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CHANGING RURAL WOMEN'S LIVES THROUGH GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION

A PAPER ON GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION
CONCEPTS, EVIDENCE AND PRACTICE IN THE CONTEXT
OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION



Joint Programme on

Gender
Transformative
Approaches

for Food Security and Nutrition



Funded by
the European Union

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCC	behavioural change communication
CCT	conditional cash transfer
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GBV	gender-based violence
GTA	gender transformative approach
GT-SP	gender transformative social protection
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPV	intimate partner violence
JP GTA	Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
PWPs	public works programmes
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Programme



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Most rural women and girls experience multiple disadvantages in their lives, because of systemic gender inequalities. Structural drivers, including discriminatory norms create and maintain gender gaps in development outcomes. Gender transformative programmes seek to address the underlying structural causes of gender inequalities and transform unequal gender roles and relations. This paper aims to orient the future policy, research and programmatic work of national governments, practitioners and development partners on the adoption of a gender transformative approach (GTA) to social protection to improve results on rural poverty reduction, food security and nutrition. Social protection interventions rarely explicitly address social and gender norms and power dynamics at household level and beyond, but there is a growing demand to understand the potential of social protection policies and programmes to contribute to gender transformative outcomes. This paper critically examines the scope for social protection to be gender transformative and discusses the available evidence on gender transformative impacts of social protection. It also aims to identify how programmes can realistically become more transformative in their objectives, design features and outcomes.

Gender transformative social protection builds on five key principles: 1) social protection needs to acknowledge and contribute towards social norms change; 2) social protection should acknowledge and address forces that uphold norms in society; 3) empowerment is a key pathway to gender transformative outcomes; 4) a gender transformative approach and norms change must be promoted at multiple levels; 5) engaging men and boys is key to promote gender transformative outcomes.

Gender transformative social protection approaches can use five levels as entry points to promote change: individual, household, community, organizational and macro environment levels. At the individual level, social protection interventions can empower women, men, girls and boys to defy norms by building different forms of capabilities to articulate and exercise choice. At the household level, they can generate positive changes in household roles and enhance women's bargaining power, decision-making, and work and time allocations. At the community level, they can strengthen collective empowerment and social capital of women and men to defy discriminatory norms and practices in the community. At organizational level, the gender transformative approach can reform agencies responsible for the design and delivery of social protection interventions. At the macro environment level, social protection interventions, particularly public policies and legislation, can promote social norm change and address structural barriers to gender equality at a systemic level.

Social protection programming should move progressively from gender-sensitive or gender-responsive approaches towards promoting a more ambitious gender transformative agenda. Gender analysis throughout all stages of the policy and programme cycle is key to achieving transformative results. Men and boys also need to be engaged as allies, but the choice and design of actual strategies need to be informed by, and tailored to, the specific context. Strengthening the capacities of government bodies responsible for managing social protection, committing adequate resources and building concrete connections to existing gender equality mechanism or gender units within the government, as well as sensitizing ministries responsible for agricultural and rural development, are necessary to strengthen women's rights and promote gender transformative change. Encouraging and supporting efforts made by rural women's movements, and building alliances between government, civil society and broader social and labour movements, is crucial to the advancement of a transformative agenda and its implementation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The background and rationale for gender transformative social protection

This paper has been developed within the context of the Joint Programme on Gender Transformative Approaches for Food Security and Nutrition (JP GTA) to advance an understanding of how social protection can promote gender transformative outcomes for food security and nutrition. It aims to orient the future policy, research and programmatic work of national governments, practitioners and development partners on the adoption of a gender transformative approach (GTA) to improve results on rural poverty reduction, food security and nutrition through social protection. Conceptual framework, practical examples and key takeaways presented in the paper are also applicable to other contexts and development outcomes beyond food security, nutrition and rural settings.

Links between rural poverty and food insecurity, gender inequality and social protection are widely acknowledged in global policy fields and research, as well as in FAO's work for increasing food security and improving nutrition (FAO, 2018a; FAO, 2020). Women are more likely to be food insecure and vulnerable to multiple deprivations compared to men, with 31.9 per cent of women and 27.6 per cent of men experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity in 2021 (FAO *et al.*, 2022).

Gender inequalities in access to the means of production, decent employment opportunities, education, health services and social protection all,¹ in effect, increase women's and girls' risk of poverty, food insecurity and malnutrition (FAO, 2023; CARE, 2020). Despite playing the key role in agriculture and agrifood systems,² rural women's gaps in ownership and control of resources and economic opportunities prevent them from being fully productive, with negative consequences for their income and access to adequate food (FAO, 2023). Their economic and food security roles are further constrained by limited autonomy to participate in the agrifood and formal labour markets, dearth of legal rights to land and other assets, and lower status in households and communities. Structural

¹ According to estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), only 26.5 percent of working age women are legally covered by comprehensive social protection benefits, such as child and family benefits, social security and old-age pensions compared to 34.3 percent of men (see ILO 2021). Similar sex-disaggregated data on effective coverage of social protection benefits overall is not available, though the World Bank ASPIRE data reports effective coverage indicators based on the household's recipient status (World Bank, n.d.).

² Women perform many different roles in agriculture and agrifood systems, including working as farmers, labourers, processors, (cross-border) traders, entrepreneurs, vendors and carers in families and communities.

barriers, such as discriminatory norms, gender-blind policies and laws and formal and informal institutional practices govern and perpetuate women's and girls' disadvantaged position in rural economies and social life.

Promoting gender equality is therefore a key development goal both for realizing human rights and social justice for women and girls, as well as for improving food security and nutrition (Njuki *et al.*, 2021). By providing women equal access to the means of production, women would be enabled to produce more and better foods on their farms and increase their incomes, resulting in improved food security and nutrition (FAO, 2023).

Social protection is recognized for its positive role in reducing income poverty and promoting improved food security and nutrition outcomes (FAO, 2018a, Tiwari *et al.*, 2016). Cash transfers, for example, can enhance household food security and nutrition by directly increasing household purchasing power and enabling families to buy a greater quantity and better quality of food, increase their health care visits and improve their living conditions and/or engage in nutrition-sensitive productive activities (Bastagli, *et al.*, 2016, Devereaux, 2016). While comprehensive evidence is still nascent and context specific, research shows that social protection schemes can also facilitate improvements in women's and girls' quality of life, including food security outcomes (Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Peterman *et al.*, 2019; Perera *et al.*, 2022).

Income or in-kind transfers have been found to increase directly women's and girls' food consumption and dietary diversity, improve their health, schooling and psychosocial outcomes, and reduce their exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) (Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Buller *et al.*, 2018; Peterman *et al.*, 2019; Camilletti *et al.*, 2021; Perera *et al.*, 2022; Gavrilovic *et al.*, 2022). In certain settings, social protection schemes can improve women's productive inclusion, including accumulation of assets and farm investments, increase their bargaining power and influence in household decision-making, and enhance their participation and acceptability in social networks and communities leading to increased access to financial resources (Perera *et al.*, 2022).

However, social protection schemes have come increasingly under criticism for failing to tackle structural gender inequalities that trap women and girls in poverty and vulnerability to risks (FAO, 2018a). Social protection efforts must go beyond simply responding to symptoms of gendered poverty and vulnerability, in order to address the root causes of gender inequality. This entails designing and implementing interventions that address harmful norms, unequal power relations and discriminatory social structures, which underpin women's and girls' poverty and food insecurity.³ Embedding a GTA at the heart of social protection systems can more effectively address women's unequal status on the labour market, limited control over means of production, and disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work. Gender transformative social protection (GT-SP) – particularly when linked to complementary measures – can also reduce women's and girls' exposure to social risks such as limited autonomy, exclusion from social networks and gender-based violence (GBV), including IPV (Camilletti *et al.*, 2022).

³ For the purpose of this paper, interventions refer to social protection policies, programmes (including statutory policies enshrined in law, other government-led schemes embedded in national social protection systems, or pilots of limited scale) and activities within programmes (e.g. communication and outreach campaigns etc.).

In recent years, there have been global calls for greater commitments and investments in building gender-responsive social protection systems,⁴ in order to promote women's and girls' empowerment and meet Sustainable Development Goal targets for gender equality (Gavrilovic *et al.*, 2022). There is also a growing demand to understand the potential of social protection policies and programmes to contribute to gender transformative outcomes, and how specific interventions can be designed and delivered in more transformative ways.

So far, however, social protection interventions have not sufficiently incorporated a gender transformative lens in their design. Many countries are at an early stage of establishing gender-responsive social protection schemes at scale (see Section 3.1 for typology of gender integration). Social protection interventions also rarely explicitly address social and gender norms and power dynamics at household level and beyond. Consequently, it is not yet well understood what GT-SP means in conceptual and practical terms, and what feasible and concrete options exist for promoting transformative design to improve outcomes for women and girls (Camilletti *et al.*, 2022). This paper addresses these gaps by providing a working definition of GT-SP, critically examining the scope for social protection to be gender transformative and discusses the available evidence on gender transformative impacts of social protection. It also aims to identify how programmes can realistically move from being gender-sensitive and gender-responsive to become more transformative in their objectives, design features and outcomes.

The paper builds on the existing conceptual thinking and body of research on this topic, including the theory of change for gender transformative programming that is being developed under the JP GTA (FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming; Section 3.1). It also refers to early thinking around transformative social protection developed by the Institute of Development Studies (see Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004) as well as a recently published analytical framework on the GT-SP developed by the Office of Research – Innocenti of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (see Camilletti *et al.*, 2022). This paper advances the earlier work by presenting a conceptual framework on GT-SP and a review of evidence and practice, drawing on examples specifically relevant to rural settings and food security and nutrition.

⁴ In this paper, a social protection system is broadly defined as an integrated portfolio of government-owned contributory and non-contributory policies and programmes, that work together in a coordinated manner to address multiple and compounding vulnerabilities faced by people and provide adequate coverage. Social protection system also encompasses overarching legal and strategic frameworks, financing and governance structures and common administrative systems (e.g. registration and enrolment, management and information system, monitoring and evaluation, case management and payment delivery mechanisms) required to design and deliver social protection policies and programmes coherently and cost-effectively (adapted from Rawlings, Murthy and Winder, 2013).

BOX 1. Key definitions and concepts

Gender “refer[s] to the social roles and identities associated with what it means to be a man or a woman” (FAO, 2011, p. 4).

The JP GTA defines gender norms as “a subset of social norms that include informal rules and shared social expectations which determine and assign socially acceptable roles, behaviours, responsibilities and expectations to male and female identities” (FAO, IFAD & WFP, n.d). Norms can be progressive and equitable or discriminatory. They manifest as attitudes and behaviours at individual and group levels.

Norms are part of social structures; they can act as either structural barriers or enablers that operate within the family, community, market, and state areas. According to Simms *et al.*, (2015), specific groups in society can be systematically favoured or disadvantaged by structural drivers, such as policies, laws, institutions, norms and practices, resulting in unequal opportunities.

While norms may not systematically disadvantage men and boys, norms may still limit their freedom of choice and affect their behaviour, as well as expose them to various risks resulting from restrictive or toxic masculine identities. OECD (2019, p. 11) defines “masculinities [to] encompass various socially constructed ways of being and acting, values and expectations associated with being a man in a given society”. Masculinities range from gender-equitable (or positive) when they are “supportive of gender equality and women’s empowerment and undermine unequal patriarchal structures to restrictive” (or toxic) masculinities that “confine men to their traditional role as the dominant gender group” (OECD, 2021).

1.2 Paper objectives, scope and structure

The overall objective of the paper is to provide a clear conceptual and practical framework for GT-SP programming. Specifically, the paper will:

1. outline **core objectives and elements** of GT-SP;
2. review **evidence** as to how different social protection instruments and complementary measures contribute to (or undermine) transformative outcomes for women and men, and how change occurs at individual, household, community and macro levels;
3. identify **examples of social protection interventions** and complementary measures that deliberately incorporate a gender transformative angle and social norm change in their design; and
4. identify **lessons and entry points** to leverage and improve existing social protection interventions to incorporate more systematically a gender transformative lens into their objectives and design components to improve gender equality, food security and nutrition results.

The paper places an emphasis on rural populations, especially those working in informal agricultural and non-farm labour markets – populations who are typically most left behind in terms of their access to resources, social security and overall

opportunities. While the thematic focus of the paper is on food security and nutrition and rural populations, the guidance and examples offered are pertinent and can be applied more broadly. In line with the nature of GTA, our analytical lens expands beyond just focusing on women and girls, to examine how gender transformative programming can engage men and boys in addressing gender inequalities and gender identities that are harmful to both sexes. By shifting discriminatory gender norms, rigid gender identities and promoting equitable gender relations, GTAs can bring positive outcomes for both men and women, boys and girls. This is explained further in Section 3.

Finally, the paper reviews a range of social protection policies and programmes, including cash transfers, public works programmes, contributory social security, such as parental leave and social insurance, and labour market programmes. The latter include livelihoods programmes (mainly those designed to promote rural women's employment and income generation)⁵ that, in contexts with high informality and high rates of self-employment and micro-entrepreneurship, fulfil a function similar to traditional active labour market programmes when they are aimed at the most vulnerable or those lacking income-generating capacities or income sources. We review policies and programmes, including those well-established in social protection systems as national statutory schemes as well as smaller scale programmes, projects or pilots, including one-off payments, emergency transfers and integrated interventions.

These instruments have varied primary objectives, level and nature of impact, as well as different potential for gender transformative changes and scalability. For example, some social protection schemes can be transformative in themselves, such as parental leave allocations for men or paternity leave, as at their core they explicitly promote progressive gender norms related to childcare and reduce women's care burdens. Others, such as public works or cash transfers, may also be accompanied by such complementary measures as sensitization and awareness-raising components in order to make them more transformative. We include in the analysis both core social protection interventions and complementary measures that tackle gender discrimination directly (e.g. behaviour change communication, social campaigns and gender equity legislation).

There are several limitations in terms of the scope of paper. First, while a gender transformative lens is critical across all of the components of a social protection system to promote long-term investments in gender equality, in this paper we focus mainly on design of specific social protection interventions, particularly programmes and activities. This is primarily a result of lack of data and evidence on other elements of GT-SP systems. Second, the menu of social protection instruments covered in the paper is not exhaustive: for example, active labour market policies focusing on job search assistance or subsidized formal employment or unemployment insurance are not covered in depth. We also do not cover social care services or agricultural insurance. Despite these being of importance to women, they go beyond the working definition of social protection applied in this

⁵ Livelihood programmes can include or complement an economic transfer, such as cash transfer, productive asset or a financial grant with a skill and knowledge component (e.g. business planning, financial literacy), and support with accessing credit and savings and rural advisory services.

paper. Finally, review of evidence on different programmes has not been carried out by a systematic search protocol. Review does not include comparisons of the magnitude of impacts or strength of evidence between interventions.

The paper is intended to be used as a conceptual framework with illustrative practical examples to inspire policymakers, practitioners, researchers and development partners to adopt a more gender transformative perspective in their work. The paper is expected to: (1) enhance the awareness and knowledge of different pathways through which social protection can promote gender transformative outcomes; and (2) increase visibility of the topic globally, influence policy discussions, and promote learning. It is not, however, intended to provide operational guidance. Finally, these efforts should be embedded in social protection systems and aligned to national priorities, to enhance the extent and impacts of gender integration in the existing social protection measures and institutional capacities of social protection systems, leading to their adoption and promotion of a GTA.

The remainder of the paper is structured within four sections. Section 2 discusses structural barriers and outcomes of gender inequalities experienced by rural women and girls. Section 3 introduces the concept of a GTA and presents a conceptual framework for gender transformative programming in the context of a social protection. Section 4 reviews the evidence and social protection practices to illustrate how different programmes address gender transformative changes at individual, household, community, organizational and macro environment levels. These levels are not mutually exclusive, but provide a framework for categorizing different entry points for generating transformative changes. Section 5 provides a summary of the key characteristics and lessons related to gender transformative programming, and concludes with a set of recommendations for maximizing the transformative role of social protection policies and programmes for food security and nutrition.

2 GENDER INEQUALITIES IN RURAL AREAS AND NORMS AS CONSTRAINTS TO EQUALITY

Most rural women and girls experience multiple disadvantages in their lives, because of systematic gender inequalities that manifest across economic, social and political domains. Structural drivers, including discriminatory norms, embedded in everyday practices, policies and legislative systems, create and maintain gender gaps in development outcomes (FAO, 2023). Other forms of social identities, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and social class intersect with gender-based social exclusion to deepen women's and girls' exposure to poverty and vulnerabilities.

Gender inequalities are created and displayed at various levels, and at different stages, in the life cycle. At the individual and household level, discriminatory norms and customs, compounded by weak legal protections and a limited voice constrain women's and adolescent girls' adequate access to food, health, education, economic and psychosocial resources; these are needed to meet women's practical needs and pursue strategic gender interests (FAO, 2023; FAO, 2018a). In rural settings, women farmers are disadvantaged by unequal and insecure land and water tenure rights, limited access to seeds, extension and advisory services, and credit and market services. As a result, they have lower productivity compared to men (Petrics *et al.*, 2015). They are also confined to less profitable forms of agriculture and non-farm business as well as income insecurity (FAO, 2023). Finally, women face greater disadvantages in employment in agriculture and wider agrifood systems compared to men, in terms of poorer work quality and lower pay (FAO, 2023).

In a household, discriminatory norms can also limit women's and girls' influence over decisions regarding allocation of cash, division of time and labour and participation in public life (Marcus, 2015). Gender roles typically limit women and girls to care and domestic tasks, creating high work burdens (FAO, 2023). Resultant time poverty, combined with limited mobility and income, prevent women and girls from participating in labour markets, education, trainings and social networks. Unequal power relations within a household, and social attitudes that condone gender-based violence, expose women and girls to abuse and harmful practices including child marriage and IPV. These compounding inequalities can result in

female disempowerment and poor development outcomes. They also limit women's abilities to make strategic choices to progress out of poverty and become more resilient to risks (FAO, 2023).

At community level, discriminatory gender value systems further obstruct women's capabilities and opportunities to improve their welfare. Community norms related to women's economic roles shape unequal access to communal resources, services and rural markets (from land to credit). Norms governing gender division of labour also create expectations for rural women and girls to help on communal farms and provide care at community level (Meinzen Dick *et al.*, 2011 cited in Petrics *et al.*, 2015). Norms can also discourage or prevent them from attending or speaking out at public meetings, taking up leadership roles and demanding accountability from state actors mandated to deliver public services (Molyneux and Thomson, 2011).

Organizations, such as agricultural and farmer organizations, and government agencies responsible for social protection, also moderate people's behaviour and gendered power dynamics in society (Vinci, 2017). Prevalent gendered social norms are often embedded in organizational mandates, work cultures and procedures. These can either promote gender equality, or pose structural gender barriers leading to women's and girls' exclusion from public goods and services and affirmative policies. Gendered social norms also influence staff commitments to gender equality and affect how service providers reach and cater to their clients and prioritize their needs. For example, staff in agricultural organizations can steer women towards employment labelled as 'women's work', that is undervalued and underpaid outside of profit-generating cash crops, for example, or direct them away from new technologies and opportunities to work on large-scale commercial farming outside the home in favour of home-bound small-scale plots.

While discriminatory norms and practices typically manifest directly at community and household levels, they are created or maintained through social, economic and political structures embedded in society's patriarchal systems. For example, policies and legislation which regulate labour markets, property and inheritance rights, distribution of work and unpaid care, can institutionalize gender biases either by promoting or failing to address them. For example, in many settings, customary laws related to inheritance rights and access to common natural resources strip women of their basic rights to these entitlements (FAO, 2011; Petrics *et al.*, 2015). When women and girls lack meaningful representation in institutions and governance mechanisms at local, regional and national levels, this not only entrenches male privilege in society, but it also reinforces a lack of support for gender transformative measures and public services tailored to the needs of women and girls (e.g. social protection, education, child care, employment and infrastructure) (FAO, 2018a).

3 A FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN RURAL AREAS

This section clarifies the core terms and concepts of a GTA in the context of food security and nutrition, and proposes a framework for thinking about GT-SP. It builds on the JP GTA's conceptual and analytical work to date and other relevant literature; however, we expand the thinking and present our own conceptualization of gender transformative framework in the context of social protection.

3.1 A gender transformative approach for food security and nutrition⁶

In order to define the framework for GT-SP, it is important to understand what we mean by 'gender transformative'. We first draw on the research and conceptual work developed within the JP GTA, and other relevant literature,⁷ to define gender transformative programming. The thinking on gender transformative programming has been developed through a detailed desktop review of literature on norms and gender transformative approaches (GTAs). This was validated through field research in two countries, analysis of good practices and expert discussions. The JP GTA gender transformative framework builds on several important concepts and elements related to the GTA, which must be clarified for the purposes of this paper.

First, we start by explaining the concept of gender integration continuum. There are different ways to acknowledge and integrate gender dynamics in any social protection intervention falling along a 'gender integration continuum'. Efforts can range from a 'gender-blind' to 'gender-aware' approaches.

⁶ This section builds on FAO, IFAD and WFP (forthcoming). See also FAO, IFAD & WFP, n.d. The section retains the core narrative for consistency and clarity, but it has also been adapted and modified for the purposes of this paper.

⁷ This includes conceptual and practical frameworks produced by CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform, the Overseas Development Institute and UN Women, to name a few.

Gender-blind approaches are those that fail to recognize differences in gender roles and unequal power relations between women and men, and boys and girls. By not questioning gender dynamics, they may in fact reinforce gender inequalities. For example, social security system that does not account for different life and work histories between women and men and their contributory capacities, can systematically disadvantage women in their access to contributory social security benefits. On the other hand, gender-aware approaches acknowledge and examine existing gender differences and inequalities, and address these through programming (definition adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming).

Gender-aware typology can be divided across gender-exploitative, gender-accommodating (-sensitive and -responsive), and gender transformative. 'Gender-exploitative' approaches are those that take advantage of, and reinforce, gender inequalities (intentionally or unintentionally), norms and stereotypes in the pursuit of other development objectives (definition adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming). Designating women as responsible for fulfilling child-focused programme conditionalities, which in turn exacerbate their work burdens and time poverty, is an example of a gender-exploitative social protection measure.

On the other hand, programmes can be 'gender accommodating', whereby they recognize the specific gender roles and inequalities and include actions that address and respond to these, but do not seek to transform them (definition adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming). Here we can distinguish between 'gender sensitive' (i.e. considering gender roles and dynamics and addressing gender inequalities in order to meet project objectives) and 'gender responsive' (i.e. those that explicitly address and respond to women's specific needs, interests and vulnerabilities) (definitions adapted from UNICEF Office of Research, 2020; FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming). For example, temporary provision of child care to encourage female workers to participate in public works programmes (PWPs) can be considered a gender-sensitive measure to promote women's employment (primary programme objective). Whereas provision of fee waivers for health insurance to poor women and adolescent girls to help them overcome financial barriers and promote their access to health services can be considered a gender-responsive measure.

Finally, a 'gender transformative' programmes seek to address the underlying structural causes of gender inequalities and transform unequal gender roles and relations by:

1. examining and questioning gender norms, dynamics and social systems that maintain gender inequalities;
2. transforming underlying social structures, discriminatory policies and gender norms (attitudes and practices), roles and power relations; and
3. strengthening or creating positive gender norms, equitable power relations and social systems (institutional structures, laws, policies, organizations, staff attitudes and practices) that promote and support gender equality (definition adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming).

A GTA builds on the gender-responsive objectives and it adopts gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment as deliberate and primary goals in its programming (FAO, 2018a; UNICEF Office of Research, 2020; FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming).

Gender transformative programming

Second, as defined by the JP GTA, **gender transformative programming** refers to the process of integrating a GTA across different aspects of intervention, including design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to “promote changes at individual and systemic levels and across informal and formal spheres of life”.⁸ As stated in FAO, IFAD and WFP (n.d), gender transformative programming encompasses interventions that tackle “women's *practical needs* (e.g. knowledge, skills, access to productive resources) and *strategic gender interests* (e.g. decision-making power, position and status in society)”, while the combined effects of these measures are expected to “trigger changes in women's and men's *agency, social relations* and *social structures*”.

The GTA also involves the systematic use of **gender transformative methodologies**. These consist of methods and tools,⁹ to facilitate and motivate women and men to examine deep-rooted norms and gender roles and become aware of gender biases in their lives. Critical reflection should propel women and men to challenge unequal power dynamics and bring about normative shifts. Participatory methods and tools are typically used to “facilitate dialogue, trust, ownership, visioning and behaviour change at various levels” (FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2020, p. 6). Beyond an emphasis on working directly with men and boys, the GTAs also place importance on engaging the so-called influential ‘norm holders’ to promote both positive gender norms and masculine identities as well as gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours (see FAO, IFAD and WFP, 2020 and FAO, IFAD and WFP, forthcoming, for details on different GTA tools and specific examples). In this paper, we apply these concepts that have emerged from the JP GTA's work and other relevant conceptual literature, as the basis for developing a framework for GT-SP, discussed in the following section.

3.2 What do we mean by gender transformative social protection?

Social protection can be defined as a “set of policies and programmes aimed at preventing and protecting all people against poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion, throughout their life cycle placing a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups” (SPIAC-B, 2019, p. 1). According to FAO's Social Protection Framework (FAO, 2017, p. 5): social protection can also have a “transformative function in the lives of the poor through reorienting their focus beyond day-to-day survival towards investments for future, by shifting power relations within households

⁸ See FAO, IFAD & WFP, n.d. and FAO, IFAD & WFP, forthcoming, for details on different GTA tools and specific examples.

⁹ Examples of gender-transformative methods include the gender model family approach, community conversations, the Gender Action Learning System and FAO's Dimitra Clubs, among others.

(as social protection can empower women) and by strengthening the capabilities and capacities of those living in poverty to empower themselves”.

To date, there has been limited attention in policy discussions and research on transformative social protection, and gender transformative objectives, in particular. Early work on this topic by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004), provided a strong rationale for the adoption of transformative objectives in social protection in the pursuit of sustainable poverty reduction goals. According to the authors, transformative social protection is concerned with tackling head-on the structural factors that push and maintain people into poverty, protecting people from social risks, such as oppressive social relations, and promoting empowerment, social equity and justice (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Transformative social protection should focus on promoting people's citizenship rights and participation in social protection processes (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004) through skills and knowledge building, awareness-raising campaigns, anti-discriminatory legislation and social accountability mechanisms (Molyneux, Jones and Samuels, 2016).

While transformative programming has somewhat evolved over time (Molyneux, Jones and Samuels, 2016), there is still no consensus on whether, and to what degree, social protection instruments should explicitly adopt transformative objectives, beyond their conventional protective and preventive functions in tackling poverty and vulnerability (Camilletti *et al.*, 2022). Agreement is also lacking on how best to achieve transformative outcomes. Similarly, there have been limited policy commitments to address norms, gender roles and power dynamics through social protection design, as this has been traditionally seen as beyond the remit of social protection. As a first step in building conceptual clarity, it is therefore necessary to define what we mean by GT-SP and unpack its core elements.

In line with a JP GTA definition, the overall goal of GT-SP is to empower rural women and men by overcoming the discriminatory norms and practices and unequal power relations that keep them poor and food insecure. A 'transformative agenda' should spearhead sustainable shifts in women's access to and control over income and resources, in the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work, and in strengthening women's political and social participation and decision-making capacity in private and public domains. This is expected to enhance the effectiveness of social protection measures and address gendered poverty in a sustainable way (Holmes and Jones, 2010; FAO, 2018a).

More specifically, as presented in Box 2, GT-SP should adopt three interrelated objectives to further overall goals.

BOX 2. Gender transformative social protection core objectives

- 1. Examine** how norms and other social structures affect and contribute to women's and men's poverty and vulnerabilities across the life cycle, influence women's access to and uptake of social protection benefits, and inform design of social protection interventions and delivery.
- 2. Alter** harmful norms and practices exposing women and men to risks and poverty, and address gender bias in social protection interventions to ensure equitable access and outcomes.
- 3. Promote** equitable gendered social norms, relations and social structures through social protection design and delivery and women's empowerment, to defy norms and improve their position in society and well-being outcomes.

Source: Adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP (forthcoming).

Building on the JP GTA's conceptual framework and other relevant literature on the subject, we propose a GT-SP framework that consists of five core elements. In a nutshell, GT-SP needs to engage with gendered social norms in programme design and delivery, and contribute to addressing structural factors that hold norms in place. This entails empowering women and men, by building their resources, agency and capabilities to resist discriminatory norms and change behaviours to pursue life goals, promoting social norm change at multiple levels, as well as engaging men and boys in this process. We unpack each of the five elements in more detail.

i. Social protection needs to acknowledge and contribute towards social norms change

First, GT-SP needs to pay attention to gendered social norms through programme design and delivery. Even though social norm change is rarely an explicit objective of social protection interventions, discriminatory norms play an important role as drivers of gender inequalities and adverse outcomes for women and girls. Norms also influence women's and girls' access to, and control over, social protection benefits. For example, norms around women's paid work and mobility influence their decisions and freedom to participate in PWP. Also, norms around autonomy to handle and own cash can create barriers preventing women from benefiting from and allocating resources freely even when they are official transfer recipients. Social protection design can additionally reinforce norms and gender stereotypes: for instance, by placing sole responsibility for fulfilling child care-related programme conditionalities on women, receipt of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) can marginalize fathers from caregiving, and reinforce women's caretaker roles and identities.

BOX 3. Example of how marriage norms and bargaining power affect women's economic security

In some contexts, according to norms related to marriage and work, a woman's place is at home as a caretaker, and it is not acceptable for her to enter paid employment. This contributes to women's low threat points within their marriages that are maintained by a lack of resource control. In a bargaining game, threat point refers to utility that a participant can attain if they do not participate in bargaining. Given little resource control, limited voice in the home, societal challenges without male protection and scarce social ties, there are significant costs involved by losing husbands' support. Each spouse's bargaining power within marriage is also dependent on their utility at the threat point (see Doss, 1996). In such situations, economic dependency on a spouse (or family, more broadly) reduces a woman's ability to realize her goals (e.g. move freely to seek employment or invest in business), resulting in her further lack of independent income and limited access to social networks. As a result, women are poorer, and their needs are not met.

Therefore, discriminatory norms and practices should be acknowledged and addressed in programme design and delivery (UN Women, 2015; FAO, 2018a). At a minimum, this entails understanding whether norms are present in each context, and how they may influence the behaviours of women and men with implications for poverty and food insecurity. This knowledge should then inform design of social protection intervention to adequately address discriminatory norms and practices, whether through the core programming or in combination with other sectoral interventions. Assessing how interventions contribute to norm change is important to achieving an understanding of the effects of programmes, and to leverage positive impacts and avoid negative ones that cause harm to programme participants (FAO *et al.*, 2022).

While social protection on its own is unlikely to directly address broader social structures, such as laws, policies, customs and institutions that affect gendered behaviour and poverty outcomes, concerted efforts are required to ensure that these are free of gender bias. Social structures should undergo the 'normative reframing' and reforming to promote gender equality.

ii. Social protection should acknowledge and address forces that uphold norms in society

Second, building on the preceding element, to facilitate gender transformative change there needs to be an understanding of how and why norms persist in a community, or in society at large. There are three main factors that hold norms in place: socialization, social convention and pluralistic ignorance (Marcus, 2018). 'Socialization' refers to the process through which women and men come to understand and accept societal norms, values and beliefs, and adopt behaviours in line with social expectations (Little, 2013). These are typically learned during childhood and remain internalized as gender biases throughout a person's life. Social protection programmes can be designed to directly or implicitly disrupt such internalized gender biases. For example, labelling cash transfers to be used for women's and girls' health and education expenditure can be a measure to challenge internalized gender norms and beliefs about women's and girls' rights to basic services.

‘Social convention’ involves social pressure on individuals and groups to conform to gender norms. Norms can be held in place through a system of rewards (e.g. social approval and economic incentives) for conforming to expectations and/or sanctions for subverting them (e.g. exclusion from the community, violence or legal action) (Mackie *et al.*, 2015). Social protection policies can include nudges, incentives and direct enforcement to address discriminatory social convention head-on. Economic incentives can strengthen women’s and men’s agency and capacity to defy norms. For example, cash transfers can include top-ups for families to encourage and support girls to attend school. Financial incentives can reduce households’ fear of social sanctions imposed by their community and potential loss of economic support. Such behavioural changes of programme participants can have important spillovers by encouraging other members of a community to modify their practices, leading to a weakened impact of the existing norms.

Finally, ‘pluralistic ignorance’ refers to a process whereby social norms persist when individuals (or groups) may privately oppose a norm, but they misperceive that most people accept it and therefore practice the norm in public (Bursztyn, Gonzales and Yanagizawa-Drott, 2018). Training and behaviour change and communication (BCC) activities at community level can create new (collective) awareness and knowledge leading to ‘corrections’ in attitudes, while cash can reinforce these impacts by incentivizing people to modify their behaviours.

Measures need to tackle simultaneously more than one of the factors that hold norms in place. This can be achieved through comprehensive social protection systems and complementary interventions, such as legislative changes, affirmative policies and media campaigns that expand women and girls’ opportunities and rights to paid employment, livelihood opportunities, property, education, etc. Importantly, by disrupting social conventions and power structures in households or communities, norm change can lead to resistance. Therefore, this process must be handled with care through gender and protection analysis, carefully tailored communication and outreach activities, and regular monitoring of adverse effects.

It should be highlighted that social protection policies and programmes do not operate in a vacuum; they are not the only, nor the main, drivers of social norm change in a society. Norms may also change as a result of multisectoral interventions (e.g. GBV prevention and parenting programmes) and broader shifts in social practices or societal events and trends, such as structural transformation or major sectoral shifts in the economy and labour markets, demographic and generational change and activities of women’s movements (Marcus, 2018). Events such as shocks and crises (e.g. natural disaster and/or conflict) can also trigger normative and attitudinal changes leading to the adoption of new, gender progressive behaviours and practices.

iii. Empowerment is a key pathway to gender transformative outcomes

Empowerment is a key component and pathway for achieving gender transformative change. For the purpose of this paper, we define empowerment as the process of acquiring agency, resources to exercise strategic choices previously denied to them due to prohibitive gender relations (Kabeer, 1999).

The potential role of social protection in facilitating women's empowerment is relatively well established in the literature (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Peterman *et al.*, 2019). However, the explicit link between empowerment and gender transformative outcomes has been underdeveloped in the literature.

We argue that empowerment is a precondition and vehicle for transforming discriminatory norms, unequal gender roles and power relations. Empowerment can also be viewed as a gender transformative outcome and important end of significance to women's and girls' well-being. Empowerment strengthens the capacities of women and men at individual and community levels to overcome oppressive relations and challenge harmful norms and social obligations (Martinez-Restrepo and Ramos-Jaimes, 2017). It is assumed that when women are empowered, their ability increases to freely choose gender roles and activities they value, make meaningful choices (denied to them in the past) and take control of their lives. For example, if women are denied the opportunity of working, then looking for a paid job can be a strategic choice, and achieving it would require agency. Defying norms and acceptable behaviour, in a context where discriminatory norms remain, could come at a cost for women, who may be seen as societal transgressors, and face negative consequences because of their increased agency.

Empowerment can be promoted through three interlinked pathways: (1) awareness of gender power relations and structures; (2) resources; and (3) agency (Martinez-Restrepo and Ramos-Jaimes, 2017). Women must possess all three in order to achieve desired outcomes. First, gender awareness is a critical component of empowerment. To overcome oppression, women (and men) need to develop consciousness regarding the discriminatory forces and structures working to one's disadvantage. Raising gender awareness is important both for women and men to enable them to act, defy norms and overcome structural inequalities. Social protection can use different modalities and features, such as nudging, labelling, messaging or complementary measures, such as BCC and training sessions to promote gender awareness and thus build new knowledge and attitudes to trigger behavioural change.

Women need basic resources (e.g. food, shelter, health and security) and strategic resources (e.g. land, money, education and access to networks) to make and enact strategic choices (Martinez-Restrepo and Ramos-Jaimes, 2017). Social transfers, for example, can provide women with resources directly (via cash or in-kind transfers or wages) or indirectly by helping them to accumulate resources and assets (e.g. land and/or livestock) through investment and income generation, or community-based assets built within PWPs. Resources that women own or have control over can enhance their agency and bargaining power in a household and a community. At the same time, as norms influence distribution and control over resources, women require agency to have a say in allocation and access to resources.

Agency is defined as the "process by which someone attains an ability to set goals, make strategic choices, and act upon their decisions" (Martinez-Restrepo and Ramos-Jaimes, 2017, p. 26). Agency comprises intrinsic, instrumental and collective dimensions, which are mutually reinforcing (Rowlands, 1995). 'Intrinsic agency' (also

referred to as 'power within') can be described as self-perceived capability of acting upon one's goals, and it is a precondition for action. Intrinsic agency manifests as self-respect, self-efficacy, locus of control, autonomy in making personal decisions and self-awareness. Psychological assets, such as women's self-esteem, confidence, satisfaction and aspirations for the future are important prerequisites for intrinsic agency (Rowlands, 1995).

Building on intrinsic agency, instrumental agency is associated with women's bargaining power and ability to enact personal goals. It manifests as influence over interpersonal relations and decision-making processes. Finally, 'collective agency' (or 'power with') refers to a process whereby women (or men) can organize themselves as a group to pursue shared interests and assert their right to make choices and control resources and decisions. Social protection can influence all three dimensions of agency (both positively and adversely) through various pathways to promote normative changes at individual and group levels (as described in Section 4).

iv. Gender transformative and norms change must be promoted at multiple levels

Gender transformation needs to be promoted at different levels – individual, interpersonal (relational) and collective/public – to lead to sustained and meaningful change. The JP GTA's theory of change for gender transformative programming defines five levels that interventions can use as entry points to promote change. These include individual, household, community, organizational and macro environment levels. Different levels refer to the points that measures target in the first instance. But transformative impacts or outcomes can also be manifested simultaneously at different levels and would ultimately impact on individual outcomes.

Social protection interventions are often directly aimed at addressing vulnerabilities and poverty at individual and household levels. However, it is also possible to extend the focus of interventions to promote changes at community level by addressing discriminatory norms, collective attitudes and customs. Organizational level change can be promoted by reforming agencies responsible for social protection. Macro environment level interventions can involve introducing anti-discrimination legislation, policies that can signal and promote norms change, such as paternity leave and addressing public norms and attitudes at scale. There are no strict boundaries between these levels which are interdependent. Changes promoted at one level can have positive (or negative) knock-on effects on others. For example, when empowerment is promoted and occurs at the individual level, this will potentially affect household and community level dynamics. Similarly, changes at a macro environment level (such as national policies or legal frameworks) or organizational level (e.g. changes in organizational culture) have direct impact on those individuals and households with whom the policies and organizations are concerned.

Gender transformative change must be promoted at all levels to ensure that shifts in structural drivers of gender inequality and poverty are achieved and sustained. In fact, if attitudinal and behavioural changes are detectable only

among the targeted group of programme participants, without spilling over into the communities and more widely, this may reduce the potential for achieving meaningful long-term change in norms. Social protection policy instruments at scale (rather than pilots) are therefore important to facilitate sustainable and wider societal changes.

v. Engaging men and boys is key to promote gender transformative outcomes

There are two key reasons why GT-SP programming should incorporate strategies to effectively involve men and boys in the promotion of gender equality. Both women and men can find themselves in conditions of poverty and vulnerability owing to harmful gendered norms and practices. For example, social expectations governing men's behaviour can deprive them of the right to caregiving and exert financial and psychological pressure on them to be the primary breadwinners. Social pressure to adopt hyper-masculine identities can expose men to social risks of violence and substance abuse. By changing discriminatory norms that produce gender inequalities, social protection can improve development outcomes not only for women and girls, but for men and boys too.

Furthermore, a GTA acknowledges the important role of men and boy in correcting inequalities. Without addressing the toxic masculinities-related social norms, simply empowering women and girls will not lead to substantive gender equality; men and boys need to understand the importance of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment, and how these outcomes can be mutually beneficial to both sexes. Actively engaging men and boys in complementary awareness-raising activities, building their understanding of why women's and girls' empowerment is beneficial for everyone, and promoting their support through economic incentives is also a key strategy for reducing and mitigating the risk of resistance. The situations where and how men and boys can be best engaged through GT-SP programming needs to be built on evidence and gender analysis to avoid any potential backlash.

We turn now to examine the role and evidence of the impact of social protection in facilitating gender transformative change, based on this conceptual framework.

4 GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL PROTECTION IN RURAL AREAS: A REVIEW OF POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND EVIDENCE

In this section we explore how various social protection instruments can incorporate gender transformative objectives, and review evidence on transformative changes according to outcome areas across five levels (see Section 3.2); and present illustrative examples of emerging good practices. For each level, we first define GT-SP objectives and expected outcomes; and then present evidence related to impacts, pathways of change and the role of programming.

4.1 Individual-level changes

How does social protection promote transformative outcomes at the individual level?

Social protection can improve material aspects of women's lives. A systematic review of reviews by Perera *et al.* (2022) finds that social protection schemes generally tend to have stronger impacts on women and girls compared to men and boys across a range of outcome domains, including savings and investment, utilization of health care services and school attendance, though they can be partly explained by women generally reporting lower employment, schooling and decision-making outcomes at baseline (Perera *et al.*, 2022). Evidence suggests that social protection can improve rural women's ability to participate in the labour market, obtain credit and save, and invest in income-generation in both farm and non-farm activities (for examples see Natali *et al.*, 2016; Pavanello, Pozarny and De la O Campos, 2017; Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Daidone *et al.*, 2019; Perera *et al.*, 2022).¹⁰ Strengthening women's practical and survival needs is a critical precondition for facilitating transformative change. Provided that women have control over new-

¹⁰ Data does not always allow disaggregation by gender of impacts on essentially household-level outcomes such as agricultural production, investment and assets, in which case the gender of the head of household is often used to study gendered impacts.

found resources, this can improve their intrinsic agency and psychological assets. These intermediate outcomes are necessary to enable women to articulate and negotiate their preferences, push back against discriminatory norms and exercise autonomy.

GT-SP OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES AT INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

At the individual (personal) level, the role of GT-SP programming is to empower women and men by building different forms of capabilities to enable them to: (1) examine and challenge gender biases and adopt positive attitudes and behaviours in support of gender equality; and (2) have agency to defy discriminatory norms and unequal power relations, and pursue strategic choices to improve their life outcomes.

Source: Adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP (forthcoming).

Cash transfers (including social security benefits) may expand women's options and choices to act independently from their husbands to meet their needs. Qualitative research of Juntos – a national conditional cash transfer programme in Peru – showed that transfers reduced women's financial dependency on spousal income. This led to some increases in autonomy and involvement in decision-making regarding use of money (particularly home-related expenditure and maternal health services) that previously required permission from husbands (Molyneux and Thomson, 2011). Women's gains in financial autonomy may disrupt gender stereotypes related to women's dependence on male partners, as well as enhance women's instrumental agency which, in turn, can lead

to defiance of discriminatory norms that restrict women's well-being outcomes. Specific programme features can be used to promote these gender transformative outcomes, as the following impact evaluation of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in India illustrates.

A randomized control trial in northern Madhya Pradesh was implemented to compare the effects of women's control of their MGNREGA wages on labour supply, financial inclusion and agency, and gender norms (Field *et al.*, 2021). The experiment randomly varied a group of women who received bank accounts, direct deposits of wages into their own accounts and training in account use. Results indicate that exposing women to a combination of own bank accounts, deposits and training, and associated gains in financial control over MGNREGA wages, led to substantive increases in women's labour participation, mobility and economic participation relative to other treatment groups. The observed seemingly greater and more long-lasting effects among the subgroup of women who experienced more constraints at the baseline in joining the labour market.¹¹ The intervention led to more liberalized attitudes regarding women's work and perceived norms among treated women, possibly as a result of their own experiences of working with and/or observing women engaged in community work. The intervention also may have led to changes in men's perceptions of gender norms, possibly as a result of social learning. These positive effects were observed three years after the experiment. The authors conclude that policy instruments that address women's access to resources and financial control can be an important measure for overcoming conservative social norms around women's work (*ibid.*).

An improved economic situation can also strengthen women's psychological assets, including self-esteem, aspirations, satisfaction and confidence, and vice

¹¹ The "constrained women" subgroup was also categorized by a lack of MGNREGA experience at baseline and a greater likelihood of having husbands who were resistant to wife's employment.

versa. These conditions are necessary for women to pursue strategic goals and decisions to improve their socioeconomic position. In Niger, a randomized control trial was set up to test the importance of a multifaceted programme in relaxing both capital and psychosocial constraints in reducing extreme poverty among the female recipients of a government-run cash transfer programme. The effects were compared across four treatment arms including: group savings promotion, coaching and entrepreneurship training (arm 1); an add-on of a lump-sum cash grant (arm 2); psychosocial interventions, including a life skills training and a community sensitization on social norms (arm 3); or both the cash grant and psychosocial interventions (arm 4). Results demonstrated that while all treatment arms induced positive changes in consumption, economic outcomes and psychosocial well-being, the paths towards women's empowerment differed in terms of the type of intervention. For instance, while the capital arm increased women's control over earnings and economic activities, the psychosocial support expanded women's social networks and relationships of importance to poverty reduction. Not only did psychosocial and full arms modalities produce impacts at a relatively low cost, but the effects were sustained 18 months after the intervention (Bossuroy *et al.*, 2022). In Uganda, an intra-household asset transfer intervention, combined with a gender transformative behavioural intervention, similarly highlights how economic transfer and directly influencing gender norms use different pathways to empower women, as illustrated in Box 4 (Ambler, Jones and O'Sullivan, 2021).

In Jordan, as a humanitarian response to the Syrian crisis, Syrian refugees were provided a cash transfer with psychosocial services consisting of case management and referrals to services, individual and group counselling sessions, and gender discussion groups to build women's and girls' resilience to gender-based violence. A qualitative study suggests that a combined set of activities enhanced women's and girls' ability to negotiate with male family members over the use of cash as a result of improved self-confidence, without increasing the risk of domestic violence (IRC/UNHCR, 2015). On the other hand, a 'Cash+' intervention in rural Tanzania targeting female and male adolescents with a combination of cash, life skills, livelihoods and health training, led to positive changes in gender-equitable attitudes regarding domestic chores, IPV and sexual and reproductive health. However, positive impacts were recorded only among male adolescents who already showed more equitable attitudes at baseline, and the impacts partly disappeared over time (Chzhen *et al.*, 2021).

By encouraging or incentivizing behaviour that contradicts social norms or stereotypes, social protection schemes can support women and men to examine and challenge gender biases and adopt gender progressive attitudes and behaviours. Programmes can directly address conventional gender attitudes and shift perceptions, among both women and men, towards traditional gender roles across reproductive and economic domains. For example, policies that provide parental leave allocation to men or allow paternity leave directly, challenge gender stereotypes related to women's primary responsibility for child care. Parental leave earmarked for fathers promotes progressive gender norms related to child rearing and incentivizes fathers to take time away from work to look after children (see Section 4.5 for a detailed discussion on paternity and parental leave policies).

Specific design features can be used (e.g. messaging, co-responsibilities) to trigger changes in attitudes related to the social and economic importance of women's reproductive work and men's role in child care and domestic duties. For example, Egypt's Ain El-Sira Conditional Cash Transfer urban pilot compensated women financially for any time spent fulfilling programme co-responsibilities (Sholkamy, 2011). This feature indirectly signals to women and their families that "care work is a labour worthy of compensation" (Sholkamy, 2011, p. 10). It should be emphasized that, while such measures are important for recognizing women's valuable economic contribution to the unpaid care work and changing people's perceptions, other efforts are needed to de-feminize care work in order to be truly transformative. Programmes can also combine sensitization activities to make people aware of the fact that care is not women's responsibility only, and promote changes in men's attitudes and behaviour towards reproductive work. For example, in Burundi's Merankabandi cash plus programme, and Madagascar's Equal Opportunity Allowance for pregnant women and children (0-15 years), behavioural change and communication sessions are designed to promote men's participation in modules that discuss equal distribution of unpaid care and domestic work in households, and the importance of fathers engaging in their children's early development (Gavrilovic, forthcoming).

However, excessive or abrupt disruption in gender norms can potentially also trigger negative gender effects, including intra-household conflicts if not carefully designed. If financial transfers channeled to women as recipients are not based on thorough gender and protection analysis, and accompanied by awareness-raising measures, this might cause a backlash as a result of men feeling emasculated and left behind (Gavrilovic, forthcoming).

Gender-blind or gender-exploitative programme design can also reinforce gender stereotypes (FAO, 2018a). For example, it has been well-documented in the literature that programme conditionalities can deepen or exacerbate harmful gender norms around women's care responsibilities (Cookson, 2018). Since mothers typically bear responsibility for complying with programme conditions (as principal transfer recipients), CCTs can reinforce traditional gender norms and stereotypes, while also placing additional burdens on women's time use, exposing them to risks of financial punishment in the event of a non-compliance and thereby further reinforcing gender inequities (Molyneux and Thomson, 2011; Cookson, 2018). In order to avoid adverse gender impacts, programme design choices should always be informed by proper gender analysis, and monitoring strategies put in place to track and identify negative changes affecting women, and adjust programme design accordingly.

BOX 4. Bundling an intra-household resource transfer with gender transformative workshops to empower women and men in Uganda

An innovative pilot project, known as Economic Intervention project, was implemented in Uganda in 2016 to test how a productive asset transfer combined with a couples-based workshop impacted women and men's individual empowerment, marital relations and gender roles in sugarcane contract farming households. The economic intervention, while not a conventional poverty targeted social transfer, provides indications of how shifting control over productive assets and income can transform gender roles. It consisted of a facilitated intra-household transfer of productive assets (sugar cane contracts). Husbands were encouraged by specially trained staff to register their wives as owners of sugar cane contracts. He contracts, in turn, allowed wives to gain formal access to productive inputs and cash advances. A small economic incentive was used to encourage participation in the programme.

The intervention was preceded by the Family Vision Workshop, a couples-based participatory workshop designed to increase gender awareness of spouses, and household cooperation in farm and resource management for a randomly selected potential participants. The workshop was modelled on the Gender Action Learning System (GALS), which involved a series of participatory activities for husband and wife, delivered during a three-day workshop. These aimed to guide men and women in examining gender biases and discriminatory norms, and in recognizing the contributions of each member to the family's welfare. Couples were also encouraged to articulate their joint vision for a new and better future, including changes in gender roles and relations, both in the family and the community. The workshop was also offered to households that did not attend the training, allowing for an evaluation of the impacts of the economic intervention and the workshop both separately as well as in combination.

Both the intervention and the workshop led to some transformative outcomes at individual and household levels. Contract transfers from husbands to wives significantly improved women's empowerment by increasing their access to resources and agency, namely decision-making power, whereas the behavioural change intervention improved their self-confidence and life satisfaction. Both interventions improved marital quality and shifted gender norms. The behavioural change intervention that was specifically intended to do this, but for the economic intervention alone, had a less obvious outcome. Ambler, Jones and O'Sullivan (2021, p. 23) state that this resulted from the "new information that both husband and wife received about her abilities when she begins to manage sugar cane and through positive experiences with shifting gender roles". The asset transfer also provided women with an opportunity to enter the "male-dominated space of commercial agriculture and contract farming", which thereby shifted norms around what was considered acceptable 'women's work' (Ambler, Jones and O'Sullivan, 2021, p. 23). Men's life satisfaction was reportedly also enhanced, potentially through a mechanism of alleviating their social expectations and sole responsibility for household economic security (sugar cane management), as women were now enabled to adopt these traditional male roles and share the burden of earning income.

Source: Adapted from Ambler, Jones and O'Sullivan (2021).

4.2 Household-level changes

How does social protection promote transformative outcomes at the household level?

In this section, we explore the extent to which individual changes in terms of enhanced agency, improved gender awareness and positive gender attitudes, or increased access to resources can translate into equitable power relations at the household level. This could lead to positive changes in household roles and enhanced women's bargaining power and decision-making related to spending and investments, work and time allocations and women's and girls' protection.

Evidence suggests that impacts of social protection programmes on decision-making indicators – for both personal and household decisions – are mixed at best and context-specific (Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Peterman *et al.*, 2019). A systematic review by Bastagli *et al.*, (2016) has found that cash transfers can improve women's

decision-making power, particularly on decisions related to household expenditure. Focusing on the social safety nets in Africa, a paper by Peterman *et al.*, (2019) finds little evidence that programmes increase women's sole decision-making, whereas indicators of joint decision-making patterns show slightly more promising results.

Beyond direct questions on decision-making in impact evaluations, actual individual control over income or bargaining power over resources is fairly complex to measure. Women are often direct recipients of cash transfers, but this does not seem to consistently lead to different household decisions (Akresh, de Walque and Harounan, 2016; Benhassine *et al.*, 2015; Haushofer and Shapiro, 2016; Handa *et al.*, 2009), though there is also evidence of shifting consumption patterns depending on the gender of the recipient (Armand *et al.*, 2020) that

suggests that women's bargaining power improved. An example of a programme in which changing the formal holder of productive activities, or sugar cane contracts and subsequent income (See Box 4), highlights the fact that empowerment and changes in gender norms can be enhanced through meaningful shifts in control of resources.¹²

When it comes to women's influence over strategic decision-making, the evidence of impact is also limited. For example, qualitative evaluation of cash transfers across six countries in sub-Saharan Africa did not significantly change gender patterns of strategic decision-making nor women's control over productive activities, particularly in patrilineal settings (Barca *et al.*, 2015). In Ghana, for example, in regions where women had a more constrained ownership of productive resources because of discriminatory practises regarding inheritance customs, their ability to spend cash transfers productively was more limited (*ibid.*). Again, design features, such as frequency, size and type of transfers, can moderate

GT-SP OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES AT HOUSEHOLD LEVEL

At the household (interpersonal) level, the role of GT-SP programming is to empower women and men to: (1) recognize the importance of equitable gender relations; (2) adopt more progressive gender roles across economic and reproductive areas; and (3) practice more equitable gender relations, including inclusive decision-making practices, ownership and control of resources, freedom from violence and social participation.

Source: Adapted from the FAO, IFAD and WFP (forthcoming).

¹² The intervention, however, does not fall under the domain of traditional social protection interventions, though it has some similarities to livelihood interventions that provide women productive resources.

these impacts. For example, in Brazil, Morton (2019) compared the effects of two different gender-targeted social protection interventions on women's access to and use of money. The ethnographic study focused on Bolsa Familia's monthly conditional cash transfer and the Maternity Wage lump-sum payment to women when they become pregnant. It found that lump sums, rather than small monthly cash transfer payments, were shown to have much more progressive effects for women's economic empowerment, enabling them to invest cash in strategic assets, such as cows and land (commonly owned by men). Monthly cash assistance, on the other hand, was more likely to be spent on items, such as clothes and furniture, which were locally regarded and stereotyped as 'feminine property' (Morton, 2019).

There are some examples of positive changes in intra-household gender dynamics related to unpaid care and domestic work, although a majority of the social protection interventions do not try to shift norms relating to these (Dooley *et al.*, 2019). For example, the World Food Programme's evaluations of cash-based interventions (operating in both development and humanitarian contexts), which also involve complementary activities, in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Rwanda suggest positive effects on intra-household division of reproductive activities (WFP, 2019). In Rwanda, awareness-raising sessions in the father-to-father and mother-to-mother support groups, combined with cash incentives, encouraged fathers to provide nutritious food for their children. This also led to a greater willingness on the part of men to contribute to household chores and child care (WFP, 2019). An evaluation of the Benazir Income Support Programme in Pakistan by Ambler and de Brauw (2017) examined the role of the cash transfer in various outcomes, including in gender norms related to men's involvement in household chores. The study demonstrated some evidence of increasing agreement among men in the treated households that they should help with household chores, even in a socially conservative setting.

Social protection programmes can include specific features and activities to shift gender norms related to caregiving and domestic work burdens. For example, soft conditionalities can be used to make men explicitly responsible for child care. Training and sensitization activities can promote directly more equitable norms related to distribution of care and domestic work. For example, in Burundi's Merankabandi Cash+ programme, at least 25 percent of male spouses are expected to participate in awareness-raising sessions that cover specific gender issues, such as family planning and use of contraception, joint decision-making and fathers' involvement in child care and early childhood development (Gavrilovic, forthcoming). More research, however, is needed to understand the impacts of social protection interventions and complementary measures on women's time-use agency and reproductive work burdens (Dooley *et al.*, 2019).

Finally, we assess the role of social protection in promoting more harmonious marital and family relations. Disruption to traditional gender norms and women's economic empowerment may increase or decrease intra-household conflict (between spouses but also between women and other family members, including younger or older women). Social protection interventions can improve relationships between husbands and wives, reduce acceptance of IPV among women and also

lower instances of marital conflict that can trigger IPV (especially physical or sexual violence) (Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Buller *et al.*, 2018). A mixed-method review of studies in low- and middle-income countries showed that in most cases (i.e. eleven quantitative and six qualitative studies), cash transfers reduced IPV, while mixed or adverse effects appeared only in two studies (Buller *et al.*, 2018). Similarly, a systematic review by Bastagli *et al.* (2016) finds that cash transfers are effective in reducing the physical abuse of women by male partners. Cash transfers are less effective in terms of decreasing the likelihood of emotional forms of violence and abuse, such as controlling behaviours. Positive outcomes on relationship quality and reductions in IPV are associated with women's empowerment (and ability to exit or not engage in abusive relationships), improved household economic security, reduced financial stress and enhanced emotional well-being (Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Buller *et al.*, 2018). Interventions also contribute to IPV reductions through other possible pathways, such as an increase in the social cost of men perpetrating violence (Roy, Hidrobo, Hodinott and Ahmed, 2019), and enhancing women's decision-making, self-confidence and freedom of movement (Buller *et al.*, 2016).

Some evidence suggests that in certain settings (i.e. highly patriarchal communities), the pace and scale of social norm change can moderate programme impacts. For example, Perera *et al.*, (2022) have found that programmes that generate smaller and more gradual shifts in power relations appear more easily accepted by men compared to those that may generate larger and more sudden disruptions. Programme design features can influence IPV outcomes as well (Buller *et al.*, 2018). For example, when women are recipients of cash, in limited cases, this has led to male spouse's resentment towards their wives because of their increased incomes. As a man's authority and status as the family's main breadwinner becomes challenged, males' disempowerment has been seen to contribute to an increase in emotional abuse of women by their partners (Bastagli *et al.*, 2016). Larger transfer amounts may also enhance the risks of men coercing money from their wives (*ibid.*).

Programme framing and labelling of social protection programmes' stated objectives (e.g. for women's entrepreneurship versus for child education and health), and careful design of transfer amounts and frequency, can leverage the impact of cash transfers for reducing IPV and mitigate potential adverse effects (Buller *et al.*, 2018; Peterman *et al.*, 2019). For example, in Ecuador, channelling cash and in-kind transfers to women was accepted by Ecuadorian men, in part, because the intervention was explicitly labelled for household food security and children's nutrition, a domain already within the domestic responsibilities and control of women (Buller *et al.*, 2016). As such, the intervention did not explicitly challenge traditional gender roles in household welfare, and this may have reduced the risk of a male backlash in response to women's receipt of cash (*ibid.*).

Programme design obviously plays an important role in shaping gender intra-household outcomes; however, the relationship between programming, context and outcomes is not always straightforward. In Tunisia, a cash grant and financial training was randomly allocated to 1 000 poor women to examine the effects of financial transfer and improvements in human capital on women's employment. A gender transformative training component was delivered to facilitate gender dialogues between spouses to promote male partners' support for women's

empowerment and reduce the risk of male backlash to women's income-generation. A subset of women attended the gender training with their male partners, while in other cases women attended trainings alone. Interestingly, only women who received the cash grant and attended the trainings on their own improved their income-generation outcomes (Gazeaud, Khan, Mvukiyehe and Sterck, 2023). For those who attended the trainings with their male partners, it appears that gender dialogues had the unexpected effects of reinforcing traditional gender inequalities, and increasing the income-generation and farming activities of other household members (Ferrah *et al.*, 2021). Authors have posited that gender dialogue intervention was light, and not adequately tailored to gender context in Tunisia, thus undermining the potential to tackle deeply ingrained patriarchal norms in the community (*ibid.*). This highlights the importance of ensuring that the design of interventions is always based on robust gender analysis and adapted to the specific context. On the other hand, sometimes positive impacts can occur without explicitly aiming for changing gender norms through behavioural change. In Box 5, we unpack the linkages between programme design, context and IPV outcomes in highly conservative areas of rural Bangladesh.

BOX 5. Combining cash and behavioural change communication to address IPV in rural Bangladesh

Rural Bangladesh is characterized by a high prevalence of IPV and conservative norms, such as the practice of purdah.* Purdah, combined with women's limited ownership of cash, restricts women's movement outside of the home and participation in social groups. Women who transgress local norms are exposed to stigmatization and harassment by the wider community. From 2012 to 2014, the World Food Programme partnered with the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) to implement a randomized control trial of a two-year cash plus pilot – the Transfer Modality Research Initiative – to evaluate which transfer modalities work best for improving food security and nutrition outcomes among ultra-poor households in rural Bangladesh. The programme delivered cash or food transfers to very poor households, and randomly assigned some of these households to receive cash or food only. A subset of women – mothers of children under two years of age – attended intensive BCC on nutrition. The evaluation examined the impact of the differential modalities, such as food or cash on physical and emotional violence, and the value added of complementary features on IPV outcomes six to ten months after the programme ended. (Roy *et al.*, 2019.)

The BCC intervention comprised nutrition trainings each week, bimonthly home visits and counselling to support changes in nutrition behaviours, and monthly community dialogues. Some training sessions included female programme participants only. Other events were open to community and family key decisions-makers, including husbands and mothers-in-law, to promote positive attitudes and support for women's attendance in public events and behavioural change related to child rearing. The involvement and sensitization of influential community leaders was meant to facilitate community support towards women's rights to participation, security and mobility, and increase message uptake. Importantly, the BCC components did not include any explicit focus and information on violence or gender issues to avoid outright resistance. (Roy *et al.*, 2019.) >>

The impact evaluation by Roy *et al.* (2019) found that a combination of transfers and BCC led to a significant reduction of physical violence for women who received both transfers and trainings, as compared to women in the cash- or food-only treatment arm. According to the authors, these impacts may have occurred through three pathways: (1) an increase in women's greater bargaining power and self-efficacy to make and act on decisions, including leaving abusive relationships and reduced acceptance of violent behaviour or participating in employment in public; (2) reduced tolerance in the community for men who inflict violence on women as a result of women's increased visibility in public, greater social ties and status in the community; and (3) reduced household poverty-related stress and conflict and enhancements in men's emotional well-being (Roy *et al.*, 2019; Roy *et al.*, 2022). These impacts were sustained four years after the programme ended, but only in the region where BCC is combined with cash transfers (and not food), suggesting that income poverty reduction creates the necessary enabling environment for long-term impacts (Roy *et al.*, 2022).

* Purdah is a social practice of female seclusion prevalent among some Muslim and Hindu communities in South Asia, often driven by religious beliefs and customs.

4.3 Community-level changes

How does social protection promote transformative outcomes at the community level?

Promoting positive gender outcomes at the community level is rarely an explicit objective of core social protection programmes, as they are typically targeted at individuals and/or households. There are some exceptions. While PWPs are primarily aimed at individual or household income stabilization, they operate also

on a community level, where work takes place, and include activities to develop community assets and resilience. Social assistance schemes, and cash transfers in particular, can combine awareness-raising activities to address norms, attitudes and practices of the broader community. Changes at community level could potentially occur also as a result of spillover effects from interventions promoting individual and household level outcomes, as non-beneficiaries observe and re-appropriate new attitudes and behaviours, but there is little systematic evidence on these impacts or on prerequisites for such impacts to occur.

Women's involvement in PWPs can improve community perceptions about their economic roles,¹³ as well as norms governing their participation in the public domain (Yohannes and Gissila, 2017). The transformative effects

of PWPs, however, depend on their actual design choices (FAO, 2018b). The use of female job quotas in PWPs, the provision of equal wages for women and men and temporary child care services are affirmative measures that directly signal to the community the value and importance of women's engagement in paid work on equal terms. For example, qualitative research on Rwanda's Vision 2020 Umurenge

GT-SP OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES AT COMMUNITY LEVEL

The objective of gender transformative programming at the community level is to: (1) contribute to a broad shift in traditional perceptions, attitudes and practices to achieve greater equality for women and girls in a group domain; and (2) strengthen the collective empowerment of women and men to defy discrimination in their community and lead to improvements in women's status, civic participation and access to rights, opportunities and entitlements.

Source: Adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP (forthcoming).

¹³ The nature of work, often involving hard physical labour, can be damaging to women's and men's health and increase work burdens.

Programme has documented that women's participation in public employment, and possibly some women's recruitment in higher level positions on public works, has contributed to achieving more approving attitudes towards women's capabilities and adoption of economic roles. However, the report notes that many structural barriers to women's employment remained (Pavanello, Pozarny and De la O Campos, 2017). On the other hand, Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme has come under criticism for paying higher wages to male participants compared to female workers for similar types of jobs, thus reinforcing gender gaps and employment stereotypes (Jones, Tafere and Woldehanna, 2010).

There are some examples of programmes with BCC components that aim to break down discriminatory gender norms and promote community-wide egalitarian attitudes towards importance of 'women's work', women's access to and handling of cash, mobility and redistribution of care and domestic work (WFP, 2019). In the Sahel Adaptive Social Protection Programme in Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Niger, a communication campaign was delivered to educate community leaders, and men in particular, about the importance of making women the recipients of cash transfers and mitigate the potential risk of a backlash (Perezniето and Holmes, 2020). A qualitative study in Ethiopia has demonstrated how the inclusion of behaviour and change communication sessions, as part of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP), that include messages about harmful traditional practices and the importance of girls' right to education and protection have contributed to positive shifts in community attitudes and norms related to the practice of child marriage (Gavrilovic *et al.*, 2020).

Social protection programmes can provide women with new means of public participation and social networking, learning opportunities, social capital and social action, which can all lead to collective agency and empowerment (Holmes and Jones, 2010). This can happen both through intentional design features as well as unintended programme effects. For example, programmes with co-responsibilities that oblige women to seek health care or participation in awareness-raising and training activities, generally require women's increased movement and interaction outside of the home. This provides opportunities for adjustments in gender norms related to women's access to public spaces, public services and mobility – even if only as an unintentional effect. For example, in Peru, participation in the Juntos programme and requirements to attend meetings and training events in towns, have contributed to increase in rural women's mobility (Valente, 2010). In Bangladesh, women's attendance in trainings and associated activities increase in their interaction and social ties in the community may have strengthened community disapproval of husbands' abusive and violent behaviour and increased social costs of IPV (Roy *et al.*, 2019). Similarly, a qualitative study of Peru's Juntos programme documented how increased participation of both women and men in communal activities altered the way women perceive and value themselves as a group. As a result, they had improved their confidence to communicate in public, enabling them to demand accountability from government officials and access to social services (Valente, 2010).

Cash transfers or public works can provide resources that women need to re-enter savings and lending groups, which can improve their access to credit for income-

generation activities, and capacity to smooth their consumption during income shocks (Pavanello, Pozarny and De la O Campos, 2017). In the WFP (2019) study in Bangladesh, Egypt and El Salvador, cash transfers enabled women's participation in self-help groups and local oversight committees, which allowed women to deepen their collective identity and form critical networks for joint economic investments and sale of products. Participation in social groups provides another pathway for supporting transformative changes to gender norms and relations at the community level. Social networks and bonding social capital are necessary for women to mobilize and act collectively towards shared interests. Women's self-help groups have led to improvements in social networks, community respect, empowerment and solidarity among women (Brody *et al.*, 2015).

Notwithstanding these results, the evidence also highlights that these effects can be short-lived and limited, as interventions often do not address the root causes of these norms on their own. A WFP study of cash and voucher transfers in eight countries found that they had minimal impact on women's social status, gender relations or perceptions of women in the community in the longer term (WFP, 2019). Similarly, PWPs also often do not translate into long-term job security because of the structural barriers to women's participation on the labour market. Moreover, if poorly designed and implemented, they can reinforce gendered social stereotypes and even cause community backlash. For example, poorly designed nutrition-sensitive social protection can reinforce gender stereotypes within a community that mothers are solely responsible for children's nutrition. Qualitative research in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru revealed community-level resentment and psychological abuse in response to women attending BCC sessions, as this was perceived by some to have challenged the social expectations as to how women should behave (Molyneux and Thomson, 2011). This highlights the importance of adopting mitigation strategies to counteract any associated abuse towards recipients (*ibid.*). For example, gender transformative methodologies can be used to engage religious and community leaders first and have them support norm change. In Bangladesh, for instance, women were initially harassed when meeting in public to collect their cash transfers, but thanks to the awareness-raising carried out by local oversight committees, women received public endorsement (mostly men's) to move freely in open spaces (WFP, 2019).

BOX 6. A couple's empowerment training in Tekavoul conditional cash transfer programme in Mauritania

In 2015, the Government of Mauritania, with World Bank support, launched the first phase of *Tekavoul* (Solidarity), a nationwide conditional cash transfer programme, that was followed by the second phase in 2020. *Tekavoul* is aimed at extremely poor households to protect them from severe deprivation, support human capital investments in children and livelihood development. Cash is conditional on participation in social promotion activities addressing hygiene, nutrition, education, civil registration and child development. Payments are channelled to female caregivers partly with a goal of improving their agency in intra-household decision-making and social position within their households and communities. (World Bank, 2015, 2020, 2021). >>

The programme combines regular cash transfers with behaviour and change communication activities on essential family practices regarding health and nutrition, early childhood development and fathers' involvement in parenting (World Bank, 2015). In the second phase discussions also include topics related to domestic and sexual violence and GBV prevention (World Bank 2020). Focus on gender issues related to reproductive care and GBV is innovative in the context of Mauritania, which can be described as a predominantly conservative society, and not open to public discussions on such topics.

To avoid community backlash, the promotional activities were carefully designed, taking into account these delicate social dynamics and norms, and were tested prior to rollout. Some sessions were open to participation of all household members to promote support for behavioural changes, while others involved mothers' or fathers' attendance only (World Bank, 2015).

Community leaders, such as elders, health and education workers, and religious authorities participated in these activities to facilitate dialogue on the sensitive issues related to social norms on child care and positive family practices. Their endorsement of communication activities was an important enabler for programme delivery. While the beneficiary households are the primary targets of promotional activities, it is expected that these measures may have positive spillover effects on community life. (World Bank, 2015, 2021.)

The World Bank's Africa Gender Innovation Lab is implementing a randomized control trial to examine the effects of combining a couples' and community-based gender norms training and cash transfers delivered in a regular Tekavoul programme (World Bank, 2020). Tekavoul beneficiaries are randomized to receive three different treatments consisting of combinations of trainings on intra-household cooperation, gender, power and violence prevention and public screenings of short videos (for a description of the evaluation, see IFPRI, n.d.). The evaluation will test if explicitly designed gender transformative and IPV prevention programming impact gender and social norms at the household and community level and reduce IPV. The study will also try to disentangle the effects of different programme modalities on IPV outcomes. Evidence will inform discussions and strategies for scaling up a GTA to a national safety net system. Results of the impact evaluation were not available at the time this paper was published.

4.4 Organizational-level changes

How does social protection promote transformative outcomes at the organizational level?

The promotion of GT-SP initiatives at the organizational level has not been widely discussed in the literature or examined through evaluations. However, we can discern three broad pathways through which gender transformative change can happen at this level.

Some agencies responsible for social protection have adopted a range of social accountability and citizen engagement mechanisms to empower women to claim their rights, engage with stakeholders and service providers, and render policies and programmes more responsive to their needs. Women's representation in planning, governance and grievance committees is important for several reasons.

It can give women a voice as to how specific interventions are designed and implemented; it can provide opportunities to lodge complaints, provide feedback or resolve problems. It also sends an important signal to women and girls, and the wider community, that women can be leaders and are capable of making important decisions outside of the home.

GT-SP OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES AT THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

The objective of gender transformative programming at the organizational level is to: (1) facilitate changes in organizational mandates, rules and procedures, and dominant values and beliefs embedded in organizational cultures so as to eliminate gender bias and promote gender transformative practices, programmes and service delivery; and (2) promote women's involvement in rural organizations and programme governance to improve their status and position, build accountability towards gender equality and improve outcomes for women.

Source: Adapted from the FAO, IFAD and WFP (forthcoming).

A WFP (2019) study found that in Bangladesh and Mali, involving women as members in the grievance committees and assigning them leadership roles, combined with training and mentoring, contributed to equality in outcomes. Similarly, in Pakistan, a social mobilization pilot in the Benazir Income Support Programme established women's committees at different administrative levels (village, union council and *tehsil*). Its role included training women to know their rights and how to become engaged in participatory monitoring. The pilot also ensured that women's leaders participated in monthly meetings and liaised with local offices (FAO, 2018b). Similar objectives, related to women's leadership and forming accountable links between programme officials and participants, have

been promoted in Peru's Juntos programme through the election of female community facilitators (Valente, 2010). In India's MGNREGA, women's participation in governance and monitoring processes is encouraged formally to promote greater programme accountability and women's collective empowerment outcomes, as described in Box 7. Women's participation in programme governance and associated opportunities to build collective agency needs to be accompanied by measures to build women's capacities and skills to actively engage in these processes (Holmes and Jones, 2010; Gavrilovic, forthcoming).

Furthermore, GTAs can be promoted through the organizational reform of agencies responsible for the design and delivery of social protection interventions, which encourage them to adopt transformative policies, programmes and practices. This can involve measures to support the gender analysis of the current level of gender responsiveness and gender transformative features of the institution, and the development of action plans and recruitment strategies to promote more gender transformative policy and programming processes. Government and non-state agencies working on social protection often lack sufficient gender awareness and gender integration skills, as well as budgets for gender policy and programme development and implementation. Staff also typically lacks operational guidelines and incentives to facilitate and promote gender transformative practices in their work (Camilletti, Nesbitt-Ahmed and Subrahmanian, 2022). Raising awareness of policymakers, managers and implementers of their own unconscious gender biases, training staff on gender norms, promoting positive gender norms in the organization, and developing employees' capacities in designing and delivering gender transformative programmes are critical parts of this process. To address institutional capacity shortcomings, the ILO and UNICEF managed Transform training programme on the management of national social protection systems

in Africa was revised recently to ensure its curricula are gender-responsive and disability-inclusive. The objective was to provide government staff working in social protection ministries with a technical knowledge on gender and disability mainstreaming approaches to design and deliver inclusive programmes.

Finally, both agricultural and rural organizations,¹⁴ can be important actors in promoting women's equal participation, voice, leadership and decision-making power. With adequate incentives and capacity to promote gender equality, rural organizations can be used as vehicles for ensuring women's oversight of programme delivery of social protection (e.g. social security/health insurance facilitated through farmer cooperatives) or complementary services (Vinci *et al.*, 2017). They can also support the gender-responsive implementation of targeting and registering beneficiaries, distribution of benefits, monitoring and evaluation, and complaint and grievance mechanisms (*ibid.*). Concerted efforts are needed to equip rural women with the necessary information, skills and confidence to participate meaningfully in these formal structures and processes through rural organizations, and to engage with authorities on an equal footing.

BOX 7. Encouraging gender transformative change through social audits of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in rural India

In 2005, the MGNREGA was introduced as a social protection law and a programme to target vulnerable populations through employment guarantee. MGNREGA was also designed to tackle social exclusion, unequal power relations and structural inequalities, including gender- and caste-based discrimination. Several programme features encourage rural women's participation in MGNREGA, with important benefits. These include female job quotas and equal wages provided to women and men for similar work, payment of wages into individual bank accounts or through post offices, and mandatory inclusion of women in planning processes and social audits. Also, work is offered in locations close to women's homes, which reduces travel barriers for women and enhances their uptake of employment opportunities (Vij, 2013).

Social audits play an important participatory governance function in MGNREGA. Their role is to monitor the quality and effectiveness of all projects under MGNREGA, and through a *gram sabha*,* enable members of village assembly to lodge their grievances (Vij, 2013). Rural women are encouraged to participate in *gram sabhas* and village meetings to assert their rights to entitlements. Evaluations show that MGNREGA's social audits have had mixed effects on women's empowerment. In some places, women's participation in the *gram sabha* has been satisfactory, with most women speaking out (73 percent of those attending meetings) (Pankaj and Tankha, 2010). As women meet and regularly interact with administrators, the relationships between government officials and women improved after social audits as also did women's self-confidence (Vij, 2013). However, their participation in the selection of jobs and access to, and management of, assets has been low (Pankaj and Tankha, 2010). Limited access to information, combined with cultural prejudice or disinterest because of time burdens and risk of gender-based violence, restrict women's attendance in village meetings (Vij, 2013). >>

¹⁴ These include cooperatives, extension and rural advisory service providers and credit unions, to name a few

Female beneficiaries are also encouraged to use other governance platforms within MGNREGA to mobilize for collective action. In Kerala, for example, the state government mobilizes female members of savings and lending groups, called *kudumbashree*, to manage the work sites which have strengthened women's position in the programme and their community (Suruchi, Maiorano and Blomkvist, 2019).

Finally, there is evidence that political empowerment through the reservation of village leadership seats for women has positively affected women's participation in MGNREGA and other labour markets, including casual and self-employment in non-farm activities (Deininger *et al.*, 2020). Equal wages have contributed to changes in gender expectations and women's demand generally for wage equality in rural labour markets. Female leadership has also had a positive influence on the promotion of positive gender role models and gender-responsive selection and quality of public assets, such as provision of water points and local roads (Deininger *et al.*, 2020). A number of studies have evaluated the impact of MGNREGA and found that the programme has contributed significantly to rural women's well-being across various domains. The programme has improved women's access to employment and ownership of income, financial literacy, bargaining power within the household, greater public mobility and strengthened social positions within their broader communities (Suruchi, Maiorano and Blomkvist, 2019).

* A *gram sabha* is a village assembly or a body consisting of persons whose names are entered as electors in the electoral roll for a *panchayat* (or 'village council').

4.5 Changes at macro environment level

In this section we examine the role of social protection interventions, particularly public policies and legislation, in promoting social norm change and addressing structural barriers to gender equality at a systemic level. The entry point here

for the promotion of gender transformative change is at national and system level rather than a programme level. Gender transformative instruments operating at the macro level also manifest as impacts at individual, household and community levels.

Social protection policies can transform the context to minimize risks of gender bias and discrimination based on gender through legislation and regulatory frameworks. This also includes efforts to address gender bias in existing social protection policies and establish institutional social accountability mechanisms to ensure equal access to benefits and services. They can also promote new norms and societal arrangements in support of gender equality through laws, affirmative

policies and social campaigns. Below, we briefly discuss each of these core measures and pathways of transformative change.

First, affirmative social protection legislation and policies can be used to directly address gender gaps and structural inequalities faced by women. Adopting paid maternity leave policies, for formal and informal sector workers, provides an illustrative example of promoting gender equality in the labour market, and improving women's economic security and status in society.

GT-SP OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES AT MACRO ENVIRONMENT LEVEL

The objective of GTAs at the macro environment level is to eliminate risks of gender discrimination and to promote normative changes in society at large, through affirmative and anti-discrimination social protection policies, legislation, social campaigns and the promotion of social accountability for gender equality and women's citizenship rights.

Source: Adapted from FAO, IFAD and WFP (forthcoming).

The purpose of maternity leave is both to promote child and maternal health and early childhood development. When it guarantees women's right to return to work, maternity leave policies can enhance women's employment and labour force attachment across their life cycle. It can also reduce gender pay gap by shortening periods outside the labour force and by incentivizing women's human capital formation. It can also have an impact on the level of discrimination by changing attitudes towards, and expectations of, women's return to work after childbirth. Maternity leave is, however, likely to have heterogeneous impacts on women with different income-earning capacities. In contexts where informality is widespread, and implementation gaps remain, access to maternity leave is more limited and such measures have less direct impact on women (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2015). In agriculture, especially in low- and middle-income countries, a large proportion of women's work is either own account work or unpaid work, as a contributing family worker (FAO, 2021; Bue, 2022), which excludes them from maternity leave provisions.

Irrespective of whether all individuals directly benefit from maternity leave policies, such system-level changes can contribute to normative changes at the level of society. However, in order to achieve individual and household level impacts in rural areas, formalization and recognition of women's work are required. Gender norms influence both adoption of maternity leave as well as its impacts, and maternity leave can contribute to norms change. When adopted as a national law, its potential for affecting large swathes of women is clear, particularly when maternity policies are expanded to cover the entire labour force, including informal sector workers (Piovani and Aydiner-Avsar, 2015). Research shows bidirectional links between the adoption of maternal leave policies and the degree of gender discrimination in society. A study conducted by Cerise, Eliseeva and Francavilla (2013) shows that in countries which exhibit lower levels of gender discrimination, governments are more likely to provide cash benefits to mothers during pregnancy and lactation. At the same time, the study showed that women's employment outcomes are more impacted by maternity policies in countries with higher levels of gender discrimination compared to those with low levels of gender discrimination. This suggests that in contexts of highly discriminatory social institutions, affirmative policies, such as maternity leave, are important for promoting progressive gender norms related to women's work. Moreover, Chai *et al* (2021) find, with some methodological reservations, that in survey data from a sample of countries, increases in maternity leave entitlements were associated with improvements in women's participation in decision-making in the household, and more egalitarian attitudes regarding women's work.

Nevertheless, the extent to which these efforts are transformative is dependent on specific policy objectives and design. While maternity leave is critical in protecting women's health and incomes during a crucial stage in the life course, the policy is often framed primarily as contributing to child well-being, rather than as a vehicle for gender transformative change. While maternity leave protects women's attachment to the labour market, if it is not accompanied by parental leave that can be shared between parents and policies encouraging fathers' participation, it may have limited impact on traditional gendered divisions of labour. When costs of leave are borne entirely by employers, women may be exposed to discrimination in recruitment (Cerise, Eliseeva and Francavilla 2013) and too long an absence has

raised similar concerns (Piovani and Aydiner-Avsar, 2015). Maternity leave should also be complemented with provision of child care services after infancy (often lacking in rural settings), to achieve meaningful impacts. A maternity, paternity and parental leave system should be designed to ensure that both parents share the care responsibilities to facilitate women's return to the labour market, and dispel the traditional stereotypes that care work should be entirely carried by mother.

Second, policy nudges, public debates and awareness-raising campaigns can be used to incentivize changes in public attitudes and values regarding gender equality through dissemination of new knowledge. Policy can motivate change in people's expectations and behaviour through a system of rewards and sanctions, leading to behavioural tipping points in society at large. No individual has sufficient incentive (or agency) to act alone, but people may modify their behaviour if they observe a widespread societal (or community) change (Nyborg *et al.*, 2016). Parental leave policy illustrates this point in Box 8.

BOX 8. A transformative approach to care through parental and paternity leave policies

Parental leave helps parents to maintain income security during the time required to care for young children while maintaining parents' engagement in the labour market, with paternity leave as a specific provision for fathers immediately after the birth of a child. Paternity leave and parental leave allocations for men can promote a redistribution of care work between women and men, by addressing social stereotypes and attitudes towards men taking a greater role in caring for children and performing housework. When leave is adequately compensated and earmarked for fathers it provides concrete financial incentives for households, and fathers in particular, to form a bond with a child and share care responsibilities.

In 2021, 115 countries globally offered paternity leave, but there are still significant variations in duration, benefits and coverage of such leave. For example, paid paternity leave was available in only 102 countries in 2021, while average duration of paternity leave is nine days in countries that provide statutory paternity leave, it varies significantly across regions. Sixty-eight countries make parental leave available to either parent after maternity leave. (Addati, Cattaneo and Pozzan, 2022.)

Uptake of parental leave by men can, however, remain limited. This can be because of resistance from both outside and within the home, when strict gender norms are deeply entrenched, as well as because of the prevailing gender wage gap in the labour market that implies a similar gap in parental benefits or income lost resulting from such leave. Male workers can opt out from taking paternity or parental leave because of social stigma and peer pressure towards men who become engaged in child care activities – roles typically ascribed to women. Ensuring that a large swathe of men is encouraged to take leave can create a snowball effect, in terms of adoption of equitable gender norms and practices related to care and domestic work. (Addati, Cattaneo and Pozzan, 2022.)

Policy design can make leave more attractive to men, for instance, by providing adequate duration and transfer value of benefits, protecting men from dismissal for taking leave and earmarking parental leave for fathers only. Public campaigns or role models to raise awareness of the importance of men's caregiving roles and progressive masculine identities is also key. In Cuba, for example, men can allocate 60 minutes per day off work to nurse their child (Addati, Cattaneo and Pozzan, 2022).



Active promotion of men's participation in care and take up of paternity and parental leave requires also further measures, such as specific non-discrimination and job protection legislation for those taking leave and adequate level of benefits (Addati, Cattaneo and Pozzan, 2022). Importantly, the usability and application of parental and paternity leave policies remains very low in rural areas where most employment is informal, and strategies are lacking to expand them to informal sector employees.

Third, a GTA entails assessing, addressing and removing gender biases in existing policies and laws to ensure equitable access to social protection. In most countries, women face structural barriers related to gaps and inequalities in education, the labour market and reproductive care burdens, which reduce their equitable access to social security. For example, women have lower access to pensions in old age, including lower benefit levels compared to men, as a result of lower contributory capacities and irregular employment histories (UN Women, 2015). Women working in the informal sector, and in particular in rural agricultural labour markets, are especially disadvantaged in terms of social security (ILO and FAO, 2021).

By using a GTA, policymakers can help to highlight gender biases in existing policies and narrow gender gaps in social security access, including pensions. Policies and laws need to recognize gender-specific experience of poverty and vulnerability that women face, as well as different employment trajectories compared to men that result in lower coverage. This is particularly important in rural contexts where women are often engaged in vulnerable, informal forms of work. In Viet Nam, for example, policy discussions are underway to revise the Social Insurance Law and Decree 136. This legislative change will introduce reform measures that compensate women, and other vulnerable groups, with lower insurable earnings and shorter contributory careers (Le and Bich Pham, 2021).

Governments can address gender inequities in accessing retirement benefits by providing individual entitlements to universal social pensions; granting women the right to social security independent of their marital status; and compensating women through care credits for lost contributions resulting from absence from the labour market because of child care responsibilities. In Uruguay, for example, women receive one year of contributions per child, with a maximum of five children, to increase pension entitlements (UN Women, 2019).

Formalization strategies for informal economy workers, who are predominantly women, can be considered as gender transformative measures. In Brazil, Chile, Ghana, South Africa and Viet Nam, specific measures were adopted to reform legislation to extend social insurance rights – in pensions, health insurance and maternity leave – to informal female workers (Holmes and Scott, 2016). These reforms involved changes in eligibility criteria, financing and contributory arrangements, and reframing the categorization of workers (ibid.). Under South Africa's 2002 Basic Conditions of Employment Act, domestic workers, who are mostly women, are now entitled to social security under the Unemployment Insurance Fund co-financed through employer and employee contributions (Holmes and Scott, 2016). By extending labour rights to poor women working in the informal economy, such measures directly address structural causes of gender inequality in the labour market and income security.

In some instances, formality of employment or self-employment and access to social insurance is subject to legal rights in other areas, such as land tenure. In many countries in southeastern Europe, being registered as a land owner can provide access to rural pension schemes, while lack of such registration impedes people, typically women, from accessing the schemes (FAO, 2022), in addition to losing out on ownership and control over land. There have been several reforms in the region to strengthen gender equality in land ownership as a necessary step to facilitate enrolment into social insurance. The 'German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation' (GIZ) and FAO, together with development partners, have supported building the capacities and enhancing knowledge and skills in land registration offices and notaries in the region, to eliminate discriminatory traditional social practices in handling registration issues (GIZ and FAO, 2021).

Finally, social accountability measures that promote social protection rights for rural women and build their collective power to demand access to decent employment and social protection, are key strategies to facilitate long-lasting gender transformative impacts. In Box 9, we present an example of an FAO project in Mexico that combines changes in labour laws with rights awareness sessions and training to expand access to social security by indigenous migrant farm workers.

BOX 9. Expanding formal social security rights for female farm workers in Mexico

The 'Closing the gaps' project was implemented as a United Nations interagency programme, financed by the United Nations Joint Sustainable Development Goals Fund, by FAO in collaboration with the ILO, UN Women and Mexican state governments in Oaxaca and Jalisco, to extend social protection for female agricultural workers and improve their working conditions. By strengthening formal linkages between the government and private sector, the project aimed to support the development of social security policies and measures for women workers in the informal farm economy, and empower them to claim their rights and entitlements through social dialogues, training and media campaigns.

The project targeted indigenous women day labourers who migrate from Mexico's south to the north and western regions. During their transit, and at their destination, these women face various social and economic risks including labour and wage discrimination, maternal health problems and no maternity leave, and risks of sexual and physical harassment.

The project ran for 27 months, during which time the following mix of gender transformative activities, among others, were delivered.

- In 2020, a series of policy dialogues and round tables were organized with representatives from the government, the private sector and women workers to conduct an assessment of gaps in access to, and coverage of, social protection and to articulate and formulate priorities for action for agricultural day labourers.
- A five-year 'Plan for Agricultural Day Labourers' was drafted, focusing on work, health, education, gender and intercultural issues.
- Training was provided to increase the political autonomy of agricultural workers, increase their knowledge of their labour rights and strengthen their capacities to claim their entitlements. The training for agricultural day labourers in social protection and labour rights allowed them to establish the necessary leadership skills to know and promote their rights, and to organize with others to seek work in companies where their rights are respected.



- Information on the rights-based agenda among workers was promoted through dialogue and virtual events, as well as through community radio and press outlets.
- Policy options were developed to incentivize small companies to comply with labour regulations and to ensure that legislative and institutional practices (e.g. labour welfare models for agricultural day labourers) are expanded throughout the country.
- A network of people was formed, including public servants of state governments, private sector participants and agricultural day labourers, to promote social protection for agricultural day labourers beyond the life of the project.

Source: Adapted from FAO (n.d.).

TABLE 1. Summary of GT-SP interventions across levels

GT-SP objective	GT-SP outcomes & pathways	Role of different features in promoting GT-SP	Examples of GT-SP interventions
Level of change: Individual			
Empower women and men, girls and boys, to defy norms by building different forms of capabilities to articulate and exercise choice.	Expand agency and self-efficacy through improved skills, knowledge, psychological changes, control over resources and social networks.	PG Registration of women as recipients of transfers disrupts gender stereotypes related to women's economic role and dependence on male partners.	In India's MGNREGS, depositing wages in women's bank accounts, combined with trainings and work close to home, enabled women to push against restrictive labour norms and remain employed.
		PG Psychosocial components (e.g. life skills, counselling, mentoring and gender dialogues) strengthen women's intrinsic agency and ability to defy norms.	
		DM Delivery of cash via e-payments and financial literacy trainings expand women's control over funds and options to act autonomously.	
Level of change: Household			
Empower women and men, girls and boys, to improve their relations, adopt more inclusive decision-making practices and progressive gender roles at home.	Increase in women's bargaining power to influence strategic decisions (allocation of time, income, assets, labour). Changes in spousal attitudes towards IPV, mobility, etc. Improved psychological well-being.	PG Gender transformative messaging, labelling and nudges, combined with financial incentives, can shift intra-household roles and relations related to paid and unpaid domestic work.	In Bangladesh, a combination of economic transfers and BCC on nutrition (not gender focused) targeted at women, their families and community, led to a significant reduction in IPV through increases in women's threat points, greater social costs to men and reduced poverty-related stress.
		PG Soft conditionalities and joint discussions (e.g. gender dialogues, couple empowerment workshops, etc.) can promote more gender equitable attitudes related to child care, mobility and IPV, and facilitate women's and girls' access to services.	

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GT-SP objective	GT-SP outcomes & pathways	Role of different features in promoting GT-SP	Examples of GT-SP interventions
Level of change: Community			
Strengthen collective empowerment and social capital of women and men to defy discriminatory norms and practices in the community. Promote new norms and practices in support of gender equality.	Community's perceptions of women's roles changed; changes in attitudes and disapproval of harmful customs. Women's collective identity and agency strengthened through leadership and participation in social groups/ community governance. Gender-responsive service delivery.	PG BCC breaks down discriminatory gender norms and fosters community-wide disapproval of harmful practices and customs.	El Salvador's Red Solidaria CCT promotes women's 'citizenship' and participation in local representative structures, through informal education. This led to increased confidence and self-esteem, enabling women to form self-help groups and be more assertive with their husbands and in public spaces.
		PG Job quotas and equal wages in PWPs can promote positive community perceptions of women's participation in employment on equal terms with men.	
		PG Co-responsibilities in health and education improve women's interactions in the public domain and challenge gender norms regarding women's mobility and public roles.	
		P PG Training, female-friendly community committees and sensitization events improve women's collective empowerment, leadership and participation in governance and service delivery.	
Level of change: Organizational			
Reform formal organizations to eliminate gender bias and promote gender equality.	Work cultures, procedures and policies are more gender equal and conducive to promoting gender transformative policies and programmes. Social accountability structures and processes for women are enhanced.	P DM Social accountability and citizen engagement (e.g. female-friendly grievance mechanisms, social audits) mechanisms empower women to voice their needs and priorities, and claim rights.	Brazil's Bolsa Familia introduced vertical oversight mechanisms to improve women's engagement in and satisfaction with the programme. People's councils are responsible for regular gender audits, and for ensuring that robust management and grievance procedures are responsive to women.
		P Gender analysis, action plans, staff trainings and incentives can promote gender transformative reforms of social protection institutions and rural organizations.	
Level of change: Macro environment			
Transform existing policies and legislation to eliminate gender discrimination and bias, and promote normative changes in society at large.	Affirmative and anti-discrimination legislation adopted; existing laws and policies reformed to eliminate gender bias and to safeguard equal access to social protection benefits/services; and discriminatory public attitudes and behaviour changed through policy incentives, new knowledge and social campaigns.	P Affirmative social protection policies and laws can reduce directly gender gaps and structural gender inequalities.	Promoting more equal distribution of unpaid care work and involvement of fathers in child care through "daddy quotas" (Nordic countries) and nursing breaks (Cuba). South Africa's 2002 Basic Conditions of Employment Act extended unemployment and health insurance to informal domestic workers, the majority of whom are from rural areas.
		P Policy nudges, public debates and awareness-raising campaigns can promote changes in public attitudes and behaviour related to gender equality.	
		P Institutional efforts to reform public social protection policies can reduce gender bias and ensure equitable access for women and girls to social protection.	
		P PG Rights awareness sessions and training build gender awareness, collective empowerment and women's demand for social protection entitlements and services.	

Legend: We have classified features across different elements of the social protection system.

P refers to policy, **PG** to programmes, and **DM** stands for delivery mechanism.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This paper has presented arguments as to why taking a GTA to social protection is important for achieving gender equality, as well as sustainable poverty reduction, food security and nutrition. We have also outlined a framework for thinking about GT-SP and reviewed evidence and practices on how social protection policies and programmes can promote and contribute to gender transformative outcomes at different levels. Although many social protection programmes have turned their attention to gender (UN Women, 2015; FAO, 2018a), gender-responsive and transformative objectives and features are still not routinely integrated into policy and programme design and implementation, or monitoring and evaluation.

While the available evidence is still limited, there is some indication that social protection schemes may impact gender transformative change among the beneficiaries, especially when designed with this goal in mind and/or have features that address a critical barrier for women, such as their control of resources or lack of social networks. At best, programmes can promote changes in gender attitudes and traditional gender roles at the individual level. In some cases, social protection programmes have also been found to enhance women's intrinsic agency and ability to act autonomously in relation to key life decisions such as work, mobility and time use. At household level, there are examples of social protection schemes that improve intra-household gender dynamics, particularly in relation to division of labour, marital cooperation and IPV. It is essential to use the lessons learned from successful interventions to inform the design of future programmes.

We have also illustrated how the effects at individual, household and community levels are interdependent. While direct evidence of shifts in community norms to date is very limited, it is conceivable that over time positive shifts in norms could filter through to the wider community. This can lead to improvements in women's social status, participation in community structures and collective agency. Any gendered effects that occur at the meso (institutional) level by the nature of the communities concerned, and how they are governed. They would also depend on continuity and scale of the intervention.

At the organizational level, efforts can be made to eliminate risks of discrimination and gender bias in institutions and interventions mandated to promote social protection. Finally, at macro (policy) level, normative changes can be promoted in society at large through progressive policies, laws, social campaigns and social accountability for gender equality. Robust evidence on organizational and macro environment levels of transformative changes is still scant, however. Importantly, innovations in GT-SP practice are also emerging. Some programmes already incorporate explicitly transformative objectives and design elements, such as skills and knowledge transfers, training related to gender equality and women's rights, awareness-raising, strategic involvement of men and boys in programme activities, and social audits.

Nevertheless, gender transformative effects through social protection are not automatic. Outcomes are shaped and determined by the broader sociocultural context, as well as the distinctive features of programme design and delivery and add-on interventions. Basic design features, such as making women the recipients of cash transfers and the careful framing of programme objectives and messaging, can facilitate pathways towards transformation. In some contexts, however, engagement of men and boys in gender transformative programming has proven also counterproductive to women's and girls' empowerment. Some evidence is also emerging that programmes that combine several measures tackling different facets of underlying gender inequities and structural barriers are likely to be more successful compared to single interventions. Nevertheless, more evidence is needed on how core social protection schemes can be best bundled up with additional components, and the cost-effectiveness of multicomponent versus single interventions, and the overall scalability of complex interventions.

There is also a limited understanding as to whether and how positive changes across levels can be rendered long-lasting and sustained beyond the life and scope of the intervention. Most of the interventions, particularly complementary measures, are delivered as pilots and have a small reach. This raises an issue around spillover effects (both in terms of spillovers between different levels and targeted populations and non-participants), scalability and coverage. There are also important policy trade-offs in terms of costs and benefits in investing in add-on activities that promote engagement of men and boys, and on focusing resources on women and girls-specific programming. Similarly, there is a trade-off between adding intensity of support for a limited number of beneficiaries and expanding coverage to a larger share of the population. Finally, continued efforts are needed to identify good practices and programming options to leverage social protection at scale for long-lasting gender transformative outcomes.

Several broad policy and programmatic implications emerge that can assist policymakers, researchers and social protection practitioners in defining options and strategies for the adoption of a GT-SP agenda in their specific settings.

A strategic approach is needed to build support for GT-SP: Ideally, social protection programming should move progressively from gender-sensitive or gender-responsive approaches towards promoting a more ambitious gender transformative agenda. At a minimum, commitments are needed to eliminate

gender biases in existing interventions and reduce the risks of adverse gender effects. Building a gender transformative agenda, however, should not be seen as a magic bullet, and its prospects depend heavily on underlying gender norms, the specific context of each country's social protection system, and broader societal commitments towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Countries should be strategic in their approach and concentrate efforts where they can make the most difference given their resources, availability and strength of the existing interventions in rural areas and their time frames, institutional capacities and local conditions.

Different options exist for building a GT-SP agenda, depending on domestic priorities, social protection context and capacities: In some cases, making small design tweaks to key social protection programmes may be the most logical first step. In other settings, it may be possible to launch new GT-SP policies or programme pilots to build evidence for scalability and broader replication in different rural settings. In some instances, countries can opt for a more systematic multimodal approach to integrating a gender transformative lens institutionally, throughout all the core elements of the social protection system – from policy and strategy frameworks to programme development, delivery and monitoring and evaluation systems. However, this would require strong political will and leadership, sufficient financial resources, adequate governance and institutional arrangements, and technical capacities to launch such reforms and sustain their momentum.

There are several avenues for incorporating a gender transformative lens into social protection programmes: On a programmatic level, gender transformative change may be promoted through the design of core social protection programmes. This may involve modifying key design features and provisions, such as transfer or asset size, frequency, and/or bundling cash transfers with gender transformative training, awareness-raising and BCC activities. Or it may entail establishing explicit linkages to other complementary interventions, delivered within or beyond the social protection sector. These include measures that enhance women's skills and capabilities to give them increased access to the labour market, livelihood training, productive asset transfers, financial and extension services, child care support, as well as leading to broad-based rights awareness campaigns and anti-discrimination legislation, including inheritance and property laws.

Gender analysis throughout all stages of the policy and programme cycle is key to achieving transformative results: Whatever option and modality is chosen, a robust and participatory gender analysis, including gender norm diagnostics study, should be conducted to inform the selection and framing of programme objectives, design features, programme communication and outreach activities, and delivery methods. Participatory monitoring and evaluation of the programmes' impacts on social norm change and effects on transformative outcomes are also critical to track progress and performance, reduce potential for negative changes, and build evidence to inform readjustments and fine-tuning of interventions. Key stakeholders who work on gender equality and women's and girls' issues, such as women's groups, parliamentarians and research

organizations, should be consulted to generate evidence and data to inform programming options.

Engaging with the broader public including non-participants, influential members of the community and men and boys is an important pathway to reducing social resistance and promoting sustainable social norm change:

Use of mass media to amplify messaging (e.g. through television, radio, posters and social media) and other community-level approaches (e.g. grassroots groups and influential community figures, such as religious leaders and gender champions) is required to address the intersecting social norms that disadvantage girls and women. Men and boys also need to be engaged as allies, but the choice and design of actual strategies need to be informed by, and tailored to, the specific context. Effective programmatic approaches may include gender dialogues or workshops to encourage men's critical reflection on gender norms and learning about their roles in reducing inequality, as well as practicing new skills in joint decision-making, co-management of household finances and division of household labour. These activities require earmarked budgets to be effectively designed and delivered so as not to divert the resources away from delivering core social protection entitlements at scale.

Similarly, as any social transformation and disruption of social convention may cause societal resistance, special attention should be placed on mitigating risks of community backlash and adopting a 'do no harm' policy. Several strategies can be adopted to deal with social resistance and potential backlash. Awareness-raising is required to counter the risks for men as a result of having to comply with social conventions related to toxic (or dominant) forms of masculine identity. It is critical to engage men and boys at all levels of interventions as champions and activists, and to undertake advocacy work to raise awareness of rights and elicit change in social norms. To deal with resistance, interventions should also create safe spaces for critical reflection and dialogue between beneficiaries, the community and programme staff about gender roles and relations in order to reflect on and question deep-rooted norms. The findings from this paper also highlight the importance of monitoring unintended harm to women when implementing gender transformative interventions, and suggest the need for further research on what works and is cost-effective.

It is necessary to address gendered political economy considerations in relation to policy and programming to promote commitments for the GT-SP agenda: Gendered political economy affects the commitments to, the scope and framing of, and ultimately, the results of GT-SP interventions. It is important to invest effort in understanding how political processes and formal and informal institutions influence ideas around gender (in)equality, women's roles in society, the role of gender norms and social protection in tackling underlying causes of gendered poverty. It is also important to understand how the latter frame choices with regard to social protection priorities and narratives adopted in a given context. Such knowledge can be used to inform policy trade-offs and decisions around the extent to which social protection in a specific country can realistically adopt a gender-responsive or more transformative approach, and to define strategies to arrive there programmatically (Holmes, Jones and

Domingo, 2019). Strengthening the capacities of government bodies responsible for managing social protection, committing adequate resources and building concrete connections to existing women's equality mechanisms or gender units within the government, as well as sensitizing ministries responsible for agricultural and rural development, might lead to the adoption of measures to strengthen women's rights and promote a gender transformative agenda. Finally, encouraging and supporting efforts made by rural women's movements, and building alliances between government, civil society and broader social and labour movements is crucial to the advancement of transformative care agendas and their implementation.

Rural women's and girls' poverty and food insecurity is entrenched in structural gender barriers and gaps in ownership and control of resources, and social and economic opportunities necessary to be fully productive. This paper has argued for the adoption of a GTA to social protection in order to address the root causes of rural women's and girls' poverty and vulnerability. While social protection is not traditionally designed with a gender transformative remit, this paper has demonstrated that even the relatively small design tweaks and complementary measures that explicitly address discriminatory gender norms, unequal roles and power relations, hold great promise for improving rural women's and girls' position in their families and communities, and can lead to better poverty reduction and food security and nutrition outcomes.



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