



Leveraging social protection to support women's and girls' climate resilience in low- and middle-income countries

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Nairobi | June 22, 2023

Motivation



- Climate change is hitting hardest some of those already most vulnerable
 - Rapidly exacerbating inequalities, including gender inequality
 - **Climate action is urgently needed – at scale, and with a gender lens**
- Growing interest in the potential of social protection
 - Social protection programs reach billions of resource-poor people globally
 - Existing vast literature suggests substantial potential to support climate resilience – but little evidence framed explicitly around climate (and even less around gendered climate impacts)
- The Sharm El Sheikh Implementation Plan for COP27 (UNFCCC, 2022):
 - explicitly mentions social protection as an implementation pathway for responding to the climate crisis
 - highlights the importance of ensuring gender-responsive implementation of climate action.
 - But it does not bring together these themes in its recommendations

What we do

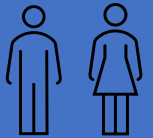
- Conceptualize a framework with plausible pathways for how social assistance (SA) can improve women and girls' responses to climate change, thereby improving their wellbeing
- Assess the evidence across the different pathways, to identify the dimensions in which SA is a promising or limited approach to gender-responsive climate action, as well as the design features that may increase the effectiveness of SA.
- Develop 5 key messages on how SA can improve women's and girls' responses to climate change

Climate shocks and stressors

- Rapid versus slow onset
- Actual versus perceived

Women and girls tend to be more vulnerable to climate variability due to greater exposure and sensitivity, and less adaptive capacity

Social assistance



- Available resources
- Control over resources, knowledge, access to services
- Infrastructure, civic engagement

Social Assistance typology and designs:

- Cash and food transfers
- Public works
- Food assistance for assets
- School feeding

(Design features, complementary activities or system linkages)

Women and girls are less vulnerable and agents of change

Reduced exposure

Reduced sensitivity

Improved adaptive capacity

Potential responses to climate variability:

- Improved coping (reduction in maladaptive responses)
- Improved adaptive responses
- Improved transformative responses

Women and girls' well-being

- Poverty reduction and food security
- Livelihoods
- Nutrition and health
- Access to education
- Freedom from violence and exploitation
- Economic empowerment and agency

Key message 1: Women and girls are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to differential exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, but SA has potential to change these

- Gender differences in **exposure** to climate hazards are determined by several factors, including gendered norms
 - Women are less likely to migrate
- Gender differences in livelihoods and health status also influence **sensitivity** to climate change.
 - Pregnant and lactating women, may be more sensitive to climate stressors and shocks such as heatwaves
 - Women's livelihoods maybe more or less affected by climate variability.
- Gender differences in **adaptive capacities** of men and women to respond to climate disturbances
 - Women are less likely to have access to and control over productive resources and services (climate information, financial, insurance, etc)
 - Women have more limited decision-making authority
- To the extent that SA increases women's and girls' adaptive capacity, or reduces their exposure and sensitivity, it has the potential to reduce their unequal vulnerability to climate variability

Key message 2: Social assistance can improve coping responses, reducing the need for maladaptive responses which disproportionately affect women and girls

- By providing households with resources, SA allows households to smooth their consumption during times of shocks
- Depending on the design of the SA program, it can also
 - Improve women's control over resources, thereby, increasing her agency which may allow her to better cope with climate shocks.
 - Link women to other community activities, networks, and services during negative climate shocks
 - Help build back infrastructure damaged during negative climate shocks (Public works)
- **SA reduces the need to use maladaptive coping strategies** in the face of climate shocks that disproportionately affect women and girls such as reducing consumption, selling off productive assets (Quisumbing et al., 2008), marrying daughters earlier (Mobarak et al., 2013; Corno et al., 2020), engaging in risky sexual behavior (Andriano and Behrman, 2020), and taking out children from school (de Janvry et al 2006).

Key message 3: Social assistance can improve women's adaptive responses - including promoting diversification and uptake of climate-smart practices – but complementary activities may be needed

- By providing households or women with resources, SA removes financial constraints on investments,
 - **Diversification** : allows HH/women to build and diversify their assets and engage in different livelihood activities (Daidone et al 2019, Hidrobo et al 2019), including among women (Perera et al 2022)
 - **New climate smart technologies and practices**: allows HH/women to invest in new technologies or practices that are more resistant to climate variability such as drought resistant seeds and irrigation.
- However, cash alone may not be enough to change HH/women's investment behavior (may not be just a resource constraint)
 - Study in Niger find that training leads to adoption of climate smart practice and cash had little added value (Aker et al 2021)
 - Study in Nicaragua find that complementary activities were needed to facilitate diversification of economic activities (Macours et al 2022)

Key message 4: It is unknown whether SA can lead to more transformative responses that take into account the preferences of women and girls – but there is potential, including through cleaner fuels, forestation, and community resource management

- **Cleaner fuels:** energy demand is strongly connected to income
 - Old age pensions in South Africa increase their energy demand and reliance on cleaner fuels (Gelo, Kollamparambil, and Jeuland 2023)
 - In Malawi and Zambia, access to the additional income inclines households to reduce the use of firewood (Chakrabarti et al. 2023)
 - In contrast, households in India increase their use of both dirty and cleaner fuels, and there is no overall shift in the use of stove technologies that use cleaner fuel (Hanna and Oliva 2015).
 - No evidence specific to women, but women may be more incentivized to adopt clean technologies in the context of an income shock
 - benefits of adoption are more transparent to women in the form of improved health outcomes.
 - windfall gains in terms of the labor savings offered by adopting more efficient technologies.

Key message 4: It is unknown whether SA can lead to more transformative responses that take into account the preferences of women and girls – but there is potential, including through cleaner fuels, forestation, and community resource management

- **Forestation:** SA can reduce deforestation by reducing the need to engage in extractive practices and allowing households to purchase cleaner energy sources. Conversely, increased income from SA, can raise the consumption of land intensive goods, increasing deforestation.
 - In Indonesia reduction in resource extraction as a result of a cash transfer reduced forest coverage loss (Ferraro and Simorangkir 2020)
 - In Mexico, a CCT increases deforestation (Alix-Garcia et al 2013)
- **Public works may promote reforestation**
 - In Ethiopia, a public works program that promotes soil and water conservation and reforestation, led to increased tree coverage (Hirvonen, 2022).



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■ Community resource management:

- SA can improve different dimensions of social cohesion, trust, and civic engagement (Evans et al 2018, Valli et al 2019), but these improvements depend crucially on the implementation and delivery of the SA programs (Burchi et al 2022).
- By increasing social cohesion, trust, and civic engagement, SA may help enforce compliance of conservation laws through social reciprocity and may also improve natural resource management but there is limited evidence on this link from SA to natural resource management
- While theoretically improved natural resource management could benefit women, it depends crucially on whether women's preferences are considered.



Key message 5: “Business as usual” is not sufficient; explicitly considering gender and climate in the design and delivery of SA is critical to strengthening women’s and girls’ responses

○ Coping responses

- Regardless of who in the household is targeted, if households are able to smooth their consumption, it reduces the need for maladaptive coping strategies that disproportionately affect women and girls
- Linking women to services and networks may provide women with information and resources to help them better cope with climate shocks
- Public works should take into account women’s added time burden resulting from climate shocks

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○ Adaptive responses

- Targeting women more likely to directly affect if and how they invest in diversifying their assets, economic activity and climate smart technology.
- Complementary components are important as cash by itself may not be enough to change women’s investment behavior
- Size of transfer may matter, as larger transfers are more likely to be invested and not used to smooth consumption

Key message 5: “Business as usual” is not sufficient; explicitly considering gender and climate in the design and delivery of SA is critical to strengthening women’s and girls’ responses

○ Transformative responses

- Explicitly make transitions to greener and more sustainable economies an objective.
- Ensure women participate in planning of programs so their preferences are taken into account
 - Public works can promote sustainable land management practices but should ensure women’s and girls are part of planning and decisionmaking process
- Leverage existing communal institutions (women’s self-help groups, ROSCAs) to strengthen the agency and coordination of women to perform resilient activities and promote their wider engagement with the state

Summary

- **Key message 1:** Women and girls are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to differential exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity, but SA has potential to change these
- **Key message 2:** Social assistance can improve coping responses, reducing the need for maladaptive responses which disproportionally affect women and girls
- **Key message 3:** Social assistance can improve women's adaptive responses - including promoting diversification and uptake of climate-smart practices – but complementary activities may be needed
- **Key message 4:** It is unknown whether SA can lead to more transformative responses that take into account the preferences of women and girls – but there is potential, including through cleaner fuels, forestation, and community resource management
- **Key message 5:** “Business as usual” is not sufficient; explicitly considering gender and climate in the design and delivery of SA is critical to strengthening women's and girls' responses

Thank you!

- Review and framework are still a work in process!
- Comments welcomed (m.hidrobo@cgiar.org)
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