Cultures of Entitlement and Social Protection: Evidence from Flood Prone Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh, India

1. **Introduction:**

Amartya Sen (1999) advocates an entitlement theory as a way to understand *how* access to food is mediated in a society. Given this, Sen provides a useful lens to design and monitor social protection programmes, which provide for food and livelihoods entitlements in the context where such vulnerabilities are faced by people. As transfer entitlements (Sen, 1999) social protection programmes have as one of their objectives enabling poor citizens to overcome risks, vulnerabilities and poverty cycles (Barrientos and Hulme, 2008). The last few years have seen burgeoning of social protection programmes which have found a firm place in development policy moving from narrow safety nets to quasi-welfare programmes and enabling growth (Devereux, McGregor and Sabates-Wheeler 2011; Barrientos, 2012). Transformative social protection based on social contracts between citizens and states, that transforms conditions of underlying vulnerabilities and poverty is advocated (Devereux et al 2011, Devereux and Lund, 2010; Chopra and te lintel, 2011; Tessitore, 2011; Ehmke, 2011;Sabates-Wheeler and Koehler, 2011; Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007). ILO's 189 member countries unanimous adoption of social protection floors on 14th June 2012 is a significant step in that direction and is hailed as a new global social contract (Durojaye, 2015, Ginneken, 2011).

This citizen rights and social contract based normative conception of social protection sits well with Sen's own entitlement thesis which is derived mainly from the discourse of formal rights enjoyed as entitlements by the citizenry through social contract (Sen, 2010), and with Sen's own transformative project that calls for changes in their entitlements in ways that enables adequate food and livelihood security for all.

Yet, the current emphasis on social protection as legal entitlements performed through social contracts between state/citizen relationships has its own limitations. For example, Plagerson, Harpham and Kielmann (2012) show that cash transfers in South Africa have at the best led to weak social contract relation between its beneficiaries and the state. **Evidence from our research on reach of social protection programmes in Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh, India, shows that in places where social contract does not work effectively, those who are culturally entitled reap maximum benefits. Following from this, our paper's main theoretical contribution is to highlight the gaps in the current social contract and entitlement based framing of social protection thus calling for its reinterpretation.**

India has a plethora of social protection programmes, however, as this paper will show these programmes do not always reach the poor – they have both inclusion and exclusion errors. As a result, the social protection programmes are not able to fully meet their stated objectives of enabling access of food and livelihoods to the most vulnerable.

A literature review of studies, both global and India focused, identifies various operational gaps for the inclusion and exclusion errors, namely: a) political clientalism b) exclusion due to social vulnerability c) elite capture d) targeting inefficiency e) leakages and corruption and f) lack of information and transparency g) Improper designing of social transfers: universal or targeted, conditional or unconditional, cash or kind

Our evidence from Bahraich, India, identifies another problem that leads to inclusion and exclusion error, namely the uncritical application of the concept of entitlement to social protection programmes. We argue that Sen's concept of entitlements needs to be understood in the context of the social, cultural and political factors that constitute *cultures of entitlements*, thus calling for their re-interpretation in their application to social protection programmes.

In order to place this papers contribution in the context of the current global and India specific literature on social protection programmes, we summarise the findings from this literature review.

1.1 Social protection programmes, its operationalisation, and inclusion and exclusion errors: Critical literature review with a focus on India

In this subsection, we discuss factors identified by the literature on social protection programmes that lead to inclusion and exclusion errors:

1.1.1 Political clientalism: This is linked with people being able to access resources due to their connections with local politicians and state patronage of groups for their political loyalty (Berenchot, 2010; Walton, 2009). In West Bengal, India, people who are affiliated to local ruling party are able to get more benefits than others through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme[1] (NREGA), one of the biggest social protection programmes in India (Das, 2015). Hickey (2008) also notes that coverage of programmes in Africa may be led by political clientalism. However, in some cases, the political clientalism can also be benevolent to all in so far as government implements social protection programmes effectively with the idea of gaining votes in return from the people, as observed with a measure of success in Tamil Nadu (Carswell and Neve, 2014), Andhra Pradesh in India (Maiorano, 2014) and in Brazil in the context of Bolsa Familia programme (Fried 2012, Barrientos, 2013) and South Africa in the case of social grants (Plagerson, Harpham and Kielman (2012).

1.1.2 Social vulnerabilities: In South Asia in general, socially excluded groups are marginalised and overlooked in implementation of social protection programmes

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[1] This social protection programme is undertaken under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005), legislated by the Indian government which gives 100 days of employment to every rural family in a year.

(Kabeer and Cook, 2010). In relation to India, caste can be a barrier with lower caste persons unable to access social protection due to discriminations (Bosher, Penning-Rowsell and Tapsell 2007; De Haan, Dubey and Sabharwal 2009; Thorat and Sadana, 2009; Haddad, Chandrashekhar and Swain 2012; Mamgain and Diwakar, 2012). Improper designing which does not take into account women's social constraints hamper their participation in social protection programmes as evidenced in South Asia by Kabeer and Cook, (2010); Sudarshan, Bhattacharya and Fernandez (2010) and in Peru and Ethiopia by Holmes et al (2011). Social protection programmes continues to be gender blind in practice with dearth of gender disaggregated monitoring and evaluation indicators (Akerkar, 2007; Jones and Holmes, 2011). Elderly persons without education are also more likely to be excluded from pensions (Kaushal, 2014). Elderly people in rural areas and from ethnic minorities and women were found vulnerable to exclusion from social protection support in West Africa (Parmar et al, 2014). Poorer screening processes for ascertaining disabilities can also lead to high exclusion errors for people with disability as found in cash grants given in South Africa, Uganda and Zambia (Mitra, 2010; Schneider et al, 2011) and Africa, Latin America, Asia, including India (Palmer, 2013; Gooding and Marriot, 2009).

1.1.3 Elite Capture:

Elite capture refers to a process where local elites are able to capture developmental resources due to their 'disproportionate access to social, political and economic power' (Dasgupta and Beard, 2007, p.230). Local elite can design and implement social protection programmes in ways that excludes poorest as shown in the case of Maharashtra, India (Pelliseri, 2008). Due to their external contacts, powerful castes in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, India are able to capture government resources (Parker and

Kozel, 2007). Panda (2015) finds that political elite capture is ubiquitous in India, with better off monopolising the government benefits (Jhabvala and Standing, 2010).

This elite capture is not inevitable, and can be thwarted through local capacity development and organisation of marginalised groups as experienced in some cases in Indonesia, Tanzania and India (Dasgupta and Beard, 2007; Lund and Saito-Jensen, 2013).

1.1.4 Targeting efficiencies: Targeting criteria to identify the poor can play a crucial role in inclusion and exclusion errors. The questionnaire used to identify below poverty line (BPL) persons in India has been critiqued for its imprecise method of scoring and for providing low quality data (Alkire and Seth, 2008, 2013; Ram, Mohanty and Ram 2009; Roy 2011; Saxena, 2009, Mahamalik and Sahu, 2011). Study by Skoufias, Lindert and Shapiro (2010) which analysed 56 social transfer programmes in Latin America and Caribbean shows redistributive impacts can be made through targetting efficiency.   Obstructive legislations can create wrong ineligibility criteria, for example widows in Rajasthan who are not able to access widow pensions should they have adult sons (Dutta, 2013).

1.1.5 Leakages and corruption: Often poor people are powerless in exposing irregularities, with powerful groups manipulating programmes for their gain, through cuts/siphoning from people's wages in NREGA (Kabeer, 2002; Deshingkar, Johnson and Farringdon, 2005; Reddy et al, 2010); Corruption and leakages work in large part of Public Distribution System (PDS) in India, where in highly subsidized food grains does not reach the targeted Below Poverty Line (BPL) families; and is sold in black market (Saxena, 2012). According to Dreze and Khera (2015) PDS leakages were as high as 30% in 2011-12. Leakages were also found in social pension distribution in

India (Dutta, Howes, and Murgai, 2010). Although attempts to decrease leakages have been made in India through use of ICT; digitalised service delivery system, biometric cards, mis-appropriations have continued suggesting that they are not fool proof systems (Reddy et al 2010; Masiero, 2015). Attempts to decrease leakages through participatory decentralisation are also not full proof as villagers can be accomplices in local networks of corruption (Veron et al, 2006).

1.1.6 Lack of information and transparency: Exclusion errors can also be caused due to lack of information and awareness about the entitlements, social protection programmes (Kabeer, 2006; Mishra, Behera and Nayak 2010; Saxena, 2012). Unfamiliarity of the poor with access processes leads them to give bribes and long delays in qualifying for the benefits (Harris-White, 2010). Transparency and better information access to poor can improve their inclusion, although it is found that despite such improvement, better off persons benefit more from the programme as they have better access to information (Ravi and Engler, 2015; Shankar, Gaiha and Jha, 2011).

1.1.7 Improper designing of social transfers: whether universal or targeted, conditional or unconditional; cash or kind

Although it is contended that universal programmes are better than targeted programmes in reducing exclusion error, it is the cost benefit analysis that determines the design in developing countries (Dreze and Khera, 2010; Slater, 2011; Kabeer, 2014). The case of India shows that both universal but conditional NREGA programme and the targeted PDS, pensions and other social protection programme have problems as discussed above.

In the last few years, cash transfers have been lauded for their success in different countries[2]. More recently in 2015 there have been a push in India to replace foodgrain transfers via PDS to cash transfers, with a governmental committee recommending the same to curb leakages and targeting errors. Critical economists and right to food campaign in India[3] have rejected this claim and questioned the move to cash transfer (Sinha, 2015; Ghosh, 2011; Shah, 2008).

To conclude, the critical literature review identifies a range of above factors debated for their contribution to the inclusion and the exclusion errors. **This paper makes a new contribution to this existing literature by showing that the errors are a result of a more fundamental assumption underlying entitlement and social contract based approach to designing of social protection programmes. It argues that entitlement and social contract thesis operate within the realm of formal rights, ignoring the impacts of the non-formal entitlements and claims, or** *cultures of entitlements* **evidenced in the empirical study examined in this paper.**

In the next section we develop a conceptual framework to highlight how cultures of entitlement and social protection outcomes are related.

2. Social protection programmes and cultures of entitlement: Uncovering the conceptual link

2.1 Social protection as legal entitlements and their limitations

Sen identifies four kinds of legal entitlements that a person may have, namely production based (land based food production), trade based (exchanging/selling what one owns to earn

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[2] See Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme (2010).For further examples, see cash transfers in Malawi (Miller and Tsoka, 2012; Miller, Tsoka, Reicher, 2011); Bolsa familia in Brazil and Mexico's Oportunidades (Davies and McGregor, 2009; Barrientos, 2013)

[3] Right to Food campaign is a coalition of NGOs, social action groups in India and promotes the fundamental right of citizens to be free from hunger. See http://www.righttofoodcampaign.in/

income/food), own labour based (sale of one's labour to buy food), inheritance based and transfer-based (securing food/income from other sources, such as governments) (Sen, 1999; Devereux, 1993). As stated in our introduction, it is the transfer entitlements given in the form of social protection programmes by the governments to its citizens that are the focus of this paper.

The concept of social protection as legal entitlements and as abstract rights in citizen-state social contract implies a particular mode of agency on the part of the citizens. Indeed it is expected within the social contract that citizens *will ensure* their inclusion in state programmes, and reap its benefits successfully. They entail a notion of 'self', 'sociality' and an 'agency' which is responsive to a particular rule of a rights game entailed in the citizen rights discourse (Cowan, 2006). In this conception, the atomised self as a bearer of rights is infused with moral individualism, which is dis-embedded from the social relations in which it operates. With its emphasis on the abstract conception of entitlement as legal rights, this conception does not engage with 'what is', that is entitlements as they work on the ground and hence is unable to account in its entitlement framing the 'dynamic back and forth movement between theory [legal entitlements as abstract rights] and data [empirical reality of how entitlements are grounded]' (Cowen, 2006, p.11, explanation our). Hence such theorization is unable to develop conceptual tools necessary for reflection of such movement.

The empirical study in Uttar Pradesh, primarily observes and analyses 'what is' that is how entitlements work on the ground rather than what the entitlements ought to be in theory. It analyses the meanings of entitlements for the people living in these specific contexts (Strathern, 2004). Reflecting on this empirical evidence, the paper comes up with a conceptual framing of entitlement outcomes that takes into account the socially embedded nature of agency, shaped by the social relations and constituted through the operation of the social, economic and cultural norms, namely the moral economy and local political economy.

It shows how access to social protection as entitlements is mediated through such norms, thereby proposing the concept of *cultures of entitlement* to capture this politics of access.

2.2 Conceptualising the concept of cultures of entitlement:

The concept of *cultures of entitlement* proposed by this paper, argues that in several societies in Asia and Africa, including India, which has significant subsistence economies; and where modern and traditional lifestyles live side by side (Chakrabarty 2000, 2002), entitlements as claims are mediated through multiple notions of rights and social relationships of power. The multiple notions of rights imply that legally authorised entitlements and rights are not the only moral category used to make claims; rather there are socially mediated moral claims which also make their effect felt in the society. As social relationships of power, moral economies and local political economies also affect the way in which entitlements are realised by people.

In this sub-section, we further develop the concept of cultures of entitlement, by drawing upon the works of James Scott, Charles Gore, and Partha Chatterjee.

The importance of moral economies in rural settings is highlighted by Scott (1976) in his work with the peasants of south-east Asia. The moral economy entails notions of economic justice and highlights rights and obligations arising from a set of social arrangements such as patron-client relation between landlord-sharecropper/landless person (Scott, 1976). Platteau (1995) notes that such patron-client relations are of common practice in rural areas of Asia. The notion of moral economy suggests that socio-economic structures are affected by morality, conventions, norms and values: that is normative structures existing in society which inform the perceptions of what is acceptable, legitimate and proper behaviour within a context of socio-economic relations. That is socio-economic relations are "structured by moral-economic norms about rights, entitlements, responsibilities and appropriate behaviour"

(Sayer, 2004 p. 3). They are culture specific norms for ordering social or interpersonal relations. Scott's work in general shows the importance of moral economies, and their potential effects on local socio-economic arrangements. Further, moral economies are also gendered in the sense that gendered norms are played out in the field of socio-economic relations of that context (Kabeer 2006). More generally, the notion of moral economy highlights how notions of entitlements or claims have a local genesis and hence arguably might be in variance with the state's notions of entitlement, as the data from this case study will show.

We further extend the use of moral economy in our entitlement analysis by drawing upon the work of Charles Gore, who in 1993, had argued that entitlement analysis as described by Sen was not enough, as it was too legalistic in its content. Gore critiqued Sen for not taking into account the non-governmental sites in his entitlement analysis and for under-estimating 'the role of socially enforced moral rules in constraining and enabling command over commodities' (Gore, 1993, p. 443). Gore, hence argued that entitlement analysis ought to 'analyse the interplay between state-enforced legal rules and socially enforced moral rules in constraining and enabling command over commodities' (Gore, 1993 p. 451). Extending implications of Gore's argument to our analysis, we develop our conceptual framework and undertake empirical analysis which shows precisely, how the state led social protection entitlements, moral economies and local political economies actively intersect with each other to produce the entitlement outcomes.

In the context of India, Partha Chatterjee (2004) extends our understanding of how entitlements work in practice, namely in places where citizen-state social contract does not work to its fullest. Chatterjee argues:

'Most of the inhabitants of India are only tenuously, and even then ambiguously and contextually, rights-bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the constitution'. (Chatterjee, 2004 p.38).

This leads Chatterjee to develop the concept of political society as opposed to the civil society as understood within the state-society social contract. It is in this political society, unruly entitlement practices, that is claims made and realised not necessarily based on law or administrative procedures take precedence over formal entitlements. Our study of politics of access to social protection engages with such unruly entitlement practices that are outside the domain of claims of formal entitlements.

Our analysis of the politics of access to social protection shows that poor people in general share a paradoxical and conflictual political relation with the Indian state. On one hand, they appreciate the importance of the state's role as a distributor of welfare and social protection programmes, important for their well-being, on the other, they also experience a disenfranchised relation with its representatives, namely its bureaucracy, and local officials who do not allow them to enjoy and access the state entitlements due to them. As the paper will show, for people from our researched village, the idea of abstract state-citizen social contract has little meaning, rather it is their actual moral contracts with the elite patrons in their village that helps them ground their entitlement claim. As these socio-cultural claim processes are arguably outside the state-civil society claim, they are more a part of the political society conceptualised by Chatterjee . In our research area, we find that entitlements are actualised through factors such as moral and local political economies, and people's abilities to negotiate within these domains. We thus extend Chatterjee's idea of political society to the domain of entitlements and further critique the linear framing of social protection as legal entitlements framed through the idea of state- citizen social contract, drawing attention to the messy reality of cultures of entitlement.

To summarise, we term this *politics of access* to social protection as *cultures of entitlements.* We deliberately choose to highlight this process by introducing the concept of cultures of entitlements rather than an invocation of social capital (Putnam 1993, 1995; Narayan, 2002; Woolcock 1998) as an explanatory variable, as it captures a more complex narrative about how social protection entitlements are accessed in practice. Recent work on social capital in India also highlights the problems involved in uncritically connecting social capital with development gains. For example, they show the problems of isolating behaviours of communities as social capital delinked from the socio-economic relations within which such behaviours emerge (Mosse, 2006; Levian, 2015). Mosse (2006) argues that an emphasis on social capital as an explanation does not tell us much about how it came into being in the first place and its related contextual significance. In our view, the contextual significance of the complex interactions between moral economies, local political economies and social protection programmes, is better captured through the concept of cultures of entitlement than isolating social capital as an explanatory variable.

This conceptual framing of the links between social protection, cultures of entitlement and entitlement outcomes can be depicted as follows in figure 1:
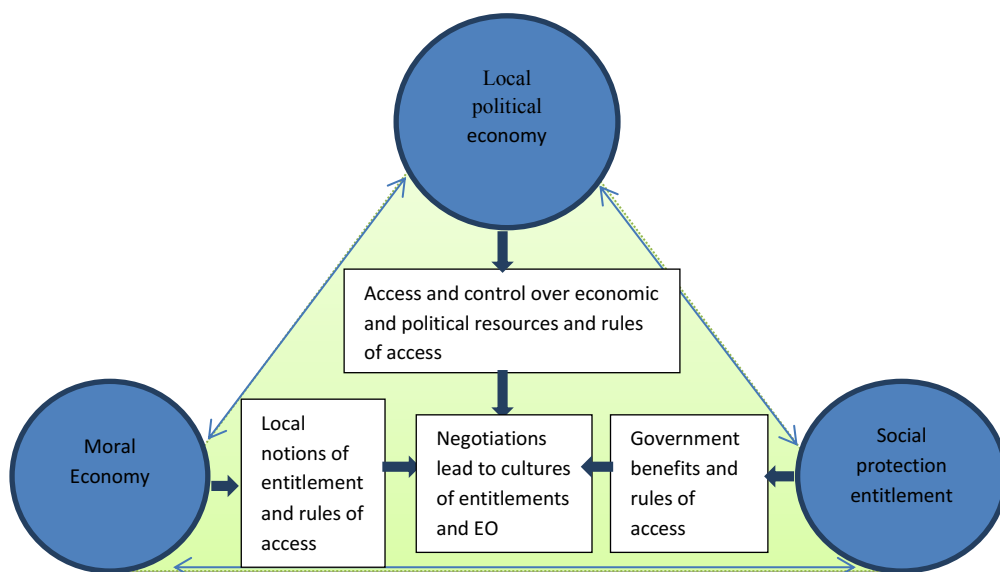
Figure 1: Cultures of entitlements and entitlement outcome (EO)

The above conceptual framework shows that the idea of formal entitlements may not be enough for the designing of effective transfer based entitlement programmes as it does not take into account situations where the state-citizenry social contract does not work to its fullest, and where non-state rules and obligations trump over the former. That is situations where irregularities in access to social protections primarily arise from local cultures of mediation through which state entitlements are acquired. In the following section, the case of Ghagrapur village, in Uttar Pradesh, India is analysed to uncover the empirical linkages between cultures of entitlement and their impact on social protection programmes.

3. Case of Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh India: an ethnographic inquiry into the working of social protection programmes

3.1 Background to the field work sites: Bahraich District, selection of researched villages, and research question

The research study was carried out in the villages of Bahraich district, Fakharpur block, Uttar Pradesh to understand the social impacts of disasters, namely floods and erosions in the area caused by river Ghagra, a Himalayan river. Four most affected flooded villages were chosen for the study in 2007 based on discussions with the district officials. They were: Laxmanpur, Mithapur, Ghagrapur and Baundi[4]. A sample of 318 households was surveyed in these villages from 1-15th October 2008. Further, qualitative field work was carried out in these 15 days, which included focus group discussions (FGD) with groups of men and women, pradhans (village elected heads).

In addition to this data collection in four affected villages, the first author used one of the village site Ghagrapur for her extended PhD field research. She stayed in the researched area between August – December 2008 and revisited the researched village in January 2011 for further discussion on her qualitative findings. The research question studied is:

What are the effects of the state supported entitlements on people's ability to overcome food and livelihood vulnerabilities experienced due to floods and erosion?

3.2) **Data collection methods, field work and analysis**

The extended PhD research field work done during August- December 2008 and January 2011 has used ethnographic research methods. During her stay, in August 2008 the village Ghagrapur experienced further intensive flooding and erosion, following untimely rains in the Himalayan region. This led her to witness first-hand how respondents from Ghagrapur coped with food and livelihood issues following floods and erosion and the role played by social protection in the same.

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[4] Villages Laxmanpur, Mithapur, and Ghagrapur are fictitious names of three villages. Baundi retains its original name as one of the village studied.

The ethnographic research methods included in-depth interviews and informal conversations with key informants from Ghagrapur (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1989; Burgess, 1991, Lofland, 1976). In all 19 key informants from different socio-economic groups in Ghagrapur were met regularly throughout field work period. More in-depth interviews were also conducted with government officials at Lucknow and at Bahraich. Further, additional 35 disaster narratives were collected to capture people's experience following the August 2008 floods. Participant observation was also used to understand the dynamics of flood/erosion impacts and how people had coped with them. This was primarily done by 'hanging out' in a particular place in the village where people gathered for spontaneous debates and social chats through the day (Woodword, 2008 p. 538; also see Forsey, 2010).

Key informants chosen for the in-depth interviews and informal conversations followed a spontaneous as well as conscious selection processes: spontaneous because key informants showed active interest in the research, and conscious because, respondents from different caste and socio-economic groups, were selected paying close attention to the way in which social groups identified and dis-identified themselves from each-other. The main social identification used was caste, with groups identifying themselves and others as upper castes, intermediate castes, and the former untouchable or low castes. Caste is an ascribed system of stratification based on one's birth in a particular caste. It constitutes a system of differentiation based on a hierarchical value attached to each caste (Gupta, 2000).

The caste groups identified in the village were: Firstly, Brahman-Thakurs which traditionally form the upper caste or dominant castes; were originally landed class, but several of whom have now lost the bulk of their lands due to erosion by the river Ghagra; Secondly, the intermediate castes consisting of Gudiya or Kevath, Luniyas, and also Ahirs, Kurmis are classified as Other Backward Classes (OBC) by the government. They have traditionally engaged in different occupations such as Ahirs doing pastoral work; Gudiya or Kevath

engaged in fishing, rowing of boats, or doing richer people's housework; Kurmis and Luniyas involved in agricultural work. Thirdly, the lowest of the caste hierarchy and traditionally doing the menial work; the former untouchable caste namely the Phasis and the Chamars, are classified as Scheduled Caste (SC) by the government. The village also had a few Muslim households classified as OBC by the government, given their traditional artisan based occupations such as weaving[5]. All households observed rules of taboos in cooked food exchange between them based on religion, caste and perceived social hierarchy.

Given these social groups, gender, caste and religion were important criteria in selection of key informants.

The main social protection entitlements to the flood/erosion affected persons were under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), special cash/kind relief support as mandated by Disaster Management Act of 2005[6], subsidized food and pension schemes[7].

In the next section we develop the narrative about the politics of access to social protection through our thematic findings. We do this by starting with an example about how moral economy, local political economy, gender and caste mediate access to social protection benefits, such as NREGA. This is followed by a discussion on the role of gatekeepers in accessing social protection programmes, and people's relations with the state representatives, namely the local officials, highlighting their trust deficits with the same. Building upon this, the last subsection elaborates the complex negotiating strategies employed by the poor to

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[5] The use of this caste categories is for sociological purposes and does not in any way denote our agreement with the caste hierarchy.

[6] An analysis of the current Uttar Pradesh government's orders on norms to give relief supports after floods and erosion shows that the eligibility criteria and procedures to access them has remained unchanged since our field work in 2008. The only difference is that there is some upward revision of the amount of cash relief support given. In the case of NREGA also, the norms and procedures of access to work for 100 days remain unchanged since our field work in 2008, the only change being an upward revision of the minimum wages paid on this work.

[7] Pension schemes include pensions for elderly, widows and people with disability. Eligibility and procedures to access these pension schemes remain unchanged since our field work.

access social protection benefits, namely mobilizing of the moral contracts of reciprocal exchanges with influential patrons in the village.

3.3) Key Thematic Findings:

3.3.1 Accessing social protection: Gendered moral and local political economies and right to work

One of India's flagship social protection programme is NREGA, which gives rural households a right to 100 days of work, was implemented in Ghagrapur. Despite the policy guideline which mandates 33 percent of the workforce should be women, women were unable to gain employment under the programme. Sonadevi, a landless widow, from an intermediate caste group and about 55 years old lived on her own in the village of Ghagrapur. Although Sonadevi needed work, particularly as after floods and failure of crops, there was not much farm wage labour work to go around, was unable to work on NREGA:

> 'Under *guarantee* [NREGA], they dig the soil. How can I do it? I can't do it. But once the soil is dug, I can carry it ... but we are not called for work. If we are called, we will go to work with our *tokri* [carrying or head loading basket] ... but the Pradhan[8] [elected village head] says, how can you do this work? ... Here men get more government work. They can work on embankments, on guarantee work'.

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[8]Village Ghagrapur had elected women Pradhan as the seat was reserved for women. However, in practice, the son of the Pradhan acted as Pradhan and participated in all the village meetings taking decisions as Pradhans. Thus although a woman was de jure Pradhan it is her male son who was de facto Pradhan and took all decisions in relation to NREGA or other social protection programmes such as identifying and preparing the list of the beneficiaries of these programmes and implementing them. For the purpose of the analysis, given that the villagers and key informants considered the son as the Pradhan, he will be treated as 'Pradhan' created as such through de-facto rather than de-jure means. Such practices, also seen in neighbouring villages, in general can be seen as indicators of female marginalisation in decision-making in public spaces in the researched area.

These words by Sonadevi show that despite her need, and her willingness to do work such as carrying soil, once dug, she was not employed on the NREGA work in the researched village.

In the village, upper castes women follow semi-purdah and do not go out to work in public spaces, a practice symbolizing notions of honour among upper castes. However women from intermediate and lower castes go out to work in public places, although they also have codes of honour about what kind of work they can do.

In this case, the Pradhan, who belonged to the Thakur – upper caste, has extended his notion of honour to the governmental work effectively discriminating against women from other caste groups who otherwise worked as labourers on farms, and wanted NREGA work.

Seema, aged 30 years and from former untouchable caste, also wanted to work, but was not able to, as she asserted 'Our Pradhan says "Taking women along with me for work, is a shame. It is like losing my honour …. How can I take women along with me for work"? Her husband, Raghu, aged 35 however was sympathetic to the Pradhan's point of view and explained in an empathetic tone: 'You see he [Pradhan] feels sharm [shame] in taking women to work'. Thus notions of honour and shame concerning women's work and a male bonding on the issue between men in influential position such as Pradhans and village men played an important role in excluding women from accessing work. In other words, moral economy, namely moral ideas of shame and honour were used to distribute state entitlements like NREGA in these villages. Further, had women done NREGA work, they would have gained equal wages as per the NREGA policy guideline. This potentially could have led them to challenge the unequal wages that they get on agricultural work in the village. Thus, excluding women from NREGA can also be called as an effect of local political economy given that the Pradhan is a landed elite. This finding is also confirmed by Khera and Nayak (2009) who show that across all the states, Uttar Pradesh has lowest women's participation, and that in

places where women have participated in NREGA, it has led to their upward revision of wages in farm sector.

3.3.2 Social protection programmes, its gatekeepers and trust deficits

Although 100 days of work is the legal entitlement of all households as per the NREGA act, in practice, the villagers (men) from Ghagrapur said that they had got work for only 30-40 days in the year. Pradhan alleged that they did not get enough money to ensure work for 100 days for every household. People also alleged misappropriation of funds, and felt that the money for NREGA was siphoned off by the officials. Further, job cards where entry for work, cash and wages were made were kept by the gram panchayat[9] officials and not given to the people: this non-transparency creating further mistrust in the minds of people. Similar problems have been identified in the implementation of NREGA nationally in an evaluation survey undertaken by the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (2008)[10], and Reddy et al (2010).

While the NREGA programme was generally appreciated for its objectives and potential to give work to the unemployed, people did not believe that they will fully benefit from them due to the leakages in the funds through the *bichuniya* (middlemen or intermediaries). The middlemen were considered to be the main problem for all government social protection and welfare programmes. People who needed work, were aware of the benefits from the NREGA and other schemes, but did not feel empowered enough to go to the district administration with their complaints and demand the access to these schemes.

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[9]Gram panchayats in India are the lowest tier of elected body in India and have village level representatives.
[10]This survey which was taken in 20 districts across various states records that on average the works was given for 35 days, had issues of financial leakages and non-transparency in the ways in which job-cards were kept and controlled by the gram panchayat and the government officials.

Consider what Laxman, from a scheduled caste, aged 36 years and Sonadevi a widow, aged 55 years and from kurmi, an intermediate caste had to say when asked as to why they did not go to seek justice with higher officials in the government as they felt that relief and development benefits for them were creamed off by the middlemen or *bichuniya*:

> "Sonadevi: Nobody hears poor people's voice. Poor do not get a *sunvaiyi* (hearing for justice)
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> Laxman: Yes, rich people go ahead, while the poor people are pushed out.
>
> Author: on the basis of caste?
>
> Laxman: Yes, caste is also considered. For example, Thakurs have a name, but the voice of a poorer Thakur is not heard as much as rich Thakurs.
>
> Author: what is *sunvaiy*i?
>
> Laxman: *Sunvaiyi* means I have told you my problem, and you have looked into it. But instead what happens is that you just yell at me as in English and say *'get out'*.
>
> Author: Have you gone for a *sunvaiyi*?
>
> Laxman: No, I have not gone to anyone with my problem. How can a poor person like me seek *sunvaiyi*? You need money for this.
>
> Sonadevi: if you have four *paise*, what would you do? Seek *sunvaiyi* or buy food for your family and children?
>
> Laxman: you need money for travel.
>
> Sonadevi: We don't have enough food, so how can we think about going around seeking *sunvaiyi*?
>
> Laxman: Anyway, what is the point of it all? We will only come back with a fallen face.

This popular perception of the government-people relation is best captured by the local proverb: *"hakim ke aghadi aur ghodeke pichadi na jaiyyo"* (do not walk in front of an officer

or behind a horse), meaning in both the cases you will be kicked or some adversity will befall you! It also suggests the lack of trust that poor people have in government officials.

In other words, the rules of access to the social protection entitlements were not always straightforward. They were mediated through intermediary gatekeepers which in turn led to trust deficits and scepticism in getting justice from higher officials.

3.3.3 Negotiation with structures of power: Hunger, vulnerability, reciprocity and moral economies

Several households were faced with the imminent issue of hunger and impoverishment after the floods and erosion in 2007 and 2008. Our survey data as shown in Table 1 gives the food and economic position of the households in the four flooded villages.

Table 1: Food and economic position of the household after floods of 2007[11]

	Food and economic position	Upper castes	Intermediate Castes	Low or Scheduled castes (SC)
1	Economic position has worsened after floods	97	96	98
2	They had enough food to eat before the floods	84	77	80
3	They did not have enough food to eat after the floods	83	80	79
4	Eating less as a strategy used to cope with the food scarcity after floods	93	90	93

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[11] All decibels in the tables used in this paper have been rounded off to its nearest whole numbers.

Table 1 shows economic position as well as access to food had worsened across castes after floods. Eating less was the common strategy used to deal with this situation of food scarcity after floods.

This issue of hunger faced by people impoverished after floods and erosion forms the main backdrop against which people strategize ways to access governmental benefits. In Ghagrapur, hunger or poverty created vulnerabilities as well as dependencies on the dominant or richer classes in the villages, as loans, or *karja* are taken from these groups to overcome the situations of need: such as food consumption, or social occasions such as marriages, or health problems and illnesses. In the survey, a large number of people (57 percent of upper, 66 percent of low/scheduled and 64 percent of intermediate castes) were found to be in debt, and had used loans as a coping strategy to deal with the impacts of floods. Debts were found to be higher among the low/scheduled castes followed by intermediate, and least amongst the upper castes.

Strategies or tactics of bargaining are used by poor people, to negotiate with the structures of power rather than by covert or overt protest in order to access governmental benefits. In this respect, they are closer to the strategies used by women as suggested by Kandiyoti in her classic paper 'Bargaining with Patriarchy' (Kandiyoti, 1988).

Consider the case of Kamaladevi a poor elderly widow of about 70 years, and Narayan a blind man aged 38 who gave part of their first instalment of their respective widow and disability pension that they received to an influential person. In both the case, influential person mediated to get the pension that both were genuinely entitled to. This is an example of a very common strategy, used by poor women and men. Whilst in official terms their action may be called colluding in corruption, for Kamaladevi and Narayan, it is a pragmatic compromise, a negotiation, which would give them some long term security or support.

Although the amounts given in social protection schemes are meagre, their importance cannot be underestimated. They are what sometimes, keep poor people from being pushed into starvation deaths in crisis situations such as flood or erosions, and what enable old people or those with disability to retain a measure of dignity whilst living with their children and extended families.

Following the September 2008 floods, the Government of Uttar Pradesh (UP), based on their assessments distributed food relief to each flood and erosion affected household. The food bundle consisted of 20 kg of rice - and other food items. The criterion used to distribute this food bundle was one food bundle per household irrespective of number of people residing in it, and was given to the head of the household[12]. This in itself caused the official government policy followed by the UP government in food relief distribution, to be discriminatory towards widowed women, as food bundle was given to one identified by adult male as its head. Thus, a widowed woman staying with her adult sons, but cooking separately was not given a separate food relief bundle but was considered to get her share from the food relief bundle, that her son got as the head of the household. This puts widowed women at a disadvantage. Thus, a poor widow Janaki, belonging to a low or scheduled caste, and aged 65, felt discriminated against by this practice and had raised the issue in her village without much success: "I have four sons, who have received separate food bundles, but they have their own families. Will they look after them or after me?" Similar norms were applied to house assistance benefits following their destruction in floods[13]. Here too, although Janaki was living in a small family shed/hut where she cooked separately, different from her four sons, she was considered to be living with one of her sons and denied a separate housing assistance following the 2007 floods.

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[12] The current eligibility criteria set by UP government and procedures to access them is the same as in 2008, when field data was collected.
[13] The current eligibility criteria set by the UP government and procedures to access them is the same as in 2008, the only difference being the upward revision of amount of cash given for destruction of houses.

Yet, in the same village, two other poor widows, although living with their adult sons and belonging to the low/schedule castes, were able to access a separate housing assistance and food relief bundle from the distributing authorities as the Pradhan of the village treated them as living in separate households. Now, why did the Pradhan extend this benefit to these two poor widows and not to Janaki? The answer lies in the social connection that the families of these two poor widows have with the Pradhan's household as compared to that of Janaki. A large amount of time is spent by many poor families in establishing a social relationship with influential persons in their village. This social relationship is established by poorer women who spend social time with women from better off households by helping them sometimes in their housework, or simply visiting them and exchanging courtesies, so that this social relationship could help them in times of distress or want. Similarly men from poorer households would do some occasional '*free*' work for influential families or invite the influential person for social ceremonies in their houses, a way of showing respect to them. This emotional work invested in building social networks and relationships with influential persons, then gives them access to government programme benefits, to which they are anyway entitled, but for which, because they have no access to its gate-keepers, they are powerless to bargain. Similarly, it is this emotional work with influential or richer groups that enable them to negotiate for a timely loan on a concessional basis in case of emergency or dire need. For example, the analysis of our survey data shows that, whilst 24 percent of upper castes, 35 percent of low/scheduled castes and 42 percent of intermediate castes had taken out loans at the standard local monthly interest rate of 10 percent, 15 percent of upper castes, 19 percent of low/scheduled castes and 15 percent of intermediate castes were able to take out loans on concessional interest rates below the standard 10 percent.

This complex relation-building behaviour is called *bhav-vyavhar* in the village as it comprises both a behavioural (*vyavhar)* and an emotional (*bhav*) relationship with the

influential groups, Hari, a male aged 50 and from a chamar caste, a low or scheduled caste explained how this relationship works:

> Hari: "Village X has a moneylender. I will go to him, do a one day's free labour such as doing repair of fencing, or roofs, or any other work that may be needed. I will not take money for this work. Then when I have a need, he will lend me some money...*bhav-vyavhar* is like this. When you have a need, I come to your rescue, and when I have a need, you help me out. This is what happens in our rural areas...

> Author: So do you work for this person till you have paid off the loan?

> Hari: No no... it does not work in that way. I would go and help him in his work, even when the loan is paid off. I go since we have a *bhav-vyavhar*. Again I may have a need of Rs 10-20/- on some other day and I may have to ask him for help. For example, you have come, and now that I have a need, I give you a long welcome, but when my need is over, that is, after you have done my work, I don't do *Namaste* [welcome] to you, then it is not right. That *Namaste* which continues all through the life is good...this is *bhav-vyavhar* in our village. It is not based on force or fight".

Another person, Laxman, a male aged 36 and from a low/scheduled caste, recounted how he had received a loan from a upper caste person in his village at a concessional monthly rate of interest, of four percent while the general monthly rate of interest in the village was ten percent as he had a "*bhavvyavhar*" relation with him. Several other persons from low or schedule caste and intermediate caste groups also reported a special relationship of *bhav-vyavhar* with an influential person who in turn helped them out in 'extra-special' ways.

Mala, a woman aged 35 from Luniya, an intermediate caste, explained how the *vyavhar* she had built over the last 4-5 years, with one family from an upper-caste group in her village had

in turn helped her get food for her family during the floods. The *vyavhar* was built through doing work for this family in return for wages. Mala recounted:

> "they had come once to my part of the village asking whether anybody would do labour work for them. I told them, that I would do the work. Since then, we have *vyavhar* between us. That's all...it works in this way. When there is any work, they call me, such as cutting or threshing of paddy, or wheat. I do their work, they give me wages. I don't have *vyavhar* with any other family...I went to ask for food to them during the floods. I don't go to others as I don't feel they will help me...I only went to this family"

In other words, a lot of emotional and physical work was invested by poorer women and men in the maintaining and sustaining of social relationships with richer or influential persons in the village. These emotional investments in turn helped them in securing such fringe benefits as are recounted above: an added separate food relief bundle, or housing assistance for the widow in a household; or a loan at a concessional rate; or some food in times of need. The emotional work done by the poorer groups in order to develop emotional social ties with persons from richer or influential groups in the village are an important strategy through which poor and otherwise excluded families negotiate their way: in order to survive or receive government benefits, which they in any case should get as a matter of right. Similar observations were made by informants where *bhav-vyavhar* was instrumental in enabling access to other government schemes such as widows, old age or disability pensions and other schemes.

These negotiating strategies by the poorer and marginalised groups can be better understood if one locates them further within the local context of power and powerlessness. To

understand the power dynamics further, the survey data in Table 2 is analysed on the government support accessed by different caste groups following 2007 floods.

Table 2: Support accessed from the government following 2007 floods:

	Support from the government following floods	Upper castes	Intermediate castes	Low or Scheduled castes (SC)
1	Cash support received from the government	52 %	33%	36%
2	Service support (e.g health care) received from the government	45%	35%	33%
3	Material support such as food relief received from the government	67%	68%	63%

Table 2 shows that the upper castes fared better over other lower castes in accessing cash and service support from the government. Scheduled or low castes received least food, material and service support from the government.

Additionally, although across caste high damage to property and livelihoods were reported (96 percent upper, 97 percent low/scheduled, and 99 percent intermediate), degree of cash support received by these groups showed variability as shown in the Table 3.

Table 3: Cash support received by the groups following floods of 2007

	Amount of cash received	Upper Castes	Intermediate castes	Low or Scheduled Castes (SC)
2	Up to 1500 rupees	61%	72%	75%
3	1501-5000 rupees	21%	23%	22%
4	5001+ rupees	18%	5%	3%
	Total	100	100	100

Table 3 shows that of all those who received cash support, the low/scheduled castes and the intermediate castes received proportionately lower amounts of money than the upper castes. 18 percent of upper castes received more than 5000 rupees as cash support as compared to 3 percent of low/scheduled castes and 5 percent of intermediate castes. Generally speaking, this suggests that persons from the upper castes had better access to government benefit provision than those from the scheduled or intermediate castes. Further, connections with influential and powerful persons were considered universally important by all caste groups for the purpose of obtaining government relief support. 86 percent of upper, 83 percent of low /scheduled caste and 89 percent of intermediate castes felt that people who had better connections with powerful groups got more relief and rehabilitation benefits than others. This explains further, why investment of emotional work in developing and maintaining relationships with influential persons through *bhav-vyavhar* is considered an important negotiating strategy by the impoverished persons in the villages.

The most important aspect of the *bhav-vyavhar* relation is that by its very nature, the relationship demands a reciprocal action from each person – albeit of different kinds. Both, in this case recognise the unequal relationship between the two in terms of resources and power. It is understood that the person in an influential position will reciprocate the emotional sentiment shown by poor persons by showing extra care towards for them as compared to others. As reciprocity of actions is the core sentiment behind *bhav-vyavhar* of this kind, it is called as "localised notion of entitlement" in this paper, in the sense that both the parties considered themselves 'entitled' to give to each-other according to requirements of their respective needs in the researched context.

The reciprocity of non-equivalent goods (Sahlins, 1965a, 1965b) meant that whilst the patron gave food items or petty cash or facilitated access to social protection benefit, the reciprocal action was often seen in terms of labour, and symbolic behaviour of care and friendship towards each-other. It was also observed that the poorer classes are mobilised by the richer patron not only for work, during times of labour scarcity, but also during a local feud to maintain their sphere of dominance or influence over wider networks.

The *notion of bhav-vyavhar* as localised notions of entitlements is thus different from statist notions of entitlements but has important consequences for the way in which state entitlements are actualised. The outcome in terms of who gets what is thus dependent upon how the statist notion of entitlement is mobilised through localised notions of entitlement: in this case, through a relation of *bhav-vyavhar* between persons in unequal socio-economic positions.

To the extent that these negotiations are based on certain localised notions of entitlements, they can be said to be a part of what James Scott (1976) calls the 'moral economy'. Scott (1976, p. 184) suggests that in a pre-capitalist normative order a "guarantee of *minimal social*

rights in the absence of political or civil rights" is expected from elites or well-off neighbours by the peasantry. However, in the above cases, the moral economy of the researched villages is guided more by normative concerns which arise not from a generalised notion of care for poorer neighbours by village elites as described by Scott, but from *individualised* and *special* relationships of *reciprocity* built with meticulous care by the poor in order to mobilize a better deal from the better off influential persons or patrons in their village. In that sense, the relationship can be described more as a *negotiating strategy* than what according to Scott's research is a generalised social right enjoyed by the poor.

Further, these relations of unequal exchange although similar to a patron-client relation, are different from traditional forms of it in India: as exhibited through either *Jajmani* relations (Gould, 1981; Dumont, 1998) or relations of bonded, unfree or semi-attached labour-landlord relation (Breman, 1974; 2007). Dumont calls *Jajmani* a division of labour in traditional India in which landless castes access their means of subsistence from the landed by performing a ritual or a function that the landed caste requires (Dumont, 1998). In the researched area, such *Jajmani* relations were almost non-existent. Further no organised system of bonded labour-landlord was found, although it was here observed that *"Karja",* or the debt did lead to landless labourers doing certain free labour or work at lowered wages for the landowner till the *Karja* was paid back. However, these relations were ***not*** recognised as *bhav-vyavhar* either by the landowner or by the labourer, as they did not have the symbolic elements of affection and care*,* or have an element of obligation or reciprocity towards each-other. Many such relations were more in line with the casualization of labour (Platteau, 1995) where debts were taken at a market interest rate and paid back through labour or in cash. Such casual relations are also found in several other districts of Uttar Pradesh (Parker and Kozel 2007).

To sum up, the relations of *bhav-vyavhar* observed in Ghagrapur enable both parties to cope with their respective risks and also to extend their spheres of influence in social and political

life after the event of disasters, albeit in uneven ways. In that sense, as a local notion of entitlement, *bhav-vyavhar* can be seen as a negotiating strategy used by the marginalised and the dominant groups alike to master the risks felt by these groups in the researched area. More generally, though, poorer groups have used it as a bargaining strategy to access social protection benefits, to which they are anyway entitled to, but are unable to access without the backing of an influential gatekeeper in the village.

To conclude, the narrative from the thematic findings in this section shows how access to social protection entitlements is mediated through moral economies and local political economies at work. The empirical analysis also shows that rather than the idea of entitlements as grounded in abstract social contract, it is the moral contracts of reciprocal exchanges with influential patrons, that enable the poor to ground their entitlement claims. As such, it is the framework of cultures of entitlements (figure 1) that best explains the entitlement outcomes rather than the social contract based entitlement thesis of Sen.

4. Evaluating politics of access to entitlements: Revisiting the idea of entitlement and its implications for social protection programming in the light of the empirical findings

The paper's main finding is that, social protection entitlement outcomes and cultures of entitlement are closely related. Given this reality, access to social protection by the poor is dependent upon their ability to negotiate through the rules of access mediated through local political economies, moral economies, and social protection programme guidelines as indicated in our conceptual framework, figure 1.

Based on this finding, the paper argues that current conception of entitlement as applied to social protection is inadequate to develop successful social protection programme regimes in places where the state-citizenry social contract does not work to its fullest, and where non-

state rules and obligations trump over the former. One such place is also Afar and Somali areas of Ethiopia where pastoralists live and where distribution channels of social protection are impacted by social practices such as mutual support networks and informal authority structures that impact social protection targeting decisions (Sabates-Wheeler, Lind, Hoddinott 2013).

Our findings thus call for a re-interpretation of entitlements and a new conceptual framing that contextualises them within the social worlds, social relations and social subjectivities of the marginalised persons. This papers conceptual framework (figure 1) is a contribution towards development of such understanding, highlighting the analytical significance of notions such as moral economy and local political economy in social protection entitlement analysis.

The paper's empirical findings highlight that it is the cultural entitlements that mediate access rather than an impartial access as implied in social contract. Since poor are dis-empowered vis a vis state, in affirming their rights through formal channels, they seek other non-institutionalised spaces to claim them. This was also seen in Tamilnadu after the tsunami where affected people used informal networks rather than formal channels to access governmental resources (Kruks-Wisner, 2011). Similarly in Delhi slums, informal authority is used to gain access to government services (Jha, Rao and Woolcock (2007). It also shows the limits of the 'passive revolution', which the Indian state has led, in its attempts to be autonomous from the landed elites, wherein the state, as Chatterjee argues is yet to be transformed into an 'authentic modernity' with impartial bureaucracy (Chatterjee, 2011 p.23). In another instance, in her study about the reach of social security schemes and welfare programmes in three villages in Tamilnadu, Harris-White concludes that in the light of political influence it is difficult for the bureaucracy to be neutral in its identification of the

beneficiaries, as a result the 'officials lose authority as representatives of the state' (Harris-White, 2004 p.456).

Given the evidence of cultures of entitlement from our paper, what is the potential to transform access to social protection in equitable ways?

Current theorizations argue that the best way forward is through deepening transparency through the right to information act 2005, and initiatives such as social audits in governmental programmes such as NREGA (Kidambi, 2011; Koehler, 2011; Vij, 2011; De Haan et al, 2009; Jayal, 2008; Reddy et al, 2010). However the implementation of such transparency and social audit initiatives remains weak on the ground (Gopal, 2009). Research also shows that in places where there are organisations of the poor, they are able to more effectively access social protection benefits (Reddy et al 2010; Joshi, 2010; Pattendan, 2011; Pande, 2008). Participatory governance or hybrid governance initiatives that foster collaboration between state representatives and community through programmes are also suggested as a best way forward in implementing social protection programmes effectively (Goetz and Jenkins, 2001; Vij, 2011; Fox, 2015; Mishra et al, 2010; Ackerman, 2004; Jayal 2008; Spink and Best, 2009).

While these are useful suggestions, it is worthwhile reflecting and learning from the strategies employed by mass organisations such as Kashtakari Sanghatana, and Majdoor Kisan Shakti Sanghatan (MKSS), organisations working with the rural poor in Maharashtra and Rajasthan respectively in India[14]. Some of the best works around successful access to social protection and welfare programmes has been led by them.

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[14]The first author has a personal knowledge of work of Kashtakari Sanghatana and MKSS. Also see http://www.mkssindia.org/ and http://www.copasah.net/kashtakari-sanghatana.html

These organisations organise the marginalised for affirmation of their rights. However there is a difference in the way in which a rights based struggle such as MKSS engages with the discourse of 'entitlements' and 'rights' and the abstract conceptualisation of 'entitlements' through notions of social contract. Organisations such as MKSS realise rights and entitlements through *every day collective struggle* of the poor. Rights are *discourses*[15], to be realised through a collective agency of the marginalised rather than treated as abstract things vested in an atomised individual agency mediated through an abstract social contracts. The innovations made by MKSS in 1990s such as *Jan sunvaiyi* (public hearings), supported through social mobilisation has led to major legislative breakthrough such as passing of the right to information act 2005 by the Indian government. In *Jansunvaiyi*, expenditures on public works such as NREGA are shared in public village level meetings, thereby checking corruption thus enforcing a transparency on the governmental system. Articulation of such innovative rights practices were a direct result of their collective everyday struggle for fair wages for labourers who had worked on public works.

Reflecting on the idea of *Jansunvaiyi* the leaders of the MKSS led movement, Aruna Roy, Nikhil Dey and Shankar Singh (1997, p. 84), have stated 'The public hearings have….. given *tangible quality to the abstract* notion of transparency and right to information' (emphasis our). Their struggle has led them to argue that 'Information is ….an important entitlement because withholding information weakens the foundations of struggles' of the marginalised (ibid, Roy et al, 1997, p. 84). In the last several years, MKSS and allied groups have continued mass mobilisation for deepening accountability and are now demanding a new legislative act; namely right to accountability. The act will ask for clear specification of work responsibilities of bureaucrats/public servants in relation to different social protection

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[15] The idea of discourse overcomes the divide between an abstract theory and practice. It questions the idea of 'truth' being out there but suggests that it is produced through various social and knowledge based practices. Organisations such as MKSS articulate critical rights practices through their everyday struggles of poor.

programmes, and imposition of penalties on officials in case of service delays from them. On the 10th March 2016, thousands of people marched to Rajasthan state assembly in India demanding an enacting of an Accountability act[16].

We contend that this current demand for *accountability as an entitlement* led by MKSS and other allied social action groups can be conceptualised as an articulation of a *new cultural entitlement*, not captured by Sen's conception of entitlements which is limited to economic entitlements (whether production-based, labour-based, trade-based and transfer-based). Building upon the current struggles of the social movements in India, we suggest that Sen's own entitlement thesis which is pitched at transfer of economic entitlements, through social protection from the state to the poor is inadequate. Lessons from social movements suggests that information transparency and accountability as *new cultural entitlements,* can arguably be used to counter the cultures of entitlements discussed in this paper. As Melucchi (1985); Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar (1998), and Bebbington (2007) have contended, social movements struggle over dominant meanings and practices, and institutions which sustains them. **Information transparency when combined with accountability as *new* cultural entitlement, and when mobilized through collective agency of the marginalised, can potentially mobilise the current *bureaucratic culture and institutions* into delivering them the social protection entitlements currently denied.**

In other words, the cultures of entitlements, evidenced in our study can be overcome only when *tangible* and *new* cultures of entitlements such as information transparency and accountability take roots. This may take a long time, as there are no quick fixes for the same. For rights based NGOs it means working with the marginalised groups on the ground,

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[16]The first author has also met Aruna Roy and Shankar Singh on 10th January, 2016 in person, in Ahmedabad, India, where they spoke about their current campaign for right to accountability act. An accountability *yatra* (rally) has been led by them in Rajasthan covering hundreds of villages from 1st December 2015-10th March 2016.

supporting their everyday struggle for *new cultural entitlements* through actions of solidarity. It calls for a commitment to a long term haul/engagement rather than only a project based engagement with the poor on the part of NGOs.

Conclusions:

The reflections from this paper argue against the simplistic extension of Sen's notion of entitlements or right to social protection programming. It shows that in places where the social contract does not work to its fullest, those who are culturally entitled reap maximum benefits. **Current experiences from social movements suggest that a struggle for tangible *new cultural entitlements*, in particular formulation of accountability act is the way forward. Rights based organisations which campaign with such awareness are most likely to succeed in their bid to achieve equitable reach of social protection programmes in practice.**

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