of West Bengal and Odisha[16]

Landesa's experience of working closely with the Revenue Departments of Odisha and West Bengal is an excellent example of a partnership between Government and an NGO in implementing a large-scale land access programme for the landless poor in two of the poorest States of India. Both the States are home to large number of landless poor who reside on government or private land and are always subject to the threat of eviction. In addition they are unable to access state's welfare services or access banking services due to lack of residence proof. Landesa has been engaging with the Governments of West Bengal and Odisha to develop, implement, monitor and improve homestead plot programmes, and make women co-owners of the allotted land. Landesa

developed two different models for the two States depending on the ongoing land allocation programs in the respective States.

In **West Bengal** it embedded its model of 'Convergent Land Sites' with the ongoing 'Nijo Griho Nijo Bhumi' (My Home My Land) Programme. Before the convergence happened, NJNB was limited to regularization of patta by the revenue department on vested land. It was not making much progress in resettling people on new sites (on purchased land). Landesa worked with the Block Development Administration (BDA) to provide a package of services to the site and the beneficiaries to ensure re-location and help in rebuilding their lives. This site development plan was developed and implemented by using various central and state schemes like Total Sanitation Campaign, Swajal Dhara, IAY. This was called the convergent land site model. In **Odisha**, Landesa had been

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[16] Micro land ownership for India's Landless Agricultural Labourers in the States of West Bengal and Odisha, Landesa-Rural Development Institute, 2014

providing technical support to the Revenue Department to implement Vasundhara, a land allocation programme for the landless. This program uses a community resource person (CRP) to provide last mile support in the TSP blocks of Odisha. In the process of identifying the landless and most vulnerable, it discovered that single women of various types - unmarried women over 30 years of age, abandoned women, destitute women and separated women are not treated as a household and therefore not eligible to receive Government assistance which mostly depends on owning a piece of land. The women were also denied land rights for the same reason. Landesa therefore piloted a model of 'Women Support Centers' (WSC) in Ganjam district. A WSC is a unit of the Tehsil, anchored by a woman revenue officer called the nodal officer WSC. Since the CRPs are present only in a few villages of the 30 TSP blocks of Odisha, the task of data collection is carried out by Anganwadi workers (AWW). The nodal officer supervises the AWW in data collection and establishes a database. This database is then verified by the WSC and the Tehsil office and the women who qualify are prioritized for land allocation and other welfare measures like pension, housing, Annapoorna and Antoydaya schemes. The initiative of introducing a separate enumeration method that identifies a whole set of new and 'invisible' landless people, has been recognized as an innovation. This model was successfully piloted in every Tehsil of Ganjam district.

The convergent land sites and Women Support Center models, were accepted for scale up by the two state governments.[17] They have formally recognized the role of Landesa for providing technical support in terms of advocacy, sensitization, training, communication, demonstration, hands on technical assistance and joint monitoring. The following are some of the milestones and key achievements of this collaboration:

1. West Bengal (between 2009 - ongoing)

- 2,33,145 landless families received Secure Land tenure

- $65,25,386 Govt. fund utilised as cost of convergence (April 2012 – Feb 2014)

- More than 85% of the distributed titles are either in joint names or exclusively in the name of women

- Along with land title *(patta)*, Record of Rights (RoR) and physical possession of land to the beneficiaries are ensured

- In more than 60% cases micro-plots are productively used by the families for income generation and/ or agricultural activities

2. Odisha (Nov 2008 - ongoing)

- The WSCs have trained more than 3000 Anganwadi workers who have been successful in identifying 56,000 single vulnerable women and woman-headed households in Ganjam district for land and other welfare services.

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[17] Landesa has received grants from Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2009- till present) and Poorest Areas Civil Societies Programme (2013 till present) to cover its costs

- Capacity building of 425 land officials through this initiative has helped to complete verification of 32,552 cases

- Land titles have been issued to 334 single women and additional 5000 women are in the process of getting land titles.

District administrations of other districts of Odisha have recognized the Women Support Center program as a best practice to benefit single women from state's land and social security programs. The program has been scaled to three more districts with 53 additional WSCs.

3. Landesa-OTELP[18] Partnership

There are several challenges and persistent problems in the tribal districts such as:

I.   Tribals do not have title to the land that they are occupying and about 41% households are landless

II. Illegal land transfer from tribal to non-tribal is rampant

III. Tribals have lost their land due to debt-induced land mortgage and concealed land leasing

IV. Revenue department has 40% less than the sanctioned staff strength and is responsible for a vast coverage area

Responding to the above scenario, OTELP-Landesa jointly initiated the land allocation program to ensure land to the landless in 1056 project villages across 30 blocks in seven districts. The program aimed at formalizing rights over land for households possessing government land, both for homestead and cultivation – as far as possible, on their current sites.

Identifying almost half of the project populace as landless, Landesa-OTELP collaboration established that landlessness could be as grave an issue in Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) as it was in OTELP areas. This motivated Government of Odisha to scale the CRP model to 18,000 villages in 118 TSP blocks across 12 districts in three overlapping phases to be implemented as Comprehensive Programme on Land Rights to Tribals in five years (2012-2017). The program has been successful in ensuring distribution of 104,758 titles to homestead (47,957) and farmland (56,801) as on March 31, 2014. Amongst these titles, 97% titles have names of women – either jointly with husbands or single titles in case of single women/woman-headed households.

The "CRP Model to secure land rights for the poor" has been adjudged as one of the high impact innovations in the Bihar Innovation Forum organized in January 2014 by Bihar Rural Livelihoods Promotion Society (BRLPS)

4. Future plans in Bihar

BRLPS is an independent society of Government of Bihar. BRLPS is implementing Bihar Rural Livelihoods

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[18] Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) funded by IFAD and implemented by the SC & ST Development Department , Government of Odisha

Project- JEEViKA (means livelihood) with support from the Government of India, Government of Bihar and the World Bank. Landesa will closely work with JEEViKA team for covering 15 million households in 44000 plus villages spread across all the 534 blocks in 38 districts in Bihar. The lessons from this scale up will be crucial as Bihar unlike West Bengal has a poor history of land reforms, has extremely feudal and oppressive caste formations and, the PoP and marginalized communities do not have a political voice. The following quote from Sajjad Hassan's paper[19] sums up the challenge very well:

The strongest resistance by the rich, and what are locally called dabangs (strong men), is to attempts by musahars and other landless (themselves or with support from government) to obtain rights over land – homestead and agricultural. It is recognized by all - Musahars and sympathetic non-musahars - that land ownership could be the game changer for Musahars. But there is very little progress there, belying laws and expectations. Any rights for musahars, as can be imagined, comes at the cost of the rich, and cuts into their authority – therefore the push back. Given how much village commons or government land is illegally occupied by the powerful, it is no wonder that government's attempts even to allocate the supposedly less contentious government land (as opposed to taking surplus land away from the rich for redistribution among the landless) comes up against stiff resistance. We heard many accounts of claims by the landless and resistance by the powerful over land, and failure of the government to enforce its own laws in favour of the landless. These are increasingly leading to class and caste tensions, often flaring up into violence.

B. Lessons from Landesa-Government Partnership

Landesa's experience clearly shows how partnership between Government and an NGO offering specialized support and services as well as introducing innovations can go a long way in making large-scale difference in the lives of the poor. It also shows the power as well as limitations of political will - to distribute land pattas is strong as it translates into votes. This has pushed the bureaucracy to deliver. The political will for convergence of services is less hence the bureaucracy is not pushing it as aggressively. According to a stakeholder, the day the Chief Minister makes this 'will' explicit - convergence will happen.

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[19] From Misery to Hope? Musahars, Poverty and the State in India, Sajjad Hassan, Center for Equity Studies, 2012

V. EXPERIENCE OF EXCLUSIVE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

A. Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP)[20]

SERP in the undivided AP has a long history of several externally funded poverty alleviation projects that were gradually scaled up. It started with UNDP funded South Asia Poverty Alleviation Project (SAPAP) from 1995 to 2000 in 20 Mandals of three districts.The World Bank funded DPIP was implemented in 316 Mandals of 6 districts from 2000 to 2006. The next decade of 2003- 2013 saw the World Bank funded Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project (APRPRP) with a spread to 656 Mandals of 22 districts. After the bifurcation of AP into Telangana and AP, 13 districts are with AP and 9 in Telangana.

Towards the end of the first decade of IKP[21] in the year 2009, it was observed that 20% of poor were still untouched, majority of whom belonged to socially vulnerable groups (SC/ST). This happened despite the focus of SERP in creating Institutions of the Poor (IOP) and creating an eco-system where multiple opportunities are available for the rural households to access and come out of poverty. The PoP households particularly those from SC & ST communities lacked the requisite skills to grab the basket of opportunities available. The presumption of IKP, that the empowered network of CBOs (Community Based Organisations) will facilitate handholding of the SC & ST households once the IKP staff shift from an intensive SHG focused facilitation to nurturing the higher level CBO's like VOs (Village Organisations), MMS (Mandal Mahila Samakhya) and ZSs (Zilla Samakhya) proved premature. The CBOs of poor, with their own continuous struggles

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[20] www.serp.telangana.gov.in and 'SC ST Unit Notes' from SERP Telangana supplemented by telephonic discussion with J. Satyanarayana, Project Manager, SCST Unit, SERP, Telangana. on 1 and 2 November 2014

[21] Indira Kranthi Patham- programme implemented by SERP in undivided AP

to come out of poverty, were not able to provide quality time and effort to the much more complex socio-economic dynamics faced by the SC & ST households. A study carried out for SERP by young professionals also concluded that there are many BPL families who even after accessing the loans from IKP failed to come out of poverty due to their inability to absorb shocks like a death or illness.

IKP concluded that it was crucial for the programme to be *PoP-centric*. Consequently a new strategy focusing on the PoP household was developed along with the emphasis on enhancing the income levels and the reduction in expenses. SERP decided to create a **dedicated facilitation unit** comprising of the IKP staff and trained community members to work intensively with the PoP Households to come out of poverty. In this approach the focus is on the *household.* The SC/ST Unit of SERP is implementing two programmes i.e., Unnathi and Bhoomi (Land Access) for SC/ST poor families in the state since 2010.

1. Unnathi

The objective of Unnathi is to enable every poorest of poor (PoP) family in the state to come out of poverty with increased and sustainable livelihood opportunities established with the aid of an intensive handholding support. This was done in a focused and phased manner starting with organizing them, strengthening their institutions, increasing their asset base, mitigating risks, expanding the livelihoods and increasing their incomes. Enhancing the income of PoP family to an annual income of Rs One lakh over a period and a significant improvement in human development aspects are considered the twin mandates of the proposed strategy.

Initially, an exclusive facilitator, PoP Community Activist (PoP CA) was placed for every 100 households of phase-I villages. For the phase-II villages, only one PoP CAs was positioned for a VO. The PoP CAs have identified SC/ST households, collected baseline survey details, brought the left out people into SHGs, provided livelihoods and applied for entitlements. In phase-III villages taken up in 2013, the services of PoP CAs have been discontinued[22]. Presently the VOAs (Village Organization Assistant) facilitate the Unnathi activities among the other activities of the VO. The VOAs are men or women who have studied school up to 10th or 12th. They are paid an honorarium by the VO.

The existing project structure of community and supporting staff is used for implementing Unnathi. In each level of the federations, an exclusive sub-committee for monitoring the progress of PoP families is constituted. The members have to ensure that the progress of the PoP families is up to the mark on all dimensions. In case of any deviations, they need to take up the corrective measures accordingly. The sub-committee members are paid wage loss and actual travel expenses by SERP.

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[22] This decision was taken due to resource crunch as well as to ensure sustainability of the intervention

Unnathi has a well-defined implementation process that consists of:

- **Identification of PoP households:** Inclusive strategy was applied for targeting i.e. all SC/ST households, except those employed in government service, were straightway taken as PoP households. The identification of PoP households has been done jointly by the concerned VOs.

- **Baseline survey:** As PoP strategy aims at enhancing the incomes and human development of the identified PoP families, it was decided to have a detailed baseline survey on indictors given below. The survey was carried out with the help of trained PoP CAs & VOAs. The data was later digitized with the support of exclusive web based software application for further analysis. The baseline captured the following:

  o Critical Human Development Indicators viz. Literacy, Education, Health.

  o Access to various Govt. schemes and benefits

  o Asset base including land, livestock etc.

  o Credit availed and its utilization

  o Annual family Cash flow

- **Prioritization of households:** IKP SERP has surveyed all SC/ST households in the State. For each household, scores were given for the following criteria:

  o Family members (Number of girl children)

  o Vulnerability (Bonded Labour, Joginies, Women headed etc.)

  o Assets (Housing, Assets of household etc.)

  o Land Assets (Dry land, Wet land, cultivable etc.)

  o Employment (Skilled, Full time, Part time, Contract etc.)

  o Migration (family members gone for migration)

  o Ultra-poor Households

  The SC/ST households in a Village Organization, based on their Assets, Vulnerability score, employment, incomes were prioritized based on the score. The families top ranked were the most vulnerable (Ultra-poor HHs) having less assets and income. The priority list was made available to all staff and CBO members.

- **Household Livelihood Plan (HLP):** The VOAs' prepare the HLPs for the prioritized SC/ST household.

- **Support to livelihood activity:** For assisting the livelihoods of the poorest among the selected PoP families, funds were tapped from different sources like APRPRP, NREGS, SGSY, IWMP and Sthreenidhi. The whole process is driven by the VOs.

- **Entitlements:** The PoP facilitators have taken advantage of entitlement program of Government of AP to facilitate sanction of entitlements like ration cards, pensions, Indra Awas Yojana and job cards to the PoP households.

- **Grounding of Livelihoods:** Purchase Committees are formed at the VO level for asset transfer. The Committee along with the beneficiary buy the asset. The PoP fund is given as loan to the member from Stree Nidhi. If the member repays regularly, she is eligible to get a loan at 0% rate of interest. Livelihoods practiced by the poor are generally chosen in such a way that it complements the other livelihoods practiced by the household.

2. Key Features of Unnathi

I. Exhaustive survey of the SC ST households and prioritization based on degree of vulnerability

II. Creation of a dedicated facilitation unit to provide intensive handholding support to the PoP families

III. Developing Household Livelihood Plan (HLP)

IV. Establishing linkages with several Government programmes to draw in resources to support asset transfer to PoP HH

V. Facilitating the families requiring different entitlements to file applications

VI. Bring all the HH under SHG to ensure the integration of the PoP HH in the SHG

3. Bhoomi

Bhoomi addresses the issue of landlessness and lack of secure tenure to land by implementing programs of Land Purchase and Land Access.

SERP has done this in convergence with the Revenue Department. The Govt. issued G.O.Ms.No.1148 in the first phase of the programme from 2002-04 institutionalizing convergence between IKP and Revenue Department. The Revenue Department agreed to give their Deputy Collectors and other revenue officers on deputation to SERP which gave a great boost to the programme. The Government also appointed Koneru Rangarao Land Committee for looking at land issues concerning the poor. The project interventions were guided by the findings of the report of the committee.

IKP-SERP developed the Bhoomi land access model with the following sub-components:

I. **Paralegal (PL) assistance strategy:** An innovative and multi-pronged PL strategy employed by IKP is a unique model for ensuring secured land rights to the poor. At the Mandal level, paralegals trained on land matters and Community Surveyors (CS) having technical know-how are positioned for facilitating the poor to get their land issues resolved. Legal Coordinators (Law graduates) and Land Managers (Retired Tehsildars) provided them both technical and functional support at district level. The entire land facilitating team works with the poor households and the government land administrators in tandem. They also equip the SHGs and their federations with knowledge and ability to resolve land issues themselves.

II. **Capacity building of paralegals**: Paralegals are the graduates recruited by way of notification, written test and interview. They were imparted initial training of one month in the districts including village for understanding the challenges faced by poor in rural areas. They were also imparted residential training at Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development (APARD), Hyderabad for 5 days with practitioners and academicians. Later, they were given Paralegal Certification Course for 10 days conducted by NALSAR University of Law (NALSAR), Hyderabad. General training module covered basics of lands like types of lands and land records, land enactments, procedures, identification and resolution process of land issues etc.

III. **Capacity building of community surveyors:** Rural Youth having technical qualifications were recruited as Community Surveyors by way of notification, written test and interview. They were initially trained for 2 months in cadastral survey in Survey Training Academy, Hyderabad. Later they all underwent apprenticeship with departmental Mandal surveyors in districts for a period of 12 months. On successful completion, they were issued licenses free of cost by Department of Survey.

IV. **Land issues resolution facilitation process** The process of identifying land issues of the poor and helping them to pursue and resolve their claims are processes that are both labor-intensive and require an informed, pro-poor perspective. The following steps are involved in this process:

- Issues are collected from the community

- Field Enquiry and collection of required material by Paralegal

- Community Surveyors attend to survey wherever required

- Representation submitted to the revenue officers

- Paralegal attends Tehsildar office every Monday to follow up issues till resolution

- Unresolved issues are escalated - Land Managers and Legal Coordinators seek Joint Commissioner's intervention

- Legal assistance is arranged for lands locked in both revenue and civil courts

V. **Inventory:** Physical inventory is one of the most effective ways adopted by IKP to identify problems that limit secured land access and efficient land utilization by the poor. IKP- Land has launched a major initiative of building SC/ST Lands database in partnership with MGNREGA. This mapping of 15 lakh acres of land belonging to 10 lakh SC/ST

will facilitate land development of SC/ST lands under MGNREGS as well as identify the lands of the SCs/STs and help them get secured title and possession

VI. **Bhoomi Nyaya Sahaya Kendram (BNSK):** Thousands of land cases of the poor are pending in revenue courts & civil courts, many more thousands of cases of the poor are not even brought before the courts as they have limited access to legal services. SERP recognized the need of providing lawyers, court fees and other legal support to the poor and established BNSK at Warangal, initially. Its success prompted to establish BNSKs in 4 more Districts in the State.

Outcomes of Land Access Programme

The Land Access or Bhoomi programme has had the following outcomes:

I. Lakhs of poor people got benefits in securing the land rights for the lands they actually owned and enjoyed.

II. For the first time land ownership and enjoyment data of SCs and STs was collected and physically verified (revenue records do not give this information as they have no caste field).

III. The inventory data also helped in identifying land issues of 10.7 lakh Poor families involving 10 lakh acres.

Revenue Department conducted Revenue Camps between the months of January to March, 2012 & 2013 in which filing of individual representations by the SCs/STs was facilitated.

IV. IKP-SERP land access activities have helped to place the issue of land rights and claims of the poor back onto the screen of the Revenue Department.

4. Key Features of Bhoomi

I. Poor, especially, SCs and STs, require exclusive facilitation support to get their land issues resolved

II. Revenue Department's role, apart from bringing in pro-poor legislations and other measures, also includes empowering the poor with regard to their land rights

III. AP Government's sensitive support mechanism demonstrated in the Bhoomi programme can be replicated to address the needs of the poor and help fulfill the responsibilities of the revenue department.

IV. Paralegals, from the community of the poor, if trained well, can competently support both the poor and the Revenue Department in:

- Settling land disputes

- Bringing in community participation and

- Making the system more transparent and accountable

B. Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project (TNEPRP) [23]

TNEPRP is an empowerment and poverty alleviation project implemented by the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj department of Government of Tamil Nadu with World Bank assistance. The project was implemented over a 6 year period extended up to September 2014. The Project covers 2509 village panchayats in 70 Backward Blocks in 16 districts. The project had a special package for persons with disabilities, tribal and vulnerable groups[24]. It defines "vulnerability" as an individual or group of people or specific community who are socially marginalized due to lack of sexual identity, physical ability to earn, family and social support to lead normal socialization process and those who are defined vulnerable by the community due to lack of social security, livelihood resources and basic survival means.

1. Tribal Development

The Project recognized the tribal as the most Vulnerable sections of Tamil Nadu as the tribal Population forms the poorest and the most vulnerable social groups. To safeguard the tribal, the project prepared and adopted a Tribal Development Plan. The objective of this plan was to empower the poor Tribal Communities and improve their livelihoods through:

I. Developing and strengthening pro-poor local institutions/ groups of the tribal,

II. Building skills and capacities of the Tribal

III. Financing productive demand-driven sub-project investments taking care to foster full respect for dignity, human rights and cultural uniqueness of the Tribal communities and ensuring that all interventions are culturally and socially compatible to them.

Project blocks were selected by giving due weightage to SC/ST Population in the blocks. The tribals are given special treatment in terms of their participation in formation of VPRCs (Village Poverty Reduction Committees). The project presumes that all tribals are part of the target poor. Going by this principle, the Gram Panchayats include all tribal families when identifying the target poor. Specifically:

- In Gram Panchayats where the number of tribal households is between 10 and 50, a tribal subcommittee of the VPRC with 2-3 tribal members (mostly women SHG members) is formed to ensure that all identified tribal families receive full benefit from the project. In addition to this a separate tribal representative is included in the general VPRC.

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[23] This section is based on the material available on TNEPRP website as well as the Final report of the Mid Term Review (MTR), August 2009 also available on the website.

[24] Widowed women and deserted wives with meagre subsistence income and without social support; orphaned children; children engaged in child labour; senior citizens above 65 with no subsistence income and social supports; nomads; HIV positive poor; transsexual poor; people from poor families suffering from chronic illnesses like epilepsy, haemophilia, elephantiasis, TB, heart diseases disabling them to take up physical labour

- In Gram Panchayats where the number of tribal families is above 50, a separate tribal VPRC is constituted and funds are directly released to the tribal VPRC. This VPRC consists of 5-10 members. It discharges all the functions of the VPRC exclusively for the tribal areas with a separate bank account and Memorandum of Understanding with the DPMU (District Project Management Unit). It receives funds separately and implements the VPRC fund for the tribal areas in an autonomous manner.

- In Gram Panchayats, where tribal population is 60 percent and above, it is treated as a single VPRC. In these VPRCs, all office bearers and 70 percent of habitation representatives are from tribal Population. Wherever necessary, the Gram Panchayat ensures the representation of other marginalized communities like scheduled castes in the VPRC.

The MTR (Mid-Term Report) survey reveals that tribals constitute about 7 percent of the office bearers (presidents, secretaries, treasurers, habitation representatives and other members) and of the VPRC. It also reveals that the tribals are not behind others in terms of participation in Gram Sabha meetings and Village Assembly meetings. While 74 percent of the total sample participated in the Gram Sabha meetings, 72 percent of tribals have participated and the participation in the village assembly is same for both the groups (69 percent).

Gram Panchayats with tribal families are provided higher allocation for the number of tribal families as compared to other target poor. At the time of the MTR in 2009, the project was proposing to engage an NGO with experience in tribal livelihoods to identify tribal specific livelihoods, which are in tune with their culture, promote NTFP based and Eco-friendly livelihoods and provide skill training and marketing linkages for the tribal products.

2. PWDs and Vulnerable Groups

The project envisages empowering and mainstreaming the disabled and vulnerable. The project objective is to empower and mainstream the disabled poor and other most vulnerable by proactively including them during social mobilization and institution building of the project thereby improving livelihood opportunities, quality of life and securing their dignity. The project is using a community based rehabilitation approach against the institutional service delivery model. It is using a social mobilization and special group institution building process as against the conventional, passive-individual, charitable, recipient model.

Social mobilisation: PwDs and vulnerable people between 18 and 65 years of age are encouraged to be a member of groups. They can either make exclusive groups consisting only of PwDs or vulnerable people or where possible get included in SHGs of other poor. The children, aged and persons affected by chronic illness are supported through individual assistance. The project recognises

that synergy between various governmental and non-governmental approaches and programs is critical to enable mobilization and institutional building processes.

Criteria for eligibility – institutional membership: All the disabled and vulnerable in the Gram Panchayat are included in the PIP[25] (Participatory Identification of Poor) list. If a poor family has a disabled person, then that particular family is added to the PIP list and the disabled person too added as a separate unit for support.

The project views all persons with disabilities and the vulnerable as defined earlier, living in a particular village panchayat as the target. The benefits to them are facilitated mostly through the groups and not directly individuals. Therefore, all the disabled and other vulnerable have to become members of the SHGs. However, the aged persons and other most vulnerable who are less in size to form a self-help group are exempted from group formation. Membership can either be in an exclusive disabled persons group (DPG) or in an exclusive vulnerable group or in existing women self-help group or other existing group.

The vulnerable persons who are incapable of any physical work or livelihoods earning activities will have to be supported through social protection interventions - safety nets including pensions etc.

Village Poverty Reduction Committee (VPRC): At least one person with disabilities and vulnerable (one each) will be a member of the VPRC, so as to voice the concerns of the disabled and other vulnerable and protect their interests in the cutting-edge village level institution of the project.

Facilitation: The VPRC identifies an active disabled person (preferably a woman) as the Community Disability Facilitator (CDF), who will work under the guidance of Block Disability Facilitating Agency (BDFA). The special rights and needs of the disabled and vulnerable are addressed by the CDF through one to one support at family level. The CDF creates a conducive environment and brings desirable attitudinal changes among the community and family members and paves way for their inclusion.

Social mobilisation and formation of groups: Exclusive SHGs for the disabled persons at the habitation level are formed. Likewise exclusive SHGs for vulnerable too are formed. As the disabled persons may be small in number, the minimum number required to form an SHG is 5. However, for the vulnerable groups, the minimum size is 12 as in case of normal SHGs. However, the aged persons and other most vulnerable who are less in number to form an SHG are exempted from group formation. They can join either a disabled SHG or a vulnerable SHG or existing women SHG or any other existing group. The Disabled SHGs are

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[25] The list of beneficiaries is finalized at the Panchayat level through the Participatory Identification of the Poor (PIP) process and approved in the Gram Sabha. The list of vulnerable is kept dynamic as the process of identifying them is difficult and long drawn. This has been done to avoid any errors of exclusion. The methodology has found wide acceptance among all the stakeholders. It is remarkable that the project has brought focus on such vulnerable groups that usually stay invisible in most poverty programs.

formed into exclusive federations at the block level.

As a special incentive for triggering appropriate institution development processes and for social mobilization and strengthening disabled SHGs, a grant of up to Rs.10,000 per functional group towards seed capital is provided. This seed capital provides these groups with confidence and is utilized for creating a basis for transactions amongst the members, bringing in financial discipline and habit. This seed capital is also leveraged with banks for additional funds.

Skill building and livelihoods: Skill Building and making the target population employable is on the top of the agenda of the project. Investments into skill building for taking up appropriate future livelihood options and occupations, particularly for the disabled youth, are being made. At the VPRC level, about 20 percent of the Special Assistance to Vulnerable of Village Fund is available for skill building. The most vulnerable avail of support from Special Assistance, if they are in the existing SHGs or special SHGs of their own. The disabled and most vulnerable are eligible for livelihood assistance under the general livelihood fund in addition to the special assistance to vulnerable sub-component. When disabled and most vulnerable SHGs access livelihood fund for economic activities, the grant from the project is up to 70% of the project cost. The equity contribution is 30% including bank credit. This can be 5% upfront individual contribution and 25% from other financial sources. In cases where investment is worthwhile, the project puts up this investment.

The MTR Survey reveals that the average income of the disabled is Rs. 30,636 which is nearly 99 percent of the average household income (Rs. 30,852). This is an indicator for focussed efforts of the project on the disabled. The average income of the vulnerable is Rs. 24636, which is nearly 80 percent of the average household income (Rs. 30,852). This implies that there is a need to focus on the vulnerable to bring them on par with other households.

3. Lessons from TNEPRP- PwD, tribal and vulnerable groups

I. PIP (participatory identification of Poor) approach has found widespread acceptance among all the stakeholders.

II. Reserving positions for PwD, Tribals and vulnerable in the VPRC (Village Poverty Reduction Committee) has helped to bring their concerns upfront.

III. Funds earmarked for skill building and livelihoods of the PWDs and most vulnerable

IV. Facilitators positioned at the village and cluster levels to work with PwDs and most vulnerable groups.

V. Dedicated Staff at Block, district level and State levels to anchor the work with the PwDs and vulnerable groups

VI. The achievement of objectives of the project, greatly depend on the project's ability to converge the various schemes and activities that are targeting the

poor, very poor and vulnerable. This role of facilitation across line departments is most challenging and requires regular and patient follow up by the project team.

C. Kudumbashree[26]

Kudumbashree was launched in 1998 as a community network that would work in tandem with local self-governments for poverty eradication and women empowerment. At the core of *Kudumbashree* functioning are Community Based Organisations (CBOs) of poor women, which work in co-operation with the Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) on a wide range of interventions. Bilateral matching of CBOs and LSGIs is ensured under the programme. Neighbourhood Groups (NHGs) of poor women have been organized and these function at the village level. Around 10-15 NHGs are federated as Area Development Society (ADS) at the ward level, and the apex body of the ADS - the Community Development Society (CDS) - at the Local Body level. The CDS is registered under the Travancore – Cochin Literary, Scientific, and Charitable Societies Act of 1955.

The project design places the responsibility on CBOs and LSGIs which are endowed with sufficient space and powers of decision making as well as resource mobilization, while convergence, co-ordination of inputs, and networking with the State and

National level actors are roles retained by the State bureaucracy.

Kudumbashree attempts to make use of CBOs and Constitutionally recognized LSGIs to reach out to the poor. There are a number of technical service providers and volunteers (mostly local youth) associated with the project, but they are either Government functionaries or remain on assignment-based contracts woven for providing strength and depth to the key project actors, the LSGIs and CBOs.

The project design recognizes the role of multiple activities in sustaining the livelihood basket of a poor family, and talks about combining self-help with demand led convergence of available services and resources to tackle the multiple dimensions and manifestations of poverty holistically. *Kudumbashree* deploys all kinds of strategies, spatial (covering Municipality or rural area), sectoral (encompassing community health, education, micro-housing, agriculture), vectoral (including microfinance) and segmental (addressing poor women, destitutes, and children), largely in a demand-led mode. Convergence of existing Government programmes (Central as well as State schemes) and plans designed by CBOs and LSGIs, based on local priorities, determine programme interventions.

Kudumbashree clearly distinguishes the conditions and needs of the ultra-

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[26] This section of the paper is based on a study commissioned by the Work and Employment Community of UN Solution Exchange in 2009. The study titled- 'Building Convergent Response Strategy for the Ultra Poor' was anchored by ARAVALI, Rajasthan and led by the erstwhile Executive Director of ARAVALI, Sachin Sachdeva

poor from the poor, right at the design stage. Using Nine-Point Poverty Indices (separate for urban and rural areas), the programme talks about 382 combinations of the nine risk factors that can make a family poor or at risk. While a family displaying at least four of the nine factors can be categorized as poor, the family with seven or more points is categorized as **families at high risk**. Following this first level short-listing, as per the nine factors listed below, at *high risk* families are passed through the second level of identification process, which includes screening against eight additional factors.

The factors considered in First Level Identification of destitute are as follows:

1. No land / less than 10 cents of land

2. No house / dilapidated house

3. No sanitary latrine

4. No access to safe drinking water within 300 meters

5. Women headed household / Presence of a widow or divorcee or abandoned lady or unwed Mother

6. No regularly employed person in the family

7. Socially disadvantaged groups (SC/ST)

8. Presence of mentally or physically challenged person / Chronically ill member in the family

9. Families with an illiterate adult member

The factors considered in Second Level identification of destitutes are as follows:

1. No landed property to create dwelling place (living in poromboke land i.e. land under the control of Public Works Department, forest land, side bunds of canals and paddy fields, etc.)

2. Spending the night time in public places, on streets, or in the verandahs of shops for sleeping

3. Families led by unwed mothers, single parent, or by separated women living in distress

4. Families led by young widows who are economically poor or having women who have passed the age of marriage, but remain unmarried

5. Families having members who are suffering from severe, chronic, and incurable diseases or physically and mentally challenged

6. Families having no healthy member to win bread for the family

7. Beggars who resort to beggary as a livelihood

8. Women subjected to atrocities

When any one of the second stage, eight factors listed above is additionally attracted, the family is categorized as destitute. Family level plans are especially formulated to support these families under the *Destitute Identification, Rehabilitation, and Monitoring (DIRM)* or *Ashraya* programme. Under *Ashraya*, the care

and well-being of destitute families is entrusted to the local NHGs. There is stress on ensuring access of the destitute family to entitlements and on pooling of resources from *Kudumbashree*, Local Government, donations, and charities for their welfare. Destitute families under *Kudumbashree* are entitled to a composite package of services under DIRM/*Ashraya*, aimed at their care and social inclusion, including:

- Food security

- Health

- Old age care

- Pension

- Provision of assets like land and shelter

- Provision of basic services like drinking water and sanitation

- Human development for capacity building

- Provision of livelihood support

There is a clear slant towards ensuring Basic Human Needs in the DIRM/*Ashraya* package, while there is some scope for working on outright livelihood activities. The project makes considerable efforts to document, package, and disseminate programme components. A key feature is the documentation of plans and progress of each family covered under DIRM/*Ashraya;* this includes photo documentation of the family members as well as the surroundings they survive in.

1. Key Features of Kudumbashree

1. It has a very well developed and detailed identification and targeting criteria. This has ensured 100% coverage of poor, ultra-poor and at risk households

2. *Kudumbashree* clearly distinguishes the conditions and needs of the ultra-poor from the poor, right at the design stage.

3. It uses the CBOs and constitutionally recognized LSGIs to reach out to the poor. The CBOs and LSGIs are endowed with sufficient space and powers of decision-making as well as resource mobilization.

4. The State bureaucracy takes care of the role of convergence, co-ordination of inputs, and networking with the State and National level actors.

5. The project design recognizes the role of multiple activities in sustaining the livelihood basket of a poor family, and talks about combining self-help with demand led convergence of available services and resources to tackle the multiple dimensions and manifestations of poverty

6. There are a number of technical service providers and volunteers (mostly local youth) associated with the project, but they are either Government functionaries or remain on assignment-based contracts woven for providing strength and depth to the key project actors, the LSGIs and CBOs

VI. PATHWAYS OUT OF CHRONIC POVERTY-WHAT WORKS

This section is a distillation of the lessons emerging from the experiences detailed out in the previous sections. As described earlier, the task of enabling the PoP out of chronic poverty in a way that they stay out of it is a herculean one. Yet, experience shows that with adequate investments of time, human and financial resources and forcing a political commitment to make that happen is the only way forward. It is clear from the experience that for the PoP collectivization, getting a voice and asserting their rights is the way to go. The financial and technical inputs and assets provide the necessary wherewithal to initiate the process. Some specific takeaways from the experiences documented in the previous sections are:

1. **Targeting:** Clear criteria for targeting the PoPs is crucial. Most programs realized that depending on BPL lists resulted in huge errors of exclusion. In all the cases the projects have developed a detailed set of criteria and protocol for the steps to be followed to identify the PoP. All have recognized the key role of the community and have incorporated the same. Whether it is PIP (Participatory Identification of the Poor), wealth ranking or variations of a similar process, the community identifies the eligible PoP households. They have decided to live with error of inclusion rather than with error of exclusion. Specifically:

a. **SERP** decided to include all households from SC and ST communities except those employed in Government service as PoP. It created a special unit for work with SC ST Households and developed dedicated programmes- Bhoomi and Unnathi- to reach out to the PoP.

b. **TNEPRP** identified PwD and Tribals as PoP. In addition it has made an exhaustive list of categories of vulnerable people like widows, HIV positive, transsexuals, nomads etc. It

has also left the scope for the community to identify any other PoPs who are not in the list prepared by the Government. The project has made special provisions for the inclusion of PoP in the institutional architecture of the programme as well as made special financial provisions for this group.

c. **Kudumbashree** uses a set of nine-point Poverty Indices (separate for urban and rural areas), the programme talks about 382 combinations of the nine risk factors which can make a family poor or at risk. While a family displaying at least four of the nine factors can be categorized as poor, the family with seven or more points is categorized as **families at high risk.** It has developed a special programme - Aashray- to support the PoP.

d. **Landesa** has developed a separate enumeration method that identifies a whole set of new and 'invisible' landless people. For the first time in Odisha, single and never married women above the age of 30 years are listed as landless households. This group of women were not treated as a separate entity and therefore were deprived of several entitlements including land patta.

2. **Household as a unit of intervention:** Experience of working with PoP has shown that the unit of planning and intervention has to be the household and not Village Organization. The concerns of PoP get lost in the larger structures.

a. The **graduation programme** is designed to provide exclusive support to each individual PoP targeted by the programme.

b. **SERP** works through an architecture of Institutions of poor (IOP) with the Village Organisation (VO) as the interface with the SHGs. The resources are channelized through this system. It realized in 2009 that these institutions were missing out on reaching the PoP. In order to focus on PoP, SERP decided to work intensively with PoP households who are gradually integrated in the larger institutions.

c. **TNEPRP** works with groups of PoP. It has provisions to organize them as special groups with specialized facilitators to provide support to the group.

d. **Kudumbashree** has tasked the NHG (Neighbourhood groups) to work closely with the PoP families. Family level plans are especially formulated to support these families under the *Destitute Identification, Rehabilitation, and Monitoring (DIRM)* or *Ashraya* programme. The plans and progress of each family covered under DIRM/ *Ashraya* is documented on a regular basis.

3. **Integration into the larger structures:** Almost all projects recognize the need to slowly enable the PoP families/groups to get integrated into the larger structure of the village. **SERP** and **TNEPRP** have ensured their representation in the various decision-making bodies of

the projects so that their needs and concerns are addressed. They have proactively included them during social mobilization and institution building of the project thereby improving livelihood opportunities, quality of life and securing their dignity. **Kudumbashree** has tasked the local CBO, NHG and LSGI to anchor the work with the PoP.

4. **Dedicated personnel/ teams for working with the PoP:** All the projects/ interventions with the PoP have dedicated personnel working closely with the identified PoP families. For specific categories of PoP, specialized staff like Disability facilitator placed. In the case of Kudumbashree, technical service providers and volunteers (mostly local youth) are associated with the project, but they are either Government functionaries or remain on assignment-based contracts. They provide the strength and depth to the key project actors, the LSGIs and CBOs.

5. **Intensive training and capacity building of project staff:** The work with PoP requires very competent and dedicated staff. Projects where successful interventions have taken place have invested into sustained training, capacity building of the staff.

6. **Livelihood plans developed for each PoP household:** Enabling PoP to identify a suitable basket of livelihoods requires intensive engagement with them. It also requires handholding support over a long period of time. The project staff is trained in the same and helps to ground the livelihoods for each identified family.

7. **Additional resource for PoP households:** In the case of TNEPRP the Gram Panchayats with tribal families are provided higher allocation for the number of tribal families as compared to other target poor. In case of SERP, Unnathi intervention, the PoPs are eligible for credit at 0% rate of interest once they have demonstrated a good credit history.

8. **Saving habit:** PoP are encouraged to develop the habit of saving regularly and gradually organized into SHGs (of their own in some cases) or become a part of a larger group. TNEPRP has set a good example by reducing the minimum number required for the SHGs of PwD to 5 instead of the usual 12. This is an important step for integrating them with the larger village community.

9. **A holistic package:** The PoP suffer from multiple deprivations hence all projects work towards providing a combination of basic services, welfare services and livelihood services. This is often achieved by **convergence with other schemes and programmes** of the Government to facilitate access to entitlements

10. **Asset transfer:** This is a crucial element of a livelihood intervention with the PoP. There is adequate evidence that rural poor value land and possessing a piece of land not only gives them an identity but also opens up several possibilities for accessing entitlements as well as livelihoods. Where land is not available the PoP have made a move out of chronic poverty with the help

of livestock (mostly small ruminants like goats or pigs but in some areas large ruminants too) or micro-enterprise support. It is important to mention here that asset building for the individual PoP household invites huge resistance from the elite and even the middle poor. An asset to the PoP gives them a better status and also disturbs the power equations in the village. The teams on ground have to deal with expectations and pressure from the other 'poor' and local elite who insist on getting some benefit as well.

11. **Synergy between Government and NGOs:** Some projects recognize that synergy between various governmental and non-governmental approaches and programs is critical for mobilization and institution building processes. The Landesa case offers some good lessons on effective Government-NGO collaboration to reach out to a large number of landless poor. However, it must be noted that the cost of Landesa has not been picked by the Government but by donors like BMGF and DFID.

However experience of several other partnerships[27] has shown that a collaboration between Government departments/programmes and NGOs is a difficult one. Yet it is to the credit of Government and NGOs, they have continued to make efforts to work out partnerships

especially from early 1990s onwards. More recently there are good examples from NRLM-MKSP partnership; the role given to Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) under MNREGA[28] in 184 blocks to facilitate demand generation and convergence across MNREGA and NRLM; and the special projects developed with NGOs under NRLM. The GO-NGO collaboration experiences have been studied in great depth yet it is useful to mention some issues that need attention in such collaborations. These are listed below:

a. The Government agency has to accept that there are gradations among the poor, and reaching out to them is important. This fortunately has started happening at higher levels of the system but is not yet the case with the frontline staff and lower level bureaucracy.

b. The political masters and the agency in charge have to be honest about making the effort to reach out to the PoP. Often this intent gets limited by vote bank considerations. The case is well illustrated by the Landesa experience in West Bengal where they are struggling to push for convergence with other line departments as the political interest is limited to patta distribution. Or the case

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[27] DPIP (District Poverty Initiatives Project) M.P and Rajasthan; IWMP (Integrated Watershed Management Programme; IFAD assisted projects like Tejaswini in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and mpower in Rajasthan

[28] Letter from Joint Secretary Ministry of Rural Development on 29 Nov. 2013 at http://nrega.nic.in/Netnrega/WriteReaddata/Circulars/Sanction_184_Blocks_MGNREGA_NRLM_convergence.pdf

of Musahars in Bihar where the local elite push back any efforts to uplift the Musahar families.

c. Often NGOs are not given the credit for their contribution and many bureaucrats are not very sure if they want an NGO to be a party. The work with PoP and vulnerable groups does need very intensive engagement which is a challenge for a large, impersonal Government machinery. NGOs have stepped in where invited by the Government but they too expect some credit, particularly when they have to work very hard to reach to the bottommost sections of the pyramid. When this credit is not given, it demotivates the people working on the ground.

d. Another area that weakens the work on ground is the phenomenon of rent seeking and corruption. There is huge pressure faced by the honest NGO functionaries from the local level bureaucracy who find presence of an NGO a hindrance to their way of functioning.

12. **Collaboration between various government Departments:** The Bhoomi intervention of SERP is a very good example of the collaboration between the Revenue Department and SERP (under the Rural Development department) where the Revenue Department agreed to give their Deputy Collectors and other revenue officers on deputation to SERP. Since poverty is multidimensional close co-ordination and collaboration across various government departments and agencies is crucial to enable PoP to move out of chronic poverty and stay out of it.

VII. CONCLUSION

The last few years have seen extensive debate on poverty line and the estimates of the number of poor. Since the General Election was scheduled for 2014, this also became a politically charged issue. A Press Note[29] issued by the Planning Commission in July 2013 states that in 2011-12 the number of poor was around 270 million. If one third of this number is taken to be PoP then this number works out to 72 million in 2011-12. The optimistic estimate made by the Chronic Poverty Report (CPR) is 76 million PoP in India by 2030.

While the debate on the poverty line and the actual number of PoP can continue, the fact remains that this number is huge. Everybody agrees that the challenge of poverty alleviation of a large number of poor has to be tackled and within that the challenge of reaching out to a large number of PoPs has to be addressed. So far, it is mostly intensive NGO led models that have clearly demonstrated how to work successfully with the PoP and enable them to stay out of chronic poverty. But there is one common argument against the so called NGO models – while they are good, and have demonstrated results they cannot be scaled up as they are very human resource intensive. However, the PoP centric work done by Government led programmes confirms that the PoP need intensive handholding support: they need assets - land or livestock, they need technical support and finally, and most critically, they need psycho-social support. This has been done in the Bhoomi and the Unnathi programme of SERP in undivided AP; with the Ashray households in Kudumbashree; with the Tribals, PwDs and vulnerable groups in TNEPRP. These efforts are no different from the ten NGO led pilots supported by CGAP-Ford Foundation of which three were carried out in India. So it is the Government delivery system working as intensively as an NGO that has succeeded in reaching out to the PoP. Of course these Government programmes delivered because of the strong political will and backing of the respective State Governments. The

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[29] Press note on poverty Estimates 2011-12, July 2013 http://planningcommission.nic.in/news/pre_pov2307.pdf

NGO led pilots were donor funded and relatively small. However, at the very core the two were similar in terms of the intensive engagement with the PoP.

It can therefore be safely concluded that there are no shortcuts to working with the PoP whether by the Government delivery system or by the NGOs. It calls for putting aside funds for a more HR intensive work; readiness for slower pace of results and fewer numbers; patient efforts at grounding livelihoods as well as facilitating entitlements; and most importantly creating institutions of poor that can go beyond economic agenda where the poor gain the confidence and voice in the social and political space. This is critical as unless this happens the likelihood of the PoP staying out of poverty is very low. This is a task that needs collective efforts of many stakeholders - several Government departments, NGOS, Donors and the poor themselves.

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