

# A Social Observatory for the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)

# NRLM

- A poverty reduction project – aims to improve access to credit, encourage stable livelihoods, promote food security, and engender social change.
- **Core Intervention:** Self Help Groups (SHGs) of 10-15 women created, and federated into Village Organizations (VO) of 10-15 SHGs for credit provision, empowerment, and livelihoods promotion.
- **Sub-Interventions:** Bank Linkages, Nutrition and Health, Disability, Food Security, Education Scholarship, Handicrafts, Sustainable Agriculture, Crop Intensification, etc.
- Project executed by NRLM, a society under the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India. **\$4 Billion from Govt, \$1 billion in World Bank credit.**
- 12 states with greatest number of poor, NRLM in all the other states. 270 million women targeted under NRLM.

# Key Challenges

- G. Mansuri and V. Rao, *Localizing Development : Does Participation Work?*  
World Bank Policy Research Report, 2012
  - Local Heterogeneity
  - Heterogeneity in Intervention
- Requires strong culture of Learning By Doing
  - Tracking, Experimentation, Evaluation, Understand Process, Feedback loops.

# Social Observatory

- Research and Learning Unit Within the Project
- Close collaboration with project implementers :
- Mr. Vijay Kumar, Joint Secretary in charge of NRLM
  - Mr. Parmesh Shah – World Bank Task Team Leader in charge of NRLM

# Researchers (so far)

- Radu Ban (Gates Foundation) (AP – IE)
- Urmila Chatterjee (SO team) (Orissa – IE, National Survey)
- Upamanyu Dutta (SO team) (Bihar – IE, MIS)
- Karla Hoff (WB) (Experiments – Bihar)
- Vivian Hoffmann (Univ of Maryland) (Bihar - IE)
- Ethan Ligon (Cal - Berkeley) (AP - IE)
- Nethra Palaniswamy (SO team) (Orissa – IE, TN – IE, National Survey)
- Vijayendra Rao (WB) (SO team Lead)
- Paromita Sanyal (Cornell) (Qualitative - Bihar)

# National Evaluation

## Key Outcomes:

### Household-level economic outcomes:

- Level and cost of debt
- Asset portfolio
- Consumption level and patterns
- Income-generating activities

### Private empowerment and welfare:

- Women's dignity, voice and mobility
- Women's say in household decision-making
- Women's subjective well-being

### Public engagement:

- Participation in political processes
- Instances of collective action

# Study Instruments:

## National Quantitative Baseline

- Sample Size to be representative at the State Level (very large – TBD)
- 3 round panel over 5 years
- Open Access Policy on Data
- Household Level Questionnaires
  - General Module: household-level economic indicators, capability based poverty indicators
  - Women's Module: women's mobility, decision-making, public participation, subjective well-being
- Community Level Questionnaires
  - General: village composition, wealth distribution
  - Women's: Quality of public services; collective action

# Planned Impact Evaluations

- National – calibrating sample design in each state (where possible) to allow either discontinuity based on poverty score for block cut-off, or PSM.
- Bihar – Random assignment of core SHG intervention in 90 panchayats – 90 panchayats control. Baseline survey completed. Follow up scheduled for July-Sept 2003.
- Orissa – Similar to Bihar
- AP – 3 arms: Health, Nutrition, Sustainable Agriculture, random assignment
- Open to proposals to evaluate sub-interventions in other states.
- Key principle: IE must be designed in collaboration with state implementation agency.
- Project should drive the research rather than other way around.



# Monitoring - MIS

## **Census of all SHG Members:**

- Annual Profile capturing key socio-economic indicators at member level.
- Monthly “Didi” Sheets capturing the weekly transactions of savings, disbursements and repayments.
- -Dashboard to display results as required by project staff at all levels (village, block, district, state, HQ) with tools for simple cross-tabs and graphical analysis
- Database updated in real time with e-bookeeping and m-booking methods.
- Data posted on internet

# Monitoring - Process

- Rotating random sample of villages in every state.
- Visited by independent agency
- Track challenges in project implementation
- Track social and political change
- Reports summarized in brief summaries that will actually be read by managers.

# Qualitative Studies Planned

- Bihar:

Tracking matched pairs of treatment-control panchayats over 2 years

- AP:

A study of the SHG deliberative process at from the village, block and district level

# Selection of villages for Bihar Qualitative Survey

- Using data from Quantitative Baseline Survey, select similar villages in project and control panchayats matched in:
  - Demographics
  - Land distribution
  - Administration - Within same block and similar leadership
  - Credit access
- Field visits to confirm qualitative similarity and finalize 10 communities across 4 districts

# Open-ended questions to be investigated in Bihar

- How intervention actually functions
- Process of economic change
- Process of social change
- Process of political change
- Role of inequality in influencing change
- Gender dynamics of the intervention and potential backlash by men

# Method in Bihar

- In two districts randomly assigned treatment-control pairs
- In two districts: triplets (treatment, control and a Phase 1 village where Jeevika has been active for 2 years)
- Each village will be visited every three months by a team of 3-4 investigators
- They will reside in the village for a week
- Conduct in-depth interviews with key informants, FGDs, PRA work
- Summarize findings in village reports
- PIs will participate in field visits
- Village reports will be analyzed in depth by PIs.

# Field Experiments

- An important source of change in the development process occurs **within people**—
  - their world-views and self-concepts
  - their sense of having certain basic rights.
- Experiments are well-suited to assessing transformations of social actors and norms
- We propose to undertake experiments to assess women's:
  - self-confidence,
  - ability to work with persons with higher social status,
  - bargaining power in the household.
  - access to social networks to obtain information
  - the lenses through which they view the world

# Methods - Field Experiments

In Bihar – same Sample as qualitative villages:

For most experiments, we will draw random samples from 4 treatment and 4 control villages in two different years to assess treatment effects:

in the short-run

in the long-run (permitting a diff-in-diff analysis)

The detailed knowledge we have of these villages will permit us to assess the channels through which the Livelihoods project affects outcomes

For one game—a test of self-confidence—we will draw on a random sample of all villages in the treatment and control groups

The results of our experiments will complement, and provide a check on, qualitative work that assesses whether women are imbued with a sense of agency: e.g., to confront problems in their villages through collective action.



# Academic Interface

- Guided by SO Advisory Committee (TBD)
- Matchmakers – Researchers to Project Needs
- Open Data Policy
- Research Fund for India-based researchers
- Bridge to the Project
- Summarize Research Findings for Project Learning
- Work with project in developing tools for learning

# Conclusion

- Data-driven learning-by-doing in a flagship project that requires an enormous amount of contextual understanding, innovation, experimentation and learning from failure, to be effective.
- Open to ideas and potential collaborations from researchers
- Looking for young people to work in the SO staff as researchers, field coordinators, research assistants, etc.