Defining Empowerment: The Relationship between Intra-Household Bargaining Power and Program Participation in Rural India

EXPERIMENTAL RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Presented to

Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP)

By

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India

27th May, 2015 (Revised)¹

¹ On the basis of comments received at the 12th Annual General Meeting of PEP held at Nairobi, Kenya. The authors are grateful to Maria Laura Alzua, Maria Adelaida Lopera, Jose Manuel Gomez, Gabriela Aguilera Lizarazu, and Rolando Gonzales.
SECTION A – Project Description

1. Motivation (300 words max.)

This project seeks to understand the impact of large scale employment guarantee programmes on intra-household bargaining. We aim to do this by extending a well-established field experiment design to compare household allocation outcomes for participants and non-participants. We use the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), one of the largest welfare programs of its kind in the world, because (a) it offers equal wages for men and women for manual labour; (b) wage payments are made to individual bank accounts of workers, and (c) participants are self-selected into the program and benefits are conditional on completing assigned work. MGNREGS was started in 2006 and now operates as a work-for-welfare program in all districts of all 29 states and 7 Union Territories in India. Thus, there are two broad outcomes that the government envisioned for this program: asset creation (mostly agricultural, but also sanitation, schools, among others), and employment generation. However, there are consequences (that are documented in scholarly work) that show that MGNREGS has provided opportunities to women and other socially-excluded groups to take part in meaningful labour. Gender parity in India (in terms of wages, labour market opportunities, and social norms) still has a long way to go; for example, India is ranked 127th out of nearly 200 countries in the Gender Inequality Index put out by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Thus, if MGNREGS has implications for gender inequality, then it becomes important to understand what are the pathways through which this takes place, and if there are further steps that policy can take to improve gender-based outcomes in this regard. Finally, the experimental literature related to intra-household bargaining in the context of program participation largely focuses on conditional cash transfers programs, offering a relatively unexplored perspective on labour policy interventions in developing countries.

2. Main research questions (200 words max.)

The proposed study aims to address the following research questions:

1. Does participation in MGNREGS improve women’s bargaining power in the household? Are there specific heuristics associated with outcomes at the household level as a result of program participation?

2. How does information-sharing between the decision-makers in the family influence the bargaining process and consumption outcomes? Does this also interact with program participation?

3. How do these changes in intra-household bargaining power and women’s empowerment affect household-level development outcomes such as labor market participation, access to public goods (such as schools, health care centres, sanitation facilities), and ability to hold elected representatives to account?
3. Priority theme (200 words max.)

The proposed study directly addresses policy concerns made explicit under priority theme 1: ‘Improving the targeting of public expenditures and social assistance’. Recent studies such as Alatas et al. (2014) show that programs that have self-selection are likely to have more efficient targeting than those where targeting is based on agency evaluations. By clarifying the pathways of development impacts sought to be addressed by large-scale welfare programs (such as MGNREGS), the proposed study will help achieve an enhanced understanding targeting of self-selecting programs. Furthermore, if a male-dominated household benefits from female members participating in MGNREGS in terms of enhanced consumption, then this may be evident via the channels of improvements in women’s autonomy in household decision-making (an indicator of household bargaining dynamics) as well as the share of household income contributed by the woman (an illustrated measure of women’s empowerment, which may explain bargaining power).

4. Policy relevance (200 words max.)

The proposed experimental study will address several policy-relevant issues: by understanding the optimal targeting mechanism in case of non-cash transfers, and offering a clear pathway for benefits to have maximal impact, policymakers will have a clearer understanding of the transmission mechanism and outcomes of the program. By understanding the implications for women’s empowerment, the program can be refocused to emphasize the benefits derived by targeting female labour. For example, evidence from the experiment may provide motivation for making the program more conducive for female participation on a larger scale (say, by making female-only worksites). The Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) is the nodal implementation agency for MGNREGS and therefore the key stakeholder in terms of policy. Ongoing projects funded by the National Institute for Rural Development (an agency under the MoRD) have already engaged with stakeholders, and this project will aim to provide supplementary micro-level evidence of female empowerment effects of MGNREGS. The field experiment will also depend greatly on the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) since program participation (and benefit disbursement) is largely overseen by local governments (Panchayats) in India.

5. Experiment description (1.500 words max.)

Much of the experiment will be adapted from Mani (2011), with the addition of a new treatment for program participation.

In this experiment, a husband-wife pair will be given endowments at the start of the experiment and preferences for sharing rules will be elicited via their choice of investing the endowments (completely) under various heads of expenditure. The pair will be asked to take purchase decisions on a pre-determined list of commodities, initially expressed as an intention, and later as a final consumption decision. In order to keep the experimental
design tractable, between-pair variation in share of household income (as an initial endowment) will take any one of five proportions (70-60-50-40-30 percent). This will be a control variable, in that equal numbers of pairs receive each of the five proportions of the initial endowment. The randomization of endowments between spouses is a critical element of the intra-household bargaining dynamic. First, with randomized endowments, we control for trade-offs between personal income and household income. If husbands and wives are given a share of the household income, then they will treat expenditure decisions as household-level decisions rather than personal decisions. Second, this control will enable us to understand the differences in proportionality of expenditure by gender, and across expenditure heads. For example, it would be of interest to know whether women invest consistently greater proportions of endowments in education, while men prefer to spend greater part of household incomes on food. Randomization of the endowment is arguably crucial also since intra-household bargaining power is often endogenous to the household’s consumption decisions. Using an experimental approach will therefore allow us to create an exogenous variation in the bargaining power.

In the proposed study, there will be three treatment conditions to the extension of the household bargaining experiment (Mani, 2011): share in household income (randomly allocated by the experimenter, as a control variable); information about expenditure decisions of the other member of the household (information available or unavailable to both participants in the pair); and program participation (sample selection at four levels: husband in program, wife in program, husband and wife in program, neither in program). Thus, a 2 (information) x 4 (program participation) design will result, with eight conditions in which share in household income will be equally controlled.

In the baseline case, both members of the family will have no information of the other person’s decision (i.e. the female takes the decision independently), and neither will be involved in program participation. Under the assumption that a household is not a uniform unit, expenditure decisions will determine perceived control over household resources, and therefore serve as an indicator of intra-household bargaining power. Under the program participation treatment, we allow those who participate in welfare programs (determined using matching estimators on survey data) to have varying income shares in the household. Essentially, since both players of the household decide independently, preferences for expenditure are also expected to differ.

We expect to derive key results on bargaining dynamics through interaction effects as well. For example, the interaction effect between unbalanced income shares, program participation, and full information will give us insight into whether participation in welfare programs with greater resulting income shares will influence perceptions of how the other member will perceive their decision making (information treatment).

6. Related literature (1000 words max.)

The proposed research design and methodology aims to build on current empirical literature on intra-household bargaining in India. In order to assess the impact of changes in intra-household bargaining, the proposed methodology draws on empirical methods.

We are grateful to Maria Adelaida Lopera for suggesting this.
that have only recently gained ground, while also laying emphasis on seminal economic theories of households and families (such as Browning and Chiappori, 1998; and Basu, 2006).

We first tackle the literature of direct importance: studies that employ field experiments to address questions of intra-household bargaining. While there are several such studies, the closest is Mani (2011) (and to a lesser extent a strikingly similar design to Castilla [2013]). She uses an investment game between spouses of the same household (in rural Andhra Pradesh) to investigate the relative importance of key factors (return on investments and informational awareness) that influence the efficacy of household investment decisions. In finding that household members are willing to trade off lower efficiency for more control over decisions, she makes an important case for factors such as identity that may be spurring such 'spiteful' intra-household dynamics. Ashraf (2009) conducts a similar experiment to test informational factors influencing decision-making in the Philippines, but poses only two ‘expenditure’ options: either investment for future benefit or immediate consumption. The experiment confirms that there exist gender-specific differences in household decision-making as influenced by information (asserted as an outcome of control). For a more recent study of the influence of information asymmetry on intra-household allocations, see Castilla and Walker (2013). Finally, Dasgupta and Mani (2013) offer initial evidence (using a pilot study conducted in New Delhi) of how investment decisions may differ by how the money is earned. In the context of program participation, this is particularly relevant since benefits from welfare programs are conditional. Our experiment will differ in that there will be no hypothetical effort-demanding task, instead exogenous variations enter via participation in existing welfare programs. Furthermore, we expect that the proposed artefactual field experiment will be among the first to experimentally investigate consumption choices in the rural Indian population using real commodities (see also Beblo and Beninger, 2012). Other studies that study the intra-household dynamics using experimental procedures, but without any treatment for program participation include Couchard et al. (2009); Munro et al. (2011), and Yang and Carlsson (2012).

Within the empirical literature on intra-household bargaining (and allocation of resources), a large number of studies focus on the impact of conditional cash transfers to households (Ferro et al., 2011). In particular, the PROGRESA (Programa de Educación, Salud y Alimentación – Education, Health and Nutrition Program)-Oportunidades conditional cash transfer program has come under extensive study. Handa et al. (2009) find that transfer income is not spent differently from general income, with husbands and wives having common preferences with respect to consumption expenditure. Their study does not find any significant impacts on women’s empowerment within the household as a result of targeting benefits towards her. Despite this, the program does appear to have tangible benefits: a follow-up study that aimed to study long-term impacts of the program found significant improvements in schooling, delayed labour force entry, and shifts from agricultural to non-agricultural employment (Behrman et al., 2011). In a similar study, Behrman and Hoddinott (2005) found no impact on child nutrition, but show significantly lower incidence of stunting among children of illiterate mothers who received benefits under the program.

Other studies have also focused on the Bolsa Familia (Family Grant) program in Brazil. A study of particular importance is the ‘accidental’ experimental approach by Braido et al.
The study utilises an exclusion error on part of government officials to test for the impact of conditional cash transfers under Bolsa Alimentação (BA) on women decision-makers in Brazil. They identify female empowerment effects through a difference-in-difference model using female-only households as the comparison group, and through a subsample analysis of eligible women beneficiaries who had an extra source of income versus those that did not. While they do find benefits for child nutrition, healthcare, and food consumption expenditure, they do not attribute it to having a female-targeted beneficiary. Their results are thus not representative of how middle-class households typically react to exogenous changes in female nonlabour income.

This evidence is not restricted to rural areas, and is spread across developing countries (see for example Gitter and Barham (2008) in Nicaragua, and Undurraga et al. (2014) in Bolivian Amazon) but has been largely restricted to conditional cash transfer programs. For example, Ghana’s National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) (Asuming, 2013), and changes in the Hindu Succession Act in India (Deininger et al., 2013) are some of the ‘natural’ experimental studies. Since there are several large-scale welfare schemes that are currently offered by the Government of India (and several other governments), there are several aspects of intra-household bargaining (in the context of program participation) that are yet to be explored.

SECTION B – Experiment Implementation

7. Targeted population (200 words max.)

Our proposed target sample will come from villages in Dindigul district of Tamil Nadu in which MGNREGS has been successfully implemented. Refer to Table A.1 (in the appendix) for more details about Dindigul district. Note that this is a suggested district for study, which may be replaced by another district depending on administrative feasibility and efficacy of initial pilots. The sample design is pertinent in order to control for uneven implementation of programs due to differences in local governance (among other factors). The rationale behind targeting rural households is to understand the implications of program participation first hand. While focusing on a specific village or district may limit external validity of the study, we aim to overcome this since Dindigul is representative of other MGNREGS districts within the state of Tamil Nadu.

8. Recruitment protocol and sample size (1,000 words max.)

We propose to recruit married couples via local contacts in Dindigul district, with help from the local Panchayats via the Ministry of Rural Development and local coordinating institutes. In view of the program participation treatment, we propose to draw samples from extensive survey data drawn from the ongoing Socio-Economic Profile of Rural India (SEPRI). SEPRI data is being collected by IRMA and data collection and validation is complete for eight states, including in the proposed district. SEPRI has extensive data on
local governance, social networks, agricultural assets and income, household consumption, and participation in MGNREGS. We aim to model the selection process using SEPRI data since participation is voluntary, and create matched subsamples using nearest-neighbour or propensity-score matching techniques. The participation equation is:

$$Y_{iv}^j = \beta_1^{ij} + \beta_2^{ij} MGNREG_{iv} + \beta_3^{ij} R_v + \beta_4^{ij} X_{iv} + \epsilon_{iv}^j \quad (1)$$

Where $Y_{iv}^j$ is the outcome variable of interest for the $j^{th}$ outcome, for the $i^{th}$ individual in the $v^{th}$ village. $\beta_1^{ij}$ is a village fixed-effect, $MGNREG_{iv}$ is an indicator variable that takes the value of 1 if an individual worked under MGNREGS in the past 12 months, $R_v$ is a vector of exogenous indicator variables including whether the village was governed by a Panchayat where the Pradhan's position was (currently) reserved for a woman, the ratio of completed works to works taken up under MGNREGS, Panchayat expenditure on MGNREGS, and other design and implementation factors, and $X_{iv}$ is a vector of individual and household characteristics. We include factors such as age, age-squared, household size, dependency ratio, years of education, labour market activity, and whether the mother spends separately on a child’s education (which will explain the existing intra-household dynamic). Note that $\beta_1^{ij}$ in equation (1) may be biased under OLS since participation in MGNREGS is voluntary and entirely based on self-selection. This means that participants are not randomly assigned participation in MGNREGS, and hence treatment effects are severely biased. In order to overcome problems of self-selection, we use propensity-score matching methods (Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983) in order to create a matched sample and estimate the impact of participation. The propensity score is defined here as the probability of participating in MGNREGS given all observed characteristics. The assumption underlying PS matching is that, conditional on observables, the outcome change if not treated is independent of the actual treatment, i.e. $(Y_0^j, Y_1^j) \perp MGNREG | X_{iv}$. This is known as the assumption of unconfoundedness. This has been shown to imply $(Y_0^j, Y_1^j) \perp MGNREG | p(X_{iv})$ where $p(X_{iv})$ is the propensity score, defined as $p(X_{iv})=p(MGNREG = 1 | X_{iv})$ which, by definition, takes a value between 0 and 1 (Rosenbaum and Rubin 1983).

MGNREGS muster rolls that are statutorily required to be maintained at the Block Development Office or Panchayat office will be useful in tracking participating households once the matched samples are drawn. The treatment will only include those who have completed at least 10 continuous labor days in the past year. The sample selection will be categorised into 4 groups under program participation: (i) neither participants, (ii) male participant, (iii) female participant and, (iv) both participants. Participant confidentiality will be maintained, and each couple will be assigned a unique alphanumerical code identifying the treatment that they are placed in. During recruitment, participant coordinators will ensure that all potential participants are apprised of the risks and benefits of taking part in the experiment: that there are no risks (since they will not lose any money they do not have); and that they stand to receive over and above the payoff fee (either in the form of cash benefits or commodities that they purchase), as well as contribute to current scientific understanding.

Each participant will be given a day’s wage (approximately ₹150) for a show-up fee, and

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3 We are grateful to Rolando Gonzalez for suggesting this.
additional rewards from the allocation experiment. The participant coordinators will arrange for a closed room containing booths (or stores) which will accommodate up to 10 pairs (20 individuals, and thus 10 experimental games) at a time. Depending on the program participation status of the husband and wife, each pair will play any one of the two experimental treatments (full information, or no information), assigned randomly to the couple. They will also receive one of the five income shares (30-40-50-60-70) to be controlled across the sample. On the basis of comments received at the PEP 12th Annual General Meeting in Nairobi, we undertook simple power calculations in order to determine optimal sample size in the context of the complex experimental design that we wish to implement.

We performed power computations to find that with an effect size of .80 (based on Cohen's classification of low, medium, and high effects), and a maximum power of .99, the sample size per group would suffice at 24 pairs. Based on this estimate, and keeping contingencies in mind due to potential attrition, the total sample size is estimated to be 600 individuals (300 pairs). The sample is distributed as follows:

- 75 pairs in each of the four conditions formed due to the interaction between program participation and gender.

Within each condition, 37 pairs will receive full information and 38 pairs will receive no information about their partners' decisions (an almost equal number, as information condition will be randomly assigned).

Within each condition, income shares (control variable) will be randomly assigned. 15 pairs will receive a 30 (husband)-70 (wife) income share, 15 pairs will receive a 40 (husband) - 60 (wife) share, 15 pairs will receive a 50 (husband) - 50 (wife) share, 15 pairs will receive a 60 (husband) - 40 (wife) share, and 15 pairs will receive a 70 (husband) - 30 (wife) income share. In total, 60 pairs will receive each of the income share distributions, well above the required sample size based on the power analysis.

9. Experimental protocol (1,500 words max.)

The experiment instructions and protocol will be adapted from Mani (2011). All instructions and explanations will be provided to a husband-wife pair solely by the experiment coordinator in the local language. During the experiment briefing, all subjects will be informed that their information will be completely confidential and will not be traced back to either of them. The purpose of the experiment for debriefing (once the experiment concludes) will be communicated as examining ‘decisions related to financial matters in the household’.

(S)he would also be told that they will receive a fixed show-up fee of approximately ₹150 for participating in the experiment once the experiment concludes. They will also be informed of the opportunity to earn over and above this amount depending on the decisions taken during the experiment. It will be clearly emphasized that the reward will depend on a randomly chosen decision, depending on the role of a die (in case of
hypothetical decisions), so that they take all expenditure decisions seriously (or at least treat them with equal importance). In the case of real decisions, the reward shall be the commodities that they choose to purchase. Under the information treatment, spouses will take decisions jointly (either in each other’s presence or with full information availability). Under the program participation treatment, there would be no special instructions or order to circumvent any response bias or communication between participants who may recognize each other via networks formed during program participation. Designated waiting areas will also be used to ensure that no communication takes place between any two participants at any stage of the experiment.

On the basis of comments and suggestions received, initial pilots will test hypothetical and real expenditure decision tasks. The experimental implementation of the intra-household resource allocation task can take two forms of responses:

(a) Hypothetical Decisions

The husband-wife pair would then be lead separately into different booths with an experimental coordinator of the corresponding gender, who would explain the expenditure decision across four heads: education, healthcare, food, and entertainment (in a randomized order). The first round will be a practice round using dummy heads: ‘red’, ‘blue’, ‘green’, and ‘yellow’, while the second will be the round using actual heads of expenditure: ‘food’, ‘entertainment’, ‘education’, and ‘healthcare’. The third iteration will be the actual expenditure game using vignettes. This will eliminate any misconceptions about the experimental procedure. The order of the expenditure headings will also be randomized to control for rank-order effects. In order to introduce realism into the experiment, we will also test the same decisions using vignettes (see appendix for suggested vignettes). The purpose of using such vignettes is to simulate an environment where all categories require expenditure immediately, and preferred expenditure choices when dealing with specific situations. Under each of these options, the return options will vary randomly between high and low. We keep these heads as broad as possible so that common types of consumption expenditure are covered. However, there has been extensive evidence, such as Strauss et al. (2000) that shows women’s preferences are skewed towards family needs (relative to men). Thus, there may be a need to explore purchase and allocation decisions in a more naturalistic setting.

(b) Real Decisions

The experiment with real decisions involves setting up a store as a local point of purchase for actual commodities for which substantial demand already exists (determined on the basis of SEPRI data). Additionally, we will elicit intended (or expected) consumption beforehand in order to control for existing household demand for specific commodities, where the deviations from these intentions will provide revealed preferences. We will draw a representative list of commodities in order to offer both immediate-benefit consumption goods (such as carnival tickets and food) as well as delayed-benefit consumption goods (e.g., painkillers and stationary/ Notebooks). We will also attempt to standardize the prices.

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4 For example, an individual may choose to purchase foodgrains solely because there is a shortage of foodgrains in the household. Thus, the requirement to disentangle need from preference is of paramount importance. We aim to do this using the ‘intention to spend’ order list.
of the commodities so that there are no market-based incentives for the consumption decisions. The key challenge will be ensuring to use commodities that will benefit the entire household while also being largely gender-neutral. Before being asked to visit the store, participants will be informed that their decisions will be irreversible and that they should treat it as a regular visit to a store. This store will either be manned by a confederate (a local coordinator) or a local merchant (who already has a store) who will record purchase decisions on an order list that will be provided by the experimenter. In the case of full information, we propose to use a two-step purchase decision mechanism, wherein after the order list is filled, we transfer this information to the spouse, and then provide them the option of revising the order decision. The novelty of this experiment is that it will be an artefactual field experiment that, to our knowledge, has not yet been explored in the rural context. These will also give us a revealed preference for consumption decisions.

Since they would be placed in different booths (or at different experimental shops), there will be no scope for either of them to know about the other person’s investment options or returns during the course of the experiment. The share in household income will be varied exogenously within subjects, so as to quantify how much household member’s value control over expenditure decisions. Once both spouses have made their decisions, the experiment coordinator would send the data to the data entry operator, who will compute the returns. During this time, participant debriefing will take place to answer any questions or concerns that participants may have. Payments may be made privately to each spouse, and to spouse’s bank accounts (this is in light of the recently launched Jan Dhan Yojana to open bank accounts for citizens of rural India). These randomized payments will be jointly determined by the choices made by both members of the household.

We propose to commence pilot studies in mid-July 2015 in villages around Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul district, Tamil Nadu. The pilot studies will focus on establishing validity of the proposed variations in the allocation experiment. This is keeping in mind the institutional support available to the research team at GRI (since Prof. G. Palanithurai is a frequent collaborator), as well as proximity to proposed villages. Students from the departments of public administration, political science, and economics will serve as experiment coordinators once their training is complete.

10. **Timeline (300 words max.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Year 1 (months)</th>
<th>Year 2 (months)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethical clearance and launch of pilot study</td>
<td>x x</td>
<td>x x</td>
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<tr>
<td>Design of experiment and coordinating with MoRD for local</td>
<td>x x x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Based on pilot study, launch of sample selection for final experiment

Recruitment of experiment and participant coordinators

Baseline experiments

Treatment experiments

Data entry and preliminary analyses

Writing of report and first paper

Policy workshop and dissemination of findings

Publication of study

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11. **Budget outline (300 words max.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Per Unit rate</th>
<th>Total Expenses (INR)</th>
<th>Total Expenses (USD)</th>
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<td>Salary to team members</td>
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<td>₹ 30,000 per month per person</td>
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<td>Salary to Research Assistant</td>
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<td>₹ 150</td>
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<td>Payments to experiment and participant coordinators</td>
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<td></td>
<td>35 experimental commodities for real decision experiment</td>
<td>(Variable)</td>
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Panchayats

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**SECTION B – Research Team**

1. **Team members**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Education or experience</th>
<th>Field of expertise</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hari K. Nagarajan</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>PhD in Economics, University of Oklahoma (Norman), 10 years of survey execution experience</td>
<td>Rural development</td>
<td>Policy outreach and compilation of research output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savita Kulkarni</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>PhD in Economics, University of Mumbai; Project Fellow at the Centre for Computational and Experimental Social Sciences at University of Mumbai</td>
<td>Experimental and behavioural economics</td>
<td>Field supervision, experiment coordinator, and compiling research output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hansika Kapoor</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>MA in Clinical Psychology, University of Mumbai, 2 years of experience with lab experiments</td>
<td>Cognitive psychology and experimental game theory</td>
<td>Experimental design, data analysis, compiling research output</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anirudh Tagat</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>MSc in Economics, University of Warwick</td>
<td>Rural development and experimental economics</td>
<td>Experimental design, data analysis, and field supervision</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Expected capacity building (200 words max.)**

The proposed project will involve junior researchers from the fields of economics and psychology. In including younger researchers, the proposed research program will provide extensive ground-level exposure on the administration of, and execution of large-scale field experiments in rural India. It will also provide a novel opportunity to engage with...
impact-based research for female researchers in India. We will also base our experiments around the Gandhigram Rural Institute, Dindigul, a nationally accredited university that caters exclusively to rural students. The students from various departments will serve as experiment coordinators, serving to build on their understanding of new evaluative methods in social science research.

Furthermore, the findings of the project will be disseminated widely via a short workshop on experimental methods and their usefulness in aiding policy at IRMA. At a later stage in the project, we also expect to engage with officials in charge of implementing and monitoring MGNREGS in India, the Ministry of Rural Development, as well as senior officials from the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. This will also enable such officials to explore new perspectives on measuring policy impacts.

3. List of past, current or pending projects in related areas involving team members (200 words max.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of funding institution</th>
<th>Project title</th>
<th>Team members involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Rural Development, German Development Institute (Bonn), International Growth Centre (IGC), and World Bank</td>
<td>Socio-economic Profile of Rural India (SEPRI)</td>
<td>Hari K. Nagarajan and Anirudh Tagat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Ethical approval (200 words max.)

The project has received ethical approval from Monk Prayogshala’s Institutional Review Board for Ethics (reference no. 015-012). Details of the approval are attached. Full details of the experiment will be documented on an ongoing basis to ensure that there are no ethical violations during the conduction of pilot studies as well as the final experiment in the field. Further ethical clearance can be sought from PEP’s ethical review committee if required.

5. Ethical, social, gender or environmental issues or risks in relation to your experiment (300 words max.)

The proposed experiment will be executed taking complete cognizance of various ethical, social, and gender issues that may arise. Since the proposed experiment will take place in villages in Tamil Nadu, the research coordinators managing local administration of the experiment will recruited locally, and will speak the local language (Tamil) and be fully aware of local customs. These research and experiment coordinators will also be matched by gender with the participants (i.e. only female experiment coordinators will
administer the experiment to female participants), and be fully sensitized to maintaining full confidentiality and privacy of the participant’s decision in order to minimize any apprehension or response bias. Since the resource allocation experiment may involve real commodities, participants will be clearly informed about potentials risks and benefits of taking part in the experiment. During the debriefing, participants will be given an option to speak to a coordinator in the event of any distress caused by the experiment or the outcome of the experiment. We will also ensure that local government officials who support the administration of the experiment are provided adequate incentive to do so.

12. References


13. Appendix

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HYPOTHETICAL DECISIONS

This is an experiment to study decision-making between husbands and wives in the household. The instructions are very simple. Please listen to them carefully.

- This experiment consists of two players, your spouse and yourself, with a few rounds.
- The task will begin with a practice round, so that you understand the rules of the task.
- During each round, you will be given a certain amount of money. This money will be given as five-rupee coins. In total, there will be 20 five-rupee coins divided between your spouse and yourself. You will randomly receive some number of coins in a given round.
- It is not necessary that you and your spouse will have the same number of coins at the start of each round.
- During each round, you will be required to allocate all five-rupee coins in different bowls. These bowls can stand for different expenses for the household. For example, you may have to allocate the five-rupee coins between buying milk and going to the fair.
- The five-rupee coins will be allocated to you at the start of every round; no five-rupee coins will be carried over across rounds.
- There are no right or wrong decisions; please play the task as truthfully as possible.

Any questions? Yes – Ask me.
No – Continue.

At the beginning of each round, you will get a fixed number of five-rupee coins. There are three rounds in all, of which the first is a practice round, and the second is with expenditure heads, and the third is the task with vignettes. I will be giving you instructions before each round.

Practice (First Round)
(This title will not appear for the participants; they will be kept blind to the information condition)

You will be required to allocate all the five-rupee coins under each of these four colors. Please note that you can choose to allocate zero money to any of the colors as well.
- Red
- Blue
- Yellow
- Green

Following is an illustration of how this task is played. Suppose you have an initial investment of Rs. 50 (10 five-rupee coins), then you can choose to allocate the coins as under:

---

**The English instructions will be translated into Tamil and verified using back-translation procedures by the local NGO.**
Round 1: You decide to spend ₹ 20 on RED, ₹ 5 on GREEN, ₹ 10 on BLUE, and ₹ 15 on YELLOW.

**[Full Information Condition]**

Your spouse has decided to make the following expenditure decision:
Round 1: Your spouse has spent ₹ 20 on RED, ₹ 5 on GREEN, ₹ 10 on BLUE, and ₹ 15 on YELLOW.

- We will randomly select one of the colors, and give you the return on your expenditure decision. This return will either be double of the expenditure decision, or it will be the same as the expenditure decision. As this is a practice round, you will only receive returns on the last decision made. However, let me explain how you would receive returns.

The experimenter randomly selects RED, which gives a return of ₹ 20. The experimenter randomly decides whether the return will double to ₹ 40, or will stay the same, i.e., ₹ 20. In this case, suppose the return is doubled, you will receive ₹ 40. This amount will be credited directly to your bank account. Again, this was only a practice round, and you will only receive returns at the end of the third and last round.

If you have any questions, or need assistance of any kind, please ask the experimenter. We expect and appreciate your cooperation. We assure you that the results of this experiment or any other details will not be disclosed to anyone, and you will not be identified by name. The data collected are strictly for the purposes of research.

Any questions? Yes – Ask me.

No – Let’s begin

**Expenditure Headings (Second Round)**

(This title will not appear for the participants; they will be kept blind to the information condition)

You will be required to allocate all the five-rupee coins under each of these four categories. Please note that you can choose to allocate zero money to any of the categories as well.

- Food
- Health
- Entertainment
- Education

Following is an illustration of how this task is played. Suppose you have an initial investment of Rs. 50 (10 five-rupee coins), then you can choose to allocate the coins as under:
Round 2: You decide to spend ₹ 5 on EDUCATION, ₹ 20 on FOOD, ₹ 10 on HEALTHCARE, and ₹ 15 on ENTERTAINMENT.

[Full Information Condition:]
Your spouse has decided to make the following expenditure decision:
Round 2: Your spouse has spent ₹ 10 on EDUCATION, ₹ 5 on FOOD, ₹ 30 on HEALTHCARE, and ₹ 15 on ENTERTAINMENT.]

- We will randomly select one of the categories, and give you the return on your expenditure decision. This return will either be double of the expenditure decision, or it will be the same as the expenditure decision. Again, you will only receive returns on the next and last decision made.
- Do you have any questions? Yes – Ask me. No – Let’s continue.

Vignettes (Third Round)
(This title will not appear for the participants; they will be kept blind to the information condition)

You will be required to allocate all the five-rupee coins under each of these four situations. Please note that you can choose to allocate zero money to any of the situations as well.

- **Vignette 1** (Education): “Your child has to pay fees for school and buy new books. How much of your money would you allocate on the fees and books?”

- **Vignette 2** (Entertainment): “An exciting new fair has come to the neighbouring village (chowkidani). How much of your money would you allocate to going to the fair?”

- **Vignette 3** (Food): “The ration in the house is nearly over. When you go to the store, how much of your money would you allocate for food?”

- **Vignette 4** (Healthcare): “Your child has been suffering from severe cough and cold for the past few days. How much of your money would you allocate for going to the nearest doctor?”

Following is an illustration of how this task is played. Suppose you have an initial investment of Rs. 50 (10 five-rupee coins), then you can choose to allocate the coins as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Round 3</th>
<th>Vignette 1</th>
<th>Vignette 2</th>
<th>Vignette 3</th>
<th>Vignette 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(₹ 0, no coins)</td>
<td>(₹ 15, three coins)</td>
<td>(₹ 5, one coin)</td>
<td>(₹ 20, four coins)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Round 3: You decide to spend ₹ 0 on Vignette 1, ₹ 15 on Vignette 2, ₹ 5 on Vignette 3, and ₹ 20 on Vignette 4.

[Full Information Condition:]
Your spouse has decided to make the following expenditure decision:
Round 3: Your spouse has spent ₹ 0 on Vignette 1, ₹ 15 on Vignette 2, ₹ 5 on Vignette 3, and ₹ 20 on Vignette 4]

- We will randomly select one of the situations, and give you the return on your expenditure decision, only for the third round. This return will either be double of the expenditure decision, or it will be the same as the expenditure decision.

**No Information Condition**
Both spouses will receive instructions as outlined within each round.

**Full Information Condition**
These will be the same instructions as above. Except, at the end of each round, participants will be told:

- “Your spouse has decided to spend ₹ A in colour/head/Vignette 1, ₹ B in colour/head/Vignette 2, ₹ C in colour/head/Vignette 3, and ₹ D in colour/head/Vignette 4.” (The added information is provided to manipulate the information variable). This instruction has been included in parentheses after every round.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR REAL DECISIONS**

This is an experiment to study decision-making between husbands and wives in the household. The instructions are very simple. Please listen to them carefully.

- This experiment consists of two players, your spouse and yourself, with a few rounds.
- During the task, you will be given a certain amount of money. This money will be given as five-rupee coins. In total, there will be 20 five-rupee coins divided between your spouse and yourself. You will randomly receive some number of coins.
- It is not necessary that you and your spouse will have the same number of coins.
- First, you will be required to state your intention to purchase commodities from a list that is given to you. This list will contain the names of the commodities and their prices. Any unspent tokens will not be given to you, so you should attempt to use all the money you have. Once you have filled up the list, please submit it to the experimenter.
- Please fill in the order form for the commodities that you wish to purchase.
- There are no right or wrong decisions; please make your decisions as truthfully as possible.

Any questions? Yes – Ask me.
No – Continue.

**Sample Intention Order List**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painkiller (Crocin)</td>
<td>₹17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>₹17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notebooks</td>
<td>₹13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>₹39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After participants have filled in their intentions to purchase commodities, they will be given the following instructions:

- You will now be taken to the shop where you will be able to decide which commodities you would finally like to purchase.
- Once you have filled up the list, please submit it to the shopkeeper. He will arrange for your commodities and you will receive them in a bag. Please pay the amount allocated in the order list to the shopkeeper.

If you have any questions, or need assistance of any kind, please ask the experimenter. We expect and appreciate your cooperation. We assure you that the results of this experiment or any other details will not be disclosed to anyone, and you will not be identified by name. The data collected are strictly for the purposes of research.

### Sample Expenditure Order List
[Please indicate below what you will spend]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painkiller (Crocin)</td>
<td>₹17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>₹34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notebooks</td>
<td>₹13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>₹52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biscuit Packets</td>
<td>₹15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>₹30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chowkidani Tickets</td>
<td>₹30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>₹75</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>₹116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Full Information

[This instruction will be given AFTER intention lists are filled, but BEFORE participants fill in the final order form.]

Your spouse intends to make the following expenditure choices:

### [Spouse Name] Sample Intention Order List
[Please indicate below what you intend to spend]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Painkiller (Crocin)</td>
<td>₹17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notebooks</td>
<td>₹13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biscuit Packets</td>
<td>₹15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>₹15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chowkidani Tickets</td>
<td>₹30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>₹90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>₹75</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>₹105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table A.1: Characteristics and Program Data for Dindigul District (Tamil Nadu)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>As of April 1st, 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>6266.64 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>2,159,775</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex ratio (number of females per 1000 males)</td>
<td>0.998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate (%)</td>
<td>68.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Blocks</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Panchayats</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I Job Card</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Job Cards [In millions]</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Workers [In millions]</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste worker % as of total Workers</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Active Job Cards [In millions]</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Active Workers [In millions]</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>II Progress</strong></td>
<td>FY 2014-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person days Generated so far [In millions]</td>
<td>13.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Person days out of Total (%)</td>
<td>87.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average days of employment provided per Household</td>
<td>58.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Person Days for Scheduled Caste Households</td>
<td>58.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No of HHs completed 100 Days of Wage Employment</td>
<td>23,901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% payments generated within 15 days</td>
<td>20.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Households Worked [In millions]</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Individuals Worked [In millions]</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Men Worked</td>
<td>16.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Women Worked</td>
<td>83.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Scheduled Caste Worked</td>
<td>21.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>III Works</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total No. of Works Taken up (New + Spillover) [In ‘000s]</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Ongoing Works [In ‘000s]</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Completed Works</td>
<td>5,495</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Expenditure on Agriculture &amp; Agriculture Allied Works</td>
<td>90.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IV Financial Progress</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditure [₹ in millions]</td>
<td>1839.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Expenditure [% of total]</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Wage rate per day per person [₹]</td>
<td>125.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Cost Per Day Per Person [₹]</td>
<td>139.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MGNREGS database, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India
(http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lvl_details_dashboard_new.aspx)
## Section I: Application Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title:</th>
<th>Defining Empowerment: The Relationship Between Intra-household Bargaining Power and Program Participation in Rural India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of Submission:</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed Start Date:</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; August 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP Ethics Project ID Number:</td>
<td>015-012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed End Date:</td>
<td>31&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; November 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Applicant(s) Details:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name:</th>
<th>Hansika Kapoor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position Held:</td>
<td>Research Author, Department of Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>1103 Hillside, A wing, Raheja Vihar, Powai, Mumbai – 400 072</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hk@monkprayogshala.in">hk@monkprayogshala.in</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone:</td>
<td>+91 91 67 226464</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Name:</th>
<th>Anirudh Tagat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Position Held:</td>
<td>Research Author, Department of Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address:</td>
<td>Address: Flat 102, Building No. 8, Shanthi Park Apartments, Jayanagar 9th Block, Bangalore – 560069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:at@monkprayogshala.in">at@monkprayogshala.in</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone:</td>
<td>+91 96 19 814988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project Location(s):**

- 4116, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Oberoi Garden Estates, C Wing, Off Saki Vihar Road, near Chandivali Studios, Powai, Mumbai – 400072
- AND/OR
- Proposed location for field experiment: Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu

**Signature of Applicant(s):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Hansika Kapoor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>8&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; May 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Anirudh Tagat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Section II: Details of the Project

Overview of the study:

This project seeks to understand the impact of large scale employment guarantee programmes (specifically, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, or MGNREGS) on intra-household bargaining. We aim to do this by extending a well-established field experiment design to compare household allocation outcomes for participants and non-participants.

The key research questions are:
1. Does participation in MGNREGS improve women’s bargaining power in the household? Are there specific heuristics associated with outcomes at the household level as a result of program participation?
2. How does information-sharing between the decision-makers in the family influence the bargaining process and consumption outcomes? Does this also interact with program participation?
3. How do these changes in intra-household bargaining power and women’s empowerment affect household-level development outcomes such as labor market participation, access to public goods (such as schools, health care centres, sanitation facilities), and ability to hold elected representatives to account?

Method:
Much of the proposed experiment will be adapted from Mani (2011), with the addition of a new treatment for program participation.

In this experiment, a husband-wife pair will be given endowments at the start of the experiment and preferences for sharing rules will be elicited via their choice of investing the endowments (completely) under various heads of expenditure. In order to keep the experimental design tractable, between-pair variation in share of household income (as an initial endowment) will take any one of five proportions (70-60-50-40-30 percent). This will be a control variable, in that equal numbers of pairs receive each of the five proportions of the initial endowment. There will be three treatment conditions to the extension of the household bargaining experiment (Mani, 2011): share in household income (randomly allocated by the experimenter, as a control variable); information about expenditure decisions of other member of household (information available or unavailable to both participants in the pair); and program participation (sample selection at four levels: husband in program, wife in program, husband and wife in program, neither in program). Thus, a 2 (information) x 4 (program participation) design will result, with eight conditions in which share in household income will be equally controlled.

In the baseline case, both members of the family will have no information of the other person’s decision (i.e. the female takes the decision independently), and neither will be involved in program participation. Under the assumption that a household is not a uniform unit, expenditure decisions will determine perceived control over household resources, and therefore serve as an indicator of intra-household bargaining power. Under the program participation treatment, we allow those who participate in welfare programs (determined using matching estimators on survey data) to have varying income shares in the household. Essentially, since both players of the household decide independently, preferences for expenditure are also expected to differ.

Funding:

This project is being funded by the Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP) under the 3rd call for funding (experimental) under the Policy Impact Evaluation Research Initiative (PIERI) theme.
### Section III: Details of Participants

#### Recruitment procedures:

All participants will be recruited on a voluntary basis. On the basis of power calculations, we expect to recruit between 500 and 800 individuals in husband-wife pairs. They will also be presented with a consent form before participating. The consent form would include details of the researchers conducting the study, general instructions, potential risks, and benefits. Participants will be informed that they may withdraw at any time during the study without penalty by informing the experimenter. The experiment instructions and protocol will be adapted from Mani (2011). All instructions and explanations will be provided to a husband-wife pair solely by the experiment coordinator in the local language. During the experiment briefing, all subjects will be informed that their information will be completely confidential and will not be traced back to either of them. The purpose of the experiment for debriefing (once the experiment concludes) will be communicated as examining ‘decisions related to financial matters in the household’.

#### Payments and Incentives:

Participants will receive a fixed show-up fee of approximately ₹150 for participating in the experiment. They will be informed that there would be an opportunity for them to earn over and above this amount depending on the decisions taken during the experiment. In the case of hypothetical decisions, it will be clearly emphasized that the reward will depend on a randomly chosen decision, depending on the role of a die, so that they take all expenditure decisions seriously (or at least treat them with equal importance). In the case of real decisions, it will be clearly emphasized that they will get to keep the commodities purchased as a reward for taking part in the experiment. In the Informed Consent Form, participants will only be told that they will be adequately compensated for their time, without revealing the amount of money, to prevent potential biases in expenditure decisions.

A copy of the consent form is as under:

Please consider the following information before deciding to participate in this research.

**PURPOSE:** To study decisions related to financial matters in the household.

**WHO IS CONDUCTING THIS STUDY:** This study is being conducted by Anirudh Tagat, Research Author at the Department of Economics, Monk Prayogshala (+91 96 19 814988), Hansika Kapoor, Research Author at Monk Prayogshala (+91 91 67 226464), and Savita Kulkarni, Assistant Professor, Symbiosis School of Economics, Pune.

**HAS THIS STUDY BEEN APPROVED?** Yes, this study has received Ethical Approval from the IRB at Monk Prayogshala, in August 2014 (#015-012). For queries regarding the same, you may contact nd@monkprayogshala.in

**WHAT YOU WILL DO:** You will begin by providing some basic information about yourself. Following this, the coordinator will assign a unique number to you that will ensure that your real name is not used. Please ensure that you keep your identity token with you at all times during the experiment. This experiment consists of two players, your spouse and yourself, with a few rounds.

- The game will begin with a practice round, so that you understand the rules of the game.
- During each round, you will be given a certain amount of money. This money will be given as five-rupee coins. In total, there will be 20 five-rupee coins divided between your spouse and yourself. You will randomly receive some number of...
coins in a given round.

• It is not necessary that you and your spouse will have the same number of coins at the start of each round.

Hypothetical Task:
• During each round, you will be required to allocate all five-rupee coins in different bowls. These bowls can stand for different expenses for the household. For example, you may have to allocate the five-rupee coins between buying milk and going to a doctor.
• The five-rupee coins will be allocated to you at the start of every round; no five-rupee coins will be carried over across rounds.

Real Task:
• First, you will be required to state your intention to purchase commodities from a list that is given to you. This list will contain the names of the commodities and their prices. Any unspent tokens will not be given to you, so you should attempt to use all the money you have. Once you have filled up the list, please submit it to the experimenter.
• Please fill in the order form for the commodities that you wish to purchase.

After participants have filled in their intentions to purchase commodities, they will be given the following instructions:
• You will now be taken to the shop where you will be able to decide which commodities you would finally like to purchase.
• Once you have filled up the list, please submit it to the shopkeeper. He will arrange for your commodities and you will receive them in a bag. Please pay the amount allocated in the order list to the shopkeeper.

If you have any questions, or need assistance of any kind, please ask the experimenter. We expect and appreciate your cooperation. We assure you that the results of this experiment or any other details will not be disclosed to anyone, and you will not be identified by name. The data collected are strictly for the purposes of research.

There are no right or wrong decisions; please play the game as truthfully as possible. Further instructions will be provided during the course of the task. It is anticipated that the entire experiment will require your presence at the centre for 45 mins.

RISKS: There are NO monetary, ethnic, or emotional risks associated with this experiment. You will not be asked to spend any money of your own during the course of this experiment. In the event that your decision-making is hindered or you are uncomfortable/stressed while taking decisions at any particular time please prompt the experimenter and you can exit the experimental area. Should you wish to consult a doctor, this will be arranged for by the experimenter.

BENEFITS: On completion, you will be adequately compensated for taking part in the experiment, as well as any additional rewards that you may have gained during the experiment. These will be paid directly into your individual bank accounts [in the event that the rewards result from a real purchase task, you will be allowed to keep these purchased items].

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your participation will remain strictly confidential and your responses will not be associated with your identity. The results may be published in a research paper, and you may request to have a copy of the same once it is published. The results may also be used to inform policymakers about the state of welfare programs in general, but your identities will not be associated or shared with any of these individuals.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty. If at any time during the study you begin to feel uncomfortable, you may exit the study by informing the experimenter in charge.

CONTACT: If you have any questions, comments or feedback regarding this study, you can contact us at +91 96 19 814988
Risks to Participants:

The proposed experiment will be executed taking complete cognizance of various ethical, social, and gender issues that may arise. Since the proposed experiment will take place in villages in Tamil Nadu, the research coordinators managing local administration of the experiment will be recruited locally, and will speak the local language (Tamil) and be fully aware of local customs. These research and experiment coordinators will also be matched by gender with the participants (i.e., only female experiment coordinators will administer the experiment to female participants), and be fully sensitized to maintaining full confidentiality and privacy of the participant’s decision in order to minimize any apprehension or response bias. Since the resource allocation experiment may involve real commodities, participants will be clearly informed about potential risks and benefits of taking part in the experiment. Further, individual payments to individual bank accounts will be used to circumvent the problems associated with making joint payments to husbands and wives.

Confidentiality:

Anonymity of data will be maintained once it is collected. The data will be available to the researchers working on this project only. All data on computers will be password protected. The data will be used for the sole purpose of academic publications.

Section IV: Signature of the Ethics Committee

Proposal Title: Defining Empowerment: The Relationship Between Intra-household Bargaining Power and Program Participation in Rural India

Name(s) of the researcher(s) submitting the proposal:

Hansika Kapoor, Research Author, Department of Psychology
Anirudh Tagat, Research Author, Department of Economics

Committee’s Comments and Recommendation (replies to comments in italics):

Nikita D’Souza:

1. What are the differences between your experiment and Mani (2011)? What will be the average time in each sitting?

Mani (2011) deals with the impact of control over household-level outcomes. She uses an experimental approach where participants are required to allocate money across different investment options. The similarity to our experiment is only related to the first round (practice round) of the household allocation task, where payoffs are randomly determined. However, we do not wish to study future gains from investment, but rather immediate-return expenditure decisions (hence the proposal to deal with real commodities). Mani’s key objective in the experiment is to simulate a tradeoff between control over household income and efficiency of decisions, while we do not wish to manipulate the share of household income, even though we do want to study how information availability will influence decision-making. The experiment will take approximately 45 minutes per husband-wife pair.
2. Is there any way to minimize communication between participants to reduce bias during the program?
Communication will be minimised based on the division of people in different booths - at least within the experiment, because we won’t be able to control what they tell each other outside of the experiment room.

3. It seems fine from the ethical point of view as long as there is informed consent in the local language and willingness to participate.

4. The only concern I have too is that there could be a lot of confounding factors like the ones she (Prachi Bhuptani) mentioned affecting their decision making. While some you are able to measure and control, others might mediate or even change the outcome.
Most confounding factors related to social and demographic characteristics will be controlled for in the propensity-score matching methodology while selecting participants.

Sharanya V:

1. Can you please explain the relevance of using the condition both husband and wife participating in the mentioned program? What is its relevance, if you are interested in studying only how the bargaining skills of the women change when they take part in the MGNREGS program?
If both are participants, then in an ideal world, the husband would recognise or be more attuned to the increased autonomy of the wife (if any, as a result of MGNREGS participation). So in that sense, this will tell us if men are also empowered to take decisions independently and “respect” the decision of the women in the household. We’ll also be able to find the difference between this treatment and the one where only the wife is the participant, or where only the husband is the participant. Hope that makes sense.
We already have information on how income earned outside MGNREGS and plan to use this as well to test whether it influences intra-household bargaining.

2. The only thought that I had after reading the proposal is if the way the participants bargain would be affected by the whole experimental setting (that is knowing that it is an experiment and that they have been chosen for it).

Prachi Bhuptani:

1. Under the section “Risks to participants”, you go on about how the researchers are trained in local customs and languages. I would include that point in Recruitment procedures as well as methodology so that it answers lingering questions of confounds (when coming to methodology and recruitment) and people don’t have to read the entire thing and use points from one section to answer questions regarding other section.
We have made these additions in the relevant sections.

2. What daily/household items are the participants allowed to buy? It shouldn’t be harmful items like tobacco or alcohol (I imagine there is alcohol dependency amongst daily wage laborers). Just have a sentence or two stating that the items will be screened properly. It would be better if you provide the actual list of items. I know you have mentioned a list in the methodology sheet. Include that in the IRB if it is the final list.
All items will be pre-screened and pre-determined on the basis of pilots of the experiment in July 2015. The final list of items will be decided on the basis of success and efficiency of the allocation experiment tested in the pilots.

3. How are you planning on recording consent? Written consent may not be possible as some of your participants may be illiterate. If you are taking verbal consent, you need to record it and save the audio file in a safe location. This needs to go in the method as well as IRB.
As far as informed consent goes, we may not be taking verbal consent since it may be difficult to store and validate. We propose to
obtain thumb impressions (at the least) as a form of signed consent. These consent forms will be stored securely.

4. Also, in the recruiting para, you did mention that you will recruit married couples. However, some of your questions fall under the child-theme. I know that you are looking at a variety of variable like age for recruiting, which means that you will recruit couples with children. But you can try that make it more explicit. 
Duly noted. Since all couples may or may not have children, we propose to control for this in the propensity-score matching process itself, so that all differences between participants are controlled for in this aspect.

5. Since gender issue may arise over the course of the study, the debriefing needs to be particularly strong. You can mention the purpose of the study in the debriefing along with resources for additional help (I am mentioning these because I imagine domestic violence is widely prevalent among lower class married couple and you don’t want this study to be one of the triggering incident).
This has been added to the section on ‘Ethical, social, gender or environmental issues or risks in relation to your experiment’ (section B, part 5).

I have discussed this project with the principal researcher who is suitably qualified to carry out this research and I approve it. I am satisfied that checks have been successfully completed.

Signatures (Members of Ethics Committee):

(Chair – Nikita D’Souza)  
(Members – Prachi Bhuptani and Sharanya V)

Date: 26th May 2015
Status: Approved