

## Gender and Social Protection \*

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- Women and men face different risks and vulnerabilities, some specific to their gender and others exacerbated by gender inequalities and discrimination.
- The design and implementation of social protection programmes should address such gender-related constraints, including barriers to women's economic advancement.
- Social transfers in the hands of women, improves children's health and nutritional status and school attendance, and can be an effective way of reducing hunger and intergenerational poverty.

Social protection is a relatively new policy approach that aims to integrate concerns about social security and poverty reduction into a unified framework (Kabeer, 2008). To date, the social protection agenda has generally been presented in terms of categories of poor, excluded and vulnerable social groups, differentiated according to age, health status and relationship to formal labour markets. This emphasis on the formal sector has left out women in particular. Although some measures are targeted primarily at female-headed households, gender is rarely used as a differentiating lens through which to understand poor people's exposure to risk and vulnerability and to design social protection measures accordingly. At the same time, however, social protection programmes are rarely gender neutral, and poorly designed programme can exacerbate or contribute to inequalities (Luttrell and Moser, 2004).

Progress on gender equality is recognised as a critical factor in achieving the MDGs. Women and men face different constraints and barriers that can limit opportunities for women and girls. According to Kabeer's (2008) typology, these constraints can be:

- **gender-specific** (*i.e.* societal norms and practices that apply to women or men by virtue of their gender);
- **gender-intensified** (*i.e.* inequalities between household members reflecting norms and customs on the distribution of food, health care, access to property, etc.);
- **gender-imposed** (*i.e.* forms of gender disadvantage that reflect discrimination in the wider public domain).

\* The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this paper are the sole responsibility of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the OECD or the governments of its member countries.

Such constraints mean that girls and women are disproportionately represented among the extreme poor (DFID, 2005a) in many parts of the world. They not only limit women's access to the labour market, but also often confine working women to more poorly remunerated, more casual and more insecure forms of waged and self-employment, particularly in the informal economy, without access to social protection. Increasing informalisation of women's work and growing sources of vulnerability (*e.g.* due to rising food prices and climate change) affect women's ability to provide for their families and cope with insecurity. Moreover, women are particularly affected by the human rights violations, pervasive poverty and physical insecurity that often characterise fragile states (DFID, 2005b). These factors underscore the need for greater understanding about the rationale and policy and programme implications of a gendered approach to social protection (Box 2).

### **Box 2. Approaches to achieving gender equality and to social protection**

#### **Gender equality**

A strategy often used to achieve the goal of gender equality in different sectors is based on a dual or twin-track approach. *Gender mainstreaming* is the integration of a gender perspective into every stage of the policy process – design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation – with a view to promoting equality between women and men. Gender mainstreaming is **not** concerned only with women, but with the relationship between women and men for the benefit of both. *Gender-specific actions* are required in addition to transform the inequalities between women and men that have been identified through gender analysis and mainstreaming (EC 2008).

#### **Social protection**

The full range of social protection interventions comprises protective, preventive, promotive and transformative measures (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004).

- Protective measures are narrowly targeted safety nets for income and consumption smoothing in periods of crisis or stress (*e.g.* social assistance programmes for the chronically poor).
- Preventive measures seek to avert deprivation (*e.g.* social insurance such as pensions and maternity benefits).
- Promotive measures aim to enhance real incomes and capabilities, and provide springboards and opportunity ladders out of poverty.
- Transformative measures seek to address concerns of social equity and exclusion through social empowerment (*e.g.* collective action for workers' rights, building voice and authority in decision-making for women).

Social protection measures can have different and often overlapping objectives and impacts (*e.g.* simultaneously “promoting” incomes as well as “preventing” deprivation). Kabeer's (2008) “generative” model emphasizes that social protection measures can contribute not only to more livelihoods security for poor and vulnerable groups, but also to some of the mainstream goals of development, including economic growth, human development and good governance.

## What are the linkages between gender, social protection and pro-poor growth?

Addressing gendered forms of vulnerability across the life cycle can lead to gains in gender equity, poverty reduction and human development, which is crucial for unlocking economic potential for pro-poor growth. The higher levels of vulnerability often faced by girls affect future productivity; they are more likely than boys to be kept out of school for domestic chores and home-based work (although boys run the risk of not attending because of income-earning responsibilities); and early marriage and childbearing may further restrict their education, skills development and opportunities.

Women's opportunities are also limited by their primary responsibility for childcare and domestic work, cultural restrictions on their public mobility in some regions of the world, and the gender segmentation of employment opportunities. Social security measures in many developing countries tend to be restricted to the small, male-dominated section of the workforce employed in the formal state and private sector. While their market contributions have become more important within household livelihood strategies, women are concentrated in informal and labour intensive work, often face particular risks and vulnerabilities (*e.g.* health risks, interrupted and insecure employment) and are less likely to have been able to save or contribute to pensions. In most regions of the world, women live longer than men and hence face a longer period of widowhood, and risk of decline into greater poverty and insecurity.

In looking at the relationship between social transfers and growth, the gender of cash transfer beneficiaries can make an overall difference to the effectiveness with which it stimulates investment and facilitates more efficient resource allocation within the household (Barrientos, 2008). Well-designed measures that take account of the possibility of both positive and negative synergies between women's work and children's welfare and recognise the barriers to women's advancement in the labour market have strong potential to contribute to the wider goals of economic growth, human development and social justice. There are a range of transmission mechanisms through which social protection can reduce poverty and strengthen growth effects at the micro-level, with particular benefits for women and girls.

**Investment in human capital:** Social transfers increase investment in human capital, particularly education and health, improving the underlying micro-level determinants of growth (Barrientos, 2008). For examples, studies show the following range of impacts:

**Nutrition:** Providing cash transfers directly to mothers and grandmothers is an effective strategy to improve child nutrition. South Africa's old age pension has had particularly positive effects on girls' nutritional status, with those in recipient households an average of 3-4 centimetres taller than their same-age counterparts in non-recipient households (Samson *et al.*, 2004).

**Health:** Research in South Africa estimates that receipt of the unconditional Child Support Grant (CSG) during the first 36 months of life gives a significant boost to child health (Aguero, Carter and Woolard, 2006). The self-reported health status of women in South Africa improves dramatically at 60 when they begin to receive a social pension. In Bangladesh, cash transfers interact with direct health interventions to improve immunisation, access to micronutrients and ante- and post-natal care for mothers (Devereux, 2007). Cash transfers have also shown promise to help mothers and children affected by HIV and AIDS in Cambodia, El Salvador and Kenya (Adato and Bassett, 2008).

**Education:** Family allowances, social pensions, and other cash transfers linked to school attendance tend to have positive gender effects (Tabor, 2002). In Bangladesh, the school stipend programme has helped achieve gender parity in primary education. There is evidence from rural Brazil that old-age pensions have helped increase school attendance, especially among 12-14-year-old girls (de Carvalho, 2000). In South Africa, the effects of social transfers on the education of girls are also strong (Williams, 2007). Increased opportunity for girls to access education can bring gender equity benefits across the life cycle (HAI, 2008).

**Supporting women's labour market participation:** In Brazil, evidence suggests that its large-scale *Bolsa Familia* social transfers programme has had a major impact on women's labour market participation. The participation rate of beneficiary women is 16% greater than for women in similar non-participating households. The programme has also reduced the probability of employed women leaving their jobs by 8% (Veras *et al.*, 2007). By linking to services such as pre-schools and day-care, encouraging girls to continue their education and otherwise easing the time burdens placed on women, it offers women more opportunity to seek and continue employment (SRC, 2008). Argentina's *Jefes y Jefas de Hogar* public works programme has also increased the propensity of workers, particularly women, to participate in the labour force and to find a job in the formal sector (Devereux *et al.*, 2006). The unconditional Child Support Grant in South Africa is also associated with an increase in the labour force participation of mothers (Williams, 2007).

**Supporting asset accumulation and risk management:** Well-designed programmes that link with complementary services can also have a positive effect on women's risk management and asset accumulation. In an asset transfer programme for ultra-poor women in Bangladesh, the value of the livestock provided is estimated to be doubling every 18 months (DFID, 2007). Social protection can also help provide women with the security to avoid hazardous livelihood options. For instance, there is some evidence that the Social Cash Transfer Scheme in Malawi has reduced the need for female and child-headed households to resort to 'risky behaviour' (*i.e.* transactional sex) to survive (Schubert and Huijbregts, 2006).

**Improving intra-household resource allocation:** Social transfers provided to mothers can have a positive impact both on women's position in the household and intra-household resource allocation. Improving women's position can also enable more efficient investment decisions that serve to maximise household income (Barrientos, 2008).

**Enabling access to credit and promoting savings:** Poor women are frequently highly credit constrained because they lack collateral to access loans. Social transfers, when regular and reliable, can help to alleviate such constraints, promote savings and enable women to invest in livelihood enhancing activities and contribute to growth.

## Designing social protection programmes and policies to tackle gender-related risks

Social protection measures need to be designed to respond to different gender-specific categories of risk (Luttrell and Moser, 2004), which include:

- **Health risks** (*e.g.* infant mortality, disease);
- **Life cycle risks** (*e.g.* childbearing, divorce, widowhood);
- **Household economic risks** (*e.g.* increased expenditure for social obligations such as marriage and funerals);

- *Social risks* (e.g. exclusion, domestic violence, crime).

Many social protection programmes are designed to have multiple objectives, tackling different gender-related risks. Table 4 illustrates how various instruments address life-cycle and work-related vulnerabilities in the informal economy.

**Table 4. Social protection instruments - gender related risks and impacts**

Type of instrument/ policy response	Gender-related risk	Objectives	Gender-related impact analysis
Conditional and unconditional cash transfers for mothers and children (mainly targeted at mothers/ primary carers).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient and/or unequal allocation of resources and opportunities between boy and girl children</li> <li>• Child labour, especially boys.</li> <li>• Female foeticide and child marriage.</li> <li>• Insufficient nutrition and pre- and post-natal care, and risks for working mothers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote investments in children's health, nutrition and education.</li> <li>* Reduced maternal and infant mortality.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves survival, nutrition, health and education of girl children</li> <li>• Promotes and expands women's livelihood options.</li> <li>• Increases women's bargaining power in household and community.</li> <li>• Can bring excluded women into the circle of citizenship.</li> <li>• Improves nutrition and health of newborn and mother.</li> </ul>
Childcare support for working mothers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children may be left alone in the house or with an unreliable carer when mothers go out to work.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce reliance on poor care arrangements and likelihood of adverse effects for children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves access to education for girl children.</li> <li>• Expands women's employment opportunities.</li> <li>• Increases women's participation in public life.</li> </ul>
School feeding programmes/after-school training.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children may not attend school due to domestic chores/home-based work (mainly girls) and child labour (mainly boys).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote investments in children's health, nutrition, and education.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better nutrition and uninterrupted education promotes employability and productivity of next generation of workers.</li> </ul>
Secondary school scholarships or additional stipends for girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double burden of work/ school leads to low productivity, fewer opportunities in adulthood, more likelihood of entering high-risk employment (e.g. hazardous industries, prostitution).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School retention for girls.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can delay marriage of daughters aged 11-19.</li> <li>• Positive impacts for future health and well-being.</li> <li>• Overcomes parental indifference/reluctance over girls' education.</li> </ul>

Type of instrument/ policy response	Gender-related risk	Objectives	Gender-related impact analysis
Employment-generating public works programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-related inequalities in access to employment.</li> <li>• Loss of employment/ employment insecurity because of pregnancy or time taken out for childcare.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cope with threats to income and consumption flows.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can help to break inertia of on-going unemployment.</li> <li>• Creates infrastructure that may enable women's mobility or reduce workloads.</li> </ul>
Social pensions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs of retiring or withdrawing from work in the absence of any work-related provision for retirement.</li> <li>• Widow's loss of assets to late husband's family; dependence on good will of children/family members.</li> <li>• Heavy childcare responsibilities where HIV and AIDS lead to high numbers of absent middle-age adults and vulnerable children.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet basic needs of elderly and destitute.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can give elderly men and women some bargaining power.</li> <li>• Can act as recognition of women's unpaid work.</li> <li>• Improves security, dignity, self worth, status, particularly for elderly widows.</li> </ul>
Legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination (e.g. inheritance, land ownership).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's empowerment.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives women tools for advancing their status and empowerment.</li> </ul>

Source: Adapted from Kabeer, 2008, Tables 3.1 and 9.1.

**Cash transfers focused on women and children:** Whether conditional or unconditional, these transfers can play a key role in improving the allocation of resources and opportunities from a gender perspective. Both child allowances and maternity benefits are mechanisms for addressing gender-specific constraints. Provision of maternity benefits is important for the future health of children and can mean significant savings to health and welfare budgets (Lund and Srinivas, 2000). A new conditional cash transfer and insurance scheme launched by the Government of India for the girl child, aims to tackle gender-specific risks such as female foeticide, child marriage and dowry. Conditions include birth registration, immunisation and delaying marriage to eighteen.

**Childcare support:** This recognises women's dual responsibility in production and reproduction as well as the critical need to expand employment options for working women from low-income households. It is also an indirect means of promoting children's well-being and education and reducing child labour. Examples include Mobile Crèche, a voluntary organisation in India that meets the childcare needs of women workers in the construction industry, and *Hogares Comunitarios*, a government initiated programme in Guatemala.

**School feeding:** As an example of a programme with multiple impacts, the provision of mid-day meals to children in India not only improved their attendance and nutrition but

also helped to generate jobs in the local community for members of a socially excluded group and allowed more regular participation in paid work by mothers.

**School stipends:** There is evidence to suggest that investment in girls' education has long-term social benefits. Programmes that promote keeping girls in school include provision of secondary school stipends for girls in Bangladesh, higher value of cash transfers for girls' education in Mexico and additional take-home rations for girls who attend school in Pakistan.

**Public works programmes:** Programmes such as India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme can play a key role in providing immediate employment opportunities and mitigating seasonal hunger. Depending on programme design, skills training can also be provided for women. Women's participation varies considerably by region and programme design, and is often determined by childcare and domestic responsibilities as well as cultural norms and values (such as restrictions on women's mobility).

**Pensions:** Social pension schemes based on non-contributory transfer payments (rather than contributions) make an important difference to women's old age security, with evidence from several countries (*e.g.* Lesotho and South Africa) that contributions are pooled within the household with proven benefits for grandchildren. They also have important multiplier effects in the wider economy, giving rise to increased trade opportunities.

**Legislation:** Development, implementation and awareness-raising on laws to tackle discrimination (*e.g.* related to inheritance and land ownership) as part of a comprehensive social protection programme can have positive transformative impact on women's empowerment and status.

## Knowledge gaps and debates on gender and social protection

### *Gender of the transfer recipient*

Gender-based targeting needs to consider the national context and identify and mitigate any potential unintended effects. For example, there are negative reports from Bangladesh that domestic violence may increase with transfers to women (Luttrell and Moser, 2004). More therefore needs to be understood about the situations where women/girls or female-headed households should be preferentially targeted and the most appropriate mechanism. Female-headed households are not a homogenous group – for example, widows and abandoned mothers are more likely to be poor than women whose husbands provide remittances.

### *Women's empowerment*

Individual studies indicate that social protection can help address gender imbalances in access to education, health and food. However there is currently a lack of reliable data on the overall empowerment effects (Molyneux, 2007). Recent studies suggest a mix of both positive and negative possible effects.

Research from Mexico's Oportunidades programme shows that giving cash only to women increases their decision-making role in household expenditure and their financial security, self-esteem and social status. A gender audit of Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* found

that women's domestic status increased because the income received was regular, compared with other household members whose jobs and wages are uncertain (Suarez *et al.*, 2006). On the other hand, some argue that conditional cash transfers reinforce gender stereotypes. Many programmes assume that women are available to carry out the care-related obligations associated with conditional transfers without consideration of their breadwinning responsibilities or need for paid work, and to the neglect of any recognition of fathering responsibilities. Some Brazilian experts have commented that *Bolsa Familia* utilises the 'culture of mothering' without necessarily supporting the personal progress of women as active citizens (SRC, 2008).

### ***Different types of social protection instruments***

***Food transfers:*** In certain circumstances, some authors have found that food may be more gender-equitable than cash transfers, if women have greater control over its distribution (Harvey, 2005). In Malawi, for instance, men dominate the Social Action Fund's cash-for-work programme, while women predominate in the World Food Programme's food-for-work initiative (Devereux, 2002). Subbarao (2003) documents that in Lesotho and Zambia, paying half the programme wage in food attracted more women than men. Based on studies to date, it is not clear whether this demonstrates the benefits of in-kind payments, the stigmatisation of food as a means of payment, or gender bias in other programmes (which often attract only a small percentage of women).

***Childcare support:*** The popularity of cash transfers in the current social protection agenda of international donors has led to concerns that the role of the provision of subsidised childcare support for working mothers has received less attention from the research community. Yet, in India childcare was recognised by the 2002 National Commission on Labour as one of three main areas of insecurity in the lives of poor women, in addition to old age and access to health care.

***Micro-finance:*** There is debate over the issue of micro-finance being included as a social protection instrument. Several authors (Kabeer, 2008; Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004) argue for its inclusion. They contend that schemes providing social insurance and economic opportunities can not only have a protective function but also provide promotional measures that offer 'opportunity ladders' out of poverty. In particular, loans to women have been found to have positive impacts on family welfare, children's schooling and women's voice and bargaining power within the home as well as the wider community. On the other hand, some studies show that the need to save regularly as a condition of group membership, to make timely payments and pay interest on loans and premiums on insurance, favours the moderately poor rather than reaching the extremely poor (Kabeer, 2008).

***Insurance:*** The poor, especially women, have limited access to either private insurance against risk, given the underdeveloped nature of credit and insurance markets, or social insurance, given unstable and irregular wage employment and underemployment (Guhan, 1995). While micro-finance services to the poor have generally focused on credit and savings, there is now growing interest in various types of community-based insurance, especially in the area of health. FINCA Uganda, for example has operated a single risk, not-for-profit health insurance scheme since 1998 to cover hospital costs in case of illness (see also Box 4, below).

## Good practices in gender and social protection

### *Political will to adopt a gender mainstreaming strategy*

High-level political will and commitment are essential for the integration of both gender and social protection into national policies and strategies and ensure adequate budgeting. Ethiopia's Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP) has established a framework for gender mainstreaming that is recognised to require continued leadership support, and provides lessons for other government sectors. Over the last two decades, OECD countries have made some progress in this regard. For example, the European Commission has recently developed a *Manual for Gender Mainstreaming, Social Inclusion and Social Protection Policies* for member states (EC, 2008).

### *Conducting a gender analysis*

Conducting a gender analysis and assessment of sources of risk and vulnerability helps to inform appropriate social protection policy and programme responses, identify likely gender impacts and select suitable indicators. It can also assess unintended effects (e.g. on men and women's different informal networks and transfers) and identify potential mitigation approaches. Useful tools for gender analysis are the Harvard and Moser frameworks, and the social relations approach (World Bank, 2007). A life-cycle approach helps to outline the various risks and sources of vulnerability for men and women at different life stages. It is also important to consider rural–urban and regional variations. For example, a gender audit of Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* found that urban women emphasised greater ability to make choices and decisions, whereas rural women reported improved status due to their ability to make household financial contributions and enhanced awareness of Brazilian citizenship (Suarez *et al.*, 2006).

### *Considering gender in policy and programme design*

Gender needs to be mainstreamed into all aspects of policy and programme design for social protection, including targeting, linkages with complementary services, institutional arrangements, awareness-raising and monitoring and evaluation. Design options may include a range of responses according to the spectrum of protective, preventive, promotive and transformative programme objectives, as appropriate.

### *Targeting transfers to women*

The experience of conditional cash transfer programmes in Brazil, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and South Africa has shown that children, particularly girls, in households with female pension recipients are more likely to be healthier and to attend school than if a male receives the grant (Samson, van Niekerk and MacQuene, 2006). A pilot programme in Papua New Guinea is explicitly based on the premise that a social cash transfer to women caring for children may support the achievement of a range of objectives (see Box 3), reflecting Kabeer's (2008) “generative” model, described earlier.

### **Box 3. Social cash transfers in Papua New Guinea**

Papua New Guinea's draft national Child Protection strategy includes a pilot social cash transfer programme as a way to address women and children's vulnerability. The aim is to reduce the dependency of poor women on the informal "wantok" system (extended family, kin and clan groups). Programme objectives include poverty reduction, mitigating the impact of HIV and AIDS on affected children, women's empowerment and reduced domestic violence.

*Source:* Samson, 2008

### ***Linking social protection provision for women with complementary services***

An emerging lesson from global experience is that cash transfers alone are not as effective as cash plus key complementary interventions (Samson, 2008). Gender-related examples include providing childcare support for working mothers, enhancing recipients' access to the labour market through job training, and linking to agricultural input support. This type of integrated approach responds to the importance of recognising women's needs as workers as well as their needs as mothers.

### ***Taking into account gender specific-constraints***

It is important to ensure that social transfer programmes are designed to accommodate the needs of participating women. Examples include ensuring that transactions for eligibility and distribution of food or cash transfers take place at convenient hours and in culturally acceptable conditions.

An analysis of employment-generation schemes world-wide highlights the need to design interventions that are based on clear eligibility criteria and ensure gender equity. Government directives and quotas for including women can be effective. For example, India's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 calls for at least 33% of jobs to go to women. Where cultural constraints restrict women's mobility in the public domain, women-only projects or components of larger projects can help to overcome barriers (e.g. the Rural Maintenance Programme in Bangladesh). The distance of projects and the availability of childcare can also make a difference. The Employment Guarantee Scheme in the state of Maharashtra, India, not only guaranteed employment within eight miles of participants' villages but also provided childcare facilities on site (Engkvist, 1995).

A gender study of Ethiopia's PSNP highlights the importance of avoiding the months of heaviest agricultural workload for women (Helm Corporation, 2008). It also identified the need for improvements in the grievance procedures system, in order to explicitly consider the constraints to appeal experienced by women (e.g. time, transport, gender bias to speaking in public places) to ensure that women have fair access.

### ***Supporting women's organisations and awareness raising***

The absence of social protection and decent working conditions has resulted in initiatives by workers in the informal economy to organise and mobilise. An example of good practice in this regard is the Self Employed Women's Association in India (see Box 4). Belonging to an organisation is often the first step for women workers in gaining recognition since their work is often devalued, particularly when conducted in

the informal economy and on a self-employed basis. Research highlights the value attached by women to paid work, however precarious, and the importance given to social security measures covering ill health, death and contingencies over improving wages and work conditions.

**Box 4. The Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA)**

SEWA has helped to generate a model of organisation among poor women workers in India that combines trade union negotiating strategies with co-operative formation and provision of support services for members. Co-operatives increase members’ livelihood security, which is critical for strengthening bargaining power and voice. SEWA Bank provides credit and savings services to members as well as an integrated insurance scheme, in partnership with nationalised insurance companies. Set up in response to members’ concerns about health costs and loan defaults due to ill health, the insurance scheme has over 102,000 members and includes life, asset and health insurance. SEWA has also developed its own maternity benefit scheme.

Using multiple channels of communication is often critical for increasing women’s participation in social protection programmes. Efforts to proactively recruit women to public works programmes often benefit from the presence of civil society organisations or women’s groups that have already established contacts with poorer sections of the community, particularly female members. Knowledge of different social security measures is often higher among members of civil society networks, including micro-finance groups.

***Developing robust monitoring and evaluation to assess gender impacts and inform programme development***

Good quality monitoring and evaluation systems are essential for highlighting the differential impacts of social protection measures on men and women, informing evidence-based policy options and improving programme design (taking into account the preceding points). Gender-disaggregated indicators built into a programme’s design may include indicators on wages, asset-holding, consumption, and changes in the health and nutritional status of women and men, boys and girls (Luttrell and Moser, 2004). Monitoring and evaluation in Papua New Guinea will focus on the extent to which social cash transfers empower women and promote child protection outcomes (Samson, 2008). In addition, there should be regular evaluations by independent assessors to ensure a greater degree of legitimacy. The Oportunidades programme in Mexico, for example, has been reviewed by independent external IFPRI researchers.

Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are important for providing balanced insights into programme impacts. In Brazil, the Ministry of Social Development commissioned a major quantitative survey of the impact of *Bolsa Familia*, complemented by two qualitative studies on gender and empowerment. The 2008 gender study of the PSNP in Ethiopia recommends ways in which the programme can better promote gender equality outcomes and build on the positive impacts in delivering benefits to women through cash transfers and income from public works.

## Policy implications and suggestions for donors and partner governments

Ensuring a gender perspective in the design and implementation of different types of social protection policies and programmes can enhance effectiveness and efficiency and improve social protection outcomes for both women and men. Partner governments and donors can help ensure appropriate social protection responses to the differential risks and vulnerabilities faced by men and women by:

- Supporting effective gender analyses to improve understanding of the impact of changing risks and vulnerabilities (*e.g.* due to climate change and food price volatility) on men and women, and the implications for appropriate social protection responses over different timeframes;
- Strengthening the collection of gender-disaggregated data on poverty rates, programme coverage, income, nutritional status, access to health and education, and employment conditions to help identify ways to strengthen social protection programmes;
- Developing and broadening the evidence base on gender and social protection to also cover different types of instruments, including social insurance and innovative schemes to reach women working in the informal sector;
- Supporting capacity building of policy-makers in the design and implementation of gender-sensitive social protection policies and programmes, as appropriate to specific contexts;
- Supporting women's organisations and awareness raising efforts to increase women's participation in social protection initiatives.
- Designing gender-specific programme actions that help redress inequalities that prevent women and girls from benefiting from/participating in social protection programmes;
- Building institutional co-ordination between various stakeholders, and ensuring linkages and synergies with complementary sectors and service providers.
- Reviewing and supporting social protection legislation to strengthen mechanisms to address gender discrimination.

## Notes

- 1 This good practice note was supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat and draws extensively on Naila Kabeer's book, *Mainstreaming Gender in Social Protection for the Informal Economy* (Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 2008).



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