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Perspectives on rights and public service delivery among female urban poor in Delhi

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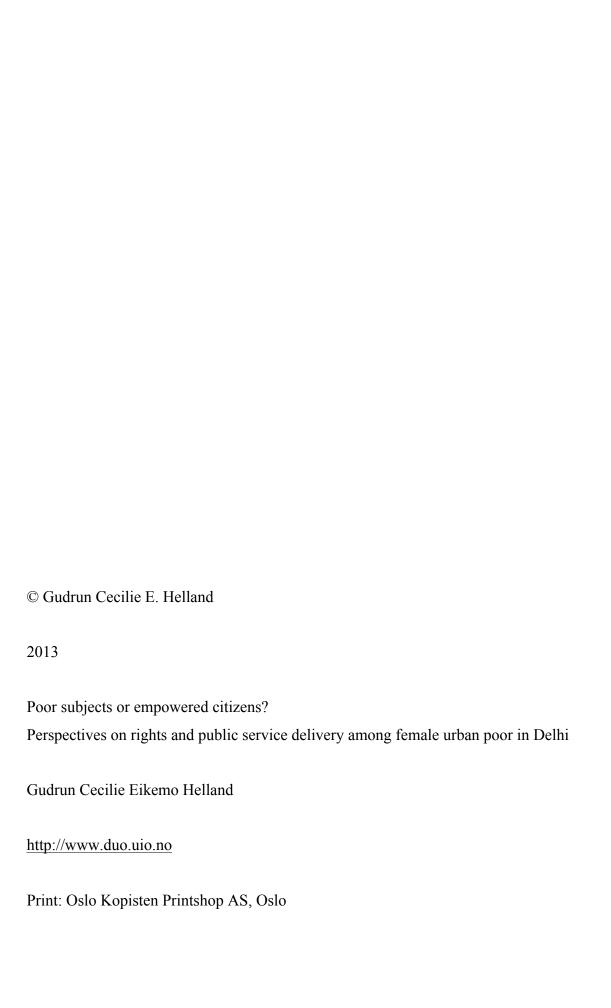
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For my parents, Sissel & Kjell Helland.

Summary

How do the female members of the urban poor population in Delhi view and interact with the government? This thesis seeks to give the answer in light of a public service delivery collaboration between state and civil society: The Mission Convergence Programme. The frame for exploration is a month long fieldwork done in and around a Gender Resource Centre in East Delhi. How do women in the locality use this centre, and how do they view the social security delivered by the state? Do they see themselves as poor subjects or empowered citizens? It appeared that respondents deliberately would use something I have called the 'poor woman's discourse'. By using this, they highlight their weaknesses, and as such, also their eligibility for being targets of various welfare programmes in an area and a time where both local and international NGOs as well as the government seems to focus much of their attentions and efforts on the urban poor women in need of empowerment.

In addition to discuss how the urban poor view and experience the state and its collaboration with civil society organizations, the thesis elucidates on the collaboration between the state and the NGO. How is it working? What are the hiccups in implementation? Does the collaboration have the potential to transform the ambivalent relationship between the state and the urban poor?

This thesis hopes to give the answer.

Words of gratitude

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1 Introduction

The Mission Convergence Programme *(Samajik Suvidha Sangham)* was launched in 2005, and is an urban developmental collaboration between the Government of Delhi, the Planning Commission and the civil society, most noticeably NGOs. The Programme was awarded with a United Nations Public Service Award in 2011 because:

> Mission Convergence represents a paradigm shift in governance with concrete steps toward holistic human development with poverty alleviation and women's empowerment as core objectives. To make the government accessible and accountable to the people, a policy was designed and implemented in partnership with community-based organizations. The Mission sought greater community participation by creating a bottom-up implementation structure that engages 124 community-based organizations working alongside government officials in the nine districts of Delhi. This is a holistic human development, poverty alleviation, women's empowerment programme and it has strengthened Delhi government's rights-based approach wherein vulnerable groups are no longer seen as beneficiaries but as entitlement holders with the right to efficiently receive basic welfare services from the government.[1]

This is all fine and well, and must be considered a very laudable effort. But, how is it perceived and used at the ground level?

This thesis seeks to elucidate on how female members of the urban poor population in Delhi view and engage with the state. The entry point of exploration is qualitative fieldwork done at a Gender Resource Centre-*Suvidha Kendr* (GRC-SK) operating in a slum area in East Delhi, run by one of these 124 community-based organizations. Has the collaboration, as one might expect after reading the quote above, had any effect on how the state is perceived, and more importantly, how women in the area see themselves and their rights in relation to the state?

Motivation for choosing the research topic

During the spring of 2010, I was enrolled in two very interesting courses at the University of Oslo: One was the Sociology Departments' *Internationalization, Citizenship and the Welfare state*,[2] and the other was IKOS' *India today: Growth, environment and democracy*.[3] These two courses together were a potent cocktail of inspiration for a budding researchers' mind. I

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[1] http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un-dpadm/unpan048057.pdf
[2] http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/sv/iss/SOS2800/
[3] http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ikos/SAS3500/

have long been very interested in women in India and their rights, and wanted to mix my interests with some of the subject covered in these courses for my thesis.

I spent the autumn of 2011 being an intern for the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) in Delhi, through the University of Oslo's (UiO) International Project Semester (Interpro).[4] During fieldwork for my Interpro project report "Accessing Education in India: A case study of out-of-school children in an East Delhi slum" I noticed that there was a plethora of community centres and activities for the urban poor run by NGOs in the area. Many of the inhabitants use them actively, and I had the impression that this was something they increasingly relied on in their daily lives. Correspondingly, I learned about the Mission Convergence Programme, a public private community partnership (PPCP) on public service delivery in Delhi and grew curious. At first glance, it appeared that the public service delivery and the implementation of governmental welfare programmes were in a way being outsourced to non-government actors. However, the NGOs do not have a legal obligation of delivering social security to Indian citizens, the state does. On the other hand, it is no secret that public service delivery on part of the state to its more vulnerable populations has been found lacking in many ways (Aase, 2010). I had read a bit about this, and now I got a chance to see for myself: How might this collaboration affect the social security accessible for the urban poor?

During the initial research I discovered that the Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs (NUPI) had a research project closely related to mine: *Slums, states and citizens: Policing, welfare services and political participation among the urban poor in New Delhi, Nairobi and Durban.* The research project has two key components: To map the slum dwellers' relations with the state, and to explain the nature of these relations. It aims to produce robust knowledge about the character of state-society relations and their implications for efforts to reduce poverty in urban slums.[5]

This confirmed my belief that these topics are important, and perhaps are being currently researched to a larger extent.

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[4] http://www.uio.no/studier/emner/hf/ikos/AAS4900/index-eng.html
[5] http://www.forskningsradet.no/servlet/Satellite?c=Prosjekt&cid=1253964649433&pagename=norglobal/Hovedsidemal&p=1224698191886

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Why women?

There were several reasons to choose female respondents. Women's situations and rights in India is one of my main research interests, and I wanted it to be a natural extension from my internship at ISST. Further, after preliminary readings of the theory to be discussed below, it appeared that female viewings of the developmental state had not been subject to much focused study, even though there is reason to believe that the female urban poor might be particularly distant from the state. Lastly, the focus on women and 'empowerment' is rampant in development projects and development research today, and is considered a very 'hot' topic by international and local civil society organizations alike.

Main foci of the thesis

The main foci of this thesis are two-fold: First and foremost, it discusses the views and experiences of the female urban poor in relation to the state and notions of social security. Secondly, and to a lesser extent, it seeks to shed a light on the collaboration between the government and the civil society in providing social security to the urban poor. Hopefully, this will enable us to get a dual perspective of social security delivery in India: One of how it is received and perceived by the citizens, the other of how it is viewed by government officials and the civil society.

This thesis will not give a detailed historical account of India as a developmental state. Neither will it discuss the Mission Convergence Programme and its inner workings in great detail, as the focus of this thesis is on the target group of the Programme, the female urban poor.

Research Questions

As these foci are broad, to say the least, it was necessary to phrase a set of research questions to sharpen the discussion:

1) How do the female urban poor view the state and its responsibilities? How do they view themselves in relation to it? How do they seek to engage with the state in matters of social security, what are the strategies they employ?

2) How does the increasing collaboration between the state and the NGO sector in public service delivery affect the respective actors – the government, the civil society and the urban poor? Does it have an effect on the expectations the urban poor have of the state in delivering social services?

Most importance is given to the first set of research questions, whereas the other is used as an assisting set to attempt to give a more detailed picture.

The views of the urban poor

The aim of this thesis is not to evaluate the Mission Convergence Programme, but rather to explore how the women in Kalyanpuri, representatives from the target group of the Programme, might use the GRC-SK and how they view themselves in relation to the state. I was especially interested in how they viewed their status as citizens, their rights and responsibilities pertaining to their social security. Did they view themselves as citizens with rights the state was legally obliged to fulfill, or rather as beneficiaries or clients of a patronal state? How was their impression of the state's view of them? Did they view the GRC-SK differently from other government projects and initiatives because of the strong participation of an NGO? As one of the expressed aims of the Mission Convergence Programme is to distribute awareness and produce empowered citizens, I was curious if the women would describe themselves as such.

During the fieldwork I discovered that many of the women resorted to the same mode of speaking when talking about themselves and their rights in relation to the government. Many of them would downplay their agency and awareness. They would frequently refer to themselves as poor, helpless and uneducated, often ignored by the state. What was curious, though, was that this was often an abrupt change in the interviews. Earlier in the conversation they had perhaps highlighted the effects of the GRC-SK: how they had changed and now felt more empowered, more capable of standing on their own two feet. The more interviews I conducted, the more I got the feeling that the women chose their words very carefully when it came to their rights and their relationship with the state. It was almost like they employed a particular narrative, centered on their vulnerability, their lack of agency. Could this narrative be a strategy of mediation between themselves and the state, in the realm Partha Chatterjee calls 'political society'? I have called this narrative 'the poor woman's discourse', and we will discuss this discourse further in chapter five.

This vulnerability, I will argue in this thesis, *is* a form of capital in an environment where a plethora of NGO- and government projects are being targeted towards a particular kind of person. In India today, the right kind of 'target' for an increasing number of welfare projects is a woman, from the 'vulnerable population', living in the slums, staying at home. Perhaps she is illiterate. The most important factor however, is that she is not *jānkārī* – she is not

knowledgeable. This is crucial because everybody, both local and international NGOs and the state, now wants to make her *jānkārī* – she should be empowered and brought forward! She is the target of the new Direct Cash Transfer scheme, she is the focus of the Self Help Groups – she is considered the key to lift her family out of poverty. *Stri Shakti*, the initiative that initially opened the GRCs, literally means woman power. Women empowerment is arguably one of the biggest priorities within social development in India today. This being so, has the women of Kalyanpuri found emphasizing their eligibility, as it were, a successful way of negotiating their claims? Or, is this way of speaking of themselves and the state simply formed by many experiences and stories of state encounters during their lives?

The collaboration between state and NGOs

The second, albeit smaller, focus of this thesis is to look at the relationship between the state and the NGO sector in India, as its departing point is a collaboration between the two. Is the relationship between them affecting their collaboration, and if so, how? In addition, I felt it would be enlightening to explore how representatives from the government and the NGO sector view each other and the urban poor, for whom they are working. Are the urban poor viewed as citizens or 'beneficiaries'? Corresponding to Partha Chatterjee's distinction between populations and citizens, the difference between the two is crucial.

The implementation of the Mission Convergence Programme will not be subject to evaluation, as it is outside both the scope of this thesis and my abilities as a researcher. Rather, the implementation will be briefly discussed using empirical data from the fieldwork. As it appears that partnerships between the state, the civil society and the private sector are increasing in India, knowledge on how such projects might function in practice is useful. Further, it is my opinion that the Mission Convergence Programme does have the potential to alter the ways in which the urban poor get access to their rights and entitlements, and as such, the workings of it should not be completely overlooked in this thesis.

An introduction to the Mission Convergence Programme

The Mission Convergence Programme corresponds to an ideal of 'good governance', an agenda that has two main goals: to promote empowerment and citizen participation on the one hand, and enhancing the transparency, efficiency and accountability of governments on the other (Desai, 2012, 17). As the quote from the UN Public Service Award above shows, the Mission Convergence Programme is lauded as an innovative and exiting new take on

public service delivery in India. Its aim is to radically change the way the government relates to economically weaker sections of the population by rooting the 'institutional mechanism' of public service delivery within the communities.

The Mission Convergence is a so-called public private community partnership (PPCP) model, an institutional reform initiative inspired by the Bhagidari system, a Government-Citizen partnership in Delhi. The Mission Convergence is the converging platform of nine departments in the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD).[6] The idea is that the Mission Convergence, not the individual departments, is now administering all the social service delivery efforts of these departments. Further, it is collaborating with Community-Based Organizations in the implementation of schemes. This is a revolutionary take on public service delivery in Delhi, because the citizens now have one state actor to relate to, instead of nine. Thus, the idea is that the rights and services the people are entitled to become easier for them to reach.

The Mission Convergence Programme is viewed ambiguously within the government. According to the PMU-representative, some government servants feel it would be better to professionalize the separate departments rather than to set up a new and extensive organizational structure. However, the departments are compartmentalized, whereas the Mission Convergence Programme aims to move horizontally, across departments. This is not appreciated by everyone, none the least because the Programme is addressing issues of discretion, misuse of power and the wrongful inclusions that sometimes happen in social service delivery in India.[7]

The government officials interviewed during fieldwork explained that the main reason for initiating the Mission Convergence Programme was the lacking relationship between the government and the urban poor:

> The Mission Convergence has been set up only for this reason. That because there are barriers between the government and the community and the community is not able to access the government – That is why this arrangement has been made. To facilitate the access of the people to the Government through NGOs, through Mission Convergence and to the departments.

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[6] The Health and Family Welfare Department, Education Department, Women and Child Development Department, Department of Social Welfare, Department of SC/ST/OBS and Minority welfare, Food and Civil Supplies, Labour, I.T Department and Department of Urban Development.
[7] The Department of Social Welfare has pulled itself out of the programme, leaving 8 converging departments.

The concept was of single window facilitation. The different departments of the Government of Delhi have their own welfare schemes, a number of schemes. But the problem is that despite they have a lot of funds for the welfare schemes, people cannot approach it. The schemes are *available*, but they are not *accessible*. It's a very prominent gap. Mission Convergence was actually initiated to make the schemes accessible to the people for whom they are meant. […] So everybody finally thought that there should be single window facilitation, one unit *yaha par*[8] all the departments can converge for the welfare schemes, and the people don't have to roam around. They'll get all the benefits, all the information, from one particular place.

The *one particular place* in the quote above is the GRC-SKs. The centres are the community based operational arms of the Mission Convergence and the human interface between the urban poor and the Programme. It is meant to facilitate the outreach of the governments' welfare programmes to each vulnerable citizen of Delhi (GRC-SK Resource Manual, 2). Functional and well-operated GRC-SKs thus becomes imperative to assure the success of this initiative, as they are meant to function as the governments' representatives at the grass roots, and the peoples' representatives when dealing with the government.

The overall aim of the GRC-SK is to make rights and entitlements more easily accessible for the urban poor, as well as to foster women empowerment and to build general awareness amongst the inhabitants. It should function as 'single window facilitation and empowerment centres at the grassroots level' (ibid, 12). It aims to achieve social inclusion by focusing on vulnerable women and poor families, especially those who have been left out of the existing welfare system either because of the lack of knowledge about welfare entitlement or because they could not prove their right to it for lack of documentary proof. (ibid, 17).

A note on words used

For broad discussions regarding the three actors, I have decided to use the word 'community' and 'locality' interchangeably. Using the word 'community' is problematic when discussing the urban poor, because in reality they are not one large community, but many small and sometimes segregated ones. However, 'community' is the term used for them throughout the Mission Convergence Programmes' terminology, and is also heavily used by the NGOs operating in urban poor localities throughout Delhi, ISST being no exception. Thus, I have used the word 'community' in chapter six, discussing the collaboration from the state and

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[8] On which

NGOs views'. I have used the word 'locality' for describing the general area in chapter four and six, as they are centered on the women's perspectives. Their meaning of the word 'community' is much more nuanced than how the NGOs or the government use it. Here, it is used to denote their immediate neighborhood. I might use the plural 'communities' as a substitute for 'locality', where it suits the context throughout the thesis.

By 'civil society' I mean to denote various civil society organizations working for the urban poor, including, but not limited to, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). It must not be confused with Partha Chatterjee's use of 'civil society', which is discussed in chapter two.

I interchangeably use the words 'narrative' and 'discourse' when discussing the views the respondents have on themselves and the government. A working definition of discourse must therefore be employed. According to Jørgensen and Phillips, a discourse is a particular way to speak about and understand the world. The way we speak does not simply mirror our surroundings, identities and relations neutrally – it plays an active part in the creation and changing of them (Jørgensen and Phillips, 1998, 9). Thus, a discourse is loaded with our previous experiences and perceptions of how the world works, as well as our expectations and opinions of how it should be. 'Narrative' is used to denote the stories the discourse consists of.

A distinction must be made between the GRC-SK and the Community centre run by ISST in the same area. The GRC-SK is a collaborative project with the Government, whereas the other is 100 percent NGO-run. Their priorities and projects are separate, but they do collaborate from time to time. In this thesis, the GRC-SK, or sometimes just 'centre', means the collaborative centre, whereas the *Sāthi* centre means the centre run strictly by ISST.

I sometimes use Hindi words in the text; they are in italics and translated in footnotes. The most important word is *jānkārī,* meaning knowledge.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is built up as follows: Following the introduction is a theory chapter that aims to elucidate on the main academic works used to shed light on my findings. The methodology chapter covers the methods used and the ethical considerations of doing fieldwork in an urban slum area. Chapter four covers the experiences the respondents have had with the state, and an analysis of the significance these experiences may have had on their outlook and view of the state. Chapter five discusses the ways in which the respondents talk of themselves and

the state, especially in relation to notions of rights, entitlements and responsibilities pertaining to their social security. Chapter six turns the perspective to the government officials and the GRC-employees, and discusses how they look at the urban poor, as well as the relationship between the two actors responsible for public service delivery within the Mission Convergence Programme. Lastly, chapter seven pull out concluding views and main points from the prior chapters.

2 Theoretical framework

As a thesis of this size cannot pretend to have an exhaustive overview of available literature, I have made a selection of texts and conceptual pairings deemed useful to shed light on my empirical findings. I have divided these into three overarching topics; Social security in the Indian context; notions of citizenship and rights; and seeing the state.

Social security in the Indian context

How is social security defined? The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines it as follows:

> The protection which society provides for its members, through a series of measures against the economic and social distress that otherwise would be caused by the stoppage or substantial reduction of earnings resulting from sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age and death; the provision of medical care, and the provision of subsidies for families with children.
>
> <div align="right">ILO, cited in Iyer & Prabhu (2001,31-32)</div>

Several scholars, amongst them Sai Ma, believe that using this definition in the Indian context is insufficient because of high levels of poverty and illiteracy, poor employment conditions and a large informal sector of the economy. Because a large portion of the population falls outside of the social security described by ILO above, a further distinction is needed to discuss the complex forms of social security in India.

Promotive and protective social security

The distinction between promotive and protective social security was first made by Amartya Sen and Jean Drèze in their book *Hunger and public action* (1989). Protective social security measures focus primarily on protecting citizens from a decline in living standards, caused by unforeseen events such as famines or sharp decline. The notion corresponds roughly to ILOs definition of social security. Promotive social security, on the other hand, concerns an improvement in the living standards for increasingly larger sections of the population. This must be seen primarily as a long-run challenge (Ma, 2008), and the outcomes are not as readily visible or easily measured as the ones within protective social security. According to Sai Ma, to look at India as a 'welfare state', one must look at the sub-national level because the individual state governments, not the central government, decide most social security

measures, and thus, one can speak of 'protective welfare regimes' or 'promotive welfare regimes'. The distinction between promotive and protective social security is useful as a starting point in this thesis because the Mission Convergence Programme might be viewed as trying to converge, as it were, between the two. The Mission Convergence Programme do not have the mandate to affect the different welfare schemes offered by the various departments, but one can argue that the very idea behind the Programme is promotive. Further, as the Mission Convergence Programme has the responsibility of implementation of all the governments' schemes and projects, they are dealing simultaneously with protective and promotive measures to social security and welfare.

Notions of citizenship and rights

Closely related to the concept of social security are the corresponding notions of citizenship and rights. Articulation of these two has been complex and shifting in the Indian context (Desai, 2012, 7). Notions of citizenships in India are plural; citizenship itself is differentiated and greatly corresponding to aspects like class, caste, religion and gender (Roy, 2010, 20). In his essay 'Citizenship & Social Class' (1950) T.H. Marshall analyzed the progressively expanding formal citizenship in Britain and how it was defined by an expansion of rights: starting with civil rights, followed by political rights and lastly, social rights. It has been questioned how well Marshall's analysis works in non-British context. However, it is still a fruitful starting point when discussing citizenship rights in India as, following Independence, a configuration of civil, political and social rights was constitutionalized in the Nehruvian developmental state, inspired by the same ideas as T.H. Marshall (Desai, 2012,7). In addition to the constitutional rights, a set of directive principles was formed that instructed the state to 'promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all institutions of the national life'[9]. These directive principles are meant to guide the state in the framing of policies and laws, but they are not constitutional rights.

Many of the fundamental rights in India have arguably been protected more in theory than in practice for most Indians since Independence, not least because of socio-political transformations, capitalist development and colonial legacies in the country. Further, the directive principles have not always been taken into regard when framing laws and policies, or in the implementation of them (ibid). There is not scope for a discussion of the fluctuations

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[9] Part IV: Directive principles of State Policy, Constitution of India, cited in Desai (2012, 7).

of citizenship in India in this thesis, but it is crucial for our further discussion to note that there have been, and still is, profound disjunctions between the formal and the real aspects of citizenship in India.

Formal and real citizenship

Partha Chatterjee contends that because of their previous colonial status, many states in Asia and Africa have experienced a distinct chronology in the development of citizenship and rights, which does not correspond with T.H Marshall's description of gradual expansion of citizenship rights. Despite the fact that the colonial administration did not consider them as citizens, the populations in India were nonetheless granted numerous social rights, in what Chatterjee calls 'technologies of governmentality' predating the nation-state. This entails the classification, description and enumeration of population groups as the objects of policy relating to a plethora of government functions to make the governing of populations easier (Chatterjee, 2004, 36).

Chatterjee divides citizenship into two categories: formal and real citizenship. All Indians are formal citizens by force of the constitution. However, their status as real citizens is another matter.

In her book *Mapping citizenship in India* (2010), Roy claims that it is possible for individuals to be *seen* as citizens by the state while still being *treated* as subjects (Roy, 2010, 12, sited in Johansen, 2012, 9). This corresponds with Chatterjees' distinction between formal and real citizenship, and reflects how different notions of citizenship as theory and practice can exist alongside one another. This might very well be the case with the Mission Convergence Programme, as this thesis will show.

'Populations' vs. 'citizens'

Chatterjee discusses how the growth in Indian cities during the '70s and '80s resulted in the governments making more efforts to service the urban poor. However, we would be wrong to assume that this meant an actual extension of citizenship to the poor. Rather, a careful conceptual distinction was being made between *citizens* and *populations* (Roy, 2010, 136). First and foremost, he argues that the state views and responds to marginalized groups, like the urban poor, as 'populations to be managed' rather than 'proper citizens' with legitimate claims. Populations are 'empirical categories of people with specific social or economic attributes that are relevant for the administration of developmental or welfare policies'

(Chatterjee, 2004, 136). Populations are produced by the classificatory schemes of governmental knowledge, and differ from citizens in the way that, unlike citizenship, it does not imply any inherent moral claim to rights and entitlements.

Following independence, many post-colonial states were also developmental, aiming to end poverty and 'backwardness' by adopting policies of economic growth and social reform (ibid, 37). These policies, says Chatterjee, were often prompted by international and nongovernmental organizations. Further, classificatory criteria used by colonial governmental regimes to identify different populations continued into the post-colonial era, shaping the forms of both political demands and developmental policy (ibid, 37). One can argue that classificatory criteria are still very much playing a part in how the state and marginalized groups engage with each other, as this thesis will show.

The relationship between the populations and the state is different from the relationship between the state and its legal citizens. Thus, populations need to engage with the state in other ways than within the civil society, which is closed to them.

Political society

According to Chatterjee, 'civil society' is 'the closed association of modern elite groups' (Chatterjee, 2004, 4). Most of the Indian population is not included into this small section of citizens – rather, they are positioned in the realm Chatterjee has called 'political society'. As Chatterjee writes: 'Most of the inhabitants in India are only tenuously, and even then ambiguously and contextually, rights-bearing citizens in the sense imagined by the constitution. They are not, therefore, proper members of civil society and are not regarded as such by the state' (ibid, 38).

Political society is the realm of mediation between populations and the state. Chatterjee argues that the main instrumental form for mediation in postcolonial India is that of the developmental state, which seek to relate to different sections of India's population through welfare. Further, the major form for political mobilization around this project is through democracy (Chatterjee 1998, 64). This means that the mobilization that takes place in the political society is the best way for certain marginalized populations to mobilize support to influence the implementation of government policy in their favor (Sarkar, 2011, 5).

To put it differently, Chatterjee sees it as the domain of political society to facilitate the political and democratic participation of the Indian citizens whose voice is rarely heard, and the members of political society are thus able to 'force' the governmental functions and non-

governmental agencies to recognize their demands in a different way (ibid, 6). This is vital for getting access to welfare benefits and programs in India today.

Chatterjee contends that there is a specific type of politics emerging from the developmental policies of government aimed at specific population groups (Chatterjee, 2004, 40), for instance the urban poor who might transgress strict lines of legality in order to live and work in the city. Because of this, the authorities cannot treat them like other civic bodies that operate within these lines of legality. However, state actors and NGOs cannot ignore them either. Thus the urban poor are being dealt with not as citizens, but as convenient targets or beneficiaries of welfare projects aimed at marginal and underprivileged population groups. The relationship between the state and the populations manifests itself in the political society, and the population groups need to make connections outside of their groups to make their claims successfully. The state, on their side, need to engage within the terrain of political society to renew their legitimacy as providers of wellbeing, and to confront the ever-changing configurations of political demands from the populations (ibid, 41).

Seeing the state

For our purposes, the theoretical approaches discussed above form the entryway to one of our most central questions: How do the urban poor view and relate to the state? One of the most influential discussions on how poor people view the state in India is found in Stuart Corbridge et al (2005) *Seeing the state, Governance and Governmentality in India,* where they look at the ways in which poor people in rural eastern India view and engage with the state. They claim that all over India people 'seek to engage with the state as citizens, or as members of populations with legally defined rights or politically inspired expectations' (Corbridge et al, 2005, 18). This is clearly corresponding to Chatterjee's notions discussed above, but to a certain extent they disagree with Chatterjee, and seek to build further on these notions.

As their starting point is the change the Indian state made towards 'good governance' and the ways in which it sought to present itself to, and engage itself with, its vulnerable citizens in the beginning of the 2000s. According to Corbridge et al, the developments in governance policies were being 'marketed' as something of a revolution. And indeed, India has seen some change. There has been a significant reduction in the rates of income poverty in the country, and India's Human Development Index (HDI) score had risen from 0.439 in 1991 to 0.571 in 2001 (ibid, 2). These improvements might have been brought by a new regime of

governance, but it is the aim of *Seeing the State* to interrogate the government's optimism for the recent developments in governance and governmentality. They take a critical stance, and seek to explore if these new modes of governance are in fact a sign that 'poorer men and women are coming to enjoy the status of citizens, and are being engaged as such by government officers (and not simply as members of beneficiary or troublesome populations, as Chatterjee maintains)' (ibid, 3).

The reforms of public administration in India, of which the Mission Convergence Programme can be said to represent is not a new development. It has been an ongoing process for over the last 20 years, coupled with public-private partnerships in urban service provision. The aim is that they will foster a new set of relationships between state actors and the public, resulting in an informed citizenry that will both be able to make demands of the state when required, but who is also able to stand on their own feet and shoulder responsibilities of their own (ibid, 251).

Despite taking a critical viewpoint to the developmental state in India, Corbridge et al does not imply that all reform in public administration is only rhetorical fodder. They acknowledge the possibility of a change in state-poor encounters in the new 'technologies of rule' that seek to produce members of the poor into clients of the government, and as active participants in their own empowerment (ibid, 6). They disagree with Chatterjee's rigid distinction between civil and political society, stating that the reality is far more complex. Further, they emphasize that different groups of poor people meet different state agencies in a myriad of ways, resulting in a variety of experiences. Thus, we should not indulge in a reductionist way of looking at state-poor relations. Even though experiences shape how people look at the state, these sightings are never straightforward or unmediated. Many aspects shape the way we view the state – our past memories, how others view it, stories and accounts that we hear in our surroundings, as well as observations of how others are treated (ibid, 8). Corbridge et al state that there is an inherent expectation that poor people view the state through a particular lens based on their (assumedly cumbersome and negative) experiences within the ambition of reforming public administration. The aim is that with reform, this particular lens will also change.

As the Mission Convergence Programme is a reform in public administration, it will be exiting, in line with Corbridge et al, to look at the ways in which it potentially alters how the urban poor view the state.

Thinking further

The contributions discussed above have inspired several scholars. Especially relevant for our purpose is Neera Chandhoke, who writes about expectations of social security and public service delivery in Delhi in her article ''Seeing' the state in India' (2005). She found that despite the fact that the state has increasingly outsourced its public service delivery to non-state actors since the 1990's, a large percentage of her respondents still held the state to be responsible for their welfare. Political preferences and expectations, she argues, are not formed in a vacuum. Rather, the expectation towards a developmental and responsible state in India is a result of two historical processes that are interrelated: The political rhetoric and the political practices of the state, and the practices of civil society that continues to fix responsibilities on the state (Chandhoke, 2005).

It should be clear from the works discussed above that the urban poor in India must relate to the state in different ways from 'ordinary citizens'. Their life situations make them vulnerable, and they might be viewed more as populations than citizens. The entitlements and schemes targeted towards them are not because of their status as formal citizens; rather, it is because of their status as vulnerable.

However, where Chatterjee is largely critical to an extension of citizenship to the poor, Corbridge et al sees more potential for real change in the ways in which the state and the poor engage with each other. Also Roy contends that the state might *view* the poor as bona fide citizens, but still *treat* them as subjects or beneficiaries of welfare policies.

This thesis, though inspired by and based on the workings of Chatterjee and Corbridge et al, seeks to go a bit further. Firstly, I seek to explore the poor-state relations in an urban setting. The ways one encounter the government and what one expect from the state while living in a resettlement colony in the capital must be very different in many ways from how one encounter state actors when living in rural areas.

Further, the NGO-sector is very much engaged in mediation between the government and the urban poor, as well as having a substantial physical presence within the areas where the urban poor reside. These NGO-run 'community centres' appeared to offer many services that facilitate life in the city for the urban poor, especially for women and children. Thus, one can argue that the NGO-sector is a crucial actor within the political society of the urban poor, something that neither Chatterjee nor Corbridge et al has discussed to a large extent.

3 Methodology

I conducted my month-long fieldwork during March and April 2012 at a GRC-SK in an underprivileged area in East Delhi. This chapter will present the field area and the GRC-SK, as well as expound on the details of the fieldwork.

Area profile

The terminology regarding the many various settlement forms in Delhi is haphazard and used interchangeably, both in literature and in official Government reports. Often, the term 'slum' is used to cover all non-planned settlements, although the areas in question might comprise of several types of settlements (Batra, 2005). This is confusing, because various settlement types have various degrees of rights and legitimacy in the eyes of the government. This is the case with our fieldwork area, where different types of settlements have grown together over the years. Even one of the government officials interviewed was unsure of its legal status.

The area is located Trans-Yamuna in East Delhi, and is comprised of three resettlement colonies from 1977 (Banerji, 2005). Because of the mixture of settlements and *jhuggi-jhumpri* clusters (JJ-clusters),[10] the inhabitants of the area belong to a range of different socio-economic backgrounds; corresponding with the type of settlement they live in. The inhabitants are further often divided into smaller groups within the settlements, by religion or caste-affiliation, linguistic differences or state of origin, or how long they have lived there.

The fieldwork was centered in and around one of the JJ-clusters in the area. The overall locality is a mixture of brick buildings[11] and JJ-clusters, often with streets dividing them. The jhuggis vary in size and quality of structure, pertaining to the economic and social capital of the inhabitants.

Several of the respondents told me that Kalyanpuri used to be a nice area to live in, but an increase in crime and thefts had changed this. Alcoholism and gambling are large problems in the locality. Many of the male inhabitants engage in contract-based work, and spend their idle days drinking and loitering on the streets. Further, young boys frequently skip school to spend their time loitering and gambling. This is especially perceived to be the case if their mothers have to work and cannot make sure their children stay in school.

One of the respondents described the area as such:

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[10] Small, roughly built huts, often consisting of only one small room.
[11] *pukka makāns*

Girls are not safe at all, and we don't walk about alone. Even the police easily take bribes, and do not do all they're supposed to. It's not safe. Even the men don't feel it's safe. Someone can come and stab you out of the blue.

There is a high-perceived risk of being raped, and as a result many of the young girls stay safely locked in whenever their mothers cannot stay with them. The women largely avoid going outside of their own 'communities', often perceived as safer. When they have to, they go in small groups together.

Water and sanitation are a big problem in large parts of the locality. There are drains in the middle of the lanes between the *jhuggis*, which the youngest children use to relieve themselves. The drains clog up and overflow into the *jhuggis* during the monsoons. A lack of toilets makes it necessary for the women to walk far to reach a functional one, and they have to pay one rupee each time to use them. Thus, they often drink as little as possible during the day in order to avoid making the trip to the communal toilets, often using it only once a day or less.

Several of the women state that they are forced by circumstance to live in the locality - they are *mazboor.*[12] Others said that they do live there voluntarily because it enables them to invest in education for the children, but they would rather live somewhere else if able to do both.

However, it is not all bad. All the women emphasized the *ekta*[13] within their communities as a very positive aspect of living there. They would frequently say they had all become like family, because they live so close to each other. As I spent a lot of time there, I too could notice the *ekta,* and the atmosphere within the communities was friendly and neighborly.

The GRC-SK

The GRC-SK is a large concrete building located on one of the main roads going through the locality. It is centrally located, and not very difficult to find. There is a small open space behind the GRC-SK, with blocks of *jhuggis* surrounding it. The building has two floors. The upper floor holds the vocational courses and remedial classes, as well as the toilet, the storage room and the kitchen. The ground floor holds a crèche for smaller children, the office of the Project Coordinator, and the Help-desk room, where all grievances and queries are made.

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[12] Compelled, helpless
[13] Solidarity

The GRC-SK has many activities, and aim to fill various needs in the community. The most notable and successful initiative is the vocational training (VTs) in sewing and beauty culture. It is not unusual for women to enroll in both courses, one after the other. Further, the GRC-SK offers informal education, both to children of women attending the courses and to younger women who are no longer, or have never, been enrolled in formal schools. In addition, the GRC-SK organizes Self-Help groups (SHGs) within the communities.

The GRC-SK offers legal help, with a lawyer coming in twice every week. However, during the duration of the fieldwork the frequency of the lawyers' visits was far less, and not according to the monthly schedule. There are also regular medicine dispensaries at the GRC-SK, with a doctor conducting free check-ups.

Activities outside of the GRC-SK are regularly organized. Health camps and nutrition camps are conducted once a month, and legal mass awareness meetings take place around in the locality.

During the time of the fieldwork a desk for enrolment into the *Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana* (RSBY) scheme was set up in the hallway of the GRC-SK. The RSBY is a health insurance scheme aimed at families below the poverty line. Each family enrolled get a card as proof that they have coverage for medical treatments worth 30 000 rupees a year at participating hospitals.[14] The other main scheme requiring enrolment on a large scale is the *Ādhār* (UiD) scheme, a unique identification system based on 12-digit numbers for each individual. This number and corresponding ID card will work as valid identification all over India.[15] The RSBY-cards and *Ādhār*-cards are both called 'smart cards' colloquially. The focused periods of enrolment in the two schemes interchange at the GRC-SK, and are priorities in implementation.

Last, but not least, the GRC-SK employs two community mobilizers who are in charge of going around in the locality and hold awareness meetings, as well as informing the inhabitants of available schemes and ongoing projects. The population covered by this particular GRC-SK is around 100 000 individuals, and the area stretches far. In total, nine women work at the GRC-SK on a daily basis.

The GRC-SK is an all-female space, and the atmosphere filled with friendly chatting flowing through the air, mixed with the sound of sewing machines and the subtle scent of jasmine oil and beauty products. Most of the activity was upstairs, and the pace was slower downstairs.

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[14] http://www.rsby.gov.in/
[15] http://uidai.gov.in/ 'Ādhār' translates into 'foundation' or 'support', and has the catch phrase "Ām admi ka adhikār" (The common mans' right). The scheme has generated much debate and controversy in India, especially amongst the upper middle class. However, we will not discuss this controversy further in this thesis.

In general I noticed that not many people came to use the help-desk, there were days with just around five visitors.

ISST as a gateway into the community

I spent a lot of time in Kalyanpuri during my internship with ISST, especially at a *balwadi*[16] for children in the locality. People grew accustomed to having me there and seeing me walk around, which is an important goal for me while doing fieldwork. I did not want to just drop in and out of the locality; I wanted to contribute with whatever I could as well. Spending a lot of time in Kalyanpuri during my internship paid off in many ways while planning fieldwork for this thesis. The GRC-SK and the *Sāthi* centre were both run by ISST, and had collaborative projects. I visited the GRC-SK, met the project coordinator and explained my project to her. Thus, the links I had made as an intern at ISST proved invaluable in getting access for this fieldwork. Further, many of the people in the locality already knew and trusted me, which I felt was necessary for successful interviews.[17]

Methods used

A combination of participatory observation, semi-structured and informal qualitative interviews was used in the fieldwork. I began with participatory observation. By doing this I got to know the employees and the women attending the GRC-SK regularly, and vice versa. I spent my days at the GRC-SK, observing the employees and the women who came to use the centre. I frequently accompanied the community mobilizers into the communities and participated in meetings and workshops. While my base at the centre was in the help-desk room, I was free to roam around in the centre, casually chatting and getting to know the women and about their lives. Starting the fieldwork with a period of participatory observation enabled me to get an understanding of the workings of the centre and how it was run, and to an extent it changed the direction of the fieldwork. Kathrine Fangen calls working on a research project an 'eternal dance between theory, method and data'. As my work progressed I realized how true that was (Fangen, 2004,39).

Initially I wanted to focus exclusively on women living in the locality and their notions and

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[16] A small, informal educational centre

[17] One day I passed a group of men hanging around at a street corner, and overheard them discussing me: Look at that *angrezi* (A slightly derogative term meaning English, but colloquially used as 'foreigner'), one of them said. One of the other men corrected him: *Voh angrezi nahin hai. Voh norwegian hai.* (She's not English/a foreigner. She is Norwegian.) I flashed them my brightest smile, and my day was made. It felt like people knew of me, and had accepted me as part of their locality.

opinions on citizenship, the state, their rights and entitlements. But as I learnt more about the Mission Convergence Programme and spent time in the locality where the GRC-SK was operating, I grew curious about the relationships between the three group actors. How do they look at and talk about each other? How does this three-tier collaboration work in practice? It is interesting to include the government officials and GRC-employees views' because the prevalent notions and attitudes the actors have about each other might have an effect on the implementation of the programme.

Interviews and selection

During the fieldwork I recorded 18 open-ended interviews with representatives from the Mission Convergence Programme, GRC-employees and women from the locality. In addition to the recorded interviews come informal talks, both individually and in groups. I was able to interview women who used GRC-SK as well as women that did not. This gave me data on the effect attending a GRC-SK has for women in the locality, and how attendance might form the women's views and discourse pertaining to the state. The women interviewed at the centre were randomly selected from the vocational courses and the remedial education, as well as some who had come to register a query. The women interviewed within the locality were selected mainly because I was familiar with that particular block from my previous fieldwork. I also received help from two young girls living in this block to find respondents. The interviews with the GRC-employees were selected a bit randomly. I had an idea of whom I wanted to speak with the most, and conducted two interviews: One individually, and one group interview where three participated.

I met the government officials by chance, at different events organized by ISST and the GRC-SK. One was a representative from the Programme Management Unit (PMU), and the other a representative from the District Resource Centre of Delhi East (DRC). Thus, the interviews follow the hierarchical structure of the Mission Convergence Programme from the 'target group' to the head office.

Focusing on the respondents living in the locality, we can divide the collected data into two groups: One for women using the GRC-SK, most of them regularly, and one for women not using it. A potential flaw in this data is the selection of respondents within the locality (henceforth: 'community') as they were all from the same block. Thus, their experiences and notions might correspond to a greater extent than if I had chosen women from various communities within the whole target area of the GRC-SK.

The use of Hindi and the interpreters' role

I have a small working proficiency in Hindi, which was a great advantage while in the field. In daily conversations I had no large problems in following what was being said, although it was challenging to form sentences of my own. I found that the best thing to do was to be candid regarding my limitations, and people would gladly help me. It is astounding how far one can go with the phrase *Ji, meri Hindi thori thuti-phuti hai!*[18] accompanied with a smile and some body language!

When time came to conduct semi-structured interviews, I had to be assisted by an interpreter. If the conversations could flow as naturally as possible without anyone being inhibited by language, the dialogue and the overall experience would be more rewarding for everyone involved.

I wanted to find someone independent from the GRC-SK or the *Sāthi* centre, as there was a possibility for the respondents to alter their answers if any of the employees were present. I did not want to steal the employees' working hours for my project. I put an ad up on various Internet forums for expats and students in Delhi, and conducted a small round of interviews before deciding.[19] The interpreter was a single woman of about 40 years of age, and a teacher from the upper middle class at a university in Delhi. There were times when I felt that she took 'poetic license' while translating. This was a challenge, and something I had to be aware of. The fact that I knew Hindi really helped in this regard, as I understood to a fair extent what was being said. The interviews with the government representatives took place in their offices, in English. I did not need assistance from the interpreter during these.

My role at the GRC-SK

The employees included me as a somewhat weird and foreign colleague completely devoid of cooking skills, who asked many silly questions. I think I represented a welcome change in a somewhat monotonous working day and I felt very at ease. They included me in everything and gave me an overview of their work, good-naturedly teasing me for my constant scribbling of notes. I also sat in on some of the legal help sessions and participated in a health camp for one of the neighborhoods in the locality. The employees felt an expressed need to protect me, and advised me strongly against walking around in the locality by myself.

I sometimes distributed information about the GRC-SK and its activities. I minimized it

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[18] Literally: My Hindi is a bit broken!
[19] Respectively on Aidsource.org, Internations.org, the Facebook page of Humanities Underground, a students' society at JNU and Yuni-net, a yahoo group expats living in Delhi.

during the semi-structured interviews, but I also viewed this as giving back to the GRC-SK and the people in the locality, as they shared their views and much of their time with me.

Fieldwork as a foreigner

I tried to be aware of my own lenses and preconceived notions throughout the fieldwork. To be able to do this as correctly as possible, I had to try to be aware of my 'frame of interpretation', and continuously reflect on my findings. Where they just my interpretations, not the respondents'? In short, I had to train my reflexivity (Thorbjørnsrud, 2005, 20). Further, I am aware that the fact that I was a foreigner doing fieldwork in an underprivileged area in Delhi might have influenced the findings, even though I tried to minimize the possibility of it.

Ethical considerations

As I have been an intern at ISST and continue to be a supporter of their work, I feared it would color my perceptions of the GRC-SK. It was more challenging than expected to keep a professional distance, as I felt very included by all the employees of the GRC-SK and by the women in the locality. However, I have tried my very best, and will be candid in my observations in this thesis.

I strove to emphasize my status as an independent researcher during fieldwork. I was aware that I might be taken for a volunteer at the centre, as I spent a lot of time at the GRC-SK, with the employees. It is my hope that it has not colored many of the answers I received in the interviews, but am aware that this might have been a factor.

Informed consent and anonymity

All names of the informants have been changed, keeping in line with good research ethics. When quoting the GRC-employees and the government representatives I have thought it best not to include details regarding their positions, as their answers might have repercussions for them. I have decided not to change the name of the locality, however, all further details have been changed. A recorder was used in the interviews to aid transcriptions. Permission was asked before each interview, and all informants were ensured that these recordings were confidential. I explained my project to all respondents before commencing the interviews, and emphasized that they were completely free to not participate, or to decide to stop at any time. It was important to follow the principle of informed consent.

4 Experiencing the state

This chapter will expound on the women's experiences with various state actors and authorities, the police and the GRC-SK. Discussing these are important, as they substantially contribute to the formation of the urban poor's views of and narratives about the state and how they view themselves.

During interviews it was sometimes unclear whether the narrated experiences were made by the women themselves, or by a family member, neighbor, friend, or 'someone' they had heard about. However, these narratives all play into forming the discourse in much the same way, and thus, serve the same purpose. The narrated experiences did to a certain extent diverge between more positive ones at the GRC-SK, and the typical narratives of somewhat cumbersome meetings with state bodies and the police. Might this reflect the reform the deliverance of social security in Delhi is currently undergoing? Perhaps, but it might also just be a result of the heavy presence of NGOs in the locality, resulting in the GRC-SK simply not being classified in the collective imagination as part of 'the State'.[20]

Because the GRC-SK is run in collaboration with a profiled NGO in the area it was not always recognized as a state body, and if it was, it was frequently viewed as the state 'helping out' the poor. Many of the respondents did not know whose project the GRC-SK was, and it did not seem to matter. What mattered were the activities and services it provided. There were many NGO centres in the area, and the GRC-SK might have been viewed as just one in the crowd, reflected by colloquial names for it. Few of the women called it the 'GRC', most referred to it as *silāi-centre,*[21] *dhobi ghat-centre,*[22] or simply, *kendr.*[23]

General experiences with state actors

The women stated that they felt ignored and overlooked by the state and its actors. They reported their meetings with state bodies as arbitrary and random, and often cumbersome. Several had stories revolving around red tape and experiences with being unsuccessful in their errands because they were being sent around to several state agencies, telling the women to either come back another day or that they had come to the wrong place.

Thus, if possible, they would find alternative ways to achieve their goals. Especially one

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[20] The words used for 'state' and 'government' in Hindi were *sarkār* or *government* in all interviews
[21] Sewing centre, based on its most popular activity
[22] 'Washing place' centre, based on its location next to the main area for washing clothes in the locality
[23] Centre

employee at the *Sāthi*-centre, Bhavani, who lived in the locality, was mentioned as the person to go to if any assistance was needed.

The women's experiences with the state can be divided into overarching topics:

Elections and empty promises

All the respondents said that politicians would give them much attention during elections, but that it would disappear immediately after. One woman, Meera, emphasized this:

> I wouldn't be able to say how the government thinks of me, but one thing's for sure, during the time of election they come here and touch our feet, always begging us to give them votes, and immediately after the elections they don't even recognize us. They say: 'Come tomorrow, come day after, this work cannot be done now' - so they keep postponing it.

This quote touches on aspects typical for experiences with the state.

As it happened, MCD-elections were underway in the locality during fieldwork. The interviews were frequently interrupted by politicians popping their head into the *jhuggis*, hands raised over their heads, with greetings of *Ram Ram* or *Namaste, ji* followed by big speeches of promises and a distribution of flyers. This was quite comical, as the women had sometimes just described such scenes. They would look at me and we would roll our eyes, giggling, demonstrating that we were on to the politicians' charade.

When discussing the topic further, they said they would elect someone from their own communities, from the *jhuggis*. They believed that having someone 'of their own' to represent them would help them achieve their goals.

Inflation and corruption

Many stated that they had experienced trouble with their rations. The *rationwala*[24] would give them rations at correct rates during the first 5 days of the month, but if they came any later, he would have sold the rations for profit. Others said that they had not been able to get a ration card, or that the *rationwala* had given them wrong prices. The need to give bribes was mentioned by many as a necessity, especially in dealing with government officials.

Nearly all respondents claimed inflation to be one of the biggest challenges in their daily life. They saw the rising prices as evidence for the government caring less about them, the poor, and more about people who had economic capital.

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[24] Literally 'ration-man'

Engaging with the state

One story was very representative of typical meetings with the bureaucracy of the state. Meera wanted to get her son enrolled into school, but had found it difficult:

> They made me fill 14 – 15 forms and said I should go to the schools to deposit them, I went around to all the schools, but they said 'No, why do you come here, go to the office', so I went to the office, but they said 'No, these are not deposited here, this is not our job', so I went back to the original place and they said 'Well, if you didn't need to deposit the forms, why did you fill so many?' Now the entire school year has been wasted for my son, he will only be admitted next year. I got angry, and asked them why they had sent me to all those places if they didn't know where I should go. They asked me why I didn't go to the schools, and I said that the schools refused to receive the forms, but ultimately, the blame was put on me.

Further, she explained that this process had been both expensive and cumbersome. Her husband had to miss work for much for it, and it had not yielded the wanted results. She felt it better to get her work done with the help of Bhavani:

> I'm sure I could go to the GRC-SK, but if I have any troubles I will just go to Bhavani ma'am instead and she will help me. If I go to the GRC-SK they will need a lot of explanations and make me come back again and again.[25] But Bhavani ma'am knows me since childhood, it's better to go to her; she always gives good help and gets my work done.

This is a good example of how the urban poor have to find alternative routes to avail of their rights, in this case, the right to education.

The women would say that the state generally never thought about the poor. However, this did not imply that they did not have ways to reach the government. Of these, voting was most often stated as the main way of getting their voice heard, even though they did not particularly believe that the politicians would come through on their elective promises. Further, pressure groups were frequently mentioned as a way to resolve barriers in meetings with state actors, the police, or other bodies of authority. Pressure groups can be quite informal and ad-hoc, and are usually organized by members of political society when facing a particular problem with the state. Interestingly, a *mahila mandal*[26] was organized in a collaborative effort between the GRC-SK and the *Sāthi* centre during fieldwork, meant to function as a semi-formal pressure group. The women participating also committed to attend sporadic meetings organized by the NGO. Further, the women were given a list of all

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[25] *Das-chakar,* meaning 'tens of times'
[26] A women alliance

members, so that they would be able to use the pressure group if need be, without needing assistance from the NGO. Here, we might see an example of the NGOs in the locality using the language of political society in order to mobilize the urban poor.

Other centres in the locality, especially the GRC-SK, were also given as a possible way of reaching the government. However, some women had doubts about how effective it was:

> I don't know whether the women working downstairs [at the GRC-SK] are simply writing down what we feel in order to make us happy, or if they are *actually* taking our voice to the government.

Another woman, very skeptical of the state, was not at all convinced by the GRC-SK.

> No no, they do nothing. They just make up their accounts and things are left behind like all the rest. They just do their jobs and then poor people get nothing.

Most of the women said that they got ample information from the government. Typically, they stated that they could learn from media like newspapers and television, as well as at the GRC-SK and other NGO-centres. Information was sometimes printed on big boards in the locality. Further, the *jhuggiwale*[27] often share information with each other, and would learn about different schemes and how to avail of them by others in the 'community' who had already gone through the process. At the inaugural meeting of the aforementioned *mahila mandal,* I noticed one of the participants used a mobile phone to record the meeting, in order to share information with women who were unable to attend. It is interesting that only a few of the women mentioned awareness meetings as an important source of information. The topic was largely absent in interviews, except for some who discussed why they did not often attend meetings like these. Especially one respondent explained that it was not necessary to have an expansive knowledge of all the different schemes and government projects available to them. If a need arose, she would learn what she needed to fix the problem at hand.

This is a perspective perhaps overlooked when dealing with the urban poor. There is a certain expectation that the women should want to know everything about schemes available to them, simply because it would make them empowered. However, the inhabitants are often busy leading their lives, working, taking care of their children, and thus do not have time to come to impromptu meetings whenever a community mobilizer or a government representative is in the vicinity.

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[27] Lit: People of the *jhuggis*, meant to denote their neighbors.

Demolition

Several mentioned their fear of demolition. A small minority had experienced this firsthand in other localities, most had just heard about it.

Narratives of demolitions by slum dwellers often emphasize the violence inherent in the act, with sudden demolitions of homes happening seemingly without any warning. Objectively, it might be more nuanced, but The Government of Delhi is certainly no stranger of demolition or relocation of slum areas. In fact, it has been one of the strategies towards making Delhi a 'world-class city' (Dupont, 2011). Further, unregulated annexes to *jhuggis* might be demolished individually. I witnessed the aftermaths of such a demolition during fieldwork for the interpro project report. A family was running a small corner shop from their *jhuggi*, and had built an ad hoc structure of bamboo sticks and tarpaulin outside to expand it. One morning, the structure had been tore down. They explained that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) had come in the early morning and demolished it, because a competing shop in a *pukka* building nearby had filed a complaint. The family had not gotten permission to build the structure, and it was within the MCDs rights to demolish it. However, no notice had been given, neither had they been given a chance to remove their merchandise.

Stories like these are important, because they form the experiences of living in a JJ-cluster, and are examples of direct and negative state encounters. These stories foster an uncertainty of habitation, where people can never be completely sure if they are free from the risk of demolition. Though rare, demolitions in areas with a mixture of settlement types might be experienced as especially arbitrary and unfair.

An unresponsive and corrupt police force

Several of the respondents told stories of rape and unsuccessful interactions with the local police. Many of our informal conversations quickly turned to experiences with the police, who are considered corrupt and frequently ignoring the poor in favor of people in the locality with more money or higher standing.

In one interview, I was told the story of a girl who had been raped and went to the police to file a report. The police discouraged the rape victim from filing a complaint, saying that her whole family would be killed if she did, as the rapists' family had more power in the area. Upon hearing this, all the *jhuggiwale* in her community went to the police in one group, to force them into action. However, the rapists' family had successfully bribed the police, and the *jhuggiwale* were unsuccessful in their attempts to put pressure on them. To illustrate the

extent of malfunction within the police, another story was told. One girl had run away with her lover, as they wanted to get married against the wishes of her family. Her family went to the police, who managed to find the couple and arrest the boy. However, before returning the girl to her family, the police had allegedly raped her, on grounds that she had already lost her honor and was clearly of a 'sexual nature'.[28]

Several news reports, in addition to the respondents' stories, narrate a picture of a highly inefficient, corrupt, discriminating and largely misogynist police force, more of hindrance than help to large sections of the population.

Experiences with the GRC-SK

I found that the women's experiences with the GRC-SK were narrated in a different light. Where general meetings with 'the state' were described as cumbersome, dissatisfying and often unpredictable, the experiences pertaining to the GRC-SK were painted more favorably. There might be several reasons for this.[29] It's possible that the GRC-SK was not perceived as a state body, because the activities and functions offered are much more in the realm of the NGO-run centres in the locality. Further, as it is a collaborative project between the state and the NGO, it is different from other state bodies, and the answers given are simply reflecting this. Thirdly, when the respondents knew it was a state initiative, they would frequently describe it as the state 'helping' them, by giving them a chance to pick up a skill and knowledge for free. However, the respondents would also mention this as the governments' duty towards the poor. As Chatterjee maintains, this does not need to entail that the poor see it as their legal citizenship right, but rather, as the duty of the governing state to take care of its governed subjects.

Using the GRC-SK and its activities

What the respondents called the centre was indicative of how they used and viewed it. The vocational training is a main priority of the government in order to enable the women to learn a skill useful to participate in the workforce and, subsequently, in the public sphere.

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[28] This might seem like an extreme story, and I do not necessarily claim that it is true. However, several news reports and exposés, as well as stories like the ones above, generally leave the Delhi Police Force in an unflattering light pertaining to their views on women. This is but one example: http://tehelka.com/the-rapes-will-go-on/

[29] It is possible that the respondents viewed me as connected to the GRC-SK, and thus felt shy about disclosing their honest opinions. However, as mentioned in the methodology, this was something I strived to avoid. Further, when discussing the GRC-SK with the respondents I did not get the feeling that they were being insincere. In any case, it is important to keep the possibility in mind.

However, findings suggest that women attending the centre seemed to view the vocational courses predominantly as an activity, not as a means to get into the workforce, often enrolling in the second course upon finishing their first. During our interview, Neha requested more courses.

> A lot is happening right now, and we would like even more things to happen for women. Like new schemes and new plans, and more centres like this, places where we're learning something. There should be such centres also in localities where there are none. And new courses! Like singing, drawing, and so on, other courses as well that help you support your family [...]

The women not using the centre regularly would emphasize the distribution of medicines, free check-ups and knowledge[30] about ration cards and other necessary papers as its main attractions. Further, pertaining to the popularity of the vocational courses, the GRC-SK was held as an alternative to further studies after 12th grade for many of the younger girls in the locality.

For the women that took advantage of the vocational courses, it had been important that the courses cost next to nothing to attend. Women not using the GRC-SK frequently also spoke highly of the fact that they had the opportunity to learn a skill without paying a lot of money.

Effects of attending the GRC-SK

All respondents at the GRC-SK maintained that their lives had changed a lot after they had started to use it. They explained that they had grown more confident, because they had learnt new things and met new people. This was especially clear in the interview with Neha (26). Neha explained that it was her husband who sent her to the GRC.

> He supports me. He said: leave the work at home, even the kids; both of us will manage together. Go out and learn something, grow some.

Neha attended the beauty culture course, and spoke freely and eloquently. She also mixed in English words here and there, saying that she wanted to learn how to speak more English. Asked about the effect the centre had in her life, she was very clear:

> Yes, it has! Since 10 years I've been sitting inside the house, now I can go outside and learn something, and after having learnt I can change something too, do something. *Ji, bahut change aega, sikhne ke bad, jo kuch karenge.*[31]

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[30] *Jānkārī*
[31] Yes, a lot of change will come, after learning one can do anything.

Neha had an ambition of putting her new skill into good use, supporting her husband in making a sufficient income for their family. She would work from home, or find work outside if she got the permission from her husband to do so. We might say that Neha uses her agency within the social boundaries of the community, and thus expands the boundaries bit by bit. She explained the importance of going out and being exposed to the world:

> Being able to go outside makes all the difference. When we go outside, we learn things - it is only when we go outside that we get information about new schemes and about our rights.

Several women mentioned this as a catalyst of change. On the other hand, women not attending the centre mentioned this as a barrier - they did not get out much, either because they did not have time or permission, or avoided going out because it was unsafe.
Lalita told us that there had been a marked change in her whole family because of various centres in the vicinity; especially had she noticed a change in her husband. She explained that their children would come home and tell him about things they had learned, as would she - he listened, understood and had changed. Lalita and her family is a good example of the worth this kind of community outreach might have. However, it has to be said that this also might be because they lived very close to an NGO centre. Further, their own will to participate actively in activities organized by centres in the locality was very strong. This is interesting, because there was a tendency for the participation to accumulate. The more a family used a centre, the more likely they were to use others, as well as to participate in SHGs and pressure groups. This might show that the presence of NGOs has an effect in the area, but perhaps also that this presence benefits a particular group of people.

Who runs the GRC-SK?

Many of the respondents did not link the GRC-SK with the government. Many did not know, and did not particularly care, that it was a government project. Other knew, but classified it separately from 'the state' in their narratives. The GRC-SK was frequently viewed as an initiative the government had started to 'help out' the poor, whereas 'the state' was more elusive and further removed from the women's daily lives. This distinction might enable them to keep their discourse and views on the state as being ignorant and corrupt intact, while still taking advantage of the GRC-SK. It might also be a possibility that because it is a collaboration between the government and the NGO sector, it is correctly viewed by the respondents as something a bit different from 'the state'. Further, most of the GRC-SK employees came from an NGO background, and were not government servants. Thus, they

related to the local women differently than governments servants perhaps would. This might also have contributed to the GRC-SK being judged separately from the state, and affecting the way respondents spoke about the GRC-SK and the government differently.

The bottom line: A differentiated view

When the women spoke about general experiences with the state, it was in terms we often see regarding the state in India. They mentioned corruption in most spheres and an uncertainty when it came to actually get their errands fulfilled. Many expressed apathy towards dealing with the state, and sought to avoid it by achieving their aims in alternate ways, much like Chatterjee suggests for his 'political society'. They would maintain that the state did not pay any attention to them, that they were left with a feeling of being overlooked. However, when discussing the GRC-SK, the picture was different. Several women emphasized the tangible change the GRC-SK and other centres in the area had made in their lives, and expressed satisfaction with the activities offered at the centre. Even though the vocational courses were the main focus, most knew that the GRC-SK was a place they could go to obtain knowledge about various schemes or documents. Not all respondents knew that the GRC-SK was a government initiative, and many did not think it was particularly important to know whose initiative it was. What ultimately mattered was that it was there, and the activities and services it offered. If discussing it as a government centre, many would highlight that the centre had been opened to help them, so that they could 'go forward'. Some would also emphasize opening of such centres as the government's duty. In any way, the women were both critical of the government as well as appreciative of the initiative. We will explore this further in the next chapter, where we will discuss the particular discourse employed by many respondents pertaining to themselves in relation to the state.

5 The "poor woman's discourse"

In the previous chapter, we discussed experiences the respondents have had with the state and other actors. Now we will discuss the different narratives that form around these experiences. How do the respondents view the state, and how do they feel the state views them? How do the respondents describe themselves and their situations?

Along the trail of narratives, a clear discourse emerged. When talking about the state, their own situation and their rights, a number of the women resorted to the same way of speaking – using many of the same words. Irrespective of the narration of positive experiences with the GRC-SK or other government initiatives in the area, most of the respondents expressed ambivalence towards the state actually fulfilling any of their rights, wants or needs. These experiences and stories make up a large part of the 'poor woman's discourse' I will argue was being used by the women. This discourse both reflect and influence how they speak of the state, how they act towards it, and what they expect from it.

What proved interesting was the fact that the women talked about themselves in relation to the government very differently within the same interview. They would applaud its efforts one moment, and then turn around and say that the government never paid any attention the next. The discourse is twofold: One centers on the government, and the other centers on the urban poor themselves.

I found that the way in which many women talked about themselves was much the same way they were being referred to by government officials and GRC-SK employees. This was especially true when being asked questions regarding rights and entitlements. They would frequently highlight their status as poor women lacking *jānkārī,*[32] and as such they did not know much about 'these things'. Neither, it was implied, could they be expected to, *because* they were poor, uneducated women. However, as our conversations progressed, they would share their knowledge and views, and it was apparent that they did indeed have a lot of knowledge. It was as if they deliberately used the 'poor woman's discourse', but why?

The 'poor woman's discourse' is in no doubt true and accumulated by tangible experience, but one might also view it as a certain type of capital the women use actively, an agent to reach the state through targeted welfare measures, or through NGO-centres in the locality.

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[32] Knowledge, information

Poor and ignored?

> When the government doesn't think of us, why should we think of the government? The
> government doesn't do anything. It doesn't pay any attention to us.

This was a fairly frequent reasoning, especially from the respondents that did not use the
GRC-SK regularly. It was usually followed by rhetorical questions like *kya karein, didi?* or
Aur kya? [33], giving the impression that this way of speaking was almost a habit. Several of the
inhabitants expressed being very fed up with the government. They would say that the
government never thought about them, and nothing the women could do would help. Because
they were poor and uneducated, not *jānkārī*, they were less important. Many felt that because
they were poor, their voice did not matter as much as the voice of the rich. As one woman put
it:

> They must be doing this work because they deduct taxes every month. But rich people pay
> more taxes than us, so they get more done. The rich must pay a lot, they pay for their water, the
> electricity they use in their big houses and much more taxes than we do. So of course their
> voices matter more, they pay more! Whatever is left is used to benefit us.

One woman alleged that the inflation was a willed strategy on part of a government that
would rather see a city without the poor. Delhi had become a city for the rich, and the poor
would soon have to give in and move back to their villages if things did not get better.

> Delhi has become a city for rich people only now. It is too hard for poor people to live here.
> What Bombay was, Delhi is now. We will start leaving if things do not get better soon.

This corresponds to Chatterjee's distinction between civil and political society, where the
poor are excluded from the civil society, 'the rich', and thus, excluded from engaging with
the state in conventional ways.
Several of the women felt overlooked or wrongly viewed by the state. Lalita stated that if the
government just had the will to find out more about the urban poor, they could, but as of now,
they had the wrong idea about them.

> That is the problem; the government doesn't see us right. If the government would see us right,
> there would be no problem. If the government *wanted* to see us right, it would do things to find
> out what we do, what we don't do, and they would also stop crimes.

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[33] 'What to do, sister?' 'And what else?' implying that this was nothing out of the ordinary.

One woman emphasized that it was in the government's hands to change the atmosphere of the area. If the government gave the urban poor orders, they would do as told.

> We feel like it's going to change, but nothing happens. Government has to make it happen. Only then it will happen. When the government orders, we will do.

At an awareness meeting, women attending were vocal of their disappointments with the state. They said the government never came to the *jhuggis,* and that they had never received anything from it. Interestingly, the meeting was held by the GRC-SK, and part of a state-run project. Thus, the government had indeed come to the *jhuggis,* but was not recognized as 'the state'. The GRC-SK employees said nothing to correct the women, thus perhaps solidifying their place in the NGO-realm of the women's narratives.

These quotes give us a picture of a state that is aloof and to a great extent out of touch with the urban poor. Further, in the way the respondents talk about the state they give an impression of expecting somewhat of a patron-client relationship.

However, many said the government could do more, but acknowledged some of the state initiatives, particularly pertaining to education for their children. This was an overall priority for the respondents, who shared the belief that their children's education would further empower them. They wanted their children to go further in life, and saw education as the best strategy to make it happen.

> If the government wants, yes, it could do a lot more. But it does do a lot, for instance they give our children free education if we can't afford it. I was an only child so my parents were able to send me to school, but what about those who have ten children? It's good that the government has opened schools with free education, free uniforms, free everything. I think there is no place better than India for this.

Shakila, who attended the sewing course regularly, stated that the government had responsibilities, like providing healthcare and medicines. At the same time she talked about how the government was helping the urban poor and thinking about them.

> The government could do more, but let's admit that the government IS doing. I don't want to criticize the government too much because it is trying to help us out.[34] It has opened up schools for the children; if there were no schools we would not be able to educate our children. And they have opened the GRC for us so that we can learn as well. And it's their responsibility to provide medicine and healthcare too, which they do. The government IS helping us, and trying

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[34] She used *madad*, help, which was frequently used by the respondents when talking about existing government initiatives targeted towards them

its best - The government is thinking about us.[35]

Keeping in line with the discourse

In this interview with Shakila, who reflected on and appreciated the work the government is doing, her neighbor, who had been listening, suddenly interrupted us. She touched Shakila's knee and said quietly: *Remember, anything you say will go directly to the government.* After this, Shakila noticeably grew a bit more negative in her comments, even though we reassured them that what they said was safe with me:

> Who thinks of getting us our rights? It's our own responsibility to get our rights, so everything has to be done by us. The government has never given us anything, till now.[36] It is our responsibility; it has to be done by us because no one else will do it.

Why did Shakila change her narrative after being interrupted by her neighbor? There might be several reasons for this. Perhaps she did not want to break the social consensus and disagree with her neighbor. Or perhaps she, too, believed that I would go to the government with her answers. Expressing satisfaction with government interventions breaks the narrative of being a poor woman without *jānkārī*, in need of assistance from a government that does not care. Acknowledging the governments' work would perhaps shift the responsibilities away from a government ignoring the poor, unto themselves for not showing enough initiative or not taking advantage of existing schemes and projects. Thus, the 'poor woman's discourse' could be viewed as a way to deny their own responsibility of having knowledge about schemes and available entitlements.

I was curious why the neighbor would think the information given in the interview would go directly to the government, especially because the assumption breaks with what most of the women said: That the government never listens to them. If this is a common complaint about the government, why should it be negative if the answers went to the state?

The 'poor woman's discourse' might function as a kind of capital for the women. They use this discourse in dealing with the state and its actors, as well as NGOs in their area. But how might this discourse be capitalized on and converted to power? Being poor, barely literate and ignored by the government does not appear at first glance as a powerful situation to be in.

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[35] *Sarkār ham ke bare mein sochte hain.*
[36] *Kabhi nahin diya, āj tak.*

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The power that comes with not being *jānkārī*

It might be useful here to remember Chatterjee's political society. The women highlight their weaknesses and their lack of protection to emphasize the responsibility of the state as a protector. Perhaps because of the many targeted approaches of social security in India, dependent on criteria of eligibility rather than aiming for universal social security, it is crucial to appear eligible in order to secure ones rights. The 'poor woman's discourse' is both a way to try to receive more entitlements from the government, and a reminder to the government not to forget its responsibilities. Further, the 'poor woman's discourse' is quite powerful in India today. Women empowerment and gender equality are topics *du jour* in the development sector, with a plethora of NGOs focusing on female urban poor as the entry point to change. Further, NGOs and other civil society organizations have influenced governmental development policies since the mid-eighties, not least in Delhi (Chandhoke, 2005). As the government has increasingly outsourced the implementation of public service delivery to civil society organizations, being part of the perfect 'target group' might prove very useful.

The government listening in

An interesting aspect to note is that the government is entirely aware of how they are spoken about. The two government officials interviewed both made references to this. On a question regarding how she thought the different social security schemes and projects were being perceived, as entitlement or help, the representative from the Mission Convergence head office replied:

> I think it is seen as a benefit given by the Government. Mostly it is seen as that. Because when you listen to them you realize it at once: *Sarkār kuch nahin karein, hamare lie.*[37]

And then she candidly continued speaking:

> And partly the goverment is also happy to do this, to have this, because at the end of the day they have to come back to power in the next elections. That's a legitimate goal of the government. If in the process of giving – of bringing these entitlements to the people, if in the process you lead them to believe that... [me: you are helping them?]
> ..Yes, exactly.

Thus, the observations made by the local women are to a certain extent correct. The schemes

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[37] The government does nothing for us

and projects aimed for the urban poor might be wrapped in empowerment and rights-speak, but it is also in the governments' interest to project it to the urban poor as benevolence from their part, to secure votes from their poorer citizens in elections. Thus, both the government and the urban poor can be said to play their parts according to the 'poor woman's discourse'. It has become a central part of their relationship and how they engage with each other.

Shaping expectations, shaping behavior

The 'poor woman's discourse' has not been formed in a vacuum. It is a result of past experiences and narratives, some of which we discussed in the previous chapter. Further, this discourse might again contribute to shape the expectations and the behavior of the urban poor towards the state. As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the way in which the women spoke about themselves in relation to the state was reminiscent of how the state has classified them into 'target groups'. In her article discussed in the theoretical framework, Neera Chandhoke holds that political expectations in India are shaped by historical processes pertaining to political rhetoric and practice of the state, as well as efforts of civil society organizations to fix certain responsibilities on the state (Chandhoke, 2005, 1037). As discourses are in constant change, what we might see in the 'poor woman's discourse' is a reflection of how the poor-state relationship has been. This relationship might be changing because of state reform in public service delivery and the expanding collaboration with civil society organizations. The poor talk about themselves predominantly as poor in need of *jānkārī* particularly because they are viewed as such by the state, and because this has been the best way to achieve access to their rights. This might also be reflected in the ways in which they choose to engage with the state. Instead of demanding their legal rights to social security as citizens, it is deemed as more successful to highlight their need for assistance as population groups. This was also how I perceived different women coming to the GRC-SK. The women coming to attend its vocational courses behaved very differently as opposed to the women who came to seek assistance at the help-desk. In the latter, they would highlight their helplessness, and dutifully 'play their part' as poor women without *jānkārī*, in need of help. In the former, it was noticeable that they came by their own choice, taking advantage of a service. There was a vast difference in how they would radiate their agency and how they adjusted it according to the situation they were in. This, I believe, is also how the 'poor woman's discourse' is being utilized.

Dual narratives - talking about rights and responsibilities

I don't have any idea about these things[38] was a frequent answer to my initial questions regarding their notion of rights and responsibilities.[39] Almost all the respondents dismissed the question at first, but when we spoke generally around it, it was revealed that they did have an idea. They would frequently state the right to education for their children and the right to vote as the two most important rights. Further, they held being good mothers, ensuring that their children went to school, as well as casting their vote as two of their most important duties. Some would highlight the fact that they, too, had responsibilities towards the government.

> It is the government's responsibility, but it is also ours. If we don't think about these things, then how will the government think [about it]?

The initial reactions I got when discussing rights frequently showed that this concept might have been a bit strange and foreign for several of the women. This was especially noticeable in the words chosen by the respondents. As previously discussed, they would refer to existing government initiatives like the GRC-SK as the government helping them, as something that had been done *for* them because they were needy, not because they were entitled to it by law. It appeared that the respondents were not particularly used to talking about themselves and the state pertaining to their formal citizenship. Further, the formal status felt irrelevant in our conversations. What mattered were the rights they were truly experiencing, a 'status' of citizenship was arbitrary. Thus, the distinction between formal and real status of citizenship was noticeable in our conversations, as the formal were given less importance, in addition to being alien.

Discrepancy in the narratives

The discrepancy in the narratives might just be reflecting the fact that the reality of poor-state relations is complex and intricate. The government, as Shakila rightly said earlier in this chapter, is doing - but it could also perhaps do more. As the urban poor are a heterogeneous group of people, it is only natural that their notions and views of the state differ from each other's, because they might have had different experiences.

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[38] *Main iske bare mein kuch nahin janta*, or *mujhe kuch nahi patta is chiz ke bare mein*, were two of the Hindi answers frequently given by the respondents.
[39] *Adhikār* was the word used for 'rights', and *zimmēdāri* or *duty* the words for 'responsibility' in all conversations.

However, the 'poor woman's discourse' was utilized by almost all the respondents. This discourse might be capitalized upon in the urban poor localities in India, first and foremost because of the large number of NGOs targeting their approach on the urban poor women and their children, but also because they are currently 'the chosen ones' by the government in matters of social development. Thus, emphasizing ones eligibility for targeted welfare and social security programmes by focusing on ones weaknesses is perhaps a strategy to reach ones entitlements. This both corresponds and contradicts Chatterjee's notion of 'political society'. The urban poor women do still not claim many entitlements as their rights as citizens, and go through alternative routes to be able to take advantage of their rights, claiming them, rather, as something the government should give to protect its poor population. However, the alternative routes used by the women might be said to be less violent and paralegal than the ones depicted by Chatterjee. They utilize NGO-centres in the area, and not least the GRC-SK, both of which can be said belong to civil society, and deemed as largely legitimate by the state. As such, NGOs, and to a certain extent the GRC-SK, might function as mediators between the government and the urban poor, and over time, influence the relationship between the two.

6 Hiccups in implementation

> *Study these four men washing down the steps of this unpalatable Bombay hotel. The first pours water from a bucket, the second scratches the tiles with a twig broom, the third uses a rag to slop the dirty water down the steps into another bucket, which is held by the fourth. After they have passed, the steps are as dirty as before; but now above the blackened skirting-tiles the walls are freshly and dirtily splashed. The bathrooms and lavatories are foul; the slimy woodwork has rotted away as a result of this daily drenching; the concrete walls are green and black with slime. You cannot complain that the hotel is dirty. No Indian will agree with you. Four sweepers are in daily attendance, and it is enough in India that the sweepers attend. They are not required to clean.*

From V. S Naipaul, **An Area of Darkness**, p. 79

This sarcastically sour observation by V.S Naipaul is undeserved, but it illustrates a point that perhaps still deserves to be made about some of the implementation of government development initiatives targeted towards the urban poor in India: What matters is not the actual change the initiatives are able to make, what matters is that the initiatives are there.

In this chapter we will discuss notions and attitudes belonging to GRC-employees and government officials, as well as the implementation of Mission Convergence Programme on the ground level. Taken into account are interviews with two government officials working within the Programme, one from the head office (PMU) and one from the district level (DRC), as well as interviews and informal discussions with the GRC-employees. In addition, I have made use of general observations done during fieldwork.

With over 1.2 billion people, public service delivery in India is a herculean task. The Mission Convergence Programme seeks to make it easier for the urban poor in Delhi to access their entitlements, but has met with many challenges. Both GRC-employees and government officials held faulty implementation as the biggest hindrance to the Programmes' success. They argued that negative experiences when trying to access schemes would influence the outcome of further community mobilizing. People would not make enrolling in new schemes a priority, seeing as it was unlikely to have a large effect.

During fieldwork I found that the dominant attitudes of all actors and the experience of the GRC-employees had an effect on the implementation of projects at the grass-roots level. Further, the existing and somewhat complicated relationship between civil society and the

government seemed to influence the workings of their partnership. The relationship between the two has gone through periods of mutual suspicion as well as periods of collaboration since Independence, and NGOs have played an important part in the development agenda in India (Andreassen, 45). Their direct collaboration in delivering social security to the urban poor is quite new, and this might be the reason why the actors still view each other with ambivalence.

Challenges of implementation

During fieldwork it became clear the Programme had lots of challenges in implementation. As the collaboration is still quite new, the PMU-representative referred to them as 'teething-problems'. The importance given to each of these 'teething-problems' varied according to the sector and level of the interviewees.

Community mobilization

An action plan is made every month, but during fieldwork there were challenges in following it. For instance, there was to be four community meetings every day, unless there was a special activity, like a health camp, scheduled. During the month I spent at the GRC-SK, no days had four different meetings. After a visit from the NGO head office, we were called into the office of the project coordinator for an impromptu meeting. It became clear that the employees would have to make some changes in their routines. The two community mobilizers were told that they had to conduct four different meetings each day – two in the morning, and two in the afternoon. Further, they would have to stop going together into the communities, but rather split up and conduct separate meetings. *If we depend on each other for everything, we will not get anything done,* the project coordinator said. *It is no good sitting upstairs preparing to go down, or to sit downstairs preparing to go up*, she continued, making a reference to a habit of the community mobilizers I too had noticed –they spent a lot of time at the GRC-SK instead of in the communities. Further, when in the communities, the mobilizing had a tendency to feel a bit rushed and superficial, often focused on imminent and material benefits rather than general awareness.

The community mobilizers answered: *It's just that going together gives us a bit of confidence, that's all.* They admitted that they felt going into the 'communities' by themselves was sometimes a daunting task, because of the atmosphere.

The community mobilizers were a bit timid toward going into the communities, and they

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were not sure of how to actually conduct meetings and mobilize people. Thus, they appeared to be avoiding it to some extent. As the PMU representative states in the following quote, the community mobilizers are integral to the Programme:

> From the GRCs point of view they're the ones who actually go further deep into the community. It is actually percolating down to the bottom of the pyramid. For everything we depend on the community mobilizer.

When talking to the community mobilizers, I discovered that they had been working at the GRC-SK for just three and six months, respectively. Further, none of them had any previous experience with community mobilizing. They had received training about different schemes and projects and were satisfied with this, but there had not been any training on how to conduct meetings with people in the communities or how to go into the locality without feeling nervous. They stated that they were mostly confident, but felt afraid in certain areas. They believed that more training and courses would help them overcome that fear.

All the other employees at the GRC-SK came from an NGO-background, and moving about in the locality and interacting with the people appeared easier for them. This is perhaps why the community mobilizers had not been given focused training on how to mobilize or how to behave in the communities. When discussing training and capacity building with the representative of the PMU, she stated that there were already too many workshops, and sufficient training was given to all community mobilizers regarding different schemes and projects whenever a new project was initiated.

It appears that the training given to GRC-employees are focused on the details of various welfare schemes offered by the government, and that the NGOs might take for granted that their employees have sufficient experience of working with urban poor. As a result, the community mobilizers have sufficient knowledge regarding the schemes, but might not be sure of how to communicate this knowledge to the people in the communities successfully, and with confidence.

Lack of communication between actors

Another challenge highlighted by the GRC-employees and the representative from the DRC, was the lack of communication between the different levels. The DRC representative explained the challenge thus:

> We get directions from the PMU, and forward it to the GRCs for implementation. For instance the identification of beneficiaries for a training programme. They do identify the trainees. So

beneficiaries are there, training institute is there – but the training is not being initiated. The gap between identification of the beneficiaries and the commencement of the course is very wide. They [the beneficiaries] lose interest, and the impact is nil, rather negative. It needs a lot of coordination between the upper level, middle level and the lower level.

The GRC-employees agreed with what the DRC representative was saying:

The biggest barrier is that to get the RSBY-card you pay 30 rupees and you get it made, but when the people go to the doctors with the cards they refuse to accept them, saying 'this will not work here.' The government has of course started off the policy, but it's hard to implement it. This makes it harder for us to do our work. People don't trust us anymore since it didn't work out previously. The main problem with RSBY is, there are lots of problems that occur. They have to deposit 30 rupees for a card worth treatment of 30 000 rupees, and for people living in *jhuggis* 30 rupees is a lot, they have to save. And yet they are told that it won't work, so it's hard.

For the representative from the PMU, corruption was seen as the biggest challenge, coupled with a lack of awareness on part of the urban poor, as well as barriers in accessing schemes:

A large number of these schemes don't go to the person for whom it is meant because the money is siphoned off. That's no secret, and this is the biggest challenge.

The second challenge is of course awareness – In Delhi people are aware, broadly aware, but access is a problem. You may be aware but being able to access the scheme is a different kettle of fish altogether. And this is why we have the GRC-SK. They form the link between the person and the scheme.

Whereas from the DRC perspective, the link between the GRC-SK and the PMU, the greatest challenge was that the project was in reality not based on peoples' actual needs:

What I feel as an individual is that the planning doesn't come from the grass-root level. It doesn't go from bottom to up. The needs are not assessed as such, the targets are already planned at the senior level, the planning level, and they are percolated down. Irrespective of their need. Whether they are assessed or not.

Thus we see that what the PMU-representative highlighted as one of the Programmes' innovative traits, the bottom-up approach, was in reality not functioning very well according to the representative from the district level. In theory the Mission Convergence Programme is a new approach, but in practice it might seem that old habits do die hard.

Funding and staff

Of the challenges the GRC-SK meet, the biggest one was the lack of sufficient budget and staff:

> Either we don't have a budget, or if it there it's very limited. We have two community mobilizers, area is one lakh[40] population. So we can't reach for everyone, to everyone. If there was more staff, then we could have worked better.

As the following quote shows, the PMU felt that there was an optimal number of staff employed at the GRCs, even though they were not able to reach the 100 000 people in their target area.

> […] I know that two people can't be interacting intensively with a population of one lack. But we cannot hire more people either. One of the first things any organization does is to keep expanding, to recruit more and more people. […] Even if a community mobilizer can't go to the community, the people can come to the GRC. I think they have a reach within the community, I cannot say with so much assurance that they have a maximum reach and I'm sure there might be a gap, but that gap can be bridged through other ways than taking on more people.

During the fieldwork I was also left with the impression that two community mobilizers trying to cover a population of 100 000 people was a raw deal. However, as discussed earlier, the community mobilizers did not in reality spend that much time within the communities mobilizing. In addition to their lack of relevant experience, making them unsure of how to go about it, the sheer number of the target population might have made not only the community mobilizers, but all the GRC-employees apathetic. The task at hand simply felt too huge to conquer successfully, resulting in apathetic implementation.

NGOs are required to have sufficient funds for the continued operation of the GRC-SK if funding from the government is delayed. The PMU-representative explained that funding indeed was very often delayed in the bureaucratic processes. For NGOs that receive funding based on projects rather than for the overall operations of the NGO, like ISST and many other Indian NGOs do, this might be a challenge. Further, one can question how a project that is meant to be government funded might not in reality be, especially when the project revolves around rights-based public service delivery.

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[40] One lakh is 100 000.

Losing sight of the process while chasing targets

One of the main struggles from the GRC-employees' view was constant evaluation and measuring of targets. An example of this during fieldwork was the change maker project. Every GRC-SK had to enroll at least 100 people in the locality who would vow to make an effort to change their own communities as volunteer community mobilizers. This project had not been prioritized, so 100 people had to sign up to be change makers fairly quickly. Thus, forms were given to the *Sāthi* centre so that students of their courses could become change makers, or forms were filled for people on the spot who came to have RSBY cards made. I got a chance to go through all the forms, and noticed a common trait in an overwhelmingly large portion of them: In the section asking how they would contribute to promote gender equality and empower women, it was written, verbatim, sometimes in Hindi, sometimes in English: *I want to first change myself, and then I'll try to change other persons of community and neighborhood.*[41] When delivering these forms to one of the monitoring agencies, it became clear that they had not reached the target of 100 new change makers, excluding GRC- and NGO employees. Thus, two of the GRC-employees were assigned to fill in the remaining forms, using names seemingly pulled from a visitors' registry at random. As a result, not all of the 100 new change makers in the locality were aware of their status as such. The GRC-SK had achieved their quantitative target, but arguably not the qualitative one. Especially the respondent from the district level lamented this focus on measurable targets:

> Most of the things have been done to show that we are achieving our targets, and meanwhile we forget the process. The *process* is not being focused on, *targets* are. When we are working for the social security, we have to at least have the definition of the person we are thinking of, or working for. Do *they* feel secure? What is *their* concept of social security? Without knowing their definition of social security, how can we impose certain activities on them? We are making, fulfilling OUR targets.

We went on discussing her opinion of what the most important initiatives in the Mission Convergence were. She felt there should be more focus on promotive social security, not protective:

> There should be more on the capacity building, not just providing the things or the services. The capacities should be built to make them empowered. So that they can take their decisions, so that they know their rights and access them. It shouldn't be spoon-feeding, you know, *lo*[42],

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[41] In Hindi, the sentence was as following: *Main pahle apne āp ko badalungi, phir dusre āp ko badalungi.*

[42] From *lena,* to take, to accept. In this context, *lo* is a command and can be taken to mean, 'Here, take it.'

> this is your benefit, this is your financial benefit – capacity building and women empowerment
> should be focused on.
> If we are able to bring an attitude in people, I think that would be long lasting instead of this
> providing once in a lifetime security for that purpose. And attitude change is a bit difficult, it's
> not tangible itself, so people avoid it. The quantitative aspect is more visible, more tangible,
> so…

This corresponds exactly to Sen and Drézes arguments on why protective social security is perhaps favored by the state, as discussed by Sai Ma (Ma, 2008). Not only does it potentially earn them votes in elections, as the PMU-representative admitted in chapter five, it is also easier to measure, as the district official says in the quote above.

One cannot have promotive social security without having protective social security; the latter is a prerequisite for the former. For instance, focusing on education for girls will not be as effective if they are undernourished and thus unable to take full advantage of their education.

The representative from the DRC held the vocational trainings, especially the beauty culture course, as an example of a project that had been diverted because of the requirements of reaching quantitative targets:

> Initially the trainings were supposed to be for the women, those who are not going anywhere,
> are at home – just to build their capacity and skill this was envisaged. But what I observe, this
> has been restricted to the age group of 18+, the girls who can go out of the community and gain
> certain things. They are at the VT's, [43] but it was supposed to be for the women, to build *their*
> capacity. So this is a diversion that has happened, because the enrolment of women takes a lot
> of effort on part of the GRCs. These girls, they come easily, so it was an easy way out, to fulfill
> the target. Taking women out of their homes requires lots of efforts. And they [the GRC-
> employees] are being pressurized for target, target, target of so many things, so that target is
> being filled by that particular group of girls. It's doing no harm, but that concept has been
> diverted.

When discussing the focus on these targets, one of the GRC-employees explained:

> It is not a proper way. We cannot change everybody in the blink of an eye. *Kuch samay
> chahie.[44]* The work that has to be completed by the government officials is thrown upon the
> GRC to finish.

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[43] Vocational training
[44] Some time is needed.

During fieldwork I witnessed how many of the GRC-employees had to spend many working hours on writing progress reports and filling in forms meant for the monitoring agencies and the PMU. Monitoring and documentation of work done in the public service delivery is in no doubt very important, but as the respondent from the DRC stated: *The process is not being focused on, targets are.* When the targets are measured in numbers, then, the focus on the people the Programme is meant to work for might be lost.

The importance of monitoring

A great importance is given to monitoring of the different GRC-SKs to ensure that implementation is as streamlined as possible in a project involving 124 different NGOs with various outlooks and motivations.

However, excessive monitoring was viewed as a roadblock to proper implementation by some of the employees. Instead of focusing on community mobilization and work, as they were used to when there was no government involved, they now stated that they had to use too much time filling up forms and registering each and everything.

This might show that there is a certain culture shock when these two sectors meet, especially for the GRC-SK employees, most from NGO-backgrounds and thus used to working differently. In the NGO-sector, they might focus on a much smaller number of people, and do not have the same requirement to reach all households in a locality. Secondly, they have smaller projects, and are freer in the ways in which they measure their success. Thus, they often have a larger focus on the qualitative, and slower, change their involvement makes in a locality, instead of measuring everything quantitatively.

I asked one of the GRC-SK employees what would make the partnership better: *Trust. NGOs pe trust. I think mostly NGOs acchā kām nahin kar rahi hain, to shayad trust bhi nahin hai.*[45] She explained that this was part of the reason that monitoring agencies were needed, but it was also implied throughout the fieldwork that the GRC-employees were sometimes less than satisfied with all the monitoring requirements.

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[45] Trust towards the NGOs. I think mostly the NGOs are not doing decent work, so perhaps there is no trust on them either.

<u>Attitudes between actors</u>

The government and the civil society

On the importance of the collaboration between the government and the civil society, the PMU-representative stated that it was crucial in order to improve state-poor relations.

> I think it's very important. It is the social sector, the civil society that brings issues to the government. They're the ones who work in the heart of the community, who have the trust of the community, and who can actually cull out the issues that are relevant to the community. So when we talk of bottom-up, it has to be through civil society because for the people at the bottom of the pyramid, to be interacting directly with the government, it's very difficult. They need someone to do the handholding for them. Even for a well-meaning government it becomes easy if civil society comes in and explains and expresses the needs and the demands of the people with whom they are closely in touch. The government is not in touch with the people at large, beyond a point it cannot go down.

She also elucidated on the ambivalent relationship between the government and the civil society, stating that as a rule it was tainted by mistrust from both sectors.

> Government has a more ambiguous relationship with civil society. Though we have consciously tried to break the barriers of mistrust, we are equal partners.
> I'm a government servant, I'm a bureaucrat, and I carry that baggage with me. I know that there is a – the relationship with the civil society is one of mistrust. As a rule. And it goes both ways, the civil society also mistrust the government. But here we have broken that mistrust, and we are working as equal partners. And both sides – government has taken a lot of confidence building measures, so has civil society. I think we are making a difference.

The PMU representative was certain that the collaboration was going well, and that the communication between the actors was satisfactory. However, the GRC-employees begged to differ, and stated that in reality it was not a partnership at all, but a very hierarchical relation.

> It is *not* coordination. PMU is BOSS. They give the orders, and we implement it.[46]
> Coordination is that they should ask for our suggestion, and then implement it. But *they* order, and *we* implement.
> The collaboration between the NGOs and the government is a good idea, but it has problems because… It is not a partnership. *Hai na?* Partnership *hoti, to* 50 % *unka, aur* 50 % *hamāra*.[47] It can be better if it's partnership, REALLY partnership.

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[46] *Voh* order *dete hain aur ham* implement *karna hai*
[47] Isn't it? For it to be a partnership, it would be 50% theirs, and 50% ours.

NGOs and the urban poor

In the interview with the community mobilizers, they lamented the fact that people often seemed to give less priority to community meetings, and said that it made them feel as if the people in the community didn't care about the work the community mobilizers were doing. It made them less eager, as they felt that the hard work they did was not being appreciated.

> We go there to help them out, but those people sometimes don't listen to us, they say, "go away, we don't want to listen to you." They're not interested, at that time you feel sad, because we are there to help them.
> If ever they are unable to get their work done, they feel dissatisfied, and that pushes them to say things like that. Since they actually run around a lot for one single thing, from there to here, from here to there, they feel bad about it, and develop a feeling of disdain towards these things.

They felt this was discouraging in their work:

> Yes, *bahut* tough *lagta hai.*[48] Because we're working for them and when they don't listen to us we feel bad. We go from door to door to call women outside.

This might point to a problem with this kind of information distribution. The system 'expects' the women to be available for meetings whenever community mobilizers or government officials come to their locality. Further, where to hold the meeting was often decided upon on the same day, and thus the women in the chosen community did not have any possibility of trying to reschedule their plans in order to be able to attend the meetings. This might be a result of the top-down planning the DRC-representative lamented earlier in the chapter, where the needs of the urban poor are not adequately assessed. Thus, programmes targeted towards the urban poor may become more about how to *manage* and govern them, rather than making public service delivery more effective and efficient for citizens. The initiatives are aimed *at* the urban poor, but not for them.

I asked the mobilizers to describe the locality and the people living in it.

> The atmosphere here is a bit, you know…. People here are not very educated, and since they don't have education they don't know about their rights either. If we tell them about any scheme whatsoever they tell us "when our husbands will be back, we will ask them and let you know". They cannot take a decision without their husbands.
> And some people will just feel like "we will lead the life as it is". Some people work in the

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[48] Yes, it feels very tough.

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kothis[49] and they say, "the children are just here and there", so they say, "we don't have any time to listen to schemes and plans" because they are busy working.

They explained why it was crucial for the women to take time out of their days to listen:

> They should take the time because it's important to know about their rights and if they know about their rights they'll move it forward to their children and the children will know tomorrow what are their rights! If the mother is aware, children will also be aware.
>
> Most of them do not know about their rights.

We discussed whether they felt that the urban poor were heard by the government, to which they replied:

> *Nahin*. To a great extent not. Because there are barriers, either they are not able to get their work done, or there's something lacking, or because they don't know about their rights they're unable to get their work done – there is one problem or another.

I asked them if perhaps the government could be focusing on people with more money on purpose, as many of the respondents within the locality had suggested:

> No, no, it's not like that. It concentrates on poor people as well, but they [poor people] don't pay attention.

From these quotes, we can suggest that the impression the community mobilizers had of the urban poor was, broadly, that they were uneducated and not aware of their rights and disillusioned by government schemes, as they had experienced many barriers in trying to reach them. Further, they portrayed them as somewhat bound by tradition, not able to make decisions without their husbands. Lastly, it was suggested that the people did not particularly care or pay attention to government initiatives. However, they also explained that there were variations within the locality, and explained this as dependent on whether the inhabitants had been successful in previous dealings with the government or not:

> There are certain women who are very happy, and there are others who are not, or who are frustrated. Those who get their work done are happy, those who don't are frustrated. When we go out into the community there are women who are happy to see us, and to realize that we tell them a new thing every day.

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[49] Bungalow, big house

Whose responsibility?

The interviewees all stated that the government, the NGOs and the people had different responsibilities within the aspect of social security. As previous quotes show, the responsibility of the NGO was stated to be the link between the government and the people. Especially in the views of the PMU-representative, the government had an overarching responsibility to ensure that a safety net was in place and that it was functioning properly:

> You're partly right that the citizen herself has to be responsible or aware of her rights, but awareness is not inborn. We become aware through a process of learning and being exposed. […] So primarily I think it's the duty of the government to ensure that the safety net is there. After all, it is a social contract. For the poorer people, the vulnerable people, for whom daily life is a battle for survival, the government has to play a bigger role, and ensure that what it is itself delivering, that it is delivered properly, efficiently, effectively.

She contended that the government should just provide what it is supposed to provide for all its citizens, like water, sanitation and other municipal duties:

> When your basic needs are taken care of, only then can you think of your other needs, social, aspirational needs. So for women here – if they can be lifted out of this basic thing and they don't need to be lifted out if the government can only provide what it's supposed to provide, I think they will automatically be pushed up.

For the PMU-representative, the legal status of the settlements the urban poor live in seemed insignificant. What mattered was that they were Indian citizens, and as such, they had the right to expect municipal services from the government.

The DRC-representative stated that all three actors had their share of the responsibility, and that everybody had to fulfill their role in the collaboration for it to work:

> It's mutual, everybody have to play their role very efficiently and diligently. Because nobody can work in isolation or vacuum. They're intertwined. If they are providers but they cannot go directly to the grassroots the NGOs are important here. But NGOs are working with the community and the community cannot remain in slumber. Government has to provide it, they are responsible. They [the people] are also responsible themselves. So it's a mutual thing, they have to work in coordination.

The GRC-employees held it as their responsibility to let people know about the GRC-SK, and that it was the duty of the government to open such centres:

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> It is the responsibility of the government to open such centres since people won't have to run around to get things done, due to NGOs like this they would know that there is one centre where they have to go and get their things done.

The terminology used

One of the Mission Convergence Programme's aims is to produce empowered and active citizens. However, this is not always clear in the way the urban poor are talked about. To start, the target groups are frequently called 'beneficiaries', not 'citizens'. There is frequent mentioning of 'lifting' someone out of, or 'pushing' someone up from their situations, to 'give' them awareness or opportunities, 'making' them aware and to 'help' someone fill out forms, for instance.

> The government has to step into the duty of the government, to give them the opportunities so that they get lifted out of the present state, be it economic or social, and go to the next level.

A hierarchical model was often used for explaining the set-up of the programme, with the urban poor being at 'the bottom of the pyramid', with awareness 'percolating down' with the aid of the community mobilizers, who go further 'deep into' the community. The NGOs are based in the 'heart' of the community, and the urban poor 'need' someone, mainly the NGOs, to do the 'handholding' for them, because beyond a point the government cannot 'go down'. It is said that part of the innovation of the Programme lies in its 'bottom-up' approach. The urban poor are referred to as 'the grass roots', many for whom life is a 'daily battle for survival'. All these words together paint a picture of a hierarchical relationship, with the urban poor at the very bottom, uneducated and needing outside help or mediation by the civil society to have their voices heard and to be able to gain access to their rights.

Overall, they are looked at as one homogenous group, something the all-pervasive use of the word 'community' reflects. In reality, the urban poor are a heterogeneous section of the population with very diverging lives, interests and needs. As long as this is not sufficiently acknowledged, programmes targeted towards the urban poor are hard to implement successfully. As the DRC-representative so fittingly asked earlier in this chapter: *Without knowing their definition of social security, how can we impose certain activities on them?*

Difference between principles and practice

The Mission Convergence Programme is a vast, ambitious and award-winning project, but it

is not free from hiccups in its implementation. There is a discrepancy between how the Mission Convergence Programme is envisaged and planned on paper, and how it actually works in practice. Representatives from all three levels identified different hiccups as the most challenging, according to the sector they belonged to. The pervasive monitoring and reporting the GRC-employees had to fulfill to show that they were implementing 'the right way', appeared to slow down the actual implementation of the Programme. Much the same can be said for the focus on achieving quantitatively measurable targets, as exemplified by the change maker project. It did not particularly benefit the urban poor in any way, but the government got a long list of 'beneficiaries' enrolled to be volunteer community mobilizers. It looks impressive on paper, but the impact for the urban poor is nil. By chasing these quantitatively measurable targets, perhaps in the government's hope of achieving international acclaim, much of the focus on the process was lost. Further, the focus on this being an initiative meant for the urban poor might also be forgotten.

It appeared that the already existing relationship and notions between the two actors were affecting the collaboration in several ways, and even though the ambivalence between the two was said to have vanished, in reality it was not.

The terminology used when discussing the Programme and the urban poor is significant. To a certain extent it mirrors the 'poor women's discourse', in as much as it emphasizes the weaknesses of the urban poor. Even though the Programme might be wrapped in rights-speak at the government level, it is still viewed, and to a certain extent projected by the government, as help targeted towards the urban poor at the grass roots.

One must state that the Mission Convergence Programme does have the potential to change state-poor relations, if it takes reform of public administration seriously. It seems to be an advantage to collaborate with NGOs based and known in the locality, because the NGOs might serve as a mediator between the government and the urban poor, and thus in actuality succeed in making entitlements easier to reach for the urban poor.

However, precisely because it is collaborating with NGOs, the Mission Convergence Programme might not lead to a change in how the urban poor view 'the State'. As it is, the GRC-SK seems to belong more in the realm of civil society for the women, and if it is acknowledged as a government project, it is predominantly seen as the government 'helping' them out.

7 Conclusion

This thesis has tried to shed a light on some of the ways in which female members of the urban poor in Delhi view and engage with the state, in the context of a public service delivery programme: The Mission Convergence.

The respondents' experiences with the state are much the same as we have read elsewhere, but I found that their strategies of engaging with it might be somewhat different. It appeared that employing a 'poor woman's discourse' was used as a strategy by female members of the urban poor. In an environment and time where urban, poor women are the focus of state governments and aid organizations alike, emphasizing eligibility to be a target could be looked at as tangible social capital.

The poor-state relationship in Delhi is complicated and intricate, and it might be slowly changing because of the NGOs influence on social development policies. The discrepancies in narratives might be a reflection of this change, or they might just be a reflection of the intricate relationship. NGOs functions as a mediator between the state and the urban poor within the realm of political society. It appears that the Mission Convergence Programme might be an attempt to engage with populations in more conventional ways, but within political society. Thus, it might represent an expanding of civil society, or a converging of civil and political society.

The rigid distinction made by Chatterjee between political and civil society, though useful as a starting point and entirely fitting in some aspects, did not suffice to reflect the intricate details of the relationship between the urban poor and the state. The relationship seemed to a certain extent to be less based on conflict between the two than what appears in Chatterjee's *Politics of the Governed.* For instance, I did not get the impression that the Mission Convergence Programme was initiated to govern and control populations, as Chatterjee views the developmental state. It seems, rather, to be a genuine project to make welfare schemes and social security easier accessible for the urban poor. However, it still has a long way to go pertaining to successful implementation.

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Abbreviations

GRC-SK – Gender Resource Centre *Suvidha Kendr*

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

CBO – Community-Based organization

CSO – Civil Society Organization

PMU – Programme Management Unit

DRC – District Resource Centre

MNGO – Mother NGO

MCD – Municipal Corporation Delhi

ISST – Institute of Social Studies Trust

MCP – Mission Convergence Programme

SHG – Self Help Groups

VT – Vocational Training

PPCP – Public Private Community Partnership

GNCTD – Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi

EWS – Economically Weaker Sections

BPL- Below Poverty Line

RSBY –Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna

NUPI – Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs

UID – Unique Identification

Appendix – The closing of the GRC-SK

After some time back home in Oslo, I came to discover that the collaboration between the Government and the NGO was discontinued. The GRC-SK was closed with immediate effect, and the collaboration was picked up again with another NGO in the area. However, the GRC-SK was moved to another location. At first I was very saddened by the news, as I knew this would be another hurdle for the respondents to access their benefits, and many of the women that had used the centre regularly have maybe chosen to stop going because of the relocation. Then I grew worried; what implications did this have for my data? The centre was closed merely 3 weeks after I left, but I had no indications whatsoever that the closing was imminent. No one talked about it, and no one mentioned it in interviews. After thinking about it, I have come to the conclusion that the end of the collaboration does not render my data invalid. Rather, it enforces them, especially my observations regarding the challenges of the collaboration between state and the NGO sector. Further, this proves that there is a will to change if something in the project is found to be unsatisfying or not working. I find this to be a good thing.

I discovered by visiting the website of the new GRC-SK that the sowing course is no longer offered by them, but that the beauty culture course had been expanded. That made me very sad, as I know that many of the women saw the sewing course as a better and more lucrative option for earning on completion of the course, as it was a greater possibility of working from home.

According to the Mission Convergence Resource manual, the GRC-SK should be prepared to move locations after some time to ensure that all localities in their target areas are covered. My data showed that the women benefiting from the centre on a regular basis lived in the locality, not very far away, indicating that there were indeed many in the target area that did not benefit as much.

However, as the women used the centre more like an activity centre with the added benefits of knowledge about rights and schemes and empowerment, they might perceive the relocation of the centre as proof that the implementation is faulty. They might perceive the discontinuation of the GRC-SK at its current location not as a relocation, but rather as a sign that the project has been discontinued.