Safety nets and women’s empowerment

Improving outcomes for women, girls, and everyone else
Gender awareness is key to effective and equitable SP and SSN interventions

• Merely targeting girls and women is not sufficient

• Poverty, vulnerability, and shocks are experienced differently by men and women, mhh/fhh.

• Differences in behavior and preferences, intra-household relations, and social norms all key to the impact of transfers programs.

• Women and men differ in their control over assets, labor force participation, earnings, and other factors key to the design of efficient and equitable SSN schemes.

→ Should SSN be targeted to women, designed differently for women, or merely be aware of gender differences?
Gender-smart SSN can boost women’s socioeconomic empowerment

• Increased income and assets necessary, but may not be sufficient, for greater empowerment.

• Other components of SSN programs, such as banking, ID cards, childcare, also promote women’s empowerment.

• Impacts include early marriage and pregnancy, fertility decisions, welfare of vulnerable children and youth, early childhood development, nutrition, girls’ school enrollment and retention.

• Conflicting impact on domestic violence.
Why might safety nets have an impact on women’s empowerment? (What’s the “theory of change?”)

• Increased and more stable income reduces domestic stress.
• The range of decisions under women’s control (their “sphere”) expands.
• Women gain power and independence in decision-making.
• Women gain more power to leave a relationship (and the cost to men of family dissolution increases).
• Women gain access to external resources and services.
• Social norms change as women gain income and independence.
Why might gender-sensitive safety nets be more effective for all?

• They allow women to expand incomes (direct and indirect) for themselves and their families.

• Higher and more stable income to invest in children (eg lower school dropouts).

• They enable changes in consumption patterns and greater investments in children.

• They help to grow local economies through demand-side stimulus and increased labor market activity.
Lessons from WB Social Safety Nets and Gender
IEG review of 257 programs (2014)

Do SSN interventions achieve results for men and women, boys and girls?

• Is gender equality an objective? In what context, with what assumptions?
• What are the different impacts of SSN programs on men and women, boys and girls, households?
• Are there trade-offs with the objective of reducing poverty?
• What are the costs and benefits of addressing gender-specific outcomes?
SSN-Gender IEG report – analytical framework

SSN intervention

Woman’s Resources

Household Resources

Man’s Resources

Intrahousehold bargaining

Woman’s preferences

Man’s preferences

Agency and Attitudes

- Empowerment
- Domestic violence
- Political participation
- Fertility choices

Consumption / Production / Investments decisions

- Decisions regarding adults and the household:
  - Food consumption
  - Adult health
  - Adult labor supply
  - Housing
  - Farm/nonfarm income generating activities
  - Capital formation
  - Savings

- Decisions regarding children:
  - Food, clothes, and so on
  - Children’s health
  - Children’s education
  - Child labor

Context (such as laws and regulations, social norms, political economy)
SSN-Gender IEG report – findings

• Increasing evidence on gender-specific impacts from evaluations.
• Importance of unintended outcomes.
• Many more SSNs than there is evidence – most programs do not report outcomes.
• Most reports focus on compliance and take-up (ie outputs) than on outcomes.
• Limited reporting of sex-disaggregated indicators.
• Limited evidence of impacts over the long run.
• Limited evidence of gender-sensitivity in many WB-supported SSN projects.
SSN-Gender IEG report – findings

• Transfers to women yield increased investments in children.
• Reduction in domestic violence (although with significant heterogeneity).
• No impact on the ability of women to decide on contraception.
• Positive impact of CCTs on antenatal visits and supervised births.
• Little evidence on political participation and voting behavior.
• Women (and fhh) invest in livestock and agricultural tools as much as or more than men.
• Public works can bring women into the labor market, but are no guarantee of continued employment.

➜ The impacts of safety net programs are not gender-neutral, but there are no consistent gender patterns.
ODI Review (2017) of 165 cash transfer programs

• Positive impact on women and girls, especially in education and employment.

• Can decrease child labour for both girls and boys, though larger reductions are seen for boys.

• Heterogeneous impacts on time allocation, eg women sometimes increase time spent on domestic work.

• Female-headed household recipients may make more productive investments than male-headed households.

• May increase women’s decision-making power and choices, eg on marriage and fertility, and may reduce gender-based violence.

→ The impact of cash transfers is not determined by the sex of the recipient alone.
RAND meta-evaluation (2012) of 15 cash transfer evaluations

• The gender of the transfer recipient affects the outcomes of some programs.

• Targeting transfers to women can improve investments of children’s health and education.

• Outcomes may be dependent on the type of programme offered.

→ Increasing female control of transfers does not by itself guarantee positive outcomes.
Essential questions for the design of gender-smart safety net programs

• What are the key vulnerabilities an constraints your program is trying to alleviate?

• How are these vulnerabilities and constraints experienced by men and women, boys and girls?

• What are the underlying drivers of these vulnerabilities (poverty, social norms, etc)?

• Are these vulnerabilities addressed in development strategies? In social protection strategies? In existing programming?

• Do adequate data exist to understand constraints and program impacts?
Checklist – what to remember in the design of gender-smart SSN programs

1. Get the **analysis** right – understand the issues facing all beneficiaries.
2. Agree on clear and relevant **objectives** with appropriate entry-points.
3. Build **implementation capacity** nationally and locally.
4. Be aware of **political economy** constraints and interests.
5. Look for **win-win** delivery mechanisms.
6. Pursue **transformative linkages** between core interventions and broader opportunities for women/girls.
7. Engage with **men and boys** and the wider community.
8. Develop **strategic indicators** and measure gender-specific outcomes.
9. Ensure meaningful **engagement and feedback** with women and girls at all stages of the program: diagnosis, design, delivery, and evaluation.
Final questions for you:

• Should SSN be targeted to women, designed differently for women, or merely be aware of gender differences?

• Is an income transfer sufficient to improve outcomes for women and girls?

• Does the sex of the recipient by itself determine the impact of cash transfers?