

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.

3.1 Rationale for integrating gender into SP programmes

In the development community, SP is increasingly recognized for the role it can play in reducing gender inequalities and promoting the economic empowerment of rural women (FAO, 2017). Interventions that recognize and support women's productive roles, alleviate their reproductive care burdens, and improve their social and economic position are key to achieving positive outcomes that contribute to sustainably reducing poverty, increasing food security and building women's and men's resilience to shocks and crises (UN Women, 2015; Holmes and Jones, 2013).

Despite this knowledge, it remains an ongoing challenge to turn this understanding into concrete actions to mainstream gender in the design and implementation of SP programmes. Difficulties in this regard are often due to a limited understanding of how gender inequalities shape rural women's and men's experience of poverty and their vulnerability to risks in rural settings; and a failure to adequately appreciate the importance of explicitly integrating gender into the SP programme cycle. In this section, we make a case for the importance of incorporating gender in SP programming, and discuss the benefits of adopting a gender-sensitive approach to SP.

There are three main reasons for integrating gender into social protection programmes.

i. Rural poverty affects women and men differently due to gender roles and inequalities

Men and women are affected by rural poverty and vulnerability in different ways due to their gender-specific roles, constraints and capacities in agriculture and rural livelihoods. Gender discrimination and inequality plays a significant role in pushing rural women into poverty and food insecurity and trapping them there.

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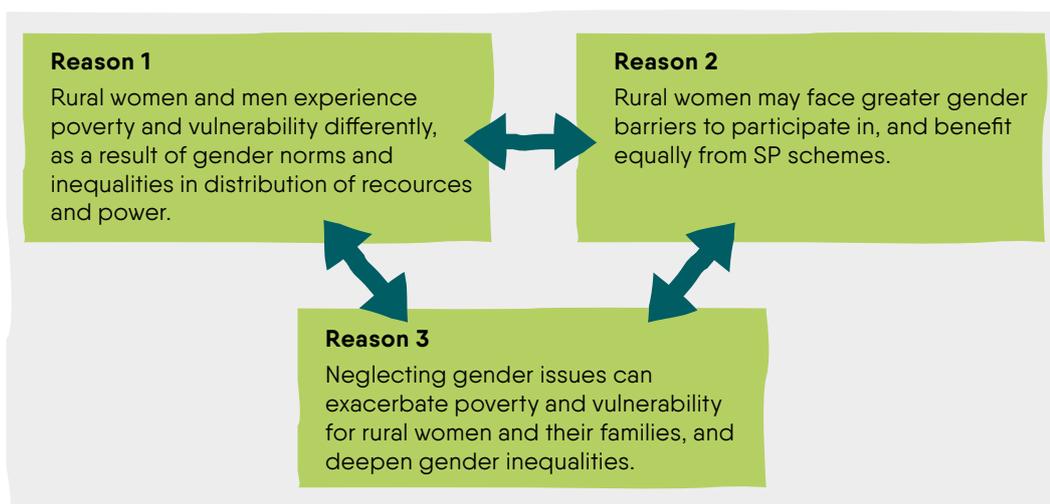
Women farmers play a significant role in agriculture. In developing countries, they make up about 43 percent of the agricultural labour force (FAO, 2011). However, because of gender-based discrimination women have generally less access than men to productive resources, services and employment opportunities. This discrimination creates a gap between women's and men's productivity and incomes. Because of discriminatory gender norms and practices, and women's generally lower status in the society, women are also more likely to experience excessive work burdens and time poverty; have reduced mobility; participate in only a limited manner in decision-making at the household and community levels; and face gender-based violence (de la O Campos, 2015; UN Women, 2015). These disadvantages further reduce rural women's access to economic opportunities and social networks, and limit their participation in SP schemes (Holmes and Jones, 2009).

Consequently, rural women face greater challenges than men in building resilient livelihoods, managing shocks and overcoming poverty. Women, especially those between the age of 20 and 34, are more likely to live in poverty than men in 41 out of the 75 countries where sufficient data is available (UN Women, 2015). Even where women and men are both as likely to live in a poor household, women tend to be deprived in other areas. They generally have less access to labour markets and education, enjoy less financial and social autonomy, and own fewer assets (FAO, 2015). See Part 4 for a detailed discussion of the links between gender inequalities and rural poverty and vulnerability to crises.



IMPORTANT NOTE: For the above reasons, SP programmes must acknowledge how gender inequalities affect women’s and men’s exposure to, and experience of rural poverty. These programmes need to respond to the different needs of women and men and recognize their different priorities with regard to the support they require. In contexts where rural women are more vulnerable to poverty and crises, it is necessary to promote affirmative action for women to maximize the benefits they derive from SP and empower them.

Figure 3: Rationale for gender-sensitive social protection



ii. Social inequalities create gender gaps in access to SP

For rural women, gender-related norms and practices may create various barriers that prevent them from participating in, and benefitting fully and equitably from SP schemes. Rural women generally have irregular and interrupted employment histories, and their work is concentrated in the informal sector. As a result, they are less able than men to contribute to social security schemes, including pensions and maternity protection.

Gender-blind programme design and implementation may also ignore the practical and socio-cultural barriers that prevent women from participating in SP programmes. These barriers include child-care demands and time poverty, restricted mobility, illiteracy, limited access to information, and cultural restrictions related to working in public spaces. For instance, mothers with small children may exclude themselves from public works schemes if these schemes do not offer child-care facilities. Even if poor rural women participate in SP programmes, they may not necessarily use and benefit equally from the social transfers. Weak bargaining power in the household, limited confidence and a lack of financial and functional literacy in using cash and wages may restrict their control over benefits.

Women, especially women between the age of 20 and 34, are more likely to live in poverty than men.



IMPORTANT NOTE: Programmes must identify and address the gender-based constraints faced by rural women and men to ensure they both can participate in, and benefit equitably from interventions. Systematic efforts are needed, beyond the targeting of women, to ensure full uptake of programmes among rural women.

iii. Gender-blind programmes can exacerbate poverty and vulnerability for rural women and their families

Neglecting gender issues in the design and implementation of SP programmes can exacerbate rural women and girl's vulnerability to poverty, and disempower men and boys (Luttrell and Moser, 2004; Bastagli *et al.*, 2016). For example, the conditions that female care providers are expected to fulfil to receive conditional cash transfers can reinforce gender stereotypes, exacerbate their time poverty, and reduce their ability to engage in activities that generate income and produce food for the household (de la O Campos, 2015; Holmes and Jones, 2010; Molyneux and Thomson, 2012). Giving preferential access to employment for women in PWP without a proper public awareness-raising component can potentially have negative consequences within households and the wider community. The programme may disempower men, who may feel threatened by changes in gender roles or alienated from programme activities (Hagen-Zanker *et al.*, 2017; IEG, 2014; Molyneux and Thomson, 2012).



IMPORTANT NOTE: Programmes must take care to avoid any unintended negative effects on rural women and men, and the gender relations between them. This can be achieved by adopting a 'do no harm' approach to programme design and implementation, and undertaking gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation activities that can assess and identify potentially adverse gender-related changes arising from programme delivery.

3.2 The benefits of gender-sensitive SP for rural poverty reduction

From the perspective of human rights, addressing the differential needs and priorities of rural women and men, through gender-sensitive SP is an appropriate approach. This approach is also warranted from a broader development perspective. Only by ensuring that every individual achieves their equal socio-economic and political rights will rural poverty and hunger be tackled effectively. Gender-sensitive SP helps fulfil the commitment of 'leaving no one behind', as articulated in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (FAO, 2016a).

There is also a business case for gender-sensitive SP. Gender-sensitive approaches to SP programmes increase the impacts of the interventions. Interventions that tackle the structural causes of gender inequalities, and work to improve women's position and empower them economically, are key to achieving long-term positive outcomes related to poverty reduction and increased resilience at the individual and household level. By enhancing rural women's production and productivity, and improving their bargaining power, gender-sensitive SP initiatives can enable women to increase the investments they make in the overall well-being of their children, and break the cycle in which poverty is transferred from one generation to the next (SOFA, 2011; SOFA, 2015). We now turn to explore in greater detail the links between gender inequalities, and poverty and vulnerability (in Part 4), and gender gaps in access to SP (in Part 5).

Summary questions



- ▶ What are the main reasons for adopting a gender lens in SP?
- ▶ Give examples of how gender inequalities contribute to rural women's vulnerability to poverty in your country.
- ▶ Give examples of how gender equality can contribute to developmental outcomes.