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Research Report

Social protection: Towards gender equality

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Social protection:
towards gender equality



Empowered lives.
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Policy in Focus



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Cover art: The selected piece depicts the graffiti art of Brazilian artist Criola <criolagraff@gmail.com>, which is a celebration of Afro-Brazilian culture and women's empowerment, reflecting the geographical and thematic focus of this issue.

Editor's note: On behalf of the UNDP IPC-IG, I would like to extend a special thanks to the specialist guest editors, Raquel Tebaldi and Flora Myamba for their dedication to the publication of this issue. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to all the authors for their generous and insightful contributions, without which this special edition simply would not have been possible.

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Editorial

Social protection has become prominent in the global development agenda over recent decades, with social protection systems now being included as a target under Sustainable Development Goal 1: “End poverty in all its forms everywhere”. In developing countries, these policies have played an important role in alleviating extreme poverty, among other impacts that are increasingly being investigated. Beyond the improvement of the material conditions of beneficiaries, 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. This special edition of *Policy in Focus*, which is auspiciously being released for International Women’s Day 2017, covers key topics related to gender equality and social protection, featuring a wide range of contributions from women policy practitioners and scholars, presenting case studies and reflections from Brazil and various African countries.

Considering that the link between social protection and women’s empowerment must not be assumed automatically, Cristina Santos asks “Are we empowering women?” and presents an important reflection focusing on conditional cash transfers. The article by Mildred Mushunje argues for a rights-based approach to addressing gender inequality via social protection and presents some of the main policy implications of this pursuit. These reflections are followed by country-specific studies, starting with a presentation of a recent assessment of the impacts of cash transfer programmes on women’s empowerment in Tanzania by Flora Myamba, which is followed by a piece by Rashida Shariff, regarding the barriers that Tanzanian women face to achieve leadership positions.

The issue of women’s leadership is also analysed by Florence Kyoheirwe Muhanguzi, in the context of non-state social protection governance in Uganda.

Women’s relationships with the labour market, informality and social protection are also crucial areas of exploration, and Hania Sholkamy presents a compelling argument regarding the empowering potential of social protection—and cash transfers in particular—in the Egyptian context of highly unequal access to and participation in the labour market between men and women. Sophie Plagerson, Lauren Stuart and Marianne Ulriksen reflect on the ways in which social protection programmes benefit women in the informal sector in South Africa.

South–South cooperation provides great opportunities for mutual learning in gender-sensitive social protection. Raquel Tebaldi’s article focuses on an analysis of the potential of this cooperation between Brazil and African countries. The last two articles of this special edition focus on Brazil. Janine Mello dos Santos explores the connections between the many facets of *Brasil sem Miséria* and gender equality, and presents important outcomes. Finishing on a personal note, Leticia Bartholo shares her experiences in the federal management of the *Bolsa Família* programme.

We hope that by presenting such a wide range of both theoretical and practical perspectives, this special issue of *Policy in Focus* will contribute towards the promotion of gender equality through social protection and stimulate new debates.

Raquel Tebaldi and Flora Myamba

Are we empowering women?

Cristina Santos¹

Ensuring that societies can function well while securing the rights of women within them to have opportunities and freedom to flourish as individuals in their own right is one of the most current social protection and development policy priorities. Recently, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have recognised gender equality and women's empowerment as key to reducing inequalities, gender-based violence and poverty,² giving women's struggles a prominent perspective. While adequate policy and institutional change are fundamental underpinnings of the promotion of well-being for women and girls, this process lies at the core of complex, dynamic and intertwined social systems and beliefs. However, many policies and development programmes are designed within a neoliberal ethos which takes the woman, and not the social systems to which the woman belongs, as the key player responsible for driving change. Drawing on some experiences and evidence from developed and developing countries, and looking in particular at conditional cash transfer programmes (CCTs), we will revisit what it means to empower women as a process and as a goal. Should we empower women? And perhaps more importantly, are we empowering women?

In most countries, social protection policies are designed with a utilitarian ethos: as long as more financial resources increase individual consumption, more is better. Furthermore, assuming individuals are capable of judging what satisfies their needs or utility, endowing them with the responsibility to optimise their resources, given their preferences and initial conditions, will lead to socially optimal outcomes. A focus on gross domestic product (GDP) growth reflects the emphasis on the expansion of resources as a whole, as an indication of the increase in resources for people within countries. Concepts of empowerment, human flourishing and human development gained new meaning with Amartya Sen's 'capability approach' at the turn

of the century. This approach encourages policymakers to question the frictionless and fully autonomous utilitarian model of growth and development, and to consider not only realised choices and what individuals are and do (their 'functioning'), but also the range of options and possibilities from which they make these choices—their 'set of capabilities' (Anand et al. 2009) when evaluating individual and societal well-being.

Central to this approach, and to critical aspects of policy effectiveness, are notions of autonomy and empowerment of individuals to exert their choices (Burchardt, Evans, and Holder 2012). The set of basic or fundamental capabilities which need to be ensured for individuals to be able to flourish has been under scrutiny, giving rise to several lists of basic capabilities. In this article, we will use Frances Stewart's list of fundamental capability dimensions, because it explicitly takes into account the social context and systems within which individuals function, which is often absent from other lists. Stewart (2013) identifies the following dimensions of capabilities as fundamental prerequisites for human development:

- bodily well-being;
- material well-being;
- mental development;
- security;
- work;
- social relations;
- spiritual well-being;
- empowerment and political freedom; and
- respect for other species.

Research has shown strong positive associations between any and all of these dimensions and measures of well-being, whether assessed by subjective

well-being or by indicators of mental health (Anand et al. 2009; Anand, Santos, and Smith 2008). However, empirical evidence also suggests that there are often trade-offs between these dimensions. While domestic violence is one of the most serious and widespread inhibitors of bodily well-being, and estimated to cost society a substantial fraction of a country's GDP (Santos 2013), policies aimed at reducing the prevalence or the seriousness of domestic violence can create adverse outcomes. For instance, Anand and Santos (2009) found that women living in the UK who have experienced domestic violence were not only those living in the poorest households but also those in households where the woman was more educated and/or had higher income than the man. However, social policy in the UK that aims to reduce domestic violence often focuses on empowering women via employment or income support alone, and only recently—through initiatives such as the Stand Together against Domestic Violence (STADV) project—has policy reached out to include clinical diagnosis and practice, and wider support systems targeted at domestic abuse (Stegmann et al. 2016). De Henau, Himmelweit and Santos (2012) used evidence from the UK, Germany and Australia to argue that systems that are meant to be 'family-friendly' often distort men's and women's perceived control and decision-making power over household resources in favour of men. This raises the question of whether promoting women's employment per se (or income support targeted at women) increases women's access to family resources or whether more multidimensional policies should be designed to ensure women's autonomy and real empowerment.

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. One of the pioneering programmes, Mexico's *Progresa*, now called *Oportunidades*, showed positive outcomes

“ Most CCTs were designed to alleviate poverty and did not have combating gender inequalities as a priority.



Photo: UN Photo/Albert González Farran. Women in English class, El Fasher, Sudan, 2014 <<https://goo.gl/9L7BtY>>.

in terms of household spending patterns shifting towards consumption goods that are more beneficial to children (Behrman and Hoddinott 2005), and in terms of women's relative bargaining power (Independent Evaluation Group 2014). 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 (Himmelweit et al. 2013). The success of earlier CCT programmes has led to the expansion of this approach across Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, regions where women's empowerment and well-being are generally low and there is a real need to implement poverty alleviation programmes whose effectiveness is argued to depend on women's empowerment and decision-making power regarding household resources.

However, there is evidence suggesting that the effectiveness of these programmes is undermined by several elements in their design and their scope, and by the limited analysis of the whole impact of these programmes on women's lives and well-being (as well as those of their families). First, most CCTs were designed to alleviate poverty and did not have combating gender inequalities as a priority; in fact, by prioritising material well-being and work or employment, and excluding other dimensions such as gender relations from the programme's impact evaluation, one can argue that women's capabilities, such as social relations,

bodily well-being or security, could indeed be compromised in some cases.

Second, it is also the case that by not analysing in great detail the political participation and empowerment of women 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. Evidence from a nationwide programme in Tanzania suggests that at the baseline start of the programme, households that benefited from it (the 'treated' households) had fewer women in them, and were less likely to have a woman as the head of household, than the households that were part of the programme for evaluation purposes only—that is, the households that were eligible but were not treated (the 'control' households) (Myamba et al. 2016).

Finally, outcomes measured by these programmes, while already narrow in scope given the list of capability dimensions discussed earlier, often exclude drop-outs. When households that drop out of such programmes are not followed up on and properly evaluated, little is known about the true outcomes, and there are reasons to believe that some of them may have been detrimental—for instance, a household that drops out because the woman was not able to use a cash transfer, which was instead appropriated (perhaps by force)

by the man. Often programmes do not envisage resources to support households where the programme has created unintended consequences.

Returning to our initial question: are women being empowered by programmes, such as CCT interventions, that aim to promote material well-being and employment by selecting women as the main household recipients of benefits and bearers of responsibilities? 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 and children.

We have previously discussed that increasing women's resources or employment opportunities per se, if not accompanied by a collective engagement of their families and their communities, can undermine other fundamental capabilities, such as bodily well-being, security or social relations. A lack of empowerment and political freedom can exclude women from the decision-making processes through which the eligibility of families is discussed and agreed on, reduce their chances of benefiting from the programme, even when eligible, and can silence women in households whose outcomes remain unobserved in drop-out cases.

Therefore, the empowerment of women and children per se, while an important

goal to achieve in its own right, may not be best achieved by policies and interventions that focus on this objective in isolation. It should hinge on policies that recognise the social complexity of relations of women within their families and communities, and which enable the rightful entitlement of women to resources and to decision-making. ●

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1. The Open University.
2. Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal 5: "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls". See United Nations (2016).

“Increasing women's resources or employment opportunities per se, if not accompanied by a collective engagement of their families and their communities, can undermine other fundamental capabilities, such as bodily well-being, security or social relations.



Photo: Marisol Grandon/DFID. Mothers support group with their budding tomato crop in Lodwar, Kenya, 2011 <<https://goo.gl/TMRoHc>>.

Gender and social protection: policy implications

Mildred T. Mushunje¹

Since the 1990s, policymakers and development practitioners have highlighted the critical importance of gender in the implementation, evaluation and effectiveness of programmes across a range of social and economic sectors, including agriculture, health and education (IFPRI 2010). Gender in this instance is defined as a socially determined set of qualities and behaviours expected from women and men and within society (FAO 2012).

As Acker (1989) remarks, “society including class structure, the state and the political economies cannot be understood without a consideration of gender”. It refers to the social roles and identities associated with what it means to be a man or a woman. Yuval-Davis (1997) contends that “gender should be understood not as a ‘real’ social difference between men and women, but as a mode of discourse that relates to groups of subjects whose social roles are defined by their sexual/biological difference”.

Gender roles are shaped by ideological, religious, ethnic, economic and cultural factors and are key determinants of the distribution of responsibilities and resources between men and women (Moser 1989). Sewpaul (2013) contends that, being socially determined, this distribution can be changed through a critical analysis of the gendered use of language and the dominant societal discourses and practices, with the self as the main site of politicisation and conscious social action, including public policy.

Gender is also implicated in the fundamental constitution of all social life. It involves the inequalities in the sexual division of labour, the separation of public and private spheres, the overvaluation of production and undervaluation of social reproduction, and the subsequent devaluation of women’s paid and unpaid caring work (Mies 1997). Notably, gender

relations are known to be complex and context-specific (Quisumbing and Pandolfelli 2010; Sewpaul 2013): what is normal in one society/culture may be unacceptable in another.

The existence of gender equality in any society has been noted to have positive effects and impacts at the household and national levels. For instance, the State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011 (SOFA) report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Bank’s World Development Report 2012 note the importance of addressing gender issues for increased productivity and improved household food and nutrition security—the SOFA report concludes that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30 per cent. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by between 2.5 and 4 per cent, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by between 12 and 17 per cent. Gender equality is key to unlocking many positive developmental results. For gender equality to be attained, there is a pressing need for the provision of services that have the potential to empower women, who through historical discrimination have been in many instances side-lined and left out of significant developmental discourses.

Gender equality starts with valuing girls and boys equally and upholding their basic human rights. The World Bank (2012) defines gender equality in terms of rights, resources and voices; equality under the law, equality of opportunities (including access to human capital and other productive resource), equality of rewards for work and equality of voice. An aspect and a tool that has often been used to promote gender equality is women’s empowerment (FAO 2012). This recognises the different levels through which women and men can access resources and seeks to devise ways to support women to participate in mainstream development (Mushunje

2013). Social protection initiatives provide opportunities to promote gender equality and address historical imbalances.

Social protection is also a means of providing short-term assistance for individuals and households to cope with shocks. The World Bank (2012) regards social protection as public interventions to assist individuals, households and communities to better manage risk, and provide support to people who are critically poor. The World Bank also considers social protection as an investment rather than a cost; therefore, it should be addressed with a focus on the causes of poverty, more so than its symptoms. Sebates-Wheeler and Devereux (2007) argue that social protection should be transformative by addressing the social justice issues that arise from structural inequalities and abuses of power. Therefore, social protection should thus aim to achieve empowerment, equity and the realisation of economic social and cultural rights for all (ibid.).

Addressing gender inequality and promoting women’s empowerment through the provision of social protection is a basic human rights issue. Under the current trend of neoliberal globalisation, women’s poverty and their deepening oppression and exploitation have been notorious (Healy 2005). Some remarkable processes related to this deterioration of women’s life conditions include the restructuring of social policy, transferring previous state responsibilities regarding social reproduction to women’s unpaid work and increasing the burden placed on them. Women have continued to play ‘traditional’ roles, but in addition, they have taken on additional ones due to changes in lifestyle as a result of migration, the effects of HIV and AIDS, economic hardships and other factors.

Social protection and gender equality

A number of strategic interventions can be enacted to promote social protection as a means for achieving women’s empowerment and, ultimately, gender equality. The Southern African



Photo: A'Melody Lee/World Bank. Women work to pay their expenses and to improve their quality of life, Rwanda, 2013 <<https://goo.gl/6j85e1>>.

“ Addressing gender inequality and promoting women’s empowerment through the provision of social protection is a basic human rights issue.

Development Community (SADC) Code on Social Security (2007) 1/2 notes that social protection safeguards individuals against life-cycle crises and enhances human welfare. The Code urges member countries to establish social protection floors that comprise basic social security guarantees. These should include access to essential health care, and basic income security for children, unemployed people, elderly people and people with disabilities. Similarly, the African Union Social Policy Framework for Africa (2008) notes that a minimum package of essential social protection should cover essential health care, and benefits for informal workers and unemployed people. This is particularly important, as the bulk of women are found in informal employment and insecure, agriculture-based work. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (2009) creates another impetus for the promotion of gender equality and provision of social protection. Article 14 requires States to take into account particular problems faced by rural women and expressly urges States Parties to ensure that rural women have the right to benefit from social security programmes and obtain access to credit and markets (United Nations 2009).

Given the range of different and interrelated objectives for social protection, there has been an increasing focus on pursuing a systems-based approach. The World Bank’s (2012) Social Protection and Labor Strategy

2012–2022 states that “the main objective of the new strategy is to help countries move from fragmented approaches to harmonized systems”. The International Labour Organization (ILO 2012) notes that social protection initiatives should ensure coordination with other policies. Social protection can—if properly structured within a broader framework—contribute directly to more rapid economic growth through human resource development and capacity strengthening of poor populations, especially smallholder farmers, the majority of whom are women.

The following are specific examples of the various social protection interventions that could be beneficial for women’s empowerment and gender equality.

1. Targeted social and cash transfers

Evidence suggests that when women are the target of cash and social transfers, benefits do not simply accrue to the women but, rather, filter through to the whole household. The FAO has gained wide experience in working with cash transfers through its From Protection to Production (PtoP) project, which is being piloted in a number of countries (FAO 2015). The PtoP programme is exploring linkages and strengthening coordination between social protection, agriculture and rural development. From the experience gained, the programme has shown that cash transfer programmes have become an important tool of social protection and poverty reduction strategies in

low- and middle-income countries. Benefits associated with cash transfers include reducing hunger and rural poverty. Child grant programmes have been shown to increase the likelihood of children staying in school. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2015), girls are still more likely than boys to drop out of school in South Asia. Providing cash grants targeted at school-based support could help keep children in school and increase literacy rates among women—half of all adult women in the South Asia region are illiterate.

2. Targeted practical gap filling

A large proportion of the population in Africa live in rural areas and rely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Women comprise 43 per cent of the global agricultural labour force and often provide the bulk of care work in rural areas, often without pay (FAO 2011). Women work more hours in a day than men and provide up to 80 per cent of all agricultural labour (ibid.). They have limited access to and control of agricultural resources, such as land, inputs (fertilisers), finance and the proceeds of their labour (Bhatasara 2011). Female-headed households should be targeted with required inputs and appropriate mechanisation to reduce the labour and drudgery of farming. Addressing the input gap coupled with mechanisation through social protection measures would greatly improve women’s time poverty.

3. Provision of social security for seasonal workers

Women are found mostly in seasonal or short-term employment and low-paying work (UN Women 2012). Social protection measures need to support women in these circumstances by providing paid leave, pensions and paid maternity leave.

In conclusion, social protection programmes can benefit greatly from the careful consideration and integration of the gender dimension, especially from an early design stage. They can be powerful tools for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, towards an overarching goal of inclusive development and the attainment of the sustainable development goals. ●

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Assessing the impact of cash transfer programmes on women's empowerment in Tanzania

Flora Myamba¹

The Tanzanian Social Action Fund (TASAF) is the government's designated programme for implementing cash transfers to people living in extreme poverty in the country. TASAF piloted cash transfers in 2009 and scaled them up in 2012 to the Productive Social Safety Nets (PSSN) programme, designed to implement cash transfers, public works programmes, livelihood programmes and an infrastructure programme. The PSSN TASAF programme is not primarily designed as a gender-based programme; therefore, it does not contain a specific strategy for evaluating its gendered impacts in terms of economic empowerment.

Acknowledging such a gap, REPOA² has designed a study (Myamba et al. Forthcoming 2017), detailed in this article, to explore women's economic empowerment occurring as a direct or indirect result of cash transfers through the TASAF. This study further identifies women who are disempowered and intends to facilitate the means to increase their autonomy and participation in decision-making. Drawing from the Women Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI) approach,³ the study examines the five 'domains of empowerment' (5DE): decisions about production, access to and decision-making power over productive resources, control over the use of income, leadership in the community and time allocation. It also examines the Gender Parity Index, which measures men's and women's input in the 5DE, and explores the contribution of additional generic variables that include culture, legal frameworks and religion to women's empowerment. The project thus poses the main research question: To what extent do conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes empower women? Empowerment is defined here as the ability and/or power to make decisions and choices through the aforementioned domains and variables. The study also considers the definition of empowerment provided by participants in treatment and control villages.

As an example, the PSSN programme prioritises payments to women who are likely to be more involved in caring responsibilities than the men living in the same households. This prioritisation was a modification that came later in the programme's implementation, after the reporting of cases of misuse of cash by male beneficiaries, who spent it on alcohol, mistresses and other personal benefits (as opposed to family-oriented expenditures). Targeting women as benefit recipients is widely used in similar programmes, particularly in Latin America. For example, in Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* CCT programme, 93 per cent of the beneficiaries who manage the cash transfer for the family are women. The study explores such questions as: How effective are cash transfer payments to women? Is this added responsibility for women a burden or a way of empowering them?

Rationale for the study

For a long time, women in Tanzania have been left out of socio-economic development cycles. Their contribution continues to go unnoticed, unaccounted for and unappreciated. It is our intention to use the study findings to increase awareness and improve the programme's focus on women's empowerment and inclusion in the development process. The findings will also inform and influence social protection policy ideas within and beyond Tanzania regarding how best to design cash transfer programmes to engage and benefit women. We hope that these findings will contribute to debates on women's economic empowerment. The mix of male and female researchers in the study is well balanced; they have a proven record of public engagement activities. Therefore, the communication between researchers and policymakers is likely to be fruitful. Finally, it will provide some policy recommendations for future programmes. The WEAI approach also enhances the empirical understanding of key aspects of economic empowerment among women in cash transfer programmes.

Methodology

The study employs randomised control trials and both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, engaging a total of 1,935 households in Tanzania, which include over 11,000 male and female adult individuals aged 18 and above. Research was conducted in nine districts over a period of 36 months, starting in November 2014. Two forms of surveys were conducted for each sampled household, including a household and an individual survey; the latter was administered separately to women and men in the households. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were also carried out. In addition to the 5DE, study participants were asked questions on the definition of empowerment and the contribution of cultural, legal and religious aspects to empowerment or disempowerment.

Key findings

Findings from the baseline phase of the study indicate that women in Tanzania are generally not fully empowered. The WEAI score for Tanzania is 0.83, which is slightly higher than for Uganda (0.80) and Ghana (0.72). Zanzibar's WEAI score is less than mainland Tanzania (0.78), which means that women in Zanzibar are less empowered than women on the mainland. The WEAI results indicate that 52 per cent of the total female population are disempowered, compared to 24 per cent of the male population.

Regarding the contribution of each of the five domains to the lack of women's empowerment in Tanzania, the results were as follows. Control over the use of income represents 4 per cent of the lack of women's empowerment; decisions about production, 8.5 per cent; time allocation, 25 per cent; access to and decision-making power over access to/ownership of productive resources, 31.0 per cent; and leadership in terms of group membership and speaking in public in the community, 31.7 per cent. This means that to increase women's empowerment in Tanzania, it is necessary to consider issues

“ For a long time, women in Tanzania have been left out of socio-economic development cycles.



Photo: Morgana Wingard/USAID. Woman sells corn at the Maasai market in Mto Wa Mbu, Tanzania, 2015 <<https://goo.gl/eaUrHp>>.

regarding resources, leadership and time constraints more carefully than issues related to production and income.

The WEAI score seemed fairly good, considering its possible range of 0 to 1, where 0 = not empowered, and 1 = fully empowered. However, both men and women have expressed, through the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, that the perceived level of women's empowerment was actually lower than the nominal index score would lead to believe. We thus re-ran the analysis of WEAI using different cut-off points for sub-indices of empowerment. Not surprisingly, we found that women are indeed less empowered.

Qualitative findings

The majority of respondents felt there is no equal opportunity in decision-making processes, with women being disproportionately disadvantaged compared to men. The country's culture of male dominance was explained by some male and female respondents as the main challenge to women's empowerment. 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 stated that they did not have full decision-making autonomy over *resource* acquisition/purchases, sales, transfers of assets, credit and investments. Land ownership was certainly a major issue for women. For the majority of the population, land is

perceived as belonging to the men of the community. The caregiving role of women in the household was an impediment to having enough available *time* to engage in capacity-strengthening activities that can enable them to acquire productive capital. Decisions on how to spend the household *income* were generally made jointly with their spouses; however, in practice, men usually had the final word. More men (14 out of 31) than women (8 out of 49) respondents had previously been or were currently in *leadership* positions in the community.

On the definition of women's empowerment, women's ability to provide financial support and contribute with skills to engage in income-generating activities (including agriculture) for the household, the promotion of gender equality and men's ability to care for their wives/partners were considered key elements.

Conclusion

We expect that TASAF's CCT programme can affect women's empowerment in various ways. First, providing them with higher *income* might result in more control over household resources, but our results show that this is an area where there is already, relatively speaking, some degree of empowerment. Second, the cash transfer might affect the *time* and *leadership* dimensions of empowerment, but other aspects of the programme could also contribute; the PSSN might need some modifications to highlight leadership issues. Third, regarding *resources*—women's ownership, purchase and sale of assets,

access to credit and land ownership—it will be interesting to see if the PSSN can have any effect at all, given that the aspects underpinning this domain are more long-term (legal, cultural, religious etc.). Moreover, women's limited decision-making power, particularly regarding credit and where to invest, is likely to negatively impact the livelihood enhancement programme. This domain has greater effects on the 'graduation' component of the PSSN programme, which engages beneficiaries in long-term livelihoods to more decisively lift them out of poverty. We look forward to the follow-up survey phase and the impact evaluation in 2017. ●

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2. REPOA is an independent research institution that creates and utilises knowledge to facilitate socio-economic development. It produces high-quality research, provides training, facilitates knowledge-sharing and promotes the use of accurate information in policy development.
3. WEAI is a survey-based index designed to measure the empowerment, agency and inclusion of women in the agricultural sector (Akire et al. 2012).

Women's participation in leadership positions in Tanzania

Rashida Shariff¹

The importance of women being in decision-making positions is widely recognised, yet this does not directly translate into an actual increased number of women in these positions. It is important for women to be in decision-making positions as a reflection of equal rights; they comprise roughly half of the world's population and can provide an alternative way of thinking about issues that directly affects their lives. The presence of women in leadership positions is also very important in influencing decisions on social protection, as women are highly vulnerable in normal as well as in emergency contexts. Under-representation of women in leadership positions signals a potential failure to understand their vulnerable realities and to implement appropriate and sustainable social protection interventions.

Women's struggle to achieve leadership roles in the community is by no means an easy task. With this article, we hope to present some general characteristics of their experiences of engaging in leadership in highly unequal gender contexts in Tanzania. A better understanding of these experiences should be able to better inform our interventions to address the unequal power relations between men and women and advance women's leadership. There are multiple factors that improve women's chances of attaining leadership positions, but there are also enormous challenges including social, economic and political issues that need to be discussed, as well as the need for the introduction and implementation of policies to level the playing field.

Enabling and hindering factors to women's participation in politics and decision-making

Personal factors

There are social and household factors that encourage women to contest leadership positions. These include: support from parents to pursue an education; self-confidence and support from teachers

and parents; and opportunities for leadership positions arising from school, religious institutions and training organised by various civil society organisations. Other factors include: socialisation by virtue of being raised in politically active families, affording them political exposure from an early age; being surrounded by strong-minded and independent women within their families; being motivated by other women's situation of living with poverty; the changes they were able to make in the lives of marginalised people in their various previous leadership roles, which developed their passion for making a difference and contesting leadership positions; the ability to mobilise resources to participate in elections; and persuasion from women's organisations, the women's wings of political parties, friends and close relatives.

Structural factors

The importance of women's participation is recognised by various international and regional human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly 1948), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN General Assembly 1966), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN General Assembly 1979) and the recent Sustainable Development Goal 5 to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" by 2030.² However, given that women's engagement and participation in decision-making processes are still limited, these instruments have not been able to rectify the historical gender imbalance promoted by socio-cultural, economic and structural barriers, among others. Therefore, while these instruments themselves set a good foundation for empowerment, if countries that ratify them are not obliged to observe them, then they are not in fact effective.

Institutional factors

Institutions such as political parties, election management bodies, schools, religious entities and the private and public sectors are influenced by a highly unequal gender context; therefore, their

inclusion of women in decision-making positions is shaped by this wider context.

Thus, it is important to work simultaneously with all interconnected elements—the institutions, the women themselves and the public in general—to ensure transformative change in Tanzania. A good foundation and starting point for furthering such increased participation would be the design of new legislation to ensure a minimum number of women in all leadership positions and during the nomination processes. This can begin with the Constitution clearly stipulating that gender equality should be compulsory and creating regulatory bodies to monitor the implementation of this clause. There should be consequences for non-compliance, as voluntary approaches have not been effective in transforming discriminatory beliefs and practices. Monitoring and evaluation/enforcement mechanisms are key here, as political will alone has been proven insufficient to ensure gender equality in decision-making positions.

Agency

Both women and men need to unite to change the patriarchal system, through a reformulation of its biased cultures and laws. Women and men members of political parties can demand accountability on this front. Women's rights organisations can also do the same across the public and private sectors. Women's rights movements could be better funded to attain better results in achieving gender equality in leadership positions.

Conscious society

The battle to achieve gender equality in decision-making processes may be futile if we only expect legislation, women's rights movements, personal factors and official institutions to bring about change. If society in general does not believe in the capacities of women, if it does not change its attitude and behaviour towards balancing gender roles, abandoning negative cultural practices such as child marriage, female genital mutilation and

“ Women’s struggle to achieve leadership roles in the community is by no means an easy task.



Photo: William Warby. Maasai villagers in the Serengeti National Park, Tanzania, 2008 <<https://goo.gl/gcedFZ>>.

treating women as citizens of lower status, respecting them and letting them live free from any form of violence—including electoral violence and sexual harassment—then all but a select few women will continue to fight losing battles.

Cultural factors

Negative beliefs that women are inferior and less intelligent than men and that they are unfit to be leaders contribute to women’s under-representation in leadership positions in Tanzania. Women’s expectations and roles in positions of influence continue to be confined to the private sphere, to a large extent. Few are lucky to have an upbringing that runs contrary to the usual societal norms. Most remain trapped in discriminatory

cultural beliefs and their corresponding practices. Changing norms is linked to changing the conscience of Tanzanian society at large, and that requires creative and consistent interventions through public campaigns across various forms of media. Other interventions include interactive learning sessions with influential members of society who can change the norms and introduce alternatives.

Economic factors

Women lack cultural capital as well as economic capital to enable them to effectively compete in elections in Tanzania. The high level of poverty among them, coupled with (or even caused by) the high amount of unpaid care work they undertake,

“ Negative beliefs that women are inferior and less intelligent than men and that they are unfit to be leaders contribute to women’s under-representation in leadership positions in Tanzania.



Photo: Matt Kieffer. Women fishing in the shallow water, Nungwi, Tanzania, 2008 <<https://goo.gl/ajXnyX>>.



Photo: Konstantin Zamkov. *Girls on the beach, Paje, Tanzania, 2008* <<https://goo.gl/2weVwX>>.

“ Women lack cultural capital in Tanzania, as they are largely affected by their gender roles.

has put women at a great economic disadvantage. There is, therefore, a need for political parties to set aside funds to genuinely support potential women candidates and not set them on a certain path to failure. In addition, employers need to consider gender equality in both employee numbers and level of pay, to help women rise above a life of poverty that affects their ability to participate in political leadership elections. Legislation to monitor election expenses might not be enough if they are not correctly implemented and monitored. We also need to be aware that failure to provide adequate economic support for women might leave them vulnerable to sexual corruption ('sextortion') and potentially even HIV/AIDS infection as a result of their desire to pursue leadership positions, as economically well-off men and those in positions of power can demand sex in exchange for political favours.

Information gaps

Women also lack cultural capital in Tanzania, as they are largely affected by their gender roles. Consequently, women have limited information about election procedures, for example. Many women in the country experience exposure to leadership roles during their formative school years and later in various institutions, as well as training opportunities. They require long-term training to build their capacities and allow them to acquire the necessary knowledge to enable them to participate, in an informed manner, in challenges and opportunities,

building their resilience and tenacity in a competitive and unequal society.

Conclusion

Women in Tanzania face multiple and historical barriers to their participation in leadership roles in the public and private sectors, in highly unequal gender contexts shaped by patriarchal power relations. As such, multiple interconnected strategies are required to address the various impediments they face. There is also a need to look beyond numbers and make comparative studies between countries that have a larger presence of women in leadership positions and those which do not, to establish the differences between them, their nature and the extent of their influence. Further investigation of the gap between increased awareness and lack of action towards achieving gender equality is also necessary. ●

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Governance of social protection initiatives to address gendered poverty in Uganda: moving beyond mere tokenism of women on governance committees

Florence Kyoheirwe Muhanguzi ¹

Evidence shows that about 47 per cent of the population of sub-Saharan Africa live below the poverty line of USD1.25 a day (United Nations 2012),² and many more are economically insecure. While vulnerability in the region³ exists across all ages, ethnicities, religions, castes and locations (urban and rural), it is a gendered experience affecting more women than men (ibid.; Sweetman 2011). Social protection is seen as a key strategy for tackling the 'poverty trap' (Lwanga-Ntale, Namuddu, and Onapa 2008). The transformative approach to social protection is preferred because of its potential to address the complex nature of risk and vulnerability: the fundamental issues of equity, empowerment and social rights (Holmes and Jones 2010). This approach goes beyond the income and consumption transfers common to many social protection initiatives to address the strategic and practical needs of men and women. Social protection, defined as public and private interventions to address risks and vulnerabilities that expose individuals to income insecurity and social deprivation, leading to undignified lives, should be a basic service and a human right that ensures dignity of people. This article highlights the various governance features of non-state social protection initiatives that are critical in addressing gendered poverty—namely, women's voice in decision-making processes, gender consideration in policies and guidelines and accountability as a prime measure of good governance.

Social protection in Uganda and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa has previously been largely known to be a responsibility of the public sector, realised through social security schemes and other poverty reduction programmes. However, non-state actors, including international,

national and community-based organisations and associations, have now started to actively respond to vulnerability to poverty.⁴ The effective delivery of social protection services is anchored within good governance and characterised by accountability, transparency, inclusiveness (voice and participation in decision-making) and responsiveness to all citizens' concerns and priorities (Brody 2009). Governance of social protection initiatives significantly influences the extent to which the gender differences in vulnerability are addressed (Corner 2005). Governance entails the manner whereby power is exercised in the management of a given initiative: the mechanisms (structures, rules, regulations and instruments) and processes required for citizens (men and women) and groups to articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations (World Bank 1992; Corner 2005).

To ensure effective action and results, governance mechanisms and processes of non-state actors in social protection should be gender-sensitive through explicit attention to both women's and men's articulation of their interests, and enable them to mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. Further, they should enhance women's empowerment, in particular access to and control over productive resources, and choice over their sexual and reproductive integrity and autonomy; ensure freedom from violence; and foster equal value to women and men, girls and boys (Harper et al. 2014).

Addressing vulnerability to poverty remains a major challenge in Uganda for the non-state actors (NSAs) that are expected to complement or fill the gaps related to inadequate government provision of social protection services. NSAs target multiple groups of people, including children (orphans and other vulnerable

children); poor women and men; persons with disabilities; and people living with HIV/AIDS. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data collected between 2012 and 2013 in two selected districts of Uganda (Muhanguzi et al. 2016), and document review of relevant published and unpublished studies, policy and programme documents, regulations and laws of selected NSAs,⁵ this article details the extent to which non-state social protection initiatives are able to promote gender-sensitive governance mechanisms in Uganda.

The main areas of governance considered key in the delivery of social protection include participation and representation in decision-making through the governance structures of NSAs, in addition to policies, laws and regulations and the key dimensions of accountability, including transparency and participation in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of social protection initiatives.

Women's voice in decision-making processes

All NSAs, whether formal or informal,⁶ have some form of governance structure for decision-making and day-to-day operations. Although women constitute the majority of the membership, especially in community-based organisations/associations (71.5 per cent), decision-making positions remain a male domain across all NSAs in Uganda, with men dominating senior decision-making positions (77.8 per cent and 65.5 per cent for formal and informal NSAs, respectively), while most women take on subordinate and clerical roles, such as vice-chairpersons, secretaries or treasurers (Muhanguzi et al. 2014). Consequently, women's voices in decision-making processes remain limited, leading to inadequate programming and targeting of women's gender needs and interests. Some organisations⁷ that had women in decision-making positions were



Photo: Stephan Gladieu/World Bank. Woman teaches mothers with small children about nutrition, Uganda, 2015
<https://goo.gl/paEiTr>.

“ To ensure effective action and results, governance mechanisms and processes of non-state actors in social protection should be gender-sensitive through explicit attention to both women’s and men’s articulation of their interests.

more likely to target women than men in their programmes and to consider gender-specific issues, such as social discrimination, gender-based violence, human rights, equal access to credit and gender awareness, among others.

Gender consideration in policies and guidelines

While many of the NSA officials interviewed (66.7 per cent) claimed to consider gender in their policies, our research revealed that most of their policies and guidelines were gender-blind (ibid.). Even where there had been nominal provisions for gender concerns, many of the respondents could not give examples of concrete gender-responsive actions or explain their aims. Consequently, the majority of the NSAs (72 per cent) provide services that are gender-neutral, focused on protective and promotive services and activities that mainly address immediate, practical gender needs. It was also found that there is a minimal focus on the strategic and transformative actions needed to deal with the causes of gender inequality. Only 28 per cent have incorporated gender-specific activities, such as: training women in modern farming methods to increase productivity and generate higher income; provision of mosquito nets for pregnant women and widows; ensuring good nutrition in families; raising human rights awareness; action on gender-based violence and unequal gender relations in the household; fighting child abuse and trafficking; provision of school fees and other schooling materials to include girls, especially orphans and vulnerable

children; ensuring that women and men participate equally in decision-making processes (representation on executive committees); encouraging women to join savings and credit schemes; and providing equal access to credit, information and employment opportunities.

Accountability is a prime measure of good governance

Considering the key dimensions of accountability—namely, transparency and participation in decision-making processes, planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives—NSAs, especially community-based ones, provide opportunities for sharing information on the design, implementation, review and feedback of policies and programmes with members and beneficiaries through meetings. However, women struggle to attend regularly, due to restrictions on their mobility and a lack of time caused by their heavy household (domestic and on-farm) workload.

Formal NSAs (sub-national, national and international) have limited consultations and involvement of local people, especially women. While the NSA officials interviewed indicated a high level of involvement of beneficiaries across the different stages of project/programme cycles, the local women and men themselves reported limited involvement in the decision-making processes of formal NSAs. All members of community-based NSAs participate in joint monitoring and evaluation activities during meetings, allowing men and women to plan accordingly for identified needs

“ Addressing gendered vulnerability to poverty requires interventions that display gender-sensitive governance beyond the mere token inclusion of women on committees and in non-state actors.



Photo: Pete Lewis/DFID. Woman in field, Uganda, 2011 <<https://goo.gl/Ri5L9J>>.

in a responsive and transparent way. Conversely, formal international and national NSAs are more accountable to donors and governments than to their beneficiaries. The community perception is that international and national NSAs are more accessible to local leaders and their relatives. The non-participatory approach was considered responsible for the inaccurate targeting of services/activities and inappropriate design of programmes/initiatives that do not respond to men's and women's needs in the community. As one of the community members stated, "Let them [NGOs] come and ask us what we want and not them to determine for us. For instance, we may badly need a water borehole rather than a primary school... our women have difficulty in getting treatment from the government hospitals because of the distance, no drugs and doctors at the health unit..."

Consequently, while there are clear benefits to social protection initiatives, respondents noted that local social protection services, such as village savings and cooperative credit schemes, burial groups and community-based associations, have helped them meet their immediate practical needs but did not fundamentally change their position or prospects in life.

Conclusion

Addressing gendered vulnerability to poverty requires interventions that display gender-sensitive governance beyond the mere token inclusion of women on committees and in NSAs. Emphasis should be placed on the effective integration of gender

into concrete governance mechanisms (structures, policies, rules and regulations) and processes, to ensure that women's and men's strategic and practical gender interests are addressed. In doing so, social protection initiatives can enhance the potential to equalise gender relations and incomes at the individual, intra-household and community levels and facilitate transformative social and economic change. ●

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1. School of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University, Uganda.
2. Using 2008 data.
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4. By the time of the study in 2013, there were about 12,952 registered NSAs (Muhanguzi et al. 2016).
5. Though too many to list individually for the purpose of this article, they include: Katakwi Grassroots Women Development Initiative, Otuko People Living with HIV/AIDS, and Skill Uganda.
6. Formal NSAs include market-based institutions (such as banks, insurance companies and microfinance institutions) and not-for-profit organisations that are legally registered and have a formal structure (Luttrell and Moser 2004; PASGR 2012). Informal NSAs work on the basis of collective action, community, family, neighbourhood and traditional solidarity networks but may have neither legal identity nor formal governance and management structures (ibid.).
7. Such as OTUKO, Omodoi Parents Association, Katakwi Development Actors Network, Action Aid Uganda, World Vision and Care International, among others.

Finding the notion of equality: women, work and social protection in Egypt

Hania Sholkamy¹

Work and welfare are fields of profound political, economic and social disquietude for individuals and families everywhere. However, unemployment, underemployment, work instability and low pay in work affect men and women in nuanced and often different ways. In Egypt, as in other Muslim-majority Arab countries, the low participation rates of women in formal labour markets, combined with their low pay and transience in informal ones, have meant that women are particularly vulnerable to risk and are in need of institutionalised social protection. While it is true that the patriarchal norms and tenets of Muslim legal codes, as well as the practices and traditions of Egyptian Christians (Copts), place an obligation on men to provide for the women who are their dependents, multiple economic crises have made it difficult for men to honour this traditional obligation, and women have had to resort to paid and unpaid work to survive the ensuing hardships.

Despite women's varied economic activities, their welfare and protection from risk and deprivation are still perceived in Egypt as a function of families and not markets.² Obedience, dependence and the exaltation of motherhood serve to discourage women from assuming roles other than those of daughter, wife or mother. Hence the fabled low rates of labour force participation of women in many Muslim-majority countries (Sholkamy 2014, Tzannatos 1999).

Bugra and Yakut-Cakar have discussed the phenomenon of the feminisation of work. They list a number of factors that explain why more women are working, including the replacement of jobs usually associated with men with precarious ones that require fewer skills but more docility, thus favouring women as workers. Women accept low pay for work that requires few skills and little security. They also posit that declining incomes of men and increased work insecurity are pushing women into the labour market (Bugra and Yakut-Cakar

2010). These pull and push factors operate in Egypt and have led to an increase in the number of women in the labour market, most of whom are in precarious employment in the informal sector.

The overall number of women working in Egypt is comparatively low. According to a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report, of all countries that have a significantly low level of female labour force participation rates, many are Arab countries with a Muslim majority: Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Yemen, Oman and Saudi Arabia (ibid.; UNDP 2008).³

In Egypt, 36.7 per cent of working women work for their family without pay, while only 5.3 per cent of working men reported a similar status (Capmas 2015). This huge gap does not reflect the unpaid 'care' work that women undertake. In a recent analysis that applies a UN Women methodology for estimating the values of unpaid work and its distribution among men and women, El-Antary (2016) noted a number of stark differences (see Table 1).

Observers have noted the need for a new social model for Egypt and have amply described the efficacy and cost of the current generous but ineffective welfare provisions.⁴

Religion has indeed been a significant variable that explains patterns of female employment and economic activity. In Egypt's religiously sanctioned value

system, women's work may be admissible but only on the grounds of economic expediency (Bugra and Yakut-Cakar 2010; Mir-Hosseini 1999). However, there are many other factors that could affect the possibility of women working and balancing their productive and reproductive roles.⁵ These include, for example, the social policies and public goods mandated by national governments and which theoretically should avail women to childcare, social security and education, as well as easy and safe mobility via well-maintained roads and public transportation. The economic policies that provide job opportunities also matter. So does the legal environment that protects work and workers or which enables women to demand their rights and protect their entitlements. These secular conditions have a dramatic impact on the degree to which religious convictions and interpretations affect the work options and practices of women and families.

The endogenous problems of the welfare state lie in the growing discrepancy between existing programme design and actual social demands. Can social pensions and provisions empower women in ways that the labour market has failed to do so?

This brief article makes the case for the empowering potential of State-provisioned social protection in general—and cash transfers in particular—as a tool for women's empowerment and as more than a poverty alleviation innovation.

TABLE 1: Proportion of men and women engaged in different types of unpaid work in Egypt

Type of work	Men	Women
Farming and household production activities	8.8%	16%
Shopping and taking family members on errands	34.7%	62.3%
Construction and maintenance of family home	4.9%	1.9%
Cleaning, cooking and other domestic activities	4.4%	88.6%
Fetching water and fuel	1.1%	5.4%
Full-time care of children and elderly people	5.3%	32.2%
Caring for others in addition to other activities	4.0%	32.2%

Source: Author's elaboration, calculated from the Egypt Labour Market Panel Survey (ELMPS 2012).

Feminist principles as foundations for social policy

The Egyptian Constitution enshrines the right to social protection as strongly as it honours family and equality. However, working women in the informal, unpaid or care sectors have no guaranteed access to these rights. They need social transfers that are untethered from work status and which are not contingent on objectively verifiable destitution.

Egypt has taken a small step in this direction. *Karama* (dignity) and *Takaful* (mutual support or welfare) are both objectively targeted cash transfer programmes that aim to increase the consumption of individuals and families living in poverty in Egypt. *Karama* provides elderly people and those with severe disabilities with a monthly stipend of EGP320 (approximately USD40) per beneficiary. *Takaful* is a conditional cash transfer for families with children living in poverty that is given four times a year to help families provide for their children. It provides a base benefit of EGP320 (approximately USD40), with increments per child ranging from EGP60 to EGP100 (USD7.5 to USD12), depending on the age of the child.

Although both are targeted benefits that rely on the use of a proxy means-testing formula to identify entitled applicants, they do so in ways that do not penalise women who work, and recognise family poverty as a basis for individual entitlements. Furthermore, women within families are not considered dependents and can receive a personal pension that is equal to that of a man. These two programmes were introduced in 2015 and are designed to provide pensions to 1.5 million families in the poorest parts of Egypt.⁶

The transfers go to women in the family, whether they are heads of households or not. They circumvent the traditional 'male provider' role by honouring women's care work and recognise the need for income support for adults who work in low-yield and unstable sectors of the economy.

In a small pilot project whereby cash transfers were piloted in the urban low-income neighbourhood of Ain el Sira in Cairo, a clear association was found between the cash transfers and women's well-being. Interviews were conducted in April 2011 with 143 women who had received cash transfers over a two-year period. This was a turbulent time in Egypt



Photo: Dominic Chavez/World Bank. Employees work in a small business where the majority of the employees are young women from the neighborhood, Egypt, 2015 <<https://goo.gl/Bn1Cqs>>.

when violence, unemployment, instability and insecurity were rampant. The transfers were the only source of income for some families, and many men had lost their livelihoods altogether. It is important to take this into account when reviewing the following tables. Despite these conditions and the relatively small number of respondents, the impact of the programme on domestic violence is worthy of note and point to the possibility of social protection intersecting with gender justice.

Adding cash to meagre incomes will improve well-being and increase consumption. However, this cash can also address structural gendered imbalances in families and households. Egypt's new programmes as detailed in this article should go beyond redistributive welfare payments and provide this income support to more families. It needs to also recognise the work of women at home and in unfair, turbulent and unrewarding markets, enabling them to fully meet the demands of their professional and private lives. ●

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TABLE 2: Violence against women⁷

	Baseline (%)	Follow-up (%)	Yes to no (%)	N
Is it the right of husband to hit wife (% Yes)	50.7 (P-value=0.01)	34.6	29.6	142
Husband always hits wife	23.0 (P-value=0.01)	11.5		139
Husband hits wife sometimes	11.5	12.9		139
			No to yes (%)	
Did wife go to someone for help after violence? (% Yes)	27.3 (P-value=0.01)	48.5	33.3	33

Source: Elaborated by Dr. Hakan Zaky.



Photo: Dana Smillie/World Bank. Egyptian business woman who applied and got a loan which enabled her to start two businesses, Cairo, Egypt, 2011 <<https://goo.gl/RbHSu7>>.

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1. The Social Research Centre, The American University in Cairo.
2. In this respect, Egyptian women are similar to women in other parts of the world. Pay gaps in the labour market persist worldwide (24 per cent per cent), and the majority of women remain engaged in unprotected, informal work (75 per cent).
3. According to Kabeer (2008b, 5), the presence of women in paid work has not necessarily fractured the edifice of unequal power within the family, nor has it challenged gender segmentation of occupational structures and of markets. Work has not leveraged the female worker to a better position in either the family or the workplace (Anker et al. 2003; Kabeer 2008b). Poor women in both rural and urban areas may also find themselves fulfilling both their productive and care work at home and without pay (Himmelweit 1995).
4. Several studies have addressed the Egyptian case, either by analysing overall social expenditures (e.g. World Bank 2011; Kamaly and Sholkamy 2014) or expenditures in the education sector (Birdsall and O’Connell 1999; Galal 2003), the health sector (Rannan-Eliya et al. 1999) or subsidy programmes.
5. Recent attacks on the possibility of “having it all”, as Slaughter puts it, do not contradict the importance of balancing different roles. The article by Slaughter addressed the dilemma of ‘high-flying’ North American women who are driven by a desire to succeed at the expense of their own family and children. This is a far cry from the situation of the majority of women who enter the labour market in Egypt.
6. Interview with programme administrators at the Ministry of Social Solidarity.
7. Gratitude to Dr. Hassan Zaky for the production of this table.

How can social protection programmes benefit women in the informal sector?

reflections on domestic workers and social insurance in South Africa

Sophie Plagerson, Lauren Stuart and Marianne S. Ulriksen¹

Gender and the informal sector have been neglected issues in the rapidly spreading social protection strategies across low- and middle-income countries. Women working in the informal sector are, therefore, doubly vulnerable: they often have a greater need for social protection compared to their male counterparts while, at the same time, being less likely to benefit from social protection interventions that target the working-age population.

In general, workers in the informal sector and those who are self-employed often fail to qualify for social insurance or social assistance. Female workers are frequently subjected to gender discrimination and prejudice, receiving low wages and few benefits. In a move to address this, South Africa has extended its Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) programme to include domestic workers. As we discuss in this article, this initiative is an example of a social protection strategy that can target income insecurity among vulnerable working-age women. However, as we will further discuss, the effects of the strategy are limited by insufficient synergies with other social protection policies that are already in place.

Paid domestic work is one of the few employment opportunities open to poor women. Domestic workers represent a sizeable section of the working population in South Africa, comprising an industry of almost 1 million workers, responsible for cooking, cleaning and child and elderly care in many private households (SASSA 2016). The vast majority of domestic workers are female. Domestic work often occurs in insecure contexts, with less legal or social protection than for other wage workers (Du Toit 2013). The extension of social security benefits to domestic workers in 2003 was part of a

broader push to improve regulation and protection of the sector. An amendment to the Basic Condition of Employment Act stipulated that domestic workers should be registered with the Department of Labour, that employers should contribute to the UIF, and that workers should have formal employment contracts that stipulate working hours, remuneration and procedures to be followed in the event of the contract being terminated.

The UIF provides short-term unemployment insurance, and pays benefits in the event of unemployment, illness, maternity, the adoption of a child and death. Employers and employees are each required to contribute 1 per cent of the employee's salary on a monthly basis, from which employees can draw if they become unemployed. The extension of unemployment insurance to domestic workers is an innovative step towards greater inclusivity in two ways, with regard to the informal sector and to gender. With regard to the informal sector, it represents an important broadening of the insurance's scope beyond the confines of the formal sector, though it still currently only serves 10 per cent of the unemployed population (SSA 2016). With regard to gender, given the size of the domestic work sector and its mostly female composition, the inclusion of domestic workers in the UIF is a positive step towards gender equality (particularly given the disparity between men and women in access to the UIF and claim behaviour regarding the benefits (Bhorat et al. 2013).

The proportion of domestic workers covered by contracts and UIF contributions showed a steep increase in the 18 months following November 2002, albeit from a low baseline. Before the enactment of the law, 10 per cent had employment contracts, and 2 per cent were covered by the UIF. After the law had been implemented, the percentage of domestic workers with a contract rose

to 27 per cent, and those registered with the UIF to 21 per cent. The number of registrations of employers has continued to grow steadily, and a recent report showed that 667,009 domestic workers were registered with the UIF in March 2015 (equivalent to 66.1 per cent of all domestic workers in the country) (RSA 2015).

Nonetheless, many remain unregistered, primarily due to widespread non-compliance by employers—coverage for domestic workers is still dependent on the registration of employers with the UIF. Qualitative research has also confirmed the difficult working conditions, long working hours, low levels of remuneration and poor regulatory compliance that still characterise the industry (Deacon et al. 2015; Dinkelman et al. 2014). Unemployment benefits payable upon employee dismissal are particularly necessary in the context of job insecurity, which many domestic workers face. However, the low wages received by domestic workers and the precarious nature of the work (many domestic workers work part-time for several different employers) in this sector mean that the nominal benefit amount to which they are entitled may be too limited to provide any meaningful level of income security.

Nonetheless, the effects regarding the inclusion of domestic workers as UIF contributors are positive overall. The policy has brought a measure of increased security for some domestic workers. However, for these gains to be optimised, several factors need to coalesce. First, rates of remuneration need to be of such a level that unemployment insurance payments make a substantive difference to smoothing intermittent income flows. Second, the legislation, which has a low level of enforcement, requires higher levels of adherence by employers to stipulated regulations governing the employment



“ Social protection policy for women remains fragmented, rather than integrated in a comprehensive understanding and recognition of women’s multiple productive and reproductive roles.

Photo: IDWF. Protest at the Parliament demanding law protection for domestic workers, South Africa, 2015 <<https://goo.gl/ZAZUM7>>.

of domestic workers. Third, administrative barriers that disproportionately affect low-income women (such as domestic workers) need to be addressed. For example, challenges and delays in accessing payments of maternity benefits need to be overcome for benefits to be experienced fully by beneficiary domestic workers (there are concrete proposals currently under way for maternity regulation reforms).

Furthermore, this strategy cannot stand alone in addressing the income insecurity faced by women working in the informal sector. In terms of social security as a whole, provisions for domestic workers remains patchy, given the exclusion, for example, from access to the Compensation for Injuries and Diseases Act, which was established to compensate workers who are injured while on duty or who contract an occupational disease (however, proposals are under way to also extend access to domestic workers).

More broadly, as an intervention that benefits women specifically, the inclusion of domestic workers in the UIF highlights that social protection policy for women remains fragmented, rather than integrated in a comprehensive understanding and recognition of women’s multiple productive and reproductive roles. In a context of increasing feminisation of the labour market, despite broad acceptance of women entering the workplace, traditional attitudes regarding gender role allocations within the home persist and are reflected by current policy

approaches (Gordon et al. 2012). Current debates around social protection, the informal sector and gender offer a window of opportunity for a comprehensive and creative discussion around how interventions, policies and programmes can be best designed and implemented to serve the specific needs of women. ●

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Gender-sensitive social protection systems in Brazil and Africa: opportunities for South–South cooperation

Raquel Tebaldi¹

Over the last decade an increasing number of developing countries have started implementing social protection programmes with the objective of contributing to the eradication of poverty and food insecurity. The positive impacts of conditional cash transfers in Latin American countries in those areas, as well as in terms of health, nutrition and education outcomes, have encouraged governments of other countries outside of the region to develop and strengthen their own social protection systems. In Africa in particular, there has been an impressive growth of non-contributory programmes over the last 15 years targeting poor and vulnerable households and individuals, serving various objectives, such as reducing poverty and vulnerability and improving the health, education, food security and nutrition of beneficiaries.

A growing body of evidence (World Bank 2014; FAO 2015; Bastagli et al. 2016) demonstrates that these programmes' impacts are not gender-neutral and that there is potential to promote women's empowerment when gender-sensitive considerations are taken into account in all of their elaboration and implementation phases. However, the multidimensional nature of gender inequalities calls for a systematic approach to social protection that goes beyond single programmes, which is being clearly expressed in international discourse, as made evident by the inclusion of the implementation of national social protection systems as target 1.3 under Sustainable Development Goal 1: "End poverty in all its forms everywhere".² As governments become increasingly interested in sustainable paths out of poverty for their populations, their efforts need to focus on integrating and expanding the set of interventions that are already in place (de la O Campos 2015).

In particular, social protection policies in Brazil have been internationally recognised for successfully addressing poverty and

food insecurity problems in innovative ways, generating substantial interest from other countries from across the Global South (IPC-IG 2016). Recent quantitative and qualitative literature reviews (Bartholo 2016a; 2016b) show that the *Programa Bolsa Família* (PBF), the country's flagship cash transfer programme, has been positive 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, in terms of refusing to accept undesired conjugal and/or work relations, and in women's increased participation in the public sphere).

However, quantitative and qualitative evidence demonstrate that, despite these positive results, the PBF is not able to overcome traditional gender norms or relations that place the bulk of the domestic care burden on women. Nevertheless, the PBF has laid out some basic implementation structures, which the government is now able to expand on to carry out other public policies that can address women's interests more broadly. Bartholo (2016b) highlights that through its conditionalities, the PBF has been strengthening women's access to public health services, and, although this has focused on children's welfare, there is great potential to build on these links to strengthen women's reproductive rights. She also points out that these types of initiatives are not without their own challenges, such as the current national context of fiscal austerity and the need to improve gender sensitivity in public service delivery.

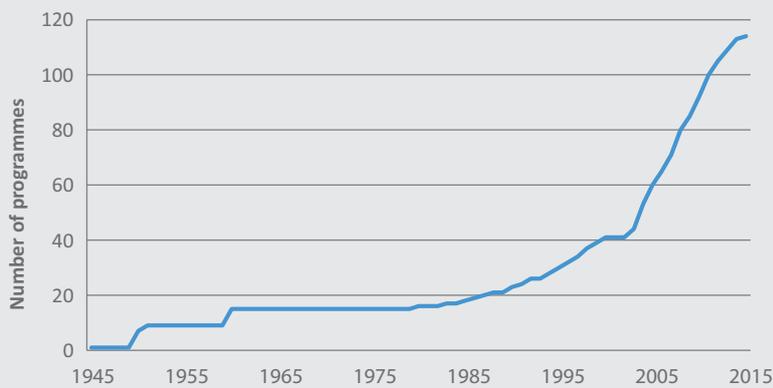
In African countries, social protection programmes currently being implemented present different levels of gender-sensitivity in their design (Tebaldi 2016). Many of them seek to provide beneficiaries with more than just basic income security, including specific training sessions and/or linkages to social services by design, which is essential to women's empowerment. The majority of these transfers are actually received by women, though only a few programmes

make that preference clear in their design. Public work programmes are also aiming to attract female beneficiaries through targets or quotas for women's participation, gender-differentiated tasks, on-site provision of childcare and flexible working hours. It is important to stress, however, that although these features may seek to address women's practical and short-term needs, their strategic needs cannot be fully met without a wider set of policies that are able to address the multidimensional inequalities they experience. Indeed, some of these features may even reinforce traditional gender roles (such as in the case of providing gender-differentiated tasks in public works to attract more women beneficiaries, which may reinforce traditional gender-based work division) if not accompanied by other measures that seek to promote women's empowerment.

In this context, there are many areas of common interest for Brazilian and African policymakers to learn from each other. The International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), aiming to analyse the perceived effects of the knowledge-sharing initiatives between Brazil and a number of African countries in the areas of social protection and food and nutrition security, conducted a survey (in English, French and Portuguese) among African policymakers in 2015, receiving responses from 43 representatives from 21 different countries. The results (Cirillo, Nogueira, and Soares 2016) show that there is a lot of enthusiasm among participants with regards to system-wide social protection instruments that are important for the promotion of gender equality, such as the Single (or Social) Registry³ (Jones and Holmes 2010). This particular instrument was highlighted by many respondents as one of Brazil's most interesting and inspiring social protection tools.

Even though most cash transfer programmes in Africa are unconditional, 10 countries that participated in the survey stated that their programmes

FIGURE 1: African non-contributory social protection programmes, by start date



Source: Cirillo and Tebaldi (2016).

were influenced by the child-focused conditionalities linked to the PBF. Among the survey participants, there is a prevalent perception that the fact that women are the main benefit recipients of cash transfers is positive in terms of ‘family-responsive’ spending patterns, when compared to men. However, Ghana’s LEAP programme is the only case where there was clear evidence of this design choice being made as a result of technical support provided by the Brazilian government. On the Brazilian side, 19 civil servants and employees from different cooperation agencies replied to a different survey, focused on ‘South–South Cooperation on social protection and Food Security’, also carried out by the IPC-IG in 2015. Respondents showed great interest in learning more about the design

of social protection systems of African countries, their social registries and the institutional and governance arrangements underpinning the programmes.⁴

In conclusion, for the viable attainment of the goals expressed in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union’s Agenda 2063, the gender dimension in social protection needs to be understood as an integral part of comprehensive social protection systems. These international development frameworks also help to create opportunities for all stakeholders involved in social protection (nationally and internationally) to work together more effectively towards these common objectives. As Antonopoulos (2013) highlighted,

“ Social protection policies in Brazil have been internationally recognised for successfully addressing poverty and food insecurity problems in innovative ways, generating substantial interest from other countries from across the Global South.

South–South cooperation provides great opportunities for mutual learning in the adoption and customisation of gender-sensitive social protection measures. Brazil and many African countries have been consolidating their cooperation activities over the last decades, and the continuous, mutual interest in the area of social protection offers an important opportunity to address common challenges and interests in promoting gender equality. ●

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Photo: Sergio Amaral/MDS. Beneficiary of the Programa Bolsa Família gets a health check-up, São José dos Campos, Brazil, 2014 <<https://goo.gl/ZXKVB7>>.

“ The gender dimension in social protection needs to be understood as an integral part of comprehensive social protection systems.

“Brazil and many African countries have been consolidating their cooperation activities over the last decades, and the continuous, mutual interest in the area of social protection offers an important opportunity to address common challenges and interests in promoting gender equality.”



Photo: CIFOR. Women working at Amarula production, South Africa, 2006 <<https://goo.gl/PS14al>>.

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2. “Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable”. <<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg1>>.
3. The Brazilian Single Registry for Social Programmes is a “tool for identifying and classifying the socio-economic characteristics of low-income families” (Direito et al. 2016).
4. The top five areas of interest for Brazilian respondents regarding the social protection experiences of African countries: (i) monitoring and evaluation systems (14 respondents); (ii) institutional and governance arrangements (13); (iii) programme impacts on the local economy (12); (iv) complementary programmes and setting up social protection systems (12); and (v) registration systems for potential beneficiaries (12).

Women and anti-poverty policies in Brazil: the *Brasil Sem Miséria* case

Janine Mello¹

Women account for 51 per cent of Brazil's population, according to the demographic census of 2010 conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*—IBGE), and they are affected more than men by the effects of poverty and destitution. Families headed by women with children present the highest rates of poverty, especially those headed by black women.² The impact of women's double/triple daily work shift, as a consequence of the dominant culture of a gender-based division of work, weakens their links with the job market and restricts their opportunities for better qualification and self-improvement, increasing their economic dependence on men. In addition, in many family arrangements, women do not participate in the decision-making process regarding the use of household resources and funds.

Women also account for 50.5 per cent of the extremely poor population; due to smaller salaries and the burden of taking care of children and elderly people, they are more likely to be poor than men in similar situations of vulnerability. Data from the 2015 National Household Sample Survey (IBGE 2015) shows that from 2002 to 2014, women's poverty fell from 6.9 per cent to 0.9 per cent. However, it is important for any strategy for overcoming poverty to consider the gender dimension from its formative stages, to ensure the effective reduction of inequalities between men and women.

Initiatives within the Brazil without Extreme Poverty Plan (*Programa Brasil Sem Miséria*—BSM) had specific impacts on women, who comprise 56 per cent of the people enrolled in the federal government's Single Registry for Social Programmes (*Cadastro Único*), 44.7 million women with monthly incomes of less than half of minimum wage—BRL880 as of 2016 (MDS 2015). In addition to benefiting from general-purpose initiatives for the improvement of health, education and social assistance, women also are targeted through the BSM by different initiatives, leading to direct and indirect impacts on their lives,

spread across three areas of support: income insurance, productive inclusion and access to services. The following is a description of several policies and programmes, their successes and how they coalesce into one or more of these support areas:

- The *Programa Bolsa Família* (PBF) is a conditional cash transfer programme through which poor and extremely poor households receive a monthly benefit contingent on the fulfilment of health and education obligations. The health and educational conditionalities have positive effects on children's performance and attendance indicators at school and on the rate of infant vaccination and the frequency of attendance of pregnant women at prenatal care (ibid.). Often, the benefit paid through the PBF represents the only source of income for poor women; in extreme cases, it was the first stable source of income to be managed by women. Moreover, the fact that women are the preferential beneficiaries of the PBF transfer within eligible families leads to positive impacts, such as the strengthening of women's decision-making power regarding household income management, which in turn increases the possibilities of women's empowerment and self-reliance and also has a strong influence on the nature of inter-gender relationships and behavioural patterns. The vast majority (93 per cent) of PBF-eligible families have women as recipients of the benefit, and 68 per cent of those women are black. The total amount of benefits distributed by the PBF increased by 60 per cent in real value from 2010 to 2014, and the benefits paid to the poorest beneficiaries grew by 102 per cent. Of the 22 million people who have overcome extreme poverty³ since the BSM was launched, 54 per cent are women (ibid.).
- *Brasil Carinhoso* (Caring Brazil), another programme within the BSM, contributed to supplement the income of PBF-eligible families, ensuring all of them overcame the established extreme poverty line. Payments began in 2012, to families with children aged between 7 and 15 years, and in 2013 to all eligible families. Up until 2015, around 5.1 million families regularly received the monthly benefit. In addition to the monetary transfer, *Brasil Carinhoso* also offers an incentive for municipal governments to increase their childcare capacity and improve the quality of services offered to children, especially to children of PBF-eligible families. There are more than 581,000 children of PBF-eligible households in childcare, and over BRL1.4 billion in benefits was distributed between 2012 and 2014 (ibid.).
- In partnership with Brazil's Ministry of Education, the BSM also incentivised schools whose majority of students were PBF beneficiaries to adhere to the *Mais Educação* (More Education) school extension programme, which offers full-time educational activities. In 2014, out of the 49,000 schools, which enrolled PBF beneficiary students, 33,100 met the aforementioned criteria. The increased access of poorer children to childcare and full-time schooling is strategic, not only to assure their own development but also to allow for the productive inclusion of women in the labour market.
- There are also urban and rural productive inclusion programmes that complement these policies. Of the 1.7 million people enrolled in the National Programme for Access to Technical Education and Employment (*Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino Técnico e Emprego*—PRONATEC), 67 per cent are women, who attend a vast array of courses, including areas such as construction services, hospitality, commerce, elderly care, computing, electrical apprenticeship, and administrative assistance, among others outside the range of activities typically associated with women in Brazil. Many courses are accessible to people with low levels of schooling and are offered with timetables that accommodate participation by full-time workers.

“ In many family arrangements, women do not participate in the decision-making process regarding the use of household resources and funds.



Photo: Sergio Amaral/MDS. Hairdresser student, Formosa, Brazil, 2014 <<https://goo.gl/e1b4gK>>.

Students receive the full course material, food (snacks) and transportation.

- Another initiative, *Programa Crescer*, offers directed productive microcredit at low interest rates. Nearly three quarters (73 per cent) of borrowers and 53 per cent of micro-entrepreneurs in the Single Registry database are women (ibid.).
- Regarding rural productive inclusion, the goal was to guarantee women farmers' access to productive support policies. The gender dimension was part of the policymaking process from the beginning. Therefore, throughout the public bids for the hiring of services for technical assistance and rural extension (*Assistência Técnica e Extensão Rural*—ATER), at least 30 per cent of the technicians to be hired should be women, and women should account for at least 30 per cent of all beneficiaries of the ATER services. Group activities, such as meetings and courses, should also have a minimum of 30 per cent women's attendance and offer recreational areas for children. As of April 2015, 358,000 families had received ATER support.
- Through the Programme for the Promotion of Productive Activities (*Programa de Fomento para Atividades Produtivas*), women could buy productive inputs and machinery and pay for labour, which are essential for ensuring food and nutrition security, as well as increasing production in a well-structured manner. As of August 2015,

184,000 families were benefiting from these promotion initiatives.

- Cisterns delivered across the Brazilian semi-arid region through the Water for All Programme (*Programa Água para Todos*) led to a reduction in time and effort spent by women and children—usually the family members charged with water collection duties—who commonly have to travel long distances due to the lack of a stable supply of quality water. Overall, 867,800 families had been supplied with cisterns by August 2015.
- The Light for All Programme (*Programa Luz para Todos*) served 458,700 families.
- The Food Acquisition Programme (*Programa de Aquisição de Alimentos*—PAA) intends to increase the volume of food bought from the production of women living in extreme poverty. The surplus can then be donated to social assistance entities or destined to increasing food stocks. In 2013, it was determined that 5 per cent of the PAA's budget should be allocated to the purchase of products from entities with an exclusive or majority presence of women. The purchasing process should include a minimum proportion (30–40 per cent) of women in relation to the total amount of suppliers. The National Programme for the Documentation of Rural Workers (*Programa Nacional de Documentação da Trabalhadora Rural*—PNDTR), from the former Ministry

for Agrarian Development, engages taskforces that issue civil, labour and pension documents for free, as well as the necessary documentation for the productive inclusion of women's organisations. Over 559,000 women used the service between 2011 and December 2014, with more than 1.14 million documents issued through 3,402 taskforces.

Through these intersectoral initiatives and with a clear focus on the poor and extremely poor population, the BSM reaches women above all, strengthening their autonomy at the individual, family and community levels, raising their self-esteem and confidence, and thus contributing to greater gender equality. ●

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1. Specialist in public policy and government management for the Ministry of Planning, Development and Management of Brazil.
2. IBGE's official census uses self-declared categories for race/colour of skin: white (*branca*), black (*preta*), yellow (*amarela*), mixed (*parda*) or indigenous (*indígena*).
3. The extreme poverty line established in Brazil is of BRL77 per capita per month.

Federal management of the *Bolsa Família* programme: a history of women

Letícia Bartholo¹

Over the last decade the ‘paternity’ (authorship) of the *Programa Bolsa Família* (PBF) conditional cash transfer programme has been a recurring discussion in Brazil. Government representatives of former presidents Fernando Henrique Cardoso (1995–2002) and Luís Inácio Lula da Silva (2003–2010) would argue about who was actually responsible for the creation of the PBF—its ‘father’, so to speak. Was it Cardoso, who began to implement conditional cash transfer programmes at the federal level? Or was it Lula, who gave them substance, quality and scale with the actual enactment of the PBF? To broaden the dispute, some researchers also claimed the intellectual ‘paternity’ of the PBF—as someone who asks for new DNA testing for a baby already under third-party care.

While the public debate echoed this paternalistic battle, the PBF was being constructed with the participation of millions of women. First, the beneficiaries themselves. There are now about 46.5 million people covered by the PBF, of which 56.6 per cent are women. In 92 per cent of the 13.8 million homes where these people live, it is the women who are the recipients of the benefit—

that is, those who are the PBF title card holders and who can withdraw the cash benefit.

The preferred participation of women in the PBF, as in other conditional cash programmes, is often questioned in feminist debate. Roughly speaking, the critique states that this definition implies the reinforcement of the identification of female roles with care responsibilities and the instrumental use of women by the government. Despite this criticism—which is valid in terms of the design rationale of these programmes—qualitative research with PBF beneficiaries has consistently pointed towards concrete improvements in these women’s lives. Some of the reported improvements are: an increased sense of dignity and self-respect; the reduction of their social isolation; the questioning—albeit fragile—of traditional male authority and of unwanted marital relations; and a feeling of a greater range of possible choices.²

Second, we must consider the women who work locally for the PBF in 5,570 individual municipalities and 27 states across Brazil. Over three quarters (77.2 per cent) of the policy managers who are responsible for the functioning

of the programme at the municipal level are women. Of course, therein lies the criticism of the feminisation of professions linked to the provision of care, but also its counterpoint, which seems to be that these social workers are not passive and that this involvement implies their insertion in productive society and further possibilities of social mobility.

I ask readers to forgive me for not addressing these questions in depth. However, in this article, I want to consider another group of women whose contributions to the PBF are not usually addressed or discussed: programme managers at the federal level. In this group there are ministers and deputy ministers who have led the PBF, and there are also women who have worked daily for the everyday construction of this public policy. I was part of the latter group, by fortune or virtue, for the last 12 years and, therefore, am able to present this story in a little more detail.

It is not very widely known or acknowledged, but the success of the PBF is intrinsically linked to the presence of women in its federal management during the early years of its inception. Two women in particular: the first, Rosani Cunha, was the National Secretary of the PBF between late 2004 and November 2008, when she passed away prematurely. The second, Lucia Modesto, was the Director of the Single Registry of Beneficiaries (*Cadastro Único*) during the same period, and was Rosani’s right-hand woman.

Both of them came into the PBF after it had already been enacted by law; therefore, they were not the mentors of the programme’s initial design. However, they took on managerial roles when the PBF was going through a critical moment, during which the national media strongly questioned the effectiveness of the programme’s targeting and its ability to be consolidated as a comprehensive and effective policy to combat poverty. It quickly became necessary to make the policy



Photo: Sergio Amaral/MDS. Women of the Calon Roma community who are beneficiaries of the Programa Bolsa Família, Trindade, Brazil, 2014 <<https://goo.gl/6kfmH6>>.

“ While the public debate echoed this paternalistic battle, the *Programa Bolsa Família* was being constructed with the participation of millions of women.



Photo: Ana Nascimento/MDS. Social worker performs screening for the Single Registry of Beneficiaries, Brazil, 2013 <<https://goo.gl/t6SZ6l>>.

design work effectively, build the federative cooperation mechanisms and establish the verification systems for the conditionalities. In addition, it was necessary to rebuild a registry of the beneficiaries, to solve the problems of duplicate records and technological deficiencies that plagued previous iterations. As if that were not enough, it was also necessary to do all of those things while expanding the PBF to reach the target of 11.2 million beneficiary families in under two years.

That was exactly what we did, under their leadership. In those early years, we often worked 10 hours a day and at weekends. There was a different working environment then, in which individual interests for internal disputes

and vanity statements or hierarchies were almost non-existent. It was certainly an environment of excessive pressure and work overload. We often shared a feeling of difficulty in balancing work and family, something that every woman with family responsibilities knows well.

We worked with the collective feeling that we were making a difference and building something new in Brazil. We had space and autonomy to define and propose improvements, which certainly reinforced that feeling. As a matter of fact, during the time I was in the federal management of the PBF and of the Single Registry, until early 2016, not even a single member of the team was

appointed for political reasons. No doubt, the respect for the work of career civil servants in conducting public policy is one of the factors that contributed the most towards the success of the PBF.

Among these state employees, in addition to Rosani and Lucia, there were many women who were mostly responsible for tasks not usually considered 'feminine'. There were women leading the elaboration of complex systems responsible for monitoring the conditionalities of the programme and checking for inconsistencies in the Single Registry. Some were coordinating the administration of the benefits or defining the PBF responsibility assignment matrix across the three levels of

“ There was a different working environment then, in which individual interests for internal disputes and vanity statements or hierarchies were almost non-existent.



Photo: Ana Nascimento/MDS. Bolsa Família beneficiary household, Brazil, 2015 <<https://goo.gl/aBnaRQ>>.



Photo: Sergio Amaral/MDS. Woman fills out an application form for the Single Registry of Beneficiaries, São José dos Campos, Brazil, 2014 <<https://goo.gl/FMVnj5>>.

“ This public policy has helped decrease infant mortality, supported the education of children and adolescents, and has empowered many women to expand their autonomy.

government, as well as engaging in dialogue with states and municipalities. Others were working in the construction of robust indicators that enabled the establishment of an innovative form of financial cooperation with municipalities and states for the management of the PBF and of the Single Registry.

These indicators led to the Decentralised Management Index (*Índice de Gestão Descentralizada do Programa Bolsa Família*—IGD). Fundamental decisions about the operation of the PBF and its infra-legal regulation were made during this period. Essential definitions regarding the design of the forms and systems of the Single Registry that are still in place, serving over 20 programmes at the federal level, were also established during the same time.

It never occurred to us, the managers who were part of the PBF during its inception and throughout its implementation, to claim ‘maternity’ over the PBF at any level. A parental perspective always seemed disconnected from the democratic tone we wanted to impart in that nascent public policy.

To all of us women who were involved in the federal guidance of the PBF, there were unquestionable gains. In addition to the professional experience obtained, we share the pride of having constructed a massive public policy, which is widely recognised and constantly evaluated worldwide, and which changed the face of Brazil forever.

This public policy has helped decrease infant mortality, supported the education of children and adolescents, and has empowered many women to expand their autonomy.³ It is a fact that these achievements are also the achievements of the male managers who were on this same path. Indeed, between 2011 and 2016, the governing body of the PBF federal management was quantitatively more masculine.

However, it fell to me to tell a little of the history of women’s involvement in the programme. And there is not a doubt in my mind that all of these men share with me the feeling that this story deserves to be told. ●

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2. Regarding the criticism of the instrumental use of women in conditional cash transfer programmes, see Molyneux (2007), Costa (2008) and Lavinas, Cobo, and Veiga (2012). On the positive effects of the PBF on women beneficiaries, see Libardoni (2008), Pires (2009; 2013), Rêgo and Pinzani (2014) and Santos (2014).

3. To verify these results of the PBF, see Campello and Neri (2013).





Addressing gender inequality and promoting women's empowerment through the provision of social protection is a basic human rights issue.

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Mildred T. Mushunje

Social protection policy for women remains fragmented, rather than integrated in a comprehensive understanding and recognition of women's multiple productive and reproductive roles.

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Sophie Plagerson, Lauren Stuart and Marianne S. Ulriksen

In many family arrangements, women do not participate in the decision-making process regarding the use of household resources and funds.

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Janine Mello



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