Introduction to gender-sensitive social protection programming to combat rural poverty: Why is it important and what does it mean?
FAO Technical Guide 1
Introduction to gender-sensitive social protection programming to combat rural poverty: Why is it important and what does it mean?

A Toolkit on gender-sensitive social protection programmes to combat rural poverty and hunger
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Abbreviations and acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4Ps</td>
<td>Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (Philippines)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDS</td>
<td>Institute of Development Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO</td>
<td>International Labour Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPC-IG</td>
<td>International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>ODI</td>
<td>Overseas Development Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSNP</td>
<td>Productive Safety Net Programme (Ethiopia)</td>
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<td>PWP</td>
<td>Public works programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Social protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>VUP</td>
<td>Vision 2020 Umurenge Programme (Rwanda)</td>
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Introduction

Welcome to FAO Technical Guide 1 – Introduction to gender-sensitive social protection programming to combat rural poverty: Why is it important and what does it mean? This is the first of three technical guides in the Toolkit on gender-sensitive social protection programmes to combat rural poverty and hunger (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Overview of technical guides and key issues covered

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overview</th>
<th>Themes covered</th>
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</table>
| Technical Guide 1: Introduction to gender-sensitive SP programming. | • Why gender-sensitive approach to social protection matters?  
• How gender inequalities affect rural women’s vulnerability to poverty and crises?  
• How social protection programmes impact gender equality and rural women’s empowerment?  
• Key dimensions of gender-sensitive approach to social protection. |
| Technical Guide 2: Gender-sensitive design of cash transfers and PWPs. | • Guidance for undertaking a gender-sensitive poverty and vulnerability analysis  
• How to integrate gender into core features of cash transfers?  
• How to integrate gender into core features of public works programmes  
• Linking social transfers with gender-sensitive complementary interventions |
| Technical Guide 3: Gender-sensitive programme implementation and M&E. | • Why gender-sensitive implementation matters?  
• Key dimensions of gender-sensitive programme implementation  
• The role of gender-sensitive M&E and learning systems  
• How to develop a gender-sensitive M&E framework? |

Background and rationale

Social protection (SP) has been broadly acknowledged as a critical strategy for reducing poverty, building resilience and promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have acknowledged the importance of SP. SDG 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere), includes a target (1.3) that explicitly calls for countries to “implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all” as a strategy to eradicate poverty and hunger. SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) recognizes that SP has a role in making progress in this area. Target 4 of SDG 5 specifically calls for countries to “recognize and value unpaid and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies”.

1 The SDGs are available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs
By making women the main recipients of transfers, SP programmes can directly reduce gender gaps in access to health, food and education, and enable women to accumulate productive resources and assets (Warring and de la O Campos, 2016). Transfers also increase the influence of rural women in household decision-making and their participation in social networks, which has positive effects on food production and family nutrition (FAO, 2015; Chant, ed., 2010).

To date, however, gender issues have received relatively little and inconsistent attention in SP programming (Holmes and Jones, 2013). This is partly due to the relatively weak understanding of gender inequality and its effects on rural poverty and vulnerability, and the limited investments that are being made to build government capacities to design gender-sensitive SP interventions. The Toolkit is designed to support SP and gender policymakers and practitioners in their efforts to systematically apply a gender lens to SP programmes in ways that are in line with global agreements and FAO commitments to expand inclusive SP systems for rural populations.² The Toolkit focuses on the role of SP in reducing gendered social inequalities, and rural poverty and hunger.

**The purpose of the Toolkit**

This *Toolkit on gender-sensitive social protection programmes to combat rural poverty and hunger* is designed for government staff involved in SP and gender programme development and implementation. It may also be of use to FAO gender and social protection focal points in regional and country offices, development partners and SP practitioners in general. The Toolkit is intended to deepen staff awareness of the importance of gender-sensitive SP and improve the technical skills they need to integrate gender issues effectively into the design, delivery, and monitoring and evaluation of cash transfers and public works programmes (PWPs).

The Toolkit is composed of three technical guides:

- **Technical Guide 1:** Introduction to gender-sensitive SP programming to combat rural poverty: Why is it important and what does it mean?
- **Technical Guide 2:** Integrating gender into the design of cash transfer and public works programmes
- **Technical Guide 3:** A guide to integrating gender into implementation and monitoring and evaluation of cash transfer and public work programmes

The Toolkit draws on literature and practical experiences from the field, and builds on the previous research and advisory work undertaken by FAO and partners, including the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), UNICEF, the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and the World Bank. The technical guides complement other related resources and knowledge products published on this topic. Reference to these resources can be found in Annex 6.

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² Consult the FAO Social Protection Framework (FAO, 2017) for the Organization’s corporate approach and programmatic work in SP.
Scope of the Toolkit

The Toolkit focuses on:

- Poor rural women and girls, as they are more likely than men and boys to be vulnerable to multidimensional forms of poverty and food insecurity (UN Women, 2015; FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2017). Adult women are also disproportionately represented among the beneficiaries and/or recipients of social transfers (FAO, 2015). The Toolkit, however, acknowledges that gender norms and gender relations can also increase the vulnerability of men and boys to poverty and risk. It underscores the importance of engaging with men and boys in SP strategies that are designed to empower rural women and girls and bridge gender gaps.

- Lessons and experiences from Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, as these regions have a high prevalence of rural poverty and agriculture-based livelihoods among rural households and women in particular.

- Social assistance programmes, such as cash transfers and PWPs. The focus on these programmes is due to their importance for the most impoverished and vulnerable rural populations, which are typically more likely to be covered by social assistance rather than contributory social security measures (see Tirivayi, Knowles and Davis, 2013; UN Women, 2015; Ulrichs, 2016). Also, as these schemes are often studied from a gender perspective, there is a relatively solid evidence base on their strengths and limitations regarding the integration of gender-sensitive features.

It is expected that the Toolkit will contribute to the development of (i) SP programmes that are non-discriminatory and provide equal access to benefits for both rural women and men; and (ii) more effective SP programmes that address the gender-based vulnerabilities and risks that prevent rural populations, and rural women in particular, from accessing and benefiting from economic and social opportunities, and claiming their rights and entitlements. Improved programmes should ultimately lead to outcomes that improve livelihoods, reduce rural poverty and build resilience.

The overview of Technical Guide 1

Technical Guide 1 presents an overview of the links between gender, poverty and SP in rural areas. It provides key information, arguments and learning tools to readers to prepare them to advocate for, and undertake practical work on, the integration of gender issues into SP at the programme level.

Technical Guide 1 is composed of seven parts:

- **Part 1:** An introduction to key gender terms and concepts
- **Part 2:** What is social protection? A brief overview
- **Part 3:** Why does gender matter for SP programming?
- **Part 4:** Understanding the links between gender inequality and women’s vulnerability to rural poverty and risks

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3 In the Toolkit, ‘agriculture-based livelihoods’ refer to production, processing and marketing activities in crop and livestock production, fisheries and aquaculture, and forestry.

4 In this document, cash transfers and PWPs are sometimes referred to as social transfers.
Part 5: Gender gaps in access to, and uptake of, SP in rural areas

Part 6: How can SP address different aspects of poverty and vulnerability that rural women face?

Part 7: What is a gender-sensitive approach to SP in rural context? An overview

Technical Guide 1 combines conceptual and empirical insights, specific programme examples, and practical tools, such as checklists and exercises. It is intended for beginners, and men and women with an intermediate level of experience in working in SP and gender policy and programming.

How should the technical guides be used?

The technical guides in the Toolkit follow a logical programming sequence: from planning and design to implementation and monitoring and evaluation. Each technical guide can be used as a stand-alone resource or in combination with the other technical guides. Figure 1 indicates the key issues and topics covered in the technical guides. Users can work at their own pace and according to their personal interests and learning objectives, without direct guidance or facilitation.

The technical guides can be adapted for, and used in face-to-face training workshops with a dedicated facilitator to respond to specific country demands and contexts. The combination of techniques used throughout the technical guides is designed to build on the participants' existing knowledge and experience.

How were the technical guides prepared?

The technical guides are based on:

- a comprehensive literature review on gender, rural poverty and vulnerability, SP, and gender-sensitive SP programming. The review combined theoretical and conceptual readings with empirical and practitioner-based literature, including impact evaluations and case studies;

- expert consultations with key partners within and outside FAO;\(^5\)

- policy and operational insights into gender-sensitive SP, collected during a series of webinar events on gender and SP organized by FAO and IPC-IG;\(^6\) and

- a peer review by external experts and academics and senior FAO staff.

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\(^5\) The list of experts interviewed can be found in Annex 4.

PART 3
Why does gender matter for SP programming?

KEY OBJECTIVES:
To gain an understanding of the importance and rationale for integrating a gender lens into SP programmes in rural areas, and be able to advocate for its inclusion in cash transfers and PWP development.