Social protection options for female farmers

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Context
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- Zimbabwe is predominantly an agriculture-based economy with about 79% of its population residing in rural areas and earning a living largely from subsistence agriculture.
- Maize is the staple food and accordingly, hunger is commonly associated with its shortage.
- Since 1990, maize production has been erratic due to, among other factors, drought, and the initial impact of the land reform programme and HIV and AIDS.

Figure 1: Trends in Real GDP Growth, 1996-2010

Comparative Average GDP Growth Rates, 1996-2010

Source: Central Statistical Office and Ministry of Finance. The figure for 2010 is projected.
Employment trends

- The percentage of the population employed in the formal sector declined from 14 percent in 1980 to 10 percent by 2004 and about 6 percent by 2007.
- About 1.2 million women work in agriculture, of which only about 5% in formal employment.
- At least 4 out of 5 jobs in Zimbabwe are presently informalized.

Employment trends contd..

- In 2011, only eleven percent of the economically active population was in broad unemployment (Zimstats, 2011).
- In contrast, ILO indicated that at least 4 out of 5 jobs in Zimbabwe are presently informalized (ILO, 2007).
HIV and women farmers

- The impact of HIV/AIDS has been severe on women as they provide 70% of agricultural labour (both as producers and processors),
- they constitute 55 percent of people living with HIV (PLHIV) (MHCW, 2009).
- Women are also the major care givers for the sick, reducing production time and opportunities to participate in activities outside the home.

Female farmers

- Women’s livelihoods are synonymous with lack of productive assets (land, collateral, finance), these are umpired through male power and control.
- They have limited credit facilities, appropriate technology, extension services and marketing facilities (Kachingwe, 1986, Women and Land in Zimbabwe, WLZ), 2006, Zimstats, 2012).
only 19 percent of large scale commercial farms are owned by women with the balance in small scale subsistence farming.

Risks women farmers face

- Although both male and female farmers face similar working environments, the impact this has on the two is different because of the different gender and sex roles.
For women....

- High levels of insecurity of employment (maternity breaks, first to give up work if there is household pressures),
- Lower remuneration
- For the subsistence farmers – the burden and strain of the hard labour even during pregnancy
- Generally have usufruct rights to means of production

Cont...

- General health risks especially for pregnant women arising out of the use of pesticides and fungicides along with the intensity of physical labour (has also led to malnourished children/stunting in children)
- Reproductive health issues arise, ranging from access to sanitary
- Absence of organised labour organisations and poor knowledge of rights and entitlements.
Cont..

- The informality of the sector excludes them from contributory schemes (such as unemployment insurance, maternity leave and workers compensation against accidents at work).

Challenges with extending formal social security to female farmers

- In terms of macro-level synergies, effective investments in agriculture should promote growth in agricultural production and rural incomes, with two beneficial implications for social protection:
  - firstly, economic growth increases the public resources available for financing social protection;
  - secondly, pro-poor growth in incomes reduces social protection needs.
Challenges cont..

- In terms of macro-level conflicts, agricultural and social protection policies typically compete for limited financial resources and they tend to be regarded by governments and donors as distinct rather than complementary policy sectors, and their implementation is often uncoordinated and internally contradictory. Devereux et al. (2008)

- The irregularity of the incomes of the self-employed makes enforcing contributions difficult.
- Conditional schemes e.g. 20% contribution of the total value of the input support of FAO programmes.
- Although no sex or gender disaggregation has been made on those failing to meet their contribution, anecdotal evidence suggests women were the ones who mostly failed to make the contribution.
- In spite of this, Lund notes that social protection should be seen as an “investment in the human potential of poorer workers in the informal economy, and especially for poorer women”.
Social protection for female farmers

- Social protection is not new in Africa. What is new, is the policy frameworks and the introduction of social assistance measures that provide conditional and unconditional transfers to targeted sections of the population.
- Communities had a way of coping with shocks (the extended family, the community mechanisms etc)

What to do...

- Strengthen the informal route e.g. Chief’s granary
- Strengthen/establish community clubs for female farmers: it’s a platform for empowerment – extension support, self-help groups, income savings and lending clubs, market linkages formation
What to do…..

- Unconditional inputs/cash transfers
- Progressive steps towards formalization of the sector
- Livelihoods based social protection schemes: asset building, education and extension,

The benefits of investing in social protection women……globally

Amongst other factors, it would:
- reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17%
- increase yields on women's farms by 20-30%
- Result in 100-150 million fewer people living in hunger
- Improved household social indicators

Food and Agriculture Organization, The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-2011