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Empowering Women through Social Protection: Selected Cases from Asia and Sub-Saharan Countries

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Introduction

- Women and men face different risks and vulnerabilities, i.e. specific to gender or by gender inequalities and discrimination.

- Thus such gender-related constraints should be addressed when designing and implementing social protection programmes.

- Gender integration is uneven, requires the inclusion of men and boys, PLUS strategic linkages with complementary programmes.

- Empowerment = when women, individuals or in an organised group, can identify causes of their deprivation and poverty, and act to change the relations of power that suppress their voice and autonomy.
Conceptual Framework

Social protection describes all initiatives that:
- provide income (cash) or consumption (food) transfers to the poor;
- protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks;
- enhance the social status and rights of the excluded and marginalised.

Components - an agenda for a comprehensive social protection strategy
- Social assistance for the poor = alleviating chronic poverty with social transfers.
- Social insurance for the vulnerable = “insuring the uninsured” by extending social security.
- Social justice for the marginalised = upgrading SP from “charity” to rights-based claims AND realising ESC rights for social inclusion.
Instruments in Selected Countries

**Ethiopia**
- **Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)** = designed to provide a safety net for the very poor to become more resilient to shocks by building their own asset base, provides food and cash transfers in exchange for labour on public works programmes, quota for female headed households’ participation and provision of equal wages, flexible hours, child care facilities and provision of direct support for pregnant/nursing women or those unable to work

**Ghana**
- **Livelihood Empowerment against Poverty** = targets women and caregivers leaving with orphans
South Africa

**The Child Support Grant** = more accessible to caregivers and children and enabled the programme to substantially increase the participation rate.

**Expanded Public Works Programme** = make more paid work for women

Zambia

**Child Grant Programme** = a poverty-targeted, unconditional transfer given to mothers or primary caregivers of young children aged 0 to 5
Malawi

WFP's food-for-work initiative = women predominate; increasing women’s control over financial and physical assets raising agricultural productivity, improving child health and nutrition, and increasing household spending on education

Purchase for Progress (P4P) = a pilot initiative, aims at achieving equal representation of men and women in farming cooperatives, ensuring that needs specific to women are adequately addressed in skills trainings.

WFP's School Meals Programme = social safety nets to vulnerable groups during the hunger season
India

- **Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY)** = a pilot cash transfer for maternity, to improve the health and nutrition status of pregnant, lactating women and infants

- **Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS)** = part of the National Social Assistance Programme to provide financial assistance to widows

- **Maharastra Employment Guarantee Scheme** = employment within 5km from home, designed with women in mind, thus, childcare facilities are provided and almost half of participants are women.

- **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.
Bangladesh

**Female Secondary School Stipend Programme** = To increase school enrolment among secondary-aged girls; improve the secondary schooling completion rate for girls; and increase female age at marriage.

**Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction, Targeting the Ultra-Poor (CFPR-TUP)** = targets women based on high proportion of female-headed households among ultra poor, aims to increase women’s economic position to empower women, includes sensitisation of men to women’s participation in the programme, provides training on income generating activities, aims to increase women’s social capital
Output of the programmes

**Community**
- Women’s informal credit access and social networks have improved thus social capital BUT unknown is women’s participation/voice

**Household/intra-household**
- Increased income/credit access, confidence BUT little evidence of improved women household decision-making

**Individual level**
- Increased economic opportunities, enhanced knowledge, skills, confidence, and mobility BUT inequalities in labour market
Empowering... How?

Considerations when designing social protection policies and programmes for women empowerment
- Exercise non-discrimination and gender equality principles – IN MIND, women’s multiple responsibilities and labour related constraints
- Ensure access to labour markets, health, education, productive assets, finance, and technology
- Place infrastructure that are tailored to women’s needs,
- Enable positive change in gender roles
- Guarantee intra-household bargaining power/decision-making
- Assist poor households meet basic needs
- Provide legal empowerment
Conclusion

Targetting women does not automatically address gender inequality.

Complementary services should exist together with cash-transfer schemes = women recipients can maintain income control and decision-making capacity.

Improve coordination between actors, and strengthen women’s agency, advocacy and representation.

Synthesise various policies to respond to different gender-specific categories of risks i.e. 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.

Capacity building of policy-makers in the design and implementation of gender-sensitive social protection policies and programmes, that are appropriate to specific contexts.

Further research and studies for data are required.
Selected References


50/50 by 2030
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