Gendered impacts of COVID-19 and social protection responses in rural areas

Audience questions & comments

1. “To whom it may concern,

Our organization Widows for Peace Through Democracy (WPD) has prepared a 2020 dossier for presentation to CEDAW (the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women) on the totally unacceptable worldwide discriminatory treatment of widows and wives of the missing or ‘half widows’. Following the theme of this webinar could you comment on any specific provision for widows in the gendered dimensions of the response to COVID-19 in rural areas?

Thank you in advance.

Very best wishes

Alice Lees
Consultant
Widows for Peace through Democracy”

(Aline Lees, via email)

Susan Kaaria: Thank you for this important question. We know that around the world, widows are often disadvantaged with respect to their social and economic rights and that this is exacerbated in crises like the current pandemic. In rural areas, widows may be at risk of having land taken from them, face extensive work burden and often lack access to an adequate pension. As can be seen in the very useful living paper on Social Protection and Jobs Responses to COVID-19: A Real-Time Review of Country Measures from the World Bank, there are some programmes that specifically address the needs of widows (as in India), but not enough. It is important that we ensure that the needs of widows remain visible to policymakers around the world during this crisis and beyond.

2. Developing countries with less structured SP systems are my concerns, how can the SP systems be ramped up to responding to the covid crises? (eddy esezoborojelu)

Susan Kaaria: The onset and spread of COVID-19 has exacerbated previously existing socio-economic fault lines within an already struggling rural context in developing countries. Many of these regions are characterised by large gaps in social protection coverage (predominantly for rural women), benefit adequacy and sustainable financing of social protection programmes is still lacking. In order to respond to COVID-19 and support both short-term and long-term recovery for rural women, it is critical to provide access to predictable and uninterrupted provision of social protection benefits.

At the national level, countries can expand social protection programmes by leveraging existing instruments, particularly by, adapting social assistance measures. This can involve vertical expansion where beneficiaries receive top-ups of payments in advance or horizontal expansion which involves increases in coverage, particularly towards the newly poor who have been negatively affected by COVID-19 but have not been previously reached by these instruments.
Rural women can only stand to gain from this approach if they were previously the chief recipients of benefits based on a gender-sensitive programme targeting design. If this is not the case, countries should adopt new criteria for targeting rural women and girls to encourage inclusiveness and alleviate increases in unpaid domestic work and income loss. A multi-pronged multi-programme approach that engages multiple sectors is important in providing integrated support that usually combines cash with the provision of social services such as nutritional food rations targeted at girls and women. Systems of registration and transfer delivery should be digitized for the COVID-19 context by introducing mobile payments (ensuring that women have access to mobile phones), registration on digital platforms to improve safety, reach towards rural women and overall operational efficiency.

3. Very interesting presentation. Increase of teenage pregnancies has increased in the rural areas due to closure of schools. How best can development partners and government help to address the challenge in the context of COVID 19? (Christopher Mweembe)

Susan Kaaria: Thank you for this question, it is clear that COVID-19 is exacerbating existing risks for adolescent girls, including child marriage and child labour, as well as exposure to GBV. It is essential that social protection responses in rural areas consider age and gender (as well as other factors such as disability and characteristics which may exacerbate exclusion and marginalization) in their design, implementation and monitoring/evaluation. This may include factors such as the elimination of conditionalities that could increase girls’ work burden, the delivery of important in-kind materials that support the needs of adolescent girls as well as messaging around the importance of girl’s schooling, among other important actions by governments and development partners.

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: Development partners and governments should strengthen local women NGO’s, FBO’s or CBO including Parent Teacher Associations on GBV as they are at grassroots levels. These groups should include male role models (boys and men) who are also gender equality champions. The focus should be creating:

- Enabling environment for protection and safeguarding of women and girls from all forms of gender based discrimination, including Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Harmful practice such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) with increased access to information, services and skills on Gender & Social Norms, GBV & Its negative consequences, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, including Family Planning, Service on SRHR and GBV and Referral, Hotline services, Dignity Kits, Psychosocial Programmes.
- Proper recording of cases and case management training done through ToT completed through contactless training or trainer led in outdoor facilities.
- Such systems need resources to function well with dedicated teams because those girls’ who become victims or survivors deserve better.

4. The increase in GBV due to COVID-19, just need a bit more info on - was the increase in GBV happened due to the restrictions/lockdowns and access to the income generation service/activities of both male and female or it was due to the pandemic effect on the people (male) behaviour? (Nawab Ali)
Susan Kaaria: During the webinar, many of the speakers highlighted emerging evidence which points to a worrying increase in gender-based violence (GBV) within the context of COVID-19. GBV is a widespread violation of human rights based in harmful gender norms; it is an extreme manifestation of gender inequalities. While GBV can affect anyone, women and girls are at particular risk.

The causes of this rise in GBV are multi-pronged and dynamic as the pandemic shifts in scope and severity. Rural women and girls are increasingly exposed to the risk of GBV due to measures deemed necessary to control the spread of the disease. These include the restriction of movement, reduction in community interaction and external support networks, closure of businesses and services as well as schools. As a result, women’s mobility is curtailed and they are cut off from both essential physical health services (such as sexual and reproductive health products) and GBV services such as female-only shelters/crisis centres, mental health and psychosocial support and clinical management of sexual assault required for the safety and health of survivors.

The covariate income shocks on households of all economic backgrounds has led to drastic income losses and household resources such as remittances, government and non-governmental support as well as help from friends and family. One of the consequences has been higher rates of food insecurity which pose increased risks of intra-household tensions and conflict among family members and between intimate partners. As unpaid domestic work and caregiving responsibilities (particularly for those who have been infected by COVID-19) largely fall on women’s shoulders to bear, rural women and girls are further exposed to the risk of sexual violence as they collect water and fuel in a less observed and safe environment.

5. There is another aspect of looking at gendered impact of covid-19. Mr. Maximo may like to also refer to the ratio of men and women infected and deceased by the covid-19. WHO has reported that 63 percent of deaths related to COVID-19 in Europe have been among men, and Chinese researchers said that in one large subset of COVID-19 patients, more than 70 percent of those who died were men. It may be a reflection that men are a weaker sex and have weaker immunity. It may also be reflecting that women are safer from covid-19 because they are lesser exposed to outside (as they remain more inside the doors in the current crisis). What are your reflections on this? (Raman, Independent humanitarian practitioner, Delhi, India)

Susan Kaaria: Several recent academic studies have reported a higher rate COVID-19 mortality in men compared to women (with some variation across countries, but broadly the pattern is similar). It is still not clear what is driving the gender differentials in mortality data but some papers speculate that it could be due to differential susceptibility based on biological sex (potentially, androgens—male hormones such as testosterone—appear to boost the virus’ ability to get inside cells) and social behaviours (such as drinking and smoking) that result in gendered differences in comorbidities (obesogenic and cardiovascular illnesses) that increase the mortality rates in men.

However, it is important to note that women experience a higher risk to their overall health due to underlying socio-economic environments that do not adequately support their specialised health needs, particularly in the context of COVID-19. Women may experience higher exposure to the virus due to their dominance in the healthcare industry (for example, in Spain, women make up 76 percent of COVID-19 infections of healthcare workers). Globally, women make up 70 percent of the health workforce and are more likely to be front-line health workers, especially nurses, midwives and community health workers as well as facility support and service staff.
Despite this “feminization” of the healthcare industry, only 30 percent of women are leaders in the health sector and are not represented in national and global decision-making in COVID-19 response efforts, thereby de-prioritizing the health needs of women frontline workers.

Additionally, while water, hand hygiene and sanitation are integral in mitigating the spread of COVID-19, women and girls have less access to sufficient hygiene resources and services. This has negative health implications for women with regards to COVID-19 exposure as well as women’s management of their menstrual and reproductive health.

6. From my experience as agronomist and sociologist in Angola, I identify as challenges for African societies
- deconstruct girls' inequalities in opportunities in all areas, including leisure
- change the forms of representation in the formal political structures of the different levels of power

May I have comments on that from the panelists? (Tina Abreu)

Susan Kaaria: Thank you for this excellent question. It is clear that in African societies, as around the world, gender inequalities are multifaceted and are reflected in deeply rooted ideas about what types of activities are appropriate for whom, including in access to leisure and wellbeing. Approaches to social protection and other interventions that aim to challenge inequalities must address multiple levels from individual ideas and intra-household relationships to formal political structures at the highest level. When designed with gender in mind, social protection can address work burden and lack of leisure time, as well as other forms of gender inequalities. However, it is insufficient alone to change deeply-rooted ideas about gender. This requires community-driven solutions from men, women, boys and girls working together.

7. How does one deal with the cases where mobility is an issue, however the masculinities are threatened with the women accessed directly for provision of services - in one of the field experiences violence against females increased in some cases where rations were distributed to women and men felt their role as breadwinners was threatened. (muqaddisa mehreen)

Susan Kaaria: Thank you for this question. While evidence suggests that in the vast majority of cases, cash transfers do not exacerbate intimate partner violence (IPV), it is important that any programming proactively consider and address protection risks. In the context of COVID-19, it is clear that many forms of gender-based violence are increasing and that responses, including social protection responses, must also address the deeply-rooted causes of all forms of gender-based violence, an extreme manifestation of gender inequalities (including those around norms related to breadwinning) and a grave violation of human rights.

8. Have you looked at including examples of governments integrating the Graduation Approach into their social protection programmes? These have important impact on gender issues, particularly in rural areas. (Ana Pantelic)

Susan Kaaria: FAO has worked on Cash + approach which has some similarities to the graduation approach such as providing complementary interventions to strengthen the impacts of cash transfers on various outcomes, also for income generation and to create a sustainable pathway
out of poverty. These can indeed have meaningful effects, but it needs to be noted that as with cash transfers and other social protection instruments it is essential to design such interventions in a gender sensitive manner from the outset in order to address gender inequalities. Our Technical Guides to Gender Sensitive Social Protection (the links to which are in webinar resources) also discuss Cash Plus interventions.

9. There is another aspect of the opportunities created by covid-19. Women Self Help Groups in India have risen to the extraordinary challenge of COVID-19 pandemic. They are meeting shortfalls in masks, sanitizers, and protective equipment, running community kitchens, fighting misinformation, and even providing banking and financial solutions to far-flung communities. We need to acknowledge and see the positive and stronger roles of women and girls in covid-19. Such crises not always increase gendered vulnerabilities but often do provide opportunities and new solutions to help us reshape the norms. Any comments on this will be helpful. (Raman Kumar)

Renana Jhabvala: Yes, I fully agree. This is what we have seen in SEWA also. It is the women at the grass roots who have demonstrated exemplary leadership qualities, commitment to help others and courage. Their role needs to be acknowledged. In SEWA we have been documenting the profiles of such women and it is really inspiring.

Susan Kaaria: Thank you for this insightful comment. While COVID-19 has thrown the world into crisis with women bearing the brunt of this burden, around the world women are stepping up as key agents of change and recovery.

The current pandemic presents an opportunity to leverage social protection to empower women, but only if social protection instruments (including labour market interventions) are designed, implemented and monitored and evaluated with the explicit goal of transforming the social institutions that perpetuate discrimination and gender-based exclusion in mind. This requires the involvement and leadership of women themselves. Self-help groups in India represent an important avenue for rural women to develop the leadership and advocacy skills needed to successfully overcome harmful traditional structures and gender norms that affect their status and welfare.

10. Have you considered issues like the importance of identity (ensuring women have government-issued ID cards) as well as technology barriers (like the gender gap in mobile phone ownership)? (Ana Pantelic)

Susan Kaaria: There is definitely a gender gap in access to Identify Cards. In this context women's rights organizations and civil society organizations can help women understand and advocate for their rights as access to an identity card is often a prerequisite to accessing essential services.

As you mention, there is also a gap in access to mobile phone access. Women in low- and middle-income countries are 10 per cent less likely than men to own a mobile phone. Social protection programmes need to this into account when designing programming- while digital transfers can increase access to banking services, they may also serve to exclude people, particularly people living in rural areas and women. Programme design and implementation can
seek to enhance mobile phone ownership as well as accommodate those who do not have access.

11. Hello, thank you for the previous presentation. My question is concerning the woman in rural areas. The difficulties to mobilize her and take her opinion due to the culture and tradition. How can we face that situation? (IFRAH AHMED)

Susan Kaaria: Despite the inherent challenges, it is important to ensure that gender inequalities in a given context are well understood in the planning process for social protection. This includes understanding the perspectives and preferences of rural women and girls.

In the planning process, a gender-sensitive poverty and vulnerability analysis (GSPVA) is a starting point for developing gender-sensitive social protection programmes that are context-appropriate. Before programme objectives and design features are formulated, it is key to establish a comprehensive understanding of gender dynamics and their links to rural poverty. Conducting a GSPVA allows social protection programme designers to understand how poverty and vulnerability affect women and men differently across their life cycle and the differences between poor rural women’s needs relative to men’s.

The GSPVA asks:

- What are the risks and vulnerabilities that rural women and men face?
- How do gender norms and inequalities affect rural women’s vulnerability and poverty outcomes relative to men’s?
- What are the potential gender-related constraints to rural women and men’s participation in the programme, and their access to and control over benefits?
- What are the programme’s likely gender impacts, positive and negative, and how will different stakeholders affect or be affected by the programme?
- What are the potential opportunities and challenges for the programme to promote gender equality and rural women’s economic empowerment?

Under more normal circumstances, methods like conducting women’s only focus groups or ensuring that women are interviewed by other women may help to support the inclusion of rural women’s perspectives. This has become more challenging in the context of COVID. Tools such as rapid assessments by phone have become important sources of information but may she unequal light on the lives of men and women due to gender differences in access to technology, such as mobile phones.

12. Ms. Susan, the M&E aspect is critical, but there is a huge gap in terms of sex, age, and disability disaggregated data (SADDD). When we talk of covid-19 impact itself, we really do not have SADDD of people infected and deceased, or we may not have access to it. Gendered impact and SADDD of covid-19 is also not documented well so far. Do you have any experience of SADDD of covid impact in rural areas in some places? Please do share. (Raman Kumar)

Susan Kaaria: There have been few rigorous analyses on collecting SADDD in the context of COVID. We think it is important to use innovative tools such as the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index, which uses mixed methods to collect both quantitative and qualitative data to understand the impacts.
13. Thank you very much for the information. How the increase in violence against women can be addressed? (Patricia Amatller)

Susan Kaaria: The FAO has long recognised that gender-based violence (GBV), in all its forms, is a gross violation of human rights rooted in unequal gender power dynamics and underpinned by discrimination against women with a range of negative consequences for survivors’ health (both physical and mental), resilience and ability to engage in productive activities. As a result, GBV also has detrimental family- and community-wide impacts on rural agricultural productivity, food security and nutrition. There is a growing body of evidence that suggests that cash transfer programmes decrease intimate partner violence (IPV), demonstrating an important protective function beyond immediate program objectives related to poverty and food security for rural women. Cash transfers do this by improving economic security and emotional wellbeing, intra-household conflict, and women’s empowerment. An expansion of cash transfer interventions during the context of COVID-19 would be an important gender-sensitive policy instrument to utilise in the national response to this gendered crisis.

However, social protection cannot be used as a singular silver bullet to combat this rise in GBV incidence. In addition, governments should invest in improving access to communication regarding COVID-19 and women-related protection issues. Emerging evidence suggests that, in response to the pandemic, women and girls have less access to information and are more likely to receive inaccurate information either inadvertently or deliberately in order to uphold existing unequal power dynamics and create opportunities for exploitation. There is a need to invest in plans for the adaptation of information-sharing mechanisms using traditional means (including local committees, women’s groups and informal networks), and innovative technology-based platforms (including SMS/text messages, radio and TV messages). Information can include how women and girls can access essential GBV support services including healthcare facilities for their physical/sexual health needs, alternative shelter options and GBV hotlines for emergency situations. These GBV support services should also be supported through their financial prioritization within pandemic response efforts as they compete with other health services in addressing the rising public demand for medical care.

14. In a more admirable and desirable manner consistent with the tradition of humanitarianism, I think the presenter nailed it all. (Gueke Rani Ebireri)

Susan Kaaria: Thank you so much for attending the webinar, we are glad you enjoyed it.

15. In Gambia, does WFP implement directly or collaborate with National and or International Partners or Government? If yes to the letter to what extent are CPs allowed to deploy own Vulnerability Mapping in the national context. (eddy esezoborojelu)

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: WFP and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education implements Home Grown School Feeding which involve Cooperating Partners and the communities. Parent Teachers Associations and Mothers’ clubs work with school authorities, Regional Edu directors and they bring challenges to the attention of Partners and WFP. There are both process and outcome monitoring to ensure proper implementation.
16. Of course, a lot of supports has been delivered for women who are affected due to COVID 19 in Ethiopia but the problem is sustainability and lack of system. (Meried Mengesha)

Susan Kaaria: Thank you for your question, this is indeed an important issue. The COVID-19 emergency has highlighted the importance of having a comprehensive and inclusive social protection system that is also flexible enough to adapt rapidly to crisis such as this. In the recovery phase it is essential that significant effort is put into developing such systems. Gender sensitivity needs to be built into the systems from the start, including design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of social protection.

17. I enjoyed your presentation Susan. My question is, how can cash transfers address gender inequalities between men and women or boys and girls in a rural setting. Are there examples of cases that you may advise for further reading? (Christopher Mweembe)

Susan Kaaria: Dear Christopher, thank you for your question. FAO research shows some positive impacts from social protection on women’s economic activities. For example, qualitative studies in East Africa found that cash transfers enabled women and men to join or re-enter social and economic groups. In Kenya, the Cash Transfer for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (CT-OVC) programme facilitated the entry into the labour market of women beneficiaries living far from local markets.

However, women’s economic advancement does not self-evidently lead to women’s empowerment. Research findings indicate that transfers paid to women result in different spending decisions than those made by men but the evidence on women’s decision-making power and control over household resources is still mixed. In many of the studies despite women being principal recipients of transfers access to cash did not affect their traditional role in household decision-making particularly where women were not the head of the household. Studies have shown that it is easier to increase empowerment through social protection if women already have some control over income and profits and are able to make independent decision. Overall, evidence suggests that the design and implementation of SP really matters for women and girls to overcome some of the barriers to access and benefit.

18. But then, we here in North East Nigeria operating as LNOGs tends to have funding challenges in respect to SP programming. I will be grateful if such issue is brought on table before all. Thanks. (Gueke Rani Ebireri)

Susan Kaaria: Thank you for highlighting this challenge. In discussions on funding it is important to emphasize that comprehensive, inclusive and gender sensitive social protection systems are an investment, not only a rights imperative or a cost. Social protection can empower rural women and girls and have significant benefits at both community and country level.

19. Hi, how is the Government of Gambia managing the school feeding programs and have this impacted positively to school performance. Is it both in primary and secondary? Secondly, what lessons can other countries learn from this exercise? (John Okiira)

Zahra Lillian Mokgos: The Government provides onsite school meals and due to the recent pandemic supported school children with Take Home Rations. I am not aware of studies done in The Gambia linking school meals with positive school performance. Even in other countries
where such studies were done, researchers always point out that there other factors that influence positive performance such as teacher-pupil ratio, safety of the learners while in and out of school, school inputs from learner centred classrooms to proper textbooks including trained qualified teachers with pedagogical knowledge and skills. School feeding alone could not make claims on positive performance.

**PS Rohie Bittaye-Darboe:** School feeding programmes address growing inequalities. Benefits have been multiple, allowing children from vulnerable homes to receive one nutritious meal, many times the only meal of the day. The meal also serves as an income transfer for many families, reducing the burden for poor families, and preventing them from sinking into the poverty trap. An additional benefit is the delayed early teenage marriages and pregnancies and has overall been the vector of local economic growth. Only primary schools in the rural areas are benefitting from home grown school feeding program.

**20. To Zarah: Do you have evidence for improved impact or increase of GBV depending on good practices for supporting women without adding to their existing workload? (Lina Rylander)**

**Zahra Lillian Mokgosi:** When we support women with our current interventions we engage, consult and hear the women’s challenges and their proposed solutions – we often have to rank priority solutions again by listening to the women themselves. They often need basic services or resources which build assets in their communities. In a study in South Sudan on a similar question in a survey for WFP interventions in 2016, women felt happy that for a change they would be paid cash or in-kind through the proposed intervention. They complained that such assumptions about increased workloads are never asked when it is men being supported and felt it was due to subconscious bias that outsiders were deciding on what would be good for them. They felt their patriarchal environments were already doing that and so they needed paid employment or support to inadvertently ease their hassling to get food on the tables of their families. That new opportunity they said was part of the empowerment and not increased workload.

**21. To Zahra. Thank you for this detailed presentation. You highlighted that direct investment on further research on the underlying causes of gender inequalities and girls and women’s disempowerment needs to take place. I agree with that. You then highlighted addressing challenges of patriarchy in the context of rural women in The Gambia. What are some of the patriarchal norms that you found that pose major challenges for women during this pandemic? (WANJA kaaria)**

**Zahra Lillian Mokgosi:** Patriarchy which is a system of unequal power relations, between men and women, allow men to control women’s production, reproduction and sexuality - This is expressed in society through cultural stereotyping, forcing women to carry the burden of heavy domestic workloads, family duties, and child rearing. This often leads to many women doing unpaid care work, effectively minimizing their ability to participate in the labour force. The whole patriarchal system inhibits the capabilities and choices of women and resulting in disempowerment. This is true for The Gambia as women are the least educated (37%) World Bank 2017, men make choices for their girl children not to go to school. In the rural areas 80% of the women are involved in farming - more than men. They work under difficult conditions and follow the 'system - of patriarchy’ otherwise they experience exclusion and/or GBV.
22. Could the speakers suggest any good examples of SP interventions that respond to the gendered challenges identified with respect to accessing basic services— for example, focusing on keeping girl children in school, or linking social protection with maternity and sexual and reproductive health services? (Samantha Coope)

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: Some of the adolescent girls miss school on monthly basis due to menstruation. WFP has plans to join up with UNFPA to get women in deprived communities (some of whom are tailors) to make re-usable sanitary wear. UNFPA will then buy these and distribute to the girls. While WFP was implementing the take-home rations in WFP supported schools, WFP requested permission from the communities to collected data on the sex, age and other vulnerability indicators of all children. WFP explained why they needed such data including the contact details of the parents. WFP is now able to share the data in partnership with the UNFPA on targeting girls in schools who are likely to need such basic services.

Susan Kaaria: Within developing countries, some national governments have responded to the crisis by adapting and innovating social protection interventions to address gendered challenges. As a foundation, the design elements of social protection interventions should be gender-sensitive and link rural women and girls to vital services, assets, and basic infrastructure. As service provision has become limited due to the spread of COVID-19, there is also a need for multi-sectoral complimentary packages of integrated support for service provision to protect the livelihoods for rural women.

In Burkina Faso, cash transfers are being scaled up where a “solidarity fund” for women vendors receive both cash grants and vegetable and livestock production inputs and hygiene kits. Argentina is piloting a programme of paid leave for all workers who have dependent children and care needs in response to the pandemic.

Meanwhile, Egypt’s National Council for Women (NCW) released a policy paper in March 2020 on Egypt’s Rapid Response to Women’s Situation during COVID 19 Outbreak to ensure that gender dimensions would be taken into consideration in Egypt’s response to the crisis. Considering the needs of specific sectors of women- including those working in small businesses and agriculture- the NCW proposed response measures across human endowment, including health, education and social protection; women’s voice and agency; the impact on economic opportunities for women; and promoting data and knowledge. Within the social protection pillar, the NCW proposed immediate and increased cash and in-kind transfers to affected women, in particular those in women-headed households; increased points on food subsidy cards to compensate for reduced school feeding; scaling up Takaful and Karama cash transfer programme; a one-time transfer to informal women workers; digitally enrolling women in national identity programmes; and registering irregular women workers in Ministry of Manpower (MoM) and Ministry of Social Solidarity (MoSS) databases. The Government’s stimulus package has taken up many of the suggested policy responses. To follow the policy response with a gender lens, the NCW has created a bimonthly Gender Policy Tracker.
23. Regarding Take home rations, are there any disparities on the impact on girls and boys and i.e. school attendance and performance, are there any negative effects and what is the positive long-term impact? i.e. in transition to secondary education (Lina Rylander)

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: Take Home Rations is being implemented in The Gambia for the first time in over 40 years of School Feeding in The Gambia during the COVID-19 pandemic while children are no longer attending school. While schools remain closed, there will be no such studies done on the impact on school attendance and performance within the context of The Gambia.

PS Rohie Bittaye-Darboe: In 2019, the Government of The Gambia and World Food Programme (WFP) provided school meals to nearly 245,000 children of which approximately 150,742 in 312 school were reached by WFP and 88,344 in 230 schools by Government led programmes. The approach during this period was largely in-kind, on site mid-day hot meals provided to every child who attends school. In regions where enrolments have been low in the past over 12.5% increase in enrolment have been registered. By the end of 2019 there was 117% enrolment in schools with 54% girls population in schools. During schools closure the same population was provided with Take-Home Rations by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and WFP. Concerns remain on whether all children will return to schools when schools reopen particularly for girl children.

24. Does School feeding program cut across all public aided schools in the Gambia (John Okiira)

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: School Feeding programmes address growing inequalities. Benefits have been multiple, allowing children from vulnerable homes to receive one nutritious meal, many times the only meal of the day. The meal, also serves as an income transfer for many families, reducing the burden for poor families, and preventing them from sinking into the poverty trap. An additional benefit is the delayed early teenage marriages and pregnancies and has overall been the vector of local economic growth.

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PS Rohie Bittaye-Darboe: No, as indicated earlier, it applies to certain schools in the rural end but we are looking forward to having school feeding program in all schools across the country in the future.

25. Thank you Zahra for the detailed presentation on the ground in the Gambia and underlining that patriarchy should not hide behind the guise of culture, taking into account that patriarchy effects both men and women negatively. (Lucy Wills)
Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: Indeed, patriarchy is detrimental to men as well, for example the sexual assault, mental health, domestic violence experienced by men is often trivialized due to damaging societal stereotypes and standards. Furthermore, in the past 25 years there has been more investment on supporting women’s empowerment often with a total disregard for vulnerable men due to the stereotypical patriarchal societies they happen to belong to.

26. Very useful presentation Ms. Zahra. Thank you. It will be useful to know more if you have tried technology solutions for contactless interventions (skill training, market linkage, e-marketing solutions,) to the extent possible, and what were your experiences? (Raman Kumar)

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: Not much in our current context. I am happy to learn from your context.

27. To Susan: In all the presentations the same instruments were mentioned (cash transfer, cash plus, facilities for access to resources, etc.) and the need to move towards greater coverage for women. My question to integrate more gender is it a question of approach? Or extension focused more on women? What should be the best approach? (Ayayivi SOZOUHOIN)

Susan Kaaria: The Toolkit I mentioned provides some very detailed guidelines on how to integrate gender in Cash transfers and PWPS -- focusing on issues of targeting, transfer size, etc. The three-part FAO Toolkit on gender-sensitive social protection programmes to combat rural poverty and hunger in English, French and Spanish. It is online.

28. This is extremely interesting. Interesting how Women's plight seems relatively similar be it in Africa or Asia (WANJA kaaria)

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: Yes, I agree. Women’s economic and social conditions are very similar, as well as many of the ways patriarchy plays out.

29. Thank you for stressing the innovations women took up we should as well build on those and document them. (Katrien Holvoet)

Zahra Lillian Mokgosi: Yes, it’s important to show that women are not just receivers of aid but given a chance can change society.

30. What is the particularity of India’s social protection of the rural area? (Dr Mouta Djirabi)

Susan Kaaria: In India, the Ministry of Rural Development implements several social protection programmes. Of these, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is its flagship programme, which provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment a year to adult members of any rural household. A vast majority of the works taken up is for the creation of productive assets directly linked to agriculture and allied activities. The Ministry also implements other programmes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna (PMAY), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna, National Social Assistance Programmes, and the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM). The mission of NRLM is to reduce poverty by enabling the poor households to access livelihood opportunities through building strong grassroots institutions of the poor such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their federations. To help set up women SHGs,
several organizations contribute (such as SEWA) and use them as vehicles to provide several social services, spanning across a wide range of Government programs. The vision is that through this platform, women can asset their right for economic inclusion and equity in all spheres of life.

31. I’m enjoying the presentations. I’m curious, are there policies by the government in India in place to take care of the huge number of urban-rural migrating people? (Lilian Abuoro)

Renana Jhabvala: One of the important things that emerged was that migrants could not access the food scheme because their ration cards and identity cards are from their rural homes. Government now is planning ration cards which can be made mobile. Unfortunately, migrants are in the informal sector with no social security or even no identity

32. The speaker just said that male returnees are displacing women from rural employment guarantee schemes. When it comes to NREGA, I understand that large numbers of households have not been making use of their 100-day entitlement to guaranteed employment, sometimes falling quite short of the 100-day cap. Are the schemes not being able to absorb the rising number of male applicants while preserving work opportunities for women? And are there any provisions being made to make sure that women keep benefiting from these schemes? (Alejandro Grinspun)

Renana Jhabvala: Yes, most villages have been falling very short of the 100-day cap. This is not because people don’t want work but because the village panchayat (village government) is not providing the work due to a number of reasons ranging from lack of money, to bureaucratic hassles, to corruption, to lethargy. After the migrants returned there was a push from both below and above to increase the work, and that has been increased. The new opportunities are taken up by the males in the families. If they had not been there the women would have gone to work.