



Overseas Development  
Institute

# **Gender-sensitive social protection: addressing poverty and vulnerability**

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A photograph of a pregnant woman in a rural, arid landscape. She is wearing a purple t-shirt and a red and white patterned sari. Her arms are raised, and she is looking off to the side. The background shows a dry, hilly landscape under a clear sky. The text "1. Poverty and vulnerability through a gender lens" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# 1. Poverty and vulnerability through a gender lens

# Poverty and vulnerability through a gender lens (1)

## Economic risks and vulnerability

- **Health**

*‘Women get sicker ... They are responsible for household chores and take care of lots of things. Husbands and children get food first when supplies are limited (Married woman, Shibhta, Ethiopia).*

- **Life-cycle**

*“After my daughter’s marriage I faced problems. I had to spend all I had in hand, and now I am penniless. I provided gold, ten thousand taka, clothes and feast for the guests. I could arrange my daughter’s marriage having everybody’s help in my village” (Single woman, Bangladesh, 2010).*

- **Employment and income: unequal labour markets**

*“That job [in a garment factory] has no future; she could lose that job anytime. If we could ensure better education, my daughter could get a better job. She is earning little” (Elderly woman, Bangladesh, 2010).*



# Poverty and vulnerability through a gender lens (2)

## Social risks and vulnerability

- **Time poverty**

*‘Women are dedicated to cooking and men work on the farm. Men play football when they rest, while we remain at home with house chores’ (Adolescent female, 20, Peru, 2009).*

- **Intra-household dynamics**

*‘We were not living well; we were always fighting... Once when he hit me very hard I went to my parents’ home to stay but my godparents came and made me come back ...’ (Married female, 24, Peru, 2009).*

- **Female-headed households**

*‘Ah do women have any role on the farm? Women can help harvest and sow but that is it. They have their own food plots but only help their men at harvest time ... Women don’t farm, they depend on men for their sustenance’ (Elderly married man, Gushiegu, Ghana).*

# Gender-sensitive programme design



# Gender-sensitive programme design (1)

## Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme

- 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
- gender-sensitive community assets to reduce women's and girls' time poverty
- encouragement of women's participation in community decisions re PSNP
- co-ordination with Women's Bureau government agency including linkages to Women's Development Package

# Gender-sensitive programme design (2)

## Peru's conditional cash transfer, Juntos

- transfer is targeted to women within the household
- linkages to other programmes and mechanisms including registration for civic documentation for women, close coordination with health insurance, programmes to protect women from domestic or sexual violence, education (including female adult literacy), and economic activities
- promotion of women as community facilitators

# Gender-sensitive programme design (3)

## Bangladesh's Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction

- 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
- addresses social and gender inequities through complementary social development trainings



# Impacts



# Impacts

## **Individual:**

Higher income and equal wages in public works but discrimination in allocation of work and wages

Time poverty - limited provision of childcare, support/flexibility for domestic responsibilities

## **Intra-household:**

Mixed impact – increased confidence, perceived status and mobility; but limited changes in decision-making and gendered division of labour

## **Community:**

Increased social capital; limited quality participation.

# Political economy dimensions



# Political economy dimensions (1)

- PE approaches focus on 3Is – institutions, ideas and interests
- Recent interest in political economy of social protection (Hickey, 2007, McCord, 2009)
- But role of gender in shaping these has been largely ignored to date but is critical to understand to maximise programme effectiveness



# Political economy dimensions (2)

- Institutional motivations for social protection
  - Gender generally ranks low down priority list
  - Exceptions of CFPR and Estancias
- Interests of key actors
  - Political elites: Gender considerations can shape programme introduction and sustainability
  - Bureaucratic agencies: weaknesses of gender mainstreaming infrastructure typically hinder implementation of gender provisions
  - Civil society: only limited focus on gender dynamics
  - Donors: fledgling interest in social protection as a tool to promote gender equality and empowerment
- Ideas matter
  - Focus on harnessing the productive capacity of all citizens, including women (Estancias and LEAP)
  - Limited support for more comprehensive gender-sensitive approach as gender relations often seen as purview of families and cultural/religious groups

# Conclusions and policy recommendations



# Conclusions/ policy recommendations (1)

Our findings suggest that gender-social protection requires more than simply targeting women and girls:

1. Supporting the routine integration of gender inequalities experienced across the lifecycle into vulnerability assessments which inform social protection design
2. Taking into consideration diverse household composition, gender relations and gender roles, and the ways these shape programme participation and benefits
3. Adapting more gender-appropriate definitions of work activities and of community assets

# Conclusions/ policy recommendations (2)

4. Capitalising on the potential of the community-programme interface to initiate community dialogues on gender-related issues
5. Promoting better coordination across sectors to promote programmes which address the multi-dimensionality of poverty and vulnerability, and enhancing linkages to complementary services (credit, childcare, legal protections, vocational training, etc.)
6. Strengthening investment in awareness at all levels of gender-related programme design provisions and their rationale (ag extension, sector ministries, communities [both men and women], evaluators etc.), and supporting capacity building to effectively implement these



## Conclusions/ policy recommendations (3)

7. Designing decision-making structures to facilitate quality participation by women; and strengthening implementation from a demand-side and esp. rights-based approach to augment community ownership of programme
8. Informing programme implementation action plans with an assessment of political economy dynamics so as to maximise programme uptake and minimise resistance/blockages
9. Integrating gender indicators that capture not only individual or household level participation but also intra-household impacts into M&E and learning processes