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Research Report

From safety nets to economic empowerment: Is there space to promote gender equality in the evolution of social protection?

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Levy Economics Institute of Bard College

Public Policy Brief

No. 128, 2013

**FROM SAFETY NETS TO ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT: IS THERE SPACE TO
PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE
EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION?**

RANIA ANTONOPOULOS

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Preface

Social protection systems comprise public policies designed to prevent or alleviate economic insecurity and poverty. Throughout the developing world, social protection strategies and the dialogue surrounding them have recently been undergoing an important evolution. In this policy brief, Senior Scholar Rania Antonopoulos, director of the Gender Equality and the Economy program, highlights the opportunities and challenges for promoting gender equality and empowerment within this shifting policy landscape. Developed with financial support from the United Nations Development Programme, this brief is intended as an advocacy tool in the service of amplifying gender-informed policy considerations in country-level social protection debates.

Part 1 begins with a general background and taxonomy of social protection instruments, providing definitions of important concepts. These instruments are placed in the context of inclusive growth strategies in the developing world. Antonopoulos addresses affordability concerns often raised with regard to creating robust social protection systems in low-income countries. She explains that high levels of social protection spending, as a percentage of GDP, are viable even for such countries, and that the knock-on benefits of investing in effective and empowering social protection systems are such that the costs of *not* investing in social protection need to be taken into account in affordability discussions.

The brief describes how social protection strategies are evolving from mere one-off interventions or “safety nets” that mitigate economic harms due to personal misfortune or systemic calamities, to interventions that are also designed to alter or rupture dynamics that are causing vulnerability in the first place. In part 2, Antonopoulos expands on the main theme of the brief, highlighting the gender considerations that can be inserted into this expanded and evolving social protection dialogue. She reveals how social protection programs, intentionally or not, “position” women in varying roles based on the lens through which these programs “see” women—as consumers, mothers, or producers, for instance—and expands on the implications for gender equality. A gender-informed social protection system is one that positions women as active participants in economic life rather than mere passive recipients. Such interventions, while simultaneously addressing income volatility, also have the transformative potential to contribute to women’s empowerment.

In this context, particular attention is paid to two social protection instruments that have gained currency over the last decade: conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and employment guarantee programs (EGPs). CCTs, which have emerged as a central social protection intervention in Latin America, offer a cash stipend to primary caretakers if certain conditions are met; often, proof of children’s educational enrollment or regular medical checkups. Antonopoulos takes up some concerns that have been raised with respect to these CCTs; particularly the voiced objection that CCTs position women according to a passive caretaker role, which reinforces gender norms that limit life choices for both mothers and girls. She explores how the objections might be met through the development of a next-generation, more integrated CCT design.

EGPs, a relatively new instrument, attempt to close income gaps through the expansion of paid work opportunities and the security of a job entitlement. This instrument is of particular importance to members of poor households who cannot find paid work alternatives. Antonopoulos discusses two examples of existing EGPs, in India and South Africa, and focuses on the gender dimensions of EGP program design and implementation. In particular, EGPs need to avoid reinforcing inequities that prevail in the rest of the economy—by accounting for women’s disproportionate dedication of time to unpaid work, their systematic exclusion from some occupational categories, and the issue of equal pay for comparable work. The selection of EGP projects also presents opportunities for addressing gender equalities; in particular, by reducing women’s unpaid work burdens. In this context, Antonopoulos highlights the potential of EGPs oriented around the provision of social care.

A companion background paper, as well as an annotated bibliography that may serve as a resource for researchers and practitioners, is available at www.levyinstitute.org/publications/?docid=1709.

As always, I welcome your comments.

Dimitri B. Papadimitriou, *President*

April 2013

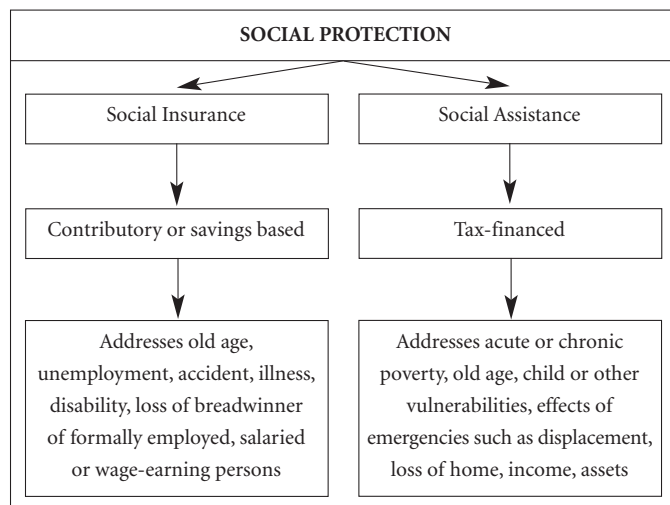
Introduction

Social protection has recently emerged as a strategic component in the policy dialogue of developing countries and development agencies, as exemplified by the United Nations Social Protection Floor Initiative, with a growing emphasis on expanding the scope of its objectives and population coverage. In the past, social protection schemes were introduced as a “safety net” to guard against the risk of rapid deterioration of living standards, especially for those households in or near poverty. Such risks were acknowledged to be heightened due to sudden personal misfortunes (e.g., protracted ill health) or systemic calamities (environmental stresses; the aftermath of natural disasters; sudden food and fuel price spikes; financial and economic crises, etc.). Also, in the context of structural adjustment policies in the 1980s and ’90s, reductions in provisioning of public services, lowered wages, and fewer employment options due to austerity programs made the introduction of safety nets imperative. Generally speaking, these interventions were aimed at protecting the least privileged by mitigating the immediate and devastating effects of such man-made or natural calamities.

However, it gradually became clear that stopgap intermediation had short-lived impacts. Over time, it was shown that as soon as these temporary supports were removed, the underlying issues that had locked people in poverty in the first place were left intact. Equally important, the latest global crisis—set off by the subprime mortgage debacle in the United States in late 2007—highlighted the fact that countries with well-integrated social protection systems were better prepared to have timely and effective responses. Today, the focus of social protection policies in many developing countries is shifting from its more restricted one-off protective function to that of investing in longer-term, integrated, larger-scale population coverage interventions.

This policy brief focuses on gender dimensions that can enrich the evolving social protection dialogue and aims to contribute to discussions on how gender equality can be promoted within social protection policies.¹

Table 1 Social Insurance and Social Assistance



Source: Adapted from Gentilini and Omamo 2009

Part 1: Social Protection in the Context of Developing Countries

1.1 What Is Social Protection? Concepts and a Taxonomy of Instruments

To flesh out the contours of social protection initiatives and their objectives—which is essential to our discussion of gender issues—we begin with some concepts and definitions. Over the years, the meanings of social protection have varied significantly (see Appendix A). Nevertheless, a convergence to a more common language, which we make use of herein, seems to be emerging.

Social protection systems embody a society’s commitment to safeguarding the living standards of its citizens by preventing, mitigating, and helping to overcome adversities that otherwise increase income volatility (and hence insecurity and poverty). Two key protection systems can be discerned: social insurance and social assistance (see Table 1).

The key characteristic of social insurance schemes is that only workers in formal employment participate in such insurance schemes. Introduced in the 1880s (Eurofound 2009), and not necessarily by “advanced economy” status countries of that era, these schemes were intended to cover civil servants and those employed in large-scale enterprises. Gradually adopted in many parts of the world so as to provide income-loss protection against (1) unemployment, (2) injury or illness, and (3) old age, they were funded by a pooled insurance system through mandated

(pay-as-you-go) contributions from the currently employed, their employers, and the state (via general tax revenue). In many cases, health insurance was also provided for the employed and their dependents. To date, given that only formal workers participate, less than 25 percent of the world's working-age population receive comprehensive coverage (protection against the impacts outlined above). Regarding old-age pensions, only 30 percent of the elderly in Latin America, 20 percent in Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East, and less than 5 percent in Sub-Saharan Africa are reached.²

Social assistance initiatives, on the other hand, are noncontributory interventions geared toward those living in poverty. With larger segments of people in poverty, noncontributory social assistance interventions have become the main policy focus in low- and middle-income countries, especially since the 1980s and within the context of the new risks and vulnerabilities that emerged. Informalization of work conditions; structural adjustment policies; "contagion" from financial, fuel, and food crises (Cook and Kabeer 2009); and added risks imposed by climate change, which have stressed already fragile environments and continue to threaten the livelihoods of those dependent on natural resource use and management—all contributed to a heightened need for risk mitigation.

Social assistance schemes since the mid-1990s have expanded their population coverage to the extent that they provide de facto social protection for the most vulnerable segments of the population. These interventions are often grouped into four broad categories:³

- (1) Conditional cash transfers, dubbed "the quiet revolution" in the literature (Barrientos and Hulme 2008), provide cash support to poor households to ameliorate income poverty. They are given directly to mothers or to a primary caregiver of children and adolescents, with conditions attached (proof of regular medical checkups or school enrollment for school age children, for instance). Such conditionalities are meant to, for example, encourage retention of school-age children within the education system.
- (2) Employment guarantee programs (EGPs) and public works programs (PWPs) provide a job and a wage to unskilled and low-skilled members of poor households who cannot find alternative wage-work. The aim is to redress income poverty that arises from joblessness, and work projects are intended to

result in the creation or improvement of community assets, including land productivity, and community-based social services.

- (3) Free access to, or subsidized prices for, consumption or production inputs take the form of in-kind transfers or price support of food, education, and basic health services through vouchers, removal of user fees, price reductions for productive inputs, or direct transfer of assets (seed and fertilizers, credit, small livestock) and basic consumption items (food, fuel).
- (4) Unconditional cash transfers and social pensions are means-tested income support transfers to address income gaps for households that face labor constraints or that have members who are disabled, young orphaned children, or people living with HIV/AIDS. Old-age social pensions for the elderly are also means tested and not tied to previous employment status.

1.2 The Need for Social Protection: Linkages to Inclusive Growth and Reduction of Inequality and Poverty

Over the past century, a common goal of otherwise divergent pathways to economic development has been the channeling of investment and resources into higher-productivity economic activities. When successful, growth of output (and income) was achieved alongside improvements in material well-being and poverty reduction. For the vast majority of the targeted populations, this took place through the reallocation of labor from less to more productive activities and sectors, primarily through the creation of better-paying jobs and increased agricultural output. However, uneven and fluctuating patterns of growth, dual economic structures (one progressing rapidly, the other lagging behind), income inequalities, and the persistence of poverty proved challenging. To ameliorate negative social and economic outcomes, the use of stabilizing economic levers and redistributive social policy interventions was deemed desirable and necessary.

Progress in meeting developmental objectives and reducing inequalities across regions and within countries, however, has not been uniform. This recognition has led to important shifts in mindsets, exemplified first by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, more recently, by the resurgent emphasis on inclusive and sustainable development. The call for better alignment of growth with human development, decent job creation,

and security for all is indeed being heard in many parts of the world. To a large degree, then, achievements in the reduction of deprivation, poverty, and inequalities, including their gendered forms and dimensions, is understood to be the *joint* outcome of effective economic and social policies. Social protection in this context becomes of paramount importance. Yet, it must be understood that it does not serve as a substitute for economic development. Instead, the opportunity lies in promoting interventions that prevent deprivations while advancing the social and economic integration of those individuals that economic growth has left behind—women and men alike.

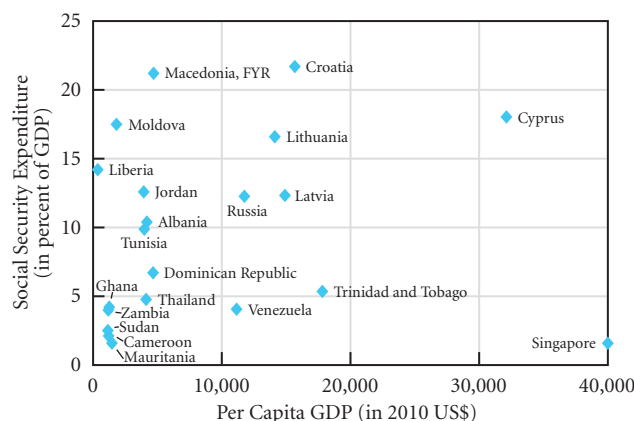
1.3 Affordability of Social Protection: A “Cost” or an “Investment”?

Social protection systems are redistributive and therefore require public budgetary allocations. While they provide direct or indirect income support, from an economy-wide perspective, what appears as a “cost” is, literally speaking, an investment that places a floor under economic downturns during hard times and propels economic activity toward inclusive, pro-poor growth in times of prosperity.

In expanding population coverage of social assistance/protection, a concern is often expressed regarding the degree to which social protection initiatives are affordable for low-income countries. Country-level experience and action research findings can shed light in this regard. Costing exercises and the use of macroeconomic impact analysis provide useful insights.

When social cash transfers are received, they are spent back into the economy, stimulating new economic activity and employment. Similarly, in the case of employment guarantee-type programs the wages earned fuel demand, and particularly demand for consumption goods. In addition, the assets and services created by these employment programs—flood control works, reforestation, new roads, home-based care services, and so on—provide risk mitigation while also creating additional demand for required inputs and labor, further stimulating production. Proper design is found to harness this energy and expand localized production and pro-poor development. Data show that high levels of social protection spending (as a percentage of GDP) have been viable in low-income countries. As Figure 1 indicates, the amount of spending on social protection (shown on the vertical axis and referred to here as “social security”) is not tied exclusively to a country’s income level (horizontal axis).

Figure 1 Social Protection as a Percentage of GDP, Various Countries



Sources: ILO 2010 (Statistical Annex Part B, Table 25); World Bank 2008; author’s calculations

A costing exercise conducted by the International Labour Organization (ILO 2008) found that the budgetary requirements of a basic social protection package for low-income countries are between 4 and 10 percent of GDP. Levy Institute research for a South African case study has highlighted the costs of *not* investing in social protection: an initial investment of 1.5 percent of GDP in employment creation for community-based home care and early childhood development would help eliminate backlogs of service delivery in underserved localities, address employment opportunity gaps, and stimulate growth in a way that generates substantial gender-equitable and pro-poor benefits; due to multiplier effects, higher tax revenue would also accrue, recouping an estimated one-third of the initial investment (Antonopoulos and Kim 2008a).

With this brief background, we now turn our focus to gender considerations.

Part 2: Social Protection through a Gender Lens—Opportunities for Promoting a Gender Equality Agenda

2.1 Underpinnings of a Social Protection Framework that Promotes Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality

Addressing income poverty and other vulnerabilities depends in crucial ways on the lens through which one “sees” those who live in poverty. From the perspective of women’s economic empowerment, this is a point worth dwelling upon. Women’s economic and social empowerment is both a process and an outcome. As an outcome, it is manifested in the degree of achieved autonomy (legal, material, and physical), equality (in opportunities, rights, and outcomes), and voiced influence (in strategic decisions that affect women’s lives within and beyond households). As a process, empowerment involves transforming (rupturing) gender-based inequality-(re)producing relations so as to enable women’s full participation in the economic, social, political, and cultural structures within which they experience their lives.⁴

From this standpoint, the opportunity social protection initiatives present is that they can promote women’s empowerment while also redressing gender-specific risks. Amartya Sen drew attention in the early 1990s to the critical difference between “protection”-oriented social protection interventions and those that lead to “promotion,”⁵ with the latter referring to initiatives that increase and promote people’s ability to secure a livelihood. This distinction serves as a pertinent entry point for the purposes of this discussion.

Consider a few gender-informed social protection alternatives that can potentially promote food security: a family cash transfer for purchases of necessities, made payable to women as they are the key managers of a household’s well-being; free delivery of food staples (rice, maize, milk, etc.), also rationed directly to female heads of households; and access to land and agricultural extension services, plus price subsidies for fertilizers and seeds dedicated to women farmers. All three initiatives have an identical objective: reduction of food insecurity. Yet there are stark differences between them in terms of the process through which deprivation is addressed, and from a gender perspective, differences in the (implicitly) assigned *positioning* of the beneficiary.

The first addresses income poverty by enabling women to participate in the economy *as consumers*, which they otherwise cannot do on their own. The second, in the case of free rationed food, allocates food directly to those deserving of support

because of their *destitute status* and inability to cope. The third approach addresses the income gap through means that enable the beneficiary to engage in the economy *as a producer*. While all three reduce an identified deprivation, the last one acknowledges it as an outcome of social relations of exclusion in production (i.e., women farmers do not have access to necessary agricultural inputs and support systems) that often underpin people’s experiences of chronic poverty and vulnerability. In a seminal paper, Stephen Devereux and Rachel Sabates-Wheeler (2004) point out that, among social protection interventions, some are deeply transformative in nature precisely because their ambition is to sever existing socially binding relations and constraints. Among the three interventions mentioned above, the third—the one that recognizes women as agricultural producers—would reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12 to 17 percent, or 100 to 150 million people, according to a 2011 report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO 2011).

The above set of examples does not provide universal guidelines for choosing social protection instruments. Country and territorial conditions may necessitate the privileging of one over the other. The key point here is that choices among potential social protection instruments assign different *positioning* to the intended beneficiary group, whether intentionally or not. From a gender perspective, social protection policy should be informed by a vision that “sees” women as active economic agents and avoids a tendency to position women in passive recipient roles. Given that the social and economic risks and vulnerabilities women face are the result of multiple and overlapping binding constraints,⁶ social protection policies alone cannot be expected to lead the way toward women’s empowerment. Rather, gender awareness can contribute to making social protection consistent with principles of equality and economic inclusion.

The following sections will address gender-related risks women face as members of poor households and income earners. Although this brief dwells on gender-differentiated risks that begin early in life and those that affect women as paid and unpaid workers, it is important to recognize that unequal distribution of resources and power affect women’s rights, opportunities, and outcomes at *all* stages of their lives (see Appendix B). We begin with a brief description of social protection instruments that address vulnerability from infancy to adolescence, focusing on instruments that have an overlapping relevance for women’s social roles as caregivers: early childhood development and conditional cash transfers. The brief then turns to the

vulnerabilities women face in navigating their worlds of work, with particular attention paid to the remediating and transformative potential of employment guarantee programs.

2.2 Identifying Gender Vulnerabilities, Creating Opportunities: Caregiving and the Early Stages of Life

Gender roles, inequalities, and deprivations begin inscribing themselves in the early stages of life and are solidified in childhood and adolescence. It is well known that the period from birth to two years of age is a “critical window” for the promotion of good growth, health, and behavioral development. Prior to entering adulthood, female children experience poverty through unequal allocations of household resources, beginning in infancy: food rationing that works to their disadvantage; detrimental allocations of their time between education and work (paid and unpaid); deficits in developing uncompromised physical, mental, and emotional capabilities; violation of their physical integrity at a young age; and early pregnancy. All along, a formative gendering process is unfolding, one that takes place through observation and participation. Positive changes that occur through individual, collective, and policy actions can have profound effects on children—particularly female children.

Social protection interventions that close income gaps, expand health services, and reduce unpaid work requirements in general will benefit children. But in addition, some social protection measures benefit them directly. While comprehensive listings of country initiatives can be found elsewhere (Barrientos, Niño-Zarazúa, and Maitrot 2010), the list below is indicative of some well-known social protection initiatives that warrant consideration for scaling up, important steps toward progressive realization of children’s universal rights:

- (1) Free infant immunization combined with free pre/postnatal care and nutrient supplements for lactating mothers and infants: usually a part of the health system, but when coverage does not reach the most vulnerable—as, for example, in Macedonia, Namibia, and Mexico—specific social protection interventions are warranted.⁷
- (2) Free school feeding programs: primarily addressing nutritional needs, these are found to be very successful in school retention in Kenya, Bangladesh, and India, among other countries.

- (3) Removal of health and education fees: improves health status and educational attainment of children; examples can be found in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.
- (4) Unconditional cash transfers and social pensions to households with orphaned children: especially important in countries with high prevalence of adults lost to conflict and illness—where elderly women often become primary caregivers of the young, as is the case in South Africa.
- (5) Early childhood development for preschool children: worldwide, there exists very limited coverage. Innovative examples that reach poor households are found in South Africa and Mexico.
- (6) Conditional cash transfers: encourage the use of educational services and regular medical appointments; found in Mexico, Brazil, and many other countries.

Reduction of risks and vulnerabilities require a sequenced intervention over the various stages of early life, and hence the introduction of a combination of instruments is highly desirable. The preferred route would entail coverage by the health and education departments; but as backlogs are at times pervasive, social protection policy can be called upon to prioritize services for the least privileged in society.

At this point, it is important to devote some space to early childhood development (ECD) interventions and conditional cash transfers (CCTs), which deserve special attention because of the overlapping space between protection of children and social roles of women in caring for them.

ECD Interventions and Child-care Services

ECD centers provide a safe and nurturing environment that meets the physical, cognitive, and emotional development needs of children under school age. Especially crucial in the context of poverty, ECD fulfills the basic nutritional, health, and mental stimulation requirements of the very young, with well-documented positive impacts (Currie 2001; Heckman, Stixrud, and Urzua 2006) that persist into adulthood (Schweinhart et al. 2005). The long-term benefits of ECD investments are also significant at the economic level, as they lead to higher educational attainment that eventually improves work options as well as the productivity of future workers.⁸

ECD is not always given sufficient policy priority, despite evidence-based advocacy (including by UNICEF). Even in those cases where its importance is recognized, huge backlogs persist. In regard to social protection, two notable experiences deserve mention: Mexico's Estancias Infantiles and South Africa's Early Childhood Development Programme. In addition to delivering benefits to children, such interventions serve the purpose of freeing up the time of adult primary caregivers. For women, this is of critical importance, as it enables them to reduce the stresses caused by facing trade-offs between paid work, school attendance, and looking for work on one side, and caring for infants and the very young on the other. In the case of Mexico, parents of preschool-age children receive vouchers through which they gain access to community-based services in neighborhood centers run mostly by women living in the same low-income communities (see box below). In South Africa, ECD centers receive direct supplements for added children from poor households, whose parents would not otherwise be able to register them for lack of ability to pay user fees. This initiative is a part of the Expanded Public Works Programme, which will be revisited in more detail in a subsequent section.

Conditional cash transfers

CCTs seek to address low levels of utilization of educational and health services for school-age children and adolescents. By now, CCTs have emerged as a central social protection intervention, especially in Latin America (Ferreira and Robalino 2010; Teichman 2007). The largest CCT programs are the Bolsa Familia in Brazil (covering 12.5 million households; introduced, on a much smaller scale, as Bolsa Escola in Brasilia in 1995, and renamed and expanded after 2003) and Oportunidades in Mexico (covering six million households; originally named

Progresá when introduced in 1997). In addition, there has been a proliferation of smaller scale initiatives in over 40 countries, with some still in a pilot phase.

CCTs provide a cash stipend, given to mothers or other qualifying adults serving as primary caretakers. While CCTs close income (consumption) gaps, they also improve school registration and retention rates as well as health-care usage among children. With a stated aim to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of deprivation—specifically, low levels of educational attainment, and ill health—evaluations of CCT programs prove they deliver excellent results. CCTs' attractive dual targets (household income and children's well-being) have invited considerable research and impact assessment as well as donor support. From a gender-equality viewpoint, two features are important: (1) better education and health outcomes for girls (increased human capital), and (2) women's empowerment, emanating from a design feature of CCTs that mandates stipendiaries be the mothers of the children (or a substitute primary caregiver over the age of 15).

With respect to the first feature, CCTs can include provisions for a graduated scale of cash awards, with higher amounts offered for older children and for girls in particular. Oportunidades does exactly that, and the enrollment of girls has been on the rise. New generations of healthier and more educated women are in the making, and this is no small achievement.

A caveat has been noted, however. CCTs identify mothers as the direct recipients of the entitlement. The transfers reduce household deficits in consumption and income poverty, but at a symbolic level they do so in the form of income distributed to women *as mothers*. Practically, women's influence over household expenditure decisions is expected to increase. In addition, since women's control over income is found to shift spending alloca-

Estancias Infantiles is a child-care program of the Ministry of Social Development (SEDESOL), Government of Mexico, designed to support working mothers, single women, and single working fathers, and aims to help reduce the backlog of child-care provisioning for poor households. It benefits women and men in poor households—households with monthly incomes of up to 1.5 times the monthly minimum wage—in two ways. First, it increases the supply of child-care spaces for children between the ages of one and four years old, or between one and six years in cases of a child with disabilities, in the care of (1) women who are in paid employment, enrolled in an educational or a vocational program, or seeking employment, and (2) single parents. The support amount is deposited in the bank account of the applicant or delivered as a check in her/his name. Second, the program creates new work opportunities, as child-care providers, for women living in low-income communities, where their services are most needed. The program provides free startup capital as well as a two-week training course and certification, plus follow-up visits. The financial grant is invested in converting part of their home or expanding an existing micro-business by carrying out necessary adjustments for building and equipment compliance. The program also pays for scheduled time with child psychologists and care providers. As of March 2010, there were 8,853 such facilities (about 75 percent located in urban centers), with plans for continued expansion.

tions toward the well-being of children, empowerment in the realm of influence over decisions improves children's lives beyond what CCTs mandate.

Despite documented benefits for children, heated debate about the merits of CCTs for women persists (Molyneux 2007, 2009; Bastagli 2009; Jenson 2009; Teixeira 2010; Arif et al. 2011). Concerns have been raised that CCTs treat women according to a caregiver identity that is mostly a reflection of ideological norms, and that ultimately limits women's life chances and options. Much unease is expressed around the reinforcement of gender stereotypes by official policy. Being a "good mother" is inadvertently equated with a full-time dedication to children's upbringing beyond their early stages of life. Besides not being aligned with women's strategic interests,⁹ some mothers face substantial time constraints (in rural and urban areas) due to other work-related obligations; and as they are unable to attend (mandatory) meetings for CCT participants or receive proof of children's school attendance, they are deemed mothers of lesser quality and are excluded from the program. This is ill conceived and unfair.

A different criticism centers on the fact that while this intervention is meant to allow the next generation to enter the labor market with better prospects, their mothers' involvement in the world of paid work is ignored. If they are not being provided with the means to become actively and productively engaged in paid work, it is as if the system has given up on them, in terms of exercising their economic rights. This is not only unfair to the mothers but also sends the wrong signal to children. If the intent is to increase household income (and women's income in particular), the focus, so the argument goes, should be on expanding livelihood options for mothers or resorting to unconditional cash transfers.

In addition, CCTs, it is feared, may unintentionally create a different intergenerational pathway of poverty transmission. As girls grow up in a cultural framework where "motherhood" status is recognized and remunerated (through rewards for "good mother" behavior), adolescents may opt for CCTs despite being better prepared for labor markets. The economic context actually invites such a choice: domestic labor market structures are highly gendered. The female labor force participation rate in Mexico is 45 percent (18 percent in rural areas), versus 78 percent for men (67 percent in rural areas). If current patterns remain undisturbed, young men who graduate out of Oportunidades are more likely to migrate out of their communities in search of

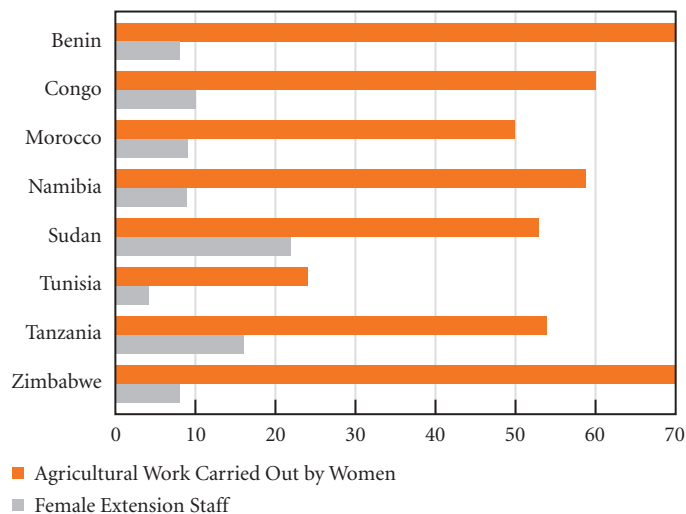
work, while young women are more likely to stay behind to raise children (robust experimental and nonexperimental impact assessments have not addressed this issue so far, perhaps due to longitudinal data requirements).

Other issues have been raised around women's ability to actually control the cash transfer income. Results are mixed, as they naturally depend upon preexisting power and control inequities, but CCTs cannot be held responsible for the pace at which intrahousehold inequities can be transformed. A more valid point concerns the very conceptualization of "empowerment" as measured by most CCT evaluators. The focus tends to be on changes in patterns of consumption expenditures and improved mobility, both of which are extremely context sensitive and represent only limited notions of empowerment.

There is a need for next-generation CCT design and programming. These gender-specific concerns need to be addressed openly and constructively through dialogue and debate. Country-level experiences with social protection provide interesting ideas in this regard:

- CCTs can become a *component* of a package of fully "integrated" interventions (an example of which is Chile Solidario), combining income transfers with health, education, employment, housing, and psychosocial counseling, with a clear component promoting economic engagement options for mothers and their graduating daughters. Public service job creation can be offered to female graduates of CCTs for the first two years of their adult working lives.
- CCTs can be delinked from their motherhood focus by expanding their scope. Opportunities exist for leveraging existing SP initiatives that can promote women's economic empowerment. In Mexico, for example, a variety of women-centered employment opportunity programs can be revamped and consolidated, including Programa Hábitat, Programa Organización Productiva para Mujeres Indígenas, Programa de Empleo Temporal, Programa de la Mujer en el Sector Agrario (PROMUSAG), Programa de Apoyo al Empleo, and Programa de Estancias Infantiles Para Apoyar a Madres Trabajadoras.

Figure 2 Percentage of Agricultural Work Carried Out by Women Compared with the Percentage of Female Extension Staff in Selected African Countries



Source: FAO 2002

2.3 Women’s Worlds of Work: Inequalities and Systemic Risks

From a global perspective, regional variations notwithstanding, results show that women stand at a disadvantage on several grounds. Women devote too much of their time to unpaid work and too little to paid work. They endure seasonal unemployment as agricultural workers and unpredictable demand for their labor when engaged in irregular and informal types of work arrangements. They lack social insurance and receive lower wages than their male counterparts. Examples of currently implemented social protection initiatives that can potentially be expanded to address income gaps include the following:

Social pensions offer cash stipends for elderly persons, households with disabled persons, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

Subsidies to vital inputs for production purposes target women with skills training and a mix of asset and cash transfers intended to promote self-employment. The Starter Pack Program in Malawi provides input grants to poor farmers (seed for maize, soybeans, or groundnuts, and fertilizer). The original plan for universal coverage of 2.7 million households was eliminated and then reinstated in 2005. In one year, Malawi graduated from

Obstacles Blight Women’s Harvests and Hopes

Women’s contributions to food production and food security would be far greater if they enjoyed equal access to essential resources and services. In many societies, tradition and laws bar women from owning land. In South and Southeast Asia more than 60 percent of the female labor force is engaged in food production but, in India, Nepal, and Thailand, for example, less than 10 percent of women farmers own land.

Without land to serve as collateral, women are also cut off from access to credit. And without credit, they often cannot buy essential inputs—such as seeds, tools, and fertilizer—or invest in irrigation and land improvements. In Jamaica, for example, women typically receive only 5 percent of loans granted by the Agricultural Credit Bank.

Because their role in food production is rarely recognized, women rarely benefit from extension and training services that would teach them about new crop varieties and technologies. A recent FAO survey found that female farmers receive only 5 percent of all agricultural extension services worldwide. In Egypt, where women make up more than half the agricultural labor force, only 1 percent of extension officers are women.

Source: FAO 2002

food-insecure status to that of being an exporter of maize. An important caveat, as mentioned earlier, is that differences in social roles necessitate that discriminatory practices must be addressed, a point that is highlighted in Figure 2 and the box above, and is a key theme of the more recent 2011 FAO report.

Self-employment promotion and the building up of women’s abilities as microentrepreneurs is often proposed as the key to economic empowerment. Important as it may be, it cannot be hoped to provide, in itself, the pathway out of poverty. On a world scale, less than 3 percent of the population works under an “employer status.” Moreover, if demand for their labor is insufficient, the self-employed (and those working for others under various arrangements) suffer. Access to credit, inputs, and training is important for women’s equality, but not a panacea.

Subsidies of or free access to food and services (education and health). Examples include the Food and Cash Transfer project (FACT, since 2005) in Malawi, which provides food rations plus an unconditional cash (US \$10) transfer to households; and the Priority Action Program (since 2000) in Cambodia, which eliminates school fees and provides remedial classes in primary education. We now turn our attention to *employment guarantee programs* (EGPs), not only because such initiatives account for the largest

population coverage among all social protection instruments, but also because this instrument uniquely closes income gaps through expansion of *livelihood options* via noncontributory employment security. This approach is relatively new and requires some clarification. More details on gender issues pertinent to the design and implementation of EGPs can be found elsewhere (Antonopoulos 2010).

EGPs provide a job and a wage to unskilled and low-skilled members of poor households who cannot find paid work alternatives. Labor is hired for a specific number of days in work projects that produce public assets. EGPs provide the security of a work entitlement; this is why it is often referred as an “employer of last resort” policy.

The argument for EGPs, philosophically, mirrors that for unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits are offered to those previously employed for a predictable period of time (three to six months on average) and guard against income insecurity while recipients look for the next employment opportunity. For those who cannot find work due to systemic and protracted lack of demand for labor or are chronically underemployed, access to an employment security benefit reduces deprivations and distress-induced migration, and can potentially serve as a good step toward a platform that provides a universal job guarantee entitlement.

Over the years, many countries have experimented with different variations of EGPs, often activating such programs (or scaling them up) during a crisis. Two country-level experiences deserve special mention, as they involved initiatives that have been introduced with a long-term vision. The first is the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act¹⁰ (MNREGA) in India, which is a *permanent* public works program, now inscribed as a guarantee in that country’s constitution, with a stated goal of averting risks and vulnerabilities arising from seasonal rural unemployment. The result of a long-standing social mobilization campaign, MNREGA provides 100 days of work per year to households located in any of the poor rural districts throughout the country. Work projects have so far been selected with the explicit aim to improve rural infrastructure, increase agricultural productivity, and enhance livelihood options. The program now reaches more than 50 million households, at a cost of about 1.2 percent of GDP. Examples of work projects include rural land development and flood control works, access roads and water ponds in villages, reforestation, environmental cleanup, construction of new roads, and maintenance of public structures.

The second is South Africa’s Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).¹¹ Introduced in 2004 with a five-year target to create a million work opportunities, the program is now in its second phase, aiming to double that target. To alleviate the extraordinary problem of chronic and structural unemployment that has averaged about 25–30 percent in the postapartheid era, the mandate of EPWP was to utilize public sector budgets to provide short-to-medium-term employment opportunities to unskilled, unemployed workers from poor and ultra-poor households. A key innovative feature of EPWP is that it provides work opportunities, not only in infrastructure, but also in the *social sectors* of the economy—in early childhood development and home- and community-based care for the permanently ill, which is of particular importance for gender equality, as they reduce women’s time allocation to unpaid care activities.

EGPs are occasionally confused with previously implemented “social funds” and small pilot initiatives. These initiatives confronted several difficulties. They were haphazardly introduced, short-lived, and had limited population coverage, such that national ownership and institutional capacity-building through “learning by doing” remained anemic. Secondly, with little national and local planning, they were “project-oriented” and not demand-driven initiatives (i.e., demand for participation and days of work did not reflect self-selection on the part of participating beneficiaries). Furthermore, EGPs are meant to expand livelihood options, not substitute for them. As such, they are not best suited to respond to, for example, vulnerabilities and risks that arise due to elimination of community-based rights to water resources and associated crop-yield reduction (i.e., depletion of water tables due to large-scale commercial use); nor are they meant to fend off unfair competition from highly subsidized agricultural production abroad; nor can they be a proper response to structural adjustment that devastates livelihoods and radically reduces jobs. Beneficiaries in these instances are not willingly, and most likely not happily, availing themselves of a job offer. They accept participation in “cash for work” or “food for work” out of distress. This probably accounts for a second occasional misconception, in which EGPs are categorized as CCT programs.

2.4 Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment, and EGPs¹²

From a gender perspective, much insight can be gained by addressing two key issues: how and under what conditions are women ensured access to EGP jobs? To what degree do selected work projects benefit them?

Ensuring Women's Equitable Access to EGP Jobs

Much like women's participation in the labor market, women participating in EGPs and PWPs are bound to face inequalities, including long-standing biases. Barriers to entry, job assignment segregation, wage differentials, and other asymmetries can be remediated at the design phase. From a (practical) policy point of view, four aspects deserve special mention.

First, women's equitable access to jobs will be predicated on addressing the gender-differentiated supply of labor constraints. Unlike men, women's world of work includes the dedication of a considerable amount of their time to unpaid work, including unpaid care work for their children and all adults. Their time for participation in remunerable work activities, therefore, is constrained to begin with. India's MG-NREGA helps deal with this issue by mandating that worksites task some workers with providing and maintaining crèche, shade, and water for children; providing time off for lactating mothers; and ensuring that projects are within a relatively short distance of women's dwellings.

Second, the gendered nature of work assignments may exclude women from some jobs. Construction jobs in infrastructure have traditionally been carried out by men. Responding to this challenge, the programs in India and South Africa have explicitly included quotas for women.¹³ There exists immense variation across localities, yet the existing evidence shows women overwhelmingly want to enroll in EGP infrastructure projects (Devereux and Solomon 2006), with participation rates in some states in India as high as 90 percent.

Third, another critical issue is the underrepresentation of women in semiskilled categories of public works, and their low participation rates as subcontractors and supervisors of projects. In some cases, the shortfalls may be an extension of normative labor practices prevailing in the rest of the economy. When appropriate training is warranted, it must be made part and parcel of PWP and EGP initiatives. A good example in this regard comes from an initiative in Peru:

The Rural Roads Maintenance Program in Peru (2003–06) increased female participation from 3.5 percent to 24 percent by setting a female participation quota of 10 percent in microenterprises, combined with a gender training program addressed to the different actors and levels of the project. Improved participation in decision-making roles in 284 microenterprises were directly linked to targeted training. The program also found

that women could undertake all maintenance activities and had performance better than men in activities like surface presentation, forestry, signalization, and control of tasks. (Gutiérrez 2005)

Fourth, equitable wages and equal pay for comparable work must be safeguarded. Again, the need to address gender-based inequities in wages is based on the fear that such programs are likely to mirror practices and outcomes that prevail in the overall economy. By setting identical wage "floors" for men and women, PWPs and EGPs can effectively lead by example.

Ensuring Selected Projects Reduce Women's Unpaid Work

In creating jobs, a main concern of PWP and EGP programs is that public funds are invested in work projects that are socially useful. As many developing countries experience backlogs in basic physical infrastructure, PWP and EGP programs have traditionally focused on closing such gaps, mostly through the use of labor-intensive production methods.¹⁴ Yet, there is space to enlarge the scope of employment-intensive works, and awareness of gender-differentiated priorities can provide guidance here. Project selection that bridges backlogs in social service delivery will not only benefit the community but can also narrow gender-based inequalities in unpaid work. In addition, physical infrastructure projects can be leveraged and prioritized with the aim of contributing to a reduction in unpaid work.

The examples below are selected from a range of PWPs undertaken at different times by different countries (or projects proposed for consideration). While benefiting communities in general, they also improved women's lives by reducing drudgery and time-taxing unpaid work burdens:

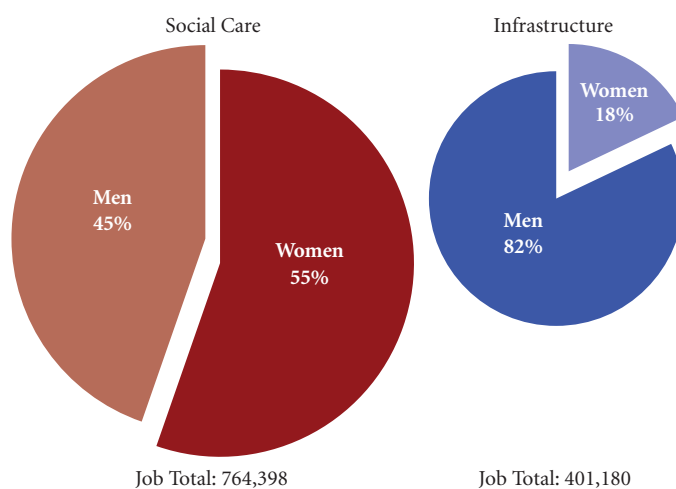
- Construction of more durable housing (Argentina) and ecological latrines (South Africa)
- Construction of small bridges, feeder roads, and paving of internal roads (India)
- Construction of water-harvesting structures and improving traditional structures (India)
- Regeneration of common lands, plantation, and reforestation (Ethiopia)
- Organizing the collection and distribution of water and firewood (India)

- Construction of public-use ovens for meal preparation (Argentina)
- Wasteland development; watershed development (Ethiopia and India)
- Upgrading irrigation infrastructure of land of poor, female-headed households (India)

An argument for social-sector PWP and EGPs (i.e., early childhood development and home-based care) can be made from an efficiency standpoint. When public job creation takes place *on a large scale*, whether through physical or social sector projects, the impact reaches the entire economy through two channels. To begin with, income earned by PWP workers is income spent back in the economy. Second, each project requires the use of beneficiary labor as well as other types of labor and physical inputs. New demand is thereby injected into the overall system as additional income flows to workers and owners of small, medium, and at times large-size enterprises. They, in turn, will also demand new goods and services, and so on. The positive “multiplier” reverberations show up at the macroeconomic level as growth in employment, output, and ultimately in tax revenues. Research findings derived through models that link PWP’s effects on the overall economy and individual households show that the impacts on new job creation, new income, and the pro-poor distribution of that income are stronger when investments are allocated in social services projects than in physical infrastructure.¹⁵ A joint study of the Levy Institute and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Antonopoulos and Kim 2008a; 2008b) estimated the employment impacts of expanding South Africa’s EPWP/ECD to cover 50 percent of children in poverty (and home-based community health services covering 20 percent of all patients with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis). The expansion of social care, equivalent to 1 percent of GDP, could create over 764,000 jobs. As a comparison, the same amount of investment in infrastructure would generate just over 401,000 jobs. Furthermore, 55 percent of the jobs created in social care investment would go to women, whereas only 18 percent of infrastructure jobs reach women (see Figure 3).

Though not the only project selection criterion, investing in social care projects meets multiple policy objectives. While expanding services, it maximizes job growth, distributes newly created income fairly, and promotes gender equality through social cosharing of unpaid care work responsibilities.

Figure 3 Employment Impacts of Expanding South Africa's EPWP/ECD: Job Distribution by Gender



Source: Antonopoulos and Kim 2008a

Conclusion

Many countries have already embarked on the path that the 2009 Social Protection Floor Initiative proposed: a progressive and gradual expansion of domestic systems with the aim of providing coverage for all. In adopting a gender-equality perspective, there are important country-level experiences to draw from. South-South cooperation can provide a platform for learning and custom-tailoring diverse instruments according to domestic needs. A call for avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach, and the need to resist external expectations and pressures, is being clearly voiced.¹⁶ Valuable lessons that build on gender equality and promote women’s empowerment deserve to be considered and debated by a wide range of stakeholders. Care must be taken so that homegrown agendas embrace the very voices of women who are, after all, meant to benefit from the renewed energy and resources of a wider social protection agenda.

So far, most social protection initiatives still do not have clearly stated objectives that address gender risks; nor are they focused on transforming gender-inequality relations. Yet, there are powerful exceptions and lessons to be learned from country-level social protection initiatives, in terms of variety of instruments as well as design elements. There is overwhelming agreement that social protection policy is critical in addressing both “life-cycle risks” and “livelihood risks,” and that more comprehensive systems are going to be gradually introduced across

the world. The issue is how to arrive at a proper combination of instruments that, from a gender-equality perspective, will achieve these goals. A useful approach begins with the recognition that gender-informed social protection interventions have the potential to nurture transformative processes that can contribute to women's-empowerment objectives.

Notes

1. This policy brief was produced with financial support received by the UNDP and was developed to inform initiatives in which UNDP country offices and their national partners are engaged. It aims, ultimately, to stimulate country-level discussions with a view toward developing locally adapted gender-responsive initiatives, and to serve as an advocacy tool.
2. "Globally, the theoretical coverage of existing statutory contributory pension schemes should amount to nearly 40 per cent of the working-age population (and 50 per cent of the economically active population). In practice, however, the effective coverage amounts to no more than 25 per cent of working-age men and women" (ILO 2010, 45–46).
3. Existing social protection instruments have been classified according to a variety of criteria. For a life-cycle stages approach, see Kabeer (2008a). For an approach that classifies social protection instruments according to whether they are preventive, protective, "promotive," or transformative, see Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004). See Barrientos and Niño-Zarazúa (2011) on "income" versus "income-plus" instruments—social protection schemes that, in addition to bridging income and consumption gaps, are designed to deliver something more. On the advantages of participation being based on self-selection, means testing, or universal provision, see UNRISD (2010).
4. How this is to be achieved is contested terrain, but the possibilities include: women's own demands and collective action, changing winds of ideas and ideologies and interests, evolution of economic and social policies, public actions that fulfill domestic and international commitments that promote equal women's rights, and initiatives that promote a renewed sense of self-esteem (see Kabeer 2008a, 2008b; Molyneux 2007, 2009).
5. Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) introduced the terminology of the "protection-prevention-promotion-transformation" potential of interventions. This provides a useful reference point to examine opportunities and challenges of social protection from a gender-equality perspective.
6. A very useful typology of constraints that limit women's opportunities is proposed by Kabeer (2008a): "gender-specific" constraints are those associated roles assigned according to prevailing norms, custom, and practices; "gender-intensifying" are those among the norms that result in inequalities of distribution of food, health care, and asset ownership, and "gender-imposed" are those that are enacted and reflect inequalities in the public domain.
7. National health systems and standards are required, but backlogs are found to be ameliorated by targeting the creation of community health centers and cadres of community-based workers.
8. Dickens, Sawhill, and Tebbs (2006) estimates that the overall impact of the investment is an added 3.5 percent in GDP growth by the year 2080, compared to their baseline projection.
9. Naila Kabeer aptly makes the distinction between practical needs that address immediate concerns (e.g., access to food) and strategic decisions and interests, which involve life-course paths (such as having or not having children, or marital status). That distinction is employed here.
10. For more information on MG-NREGA, see the Indian Ministry of Rural Development's website for the program at nrega.nic.in/netnrega/home.aspx.
11. For more information on EPWP, see the South African Department of Public Works' website at www.epwp.gov.za/. For more on EGPs more generally, see the work featured by Economists for Full Employment at www.economistsfor-fullemployment.org.
12. This section draws heavily on Antonopoulos (2010).
13. The EPWP, influenced by the national labor standards set by the Code of Good Practice targets issued by South Africa's Department of Labour, also mandates that at least 40 percent of workers are youths and 3 percent of workers are disabled, to be scaled up over time.
14. This is a field in which the ILO has been instrumental. Providing technical support, projects use the minimum amount of machines, thus maximizing the labor content of production. The ILO has advocated the use of such production methods for decades, and several countries have undertaken their implementation—primarily in Africa, but also in Asia and Latin America. For more on the ILO's Employment

Intensive Investment Programme, see www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/recon/eiip/about/index.htm.

15. See Antonopoulos and Kim (2008a; 2008b). These results have also been verified in the case of developed countries (Antonopoulos et al. 2010; Simonazzi 2009; Warner and Liu 2006).
16. See, for example, Devereux et al. (2010).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Definitions of Social Protection by International Agencies

The World Bank

Social protection consists of public interventions to assist individuals, households, and communities in better managing income risks. The objectives of these interventions are a subset of the overall objectives of economically sustainable participatory development with poverty reduction.

International Labor Organization

Social protection is defined as the set of public measures that a society provides for its members to protect them against economic and social distress that would be caused by the absence or substantial reduction of income from work as a result of various contingencies, the provision of health care, and the provision of benefits for families with children.

Asian Development Bank

Social protection is defined as the set of policies and programs designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labor markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income.

The Department for International Development (DFID)

Social protection, whether carried out by the state or privately funded, is that which (1) enables people to deal more effectively with their risk and vulnerability to crises and changes in circumstances (such as unemployment or old age); and (2) helps tackle extreme and chronic poverty. However, too wide a definition can make it difficult to distinguish social protection from development policy more broadly. For this reason, the DFID takes a narrower definition of social protection that focuses on a subset of public actions that help address risk, vulnerability, and chronic poverty.

USAID

Social protection consists of public interventions that seek to enable poor and vulnerable households to increase their ability to manage risk, thereby allowing them to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic growth.

Source: Adapted from Cook and Kabeer 2009

Appendix B: Gender-related Life-cycle Risks and Social Protection Responses

Stage in Life	Gender-related Risks and Vulnerabilities Associated with Poverty	Social Protection Responses with a Gender Focus
Infancy and Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food insecurity and health concerns • Lack of health care, adequate nutrition, and mental stimulation • Left alone or in unsafe environments <p><i>Early exposure to “gendered” social roles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Mother and infant” interventions: food security, immunization, health-care provisioning • Community-based ECD centers (feeding, bathing, health needs, and mental stimulation); hiring within the local community and local “procurement” contracts for purchases of needed materials and food can give priority to producers and vendors from local and peripheral communities
School Age and Adolescence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Girls withdrawn from school • Low levels of school attendance due to lack of primary carer’s incentive to utilize available services; reasons include child labor responsibilities (domestic work for girls, higher risk employment for boys) or double burden or incompatible work/school schedules • Early-age motherhood and associated domestic tasks, including childrearing <p><i>Early exposure to and participation in unequal “gendered” social roles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTs • Waived school fees and introduction of school feeding programs • Unconditional school scholarships or annual stipends • ECD care and child care provisioning for young mothers; afterschool programs for young and older children, coupled with training programs for young-aged “mothers” or continuing skill-education attendance programs
Working Age Adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited availability of paid work options, seasonal unemployment, precarious jobs of unpredictable duration for some own-account workers, low overall labor force participation in decent jobs and lack of maternity worker rights, unequal wages • Time conflicts between paid and unpaid work tasks (i.e., water and fuel collection, small-animal husbandry, gathering of free goods, unpaid family contributing work) as well as in providing care for <i>all</i> household members • Discrimination in access to capital, land, extension services, and vital inputs as well as markets becomes prohibitive in building own enterprises <p><i>Reinforcement of unequal social roles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EGPs to provide paid work to unskilled/low skilled women for a predictable number of days (100–130 per annum), equal hourly wages for men and women, and maternity leave and crèche provisioning • Universal access or EGP-provided community-based ECD centers hiring (mostly women) from within the local community; skill upgrading and accreditation for care providers; design/implementation should include women’s participation and voices • Access to credit, land, and subsidies to basic inputs, but also national, municipal, and local government “procurement” contracts should prioritize women’s cooperatives as vendors to nurture and improve survival rates of micro-enterprises; combine financial services with other gender-equitable access to forms of needed support
Post–Working Age Adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme poverty due to inability to work and loss of assets to other family members when husband dies • Caring responsibilities for children whose parents are lost to cross-border, ethnic, or drug-trafficking conflicts or illness, including the HIV/AIDS pandemic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old-age pensions (social pensions) • Social pensions for household with orphaned children • ECD and home-based community care services for the elderly and sick members of their households • CCTs (advisable to remove strict conditionalities that may be hard to be met by elderly women)

Source: Author’s compilation, based on Kabeer 2008b, 105

Selected Web Resources

ILO. World Social Security Report 2010–2011. For figures and tables:

www.socialsecurityextension.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.do?tid=361.

ILO. Global Extension of Social Security (statistical resources).

www.socialsecurityextension.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.do?tid=10.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Social Expenditure Database (SOCX).

www.oecd.org/document/9/0,3746,en_2825_497118_38141385_1_1_1_1,00.html.

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About the Author

Senior Scholar RANIA ANTONOPOULOS is director of the Gender Equality and the Economy program at the Levy Institute. She specializes in macro-micro linkages of gender and economics with a special emphasis on the relationship between paid and unpaid forms of work. She has served as an expert adviser and consultant for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and, since 2002, as a co-director of the GEM-IWG Knowledge Networking Program on Engendering Macroeconomics and International Economics. Her recent publications include “Explaining Long-Term Exchange Rate Behavior in the United States and Japan”(co-author), in *Alternative Theories of Competition: Challenges to the Orthodoxy* (2012); *Unpaid Work and the Economy: Gender, Time Use and Poverty in Developing Countries* (co-editor; 2010); *An Alternative Theory of Long-run Exchange Rate Determination* (2009); “The Unpaid Care Work–Paid Work Connection,” International Labour Office, Geneva (2008); and “State, Difference, Diversity: Toward a Path of Expanded Democracy and Gender Equality,” in *Democracy, State, and Citizenship in Latin America, Vol. II* (2008).

In 2006–07, Antonopoulos headed up a team of Levy Institute researchers studying the impact of public employment guarantee schemes (EGSs) on pro-poor development and gender equality. The project, supported by a grant from the UNDP, consisted of a pilot study exploring the synergies between EGSs in health and education and unpaid work—including unpaid care work—in South Africa. In 2010, she worked closely with the National Women’s Institute (INMUJERES) of Mexico toward a similar initiative whose aim was public service job creation primarily for women in rural areas in Mexico. With other Levy scholars, Antonopoulos was also involved in developing the Levy Institute Measure of Time and Income Poverty and applying it to the study of poverty in Latin America. Currently, she is leading a team of Levy scholars in advising the Institute of Labour of the National Federation of Trade Unions (INE-GSEE) to implement a newly established emergency ELR program in all regions of Greece, funded by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

Antonopoulos holds a Ph.D. in economics from The New School for Social Research.