

# ALiGN

**Advancing  
Learning and  
Innovation on  
Gender Norms**



## **Social protection and gender norm change**

**An annotated bibliography**

Georgia Plank with Rachel Marcus and Nicola Jones

July 2018

## **Acknowledgements**

Many thanks to Carol Watson for comments on a previous version and to Denise Powers and Kathryn O’Neill for copy-editing.

## **Disclaimer**

This document is an output of Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN). The views expressed and information contained within are not necessarily those of or endorsed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which accepts no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Overview reports on gender and social protection</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>How far does social protection take a gender norms approach into account?</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Does social protection reinforce discriminatory gender norms?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Can social protection contribute to a transformation in gender norms?</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Evidence on social protection and gender norms by outcome area</b>	<b>28</b>
Child and adolescent wellbeing	29
Education	31
Child marriage and sexual and reproductive health	35
Intimate partner violence	40
Livelihoods and economic empowerment	44

# Introduction

This annotated bibliography brings together key resources on social protection and gender norms. It outlines studies that discuss:

- How social protection programmes incorporate attention to gender norms
- How gender norms affect the operation of social protection programmes
- How social protection programmes contribute to gender norm change (both positively and how they may reinforce existing gender norms)

It focuses on open-access<sup>1</sup> recent literature (primarily materials produced in the last decade) identified in a rapid literature search, and, in particular, studies with explicit discussion of gender norms. However, recognising that the social protection sector has not, historically, framed objectives in terms of gender norm change, but focused on gender equality and women's empowerment more broadly, the bibliography also includes some key materials that do not discuss gender norms explicitly. When direct studies of gender norms are absent, we have sought to draw out the implications for social protection to facilitate changes in gender norms. This literature includes key conceptual and empirical studies highlighting the potential of social protection to promote gender equality, and both the strengths of gender-sensitive programme design and the absence of such features in many programmes.

Several articles (e.g., Molyneux, 2007; Chant et al., 2016 and Camfield et al., 2012), also highlight the risk that certain types of social protection programmes may reinforce discriminatory gender norms and indicate forms of gender-sensitive design that may help prevent the reinforcement of discriminatory norms.

The second half of the bibliography outlines studies that discuss the impact of social protection on gender

norms in particular areas of adolescents' and young people's lives. Specific areas of impact analysis include: adolescent and child wellbeing, education, child marriage and sexual health, intimate partner violence (IPV) and livelihoods. Articles are ordered chronologically (from the least to most recent) within each section of the annotated bibliography.

In keeping with ALIGN's focus on adolescents and young people, the literature search for this bibliography sought to identify materials that focused particularly on this age group. However, apart from materials discussing the potential of social protection to support adolescents' education, prevent child marriage, and support positive sexual and reproductive health, very few of the studies outlined here have an explicit focus on adolescents or young people. There is a notable absence of materials discussing programmes focusing on disadvantaged young men or transforming masculinities, probably reflecting the overall lack of social protection components in such initiatives.

While we sought to include materials related to all areas of social protection, there is a very strong focus on cash transfers, which reflects the dominance of cash transfers in the social protection literature. Some of the studies examined also discuss gender-related aspects of employment guarantee programmes, but none, for example, discussed the role of broader social security systems in transforming gender norms.

Overall, these studies point to emerging awareness of the potential of social protection to challenge discriminatory gender norms and the importance of gender-sensitive design to avoid reinforcing such norms. The literature is rather thin, however, and would be strengthened by more in-depth studies of the impact of social protection on gender norms.

---

1 A few significant studies not available via open access are also included

# Overview reports on gender and social protection

## Summary

- The design of social policy and programming is informed by complex, gendered social norms around family, care and social reproduction.
- Likewise, the ability to control and use the resources made available by social protection varies for men and women, shaped by gender-specific opportunities and constraints.
- Social protection programmes can increase women's bargaining power by providing more resources to the household and to women recipients in particular. However, their impact on women's broader, long-term empowerment is less clear.
- Programme design is rarely gender-sensitive – that is, it does not anticipate the impact of prevailing gender norms.
- For social protection to bring about transformational change in gender relations – as well as to help individuals and households move out of poverty in the longer term – it must take into account gendered power dynamics and inequalities within households and communities.
- Relatively simple design changes can promote gender equality and improve the effectiveness of social protection by reducing poverty and vulnerability for all.

## 1. Rebecca Holmes and Nicola Jones (2013) *Gender and social protection in the developing world: beyond mothers and safety nets*. London & New York: Zed Books.

Available at: <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/reports/ssn-gender-ie-full-report.pdf>

The central contention of this book is that if clear gender analysis informed social protection instruments, this would support individuals' and households' movement out of poverty in the longer-term, while simultaneously encouraging the attainment of broader development goals. Core to this argument is the premise that for social protection to constitute more than a safety net approach – that is, for it to achieve its transformational objectives – it must be gender-sensitive. For this to happen, social protection must support women's and girls' empowerment in the household, the economy, and community decision-making.

Holmes and Jones identify six cross-cutting themes that are important in promoting a more gender-sensitive approach to social protection:

- The relative influence of gendered economic and social risk analysis in informing social protection policy and programme design
- Implementation capacities of actors delivering programmes, including issues related to fiscal space
- Opportunities and challenges for institutional coordination and linkages
- The quality of the community-programme interface (i.e. regular interactions between community participants and implementing agencies' officers)
- Gendered political economy dynamics
- Monitoring and evaluation, knowledge exchange and lesson learning

The book is organised in two parts. The first sets the context for understanding the importance of



promoting a gender lens in social protection; the second discusses the evidence on the design, implementation and effects of social protection on gender equity and its role in promoting women's empowerment. Holmes and Jones consider the gender-sensitivity of the design and implementation of the following types of social protection: cash transfers, asset transfers, public works programmes and subsidies.

Chapter 7 – entitled 'Why politics matters: a gendered political economy approach to social protection' – has a particular focus on gender norms. The chapter employs a framework that focuses on 'three Is' – institutions, interests and ideas – to analyse why mainstream development actors have largely overlooked the role of gender in shaping social protection programmes. 'Ideas' refers to the ways in which the design of social policy and programming is informed by complex sociocultural norms surrounding understandings of family, care and

social reproduction. This includes consideration of ideas held by elites and the public about poverty and its causes, the social contract between state and citizens, and the merits of particular forms of state support.

Holmes and Jones conclude that relatively simple design changes and an investment in strategic implementation and evaluation practices will promote gender equality and girls' and women's empowerment, which will, by extension, improve the effectiveness of social protection by reducing poverty and vulnerability and enhancing resilience for all. They provide examples of good practice in policy and programme design, including: financial incentives such as conditional cash transfers (CCTs) or subsidies to promote girls' education (e.g. Secondary Education Development Programme subsidy, Tanzania); and childcare subsidies to promote women's participation in the labour force (e.g. Estancias subsidised crèche scheme, Mexico).

---

## **2. World Bank (2014) *Social safety nets and gender: learning from impact evaluations and World Bank projects*. Washington DC: World Bank.**

Available at: <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/sites/default/files/Data/reports/ssn-gender-ie-full-report.pdf>

This systematic review analyses the available empirical evidence from impact evaluations on the effect of social safety nets (SSNs) on gender-related outcomes, such as increased women's bargaining power and decision-making, improved educational attainment for girls, and better maternal health. The review also analyses the integration of gender issues across the World Bank's portfolio of SSN interventions. The review uses the language of gender norms, although this is mainly limited to discussion of the effects of SSNs on household power dynamics.

The review finds that the body of the impact evaluation literature shows consistent patterns in the mechanisms that underlie the varied responses of males and females to SSNs. In short, the ability to control and use the resources made available by SSN interventions

varies for men and women, and the costs and benefits of subsequent behavioural responses are driven by gender-specific opportunities and constraints, which are influenced by social norms, practices, and regulations. For example, the opportunity cost of children's time and their expected earnings as adults – both of which vary by gender – affect parental investments in their children's education. Likewise, the relative costs and benefits to men and women of taking up employment or programme responsibilities will affect their propensity to do so, and the ability of the transfer recipient to control the transfer and make consumption, investment, and production decisions determines the efficacy of this intervention.

The evidence also shows that SSN interventions can increase women's bargaining power by providing more resources to the household and to women in particular.

However, while SSNs can potentially strengthen women's decision-making, their impact on women's broader, long-term empowerment is less clear: 'If empowerment is a process and not just an outcome, it requires time for social norms and perceptions to change' (p. xiii).

With regard to gender mainstreaming across the World Bank SSN portfolio, the review concludes that projects would benefit from anticipating the impact of gender differences into their design, but they rarely

do. Most project documents include limited discussion of intra-household dynamics and the gender-relevant context of the intervention in question. Women are generally targeted as a vulnerable group or in an instrumental way, without discussing the costs that the intervention may impose on them. Gender is also often missing from monitoring and evaluation frameworks, except track numbers of female beneficiaries.

---

### 3. **Michael MacLennan and Raquel Tebaldi (2017) Social protection: towards gender equality, *Policy in Focus*, 14(1). Brasilia: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), UNDP.**

Available at: [http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/eng/PIF38\\_Social\\_protection\\_towards\\_gender\\_equality.pdf](http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/eng/PIF38_Social_protection_towards_gender_equality.pdf)

This special edition of *Policy in Focus*, released for International Women's Day 2017, covers key topics related to gender equality and social protection. It features a wide range of contributions from women policy practitioners and scholars and presents case studies from Brazil and various African countries. Its starting point is that 'measures that take into account the power dynamics and inequalities within households and communities are needed for social protection programmes to properly address gender inequality in a transformative way' (p. 6).

The introduction, by Cristina Santos, offers a feminist critique of social protection that explicitly addresses the impact of social protection programming on gender norms. Santos claims that social protection policies aimed at improving the lives of women and children have relied on CCT programmes targeting the poorest households and often making the woman in the household the recipient of the funds. These programmes rely on the premise that household outcomes in general, as well as the bargaining power of women, are improved when women's share of income and resources is increased. However, the effectiveness of these programmes is undermined by limited analysis of the whole impact of these programmes on women's lives and wellbeing (as well as those of their families).

To the question of whether women are being empowered by social protection interventions, the author argues that 'a challenging answer would be: yes, but perhaps only by chance. There are several aspects of these programmes, and of social norms and power structures, which undermine their effectiveness, and also potentially undermine the opportunities of women' (p. 9). First, most CCTs were designed to alleviate poverty and did not have combating gender inequalities as a priority. In fact, by prioritising material wellbeing and work or employment, and excluding other dimensions, such as gender relations, from programme design and evaluation, women's social relations, bodily wellbeing or security could be compromised in some cases. Second, by not analysing the extent of women's empowerment and political participation in the communities where CCT programmes are implemented, women can in fact be excluded from the target group by design, or they may fail to be given a fair chance to benefit from the programme even when eligible. Finally, programme evaluations often exclude drop-outs, which means that unintended consequences are not captured – for instance, a household may drop out because the woman was not able to use a cash transfer that was instead appropriated by her husband.

Although the edition focuses on social protection and gender equality, most of the articles featured do not deal explicitly with the relationship between social protection and norm change. Those which deal most directly with this relationship are:

- Myamba's article, 'Assessing the impact of cash transfer programmes on women's empowerment in Tanzania', which offers a gender analysis of the Tanzanian Social Action Fund, the government cash transfer (CT) programme for people living in extreme poverty. Although the programme is not primarily designed as a gender-based programme, Myamba argues that the lack of consideration of gendered power inequalities is a major oversight in the CT's design. Qualitative research indicates that women in Tanzania are particularly disempowered in the following areas: time allocation; access to, decision-making power over, and ownership of productive resources; and leadership in terms of group membership and public speaking in the community. For example, the majority of female CT beneficiaries feel there is not equal opportunity for women in decision-making processes over access to and ownership of productive resources. Women respondents stated that decisions about production were made jointly with their spouses only regarding what to produce, but not regarding the end-use or application of the produce. The majority of the women also stated that they did not have full decision-making autonomy over resource acquisition, sales, transfers of assets, credit and investments, with land ownership a particular concern, as land is generally perceived as belonging to the men of the community. While decisions on how to spend household income were generally made jointly with their spouses, in practice, men usually had the final word. Finally, the caregiving role of women in the household was also an impediment to having enough available time to engage in capacity-strengthening activities that could enable them to acquire productive capital and so to make use of the CT to strengthen livelihoods. Despite showing how these power differences are driven by prevailing gender norms, the article does not suggest specific ways in which consideration of gender norms and dynamics should be incorporated into CT design.
- Tebaldi's article, 'Gender-sensitive social protection systems in Brazil and Africa: opportunities for South-South cooperation', which focuses on Programa Bolsa Família (PBF), Brazil's flagship cash transfer programme. While the transfer has had positive outcomes for women in terms of health indicators (such as access to prenatal care and women's reproductive rights) and some empowerment indicators (such as increased autonomy in domestic decision-making), evidence suggests that the PBF is not able to overcome traditional gender norms that place the bulk of the domestic care burden on women. The article does not comment on how the design of the programme affects its outcomes, or whether programme activities include communications or other norm change activities.



# How far does social protection take a gender norms approach into account?

## Summary

- Women and men may experience the same risk differently or face entirely different risks and vulnerabilities – some specific to their gender and others exacerbated by gender inequality.
- However, social protection programmes currently present different levels of gender awareness and sensitivity in their design. For example, very few programmes take into account the time constraints imposed by women's domestic care burden.
- Insufficiently gender-sensitive programmes may exacerbate or contribute to inequalities, including by reinforcing traditional gendered dynamics around caring roles and responsibilities.
- Several papers in this section (Luttrell and Moser 2004; Thakur, Arnold and Johnson 2009; and Tebaldi 2016) indicate ways in which different types of social protection can be designed to facilitate women and girls' participation, address gender-related risks and vulnerabilities, and help to transform discriminatory gender norms.

## 4. Cecilia Luttrell and Caroline Moser (2004) *Gender and social protection*. Draft working paper. London: ODI.

Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/1686.pdf>

Luttrell and Moser's paper informs policymakers on how gender issues should be taken into account in the development of social protection policies, strategies and programmes. They develop a gendered 'social risk management framework' and suggest that since vulnerabilities to risk and impacts of shocks vary significantly by gender, it is useful to think of men/boys and women/girls as different constituents in any analysis so as to tailor social protection accordingly. Building on an earlier conceptual framework developed by Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) and used by Sabates-Wheeler and Kabeer (2003), they distinguish between 'gender-specific', 'gender-imposed' and 'gender-intensified' risks and constraints to show how men and women may experience the same risk differently or be exposed to entirely different risks:

- *Gender-specific risks and constraints* – These are societal norms and practices that apply to males and females by virtue of their gender and are seen to include: i) health risks, such as higher infant mortality and maternal mortality and morbidity; ii) life cycle risks, such as childbearing, divorce and widowhood; iii) household economic risks, such as the need for increased expenditure for social obligations like marriage and funerals; and iv) social risks, which include social exclusion, domestic violence and crime.
- *Gender-imposed risks and constraints* – These are forms of gender disadvantage that reflect discrimination in the wider public domain. They reflect the bias of those who allocate resources outside the household, in the wider community. These include informal cultural norms and beliefs (for example, employers who recruit in stereotypical gender roles) as well as

formal institutional structures (trade unions that define membership in such a way as to exclude women, labour legislation that promotes the interest of formal sector workers and employers, and banks that refuse to lend to women due to a perception of poor bankability).

- *Gender-intensified risks and constraints* – These are inequalities in opportunities and resources that result from non-gender factors of class, poverty, ethnicity, geographical location or uneven distribution of resources in the household, which are then further exacerbated by gender. These factors themselves may reflect community or customary norms, such as inheritance or access to common property resources and ascribed forms of discrimination (Sabates-Wheeler and Kabeer, 2003). Women and girls may therefore be more sensitive to income shocks, price shocks and shocks to labour demand.

Luttrell and Moser also suggest that the role of women as social protection providers within the household (for example in caring for chronically ill relatives and orphans) should figure in social protection programmes aimed at strengthening informal household and

community-level mechanisms. They note, importantly, that gender inequality is cross-cut by inequality between households and groups in society (including inequality based on race, class and ethnicity) as well as by other forms of intra-household inequalities (based on age, marital status and physical ability) and note the importance of rights-based approaches in reinforcing the normative case for minimum standards and non-discrimination and strengthening mechanisms to encourage actors to claim such rights.

---

## 5. Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Catherine Arnold and Tina Johnson (2009) ‘Gender and social protection’ in *Promoting pro-poor growth: social protection*. Paris: OECD. pp 167-182.

Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/development/povertyreduction/43280899.pdf>

Thakur et al. argue that women and men face different risks and vulnerabilities, some specific to their gender and others exacerbated by gender inequality. They echo calls for the design of social protection programmes to address such gender-related constraints, including, but not limited to, barriers to women’s economic empowerment. They also note that the gender of the benefit recipient matters, and that social transfers in the hands of women can help to improve children’s health, nutritional status and school attendance. They can also be an effective way of reducing hunger and intergenerational poverty. The authors note that until recently, the focus on the formal sector in social security provisions has left out women in particular and echo Luttrell and Moser in observing that social protection programmes are rarely gender neutral and – if poorly designed – can either exacerbate

or contribute to inequalities. Following on from Kabeer (2008) they offer a fuller overview of the types of social protection instruments that can address specific gender-related risks and vulnerabilities and the potential gender-related impacts, as shown in the table below. The authors are not explicit about the role of these instruments in tackling discriminatory gender norms but give pointers to the ways in which they may contribute to norm change (such as parental views on the value of girls’ education and perceptions of women’s involvement in public life).

Table 1: Social protection instruments addressing gender-related risks and impacts

Type of instrument / policy response	Gender-related risk	Objectives	Gender-related impact analysis
Conditional and unconditional cash transfers for mothers and children (mainly targeted at mothers / primary carers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insufficient and/or unequal allocation of resources and opportunities between boy and girl children</li> <li>• Child labour, especially boys</li> <li>• Female foeticide and child marriage</li> <li>• Insufficient nutrition and pre- and post-natal care, and risks for working mothers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote investments in children's health, nutrition and education</li> <li>• Reduced maternal and infant mortality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves survival, nutrition, health and education of girl children</li> <li>• Promotes and expands women's livelihood options</li> <li>• Increases women's bargaining power in household and community</li> <li>• Can bring excluded women into the circle of citizenship</li> <li>• Improves nutrition and health of newborn and mother</li> </ul>
Childcare support for working mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children may be left alone in the house or with an unreliable carer when mothers go out to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce reliance on poor care arrangements and likelihood of adverse effects for children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improves access to education for girl children</li> <li>• Expands women's employment opportunities</li> <li>• Increases women's participation in public life</li> </ul>
School feeding programmes /after-school training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children may not attend school due to domestic chores / home-based work (mainly girls) and child labour (mainly boys)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote investments in children's health, nutrition and education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better nutrition and uninterrupted education promotes employability and productivity of next generation of workers</li> </ul>
Secondary school scholarships or additional stipends for girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Double burden of work / school leads to low productivity, fewer opportunities in adulthood, more likelihood of entering high-risk employment (e.g. hazardous industries, prostitution)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School retention for girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can delay marriage of daughters aged 11-19</li> <li>• Positive impacts for future health and wellbeing</li> <li>• Overcomes parental indifference / reluctance over girls' education</li> </ul>
Employment-generating public works programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender-related inequalities in access to employment</li> <li>• Loss of employment / employment insecurity because of pregnancy of time taken out for childcare</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cope with threats to income and consumption flows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can help break inertia of ongoing unemployment</li> <li>• Creates infrastructure that may enable women's mobility or reduce workloads</li> </ul>
Social pensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Costs of retiring or withdrawing from work in the absence of any work-related provision for retirement</li> <li>• Widow's loss of assets to late husband's family, dependence on good will of children / family members</li> <li>• Heavy childcare responsibilities where HIV/AIDS lead to high numbers of absent middle-age adults and vulnerable children</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet basic needs of elderly and destitute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can give elderly men and women some bargaining power</li> <li>• Can act as recognition of women's unpaid work</li> <li>• Improves security, dignity, self-worth and status, particularly for elderly widows</li> </ul>
Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discrimination (e.g. inheritance, land ownership)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women's empowerment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives women tools for advancing their status and empowerment</li> </ul>

## 6. Raquel Tebaldi (2016) *Gender and social protection in sub-Saharan Africa: a general assessment of programme design*. International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth, Policy Research Brief 58.

Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/development/povertyreduction/43280899.pdf>

This policy research brief presents empirical evidence on the gender inclusivity of social protection programme design in sub-Saharan Africa, building on a previous mapping of social protection interventions covering 18 low-income countries of the region. The brief does not explicitly use language around norms, but does assess the extent to which different types of social protection programmes are designed to facilitate women and girls' participation and wellbeing by taking into account their roles and responsibilities, which are themselves informed by gendered roles and divisions of labour within households and communities.

Tebaldi frames her analysis with reference to the well-known distinction (originally drawn by Molyneux in the 1980s) between needs arising from women's practical experiences – which are defined by unfair systems of labour division based on gender – and strategic gender needs – which arise from women's structurally subordinate position in relation to men. Social protection interventions may seek to address women's practical needs without really addressing their gender-specific strategic needs.

The key findings of Tebaldi's analysis are:

- *School feeding programmes* – A recent study looking into the influence of school feeding programmes on primary school enrolment found that school feeding programmes in general resulted in an increase in children's enrolment of about 10%, but this impact varied by programme modality and beneficiary gender. On-site provision of food was associated with stronger effects for the first year of treatment in the elementary years of schooling, and the combination of school feeding plus take-home rations proved effective beyond the first year, especially for the girls receiving this extra benefit. In a mapping of 16 school feeding programmes across 15 African countries, at least half complemented on-site meals with take-home rations for girls to promote their equal participation.
- *Cash transfers* – In Africa, CT programmes are often focused on reaching children, with adult women frequently included among the beneficiaries, usually in their capacity as heads of households and/or as

mothers/caregivers. CTs that specifically mention orphans and vulnerable children as target groups or in eligibility criteria have been found to be delivered mostly to women in female-headed households and to result in increased access to and control over resources in the hands of these women (though this happens in a context where they already have power over the household's spending choices). However, the transfers also reinforce traditional gender norms that assign care responsibilities first and foremost to women.

- *Public work programmes* – Most of the 13 profiled public works programmes implemented in low income countries in sub-Saharan Africa also incorporate some level of gender awareness in their design. Twelve of them establish explicit quotas or targets for women's participation. After identifying a low level of women's participation, Guinea's labour-intensive public works programme set out to conduct awareness-raising campaigns and included 'soft' public works activities (which traditionally attract more women), while Liberia set out to encourage women's participation in non-traditional productive roles. Seven programmes in sub-Saharan Africa determined that childcare could be provided by on-site facilities or beneficiaries to encourage women's participation. More flexible working hours are also a common gender-sensitive provision in public works programmes. However, evaluations of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) suggest that, in spite of gender-sensitive adaptations, normative constraints continued to restrict benefits for women participants. Women who were heads of households reported difficulties in reconciling their participation in the programme with domestic demands, while women from male-headed households reported lacking control over the transfers received by their households in exchange for their participation.

Tebaldi concludes that while social protection programmes have 'great potential for narrowing the gender gap in income and for redressing women's disadvantaged socio-economic situation... [they currently] present different levels of gender awareness

and sensitivity in their design' (p. 3). Further, while 'design features may seek to address the practical and short-term needs of women, their strategic needs cannot be fully met without a wider set of policies that address the multidimensional inequalities that they experience' (p. 3). Indeed, certain design features, such

as targeting women as transfer recipients, may even reinforce traditional gender-based inequalities when solely concerned with their role as mothers and wives and not accompanied by other measures seeking to promote women's empowerment, such as links to training and services that support their access to the labour market.

---

**7. Emma Samman, Elizabeth Presler-Marshall, Nicola Jones, with Tanvi Bhatkal, Claire Melamed, Maria Stavropoulou and John Wallace (2016) *Women's work: mothers, children and the global childcare crisis*. London: ODI.**

Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/development/povertyreduction/43280899.pdf>

This study reviews the evidence on what we know about who is caring for children around the world and the surrounding policy environment. Chapter five addresses social protection and early childhood care and education – and, specifically, the extent to which social protection mitigates (or not) the negative impacts of caring on women. The chapter does not explicitly use language around norms, but does assess the extent to which social protection – as a policy area with high potential to redistribute and reduce onerous care work and to promote the representation of carers in policymaking – takes into account women's caring responsibilities, which are themselves informed by norms concerning gender roles and divisions of labour.

Samman et al. find that social protection policies have the potential to mitigate the potential negative impacts of caring on women, particularly those who lack access to labour market protection and are otherwise vulnerable. However, despite the fact that a growing number of programmes have begun to recognise women's care burden, very few offer solutions for the care-related time constraints that women face.

With regard to specific types of social protection instruments, cash transfers can help families care for their children – and, in a few cases, even explicitly address their care-related needs. However, because programmes are primarily designed to reduce poverty and develop human capital, they are often conditional on women's caregiver status and so can reinforce their

caring roles – even as they reduce women's time inputs by keeping children healthier and encouraging school attendance. Acknowledging these concerns, many newer cash transfer programmes are unconditional. Public works programmes often lead to care conundrums too. With very few exceptions, programmes have not sought to redistribute the costs of social reproduction, thereby reinforcing the existing gender-based division of labour. Evidence from Ethiopia and India suggests that even with careful attention to care in the design phase, poor implementation of public works programmes (PWP) can exacerbate women's time constraints. Where flexible working hours and crèches are available on paper only, women forgo rest and older daughters can end up providing care for their younger siblings.

The chapter provides empirical examples of cash transfers and public works programmes that do recognise and take into account women's caring responsibilities:

- India's Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), the world's largest PWP, is the only Asian social protection programme operating at scale that directly acknowledges that children require care and that women tend to provide it. Regulations permit flexible working hours for women and provide them with work close to their homes so that they can better combine paid work and care responsibilities. They also state that any worksite with more than five children under the age of six must provide childcare, with

a woman worker childcare, with a woman worker assigned to that duty and paid as if she is providing manual labour. However, evidence suggests that the programme is deepening constraints on women's time, may be increasing intra-household tensions.

- Ethiopia's PSNP, the world's second largest PWP, also supports women's care explicitly. It allows pregnant and lactating women to receive direct support, rather than having to engage in manual labour, permits mothers to alter their hours, and builds community assets such as labour-saving water taps. Further, it enables women 'to participate in nutritional classes or other activities that are thought to be particularly beneficial to them and their children' (p. 56) and count the assigned to that duty and paid as if she is providing manual labour. However, evidence suggests that the programme is deepening constraints on women's time, may be increasing intra-household tensions.
- Ethiopia's PSNP, the world's second largest PWP, also supports women's care explicitly. It allows pregnant and lactating women to receive direct support, rather than having to engage in manual labour, permits mothers to alter their hours, and builds community assets such as labour-saving water taps. Further, it enables women 'to participate in nutritional classes or other activities that are thought to be particularly beneficial to them and their children' (p. 56) and count the time as work. However, women, especially those heading their own households, have struggled to balance the many demands on their time. Research has also found that, in practice, flexible working hours for women are not always offered, and few sites have the required childcare facilities.
- South Africa's Child Support Grant (CSG) has had a wide array of care-related benefits. Children are, for example, better fed, healthier, more likely to go to school, less likely to work outside the home and

less likely to engage in risky sexual activities. South Africa also provides a Foster Child Grant, available to foster parents who have had a child placed in their custody by the courts, which was originally aimed at children removed from their families because of abuse, but now mostly supports the caregivers of children orphaned by HIV/AIDS. This reflects a deliberate government policy to encourage grandmothers to care for their grandchildren.

It is important to note that each of the programmes described above actually reinforce gendered dynamics around caring roles and responsibilities rather than seeking to transform them. However, certain programmes do seek to bring about a shift in gender norms related to caregiving:

- Because cash transfers have almost universally focused on mothers, most have totally ignored the important role of fathers in children's lives. In the Philippines, the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Programme (known as 4Ps) has sought to close this gap by using gender-neutral language aimed at increasing fathers' participation (i.e. referring to 'parents' rather than 'mothers'). To track progress, the programme established a new indicator that calls for a minimum 40% involvement of fathers.
- Similarly, in Brazil, the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) found that participation in Bolsa Família is linked to increased gender-based violence growing out of a decline in men's responsibility. A new companion programme is tackling gendered decision-making and intra-household power relations directly through group education classes which tackle gender norms that reinforce women's primary responsibility for children and to encourage fathers to see that they are also critical to their children's development.



8. **Carol Watson (2016) *Options for a “cash plus” intervention to enhance adolescent well-being in Tanzania: an introduction and review of the evidence from different programme models in eastern and southern Africa*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti.**

Available at: [https://www.unicef-irc.org/files/documents/d-3885-Social\\_Protection\\_Plus\\_Workshop\\_Background\\_Paper.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/files/documents/d-3885-Social_Protection_Plus_Workshop_Background_Paper.pdf)

In the context of increasing interest in linking cash transfers to complementary inputs that can strengthen and expand positive outcomes for adolescents and young people, this paper seeks to inform the government of Tanzania’s design of a ‘cash plus’ model linked to the country’s Productive Social Safety Net (PSSN) programme.

The study provides an overview of relevant initiatives implemented in eastern and southern Africa and evidence of their impact on positive outcomes for adolescents. The aim is to provide government officials and partners with options for the ‘plus’ component of a ‘cash plus’ intervention that can help facilitate safe transitions to adulthood, including reducing the risk of HIV infection and violence against children and adolescents. The paper explicitly examines the relationship between different models of ‘cash plus’ programming and social norm change, although the primary focus of the paper is on outcomes for adolescents in general, rather than adolescent girls specifically.

Watson classifies existing adolescent programme initiatives into three types or models and, drawing together a range of interventions, reviews the evidence on outcomes related to adolescent wellbeing for each in turn:

- Adolescent empowerment programmes target adolescents as individuals and in groups, offering a varying mixture of life skills, including sexual and reproductive health information, gender equality awareness, and economic literacy or microfinance, with the overall aim of enhancing their accumulation of different forms of ‘capital’. Watson observes that many such programmes use either explicitly or implicitly an asset’s creation and capital development framework, positing that multiple forms of assets and capital are critical for adolescent empowerment. Most programmes start from a general ‘life skills’ approach, including reproductive health training and add in a focused economic component – either through training, financial literacy or micro-savings/ credit facilitation. Many include additional gender

empowerment elements in these life skills activities or specifically target girls. In practice, the focus is on strengthening individual attitudes, capabilities and behaviours rather than on influencing wider social norms or structures. Nevertheless, programmes report a variety of positive outcomes relating to reductions in experience of violence and of other ‘risky behaviours’ as well as to broader-based ‘empowerment’.

- Parenting programmes target families through the adolescent and caregiver, providing workshops for information transmission and discussions around key themes, with the objective of enhancing parental skills and attitudes, and strengthening parent-child communication. A general set of principles has been established to guide programming around parenting initiatives, as well as key points for consideration about how to adapt existing programmes from developed contexts to low resource settings. Emerging evidence from initiatives in low- and middle-income countries suggests there may be beneficial impacts on a range of primary and secondary adolescent and caregiver outcomes.
- Community mobilisation programmes target the wider community and a broad swathe of stakeholders, including adults, young people, local leaders, decision-makers etc., with multiple forms of communication and spaces for dialogue. These programmes aim to tackle social norms that are detrimental to adolescent development and safe transitions to adulthood. A social ecological model provides a conceptual basis for programme interventions that treat social norms as ‘structural’ factors. Programmes operating at this level go beyond the focus on the individual and extend to the broader enabling environment in an effort to effect societal change through community sensitisation and mobilisation. Evidence from such programmes indicates promising results, particularly in terms of improvement in attitudes and experiences of gender-based violence and other ‘risky behaviours’. However, Watson notes that much

of the evidence comes from small pilot studies or from studies that lack a comparison group, and that evaluations of the impacts of broad-based community mobilisation efforts are complex. More research is therefore needed, including on long-term impacts. The paper concludes by presenting key issues for consideration for the feasibility and appropriateness

of the different programming models as the ‘plus’ component for the PSSN in Tanzania, with a focus on: the type and nature of risks faced by adolescents and young people; envisaged programme outcomes; national policy around youth and adolescents, child rights and gender; and characteristics of the PSSN.

---

## 9. Maxine Molyneux and Marilyn Thomson (n.d.) *CCT Programmes and Women’s Empowerment in Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador*. London: CARE Policy Paper.

The starting point of Molyneux and Thomson’s paper is that, as traditionally child-centred programmes, evaluations of CCTs have naturally focused on their impact on children, with the result that we know little about their impact on women’s lives or about their relationship with their husbands, their children, and with the authorities who manage the programme. The authors review three Latin American programmes: the Juntos Programme in Peru; Bono de Desarrollo Humano in Ecuador; and Bono Juana Azurduy in Bolivia. Through qualitative and participatory research with women beneficiaries, and interviews with key informants, the study examines whether, and in what ways, CCTs might promote gender equity and women’s empowerment.

The study’s principal findings, relating to the impacts of CCTs on women’s empowerment, are as follows:

- There were a number of practical gains for women from these programmes, which they value in a context where they receive few concrete benefits from the state or other actors. As mothers, some benefited from the family planning services, others from health checks and talks on nutrition and child health issues. Receiving the transfers meant that they were less dependent on husbands for money to meet the basic costs of children’s daily needs. The women appreciated their increased mobility in public spaces, their participation in workshops, and increased decision-making powers in the home, which gave them greater self-confidence overall.

- Despite the existence in all three countries of government policies and mechanisms to mainstream gender equality, these have not been applied to CCTs, which lack explicit objectives or strategies to promote gender equality or women’s empowerment. Also, the government bodies responsible for managing the CCTs operate with insufficient connections to existing women’s equality mechanisms or units within the government that might lead to the adoption of measures to strengthen women’s rights and resilience to poverty.
- The design of the three programmes is focused on strengthening women’s maternal responsibilities. Fathers are marginal to programme activities, reflecting existing gender asymmetries and power relations. In emphasising motherhood and in giving little or no recognition to the fact that women also work in the fields and in the labour market, as well as having a role in the community, these programmes are missing an opportunity to advance government gender equality objectives.
- The design of these programmes contained few elements that aimed to advance equality and empowerment goals for women. If gender equality and women’s empowerment were to be mainstreamed into social protection programmes, certain elements would need to be incorporated that would enhance women’s skills and capabilities to give them increased access to the labour market, support with childcare, and knowledge of their rights.

- As a result, the degree to which receipt of the stipend can be said to empower women is limited. While the women appreciated the economic benefits that the transfer brought to their family, it also came with added responsibilities and time burden, as well as the additional costs that meeting the conditionalities and collecting the transfer can involve. Greater economic empowerment for women beneficiaries could be achieved with skills training, developing women's capacity to improve their income-generating opportunities, and supporting them to find jobs or set up micro-enterprises, but such complementary programmes are currently non-existent or very limited. Although in some cases women had access to micro credit and skills training, this element of the programmes should be strengthened through training in financial management, and through proactive linkages with other programmes (government and non-governmental) that can fill these gaps.
- All three programmes helped to enhance women's rights as citizens through the requirement that participants must have identity documents and children's birth certificates in order to qualify. Assisting the women to obtain these documents is an important part of promoting the social inclusion of marginalised groups. However, more could be done to build on this to support women's citizenship through raising awareness of their rights, and introducing mechanisms to ensure non-discrimination on the grounds of race, gender and age.
- However, in general, these programmes do not take sufficiently into account equitable notions of citizenship – for example, by promoting the participation of beneficiaries in programme management, by establishing accountability mechanisms and by providing information on gender rights through training programmes.

# Does social protection reinforce discriminatory gender norms?

## Summary

- The terms of women's participation in social protection programming have been strongly influenced by women's symbolic and social roles as mothers – with the result that these programmes have intensified traditional gendered roles and responsibilities.
- Conditional cash transfers have been criticised for targeting women instrumentally and fostering 'maternalism', by reinforcing women's caretaking roles and adding to their already significant time poverty through conditionalities.
- Employment guarantee programmes may likewise perpetuate gender inequalities: the gendered nature of work assignments and failures to address women's unpaid work burden may result in their exclusion; women are under-represented in semi-skilled categories of public works; and they often do not receive equitable wages and equal pay for comparable work.
- Both types of programme may unintentionally increase adolescent girls' domestic work burden and reduce their time for study, as they take on increased household caring responsibilities to free up the labour of adult women to engage in public works or fulfil the conditionalities that accompany CTs.

## 10. Maxine Molyneux (2007) *Change and continuity in social protection in Latin America: mothers at the service of the state?* Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

Available at: [http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=B-F80E0A84BE41896C12573240033C541&parentdoctype=paper&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpAuxPages\)/BF80E0A84BE41896C12573240033C541/\\$file/Molyneux-paper.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/httpNetITFramePDF?ReadForm&parentunid=B-F80E0A84BE41896C12573240033C541&parentdoctype=paper&netitpath=80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpAuxPages)/BF80E0A84BE41896C12573240033C541/$file/Molyneux-paper.pdf)

This, primarily empirical, paper has three main objectives. First, to describe the principal elements of approaches to social policy that emerged in the late 1990s/early 2000s in Latin America, in order to further understanding of the forms of social protection that are evolving in the global South. Second, to examine and contrast these models of poverty relief with their predecessors; and third, to ask what the implications of these policies and programmes are for those who have been among the most actively engaged in them, and who constitute a good proportion of their beneficiaries, namely, low-income women. The paper deals explicitly with the relationship between social protection, on the one hand, and gender norms, roles and relations on the other, arguing that:

*The terms of women's incorporation into welfare systems in Latin America have always been strongly influenced by women's symbolic and social roles as mothers'. Currently evolving anti-poverty programmes are still premised on a gendered construction of social need and indeed have the effect of re-traditionalising gendered roles and responsibilities. Thus, the state is actively involved, through these programmes, in the structuring of asymmetrical and unequal gender relations, and this, it is argued, has long-term consequences for the satisfaction of social need. (p. iii)*

The first part of Molyneux's paper is concerned with Latin American social policy provision, examining the ways in which women's access to social rights was historically conditioned by their status as wives and

mothers and their position within the labour market as low-paid, unorganised and informal workers. The second part examines two contrasting Latin American poverty relief programmes – Progresa/Oportunidades in Mexico and the Comedores Populares in Peru – to identify the different ways in which gender has been implicated in the design and management of poverty relief. These two cases represent earlier and current approaches to poverty relief: the Comedores Populares evolved from a grassroots food distribution programme to become an important safety net for the urban poor, while Progresa/Oportunidades is an example of the cash transfer antipoverty programmes in Latin America that were rapidly expanding at the time of writing.

Molyneux argues that while both programmes position women within communities as service providers or caregivers, they operate with different logics and appear to deliver different experiences to their participants. Normative gender relations, maternal identities and ideologies are essential to the functioning of both programmes. However, the design of newer ‘contractualised’ programmes actively regulates women’s socially ascribed maternal responsibilities as a means of combating the intergenerational transmission

of poverty. For example, Molyneux argues that Oportunidades creates dependency on a subsidy that confirms mothering as women’s primary social role as a way to secure programme goals. That is, responsibility for fulfilling programme conditionalities concerning children’s school attendance and health clinic use falls disproportionately on women, while, at the same time, the programme does little to reduce household vulnerability or improve women’s labour market access.

Molyneux concludes that if women are to be provided with an opportunity for redefining the terms of their societal inclusion, then unequally valued forms of social participation for men and women that pervade the organisation of care work, the public sphere, paid work and public institutional life need to be challenged rather than reinforced. Women’s neighbourhood organisations such as the Comedores or mothers’ clubs have considerable potential for transforming some of the negative features of antipoverty programmes, but risk being clientelised and co-opted into mechanisms requiring free labour for little in return and with scant thought for women’s medium- to long-term needs.

---

**11. Rania Antonopoulos (2013) *Expanding social protection in developing countries: a gender perspective*. Working Paper No. 757. Annandale-on-Hudson, NY: Levy Economics Institute.**

Available at: <https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/79496/1/738513377.pdf>

This paper explores the opportunities presented by social protection initiatives for promoting a gender-equality agenda and women’s empowerment. The paper is primarily conceptual and deals explicitly with the relationship between social protection and gender norms, offering a critical perspective on how social protection instruments can help or hinder the process of altering rigid, gendered social roles.

Antonopoulos advocates a social protection framework that redresses gender-specific risks, while also promoting women’s empowerment. Conceptually, this is grounded in the distinction drawn by Amartya Sen between ‘protection’ oriented social protection interventions and those that lead to ‘promotion’ (i.e. promote the ability of people to secure a livelihood), as well as Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler’s seminal (2004) paper on ‘transformative’ social protection,

which seeks to sever socially binding relations and constraints. Differences – between men and women and among women themselves – in age, gender roles and responsibilities, and employment status, for instance – produce distinct risks and vulnerabilities and hence require diverse interventions. What may constitute the ‘best’ type of intervention in addressing group income deficits depends largely on ideas about poverty and how it can be reduced, as well as on views, interpretations, and ideologies about women’s roles in households, communities, and in the world of work. Social protection policy must ‘see’ women as active economic agents – who possess an intrinsic ability to engage in income generating activities as producers and wage earners – and avoid the tendency of positioning women in passive recipient roles.

To this end, the paper, first, identifies gender-specific socioeconomic risks and corresponding social protection instruments based on country-level experiences and, second, explores if and how available social protection instruments enable the loosening up of rigid social roles.

The paper takes a lifecycle approach to identifying gendered vulnerabilities, recognising that unequal distribution of resources and power affect women’s rights, opportunities, and outcomes at all stages of their lives. Gender roles, inequalities, and deprivations that begin inscribing themselves in early childhood are solidified in adolescence. Prior to entering adulthood, children, but especially adolescent girls, experience detrimental allocations of their time between education and work (paid and unpaid), deficits in developing uncompromised physical, mental, and emotional capabilities, and at times violation of their physical integrity.

Social protection policy is critical for addressing both ‘life-cycle’ and ‘livelihood’ risks. The issue is how to arrive at a proper combination of instruments from a gender equality perspective. Antonopoulos focuses on two types of social protection programmes: CCTs and employment guarantee programmes (EGPs):

- CCTs such as Mexico’s Oportunidades, which provide a graduated scale of cash awards – with higher amounts

offered for older age children and for girls in particular – have produced excellent outcomes for girls’ enrolment in education. However, Antonopoulos argues that CCTs may, simultaneously and unintentionally, create a different intergenerational path of poverty transmission. To be eligible for Oportunidades, women’s time must be fully dedicated to their children’s upbringing. As girls grow up in a cultural framework where ‘motherhood’ status is recognised and rewarded with cash payments, adolescent girls who have benefitted from school-related CCTs may later opt for, and rely mainly on, CCTs as mothers, despite being better prepared for labour markets that remain highly gendered. Antonopoulos argues that next-generation CCT programmes should address these concerns by delinking transfers from their ‘motherhood’ focus and providing them as one component of a package of interventions that address different aspects of social exclusion and impoverishment, including a clear component promoting economic engagement options for mothers and their daughters graduating from the programme.

- Employment Guarantee Programmes – existing evidence suggests that SP initiatives that offer a low-wage job to those unable to find paid work can increase women’s income, expand their livelihood options as they are hired as workers, and strengthen their role as contributors to family income through earned wages. However, Antonopoulos argues that women face inequality patterns in EGPs that must be addressed in programme design: the gendered nature of work assignments (e.g. construction jobs) may exclude women from some jobs; women are underrepresented in semi-skilled categories of public works (e.g. as subcontractors and supervisors of projects); and they often do not receive equitable wages and equal pay for comparable work. Most critically, the challenge for EGPs is to ensure that unpaid work burdens of participating women are reduced. If EGP design ignores the differentiated social roles and responsibilities of men, women, and children in household production activities, they are certain to put pressure on children’s time or result in “triple” days for women in poverty.



**12. Laura Camfield (2013) 'Growing up in Ethiopia and Andhra Pradesh: the impact of social protection schemes on girls' roles and responsibilities', *European Journal of Development Research* 26(1): pp. 107-123.**

Available at: <http://www.gsdr.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Camfield-2014-EJDR-growing-up-in-E-and-AP....pdf>

The focus of this article is the effect of public works schemes and cash transfers on adolescent girls' roles and responsibilities. Increasing participation in social protection is intended to enhance the development of girls in participating households, but evidence on their school participation and workloads suggests that the reverse may be happening. Combining a review of other papers addressing the effects of social protection on children's work with analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, Camfield explores what happens to girls' roles and responsibilities when households participate in social protection schemes in rural Ethiopia and Andhra Pradesh, India. She argues that effects are complex and often context-specific; however, the assumption that 'beneficiaries' benefit from programming means that negative impacts are rarely acknowledged.

The article's conceptual framing engages directly with the normative frameworks that underpin girls' work. It uses Power's (2004) concept of 'social provisioning' to highlight the exclusion of girls' caring and unpaid labour from evaluations of the outcomes of social protection schemes. Camfield also draws on Donath's (2000) characterisation of the 'other economy' to emphasise that the behaviour of individuals is shaped not by economic rationality but norms and expectations – both their own and those imposed by external forces.

The article reviews two social protection schemes: the MGNREGS in rural India, which has been successful in both recruiting women and increasing agricultural wage rates for non-participating women, and the PSNP in Ethiopia.

Camfield finds that, at present, targeted social protection schemes 'may "work" somewhat perversely as...they risk "improving" the short-term lives of vulnerable families at the expense of girls' schooling and workloads, with negative implications' for girls'

medium- and long-term prospects. While girls' contributions are not valued or taken into account by development policymakers, it is in fact their care of younger and older household members that frees up the labour of adult women to engage in new economic opportunities, including public works programmes. Indeed, in many cases these schemes unintentionally increase girls' workloads and significantly reduce their time for study and leisure. Social protection schemes can also sharpen tensions between individual and collective (family) interests to the detriment of adolescent girls' school attendance, achievement and, in some cases, health – for example, where the costs of schooling for some siblings are covered, but not others, or where increases in workload are reported for non-beneficiary children in households receiving conditional cash transfers. Further, where CTs do not adequately protect against household shocks such as illness, this can leave girls acting as 'shock absorbers' for persistent crises.

Camfield concludes by emphasising the need for social protection policy to recognise, firstly, girls' role in 'social reproduction' (e.g., in responding to household shocks or when women are engaged in other activities) and, secondly, that girls are embedded in social relationships that shape their motivations and constrain their agency.

### 13. Sylvia Chant (2016) ‘Women, girls and world poverty: empowerment, equality or

**essentialism?’, *International Development Planning Review* 38(1): pp. 1-24.**

Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sylvia\\_Chant/publication/287376219\\_Women\\_girls\\_and\\_world\\_poverty\\_Empowerment\\_equality\\_or\\_essentialism/links/5750b6ff08aed9fa2bd455d5/Women-girls-and-world-poverty-Empowerment-equality-or-essentialism.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sylvia_Chant/publication/287376219_Women_girls_and_world_poverty_Empowerment_equality_or_essentialism/links/5750b6ff08aed9fa2bd455d5/Women-girls-and-world-poverty-Empowerment-equality-or-essentialism.pdf)

This, primarily conceptual, paper deals directly with the relationship between social protection and gender norms, asking whether ‘mounting reliance on women and girls to solve world poverty is an effective means to achieve greater female empowerment and gender equality’ (p. 1), or whether, instead, it ‘threatens to lock-down “essentialising” stereotypes which are unlikely to dismantle gender disparities within and beyond the home’ (p. 1).

Chant argues that although the notion of a ‘feminisation of poverty’ has been widely popularised over the past 20 years (with some benefits in terms of drawing attention to gendered disadvantage), whether the kinds of policy initiatives that have emerged are good for women and girls is more contentious. She discusses three types of intervention which seek to help women lift themselves and their households out of poverty (including conditional cash transfer programmes), arguing that these have played a part in the resilience of traditional gendered norms.

Chant’s central social protection-related argument is that addressing (gendered) poverty through CCTs has intensified women’s unpaid work and reinforced restrictive norms around ‘maternal altruism’. This argument is advanced mainly with reference to existing studies on the ‘Prospera’ (formerly ‘Progres/

Oportunidades’) programme in Mexico. CCT schemes nominally aim to ‘empower’ women and to alleviate poverty by channelling money to families through women. However, in Mexico cash transfers are allocated to mothers in exchange for ‘co-responsibility’ in the form of ensuring their children’s attendance at school and at medical check-ups, but also undertaking a range of ‘voluntary’ community-level tasks – such as cleaning schools and health centres – which can take up to twenty-nine hours of women’s time a month (‘no mean feat in light of women’s other unpaid burdens’ (p. 6). Further, the CCT instrumentalises women as bearers of benefits to others – that is, ‘putting money in the hands of women signals social recognition of their conjectured...financial prudence as well as altruism towards other household members’ (p. 6). Chant argues that in placing pressure on women to intensify their unpaid maternal and community roles, while making little attempt to involve men in the process, Progres/ Oportunidades has endorsed and entrenched a markedly non-egalitarian model of the family. She concludes: ‘When gendered norms and relations continue largely unaddressed except in the form of being co-opted and exploited, then disparities are arguably prone not only to reproduction, but also to intensification’ (p. 16).

### 14. Leticia Bartholo (2016) *Bolsa Família and gender relations: national survey results. Brasilia: International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth.*

Available at: [http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/eng/PRB55EN\\_Bolsa\\_Familia\\_gender\\_relation.pdf](http://www.ipc-undp.org/pub/eng/PRB55EN_Bolsa_Familia_gender_relation.pdf)

This Policy Research Brief summarises the results of countrywide quantitative research on the impact of Brazil's Bolsa Família programme (PBF) on gender relations. It does not deal explicitly with normative change, but does seek to understand whether and how the cash transfer – of which women are usually the direct recipients – has contributed to changing gender roles and relations within households. Bartholo first contextualises the PBF within the feminist debate on CCT programmes, before going on to describe the characteristics of beneficiary women and discuss the results of surveys undertaken to assess the PBF's impact.

The brief reports that, in addition to increasing targeted women's access to prenatal care, the PBF has increased their decision-making autonomy over domestic issues. Nationwide household surveys indicate that the cash transfer expands the autonomy of the grant holders living in urban areas in decisions related to purchases of durable goods and children's medicines, children's school attendance, and use of contraceptives. The brief concedes that an increase in women's exclusive decision-making on matters relating to the home and children should not be straightforwardly interpreted as a gender equality gain (indeed, 'it may even denote more difficulty in sharing housework with male partners' (p. 4)). However, the programme's positive impact on the probability of beneficiary women deciding individually on the use of contraceptive methods

suggests that it can work as an instrument for realising women's reproductive rights, in contexts in which women are already willing to exercise their autonomy.

However, at the same time, while impact assessments and other analyses based on household survey data do not find significant changes in the participation of beneficiary women (or men) in the labour market, there are indications that a reduction in the number of hours dedicated to productive work among targeted women is offset by an increase in the number of hours devoted to domestic chores – which does not occur among male beneficiaries. This offsetting, Bartholo argues, could be interpreted as a negative effect of the PBF on equity in gender roles, as it reinforces women's responsibility for domestic work at the same time that it decreases their engagement in productive work (which might help increase female autonomy). Alternatively, the author contends, it could indicate an expansion of women's choices, if the work exchanged for domestic chores is precarious and/or exploitative.

The brief concludes that the PBF cannot evade criticism that it uses women instrumentally – that is, 'as mediators between the State and the family' (p. 4) – but that 'to interpret it as a merely maternalistic programme unconcerned with the choices of adult women seems reductionist... because the PBF can help women realise their reproductive rights and reduce their need to submit to very precarious labour relations' (p. 1).

# Can social protection contribute to a transformation in gender norms?

## Summary

- This section explores whether social protection programming can empower women by bringing about transformational change in gender roles and relations, focusing on the type of programming for which most evidence is available – CCTs in South America.
- The evidence suggests that CCTs have multiple positive impacts for women and girls. CCTs can reduce adolescent pregnancy by enabling girls to stay in school and have been shown to increase women's use of sexual and reproductive health services. There is also some evidence that CCTs increase urban women's labour force participation.
- However, impacts on women's broader empowerment are more contentious. Despite considerable speculation that programmes may have spillover effects on gender relations and norms by recognising women as the primary recipient of transfers, most studies have failed to find evidence of increases in women's intra-household decision-making power.
- Molyneux et al. provide three empirical examples of promising Latin American CT programmes that may help social protection play a more transformative role for women and girls – by supporting longer-term income-generation opportunities that allow them to enter the labour market and escape poverty.

## 15. Hania Sholkamy (2011) *How can social protection provide social justice for women?. Pathways Policy Paper. Brighton: Pathways of Women's Empowerment RPC.*

Available at: <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/bitstream/handle/123456789/5843/Conditional%20Cash%20Transfers%20Policy%20Paper.pdf?sequence=1>

This research brief – a product of the Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Programme Consortium – summarises lessons on the impact of cash transfer programming in Egypt and Brazil on women's empowerment, advocating for a feminist approach to social protection that redresses gender inequalities and 'enables women to assume the roles they choose and fulfil the obligations they value' (p. 1). The brief deals explicitly with the potential for social protection to bring about shifts in gender norms, although these shifts are mostly framed as changes in power relations between men and women.

The brief argues that women should be a priority for social protection and that feminist principles and

practice should inform social protection policies.

'Women are undermined and constricted by conditions and norms which make them poorer, less able to benefit from the rewards and protection of labour markets, more burdened by work that they are shouldering without pay or support and less visible to the state and its social policies' (p. 8). In addition, practices of managing needs, income and expenditures, as well as the distribution of power and resources at the household level, are always informed by hierarchies of gender.

The main research findings presented in the brief are:

- CCTs transfer power as well as money to women. The most empowering CCTs strengthen 'women's citizenship', equipping women with knowledge,

spaces and networks with which to claim their entitlements. Three main elements can help make CCTs a vehicle for increasing women's citizenship: incorporating participatory programme design by interviewing women on their burdens, challenges and aspirations; including conditions that enable women to make financial decisions at the household level; and 'protecting the money' by enabling women to access their transfers through a bank card.

- Conditions or co-responsibilities can enable women to make financial decisions that would otherwise require a male or older person authority and approval. In Egypt, co-responsibilities attached to cash transfers have empowered women by enabling them to make decisions at the household level in ways that they are not able to do in the absence of such terms. In cases where men have privileged rights to decision-making concerning household expenditure, childhood education and savings, the co-responsibilities enable women to 'guard' the money from transfers and ensure that it is spent on education, nutrition, health and home improvements. Further, while women reported

that they usually make daily decisions on household expenditures and that they tend to keep their own income from work, both of these norms are frustrated in times of crisis. In this context, 'The coresponsibilities provide succour to women when they disagree with spouses or older women on how money should be spent. They are better able to decide to support or ignore competing demands on their cash' (p. 10).

- Women cannot become more powerful through money alone, but, when combined, cash, support from social workers, a connection with the state, and co-responsibilities can address power disparities. A programme that works towards empowering poor women within their families over the long run should support women by recognising their own choices and obligations. At the same time, gender transformative social protection programmes need to nurture a relationship between women and require a progressive state that is equitable in its policies. This relationship must 'bypass old and new kin and community structures that entrench principles of bias against women and impose unfair burdens on them' (p. 11).

---

**16. Maxine Molyneux, Nicola Jones and Maria Stavropoulou (2016) 'Gender, urban poverty and social protection: lessons from Latin America', in Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (eds), *State of the urban poor report 2015: gender and urban poverty*, pp. 176-193. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.**

Available at: [https://www.academia.edu/33157220/Gender\\_and\\_Urban\\_Poverty](https://www.academia.edu/33157220/Gender_and_Urban_Poverty)

The focus of this book chapter is the contribution of social protection programming to reduce urban women's poverty. It begins by providing a brief, primarily conceptual, overview of the gendered experience of urban poverty in Latin America – making direct reference to inequalities stemming from entrenched social norms – before describing the evolution of social protection systems in the region and their strengths and weaknesses through a gender lens. Molyneux et al. argue that while the CCTs have focused on women, the extent to which they have empowered them has been more limited. The chapter concludes by providing empirical examples of promising

complementary programmes that may help social protection play a more transformative role for women.

Women's poverty and vulnerability in Latin America is inextricably bound up with discriminatory gender norms: 'The feminisation of poverty is driven by the increase in female-headed households, low female labour market participation rates, female segregation in sectors with lower earnings, lack of care choices, limited access to social protection, and entrenched gendered norms' (p. 177). Significant gender gaps persist in the urban labour market, with women concentrated in certain sectors such as factory work and the informal sector and tending to have low-productivity jobs and lower earnings. Due to their unpaid domestic and care responsibilities,

urban Latin American women are also more likely than their male counterparts to experience time poverty. Sexual violence is also common across Latin America, sometimes linked to perceived transgression of gender norms. Girls who are poor, indigenous, or slum-dwellers still face educational obstacles, including having to spend more time on household chores at the expense of their school attendance and achievement.

Although increased coverage of conditional cash transfers – widely claimed as a ‘women’s policy’ – has brought direct benefits to many poor urban Latin American women, CCTs have failed to address gendered vulnerabilities in their policy and programme design. The evidence suggests that CCTs have multiple positive impacts for women and girls. CCTs can reduce adolescent pregnancy by enabling girls to stay in school and spend more time there. In Brazil, Bolsa Família increased women’s utilisation of prenatal care and in Chile, Solidario improved their rates of screening for cervical cancer. There is some evidence that CCTs increase urban women’s labour force participation. Bolsa Família increased urban women’s paid employment, while Colombia’s Familias en Acción increased the labour force participation rate of urban women. However, discussions about CCTs’ impacts on measures of women’s broader empowerment are more contentious. There has been considerable speculation that programmes may have spillover effects on gender relations by recognising women as the primary recipient of transfers or ensuring access to their own income. However, most studies have failed to find measurable evidence of increases in women’s intra-household decision-making power as the result of transfers. Furthermore, CCTs have been criticised for fostering ‘maternalism’, by reinforcing women’s caretaking roles and adding to their already significant time poverty with conditionalities. At the same time, CCTs fail to adequately support income generation opportunities that would empower female beneficiaries to allow them to escape poverty.

Molyneux et al. provide three examples of Latin American cash transfer programmes that

are seeking to play a more transformative role in the lives of poor urban women and girls:

- *Ingreso Ético Familiar, Chile* – Compared to its predecessor (Solidario), the programme has significantly expanded transfer types and amounts, placing greater emphasis on beneficiary capacity to generate income for a sustained exit from poverty. A specific women’s employment transfer targets low earning working women with a transfer of an additional 20% of their wage for up to four years. On their third year of employment, their employer also receives a transfer equal to 10% of their wage which aims to further encourage women’s formal employment.
- *Estancias childcare programme, Mexico* – Created to facilitate and stabilise the entry of low-income mothers into the labour market, Estancias covers up to 90% of the cost of care for children between the ages of 1 and 4 using third-party providers and is now providing care to more children than the state-run childcare programme. Estancias has had a significant impact on low-income mothers’ employment and income: between baseline and evaluation the proportion of employed beneficiary mothers increased by 18%, and the average number of hours they worked each week increased by six.
- *Bolsa Família, Brazil* – Women face both normative and practical obstacles to citizen engagement. Bolsa Família’s system of social accountability has institutionalised vertical linkages to promote oversight and responsiveness. Municipal level people’s councils or Conselhos are responsible for regular monitoring and evaluation, audits, and for ensuring that good management practices, fiscal transparency mechanisms, and robust complaints procedures are in place. However, in practice, much still needs to be done to encourage women to engage in these processes, including communicating beneficiary rights and responsibilities beyond their caring roles, auditing gender issues and assisting with childcare.



**17. Michelle Adato, Oscar Morales Barahona and Terence Roopnaraine (2016) 'Programming for citizenship: the conditional cash transfer programme in El Salvador', *Journal of Development Studies*.**

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2015.1134780>

This paper reviews the experience of a CCT programme in El Salvador with 'programming for citizenship'. Specifically, Adato et al. evaluate how well CCTs can be used to achieve outcomes beyond the more concrete and proximate education and health indicators they primarily target, such as women's personal empowerment through new knowledge and social interaction.

El Salvador's programme, Red Solidaria, which began in 2005 (and was known as Comunidades Solidarias Rurales from 2009), set a uniquely ambitious agenda with respect to community participation, with an explicit objective to promote 'citizenship' through the CCT. The programme set out to achieve this aim through local representative structures, and non-formal education.

The evaluation finds that the programme's greatest transformative impact relates to women's personal empowerment and social engagement. As with some other CCT programmes in Latin America, this impact was attributed in large part to the monthly training provided, which offered women beneficiaries the opportunity to leave the domestic space, learn about the world, and gain confidence to speak in public. Women who were interviewed described having greater levels of confidence and self-

esteem, and having acquired the potential for better communication, particularly with other women.

The training sessions offered beneficiary women access to new knowledge, some of which – according to NGO representatives – they have gradually put into practice. Programme elements such as CTs under the control of women, together with the emphasis on education, health and nutrition, as well as the contents of training, become resources which parents (usually mothers) can draw upon in order to support their children. The knowledge they received from the training and the confidence they gained in speaking has made them more confident and assertive with their spouses, in turn increasing their self-esteem.

In addition to these elements of personal empowerment and empowerment in close relationships, women engaged in new forms of social participation within their communities. Some of this refers to women's greater degree of social interaction in the public sphere as a result of regular programme activities, at health services and schools. More strikingly, in several cases it was observed that women decided to play a more active role in community organisations, motivated by experience and skills acquired through the CCT programme.

# Evidence on social protection and gender norms by outcome area

## Summary

- **Child and adolescent wellbeing** – CTs can bring about shifts in family dynamics – including improved bargaining power of women within the household, resulting in improved outcomes for children – and greater involvement of some men in activities previously seen as exclusively female, such as childcare and helping children with their education. Nevertheless, as noted above, such programmes may foster paternalism and increase adolescent girls’ work burdens.
- **Education** – Social protection programmes which seek to change norms around girls’ education include tuition fee waivers or stipends, school feeding and other in-kind support. Such programmes can increase enrolment, reduce dropout and improve attainment for girls. They can also result in families and communities placing more value on educating girls and women, and in women being able to talk persuasively, work outside the home and interact in the public sphere. However, these gains are likely to be sustained only if programmes offer participants substantial improvements in human or social capital and if there are employment opportunities for educated young women.
- **Child marriage and sexual and reproductive health (SRH)** – Some school-based programmes (including CTs conditional on girls’ school attendance) aim to change norms and behaviours relating to child marriage and SRH. Removing financial incentives to marry off girls can decrease child marriage rates and increase age at marriage and first pregnancy. However, these outcomes may be unsustainable if not underpinned by normative change. There is some limited evidence that combining financial or in-kind incentives with empowerment and/or communications components can improve effectiveness and sustainability.
- **Intimate partner violence (IPV)** – Social transfers can decrease the likelihood that women experience controlling behaviours or violence from partners. The evidence on the mechanisms or causal pathways through which social protection decreases IPV is still nascent, but suggests that outcomes owe more to reduced household stress than to women’s increased bargaining power. Nevertheless, effects may be stronger among women who particularly lacked decision-making power before the intervention. CTs may not have a sustained impact on IPV beyond the implementation period, or may even result in backlash, unless they are accompanied by gender transformative elements, which seek to shift intra-household power relations and challenge norms around gender roles and women’s capabilities.
- **Livelihoods and economic empowerment** – Subsidised childcare services can enable women to work outside the home for the first time, or to access more stable and less precarious jobs. Employment guarantee programmes can also be instrumental in ensuring paid employment for women which, in turn, can have positive and significant effects on women’s control over household decisions. However, access to affordable childcare and/or a paid job does not automatically transform gendered attitudes to the division of productive and reproductive roles between men and women. Moreover, increases in women’s time spent on paid work may be offset by increases in girls’ domestic work burdens. Communications activities are needed if women’s increased participation in the workforce is to be supported by men’s more active involvement in domestic and care responsibilities.

## Child and adolescent wellbeing

- 18. Nicola Jones, Rosana Vargas and Eliana Villar (2007) 'Conditional cash transfers in Peru: tackling the multi-dimensionality of poverty and vulnerability', in Alberto Minujin et al. (eds), *Social protection initiatives for families, women and children: an analysis of recent experiences*. London: ODI.**

Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/1678.pdf>

This paper discusses the development and implementation of the first year of the Juntos cash transfer programme in Peru, based on documentary analysis and qualitative fieldwork in Ayacucho Department, the first region in which the pilot phase of the programme was implemented. The analysis pays particular attention to the impacts of this social protection mechanism on women and children, the strengths and weaknesses of a conditional approach, and changes in family and community dynamics. While the paper does not explicitly use language around 'norms', its focus on the impact of the CT on household dynamics deals directly with (changes to) the gendered distribution of domestic responsibilities and decision-making power.

The analysis is framed with reference to the 'explicitly gendered definition of vulnerability' (n.p.) adopted by the programme. Juntos follows Mexico's Progresar/Oportunidades' approach of directing cash transfers through mothers, 'not only because women are seen to be more in tune with and take primary responsibility for children's care but also in order to transform gender relations in the family' (n.p.). That is, there is both an attempt to improve women's negotiating position within the family by providing them with an independent financial resource as well as increasing fathers' sense of responsibility in the domestic sphere through a combination of the programme conditions and various awareness-raising initiatives.

The main analytical sections of the paper first present empirical evidence on changes in children's educational attendance and time use, health and nutrition seeking behaviour of mothers and children, and birth registration rates, before turning to a discussion of changes in family dynamics and livelihood opportunities resulting from participation in the programme.

Two findings are of particular relevance to the relationship between social protection and (changes in) gender norms. First, Juntos' specific focus on gender inequalities and women's vulnerability within the household was found to be bearing fruit. The programme has brought about shifts in family dynamics, including improved bargaining power of women within the household due to reduced economic dependence, as well as greater involvement of some men in activities previously seen as exclusively female – i.e. domestic work, childcare and helping children with their education – especially when women are occupied with the demands of the programme. However, the paper does note that further research is needed to understand the extent to which women's increased visibility and decision-making power is actually resulting in a greater work burden for women. In some cases, a reduction in domestic violence was also reported, related in part to reduced daily survival pressures and the greater negotiation capacity and economic autonomy of women, but also due to specific interventions in the region.

Second, while Juntos ostensibly promotes joint responsibility between citizens and the state (e.g. for accessing basic services for children), in practice, the relationship established through the agreement remains somewhat paternalistic. That is, while some respondents were using the language of rights – usually male interviewees with reference to the notion of reparation to compensate the poorest population for their unequal standard of living – this was far from widespread. Many of the women knew about the programme demands they had to meet, but described them in terms of tasks to be completed due to instructions from authorities rather than components in the equation of citizenship rights and responsibilities.

## 19. Paola Perezniето et al. (2014) *Effects of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme on children and adolescents: a mixed methods analysis*. London: ODI.

Available at: <http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/East%20and%20Central%20Africa%20CVTWG/ef-fects-of-the-palestinian.pdf>

This report presents findings from a mixed methods study of the effects of the Palestinian National Cash Transfer Programme (PNCTP) on children and their families, exploring impacts across the four key dimensions of children's rights recognised in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: survival, development, protection and participation. Perezniето et al. use the language of norms, including gender norms, explicitly and extensively throughout their analysis.

As part of its analytical framework, the report presents a feminist critique of conditionality in cash transfers. While there is a broad consensus that social transfers can and do increase women's intra-household bargaining power, resulting in improved outcomes for children, there is increasing disagreement around the effectiveness of conditionalities. On one hand, conditionalities can encourage behaviour change and begin to shift social norms (such as those that prevent girls enrolling for and completing secondary education). On the other hand, conditionality is accompanied by certain risks, such as fostering paternalism or potentially increasing the burden on mothers who usually have to fulfil the requirements.

The main body of the report considers the effect of the PNCTP on children and their households, with reference to children's rights to survival, development, protection and participation.

Findings related to gender norms are:

### Child development

- Dropping out of school – Boys were more likely to miss out on schooling because they were better able to work outside the household for pay as a consequence of social norms that allow boys but prevent girls from doing such work. Some girls also spoke about having to drop out of school either to care for siblings, an older member of the family, or a family member who was ill or disabled.
- Recreational activities – While the PNCTP has had some effect on children's capacity to enjoy recreational

activities, children continue to have very limited recreational time and opportunities, and limited resources with which to enjoy these. Boys and girls both expressed the view that girls faced a more difficult situation as regards their ability to enjoy recreational activities, given the limits to their mobility outside the home imposed by restrictive social norms.

### Child protection

- Work and exploitation – Work in and outside the household is a gendered phenomenon, with girls more likely to do domestic work for three or more hours a day than boys, across all age groups. Boys were more frequently involved in paid work outside the home, reflecting the fact that social norms allow them more mobility. Both the quantitative and qualitative data suggest that the cash transfer does not make much difference in situations where children have to work, particularly in the poorest households, where additional income is still needed to make ends meet.

### Children's participation

- The everyday problems children face severely limit their ability to exercise their right to participation, with few safe spaces available. Hierarchical social norms also represent a major barrier to children's participation; girls in particular face strong restrictions on their mobility and social activities outside the home. According to findings from the West Bank, the chances of adolescents in the comparison group being invited to go out with friends and participate in social events were reported to be higher. The proportion of adolescents who had someone to talk to was also higher among the intervention group, as was the number of adolescents reporting belonging to a social group.
- Decision-making within the family is also highly gendered, being the realm of men and young boys rather than women and young girls. In the case of the PNCTP, while many children noted

that they requested small presents or treats from their parents on payment day, there was no strong sense that household priorities about how best to use the cash were discussed with children.

The report concludes by recommending means to strengthen the impact of the PNCTP. These recommendations include a need to address gender-specific vulnerabilities. Pereznieto et al. argue that because girls are more socially isolated than boys, the

need for gender-segregated safe spaces (in which girls could regularly discuss issues affecting their lives) is acute. Practical support is also needed: given that girls are more likely to be called on by their parents to help shoulder family care burdens, provision of respite care – such as community-based crèches or centres to care for people with disabilities – could help girls better manage their educational and domestic care responsibilities.

## Education

### 20. Sidney Ruth Schuler (2007) 'Rural Bangladesh: sound policies, evolving gender norms, and family strategies', in M. Lewis and M. Lockheed (eds) *Exclusion, gender and education: case studies from the developing world*. Washington, DC: Center for Global Development.

Available at: <https://www.cgdev.org/doc/books/lewis-lockheed-eduCaseStudies/lewis-lockheed-chapter7.pdf>

In this book chapter, Schuler presents findings from interviews conducted with 212 women, men and girls in rural Bangladesh on changing gender norms and government policies to address income- and gender-based differentials in access to education – including food for education programmes and secondary school stipends for girls.

Schuler notes a significant shift over time in perceptions of women and gender roles. Women are perceived to be changing and becoming 'better educated, better informed, more daring, and more resourceful than they used to be' (p. 188). The positive valuation of women who were able to talk persuasively, work outside the home and interact in the public sphere is striking in light of traditional gender norms, which value submissiveness, modesty and female seclusion. These changes were perceived by interviewees to be a response to both economic, environmental and social stresses and opportunities such as microcredit, health and family planning services, and education. Education was identified particularly frequently as a key factor leading to the emergence of 'smart women'. A substantial minority of parents (particularly those without sons) saw investing in girls' education as a

'strategic investment', as the daughters would then support them – in a context where only support from sons has historically been considered socially acceptable.

More broadly, Schuler identifies the emergence of a norm that girls should be sent to school. As one young woman said, 'My father thought it was unnecessary for girls to read and write, but in my case he did not object [...] none of my peers were sitting idle at home, so I also went to school' (pp. 190-191). However, while significant shifts have taken place, norms related to education and early marriage are in flux, and fears that increased education may undermine a girl's marriage prospects are still common. Nevertheless, there is clear evidence from Schuler's study that – as scholarships bring girls' education within reach of lower economic groups – ideas around what makes a good wife and daughter-in-law, as well as the importance of married women being able to support themselves in case something goes wrong in their marriage, are increasing the demand for female education. The marriage market has shifted in favour of brides with more education; educating girls was seen as helpful in securing 'better' husbands, including less violent men, while educated girls are less likely to require a dowry because they

are more likely to secure well-paid jobs. Increased education among young brides is also influencing how people think about the desirable age of marriage.

Schuler concludes by cautioning that these positive shifts are likely to be sustained

only if there continue to be employment opportunities for educated young women.

---

**21. Denise Hallfors et al. (2011) ‘Supporting adolescent orphan girls to stay in school as HIV risk prevention: evidence from a randomized control trial in Zimbabwe’, *Research and Practice* 101(6): 1082-88.**

Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3093274/pdf/1082.pdf>

Using a randomised controlled trial (RCT) in rural eastern Zimbabwe, Hallfors et al. tested whether comprehensive support to keep orphan adolescent girls in school could reduce HIV risk. The study does not deal explicitly with gender norms but does measure the impact of school-based support to orphan adolescent girls on attitudes and behaviours relating to girls’ education and aspirations, gender equality and sexual intercourse.

All orphan girls in grade 6 (mostly aged 12) in 25 primary schools were invited to participate in the study. Primary schools were randomised into intervention and control groups. Support to in-school girls included tuition fee payments, a daily feeding programme, a school-based helper to monitor attendance and resolve problems and, in some cases, in-kind support in the form of school and sanitation supplies and/or formal or informal boarding. Hallfors et al. conducted annual surveys and collected additional information on school dropout, marriage, and pregnancy rates.

The study found that the intervention reduced school dropout by 82% and marriage by 63% after two years. Compared with (145) control participants, the intervention group (of 184 girls) reported increased bonding with school and teachers. Without support, it is difficult for orphan girls to continue into secondary school in rural Zimbabwe: school staff frequently

reported that control group participants had been ‘chased away’ from school (i.e., told to go home and get money to pay school fees). Those in the intervention group also reported higher attendance, and were more likely than those in the control group to feel that teachers cared about them. They also reported higher expectations to complete secondary school and college and were more likely to expect future financial rewards from schooling. Intervention participants also held more equitable gender attitudes than control group participants at the two-year follow-up. Hallfors et al. argue this finding to be unsurprising ‘because educated women can consider career paths with greater financial independence; they can also be more selective in marriage and the timing of fertility’ (p. 1087). Finally, intervention participants were more likely to report over time that the consequences of sex were an important factor in their desire not to have sexual intercourse. Hallfors et al. conclude: ‘If schooling results in better future expectations, more equitable gender attitudes, and more concern about the consequences of sexual intercourse, it is reasonable to expect that students who have an assurance of school support may be less inclined to marry or have sex’ (p. 1087).



**22. Nicola Jones, Elizabeth Presler-Marshall and Tran Thi Van Anh (2014) *Early marriage among Viet Nam's Hmong: how unevenly changing gender norms limit Hmong adolescent girls' options in marriage and life*. London: ODI.**

Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9182.pdf>

This report draws on research from qualitative fieldwork undertaken in Ha Giang province, northern Viet Nam, on what drives the shifting and persisting norms surrounding marriage practices and marriage–education trade-offs for girls within the Hmong community. Over the past two decades, Hmong families have received various forms of support from national poverty alleviation programmes, including tuition fee waivers for children.

The study explores how gendered norms are shaped by individual agency, socio-economic conditions, demographic factors, and cultural and political institutions (including government anti-poverty policy) and the impacts that these norms have on girls' capacities in terms of education, economics, decision-making, SRH and physical wellbeing. It concludes with a brief reflection on the policy and programming implications for the Government of Viet Nam and its development partners.

Jones et al. argue that Hmong girls are located in an unusual nexus of norm stability and change. On the one hand, they are growing up in an isolated, unique cultural environment that works to maintain social norms. On the other hand, there is considerable scope for state-led, top-down change that has the potential to shift actions – if not norms and attitudes – rapidly. This combination has resulted in significant, uneven and sometimes surprising shifts in gendered social norms.

The authors find that education is one area in which top-down mobilisation has had a clear impact on the norms that shape Hmong marriage practices and girls' lives, altering not only what girls do, but what their communities and families believe they ought to do, in the space of a single generation.

The government has taken a multi-pronged approach to encouraging Hmong children to complete 9th grade. First, schooling has been free up to 9th grade. Second, fines have been imposed on parents who do not send their children to school. Finally, the commune has carefully crafted messages, convincing parents that only the

irresponsible fail to educate their children. As a result, not only do all children (girls and boys) now complete 9th grade, but girls are outperforming their male peers, with many aspiring to higher education. There is evidence of genuine norm change in regard to the value of education among adolescent girls and their families, who reported education to be the key to a better, less poor, future. However, if schooling fee waivers are removed, this norm change may not be sustained.

Jones et al. attribute this remarkable transition to a confluence of well thought-out policy, as well as the emergence of Hmong role models who also encourage change. For example, a handful of families have invested in upper secondary education for their daughters. They not only demonstrate that education is attainable, but as their children take on wage labour and are appointed to official positions, they also model a way out of the hardships inherent in subsistence farming.

However, it is unclear whether and how these educational gains will bring about a shift in marriage practices. Hmong culture is shaped by a tough agrarian reality, with jobs nearly non-existent outside the informal economy, and farming requiring the labour of as many young people as possible. The authors contend that this culture continues to reinforce the status quo and slows norm change even in the face of top-down change. An entrenched preference for sons means that girls receive a smaller share of family resources (education, leisure time and inheritance) and that their lives are also more circumscribed by obligations of filial piety during the crucial developmental stages of childhood and adolescence. Hmong girls are acutely aware of the social pressures that encourage conformity with traditional norms and practices: they value social recognition as diligent, hardworking daughters; worry that they will be seen as unmarriageable if they attempt to walk away from a kidnapping; and fear community stigma if they marry too late.

**23. Sarah Baird, Ephraim Chirwa, Craig McIntosh and Berk Özler (2015) *What happens once the intervention ends? The medium-term impacts of a cash transfer programme in Malawi*. 3ie Impact Evaluation Report 27. New Delhi: International Initiative for Impact Evaluation.**

Available at: [http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer\\_public/2015/10/01/ie27-malawi.pdf](http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer_public/2015/10/01/ie27-malawi.pdf)

This report evaluates the five-year impacts of the Zomba Cash Transfer Programme (ZCTP) in Malawi. Implemented for two years during 2008–2009, the programme involved giving cash transfers, both conditional on schooling and unconditionally, to never-married 13- to-22-year-old young women. The report summarises the findings of the Schooling, Income and Health Risk study, a randomised control trial designed to evaluate the impacts of the programme on a variety of outcomes – education, marriage and fertility, health and nutrition, and sexual behaviour – with a focus on whether results recorded at the end of the implementation period were sustained two years after the programme ended. The report does not deal explicitly with norms or norm change, but does report on the mid-term behavioural impacts of social protection programming, with the accumulation of human capital argued to be critical to the sustainability of results.

Results are analysed separately for young women who were in school at baseline, focusing on differential impacts between the CCT and UCT arm, and those out of school at baseline, focusing on differences between the CCT and the control. The results suggest that the substantial benefits conferred by unconditional transfer while the programme was in place were transient. While the UCT did delay early marriage and teenage pregnancy for adolescent girls while the programme was in place, as soon as it ended, UCT beneficiaries engaged in catch-up behaviours that caused the trajectory of these outcomes to return to the same level that they would have reached had the programme never been put in place, and this within only five years of the programme's inception. Even the conditional programme, when

implemented among those in school at baseline (and therefore likely to continue with schooling even in the absence of a CCT), had few detectable long-term impacts. However, the programme that provided conditional cash transfers to girls who had already dropped out of school at baseline had large and durable impacts on a wide range of outcomes – including primary school completion, years of education, marriage rates, likelihood of having been pregnant, and desired fertility. At the five-year mark, the likelihood of primary school completion among this sub-group had actually continued to increase after the end of the programme.

Baird et al. interpret these results to suggest that 'long-term impacts are sustained only when a cash transfer programme achieves substantial improvements in the stock of a durable form of capital, such as human capital' (p. i). That is, without a significant accumulation of some combination of skills, health, knowledge, information, and networks, sustained future gains from cash transfer programmes targeting adolescent girls and young women are unlikely. That the significant effects of the Zomba UCTs and CCTs for in-school girls observed during and immediately after the programme had mostly dissipated two years after the experiment ended is attributed to insufficient human capital accumulation. By contrast, at-risk baseline school dropouts – who were unlikely to return to school on their own but did so in large numbers when offered CCTs – accumulated sufficient human capital to bring about significant and sustained changes in educational attainment (as well as marriage, fertility and desired fertility).

## Child marriage and sexual and reproductive health

24. **Amanda M. Kalamar, Susan Lee-Rife and Michelle J. Hindin (2016) ‘Interventions to prevent child marriage among young people in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review of the published and gray literature’, *Journal of Adolescent Health* 59: pp. 16-21.**

Available at: [http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(16\)30161-6/pdf](http://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(16)30161-6/pdf)

The objective of this systematic review was to identify high-quality interventions and evaluations targeting child marriage in low- and middle-income countries, to enable policymakers to consider interventions likely to help curtail child marriage, while avoiding the replication of interventions that were well-designed and evaluated but did not result in behaviour change. The review does not compile findings on (changes to) gender norms, but does report the impact of social protection interventions to prevent early marriage in terms of behaviour change, and points out the potential unsustainability of these interventions in the absence of long-term normative change.

Of eleven interventions identified, nine were cash transfers<sup>1</sup> – either unconditional or conditional on girls’ school attendance – or seek to decrease school-associated costs through tuition fee payment or in-kind support (provision of uniforms, books etc.). Kalamar et al. find that most of these economic interventions had a significant impact on decreasing the rate of child marriage or increasing age at marriage in the intervention group. Specifically, six evaluations found positive results in decreasing the proportion married or increasing age at marriage, one had both positive

and negative findings, and four had no statistical impact on the proportion married or age at marriage.

Kalamar et al. attribute these behaviour changes to the removal of financial incentives to marry off girls – both the ‘carrot’ of a dowry or bride price and ‘stick’ of no longer having to educate girls who are not perceived to be a source of future wealth to the family. Most of the interventions that had no statistical impact on child marriage, had defined goals that were broader than child marriage including HIV and sexual and reproductive health more generally, whereas those that did have a statistical impact focused directly on child marriage or on closely related structural factors such as schooling. However, Kalamar et al. do not argue that the behavioural changes are indicative of long-lasting normative change. Instead, in the absence of cost data and given that many interventions exceeded two years in duration, they question the sustainability of the interventions and conclude that, based on the studies reviewed, ‘it is unclear whether changing norms is needed for sustained long-term change after the intervention’ (p. 520).

---

1 These are: a school voucher lottery for private school tuition in Colombia; cash transfers conditioned on school attendance in Mexico; payment of school fees and provision of school uniforms, books, and other school supplies in Zimbabwe; support to remain in school in Ethiopia; payment of school fees and cash transfers conditioned on school enrolment and attendance or unconditional cash transfers in Malawi; payment of school fees and cash transfers conditioned on school enrolment and attendance in Malawi; provision of school uniforms in Kenya; and an unconditional cash transfer to households based on the presence of an orphan or being ultra poor in Kenya.

25. Priya Nanda, Priya Das, Nitin Datta and Sneha Lamba (2016) *Making change with cash? Impact of a conditional cash transfer program on girls' education and age of marriage in India: a process evaluation*. Washington DC: International Center for Research on Women.

Available at: [https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/IMPACCT\\_ProcessBrief\\_Webready.pdf](https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/IMPACCT_ProcessBrief_Webready.pdf)

This report is one of three briefs that summarise the findings of a rigorous impact and process evaluation of the Haryana state government's programme Apni Beti Apni Dhan (ABAD or Our Daughters, Our Wealth), a long-term conditional cash transfer programme introduced in 1994 with the aim of changing attitudes around how girls are valued and incentivising families to delay their daughters' marriages until age 18. A core finding of this evaluation is that the programme failed to bring about a shift in gendered norms around marriage.

Under the ABAD programme, households belonging to disadvantaged groups or living below the poverty line were eligible to apply if they had daughter/s among their first three children born during the enrolment period (1994-8). The programme offered two points of transfer, the first a small cash disbursement of 500 Indian rupees to mothers within 15 days of delivering an eligible girl and the second a (larger) savings bond in the name of a girl redeemable for 25,000 Indian rupees at age 18 – provided the girl was unmarried at that time.

In 2012, the first cohort of girls enrolled in the state-wide ABAD program turned 18, offering an opportunity to evaluate the ABAD programme. The evaluation found that the programme had little impact on girls' marital status and level of higher education (findings relating to each of these outcome areas have been published as

separate briefs): 'while the ABAD programme may have met a cash need and helped girls achieve more schooling, the programme did little to change gender norms and conditions that prioritise marriage over all other needs'.

The process evaluation attributed ABAD's failure to change prevailing gender norms and inequalities around marriage to a lack of outreach communications on the programme's core purpose of improving girls' status. The majority of beneficiaries surveyed believed the intent of the programme was to help defray marriage costs. Rather than challenge the idea of the 'girl as a burden', it may have inadvertently reinforced that notion. No efforts were made to clarify this misunderstanding once the programme was underway. As a result, a majority of girls who married after cashing out used the cash benefit mostly to meet their marriage expenses. Many unmarried girls who received the benefit also intended to use it mostly for marriage expenses or other household needs.

Nanda et al. conclude that for long-term changes in social norms to be brought about by financial incentive programmes, they need to be accompanied by complementary activities (e.g. communications, life skills training, employment opportunities) that tackle normative and structural barriers to change.

**26. Elona Toska, Lesley Gittings, Rebecca Hodes, Lucie D. Cluver, Kaymarlin Govender, KE Chademana, and Vincent Evans Gutiérrez (2016) 'Resourcing resilience: social protection for HIV prevention amongst children and adolescents in Eastern and Southern Africa', *African Journal of AIDS Research* 15(2): pp. 123-140.**

Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5558245/pdf/nihms879832.pdf>

This research paper combines expert consultations with a rigorous review of academic and policy literature on the effectiveness of social protection for HIV prevention among children and adolescents. The review identified 22 peer-reviewed and grey-literature publications highlighting evidence to date on 20 social protection interventions. One section of the paper is dedicated to findings on the relationship between social protection, HIV prevention for children and adolescence, and gender norms.

Toska et al. find that HIV-inclusive child- and adolescent-sensitive social protection has the potential to interrupt risk pathways to HIV infection and foster resilience. Social protection can play a role in HIV prevention among adolescents through alleviating economic and structural drivers of HIV risk, including economic and gender inequalities and social exclusion, which are at the root of HIV susceptibility and vulnerability, and underlie HIV-risk behaviours. Moreover, the empirical evidence presented indicates the potential effectiveness of combinations of social protection interventions, particularly cash/in-kind components combined with activities to promote 'care' and 'capability' among children and adolescents. Social protection interventions may work better in combination by addressing the multiple vulnerabilities and contextual barriers faced by those most at risk of HIV infection, resulting in greater effects on HIV prevention. Future research should explore which combinations of social protection work for sub-groups of children and adolescents, including those living with HIV.

As noted above, the review presents evidence which deals directly with the relationship between social protection, HIV prevention for children and adolescence,

and gender norms. Growing evidence indicates that HIV-infection risk is linked to sex between individuals of different ages and different economic status, as well as to unequal gender norms that limit women's power to negotiate safer sex or to protect themselves from violence. As a result of these intersecting structural factors, adolescent girls account for over 62% of new infections in Eastern and Southern Africa. Mixed-methods investigations provide increased recognition of the associations between gender inequality, transactionality, poverty and HIV-risk behaviours. Girls and young women tolerate condom refusal and their male sexual partners having multiple partners to maintain relationships with partners who support them materially.

However, critics note that dominant discourses around gender inequalities and the ability of women and girls to protect themselves can be reductionist, and there is a need for more nuanced understandings of the relationships between HIV prevention and gender inequalities, including how they interact with poverty and other factors. Further research on social protection among adolescents, gender and HIV risk could also interrogate masculinities, given that norms of masculinity and institutional supply-side barriers make men less likely to access prevention, testing, treatment and support services and more likely to be lost to follow-up. Research about masculinities as well as femininities, adolescence and HIV risk is an underexplored area that has the potential to provide valuable insights. Further research is needed to elucidate the complex gendered vulnerabilities and pathways for contracting and transmitting HIV and the uptake of HIV prevention and treatment services.

## 27. Sophia Chae and Thoi Ngo (2017) *The global state of evidence on interventions to prevent child marriage*. New York: Population Council.

Available at: [https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017PGY\\_GIRLCenterResearch-Brief\\_01.pdf](https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017PGY_GIRLCenterResearch-Brief_01.pdf)

Chae and Ngo's review examines the global state of evidence on interventions to prevent child marriage, focusing exclusively on rigorously evaluated interventions conducted over the past 20 years and building on previous reviews by incorporating new results. It deals with four types of intervention (set out below), of which two are types of social protection, and looks for evidence of (behavioural) changes in the prevalence of child marriage and/or the age at first marriage.

The review includes all studies that examined the impact of interventions on child marriage, regardless of whether the intervention was designed to reduce child marriage or to improve other aspects of adolescent wellbeing, such as schooling or health. It is limited, firstly, to interventions evaluated as part of an RCT, quasi-experimental study, or a natural experiment, for which there were both baseline and endline data. For our purposes, it is important to note that the review includes studies that measure the prevalence of child marriage and/or the age at first marriage, either in the study population or the community, but excludes those that only measured knowledge and/or attitudes toward child marriage.

Chae and Ngo also limited their review to studies that measured the prevalence of child marriage and/or the age at first marriage, either in the study population or the community, and excluded studies that only measured knowledge and/or attitudes toward child marriage.

In total, 22 studies met these inclusion criteria. The authors classify programme approaches into four categories:

### Social protection

- Schooling approaches focus on providing incentives to keep girls in school and for out-of-school girls to return to school. They include the provision of free school supplies and/or uniforms, payment of school fees, and tutoring in mathematics and English.

- Economic approaches involve providing families economic incentives or opportunities to offset the costs of raising girls and to discourage them from marrying girls off. Economic approaches mainly involve cash or asset transfers that are either unconditional or conditional upon meeting certain criteria, such as school attendance.

### Beyond social protection

- Empowerment approaches focus on strategies that give girls the information, skills, and support structures they need to advocate for themselves and improve their own status and wellbeing. In contrast to the other categories, this category contains the broadest range of approaches, including not only life-skills training, livelihoods training, and gender-rights awareness training, but also exposure to future careers, reproductive health training, and social mobilisation and group formation by adult female mentors.
- Community approaches recognise that the elimination of child marriage involves not only the parents and family members of girls, but also the communities in which they live. In contrast to empowerment, schooling, and economic approaches, which directly affect intervention participants, community approaches consist of activities that are targeted toward the communities of intervention participants. This approach aims to influence community attitudes toward child marriage and increase local knowledge of the negative consequences of this harmful practice. Community dialogue and street theatre are examples of this approach.

The review assessed eleven studies as successful, six as mixed successes, and five as unsuccessful.

Findings for each approach are:

- Empowerment was the most utilised approach, included in 14 interventions, and had the highest success rate (57%).



- Community was the least utilised approach, incorporated in only six interventions. Four of these interventions demonstrated mixed success, one was successful, and one was unsuccessful.
- Schooling was included in seven interventions and was the second most successful approach (43%); the remaining interventions had mixed success and none were classified as unsuccessful.
- Economic approaches, utilised in 10 interventions, were the least successful approach: economic approaches had the highest failure rate (67%) when used as the sole approach. Interventions that coupled it with another approach had a higher success rate (57%).

## 28. **Growth and Economic Opportunities for Women (GrOW) (2017) *Reducing child marriage and increasing girls' schooling in Bangladesh*. Ottawa: International Development Research Centre.**

Available at: <https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/bitstream/handle/10625/56362/IDL-56362.pdf?sequence=2>

This policy brief sets out findings of an impact evaluation of two different approaches – an adolescent empowerment training programme and a conditional incentives programme – deployed in rural Bangladesh with the aim of tackling child marriage. The study does not deal explicitly with gender norms but it does seek to inform policy-makers on effective ways to reduce the practice of child marriage. It also discusses impacts on empowerment – one of the building blocks of norm change.

Between January 2007 and September 2015, researchers ran a randomised trial in six sub-districts of south central Bangladesh. The researchers randomly assigned sample villages to receive: i) a girls' empowerment programme; ii) a financial incentive to delay marriage; iii) a combination of the empowerment programme and the incentive; and iv) no programming (control group). Under the conditional incentive programme, which ran from May 2008 to August 2010, families of unmarried girls aged 15-17 were eligible to receive \$16 worth of cooking oil each year until their daughters reached the age of 18 or married. Cooking oil was chosen as an incentive because it is purchased by all families — and so is equivalent to giving cash — but is easier to track than cash. The value of \$16 per year was chosen to offset the higher dowry cost associated with delayed marriage. In communities receiving the empowerment programme, all girls aged 10-19 were

invited to take part in one of four 6-month cycles of Kishoree Kontha (Adolescent Girl's Voice), a peer education programme that ran between December 2007 and August 2010. The curriculum included educational and social competency components designed to teach girls about the dangers of early marriage, help them with school work, and equip them to negotiate with their parents when told it was time to marry.

A follow-up survey conducted four-and-a-half years after programme completion found that:

- Incentives for unmarried girls delayed marriage and childbirth, and prolonged school attendance. Girls who remained eligible to receive the oil stipend for the full two-year period were 22% less likely to have married before the age of 18 than girls in the control group. The incentive appeared to have a lasting effect, with marriage rates between the incentive and control groups not converging until age 22. Furthermore, the reduction in child marriage resulted in 14% fewer teenage births among girls who received the stipend. Girls aged 15-17 at the programme start who received the incentive were also 14% more likely to be in education at age 22-25.
- Empowerment programming extended girls' education, but did not significantly delay marriage. Girls who attended the empowerment programme were 7% more likely to be in school at age 22-25 and had completed 2.4 months more schooling than

those in the control group. The programme did not, however, have any significant impact on marriage age.

- Incentives for unmarried girls benefited those out of school as well as those in school. Unlike incentive programmes that are conditional on girls staying in school, one that is conditional only on delayed marriage has the potential to benefit out-of-school girls. The incentive decreased the likelihood of child marriage by 12% among girls out of school when the study started, compared with 27% among girls in school. Those who were out of school at programme launch were 8% less likely to give birth in their teen

years than those in the control group, while those in school were 18% less likely to have given birth.

- There was no observed advantage of combining incentives with empowerment programming. Child marriage rates were the same in communities that received the incentive and empowerment programme as they were in the incentive-only communities.

## Intimate partner violence

### 29. **Melissa Hidrobo, Amber Peterman and Lori Heise (2013) *The effect of cash, vouchers and food transfers on intimate partner violence: evidence from a randomized experiment in Northern Ecuador*. Rome: World Food Programme.**

Available at: [https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db\\_name=NEUDC2013&paper\\_id=202](https://editorialexpress.com/cgi-bin/conference/download.cgi?db_name=NEUDC2013&paper_id=202)

Using a randomised experiment in Northern Ecuador, this study provides evidence on whether cash, vouchers and food transfers targeted to women in poor urban areas and intended to reduce poverty and food insecurity also affected rates of intimate partner violence (IPV). This empirical study does not explicitly explore the relationship between social transfers and gender norms, but does seek to identify the impact of transfers on household gender relations, decision-making and conflict.

In April 2011, the World Food Programme (WFP) expanded its assistance to address the food security and nutrition needs of Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorians, and to support the integration of refugees into Ecuadorian communities. The programme was designed as a prospective randomised control trial and consisted of six-monthly transfers of cash, vouchers, or food transfers to Colombian refugees and poor Ecuadorian households. In addition to improving the food consumption of poor households, a major goal of the programme was to improve the role of women in household decision-making. Although the programme

did not focus specifically on IPV, there were concerns that transfers, and specifically cash, intended to improve the food security of poor households, could unintentionally increase conflict within the household.

The results of the randomised control trial indicate that, overall, transfers decrease the probability that women experience controlling behaviours, moderate physical, and any physical/sexual violence by six to seven percentage points. Impacts do not vary by transfer modality which, combined with the overall reduction in IPV, suggests that violence is not being used to forcefully extract resources. Instead, Hidrobo et al. assert initial conditions and power dynamics between partners to be important in determining the magnitude and significance of reductions in IPV. In particular, they find that the decrease in IPV due to transfers is concentrated among woman with low sole or joint decision-making power at baseline (who the RCT found to be 10 to 11 percentage points less likely to experience controlling behaviours, moderate physical violence and any physical/sexual violence).

However, while Hidrobo et al.'s results provide strong evidence that transfers reduce IPV among the study population, they are unable to isolate the pathway or mechanism through which this occurs. The authors conclude it to be unlikely that the decrease is due only to an improvement in a woman's bargaining power since they find no evidence of improvements in a woman's decision-making within the household as a result of the transfer. Instead, they find support for theories related to stress and that by improving a household's food security and economic situation, transfers reduced stress and consequently IPV. While they find no evidence that transfers were being diverted to other purposes (including forcefully by male family members) or leading to conflict within a household, they do not dismiss extraction or male backlash theories completely.

The programme transfers were labelled as intended to improve a household's nutrition; it is possible that transfers may not have led to conflict or been diverted because they were perceived to be for the benefit of the entire household and household nutrition is typically thought of as being controlled by women and mothers.

Hidrobo et al. conclude that it should not be assumed that giving cash to women will a priori cause larger increases in intra-household violence, but that a lack of understanding of the mechanisms surrounding IPV and income requires further research to elucidate the pathways through which receipt of transfers translate into changes in IPV.

---

### 30. IRC / UNHCR (2015) *Integrating cash transfers into gender-based violence programs in Jordan: benefits, risks and challenges*. New York: International Rescue Committee.

Available at: <http://www.cashlearning.org/downloads/erc-irc-action-research-web.pdf>

This case study of the International Rescue Committee cash transfer programming for Syrian refugees in Jordan seeks to identify lessons learned and recommendations for improving the effectiveness of cash-based interventions in mitigating gender-based violence risks and building women and girls' resilience. Specifically, the qualitative research seeks to examine how the combination of cash transfers and psychosocial services (case management, counselling, and gender discussion groups) support women and girls' protection, if and how cash assistance exacerbates protection issues, and how existing assessment, monitoring and targeting systems can be strengthened. The study does not deal explicitly with norm change, but does consider, first, the impact of cash transfers and psychological services on gendered household roles and decision-making and, secondly, their ability to bring about behaviour change vis-à-vis domestic violence.

The study finds that changes to gendered household roles and decision-making resulting from the cash transfer alone are temporary. While the explicit targeting of women as recipients of cash transfers significantly

shifted their roles in household financial decision-making during the assistance period, these changes did not change financial decision-making roles in the long-term unless women accessed other income sources. Notably, none of the male focus group participants said that a woman's role or status would change as a result of receiving cash assistance; most expected that a woman would spend the money on rent and goods for the household and children. Some women confirmed that bringing in financial resources increased their personal value to their families, which risks reinforcing a negative tendency to value women primarily according to their financial contribution to the household.

Further, cash can be an adequate tool to mitigate risks of gender-based violence, under the conditions that the main source of the protection risk is a lack of financial resources, and that cash and protection programming are used in tandem. Both women and cash assistance officers perceived the cash transfer to reduce household tensions resulting from financial stress and, in turn, domestic violence against women. However, while the impact of cash on gender-based

violence and household decision-making was limited to the implementation period, psychosocial services and gender discussion groups offered sustained protection beyond implementation. Psychosocial activities contributed to deeper personal change among women by strengthening their self-confidence to make financial decisions and/or negotiate with male family members on the use of the cash transfer. For men, participation in the gender discussion groups also brought about

some behaviour change, although not as dramatically as for women, perhaps because there are fewer services available to them and because participation is on a voluntary basis. It is also worth noting that, in some cases, the fact that it was women who received the transfer caused men to feel ‘discomfort...in sharing power’ (p. 20) and negative attitudes among husbands and in-laws towards women recipients.

### 31. Andrew Gibbs, Jessica Jacobson and Alice Kerr Wilson (2017) ‘A global comprehensive review of economic interventions to prevent intimate partner violence and HIV risk behaviours’, *Global Health Action* 10:(2): pp. 87-102.

Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/16549716.2017.1290427#aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cudG-FuZGZvbmxpbmUuY29tL2RvaS9wZGYvMTAuMTA4MC8xNjU0OTcxNi4yMDE3LjEyOTA0Mjc/bmVIZE-FjY2Vzcz10cnVlQEBAMA>

This study offers a comprehensive review of published evaluations of economic interventions seeking to prevent IPV and/or HIV risk behaviours. Gibbs et al. identify 45 separate analyses of three types of intervention: i) social protection (conditional or unconditional cash transfers) ii) economic strengthening (cash transfers, microfinance or village savings and loan associations) and iii) ‘gender transformative’ (e.g. mentoring, life skills training, business or vocational training).

The conceptual framing of the study makes explicit reference to the relationship between gender norms and inequalities on the one hand and vulnerability to IPV and HIV on the other. Specifically, poverty, when intersecting with gender inequalities, places women in economically and socially dependent relationships with men, thereby increasing their vulnerability to HIV and IPV. This exacerbates, for example, the challenges of negotiating condoms or leaving violent and controlling relationships and exposes women to controlling behaviours. In addition, qualitative research has argued that men’s partial exclusion from the capitalist economy has led men to develop identities that draw on and deploy forms of emphasised heterosexuality (or ‘hyper-

masculinity’), which include control over women and, more specifically, IPV as a way to dominate women.

Overall, the review is ‘highly suggestive that broad-based cash transfer interventions have widespread positive benefits for women who receive them, as well as their children’ (p. 98) as regards decreased vulnerability to HIV and IPV:

- Unconditional cash transfer interventions showed either flat or positive outcomes. Examples cited include analyses of the South African Child Support Grant, for which Cluver et al. reported a significant reduction in transactional sex and age-disparate sex for girls among beneficiary households; furthermore, a cross-sectional analysis by UNICEF reported a significant reduction in sexual activity, delayed sexual debut and reduced pregnancies for both girls and boys whose families received the grant. In Kenya, an NGO-run unconditional cash transfer called ‘GiveDirectly’ showed a 30–50% reduction in various forms of physical violence, a 50% reduction in rape and a 60% reduction in other forms of sexual violence. Similarly, in Ecuador, an evaluation of the state-run unconditional cash transfer

Bono de Desarrollo Humano showed reductions in controlling behaviours and women's experiences of IPV.

- However, for adults, interventions that solely strengthened economic wellbeing, through either cash transfers or microfinance/village savings and loan association (VSLA), showed mixed outcomes with studies reporting increases, decreases or no impact on HIV risk behaviours and IPV. Gibbs et al. attribute these 'mixed' outcomes to backlash against women who transgress gender norms. They cite: firstly, studies which emphasise that as women gain economic autonomy and power in relationships more generally, they may face a 'male-backlash' as men start to feel their 'authority' is challenged; and, secondly, studies that suggest the impact of economic strengthening interventions

on IPV to be contingent on whether the target community is more socially liberal or conservative.

- By contrast, the interventions that combined economic – cash transfers or microfinance/VSLA – and 'gender transformative' elements, which seek to challenge norms around gender roles and women's capabilities, showed positive or flat results, and no negative findings. Gibbs et al. therefore conclude that 'women's experiences of HIV- and IPV-vulnerability are often shaped at the intersection of gender inequalities and economic marginalisation and that successfully working to reduce these risks needs to combine economic and gender transformative interventions' (pp. 97-98).

---

**32. Ana Maria Buller, Amber Peterman, Meghna Ranganathan, Alexandra Bleile, Melissa Hidrobo and Lori Heise (2018) *A mixed-method review of cash transfers and intimate partner violence in low and middle-income countries*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti.**

Available at: [https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/CT%20%20IPV\\_Review\\_Innocenti%20WP%202018-02.pdf](https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/CT%20%20IPV_Review_Innocenti%20WP%202018-02.pdf)

Buller et al. conducted a mixed method review of the evidence from low- and middle-income countries on how – i.e. the pathways through which – CT programmes decrease IPV. A central finding of the review is that the degree to which the design of a CT programme is aligned with prevailing gender norms is a key factor shaping how it impacts IPV.

Fourteen quantitative and nine qualitative studies meet the authors' inclusion criteria, of which 11 and 6 respectively demonstrate evidence that CTs decrease IPV. They find little support for increases in IPV, with only two studies showing overall mixed or adverse impacts. However, CTs may have different impacts on different types of violence within the same study. For example, transfers appear to reduce physical and/or sexual IPV more consistently than emotional abuse or controlling behaviours.

Drawing on the 14 studies, as well as related bodies of evidence, the authors theorise three pathways through which CTs could affect IPV: first, economic security and emotional wellbeing; second, intra-household conflict; and third, women's empowerment. The authors

find evidence to support each of these pathways, as well as to support each step in the proposed causal chains. However, the economic security and emotional wellbeing pathway is the only one that exclusively reduces IPV; the other two may either increase or decrease IPV, depending on whether additional cash aggravates or soothes relationship conflict and/or how men respond to women's increased empowerment. How these pathways play out depends on intra-household gender dynamics, which are in turn affected by local gender norms and inequalities.

The qualitative studies reviewed suggest that in highly patriarchal settings, shifts in household dynamics that are less challenging to traditional gender norms are less likely to prompt violence. Likewise, programmes that generate smaller shifts in relationship power appear more easily accepted by men than those catalysing larger disruptions. For example, increased cash and in-kind transfers to women was accepted by Colombian and Ecuadorian men in part because it was intended for children's nutrition, a domain already within the domestic responsibilities

of women. Indeed, how a programme is ‘framed’ and the meaning imbued to cash by a programme’s stated intent (e.g. for women’s entrepreneurship versus child health) may influence the transfer’s impact on gender dynamics and IPV as much as any other programme feature. More ‘acceptable’ shifts might also be achieved by making smaller, more regular transfers

(conducive to small household purchases managed by women), rather than larger or lump sum transfers.

In addition, Buller et al. note that, firstly, the recipient of the CT and, secondly, complementary activities with the ability to shift intra-household power relations are likely to be important design features for understanding how to maximise and leverage the impact of CTs for reducing IPV, and mitigating potential adverse impacts.

## Livelihoods and economic empowerment

### 33. Paola Perezniето and Mariana Campos (2010) *Gendered risks, poverty and vulnerability in Mexico: contributions of the Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras* programme. London: ODI.

Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/6248.pdf>

This study presents empirical evidence on the impact of Mexico’s Estancias Infantiles para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras (Child Care Services for Working Mothers) – a government subsidised childcare services programme targeted at mothers in poor households who work, are looking for work, or are studying and do not have access to formal social security-provided childcare – on women’s equal access to paid employment opportunities, education, capability development and capacity to lift themselves out of poverty.

The starting point of Perezniето and Campos’ study is the common assumption that gender is already being addressed in social protection initiatives because many cash or asset transfer programmes and public works schemes target women, drawing on evidence that women are more likely to invest additional income in family wellbeing. However, they assert, the role that gender relations play in social protection effectiveness is likely to be more complex: ‘gender norms and dynamics may affect the type of risk that is tackled, the choice of social protection modality implemented, awareness-raising approaches, public buy-in to social safety net programmes and, most importantly, programme outcomes’ (p. ix).

The study finds that subsidised childcare services are an important form of social protection to address vulnerabilities to economic and social risks facing poor

women with children. Many beneficiaries have started to work outside the home as a result of the programme, while others have been able to access more stable and less precarious jobs as a result of having access to a dependable and stable form of childcare. Other positive findings include women’s increased autonomy over decision-making related to their own expenses and some initial, albeit limited, evidence of men being more cooperative at home to support their wives in their new roles as income earners. The programme has had a very positive impact on early childhood development, particularly as these are children who would not typically have access to such a service. The programme has been particularly positive for single mothers who have to work to sustain their children and who typically lack support to do this.

However, evidence from the programme also shows that access to affordable childcare and a paid job does not automatically transform gendered attitudes to the division of productive and reproductive roles between men and women. With respect to changes in household dynamics, many women who access the programme initially needed to negotiate their participation with their husbands; other potential beneficiaries have been unable to access it because of an ingrained belief that women should remain in the house and care for children. Although evidence suggests that these patterns are



changing, some men whose wives were working said that they only ‘allowed’ this to happen because the money was needed for the household, given problems with male unemployment or shortfalls in income: if the economic situation in the household improved, they would prefer wives to stay at home. In addition, despite evidence of a significant increase in access to work opportunities as a result of the programme, there is a dearth of evidence suggesting that women have used it to continue to pursue education. Estancias could be strengthened by promoting sensitisation on changing the roles of men and women within the household so that women’s increased

participation in the workforce is supported by men’s more active involvement in domestic and care responsibilities.

Nevertheless, Perezniето and Campos conclude, beneficiary women’s entry into the paid workforce is offering them a ‘good basis for a gender transformation, which can promote a more sustainable reduction in their level of vulnerability and dependence, taking a step towards gender parity’ (p. 47).

**34. Valentina Barca, Simon Brook, Jeremy Holland, Mosope Otulana and Pamela Pozarny (2015) *Qualitative research and analyses of the economic impacts of cash transfer programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.**

Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4336e.pdf>

This synthesis report presents the findings from qualitative research on six cash transfer programmes in sub-Saharan Africa, with the aim of understanding the impact of CT programmes in three interrelated areas: household economy (the activities surrounding decisions on how to distribute resources within a beneficiary household); local economy (the production and exchange of goods and services in the beneficiaries’ communities); and social networks (specifically risk-sharing arrangements underpinned by social capital, and the contribution of beneficiaries to local decision-making processes).

Findings on the impact of cash transfers on gender norms are limited mainly to the household level. Across countries – in both matrilineal and patrilineal contexts – CTs did not significantly transform structural gender norms, particularly concerning the gender balance of strategic household decision-making, but instead conformed to existing gender patterns of roles, responsibilities and practices. Although changing gender norms was not a primary objective

of the CTs in this study, CTs targeting orphans and vulnerable children were received in a particularly large proportion of female-headed households, generating an increase in these women’s access to and control over resources in contexts where women already had some say in household spending decisions. However, at the same time CTs reinforced norms around women as primary caretakers and men as caretakers of last resort. Gender norms also strongly influenced the types of livelihoods and savings activities towards which beneficiaries directed the CT funds.

However, a key overarching finding across the research themes is that contextual factors, including gender norms, mediate the types and scale of CT impacts in different ways in different countries. Gender norms within families and communities determined access to shelter, land, economic networks and other productive resources. Contrasts between the two selected research districts for Ghana’s Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty programme illustrate this well: while in both contexts men have greater decision-making

authority over household resources, Komenda District in Central Region is a matrilineal society, in which women have greater access to productive resources through inheritance, giving them greater control over use of the CT. In contrast, Tolon Kumbungu District in Northern Region is a patrilineal society, reducing women's access to productive resources through inheritance and thereby limiting the extent to which female beneficiaries could utilise their CTs productively (although the report does not state how CTs were used instead). Sociocultural norms also influence decision-making with regard to the CT. Again, contrasts between two selected research districts – this time for Kenya's Cash Transfer to Orphans and Vulnerable Children – illustrate this well: in the Kamba society

of Kangundo District, Eastern Province, widows and their children risked being chased away from patrilocal family homes, so taking on a CT-eligible orphaned or vulnerable child as an extended family asset became an important strategy to avoid this treatment. In contrast, in the Luo society in Owendo District, Nyanza Province, the CT did not influence a family's initial decision to take on such a child, because of the high value placed on children and the associated norms of social responsibility. Beyond the immediate family, across the case studies in different contexts extended families played various roles in enabling beneficiaries to access risk-sharing arrangements or asset pools.

### 35. **Fernanda Bárcia de Mattos and Sukti Dasgupta (2017) *MGNREGA, paid work and women's empowerment*. Employment Working Paper No. 230. Geneva: ILO.**

Available at: [http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_613735.pdf](http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_613735.pdf)

De Mattos and Dasgupta's paper assesses the impact of the government-legislated rural employment guarantee, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on women's access to paid employment, their household bargaining power and, lastly, breaking 'the cycle of disadvantage' – that is, the intergenerational transmission of poverty to girl children.

Using a sample of married women from the India Human Development Survey, the authors find that the employment guarantee programme has been instrumental in ensuring paid employment for women. Indeed, about half of those who worked in the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) in 2011–12 were either out of the labour force or working in unpaid work in 2004–05, while for many married women it was their first opportunity for paid work. Various design aspects of MGNREGS, which take into account gendered norms around caregiving – such as offering work close to home and childcare

facilities at the work site – have contributed to the programme's positive effect on women's employment. It is worth noting, however, that while men working in MGNREGS sites were likely to come from the poorest households, for women this was not necessarily so – women tended to be distributed among the lower-income groups, not entirely from the poorest groups. The authors attribute this to women's decisions to take to the 'last resort employment' legislated by the MGNREGA in a context of scarce employment opportunities.

The authors also find that, in turn, paid employment had positive and significant effects on women's control over household decisions. Controlling for other factors, women who worked in the MGNREGS in 2011–12 were significantly more likely to have control over household decisions than others.

However, De Mattos and Dasgupta do not find sufficient evidence to suggest that this change in household bargaining status contributed to transformative gender equality, in the sense of

preventing the intergenerational transmission of poverty. This is proxied by the time spent in school (rather than working at home or outside) by the next generation of girls in the households of women taking part in MGNREGS. They do find that there is significant evidence – albeit weak – that the likelihood of the oldest girl spending more hours in school is greater for households in which the women worked in MGNREGS. This relationship is stronger when the woman working in MGNREGS also has control over household decisions. However, more information about the household over a longer period of time would be required to make a case for ‘breaking the cycle of disadvantage’ and bringing about a transformation in gender relations. Moreover, when accounting for work intensity, the authors find that the relationship between the hours spent in school by the older girl child and the woman’s days worked under MGNREGS is no longer linear; there is a declining impact. Indeed, after 33 days

of work in MGNREGS, the relationship between the woman’s work in MGNREGS and time spent in school by the older girl is reversed. This is attributed to older girl children taking on responsibility for household chores that the older woman would normally carry out.

The paper concludes that transformative gender equality therefore requires action to address the macro structures that create gender inequalities in the first place, including social norms, and interconnections with economic power. Barriers which persist in hindering women’s participation include work opportunities, gender pay gaps, expectations about appropriate roles for women, and their responsibility for the bulk of care work. Micro- and macro-level policies are needed to change perceptions (both inside and outside of the household) of women’s worth and capabilities, and to foster acceptance of women working in paid employment outside the home.

## About ALIGN

ALIGN is a digital platform aimed at advancing understanding of gender norms by connecting a global Community of Practice committed to gender equality for adolescents and young adults. By encouraging collaboration and knowledge exchange, ALIGN aims to ensure evidence and learning on norm change informs more effective policy and practice.

## Disclaimer

This document is an output of Advancing Learning and Innovation on Gender Norms (ALIGN). The views expressed and information contained within are not necessarily those of or endorsed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, which accepts no responsibility for such views or information or for any reliance placed on them.

## Copyright

© ALIGN 2018. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International Licence (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0).

Front cover: Girls in school in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan.

© Vicki Francis/Department for International Development

## ALIGN Programme Office

Overseas Development Institute  
203 Blackfriars Road  
London SE1 8NJ  
United Kingdom  
Email: [align@odi.org.uk](mailto:align@odi.org.uk)  
Web: [www.alignplatform.org](http://www.alignplatform.org)

ALIGN is funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and is led by the Overseas Development Institute.

**BILL & MELINDA**  
**GATES** *foundation*

