PART 1
An introduction to key gender terms and concepts

KEY OBJECTIVES:
To understand essential gender concepts and their relevance to analyses of rural poverty and vulnerability; and explore strategies for promoting gender equality and the empowerment of rural women.

IMPORTANT NOTE:
For some readers, this introductory section will address familiar concepts. For others, much of this material may be new. The gender concepts discussed in this section will appear throughout the technical guides. For this reason, these concepts require some preliminary clarification.

1.1 What is 'gender'?[7]

'Sex' refers to the biological characteristics of women and men, which are manifest in their different roles in reproduction (FAO, 2013). **'Gender'** refers to the socially constructed roles, attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female.

Examples of a gender norm can be the common social beliefs that "women and girls should do the majority of domestic work" or that "only men can drive tractors".

'Gender norms' refer to the informal rules and shared social expectations that define socially acceptable roles and responsibilities of men and women, their expected behaviour and the power relations between them. Examples of a gender norm can be the common social beliefs that "women and girls should do the majority of domestic work" or that "only men can drive tractors". These norms are not universal and can vary both within and between cultures (FAO, 2013). Traditional gender norms are often deeply rooted but can also change over time. In many societies characterized by a patriarchal social order, gender norms are generally skewed in favour of men and disproportionately disadvantageous to women (World Bank, 2012).

1.2 What do we mean by 'gender relations'?

'Gender relations' refer to the ways in which society defines the rights, identities, and roles and responsibilities of women and men in relation to one another (FAO, 2013). Gender relations are informed by socio-cultural norms and they determine how power is distributed between the sexes. These relations may create and reflect systemic differences in men's and women's positions and life chances in a given society across three domains:

1. gender entitlement systems, which influence access to health and education, and access to, and control over productive resources and income;

2. gendered division of labour across productive and reproductive work; and

3. social status, bargaining power and agency to influence decision-making processes at the household and community level.

Social relationships among women and men are influenced by other socio-economic variables, such as age, class, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation.

1.3 What do we mean by 'gender roles' and 'gender division of labour'?

The concept of **'gender roles'** refers to activities ascribed to women and men in a given society according to their sex. In the rural context, both women and men perform multiple roles (often referred to as 'triple roles'). In the productive domain, these roles relate to food production and income-generation. Men and women also have roles in the reproductive domain. These roles are related to the care of the family and household. Men and women also have roles in community management. Activities associated with community management are usually carried out by women as an extension of their reproductive role. These activities can benefit the community in a number of ways (e.g. the provision and maintenance of scarce resources, such as water, health care and education, for collective consumption).

7   This section draws on and adapts material used in the FAO Training Course for Gender Focal Points (FAO, 2013).

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In many societies, work can be rigidly divided between men and women according to their gender roles. This is generally referred to as the **'gender division of labour'**. This division is affected by, and in turn shapes, power relations between women and men. When considering gender roles and the gender division of labour, there are three important aspects to keep in mind.

First, depending on the cultural context, social norms tend to define women's primary role as that of key household care providers responsible for family welfare, while men are designated as primary economic providers. In reality, rural women must juggle multiple roles. Domestic tasks and caring responsibilities, including the care of children and sick and elderly family members, fall almost entirely to women. These tasks when combined with women's income-generation and community activities, lead to disproportionate work burdens for women (see Part 4).

Second, different values may be ascribed to men's and women's tasks. For example, while both sexes perform productive work in agriculture, these efforts are not all equally valued or rewarded by society. Care work and domestic work performed by rural women is typically unpaid and undervalued by the family and society in general (FAO, 2013; Grassi, Landberg and Huyer, 2015).

Third, gender norms around 'suitable' jobs for women and men may lead to occupational gender segregation in agriculture and the non-farm labour market (see Box 1). Gender segregation results in a disproportionate concentration of women and men in particular occupations and industries, which can be enforced by rules, laws and policies (UN Women, 2015). This assumed rigid gender division of roles and responsibilities can lead to gender inequalities in economic opportunities and livelihood options, and differences between men and women in terms of their vulnerability to risks and coping capabilities (see Part 4).

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Box 1: Gendered work norms in farming

Women and men may farm different crops. In some cultures, social norms and household responsibilities dictate the types of crops women can cultivate. For example, in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa, wives bear primary responsibility for household food security. As a result, these women may prioritize crops for home consumption. Men bear primary responsibility for cash income and tend to choose to grow cash or export crops for market sale. The cultivation of cash crops is culturally viewed as a male activity, and women are less likely to cultivate these crops. While farmers may be responsible for gender-specific tasks, their labour may still be 'shared'. Often men assist with certain tasks related to the kitchen garden and subsistence farming (e.g. yam mound preparation, high-labour clearing, cutting tree stumps), and women may provide support in the cultivation of the principle market crop.

Source: Adapted from Pavanello *et al.*, 2016; FAO, 2013.

1.4 Gender discrimination and gender inequality

'Gender discrimination' is any exclusion or restriction to entitlements and opportunities based on gender roles and relations that prevents a person from enjoying full human rights (FAO, 2013). **'Gender inequality'** refers to unequal treatment and/or perceptions of individuals and groups based on their gender. Discriminatory gender norms are the core means by which gender inequalities are

created and maintained in a society. They are exercised through informal customs and practices, formal rules, laws and policies, and social institutions, such as labour markets, education and marriage. Discrimination relates to both differences in treatment between men and women, and the different outcomes certain practices may have that contribute to disproportionate deprivation and social limitations for a particular gender.

IMPORTANT NOTE: In this technical guide, we explore how gender norms, roles and relations in rural contexts create gender-based discrimination and inequality, and how this situation hinders women's (and men's) capacity to construct sustainable rural livelihoods and manage risks effectively (see Parts 3 and 4). Because of gender-based discrimination and inequality, women may be denied adequate access to SP, which has implications for SP programme outcomes related to poverty, food insecurity and vulnerability (see Part 5).

1.5 Strategies for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment

In this technical guide, we consider the concepts of gender equality and women's empowerment both as underlying principles and the goals of SP programming. This section then looks at the main strategies for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in SP programmes.

Defining gender equality and women's empowerment and the interdependence of these two concepts

'Gender equality' denotes the equal participation of women and men in decision-making; equal ability to exercise their rights; equal access to, and control of, resources and development-related benefits; and equal opportunity to obtain decent employment and improve other aspects of their livelihoods.

'Women's empowerment' has a number of definitions. It is usually framed in terms of economic advancement and enhanced power and agency, which can enable women (and men) to have increased control over their lives. In this technical guide, the term 'empowerment' includes social, economic and political dimensions. According to the definition proposed by Kabeer (2005), the concept of empowerment can be explored through three closely interrelated dimensions: agency, resources and achievements. Agency represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect; resources are the medium through which agency is exercised; and achievements refer to the outcomes of applying agency and resources effectively (Kabeer, 2005). In the rural context, a woman can be considered empowered, when she has both the ability and the power to make and act on economic decisions, and is consequently able to succeed and advance socio-economically (Golla *et al.*, 2011).

> Men can also benefit from women's empowerment, as it offers the opportunity to live in a more equitable society and reduce the constraints imposed on them by their male gender roles.

The empowerment of women may emerge through improved access to resources; the collective action and political mobilization of women; and training and awareness raising (FAO, 2013). Women's collective voice and agency is critical for negotiating transformative gender changes; demanding higher wages; and improving women's access to resources and social services and care services, including SP (Domingo *et al.*, 2015). Men can also benefit from women's empowerment, as it offers the opportunity to live in a more equitable society and reduce the constraints imposed on them by their male gender roles.

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Having power and agency, within both a household and community, is critically tied to women's ability to achieve gender equality; gain access and control over resources and entitlements, including SP benefits; and in turn, advance economically and move out of poverty (Kabeer, 2005). Women's empowerment, in particular improvements for women in education, health and control over income, is central to alleviating household poverty and improving food security and nutrition (FAO, 2011). In this technical guide, this is the rationale for exploring the ways SP can contribute to achieving outcomes that reduce gender inequality and support women's empowerment.

Gender mainstreaming and women-specific actions

Gender equality and women's empowerment can be promoted through two twin-tracked strategies:

- ▶ gender mainstreaming and

- ▶ women-specific interventions

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has defined gender mainstreaming as "a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and needs an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated" (ECOSOC, 1997, p. 27). However, equal treatment in policies and programmes may not necessarily lead to equal outcomes for both sexes. In cases of significant and systemic gender inequity, affirmative action and women-specific interventions must be undertaken. Both the gender mainstreaming[8] and women-specific actions are relevant to the concept of gender-sensitive SP programming.

> Gender equality and women's empowerment can be promoted through **two twin-tracked strategies**: gender mainstreaming and women-specific interventions.

The typology of gender integration into programmes and policies

Efforts to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment objectives into any given policy or programme can be done along a 'continuum'. Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) first developed a policy classification tool for helping practitioners determine the degree to which an intervention is explicitly working towards transforming unequal gender relations. They classified interventions into two broad types:

- ▶ Gender-blind interventions that recognize no distinction between the sexes, and may make gender assumptions that lead to a bias in favour of existing gender relations.

- ▶ Gender-aware interventions that recognize that the nature of women's involvement is determined by gender relations, which make their involvement different, and often unequal; and that consequently women may have different needs, interests and priorities that may sometimes conflict with those of men (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1996).

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8 There are many tools and operational approaches to mainstream gender in development policies and programmes, including: gender strategy development, gender analysis and data disaggregation, gender budgeting, gender stocktaking, and audits. For specific examples of these strategies refer to the *FAO Training Course for Gender Focal Points* (FAO, 2013).

Building on the original classification developed by Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) and FAO work in this area, this technical guide defines three categories of interventions (see Table 1) to indicate the degree of gender integration in terms of objectives and scope: gender-discriminatory or gender-blind, gender-neutral, and gender-sensitive. In this technical guide, the gender-sensitive policy classification is used to characterize interventions that incorporate transformative elements in gender objectives and features (see Part 2). Programme designers should aim to develop gender-sensitive SP interventions that maximize positive outcomes related to gender equality and empowerment and do not reinforce gender inequalities.

Table 1: A 'gender continuum': FAO typology of interventions

Type	Description of intervention
Gender-discriminatory/ gender-blind	Ignores gender issues, gender roles and the gender gaps between men and women; may contain measures that discriminate against women and men, and/or reinforce gender inequalities.
Gender-neutral	Recognizes gender inequalities, but does not include specific measures to address gender discrimination and inequality.
Gender-sensitive/ transformative	Recognizes specific needs and priorities of women and men, and purposefully and proactively tackles gender inequalities by questioning and challenging the structures, institutions and norms on which these inequalities are based, sustained, reinforced and reproduced over time.

Source: Adapted from FAO, 2016b.

Practical and strategic gender needs

Another helpful concept in assessing the types of gender issues that SP programmes may address is the concept of 'practical and strategic' gender needs (also referred to as gender interests).[9] For example, programmes can address practical gender needs by improving people's immediate, material circumstances and reducing deprivation (e.g. improving access to food, health care and education). In such circumstances, the lives of women (or men) may be improved without necessarily altering existing gender norms or challenging women's traditional roles and subordinate position in society (March *et al.*, 1999). Programmes can respond to strategic gender needs by improving women's position and status in society and empowering women to claim their rights and entitlements. To achieve this end, programmes must address the ways in which existing gender norms determine the balance of power, social status, and control over resources

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9   The concept of practical or strategic gender interests was first coined by Maxine Molyneux in 1985. It was then developed into a tool for planners by Caroline Moser, who looked at 'needs' rather than interests. Kate Young introduced a concept of transformative potential to complement the concept of practical and strategic gender interests (March *et al.*, 1999).

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by transforming the social institutions that perpetuate discrimination and gender-based exclusion. Practical and strategic approaches are closely related and complementary. Interventions with 'practical' objectives can also serve to meet beneficiaries' strategic gender needs in that they may affect gender norms, roles and power relations, either intentionally or otherwise.

Understanding the concept of practical and strategic gender needs can help development planners to determine how the practical needs of programme beneficiaries can be met through SP schemes in a way that has the transformative potential to assist women and men in challenging unequal gender power relations, and contribute to women's empowerment. In the Toolkit, we explore the scope for designing SP programmes that address both practical and strategic needs in a synergistic way.

Summary questions

▶ **How might gender norms and practices be expressed in the everyday lives of rural households/communities?**

▶ **What are the key gender inequalities in your country? What progress has been made in the areas of gender equality and women's empowerment in your country?**

▶ **Give some examples of the strategies used by government, donors, and civil society to address gender inequalities and promote women's empowerment in your country.**

**Exercise 1:
Reflecting on gender norms and roles relevant to your context**
(SEE ANNEX 1: LEARNING TOOLS)