Gender–Sensitive Social Protection for Zero Hunger

WFP’s role in Latin America and the Caribbean
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1. Introduction

WFP has over 50 years of experience designing and implementing safety nets programmes for food insecure and vulnerable people, in partnership with governments and communities. Social protection systems have proven to be effective vehicles not only in reducing poverty and generating social inclusion, but also for the delivery of risk reduction, resilience, food security and nutrition outcomes at scale.

WFP’s role is two-dimensional: 1) service delivery in countries limited by capacity or resources and 2) technical assistance, capacity development, advocacy, and policy support to advance country-owned programmes. The latter builds on WFP’s operational footprint and longstanding experience in designing and implementing large-scale transfer programmes to vulnerable communities, and is the most prominent function of WFP in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).

While developing the overall framework that will guide WFP’s work on social protection in the region, the regional Social Protection and Gender teams decided to join forces and dedicate specific attention to WFP’s role in supporting Gender-Sensitive Social Protection, a crosscutting topic of renewed relevance for Zero Hunger, both globally and in the LAC region.

This paper reflects this effort. It intends to better define gender-sensitive social protection in the context of WFP’s work in the region, and provides the overarching framework for ensuring a gender dimension is integrated in WFP’s work on social protection for the period 2017-2021.

Methodology

This document is the result of an extensive review of relevant publications on social protection and gender in both LAC and globally.

A three-day workshop on social protection organized in WFP Regional Office in Panama in November 2016 provided the opportunity to deepen the understanding of WFP’s position and experiences on social protection in the region and to acquire additional knowledge on existing gender-sensitive interventions in the countries where WFP operates. While in Panama, the author held a series of interviews with relevant informants, both WFP and from other organizations such as ECLAC¹ and OPM.²

Finally, the discussions and materials used in the context of a series of webinars on gender-sensitive social protection organized by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) were also useful for the development of this paper.

1 ECLAC: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
2 OPM: Oxford Policy Management
2. Basic Concepts

This section attempts to conceptualize gender-sensitive social protection and its declinations in the LAC region.

What is gender-sensitive social protection?

This paper departs from the understanding that economic and social risks and vulnerabilities are gendered. In other words, not only men and women are affected by risks differently, but can also face different types of risks due to their being men or women.

Incorporating a gender dimension in social protection policy and practice influences the types of risk tackled, and shapes programme design and impacts. Gender-sensitive social protection puts the emphasis on gender-based social risks and vulnerabilities such as exclusion, discrimination and violation of rights, and the potential of measures to address them and promote greater gender equality. The main assumption is that the overall social protection goals of social inclusion, interruption of the intergenerational transmission of inequality, and human development, can only be realized if a gender dimension is systematically integrated.

This paper adheres to a transformative view of social protection that extends to concerns of social inequalities and exclusion in addition to economic risks, and focuses on how to best promote changes that reduce risks and vulnerabilities in a long-lasting manner while promoting greater social inclusion, cohesion and empowerment.

For the purpose of this paper, gender-sensitive social protection describes the set of actions directed to reduce the vulnerabilities and increase the capacity to cope with risks men and women face in different phases of their lifetime. This requires the integration of a gender dimension at every stage of the policy and programme design, implementation and monitoring. For gender-sensitivity to be realized, the objectives of a social protection system must serve the goal of gender equality.

At a minimum, mainstreaming gender across social protection means policies and programmes address the differential needs, risks and vulnerabilities of men and women and avoid reinforcing gender inequalities.

Why gender matters for social protection?

Social protection, particularly in LAC, promotes universality using a rights-based approach. The emphasis is rather on universality of individuals’ access to formal systems of social protection, with priorities defined upon needs. The assumption is that the universe of social protection beneficiary is far from homogeneous and its members’ needs and vulnerabilities vary widely. Targeting the poorest and most marginalised is therefore required to attain universal minimum standards of provision.

Gender equality is a human right and is critical to ensure the enjoyment of human rights by all. For gender equality to be realized however, the different risks and vulnerabilities of men and women of different ages should be taken into consideration, and activities designed to address them. Prioritization is also necessary to harness the transformative potential of social protection and to address the underlying causes of exclusion and discrimination.

To date however, while the expansion and strengthening of social protection systems globally has provided important opportunities against poverty, women all over the world continue to experience unequal access and coverage. This reflects a general disconnect between evidence on the gendered nature of poverty and vulnerability and the design of social protection programmes.

The relationship between gender equality and social protection is a mutually reinforcing one. Not only a gender lens is essential to enhance social protection outcomes, but sensitively designed social protection interventions have the potential to overcome social exclusion and access barriers, thus contributing to the advancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The linkage between gender equality and social protection is also outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which promotes a model of sustainable development characterized by more inclusive societies, solidarity and cohesiveness, in order to ensure a life of dignity for all, leaving no one behind. More specifically in relation to gender, it expresses the need to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work also through social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family (Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 5), among others. Finally, SDG 10 on reduce inequality within and among countries, calls for the adoption of social protection policies for achieving greater equality.

3 Reference is to idea that in addition to being protective (providing relief from poverty and deprivation), preventive (minimizing the impact of shocks), and promotive (increasing income and capabilities), social protection interventions may also be transformative (addressing social inequalities). Devereux S. & Rachel Sabates-Wheeler 2004, Transformative Social Protection, IDS Working Paper 232, Brighton: IDS.

4 This definition was purposely developed for the present paper to describe WFP’s take on gender-sensitive social protection in the region.


7 The integration of gender equality has the potential to maximise the impact of interventions by ensuring basic economic and social rights become a guarantee for all.

8 https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld. An important link also needs to be made with SDG 1.3 which relates to social protection.

The need for gender-sensitive social protection in LAC

Despite significant progress in the past years, LAC remains the most unequal region in the world.\(^{10}\) This is mostly due to its significant structural heterogeneity.

Inequality in LAC has economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions. Among its main determinants are gender, race, and ethnicity, with different manifestations depending on the age, and location, for example urban versus rural areas. Overall, gender is perhaps the most recognized and analysed one.\(^{11}\) The extent to which it has been integrated in the practice of social protection programmes in the region is however uneven at best.\(^{12}\)

Gender-based inequality in LAC is essentially grounded in the sexual division of labour between men and women, whereby women tend to shoulder most of the reproductive and care responsibility.\(^{13}\) This compounded with limited support services such as child care facilities, and maternity and parental benefits, results in little time and opportunities for women to enter the labour market and enjoying the benefits associated with it, including those deriving from social protection schemes.

Amongst the commonly recognized disadvantages suffered by women in the region are heavy domestic work at home and high rate of informality and exploitation when performing it for others,\(^{14}\) salary discrimination, a significant gap in the participation in the labour market, high level of unemployment and informal labour,\(^{15}\) inequality in the access to, use and control over productive resources. In addition, lack of mobility due to fear of violence, illiteracy and care duties were also found in some contexts.\(^{16}\) While longer life expectancy and aging is increasing the number of women among older persons, they continue to be much less represented among those enrolled in retirement and pension schemes.\(^{17}\)

Non-remunerated domestic labour has a big incidence on the multiple expressions of poverty women suffer in LAC. In general, it is an impediment to remunerated work that provides income and sufficient security to be economically independent. The attempt to balance work and child care leads women to take on lower-quality jobs in the informal economy, resulting in lower social security coverage.\(^{18}\) Less independent women are also more likely to suffer from gender-based violence and have fewer chances to escape the vicious cycle of violence.\(^{19}\)

Time use has emerged as an additional important element to measure the gender gap in LAC. Evidence from across the region indicates that while women suffer consistently more from income poverty than men, time is distributed even more unequally.\(^{20}\) Studies on fatherhood and the role of men in sexual and reproductive health in LAC, while confirming much of the reality described above, they also complement it with a slightly different perspective. According to them, not only men do participate in caregiving more than it is commonly thought, but their presence as co-parents yields some important benefits for the children, women and themselves.\(^{21}\)

Social protection can be a powerful instrument to redress the socio-economic disadvantages women suffer as a consequence of their care responsibility. Depending on how they are designed, social protection systems can either reinforce or reduce existing gender inequalities. Given the importance of the care economy in the LAC region, the imbalance in the social and economic organization of care and domestic work that operates to the prejudice of women cannot be overlooked. In recognition of this, social protection was recently confirmed as one of the action areas of the gender equality agenda in LAC.\(^{22}\)

This paper argues for WFP to be forefront on this together with the rest of the UN System by ensuring the consistent integration of a gender dimension at every stage of social protection work in LAC.

### Time Poverty: Household well-being is a function of their income-consumption levels and their time decisions. Households need a minimum of hours to complete household chores. The less that time, the greater the well-being. Assignments of resources, roles, and time in households reflect differences in the preferences and power of individuals within households. The use of time has strong gender implications, since women have to work more hours in domestic tasks, apart from paid work. ECLAC (2010)

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\(^{10}\) ECLAC (2016i), La Matriz de la desigualdad social en America Latina, p. 16.

\(^{11}\) Ibid, p. 19.

\(^{12}\) A thorough analysis of social protection systems and programmes in the region from a gender perspective lies outside the scope of this paper. However findings from some studies on this issue reveal a substantial disconnect between gender equality and empowerment goals on the one hand and social protection objectives on the other. ODI (2010i), Rethinking social protection using a gender lens. London: ODI, p. 13. See also, ODI (2010ii), Cash Transfers and gendered risks and vulnerabilities: lessons from Latin America. London: ODI, p. 3.

\(^{13}\) This is also true globally, where in comparison with men, women spend an average of 5.7 weeks more on unpaid care in a year. ODI (2016), Op. Cit., p. 12.

\(^{14}\) According to the ILO, in Latin America 11% of women enter the labour market through paid domestic work. ILO (2015), Labour Overview: Latin America and the Caribbean. Uma: ILO. Within this, data reveal the persistence of high rates of informality and deregulation, discrimination, and exploitation and abuse experienced mainly by women. A good example in the region is Brazil, which enshrined mandatory social security enrolment of domestic workers in its constitution since 1988.

\(^{15}\) Evidence shows that informal labour markets across the world are sex-segregated, with women disproportionately concentrated in lower-quality jobs. Gender segmentation in informal employment is also evident with women concentrated in invisible areas such as domestic work, street vendors, etc. ODI (2016), Op. Cit., p. 9.

\(^{16}\) This was reported for example in relation to Honduras and El Salvador. Key informant interview with WFP staff.


\(^{19}\) ECLAC (2016ii), Equality and Women’s Autonomy in the Sustainable Development Agenda, Document prepared for the thirteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo,25-28 October 16), Santiago: ECLAC, p. 108.


\(^{21}\) These are more likely to increase in the household, freeing women’s time, and less likely men undergoing in risk taking behaviors. Barker, G., and Verani, F. (2008), Men’s Participation as Father in the Latin American and Caribbean Region: A Critical Literature Review with Policy Considerations, Brasil: Promundo.

\(^{22}\) Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, Montevideo, 25–28 October 2016.
What is called care?

Within the concept of care are all those actions and relationships that make the well-being and survival of people ranging from provision and preparation of food to affection and emotional restraint, through support in the education of children, girls and adolescents and the health care of people dependent on the family. In most societies it is women who carry out caregiving actions. Much of the discrimination suffered by women in various spheres of life is understood from this link in the chain, where an uneven distribution of monetary and time resources is forged, and care tasks are in most cases invisible and unpaid and hinder women’s access to education and the labor market.

Source: Women’s Autonomy and Equality in the Sustainable Development Agenda, XIII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean (October 2016)

What is the care economy?

The “care economy” refers to the non-payment work performed in the domestic sphere that maintains the current labor force, raises the future and cares for the aged. This invisible area of production, which includes the care of children, the elderly and the sick, the daily maintenance of household welfare, voluntary work in the community and subsistence production, is of fundamental economic importance. It has been estimated that all of these shares if they were accounted for would comprise one third of the gross national product of the countries of the region.

Source: The invisible economy and gender inequalities. The importance of measuring and valuing unpaid
3. What does it mean for WFP?

WFP framework guiding gender-sensitive social protection: global and regional levels

Globally, the 2030 Agenda provides the overarching framework for achieving sustainable development and ending poverty, hunger and inequality. Within this, WFP prioritizes SDG 2 on achieving zero hunger, and SDG 17 on partnership. WFP Strategic Plan 2017-2021 aligns WFP results framework with the 2030 Agenda both in responding to emergencies, and performing early recovery and development-enabling interventions.

With the release of WFP’s Food-based Safety Nets Policy (2004) and the Update of WFP’s Safety Nets Policy (2012), WFP was one of the first agencies to develop a policy framework defining principles and articulating the role of food assistance in social protection. The policy frames WFP’s corporate position with regards to social protection, while further aspects can be found into WFP Social Protection and Safety Nets Guidelines.

This marks WFP’s strong commitment to and belief in these systems as a means to reduce hunger and malnutrition, protect livelihoods, and increase resilience in the face of shocks. More specifically, WFP operates at the intersection of safety nets, social services, labour market policies and insurance schemes. A regional strategic vision on Social Protection 4 Zero Hunger currently under development will further detail WFP’s approach to social protection for the LAC region for the period 2017-2021.

WFP Gender Policy (2015-2020) lays out the importance of a gender-transformative approach to food assistance programmes, which is grounded in the recognition that equality of opportunities, access to resources, and voice are condition sine qua non for a world with zero hunger.

Recognizing that persistent and structural gender inequalities act as barriers to overcome entrenched poverty and hunger, WFP is committed to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment by integrating a gender lens throughout its work, including on social protection.

The WFP Regional Gender Strategy (2016-2020) further guides the WFP Regional Bureau for LAC (RBP) and related Country Offices (COs) to ensure the different food security and nutrition needs of women, men, girls and boys are adequately met, thus contributing to bridge the gender gap in food security and nutrition.

All the above provides WFP with a valid framework of reference to ensure the integration of a gender dimension in its social protection work in the LAC region. In line with the two regional strategies it aims to bridge on gender and social protection, this paper is also valid for the period 2017-2021.

23 WFP (2016i), Strategic Plan (2017-2021), WFP/EB.2/2016/4-A/1/Rev.2, Rome: WFP.
24 WFP (2016ii), Social Protection Concept Note, Panama: WFP.
26 The Strategy indicates the path to follow for the region in the next five years both in terms of gender mainstreaming and targeted actions to achieve the four objectives set forth by WFP Gender Policy. WFP (2016iii) Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Gender Strategy 2016 – 2020. Panama: WFP.
Entry points for WFP’s engagement in gender-sensitive social protection in LAC

Leveraging its long-term experience in supporting social protection schemes all over the world, WFP’s role is to strengthen countries’ capacities to provide access to adequate, nutritious and safe food for all.27 The objective is to support and advance food-security oriented and nutrition-sensitive national social protection programmes and systems, contributing to the achievement of SDG 2: “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.”28

WFP also advocates for social protection programmes to be increasingly flexible and shock-responsive and for relief efforts to use existing national social assistance systems where possible and appropriate.29 Work in this area entails strengthening the capacity of social protection systems to anticipate and respond to fluctuating food and nutrition needs, supporting the food insecure to manage risks while building resilience.30

As far as the LAC region is concerned, WFP’s main social protection work streams as they are being delineated in the upcoming regional strategic vision for social protection are: nutrition-sensitive; shock-responsive; integrating a food security lens in social protection programmes; leaving no one behind/inclusive approach; cost-efficiency and effectiveness of social protection programmes; and support the building and integration of social protection systems.

WFP contributes to social protection through cash transfer programming, nutrition interventions, emergency preparedness and response, support to smallholder agriculture, school meals and public works, but also crosscutting expertise in targeting, vulnerability analysis and mapping, information management, and monitoring and evaluation. Also, the wealth of knowledge and experience on social protection that exists in the region31 provides opportunities for facilitating South-South cooperation and promoting exchanges between countries.

These are WFP’s main entry points when contributing to social protection work in the region. Yet, more needs to be said about how WFP’s work on social protection for food and nutrition security is designed and the principles underpinning it.

Of relevance to this paper, WFP adheres to a people-centred approach that values social protection as a citizen guarantee, universal in scope, but differential in practice as accounting for the different needs of various population groups.32 WFP also recognizes that applying a gender lens is essential to food security and nutrition and to achieving zero hunger in a way that leaves no one behind.33 For example, recognizing that nutritional status both determines and is determined by multiple factors, WFP is committed to design programmes with a clear understanding of how nutrition is affected by gender inequality and lack of women’s empowerment.34

More in general, this means making sure that the linkages between gender, food security and nutrition and the impact on poverty and vulnerability are analysed, and WFP’s work on social protection contributes to improved food security and nutrition through the enhancement of gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Targeting activities to women - or men depending on the context - is not enough to address the underlying causes of inequality and promote more equal gender relationships. A ‘transformative agenda’ requires social protection to contribute to some more fundamental and sustainable shifts such as for example changes in women’s access to and control over resources such as credit, information, land of quality; changes in women’s agency and decision-making across all relevant spheres; with consequent positive effects on well-being outcomes.

So far, WFP Purchase for Progress (P4P) showcases the most comprehensive approach on addressing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the region, and could serve as a model.

28 More specifically as per the first and second targets “ensure access by all people … to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round”; and “end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age.” Evidence shows the positive impacts of social assistance on household food security. As far as the region is concerned, examples include an increase of 13% of the median food expenditures in beneficiary households in Mexico; and increase in per capita food consumption, caloric intake and dietary diversity for both Colombian Refugees in Ecuador and beneficiary households in Paraguay.
30 Examples of shock-responsive social protection in the region are the vertical expansion of the value of cash benefits to Bolsa Familia households in Brasil, and WFP’s cash transfer through the government safety net platform to the households affected by the earthquake in 2016 in Ecuador. OPM (2016), Study on Shock-Responsive Social Protection in Latin America and the Caribbean. Theoretical framework and literature review. Oxford: OPM in collaboration with WFP.
31 More specifically, Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Cuba, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Dominican Republic have developed globally recognized social protection programmes. WFP (2016i), Op. Cit.
34 Ibid, p. 22.
Following is a “quick recipe” to ensure gender-sensitivity in the design of WFP’s interventions for food security and nutrition, which goes through the integration of the following five key ‘ingredients’: diversity, participation, accessibility, empowerment, and communication and information. Reference is also made to WFP Gender Policy objectives and related activities as articulated in the Regional Gender Strategy and guiding WFP’s work on gender globally and in the region more in particular. These are:

**Objective I**: Food assistance adapted to different needs. Women, men, girls, and boys benefit from food assistance programmes and activities that are adapted to their different needs and capacities.

**Objective II**: Equal participation. Women and men participate equally in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender-transformative food security and nutrition programmes and policies.

**Objective III**: Decision-making by women and girls. Women and girls have increased power in decision-making regarding food security and nutrition in households, communities and societies.

**Objective IV**: Gender and protection. Food assistance does not harm to the safety, dignity and integrity of the women, men, girls and boys receiving it, and is provided in ways that respect their rights.

**Diversity** For social protection to be truly inclusive, the first step is to identify the different needs of men and women in a given context, including at different stages of the life cycle, and tailor food assistance activities to best address them. Age and gender analysis is critical for this. While maintaining the universality of the right to access and minimum standard of provision, targeting is therefore an essential means of reducing gender inequalities and optimizing the distribution of often-limited resources. (**Objective I**)

**Participation** The strength and effectiveness of social protection programmes depend on a large degree on the availability of effective channels and opportunities for the participation and voice of those benefiting from it, men and women alike. Regular consultations with and engagement of men and women of different ages in different phases is critical to ensure the needs and concerns of all are taken into account in the design, implementation, and monitoring of food security and nutrition-related social protection interventions, and decide on priority lines of action that reflect the realities of those concerned. (**Objective II**)

**Accessibility** It is important for social protection systems to be aware of the existing social, cultural, and other barriers that can inhibit some individuals from accessing services and programmes effectively, and to actively work to dismantle them. From a gender perspective, these can take the form of attitudes, behaviours as well as practical impediments such as limited time and mobility that act at the prejudice of women. Others may be rooted in the nature of informality, and the high presence of women in low-paid, informal jobs. Making services accessible to all is essential for social protection to achieve food and nutrition outcomes. (**Objective I**)

**Information and communication** Making information on how to access and benefit from programmes available to all and in a way that it is understood by all is critical to avoid further marginalizing and discriminating against certain individuals or population groups. Multiple information channels and strategies should be used to reach out to all those concerned, including the illiterate and those belonging to a minority group, on how to access social protection schemes that ensure adequate, nutritious and safe food, including in crisis situations where time and resources may be limited. This will support their capacity to make decisions regarding their well-being, as well as ensuring accountability and transparency of the social protection system in place. (**Objective IV**)

**Empowerment** Finally, empowerment is perhaps the most difficult to ensure, but also the one with the highest potential to be transformative. It is about fostering the capacity of individuals, and women in particular, to exercise their rights fully, including the right to access opportunities and services made available through social protection schemes. Engaging women in the design, implementation, and monitoring of food security and nutrition-sensitive social protection work can strengthen their voice and decision-making power. (**Objectives I-III**)

Some ingredients are specific, while others such as for example empowerment and information and communication are more transversal and cut across multiple gender objectives and activities. Sufficient capacity of staff on gender is key for the successful realization of the recipe.

35 Reference is both to the activities directly implemented by WFP and to the government’s programmes WFP supports, where WFP has a role to advocate for the inclusion of gender-related considerations.

36 While the ingredients are well-known dimensions that allow the assessment and integration of gender issues, the idea to use them as a recipe and their articulation in relation to WFP’s Gender Policy objectives were made on purpose for this paper.

37 Limited awareness of programmes as well as of the benefits in relation to the cost of participation can act at the detriment of women because of the higher opportunity costs they face in terms of time, lower literacy and limited resources. This is particularly true for indigenous groups living in remote areas and speaking different languages.
Practical steps to ensure a gender dimension is integrated across programmes’ design, implementation and monitoring include:

1. Create evidence and data disaggregation by sex and age;
2. Addressing gender inequalities should feature clearly in the programme objectives;
3. Programme conditions should be formulated in a gender-sensitive manner and with a focus not to exacerbate gender vulnerabilities and inequalities;
4. Gender-sensitive indicators should be integrated for evaluating the impact of social protection work on gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Recognizing the importance of the care economy in LAC, critical to the realization of the above is to provide systematic attention to the sexual division of labour between men and women of different ages at the household, community and societal levels to avoid reinforcing existing gender inequalities, and adding to the already heavy burden of women. Also, programmes should be designed in such a way as to actively promote the principle of co-responsibility between men and women in every sphere of life, including for example shared family responsibility for children care, nutrition and health.38

So designed, WFP’s work on social protection will not only be based on improved understanding of how men and women experience poverty and their capacities to deal with risks across their lifecycle, but a gender analysis will inform the choice of programmes and services, as well as delivery and implementation mechanisms. Finally, gender-sensitive indicators will also ensure the ability to monitor the differential impacts of interventions on men’s and women’s food security and nutrition, as well as on gender equality.

Examples of gender-sensitive design features in WFP’s interventions can include flexible working hours for women in work programmes; planning activities around women’s productive and reproductive responsibilities (for e.g. the Seasonal Livelihood Programming); provision of childcare facilities to facilitate women’s participation; measures to encourage women’s active participation in programmes’ governance; and promotion of responsible fatherhood and engagement of men in care, nutrition and health.

Given WFP prominent technical assistance role in the region, capacity strengthening for gender-sensitive national social protection policies and programmes is a priority sector of interventions for the coming years.39 For this to be achieved however, a certain level of capacity and understanding of gender issues should be guaranteed among staff. Finally, it is important to mention that while WFP’s contribution is expected to be for the most part at the programmatic level, WFP’s role in support of social protection policies that address the gender gap should not be disregarded.40

38 See examples of WFP’s efforts to encourage men to participate in sensitization and training on nutrition in Bolivia, Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, and Honduras. WFP (2016iii), Op. Cit., p. 10.
40 For example WFP’s work in support of existing institutional framework in the definition of gender-sensitive policies for food security and nutrition, and in advocating for the integration of gender equality in any food security and nutrition programmes and policies at both national and local levels.
A quick overview of gender-sensitive social protection in the region

While a comprehensive assessment - from a gender perspective - of the multitude of social protection programmes that exist in the region is outside the scope of this paper, following is a brief overview of some gender-related features that emerged from the analysed literature. Importantly, considerations are solely based on the analysis of secondary data, and only those that was possible to review in the context of the development of this paper, thus they are far from being exhaustive. The idea is just to exemplify what gender-sensitive social protection can look like in the practice of social protection in the region.

Tackling inequality and improving human development outcomes are among the primary objectives that inspire social protection in LAC. Of the main sets of social protection instruments that exist, cash and asset transfers probably predominate in the LAC region, and are the ones receiving most of the attention.

From a gender perspective, findings from the analysed studies reveal that cash transfer programmes with a human development objective in the region are mostly targeted to women in their capacity as caregivers and on the assumption that it is more likely that the transfer will benefit the whole family. Yet, besides not being a sufficient condition for programmes to be considered gender-sensitive, studies reveal contrasting results on the impact this has on intra-household dynamics and women’s empowerment more specifically. Evidence shows that transferring money to women is positive at least in terms of the increase in family income and the potential ability to decide over its use, but it does not necessarily brings about empowerment or economic independence.

Effective change on this in fact requires shifting underlying attitudes and behaviours for which financial incentives are not enough. Other studies suggest that women’s participation in conditional cash transfer programmes can be counterproductive as conditionality often falls back on women increasing their burden of domestic and care responsibilities, preventing them from engaging in paid work, and results in the reinforcement of a utilitarian approach to women’s traditional roles within the household.

In some cases giving the cash transfer to the women has also resulted in higher rate of domestic violence. Evidence on this however is mixed, and there is no consensus as to whether an increase in a woman’s income increases or decreases her risk of experiencing intimate partner violence. A second consideration relates to the fact that for the most part social protection programmes in the region seem to be informed by an uneven and narrow understanding of gender relations. Priorities is given to practical gender needs such as health and education, with a few examples of psychosocial support in relation to domestic violence; and little or no attention to transformative goals such as changes in the power dynamics within the household or tackling the underlying causes of intimate partner violence. A notable exception to this is the programme Familias en Acción in Colombia, whose objectives include women’s empowerment and protection from domestic and sexual violence, and a general increase in women’s voice and agency through participation in programme decision-making and governance.

42 ILO & UNWOMEN (2012), Combatiendo la desigualdad desde lo basico. Piso de proteccion social e igualdad de genero, p. 36.
43 Time-use surveys in the region confirm the negative impact of such programmes on women’s time, confirming that they are the ones doing most of the unpaid work. ECLAC (2016ii), Op. Cit., p. 44. See also, ODI (2010ii), Op. Cit.
44 Reference here is to Progresa/Prospera in Mexico where higher transfer seems to have led to increase in domestic violence. Webinar on Gender-Sensitive Social Protection Design: What Works in Asia? Organized by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2016.
46 Webinar on Gender-Sensitive Social Protection in the Caribbean, Organized by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2016.
Evidence also indicates that the role social protection can realistically play in advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment is often also the result of a political decision, rather than a mere technical design choice. It depends on the appetite that exists in a country for gender equality, and on the government agencies responsible for the programme. This is because tackling deeply engrained gender inequalities requires systematically thinking through and addressing the social and cultural beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are causing them.

Finally, little evidence seems to exist on the sustainability of gender-related changes beyond the life of the programme, for example in relation to transformation of unequal gender relations. What has become clear however is that to effectively promote transformative dynamics within the household and for them to be long-lasting, men should be brought into the picture, including on issues such as nutrition, health, and more generally on parenting and care. On this, the programme Juntos in Peru provides a good example of how training and linkages to complementary programmes have contributed to increased sharing of domestic responsibilities between men and women, and increased women’s perception of their bargaining power in the household. Chile provides another example of the promotion of shared-responsibility on childcare, and it is the only country that introduced compulsory paternity leave.

4. Key to ensure gender-sensitive social protection

Finally a series of actionable recommendations is provided. Recommendations are mostly geared towards expanding the analysis and understanding of the topic, as well as ensuring the establishment of the conditions to enable the integration of a gender dimension in WFP’s social protection work. As such, they apply to WFP’s dual role as direct provider of food assistance and supporter of countries’ strengthened capacity on food security and nutrition, as well as to the various operational contexts the region presents.

Recommendations are meant to contribute to the fulfilment of the 2030 Agenda obligation to either acquire or strengthen skills-sets in areas such as social protection and safety nets - among others - as recalled in WFP newly approved Strategic Plan. Given the timeframe 2017-2021, priority is on what is possible to achieve in the limited time available, and what gender-sensitive social protection can realistically achieve.

1. Strengthening capacity on gender-sensitive social protection

The first step for WFP to effectively promote gender-sensitive social protection for food security and nutrition is to ensure understanding of what gender-sensitive social protection is, and that sufficient capacity on gender exists internally, at all levels of implementation and across programmes and staff. Capacity constraint in fact often lies at the heart of poor understanding of gender dynamics and uneven integration of a gender dimension in social protection as well as in other areas of work.

More specifically for WFP this means strengthening understanding of the gendered patterns of poverty and vulnerability in each given context, in crisis as well as in normal times, and the linkages between gender equality, food security and nutrition; and design social protection interventions that explicitly aim at reducing the vulnerability factors men and women of different ages experience, as much as reducing poverty and economic risks.

When gender analysis informs the design of social protection interventions, social exclusion and access barriers are reduced, and there is a greater potential for programmes to contribute to enhanced equality. Particular attention should be paid to ensure quality of participation of men and women in programmes at different levels, as a way to ensure sustainability of results.

48 Webinar on Gender-Sensitive Social Protection Design: What Works in Asia? Organized by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2016.
49 Depending on who is the lead agency for social protection in a country, the scope for attention to gender equality may vary widely. ODI (2010), How to design gender-sensitive social protection programmes. London: ODI, p. 38.
50 ODI (2010), Cash transfers and gendered risks and vulnerabilities: lessons from Latin America. London: ODI.
51 Webinar on Gender-Sensitive Social Protection in the Caribbean, Organized by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), 2016.
52 For example by ensuring the systematic integration of a gender dimension in WFP’s current work on shock responsive social protection.
2. Broadening analysis of the context

Opportunities to enhance gender equality through social protection policies and programmes are highly context-specific, and depend on the interests and priorities of key actors, as well as on the understanding of the multiple objectives ascribed to social protection in any given context, and the role of state in addressing gender inequalities.

For WFP’s work on social protection to effectively integrate and act on the cultural, economic, and political realities, it needs to be informed by a thorough understanding of the contexts in which it operates. Within this, an analysis of the key vulnerabilities, risks, needs and capacity of men and women of different ages in various locations, as well as the interest and capacity of social protection actors to address them, should form the basis of interventions.

Ideally, the combination of gender and context analysis should inform the choice of the type of programme and shape the definition of specific design features, including the identification and differentiation of eligibility and benefit criteria that address the needs and characteristics of various population groups in urban as well as in rural areas, thus harnessing the transformative potential of social protection for food security and nutrition to tackle inequalities, avoid doing harm, and achieve greater gender equality.

A comprehensive analysis of the extent to which gender equality and food security are reflected in social protection systems and programmes in the region could be a good starting point and provide useful insights to further guide WFP’s work on this.

3. Levering opportunities to integrate gender

The country level strategic planning process, which is currently ongoing within WFP and consists of a Strategic Review and the formulation of a Country Strategic Plan, provides a unique opportunity to ensure the systematic integration of gender-sensitive social protection in WFP’s work in support of country-level strategies for zero hunger.

Attention to gender should start with the review of the country context and the identification of challenges to achieving zero hunger for this analysis to adequately inform the Country Strategic Plan and shape WFP’s role on gender-sensitive social protection in each country.

Other important opportunities that should be better leveraged include the efforts WFP is making to integrate a food security lens in social protection programmes for example in Guatemala, as well as the work on shock-responsive social protection in LAC, WFP is doing with support from the Oxford Policy Management (OPM). The three case studies in Ecuador, Guatemala, and Haiti could be the platform for the integration of a gender dimension into the analysis of shock-responsive social protection.53

Finally, given the importance WFP is attributing to enhancing nutrition outcomes through social protection, it is critical to ensure that the design and implementation of nutrition-sensitive social protection programmes is also gender-sensitive. A few examples of how this could be done include making sure that the design of nutrition programmes do not compete with caring practices; ensure that expecting and nursing women are not involved in hard work or performing highly physically demanding activities (for e.g. walking long distances); provide support and child-caring services where needed; and involve fathers as much as mothers in nutrition-related sensitization activities.

4. Generating evidence to advocate for gender-sensitive social protection

Research reveals there is still very little evidence of the linkages between social protection design and outcomes on poverty and vulnerability, and even more so if looked from a gender perspective.54 Studies on the transformative impact of social protection on people, and more specifically on women, are even fewer.

Enhancing the evidence-based on how social protection can enhance food security and nutrition in LAC by tackling the gender-based inequalities that are contributing to it is one of the stated goals of WFP Regional Gender strategy, and is critical to foster WFP’s capacity to advocate for increased efforts on enhancing gender-sensitivity in social protection policies and programmes in the region.

Knowing that achieving lasting changes takes time, getting the right evidence is also critical to ensure continuity of funding and donors’ interest.

Emphasis should be placed on the gendered impacts of social protection interventions such as for example on the opportunity costs of women’s participation, the impact on time use, family dynamics and women’s empowerment; as well as on key gender-sensitive design and implementation features and their impact on gender equality as well as on the advancement of food and nutrition security outcomes.

53 Some efforts on this were made in the context of the development of this paper. More specifically, the author reviewed the overarching research questions used for the studies and made suggestions on where and how to integrate a gender dimension.

54 ODI (2010), Cash transfers and gendered risks and vulnerabilities: lessons from Latin America. London: ODI.
5. Ensuring do no harm

Recognizing that limited or no sensitivity to gender in the design and implementation of social protection programmes can result in the perpetuation and exacerbation of existing inequalities and discrimination, specific attention should be paid to avoid doing harm to the safety, dignity and integrity of women and men of different ages.

Including a protection lens in WFP’s social protection work is essential to anticipate the possible consequences of each intervention, both intended and unintended, and ensure a ‘do no harm’ principle is applied and mitigating measures adopted.

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<th>Protection Approach</th>
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<td>The promotion and protection of the human rights of women and the strengthening of efforts to achieve substantive equality between women and men are fundamental to the prevention of violence against women. The structural imbalances of power and inequality between women and men are both the context and the causes of violence against women. The elimination of violence and discrimination against women in all areas requires a comprehensive, coordinated and sustained effort. UN (2006), Ending violence against women</td>
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Just to provide an example, the debate on whether conditional cash transfer programmes targeted to women reinforce or have the potential to change gender relationships in the region and elsewhere is still vivid. It is therefore important for WFP to ensure that compliance with conditional requirements does not have detrimental time implications for women either through the active promotion of the principle of co-responsibility or by considering conditionalities that notch on men’s as well as women’s time and work, thus challenging the existing sexual division of labour, and at a minimum, not adding to the already heavy burden of unpaid women endure daily.

6. Enhancing partnerships opportunities on gender

WFP realizes that achieving zero hunger requires to act as part of a system and help to shape the way in which partners interact. If possible, this is even more crucial for the effectiveness of WFP’s gender-sensitive social protection work.

It is important that WFP deepens its commitment to effective partnership when performing gender-sensitive social protection work, by actively seeking opportunities for collaboration and coordination both horizontally, across sectors, and vertically, at different levels, to enhance understanding, ensure coherence and complementarity of interventions, integrate with existing programmes and systems, and generate the systemic changes it aims to, thus contributing to greater gender equality and women’s empowerment particularly on areas of relevance for WFP such as food security and nutrition, and disaster risk reduction. Concerted efforts by a wide range of stakeholders are also needed to harness the differing degrees of influence and capacities various actors may have on gender in each operational context.

As far as gender-sensitive social protection is concerned, collaboration should be sought with agencies such as the World Bank, FAO, UNICEF, UN WOMEN, and ILO, as well as with institutions such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). NGOs across relevant sectors of intervention should also be considered.
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