BOTTOM UP OR TOP DOWN?
EXCLUSION AND CITIZENSHIP IN PAKISTAN

COLLECTIVE FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

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Collective for Social Science Research

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About This Report

This paper was prepared as a case study for the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) as part of a broader project 'Addressing Intersecting Inequalities Post-2015' addressing the debate on new Millennium Development Goals.

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GLOSSARY

ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
CCB	Citizens' Community Board
CNIC	Computerized National Identity Card
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
LGO	Local Governance Ordinance
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NADRA	National Database Registration Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PSC	Poverty Scorecard
UC	Union Council

Autaq	A notable's open courtyard or seating area in Sindh
Baghban	An ethnic/racial group in KP whose traditional occupation is gardening
Chuhra	Low-caste servants in Punjab, whose traditional occupation is sweeping
Gujjars	An ethnic/racial group in KP whose traditional occupation is cattle herding
Hamsaaya	Servants from lower, mostly landless, groups in KP
Hujra	A notable's open courtyard or seating area in KP
Jirga	Dispute resolution forums
Kammi	Non-agricultural, manual-working class in Punjab
Kumhar	A kinship group in Punjab whose historic occupation is pottery
Mallah	A kinship group in Sindh whose historic occupation is sailing
Mussali	A non-agricultural servant caste in Punjab
Nazim	Head of Union Council
Purdah	A religious/social custom amongst Muslims and some Hindus in which women stay segregated from men or keep their faces and bodies covered when they are near men
Sardar	A tribal leader
Tarkhan	A kinship group in Punjab whose historic occupation is carpentry

Introduction

The 'intersecting inequalities' framework (Kabeer, 2013) offers an insightful perspective into the multiple dimensions of social marginality and exclusion in Pakistan. While some of these dimensions such as economic class and gender are publicly acknowledged, others such as caste, kinship group, ethnicity and religion are rarely addressed explicitly in policy or public debate. Yet understandings of economic class and gender-based inequalities remain partial and incomplete without attention to their interaction with other dimensions of marginality. MDG outcomes such as poverty reduction, improvements in nutrition, health and education, are closely correlated with household economic resources and gender, but also with identity markers such as caste, kinship group, ethnicity and religion.

Over the last decade or so, Pakistan has experimented with various approaches to addressing exclusion and citizens' empowerment – encompassing several prominent 'ways forward' reviewed by Kabeer (2010). This paper analyses the interaction and impact of two alternative approaches – one based on devolution and citizens' empowerment with reference to local infrastructure, and the other a top down social protection programme with extended outreach – on intersecting inequalities. Both types of approaches continued to be deployed in Pakistan and elsewhere as routes to tackling social exclusion. We use primary qualitative investigations into processes relating to these two interventions to draw lessons for future interventions.

In Section 1 we outline three salient dimensions of identity-based inequality in Pakistan: religion, ethnicity and kinship group based hierarchy. Section 2 provides a description of the two interventions -- Citizen Community Boards and the Benazir Income Support Programme – which we examined. Section 3 presents our findings based on qualitative fieldwork which we discuss in section 4, Section 5 offers a conclusion.

1. Intersecting Inequalities and Exclusion

> "Identity-based inequality intersects with other forms of inequality to define social exclusion. Its intersection with economic inequalities – the fact that socially excluded groups face particular barriers in gaining access to resources and opportunities – means that those most likely to be left behind in national progress on the MDGs are disproportionately drawn from ethnic and religious minorities, from racially disadvantaged groups and from the lowest castes. Women and girls from these groups are frequently at a greater disadvantage" (Kabeer, 2010).

Three non-exclusive dimensions of identity-based inequality in Pakistan – religion, ethnicity and kinship - are thought to be significant correlates of the forms of economic and social deprivation measured by MDGs.

The state overtly privileges the Muslim faith and this is reflected in a range of constitutional provisions and legislation. Although policy statements generally stress non-discrimination, protection and minority rights, the fact remains that some citizens are formally designated as religious minorities. Protective and promotional measures such as reserved quotas in electoral representation and access to public sector resources coexist with discriminatory laws and practices.[1] While non-Muslim citizens constitute a relatively small proportion of the population - under 4 per cent according to the most recent Population

[1] Such discrimination has been manifest even in the design of some interventions which have been classified as social protection programmes – see for example, Kabeer et al 2010.

Census in 1998 - they are disproportionately represented among the socially excluded (Government of Pakistan 2001). The 1998 census reported, for example, that non-Muslims were half as likely as Muslims to be able to read. Religious identity, moreover, is not simply a source of difference and inequality between Muslims and non-Muslims. Sectarian differences between Muslims, as well as differences between groups and individuals in their adherence to various aspects of religiously-ordained norms, can become sources of social division and exclusion for some groups.

Ethnicity is another significant and visible dimension of identity-based difference. Pakistan is a multi-ethnic state in which ethnicity is empirically identified through language. Administrative and political regions - namely provinces - broadly correspond with linguistic groups, with significant ethnic minorities within provinces as well as groups straddling provincial boundaries.[2] Regional disparities in income, economic development and social indicators are often interpreted in ethnic terms (Adeney 2007). There can be considerable ethnicity-based differences at the local level too, with some groups exercising political dominance over others, and a hierarchy between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' with respect to migrant status. Not all national, provincial or local ethnic minorities are socially excluded. In fact, some ethnic minority groups have been relatively privileged in terms of their access to political power and state resources (Kennedy 1991).

While both religion and ethnicity are identity-based dimensions of social exclusion at the macro and meso levels, kinship group identity and dynamics tend to characterise economic, social and political interactions at the community level. In some regions of the country local kinship group-based inequalities resemble traditional occupational caste hierarchies that are also found in India and Nepal. In other regions there are long-standing relations of domination and subservience between kinship groups which may have a basis in an occupational hierarchy but are embedded in institutional arrangements for access to resources and political power. While there is little agreement over the use of the term 'caste' to describe kinship group-based hierarchy and inequality, the fact that the kinship group is a prevalent form of social organisation in rural but also urban Pakistan makes it a key category in any analysis of social exclusion.[3]

Kinship group: prevalence and invisibility[4]

The intersection between kinship group-based inequality and other identity-based dimensions of social exclusion, notably religion and ethnicity, is obvious enough at the community level. Kinship groups are mostly based on endogamy, and are often subsets of ethnic groups. Similarly, religious identity is normally passed on through the male line, and individuals associate with a faith community through their kinship group. At the community level, therefore, it will be common for families belonging to a

[2] No ethnic quotas exist in Pakistan but those based on provincial lines have been in place since 1949. They have restricted the number of recruits from provinces previously over represented - had a higher proportion of government employees than their proportion in the population (Kennedy 1984). It is contested whether quotas have also created parity between ethnicities. According to frequent complaints from Balochistan - the province with the worst human development indicators – quotas favour non-Baloch 'immigrants' into the province and not "the sons of the soil"(Kennedy 1991).

[3] Alavi (1972) proposed a focus on the political nature of the kinship group and the kinship system as a feature of social organisation in Pakistan distinguished from the religiously ordained Indian caste system. Some contemporary Indian writing on caste that highlights the significance of kinship group-based political solidarity comes close to this view - see Gazdar and Mallah (2012) for a review.

[4] The discussion of kinship group in the remainder of this section draws on ongoing work of one of the authors (Haris Gazdar) with Mishal Khan and Hussain Bux Mallah on kinship groups and marginality in Pakistan.

particular kinship group to have a unique ethnic as well as religious identity. There are rare instances where people belonging to the same kinship group but different ethnic or religious identities retain strong kinship bonds that straddle ethnic or religious boundaries. The kinship group, therefore, can be safely treated as a basic 'building block' of Pakistani communities, particularly in rural areas but also in most urban localities. Other identity-based markers follow the contours of kinship groups. An analysis of intersecting inequalities and social exclusion such as the present one, which happens to have its primary empirical focus on local communities (and not the macro or meso levels), can take the kinship group as a reliable unit of observation which subsumes religion and ethnicity which are more powerful categories at higher levels of aggregation and politics.

Before describing how kinship group-based inequality at the local level intersects with economic class and gender it is important to make two preliminary observations about this dimension of social position and exclusion. First, while at any given moment in time we may see individuals and families organised into identifiable kinship groups, there may in fact be fluidity in the membership, composition and status of kinship groups. Moreover, there are always individuals and families, particularly among the most socially excluded, who do not credibly belong to any identified kinship group. Our use of the kinship group as a lens on social exclusion does not imply that all kinship groups are equally coherent, or that all individuals and families fall into neat categories. It is not only those who belong to weaker, lower status or politically dominated kinship groups who may be socially excluded, but also those individuals and families which may not belong to a coherent kinship group at all.

Second, while religion and ethnicity are publicly acknowledged dimensions of social and political distinction, and hence possible channels for mobilisation, kinship group identity, while ubiquitous, remains largely unacknowledged as a dimension of exclusion on its own even though it forms the basic building block of broader wider ethnic and religious identity groups. While the constitution speaks about the eradication of discrimination based on caste, there is no formal definition of caste or kinship group-based inequality. The only exception in Pakistan is the legislation inherited from British India for affirmative action in the favour of Scheduled Caste Hindus – the schedule that lists these castes is itself a relic of the colonial period. It is not as though occupational caste is not recognised as legal category for the non-Hindu citizens. There is at least one major law which actively differentiates between 'agricultural' and 'non-agricultural' tribes and limits the economic rights of the latter: the Punjab Land Alienation Act of 1900 remains on the statute in the province and helps to underpin institutionalised inequality in entitlements to land and village common resources (Gazdar and Mallah 2012).

The fact remains that kinship groups and kinship group-based social exclusion does not enjoy public visibility in policy or politics. While the kinship group is the unquestioned intermediary in social, political and economic interaction, it is not recognised as valid category for either the analysis of exclusion or for policy intervention or political mobilisation to counter exclusion. The formal recognition of religious or ethnic identity in Pakistan, caste in India and Nepal, and race and indigeneity in Latin America, allows for the generation of national or sub-national level statistics and legitimises the discussion of alternative policy options for countering social exclusion stemming from these identity markers. By contrast, kinship group-based inequality remains articulated only at the local level in social and economic institutions and political mobilisation.

Regional patterns and processes

The absence of a unique and overarching process of kinship group-based exclusion, or an encompassing narrative of resistance and change implies that this critical dimension of social inequality must be

observed, almost exclusively, at the local or community level. Variations between regions and localities are significant, even if many of the outcomes faced by the socially excluded groups are similar. Observations about patterns and processes of kinship group based inequality in the mostly rural communities in our fieldwork sites are summarised here as a prelude to the examination of the impact of two alternate policy interventions on social exclusion.

Over much of Punjab, particularly its northern and central regions, the legal-institutional division of rural society between hierarchically ordered agricultural and non-agricultural 'tribes' remains a key source of social inequality. Non-agricultural servant classes – pejoratively known as *kammi*, *mussali*, and Christian *chuhra* – are disproportionately among the poorest, and virtually exclusive victims of extreme forms of labour exploitation such as bonded labour. In southern Punjab this hierarchy exists alongside strong class divisions between landlords and tenant/labourers. Hindu Scheduled Castes are also among the vulnerable groups present in South Punjab.

The same is true over much of rural Sindh where land ownership is closely correlated with the local political power and strong collective action amongst kinship groups. The traditional association of kinship groups with particular occupations has given way to the emergence of kinship groups as repositories of local political power, which is often manifested with respect to control over land and common resources including village identity. The position of historically marginalised Muslim groups such as Mohanas, Maachhis and Khaskhelis remains vulnerable but fluid, while non-Muslim Scheduled Castes such as Bheels, Kolhis and Odhs who are also ethnic minorities are almost invariably to be found among the most oppressed. Though not all Scheduled Caste communities are bonded labourers, virtually all bonded labourers are from the non-Muslim Scheduled Castes. Communities with nomadic status are also amongst the most vulnerable (Mallah 2006).

Landlord power asserted through the political strength of dominant kinship group can also be seen as a prevalent form of class and social organisation over many parts of Balochistan. Here the tribal structure of kinship group leadership is more institutionalised, with tribal leaders (*sardar*s) presiding over an elaborate system of governance which straddles informal as well as formal channels of arbitration and conflict resolution. There are hierarchies between powerful and less powerful tribes, as well as clans within tribes which are ranked by order of their closeness to the *sardar* clan. Occupational castes or kinship groups of traditional service providers to pastoral and landowning Baloch clans [5]are not acknowledged as members of the tribe but as dependents. Tribal chiefs are not only at the apex of land ownership, dispute resolution, and control over common resources including homestead land, but also dominate electoral politics. Their state-like position includes their ability to use violence against members of their own tribes as well as other 'dependents' in order to impose their authority.

Tribal structures prevail also in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other ethnic Pakhtun regions. Tribal myths around lineage and racial purity are significant factors and Khans or hereditary landlords from 'high' kinship groups such as Mohammadzai and Yousufzai dominate tenants and servants from 'lower' – mostly landless - groups generically known as *hamsaaya*. As with Baloch tribes, there is an element of dependence built into the Khan-*hamsaaya* relationship. Many of the *hamsaaya* are from distinct ethnic or racial groups such as Baghban (gardeners) and Gujjars (cattle herders), while others may be individuals and families from Pakhtun tribes who have sought refuge in return for service. Dispute resolution forums (*jirga*) are convened by Khans, though in some areas Khans have lost political power and the authority of arbitration to Muslim clerics who owe their position to religious sanction.

[5] Such as Lorhis, Nakeebs and Darzadas

Continuity and change

Economic opportunities are conditioned not only by macroeconomic trends in growth and job creation, but by individual and group-based interaction with markets, other legal-economic institutions, state resources, migration, and political power. In the rural context it is not merely land ownership but the institutional arrangements which underpin property and usufruct rights in land which have historically defined economic opportunity. The dominant kinship groups and the processes of domination from different regions of Pakistan which we have summarised above are invariably linked to the ownership and control over land. The excluded groups are, almost without exception, those who are either landless or own little land. Many are not able to assert ownership claims over their homesteads in the face of legal-institutional ambiguity with regard to residential rights (Gazdar and Mallah 2010, 2012). To the extent that income is correlated with ownership of land, the close association of the socially excluded with landlessness generally translates into higher levels of income poverty.

It is expected that economic growth and diversification will have altered historical patterns of social inequality and exclusion. Non-farm employment, particularly in the formal sector or through migrant labour in large cities or abroad, has led to conspicuous changes in the position of many of the formerly marginalised kinship groups. In rural areas formal sector employment is usually restricted to government jobs, and these tend to be rationed and apportioned according to prior access to the state and therefore to already empowered groups. Those with existing government jobs are able to influence the future rationing of these jobs to their family and kinship group members. Some parts of the labour market are more open, but here too the need for prior social networking leads to a degree of friction in employment opportunities (Gazdar 2004). Education and migration have been important channels of mobility for many individuals and groups (Gazdar 2007). Engagement with the political process has been a factor in the upward mobility of entire kinship groups, even if existing hierarchies are often utilised to perpetuate dependent patrimonial relations between dominant and dominated groups (Cheema et al. 2007; Wilder 1999).

Gender and patriarchy

Discrimination against women is widely acknowledged, and patriarchy strongly influences women's ability to realize their rights and to gain access to assets and resources. The barriers to physical mobility and restricted opportunities for employment and public engagement ensure persistently poor outcomes for girls and women across indicators.

Patriarchy also intersects with kinship group-based inequality in a more profound manner. While the precise identity and dynamics of kinship groups vary across the country, there is a virtually uniform adherence to patriarchal norms. Kinship groups are, almost invariably, extended networks of families headed by patriarchs, which establish and reinforce men's predominance in the public realm. Formerly 'low' kinship groups which acquire status and power through economic and political mobility, also tend to acquire patriarchal norms of female seclusion and 'honour' normally associated with 'high' groups.

2. Two Alternative Approaches

Intersecting inequalities have been addressed internationally through a wide range of interventions, ranging from fiscal allocations to social programmes, affirmative action, decentralization, and the encouragement of collective action on the part of the socially excluded (Kabeer, 2010). We examine the impact of two alternative approaches to social programming and fiscal transfers using cases of

interventions which emerged with strong political support at different points over the last 12 years. These interventions encapsulate alternate features which have wider relevance for programme design in Pakistan and elsewhere. One was a window introduced in 2001 for the use of local government development funds through Citizens' Community Boards (CCBs) to encourage and ensure community participation in the design and implementation of public investment. This intervention, at least in terms of its design, was based on a 'bottom up' approach to the utilization of public funds. The other case is that of a cash transfer programme initiated in 2008 (Benazir Income Support Programme or BISP) for providing income support to women in poor households using a 'top down' approach to targeting and disbursement directly from government to individuals.

Citizens' Community Boards (CCBs): Bottom Up

The military regime of General Pervez Musharraf launched a major reform of local government systems in 2001 on the pretext of strengthening local democracy and governance. The Local Governance Ordinance 2001 (LGO 2001) established elected local governments at the district, tehsil and Union Council (UC) levels with quotas for women, religious minorities and 'labourers'.[6] Further, line management functions and development funds were devolved to the various tiers of local government.

LGO 2001 and accompanying legislation also provided for targeting and accountability outside government structures. In particular, non-state engagement was envisaged in the ring-fencing of a quarter of the local government development budget for community-initiated projects through Citizen Community Boards (CCBs). LGO 2001 stipulated that CCBs should be composed of at least 25 people from a community. The definition of a community was not specified. After its registration, a CCB could apply for development funds for small infrastructure projects benefiting their community.

The main purpose of the CCB program was the demand-driven development of small infrastructure projects. Citizens had a right to demand infrastructure development provided they fulfilled the criteria laid down by the local government law – namely that they registered a CCB and developed a project proposal according to a prescribed template. Budgetary allocations designated for the CCB window could not be utilized for other government spending. Although the local government law and CCB design did not explicitly articulate goals such as poverty reduction or countering social exclusion, the public discussion in the lead up to these interventions was based on the premise that the devolution of decision-making down to the local level was inherently pro-poor. Donor support was predicated on the assumption that the devolution reforms in general and the CCB window in particular would lead to poverty reduction and the empowerment of the socially excluded.[7]

There were several features of CCB design which were thought to favour pro-poor projects and social inclusion. It was argued that the political economy of infrastructure was tilted towards elite capture through a nexus between higher level elected representatives (members of national and provincial assemblies), bureaucrats and contractors. CCB projects would be too small in scale to attract the interest of these elites, and CCB members have to contribute 20 per cent of the cost of the proposed

[6] The Union Council is the lowest tier of local government. There are over 6,000 Union Councils in the country with an average population of 30,000, and the head of the local council was known as the UC Nazim.

[7] DFID support for the CCB component extended through the Improved Citizens Engagement through Devolution (ICED) programme which was implemented by the Devolution Trust for Community Empowerment (DTCE) – see DFID ICED Programme Memorandum 2007.

project from their own resources. Moreover, it was presumed that social inclusion and empowerment could happen through four channels:

- Collective action, catalysed by the CCBs, would push government to become more responsive to public demand in general – and to the socially excluded by implication
- The CCB system would break patron-client relationships entrenched in many parts of Pakistan and reduce the dependence of the socially excluded on powerful patrons
- By allocating funds for CCBs, this system would generate demand for collective action by the socially excluded
- Public goods provision would benefit everyone in a community without exception – and thus benefit the socially-excluded

By the end of 2010, 49,643 CCBs had been registered and 19,391 projects were approved with an outlay of 9.3 billion rupees. They were mostly small infrastructure projects like street lining, drains, and the construction of community centres. Projects in other sectors such as education and health were also mostly focused on the provision or maintenance of local physical infrastructure. The local government reforms and the CCB window offer a useful opportunity for analysing whether and how openings for local collective action might lead to citizens' empowerment and social inclusion. Although the reforms lost political support and funding with the ouster of the military-led regime in 2008, its lessons remain relevant for future programming.

Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP): Top Down

The Benazir Income Support Programme was initiated in 2008 as an unconditional cash transfer targeted to women in poor households. Its objectives, according to the law, were to:

> "…enhance financial capacity of the poor people and their dependent family members; formulate and implement comprehensive policies and targeted programs for the uplift of underprivileged and vulnerable people and reduce poverty and promote equitable distribution of wealth especially for the low income groups" (Ministry of Law, 2009).

Although the immediate impetus for the programme was provided by a change of government from a military-led regime to an elected civilian government, its antecedents could be found in the National Social Protection Strategy drafted but not implemented under the previous regime (Gazdar 2011). The strategy argued that "…social protection also helps achieve greater social cohesion and social capital, and fight social exclusion, for example by supporting social mobilization of and by the poor and defining their rights and entitlements as citizens"(Government of Pakistan 2007). In practice, though, BISP design is based on the top-down administration of a targeted cash transfer with no element of social mobilization. BISP represents a major scaling up of social protection systems in Pakistan with a three-fold increase in budgetary outlay in this area in its first year. It currently claims to reach 5 million beneficiaries or up to a fifth of all households.

Besides scale and outreach, the programme represents two institutional developments. First, its categorical focus on women is unique among social programmes in Pakistan, and thus deals directly with one significant dimension of intersecting inequalities. Second, its use of a well-defined universe for systematic targeting is an apparent routine but, in effect, a departure from past programming. The application of the census method in beneficiary identification through a poverty scorecard survey was a rare instance of a social intervention in Pakistan proactively reaching out to all residents. The fact that

the eventual identification of beneficiaries was carried out using a poverty score (income proxy), or that many households may have been missed due to survey errors, does not reduce the significance of the adoption of proactive outreach. This contrasts with the prevailing administrative culture of agencies responding to applications.

The BISP, like the CCB window, as well as most other social programmes in Pakistan, is associated with a political tag. The party which initiated the programme lost power at the federal level in general elections held in May 2013, and though the winning parties too advocate cash transfer programmes in their election manifestos, BISP may be subject to change. Its lessons, as those of the CCB window, will nevertheless remain relevant to future programming.

3. Process Observations

The CCB window and the BISP are very different types of programmes in terms of scale, outreach, objectives, and approaches. The key difference, of course, is that the former is meant for a community-based project whereas the latter is a direct cash transfer to an individual. We had the opportunity to observe the two interventions from a comparable perspective – namely intervention processes at the level of the community and the individual beneficiary, and the interaction of these processes with prevailing forms of intersecting inequality and social exclusion in selected sites. Our qualitative process observations which we report and analyse below encompass only a small part of each of the two interventions. We believe, however, that these observations can provide useful lessons for addressing intersecting inequalities, and particularly those identity-based inequalities which find little visibility in the policy and programming domains in Pakistan.

This section reports our empirical findings based on qualitative fieldwork in selected communities across Pakistan. We purposively selected 40 communities which had CCBs – half of which had received project funding, while others had not. For BISP we interviewed over 40 beneficiaries with around half of them purposively selected because they had process-related complaints, in order to learn more about individuals' interaction with the programme.

CCB Window

Information and mobilisation

The bottom-up approach premised on the assumption some individuals and groups face disadvantage in accessing public resources due to various dimensions of social exclusion. Opening a window for such individuals and groups to access public resources can create incentives for collective action and, ultimately, empowerment and greater social inclusion. For this approach to work, information needs to be freely or at least easily available across the board. We found, however, that information of the CCB window was itself rationed to individuals from privileged kinship groups, those with assets, and those linked into business and NGO networks. Interviews with CCB office-bearers revealed that information about the CCB window and the registration process was obtained almost invariably through personal contacts. There was just one CCB (Al- Sadqa in Sindh) that was initiated as a result of public information in the form of a newspaper advertisement. The main activists in CCBs were individuals who already had experience with NGO projects. For example Mian Israr CCB in KP was initiated by individuals who came across a pamphlet about CCBs which they found while visiting the district government offices for some other work. The activists in this CCB too had been involved with NGO activity in the past.

The most common channel of information about the CCB window in our sample was provided by local elected representatives or local government officials through personal connections. A large number of CCBs in our sample were directly or indirectly set up by a Nazim (head of Union Council) or a councillor – CCB officials were either close family members or political associates, or even acting directly on instruction. These Nazim or councillor linked CCBs varied in the extent to which they were independent entities. A number of CCBs that were initiated or facilitated by women councillors (for example Bait, Jamal Khet and Kohatabad in KP) or religious minority councillors (Saraswati in South Punjab) appeared to have a purpose beyond simply the immediate political agenda of the supporting councillor. The same could not be said for the large number of CCBs that appeared to be merely proxies for UC Nazims or their close allies.

Intra-group dynamics and funding

A key channel of empowerment presumed in the CCB programming was participation in collective action. We observed that participation by all or even most members of the CCB could not be assumed. Most members, and sometimes even the office bearers of CCBs, were just nominal members and did not take any active part in CCB activities, let alone take any decisions.

We came across a number of CCBs where the listed members, including the Chairman and Secretary, had not been active even when the CCB was itself active. These CCBs were shell organizations which were managed by non-CCB members for whom CCB members merely acted as proxies. There were 8 such CCBs out of our sample of 40. The Umra Wali CCB in Sindh was one such type, which was entirely managed by a former UC deputy Nazim who used his sister as a proxy Chairman. Although the CCB was nominally a female CCB it did not have any participation of even its formal office bearers, let alone other CCB members. The project was cattle shed which was used privately by the former UC Naib Nazim.

Many CCBs we visited had proxy members. They were centred on one or two individuals who had gained power due to reasons external to the CCB. The CCB was a vehicle to enhance the political power and access which they already enjoyed. Although CCBs were required by regulation to have a minimum of 25 members, in 30 out of the 40 CCBs that were studied in our survey there were only up to two active members. Even in those CCBs where informants were able to identify more than two active members, the total number of activists rarely exceeded 5 or 6. Moreover, in our sample the proxy CCBs appeared to have been more successful in getting funds for projects. Of the 40 CCBs we interviewed, 8 were actually run by non-members (with no or up to 2 members somewhat active) out of which 7 received project funding. Compared to this, only half the proportion (4 out of 10) of the CCBs with more than two active members had been successful in this regard.

Even though the purpose of a CCB was to provide an avenue of collective action for socially excluded individuals, it was perceived by citizens as a vehicle for getting funds for their collective needs. Therefore most citizens we interviewed measured the success of their CCB by the availability of funds to it. CCBs which had ties with well-connected individuals, such as members of the local government or government employees, were more likely to get project funding thereby enhancing the power of those individuals.

CCBs that had been set up specifically by UC Nazims or other politically influential persons were virtually guaranteed the provision of funds. In fact, the one proxy CCB in our sample that did not receive funds (Saanjh in South Punjab) had been formed as a proxy not by the Nazim but by a local NGO activist who claimed that he had a running rivalry with the then Nazim.

There were 14 CCBs out of the sample of 40 which had any member from a socially excluded group defined as someone from a disadvantaged kinship group or a religious minority. For example, the Wardaga CCB in KP which was managed by the dominant landlord family of the village had a female member whose family were dependent servants of the landlord. This CCB member was from a marginalised kinship group and was not even aware that she was a CCB member. In fact, she was even unfamiliar with the concept of a CCB.

Our fieldwork involved not only case studies of CCBs and their projects, but also interviews with individuals who were identified through community mapping exercises as belonging to marginalized and excluded kinship groups. Out of 40 such interviews in villages where CCBs did, in fact, exist, only 5 socially excluded interviewees were even aware of the existence of the CCB in their community. Informants were also asked if they thought they could form a CCB, and to reflect on the obstacles they might face. For many of the informants the idea of finding the time, let alone the resources, to do 'social work' seemed beyond their means. Many thought that they would not be successful even if they tried, because no one would want to join a group led by a poor and marginalised person. There were a number of informants who were so economically and politically dependent on patrons or employers from dominant groups, that they could not imagine taking any public initiative on their own. Those few who understood the CCB concept were clear that they could not raise the cash required upfront (20 per cent of total budget) to finance a CCB project.

Even if it was hard for the marginalized individuals to take advantage of the bottom-up CCB system, there were groups which were already getting empowered through channels external to the CCB. These individuals and groups saw a further avenue of empowerment and mobility in the CCB system

Electoral political system was observed as one such source of empowerment for people from socially excluded kinship groups. The Qaim CCB in North Punjab was managed by two brothers from a dominant landowning caste family, one of whom was the UC Nazim when the CCB was made. The other brother was involved in litigation over an earlier CCB and the two, therefore, had registered this CCB without any formal involvement. The Chairman and Secretary of this CCB were two men from a non-agricultural caste (considered lower than those of the two brothers) who described themselves as political workers of the two dominant caste brothers. Privately, the Chairman noted that he did take decisions relating to the CCB, even though he avoided making this claim in front of the UC Nazim and his brother.

Then there were cases where individuals from marginalized groups had used the CCB channel to empower themselves and their communities. The Saraswati CCB in South Punjab was made by men belonging to the Scheduled Caste Hindu Meghwar community. All its members and leaders are from that kinship group. The Meghwars are a poor and politically weak group in the village which is dominated by various Muslim landowning families and castes. The Meghwars, in fact, have been at the receiving end of pressure tactics by one of the dominant groups that occupied land which had been reserved for a Hindu graveyard. Although most of the Meghwars are labourers, some have acquired education and entered professions. The CCB Secretary Raju Meghwar has a masters' degree, and his cousin was elected on a minority seat to the Tehsil Council. It was through the minority councillor that the community learnt about the CCB window. They managed to secure funds for a project through the help of a locally elected individual who repaid a political debt to Raju's councillor cousin for voting for him in the council elections. Although the CCB was not the driver for the empowerment of this marginalised group – since education and electoral politics were clearly important – it did provide a channel for accessing public resources.

As part of intra-group dynamics we want to highlight here the gender dimension in CCBs which had female members. It is important to discuss this separately as, unlike the BISP, the CCB programme was open to both males and females. We purposively over-sampled CCBs with female members to see if CCBs were a medium of women's empowerment. It may be noted that any CCB which had women with at least a third of its members was formally designated as a female CCB. A number of fieldwork districts had no officially recognized female CCBs at all. Such CCBs were more in evidence in districts where the CCB window was supported by international donor organizations which insisted on target-setting for the establishment of female CCBs. The female CCBs that we did find could be broadly classified as one of the following three types:

- CCBs where female members are just on paper and are not active at all
- CCBs where one or two female members are active and have emerged as leaders
- CCBs where several women have come together to focus on their empowerment.

There were 4 CCBs we encountered which were nominally female or mixed CCBs but were actually being run by non-members behind the scenes. One such CCB was Kikki Abad in Balochistan who was made a member by the village landlord. He was absolutely dominant on the resources of the village and its residents. It was nominally a mixed CCB headed by a female Chairman – the landlord's sister – however all the processes were conducted by the landlord including registration and project funding application. The CCB account was also accessed by this non-member which is against the official CCB rules. Umra Wali in Sindh was another such CCB. She was made a CCB member by the dominant landlord of the village who was also a former UC Nazim. The Chairman, his sister, just held a nominal position. When she was asked about the CCB processes, she had very little idea even about the year the CCB was formed.

The second group is the largest among the female and mixed CCBs, where one or two members have taken charge of the CCB and therefore the CCB process has contributed to their empowerment. This contribution is usually small because the women involved normally have a history of political life or collective action. One such case is the Nur-e-Badr CCB in Gujrat. This CCB was made by 2 women who wanted to get a road paved in their neighbourhood. They were told by a friend who worked as a computer operator in a government department that they can get funds through the CCB channel. The three ladies became friends as they were taking beautician classes at the same beauty parlour. The other CCB members thought that they were giving their computerized national identity card (CNIC) copies for a health survey. Although this CCB did not get project funding, it is an example of women's empowerment due to their economic independence and mobility.

The third group consists of CCBs which have evolved into small but organized women's groups. This is the smallest of the groups. An example is of the Kohatabad CCB in Mardan where a former female UC councillor and her friends have made a CCB and are actively running it. They did not receive project funding even on applying for about 4 times. However this group also runs a local NGO and is involved in district level politics. They have conducted several social activities including free medical camps for women; obtaining charity from the Bait-ul-Maal for needy women and helping them obtain BISP cash grants. Another example is of the Bait CCB in Charsadda. It was formed by a female UC councillor but on the advice of the UC Naib Nazim who asked her to make a CCB to get access to CCB funding. Even though the Chairperson and several other females have been active in this CCB, the project – a vocational centre - was the idea of the male UC Naib Nazim who was actively involved in managing it.

BISP processes and impact

BISP beneficiaries are those that have been found to be among the poorest households according to a proxy means test. Although the BISP poverty score is a good proxy for household income or wealth status, this score is neutral to specific qualitative dimensions of marginality and exclusion such as local power relations, status hierarchy based on occupation or kinship group identity, and religious minority. However, we found households facing exclusion due to their kinship group, gender and ethnic minority status. As such then, a qualitative study of the BISP processes and impacts allows us to highlight the intersecting inequalities encountered by the beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of these two programmes.

Information and mobilisation

Among our interviewees an overwhelming number declared that they received information about BISP for the first time through the poverty score card enumerators. Even though this method is empowering in the Pakistani context as it bypassed the traditional patron-client relations between the landed and the landless labourers, there was a nuance which could have been improved upon. A large number of interviewees did not have information about social protection and their entitlements under the BISP. They were under the impression that this money was charity from the late Benazir Bhutto whose name was part of the programme title. Television was an important source of information for a significant minority of interviewees. In addition, the size of the program ensured that many people within communities knew others who had been interviewed for the poverty scorecard or had heard about it from a public medium. This ensured a level of transparency in the demand of BISP grants within the citizens. We encountered a number of people who demanded BISP as a right due to their self-perception of being poor. For example, Sodhi from Sindh who belonged to the socially excluded Mallah kinship group complained that she should be receiving BISP payments under the poverty score card method as she was receiving them from a prior system of BISP where legislators could put forward names of beneficiaries. For another significant minority of interviewees, local patrons also served as sources of information about BISP. Unlike traditional sources of patronage we encountered, much of this patronage stemmed from modern channels such as politicians, NGO staff and government officials. For example, Sakina from Sindh who belonged to the 'low' kinship group of Jogi received information about BISP from an influential political worker from her village.

Selection

BISP targeting was done through a poverty score for which a nationwide Poverty Scorecard (PSC) survey was conducted. The prescribed method for the survey was a door-to-door census. Through this method, therefore, an attempt was made to sidestep the conventional use of local patrons and notables as formal or informal intermediaries between the state and citizens. Local patrons were not, obviously, absent from this process. We came across cases across the country of local patrons hosting the PSC survey teams in their houses, or distributing eligibility letters to beneficiaries. The role of the local patrons remained peripheral in most cases, due to the strong message for universal enumeration in survey team process, manuals and training.

Survey enumerators were supposed to visit each household, however in many instances it was observed that they selected a central location in the village or community – often the local patron or notable's open courtyard or seating area (*autaq* in Sindh/*hujra* in KP) – where the community members could come and have their forms filled out on their own. This had the potential to create spatial barriers for

certain excluded groups who might have had differences with local power brokers. We also documented cases, however, of changes in norms governing differential access to space – the *autaq* which has traditionally been a male domain in Sindh villages was seen to become a site where women gathered to get their PSC survey forms filled by enumerators who happened to be stationed there. Such changes in the gendered division of space can have significant implications for prevailing institutions of patriarchy.

An important procedural precondition to avail the BISP cash transfers was possession of a valid CNIC. Many women had to get their identity cards made for the first time in their lives and this too entailed making visits to the NADRA Office where they would have their pictures taken. Once again, this is an important shift engendered by the BISP for women who face mobility and *purdah* restrictions. The example of Zarghoona from Quetta is instructive in this case, as she is a BISP beneficiary who is otherwise not allowed to leave the house but went to the NADRA office to get her CNIC made, specifically to access BISP benefits; she now routinely goes to the local post office on her own to collect her payments. Moreover, this precondition also effectively brings women into the pale of citizenship – linking entitlements to citizenship was seen to bolster women's identity as citizens as they clamoured to get CNICs made and PSC survey forms filled. These first encounters of women with the state were devoid of disempowering experiences as we did not hear any accounts of women being harassed in government offices.

BISP was supposed to communicate with its beneficiaries through 'eligibility letters' - letters informing them that they had been selected - and 'discrepancy letters' - letters informing eligible beneficiaries of any discrepancies in their case. However it was observed in an overwhelming majority of cases that these letters did not reach beneficiaries. Nevertheless, the wide-scale incidence and outreach of this programme worked to its advantage. Thus when some women in the community began receiving their payments or eligibility letters, those who did not receive these exerted individual initiative to find out about their status in the programme. Potential beneficiaries relied on interpersonal mediation (by relatives, neighbours, social workers, government officials or local patrons), visits to the local BISP office, post office or internet cafes to learn more about their eligibility status and payment details. Reliance on social workers such as NGO activists suggests a shift away from traditional patronage structures. Similarly, for the poorest segments of society to visit internet cafes in order to obtain eligibility details also suggests a newly evolving pathway to empowerment for citizens; even if they do not possess the necessary (computer) literacy to access and understand the online BISP tracking form.

Disbursement of funds

Once a woman becomes a BISP beneficiary she can receive her income support through one of various modalities. Initially, most beneficiaries received their disbursements through postal money orders – in effect, cash delivered at the doorstep by a postal worker. Other methods such as mobile phone transfers were also piloted. In 2012 the programme embarked on a transition to debit cards which could be used to draw money from ATMs or for receiving cash from designated money transfer franchisees. Postal money orders were usually delivered bi-monthly, while debit card transfers take place once every quarter.

For the mostly illiterate women from poor and socially excluded kinship groups even the most straightforward of these payment modalities represents a major step forward in terms of access to basic services and entitlements. We have already noted the significance of women from marginalized groups acquiring computerized national identity cards (CNICs) in order to become programme beneficiaries.

For many of these women the CNIC represents a radical departure from a prior situation of residential insecurity and limited access to citizenship-based entitlements. The acquisition of a CNIC implies that a woman is able to provide a fixed and reliable address – something that many marginalized groups cannot take for granted. Even the postal money order represents a quiet but significant change. For many families the receipt of BISP money orders is not only their first ever experience with the money order system, but also the first time that they have ever received any postal service at their given address.

Under these conditions it is not surprising that a range of intermediaries (mostly male) play some part in facilitating a woman's access to her income support entitlement. The intermediation can be minor – as with local patrons or leaders informing postal workers about the precise location of a woman beneficiary whose home address may not be recognized or understood by the postal worker. In the case of debit cards the need for intermediation is stronger as a woman beneficiary might be unable to navigate around the relatively more challenging system of payment. The intermediary may be some close friend or relative, an acquaintance such as a fellow community member or a complete stranger such as a commission agent, who would come forward to help either due to solidarity or possibly in the expectation of monetary compensation. So even though BISP circumvents entrenched patronage structures by providing citizens with tools for directly accessing their benefits, intermediaries are still necessary for the marginalised. Two case studies of women from 'low' kinship groups illustrate the nature of empowerment and acquisition of agency despite the ubiquity of social intermediation.

Rehsma Baghri from Shaheed Benazirabad belongs to a non-Muslim Scheduled Caste family which traditionally worked as a beggar. She was also highly residentially insecure, as she lives on the village landlord's plot and needed his permission to provide her address on her CNIC. She learnt about BISP through the landlord, and had her survey form filled out at his *autaq*. Despite such strong marginality and dependence on a local patron, Reshma obtained her debit card herself and subsequently visits the bank to withdraw her payments without relying on this patron.

Fateh Khatoon from Larkana faced extreme marginality due to a similar set of factors: her kinship group (Mugheri Baloch) was low in the social hierarchy of her village; her household was heavily indebted to the village landlord and they faced residential insecurity as they lived on his land, in addition to frequent food insecurity. She had her CNIC made upon the suggestion of her landlord, who told her that BISP would provide cash transfers to poor women. However, upon gaining this information she got her CNIC made and began obtaining her mobile banking payments independent of the landlord to whom she was virtually indentured; thereby establishing a direct relationship with the state.

4 Discussion

Elements of the two alternate approaches to the transfer of public funds – one bottom-up involving collective action on the part of beneficiaries, and the other top-down administration of targeting and disbursement – are likely to be present across a range of social policy interventions, and not only in Pakistan. Both these approaches receive some attention as possible ways forward in addressing intersecting inequalities and social exclusion (Kabeer 2010). Our process observations on the CCB window and the BISP in Pakistan throw up a number of points of contrast and comparison.

The bottom-up approach of the CCB window was able to attract socially excluded applicants only exceptionally. The rationing of public funding in the absence of rigorous categorical criteria for the selection of individuals or organizations from particularly marginalized groups left the field open for

those segments of the community which were the most able to mobilize their own resources and gain access to government systems. The transactions costs of obtaining information, building an organization, getting it registered, and applying for funds were non-trivial for the socially excluded. Those among the socially excluded who were already upwardly mobile due to other drivers were able to utilize the CCB window for their further progress. For others, the window was barely open. Actually, the bottom up approach not only used existing power structures for the dissemination of information and funds but also relied on them for rationing scarce resources. In effect, the system strengthened social exclusion by supporting pre-existing patron client relationships.

By contrast, the pursuit of outreach as part of programme design meant that the BISP top-down approach ensured the inclusion of socially excluded groups – women in categorical terms, but also locally dominated individuals and groups. Not all top-down programmes can achieve such inclusion, particularly if their benefits, like BISP's, are targeted rather than universal. The key difference in the BISP process is the incorporation of a well-defined universe as a starting point of targeting and measurement. The stress on outreach – specifically the census method – or the insistence on enumerating ALL regardless of kinship group identity, religion, ethnicity, class and gender, meant that intersecting inequalities were reduced to one dimension: the poverty score. The BISP did not address the process of intersecting inequality or social exclusion but had strong processes itself for ensuring certain programme outputs. The empowerment of poor and marginalized women beneficiaries as well as potential beneficiaries through their engagement with BISP processes -- such as owning a CNIC, providing a reliable address, and learning how to use ATMs – was a significant point of departure. Sequencing of such programmes is also important. Top-down programmes have the capacity to engage the marginalized with the state – many of them for the first time. Bottom-up programmes can build upon this as an engagement with the state that has already been made through the top-down intervention. Even if certain BISP beneficiaries relied on patrons for information, the process itself ensured that it was not costly for them to circumvent their patrons thereby slowly chipping away on entrenched power structures.

Our findings need to be read alongside the qualification that public policy in Pakistan is oblivious to identity-based inequality and exclusion. Where kinship group-based identities are acknowledged and made visible through affirmative action policies we might expect greater social mobilization around these identities, and bigger scope for bottom-up collective action. The top-down outreach method is too static to sustain active engagement which might come from socially excluded groups forming their own organizations and generating their leadership. Even if the CCB program had an implicit understanding that the system would generate demand for collective action by the socially excluded, the programme failed to do that. This was possibly because the programme lacked a base in prior understanding of social exclusion in the Pakistani context and the costs for the socially excluded towards participation in collective action. In some ways the categorical focus of the BISP on women enables the programme to effectively confront some patriarchal norms governing the gendered division of space in Pakistan.

5. Conclusion

Intersecting inequalities might be impervious to economic diversification and political competition even if they do not constitute an overarching narrative or ideology of group-based discrimination. The prevalence and persistence of social exclusion premised on kinship group-based identities in Pakistan is a case where intersecting inequalities are ubiquitous in local configurations of power, yet varied enough to not gain visibility at the national level. While the ideological coherence of differences along the lines

of caste, race or indignity might produce stubborn patterns of intersecting inequality in, say, India, Nepal, and Latin America, the public acknowledgement of group-based difference also generates counter-narratives of resistance and spaces for policy action. By contrast, there may be many dimensions of intersecting inequality which remain hidden from public and policy discussion, and yet powerful enough to perpetuate forms of social exclusion.

Alternate intervention approaches – top-down and bottom-up – can work synergistically or in opposite directions depending on their social, political and institutional contexts. Our study of alternate approaches in Pakistan suggests that under certain conditions, and up to a particular point, the top down application of methods which ensure the adoption of a well-defined universe in social programming can be more effective than bottom-up collective action in engaging some of the most marginalized citizens. If the gap between the social capacity and functioning of the most deprived and those above them is very wide, facility in the navigation of simple administrative procedures (such as the acquisition of a reliable residential address, or registration for a national identity card) can represent a major advance for the former.

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