

# STAAR Evidence Digest

Curated by the **STAAR Technical Senior Leadership Team**

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## Hello and welcome to the STAAR Evidence Digest for March 2024

The STAAR Digest is a collection of articles that our Technical Leadership Team finds interesting – related to both social protection in crises and gender-responsive social protection. We aim to publish the Digest each month. We have curated the content by **themes** which relate closely to our work on STAAR and the content is by no means exhaustive. Any feedback on the content, format, etc is welcome. Email us at [STAAR@STAARfacility.org](mailto:STAAR@STAARfacility.org)

## Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

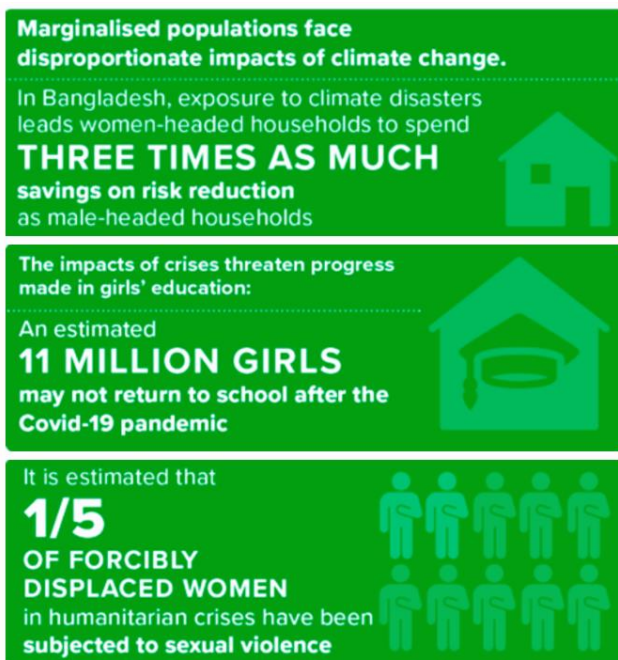


Figure 1: The gendered impacts of crises, IIED, UNESCO and Vu et al. (2018)

» This month we celebrated International Women’s Day on 8<sup>th</sup> March. STAAR highlighted our collaborative work with UN Women in this [blog](#) which also illustrates several exciting innovations in social protection design, implementation and data to support better outcomes for women and girls in crisis contexts.

» Keetie Roelen’s podcast with Annabelle Williams discusses [why are women poorer than men?](#)

» Amber Peterman et al. launched their comprehensive systematic review and meta-review on [social safety nets, women’s economic achievements and agency](#) finding that social safety nets are able to enhance women’s economic inclusion and agency, but vary by type of intervention: the review found larger effects for women from unconditional cash transfers, asset transfers and social care services as compared to food, vouchers or in-kind transfers, and conditional cash transfers.

- » Socialprotection.org’s blog series focuses on the role of [social protection in preventing and responding to gender-based violence](#).
- » This month was also the [Commission on the Status of Women \(CSW68\)](#) in New York which focused on the priority theme of addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective. Gender-responsive social protection was a key theme throughout many of the side events and discussions hosted alongside the closed negotiations.

We heard a consistent message from governments, development partners, civil society actors, and recipients themselves on the vital importance of social protection for improving the lives of women and girls. Collectively, they stressed that access to social protection is a right. And that to promote and protect this right, there is an urgent need for sustainable financing; investment in local women’s organisations; support for partnerships to foster collective action; and amplification of women and girls’ voices in policy and programming dialogues.

A few highlights from CSW include:

- The [We Deserve Better event](#) showcased a [mini-documentary](#) hearing from the voices of women and girls themselves about the power of social protection and need for participatory

- policymaking. STAAR led a consultation with women and girls in Nepal to feed into this initiative. And will continue to collaborate with UNICEF as the initiative gathers momentum.
- Socialprotection.org released a [podcast](#) on gender transformative social protection in time for CSW68. The podcast discusses the idea of adverse inclusion and what it takes to design and deliver truly gender-transformational social protection.
  - UN Women launched their [Women’s Economic Empowerment Strategy](#) with social protection as a cornerstone of achieving economic empowerment, justice, the realisation of human and economic rights, and multiple SDGs.
  - HelpAge International’s event and publication on [Advancing Gender Equality through Social Protection in an Ageing World](#).
- » UNICEF released two impact evaluation reports under its Gender Responsive Age-Sensitive Social Protection (GRASSP) research programme. First, is the [4<sup>th</sup> round report](#) of the “Ujana Salama” (‘Safe Youth’), a cash plus programme targeting adolescents in Tanzania aimed at promoting safe transitions to a healthy and productive adulthood. The programme provides in-person training, mentoring and grants to adolescents living in households receiving cash transfers from Productive Social Safety Net programme. The report revealed that impacts were gendered.
  - » An impact assessment on the [Impact of the Cash Transfer Intervention in the Commune of Nsele in Kinsha UNICEF](#) was published along with a [policy brief](#). The initiative implemented by UNICEF and WFP provided cash transfer plus training on women’s empowerment, financial management and vegetable growing kits to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. The impact evaluation measured the programme’s impact on women’s involvement in decision making and changes in household dynamics along with other indicators on food security, consumption patterns, coping strategies and social cohesion.
  - » UNICEF and ILO released a brief on [The promise of universal child benefits](#), which finds that globally 1.4 billion children are not covered by any form of social protection, with children from marginalised groups the most likely to be excluded.



**GIZ PROGRAMME ON GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

Many women in the Middle East and North Africa have little or no access to social protection. Last year, the STAAR Facility carried out a study to inform the design of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH’s new programme aimed at improving gender-equitable access to social protection across the region. STAAR’s team of national consultants were able to consolidate local knowledge on gender considerations in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan which directly fed into the design of this important new programme. Key findings included:

- Egypt: The study highlighted Egypt’s evolving social protection systems, increasingly guided by a rights-based approach. It aimed to inform formal government institutions about identifying the increasingly growing population of informal sector workers, particularly women.
- Jordan: The Jordan country-case study showed a specific requirement to address social protection for women in the informal economy. A lack of knowledge of women’s rights in the informal economy hindered momentum in providing social protection support.
- Morocco: Despite key constitutional, legislative, and institutional reforms for gender equality, combating discrimination and gender stereotypes, COVID-19 created new challenges for women in Morocco
- Tunisia: This country case study emphasised the need to amend legislation granting automatic head-of-family status to husbands, advocating for change through civil society organisations and human rights activists.

## Social protection in crisis settings

- » The BASIC Research team has published several new briefing papers and blogs that are well worth a look including:
  - **Does Cash-Plus Programming Work in Contexts of Protracted Crises?** This policy briefing discusses the challenges of cash-plus programmes in protracted crises, characterised by conflict, violence, displacement and climate shocks. The paper assesses whether cash-plus programming is the best option in such settings and presents recommendations for enhancing its effectiveness.

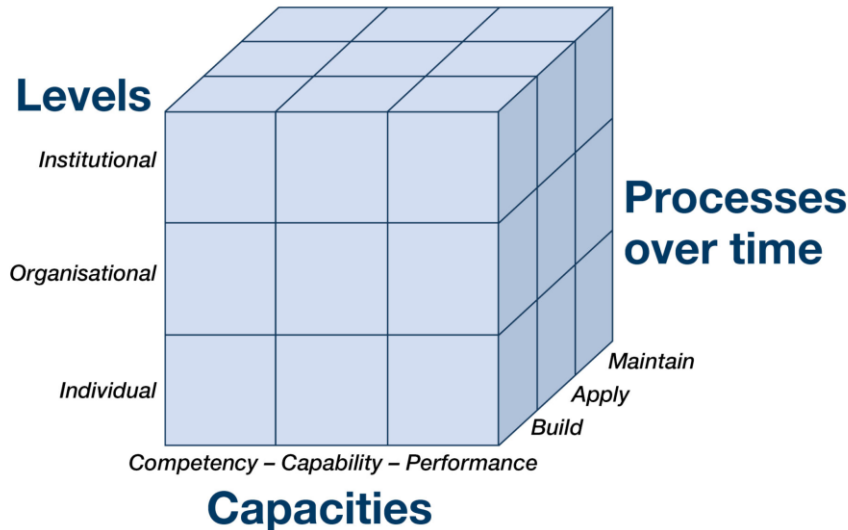


Figure 2: Capacity Cube, Institute of Development Studies

- **Using a ‘capacity cube’ analysis to understand social protection delivery in crises**, This blog addresses the research and analysis gap in improving capacity to design and deliver social protection or emergency assistance in protracted crises. It outlines a helpful framework for understanding what it means to build capacity in situations of protracted crisis – which the STAAR team is now starting to apply in our own technical assistance. Further details can be found in **this briefing paper**.
- **Researching Capacities to Sustain Social Protection in Protracted Crises: Early Findings** delves into the knowledge gap in sustaining and delivering social protection systems and programmes through identifying ways in which external actors might support the resilience of these systems.
- » IDS has also published a report on Sudan that is part of a growing literature that adopts a **conflict-sensitive lens to social protection analysis**. The paper explores the conflict sensitivity of social protection in Sudan since the present war started in April 2023, and also examines the role of community-led (informal) mechanisms. The report highlights how conflict sensitivity principles can be introduced and then woven through the delivery chain of formal social protection programmes. Key suggestions relate to:
  - Systems of analysis, monitoring, and accountability to affected people
  - Capacity for adaptive management
  - The role of donors reinforcing conflict-sensitivity through their partnership, financing, and risk management strategies
  - Recognition by external actors of the fundamental importance of acknowledging and understanding community-led crisis response

## Social protection and cash voucher assistance (SPCVA)

- » Gaby Smith, part of STAAR’s technical leadership team has developed a report for ILO which **synthesises an array of recently published studies related to the nexus between social protection and cash voucher assistance** (SPCVA) in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Written prior to October 2023, the document provides a useful model of pulling together shared findings that can be jointly owned and taken forward by in-country stakeholders. The report divides up the issues from the various reports into helpful categories, including:
  - Targeting and coverage
  - Adequacy
  - Shock responsive social protection
  - Referral pathways
  - Protracted issues in the wider environment – such as the Gaza blockade, fiscal constraints, and political economy
- » KeyAid Consulting’s summary report of cash coordination since 2022 in Romania, Ukraine, Moldova and Poland **has some super interesting findings and conclusions** that are likely useful/applicable for other contexts. The report explains that, while there has been a lot of interaction between cash and voucher assistance (CVA) and social protection programmes in the four countries, a range of challenges in each country has prohibited the full integration of both systems:
  - The ambition of reconciling CVA to social protection schemes when possible (eligibility criteria, basing transfer value on national minimum expenditure basket etc) has not yet materialised in any of the four countries, despite social protection systems being for the most part mature and diverse and Humanitarian CVA being at scale and well resourced.
  - Key challenges include: the opportunity to engage regularly and consistently with government stakeholders in the CWG (particularly in Poland, Romania & Ukraine); the lack of tools and practices amongst humanitarian actors to navigate between the two systems; and social protection systems being insufficiently prepared to absorb the refugee caseload due to limited resources (particularly in Moldova).
  - Looking ahead, the harmonisation of humanitarian CVA and social protection requires (i) clarification of a long term vision and timeline for harmonisation/transition between humanitarian cash and social protection; (ii) consistent engagement between CVA and social protection stakeholders to identify where bridges can be made; (iii) raising awareness among governments on what humanitarian CVA can contribute to and how it can complement social protection and more specifically social assistance.

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