

Protecting the Vulnerable:

The Design and Implementation of Effective Safety Nets



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Gender Dimensions of Safety Nets

HNDSP Course on **Protecting the Vulnerable: The Design and Implementation of Effective Safety Nets**

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What Is Added by a Gender Perspective?

- Can targeting be enhanced?
- Can poverty outcomes be improved?
- Can HD outcomes be improved?
- Can long run opportunities be enhanced?

Targeting on Gender to Reach Poorest Households

- Are female headed households poorer?
 - evidence not overwhelming
 - risk of excluding poor – since not all poor female headed
 - headship needs to be linked with other information on assets and composition

Targeting on Gender to Increase Impact

Underlying conceptual framework:

Do household decide as a single decision maker or with negotiation?

Termed **unitary** and **collective** in the literature

Even if unitary decisions, need to consider how households allocate resources

Targeting on Gender to Increase Impact

Do women spend differently than men?

Most evidence indicates that they invest more in children, particularly for nutrition and health

Programmatic evidence from UK welfare and USA food stamps

Implications of Intra-Household Distribution

If seeking to target to women should program earmark cash or commodities?

Generally food aid relief gender targeted

Note that targeting to women to influence budget not the same as targeting individuals.

Transfers targeted to individuals are usually shared:

- Supplementary feeding cannot be exclusively on vulnerable child

Implications of Intra-Household Investment

Households often invest more in sons than daughters, especially in times of hardship

Conditional transfers may offset this:

Example: Bangladesh female stipend,
In some countries, WFP food for education

Even if **not** conditional on individuals, transfers may have different impacts on daughters

Does Targeting on Women have Extra Costs?

Possible impact on domestic violence and divorce

Some anecdotal evidence that earmarked credit does not always remain under woman's control.

Targeting restricts household's ability to determine who bears time burden of program compliance

Targeting to women in public works may prevent some households from participating

Considerations for Labor Supply

Transfers programs likely reduce labor supply

On the other hand, public works participation may reduce child care

Affects other household members and may influence schooling of girls

But little evidence that labor supply affects child nutrition

What does chronic health care imply for transfers?

Labor Market Issues

- Job security often lower for women and benefits not vested
- Leave policies are **two-edged**, but state financing may help share costs
- Unemployment insurance mainly in formal sector
- Retrenchment may reverse affirmative action, but can be offset in compensation

Taking Child Care Into Consideration in SP Programs

Provision of crèches can enhance public works

Example: Maharashtra

Subsidies to child care are also shown to increase women's income *and* girls' schooling

Example: Kenya, Romania

Protecting Families from Divorce and Abandonment

Abandoned women often have neither financial assets nor opportunities to participate in public works

While they may benefit from targeted assistance, legal reforms may offer more long term protection

What Criterion Should be Used For Property Rights in Divorce?

“Fair” settlement can be based on:

- a woman’s role as guardian
- property she brought into marriage
- property accumulated during marriage
- expectations from marriage
- opportunities given up for marriage

Protecting Widows

Issues similar to those with divorce

But **'women as women'** often receive less attention than **'women as caregivers'**

Property often listed only in man's name

Property may stay with children or brothers

Levirate protection undermined by AIDS

Pension Reforms

Women generally have less claims on pensions

- lower labor force participation
- tendency to work in informal sector

Differences in retirement age and life expectancy influences optimal type of benefit

Role for guaranteed minimum pensions

Example: reform in Chile

Addressing Limitation of Legal Reforms

Clash of traditional and *dejure* rights

Role for:

- Mediation
- Legal counseling and assistance
- Registration of property
- Registration of children: Example Mozambique
- Right to register traditional marriage