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**Initiating women’s empowerment; achieving gender equality: Interlinkages amongst
Social Protection, Infrastructure and Public Services**

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* The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations.

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List of Abbreviations

ADB: Asian Development Bank
CSW: United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
EBRD: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECD: Early Childhood Development
EIIP: Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme
EPWP: Expanded Public Works Programme
FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation
GRB: Gender Responsive Budgeting
ICRW: International Center for Research on Women
IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
MGNREGA: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee
PSNP: Productive Safety Nets Programme
MUS: Multiple use water systems

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Section 1: Introduction

Achieving gender equality has been set out as a key objective in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which lay out social protection, infrastructure and public services as the three main focus areas that can lead to gender equality and women's empowerment (Goal 5). This paper seeks to establish a rationale for these three focus areas working together in order to achieve this objective. In setting out the reasons behind the claim that these three focus areas need to work in tandem if gender equality is to be achieved, this paper draws from concrete illustrations of programmes and policies, assessing their strengths and weaknesses. The paper presents some examples that have been able to achieve synergy and therefore heralded positive change. These are presented as 'successful cases' – success therefore being defined in terms of synergy between the three focus areas, as a precursor to progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. The paper weaves these examples together with cases where there has been a focus on just one of these three areas – assessing the reasons why these have shown limited progress on women's empowerment and gender equality.

Gender equality refers to 'the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys' (UN WOMEN 2001). There is considerable debate in the literature on whether equality should be measured as equality of opportunity or equality of outcomes (World Bank 2011). This paper privileges the understanding of gender equality as recognition and due consideration of the 'interests, needs and priorities' of diverse groups of both women and men (UN WOMEN 2001). At the same time, gender equality is considered to be 'substantive' rather than merely 'formal' (UN WOMEN 2015, 12). This means that formal laws that establish equal rights for men and women are not sufficient for women to realise their rights and therefore achieve equality of outcomes. Consequently, achieving gender equality is only possible through alleviating the inherent disadvantage faced by women (Htun and Weldon 2011), which include addressing power inequalities and structural constraints. In other words, substantive gender equality requires 'fundamental transformation of economic and social institutions, including the beliefs, norms and attitudes that shape them, at every level of society, from households to labour markets and from communities to local, national and global governance institutions (UN WOMEN 2015, 13).

While gender equality denotes an outcome or a goal, women's empowerment can be best understood as a dynamic process through which women gain control over resources and are able to challenge the patriarchal structures that sustain and reproduce inequality (Sardenberg 2016; Cornwall and Edwards 2016; Cornwall and Rivas 2015; Kabeer 2005). According to Eyben et.al. (2008), there are three dimensions of empowerment: economic, political and social; but all three dimensions encompass 'the process by which, those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire such an ability' (Kabeer 1999, 437). In other words, women's empowerment is a process through which gender equality can be achieved.

Gender inequality and women's disempowerment can be understood as arising because of structural factors which operate through social norms, macro-economic and political processes and structures, skewing power relations adversely for women. This implies that redistribution of power in order to achieve gender equality or to initiate a process of women's empowerment is critical. While equality in legal provisions do go some way in providing an enabling environment for this, these are insufficient (UN CEDAW 2004). Therefore, changes in power inequalities and structural factors are necessary for women's realisation of their rights and achievement of gender equality. This paper proposes a conceptual framework comprising of three main aspects that are necessary for redistribution of gendered power relations: a) recognition of the multiplicity of women's roles; b) incorporation of how women are defined and framed in terms of their interests, needs and priorities; and c) transform larger social and economic structures in order to effect changes in women's position. This paper takes into account these three aspects in assessing policies and programmes from each of the three focus areas

– social protection, infrastructure and public services. In addition, this paper aligns with the international human rights framework underpinned by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN CESCR), and especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), in recognising that in achieving substantive gender equality, the emphasis needs to be on equality of outcomes (Otto 2014) so that programmes and policies ‘alleviate the inherent disadvantage that particular groups experience’ (UN CESCR 2005) Therefore, the paper’s framework includes an overarching aspect pertaining to women’s rights as human rights, which cuts across each of the three aspects.

It is important at the outset, to present the definitional boundaries of these three focus areas. Social protection, perhaps, is one of the terms with the widest scope – it can cover anything from cash or in-kind transfers to insurance and labour legislation. Literature also recognises that social protection can be provided by diverse sectors and be encompassed in formal and informal measures. In order to achieve an in-depth discussion about the relevance of social protection measures to gender equality and women’s empowerment, this paper has limited the concept of social protection to include only State-funded or State-implemented measures that deal with structural inequalities – what has been coined as ‘transformative social protection’ (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2007). These include four categories of instruments:

- a) provision measures, which provide relief from deprivation;
- b) preventive measures, which attempt to prevent deprivation;
- c) promotive measures, which aim to enhance incomes and capabilities; and
- d) transformative measures, which seek to address concerns of social justice and exclusion. (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux 2007).

Practically, this paper will consider two types of examples under this domain: cash transfers (conditional or unconditional) and public works programmes – examining these against their transformative potential, especially in addressing women’s roles, needs, interests and the structural constraints they face.

Both infrastructure and public services conjure up the role of the State in their provision. In fact, ‘infrastructure services often are public goods or natural monopolies, or both. As such they are either run or regulated by public entities...’ (Fay et al. 2011, 340). Basic infrastructure encompasses amenities such as roads, information and communication technologies, sanitation, electrical power and water (UN 2018). Public services are provided by the State, while infrastructure is the physical, human and financial set up and organisation that is required in order to deliver these services. Infrastructure can be understood as physical, human, and financial. For example, the State can provide services such as education, health, water and sanitation – through physical infrastructure (roads, schools, hospitals, water pipes), human resources (teachers, doctors, engineers) and by putting in the requisite financial infrastructure (budgets) into place.

The role of the state in providing infrastructure and public services is especially emphasised through the international human rights system (UN CESR 1990). The human rights approach speaks about the duties of States to respect (i.e. not interfere directly or indirectly) the enjoyment of human rights; to fulfil and to protect rights. It is in the ‘fulfil’ obligation, that it becomes critical that States adopt measures that enable the realisation of women’s rights when providing infrastructure and public services, as well as in the provision of social protection. It is also important to note here, that while there is growing privatisation of infrastructure, public services and social protection measures, a rights-based approach also establishes the role of the state to protect rights – through regulation of private sector, such that everyone can enjoy these rights. In this way, States are critical as ‘arbiters of social and economic rights’ (UN WOMEN 2015, 38) through direct provision and regulation of the three focus areas – social protection, infrastructure and public services.

This paper presents eight case studies, aiming to analyse their strengths and weaknesses, assessing their progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. These case studies have been chosen purposively, aiming to provide a spread of regional contexts and focus areas, rather than a representative sample. Of special interest have been cases where there have been interconnections made between the focus areas of social protection, infrastructure and public services, with the aim to trace how these programmes/policies have worked to create positive change. This paper also presents and analyses some policy or programming examples that have been restricted to any one focus area. The aim has been to draw lessons from both the successful cases and those where success in terms of gender equality has been limited. An analysis of the synergies that arise when programmes have worked in tandem across the three focus areas, and the trade-offs that ensue when they fail to do so, has allowed the paper to outline key principles and recommendations for policy design and implementation so as to realise women's rights, initiate women's empowerment and achieve gender equality.

This paper is structured as follows: section 2 sets out how each of the three focus areas - social protection, infrastructure and public services - is linked to gender equality and women's empowerment. A key point that is highlighted throughout the discussion, is the importance of recognising women's unpaid care work if any progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality is to be sustained. Section 3 considers these three focus areas in relation to one another, putting forth the main argument of the paper - which is that interlinking these three focus areas is essential for long term and sustainable progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. To understand these interconnections, it is critical to consider women's various roles, interests and needs; and especially the ways in which these interlinkages have the potential to transform social and economic structures to ensure the realisation of women's rights and to secure their positions. Section 4 thereafter examines policy or programming examples, assessing firstly, how the chosen programme has/ has not built interlinkages with other focus areas; and secondly, how this has led to successful or limited outcomes in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment. The paper concludes in Section 5 with some lessons learnt from both successful and weak cases. It thereby summarises the importance of the linkages between social protection, infrastructure and public services – in both theoretical and practical terms and puts forward key principles and recommendations for programmes aiming to achieve gender equality.

Section 2: What does Social Protection/ Infrastructure/ Public Services have to do with Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment?

This section presents a literature review on the links of each focus area, to gender equality and women's empowerment. As defined above, gender equality and women's empowerment denote a redistribution of gendered power relations. This necessitates therefore a consideration of three main dimensions:

a) how women's role/s are envisaged: women can be seen as carers (for their families and communities); as workers (both paid workers in the market and unpaid workers in families), and as rights-bearers (able to exercise agency to challenge social injustices, claim their rights and actively participate in public and political life) (Kabeer 2008b, 2017). Meaningful participation implies access to information and accountability – which are underlying principles of the rights-based approach.

b) how women are defined and framed – in other words, which of women's interests, needs and priorities are understood/ encompassed and how these are articulated – this includes both *short term practical needs* (which arise as a response to immediate and perceived necessity as identified by women in a given context. These are often related to survival and living conditions, such as water,

healthcare, childcare and employment) and *longer term strategic needs* (which are needs that women identify because of their subordinate position in society - these relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control, may include issues such as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their bodies) (Moser, 1995). A focus on women's strategic needs implies a focus on asymmetries of power that create women's subordination – which comes from the Human Rights approach.

c) The importance that is accorded to transforming the economic, political and social institutions in order to secure and transform women's position (Young 1994) and voice. A rights-based approach recognises that institutions and structures often reinforce and reproduce unequal power relations amongst women and men – and this constrains the enjoyment of rights by women. Transformation therefore can only come about through two aspects: collective action and specific measures that redress specific disadvantages faced by women. This highlights the role of two types of actors – firstly, women's rights organisations, who can legitimate, highlight and foster capacity for advocacy on, women's rights concerns (Kabeer 2013) and secondly, accountable States who are the primary duty-bearers for protection and fulfilment of human rights.

2.1 Social protection, gender equality and women's empowerment

While social protection measures did not explicitly aim to achieve gender equality, women have always been targeted as beneficiaries of social protection programmes, either individually or as female heads of households. This is because targeting women and increasing their resources has been considered as the most effective way of increasing families' overall well-being, and especially impacting children's health and nutrition positively (Yoong, Rabinovich, and Diepeveen 2012). However, this approach has been criticized for its instrumental nature (Bradshaw and Viquez 2008). Another critique of social protection programmes from a gender lens highlights that poorly designed programmes can exacerbate or contribute to inequality (Luttrell and Moser 2004). Holmes and Jones (2013) also discuss how interventions are sometimes more pre-occupied with addressing the material conditions of poor women, rather than their position within the home and society.

More recently, literature has started to highlight the complex role that gender plays in social protection. As Holmes and Jones (2013, p.5) have expressed, gender affects 'the types of risks that programmes seek to cushion people against, the choice of programme approach adopted, awareness-raising strategies, public buy-in and, arguably most importantly, programme outcomes'. Through the lifecycle approach to social protection which addresses the needs that individuals have based on the stage of life (UNICEF 2009), Antonopoulos (2013) brings women's needs and priorities at different stages of their life to the fore, from an early age as girls, working age, and as older women. Even then however, the focus has remained on social protection programmes working with women as beneficiaries, but without considering the other roles that they play in their families, communities and the economy. In other words, positioning women as passive recipients of social protection programmes does not consider their active participation in these programmes, either as workers, as carers or as rights-bearers (Kabeer 2008b, 2).

A gendered lens on the social protection agenda implies three ideas: firstly, that gender inequality is a source of risk and vulnerability¹ embedded in the broader socio-political environment; secondly that

¹ According to Kabeer's (2008) typology, the constraints that limit opportunities for women and girls can be:

- **gender-specific** i.e. societal norms and practices that apply to women or men by virtue of their gender;
- **gender-intensified** i.e. inequalities between household members reflecting norms and customs on the distribution of food, health care, access to property etc.;
- **gender-imposed** i.e. forms of gender disadvantage that reflect discrimination in the wider public domain.

these risks and vulnerabilities are mediated through policy interventions, pre-existing political economy dynamics and socio-cultural norms (all of which have their own context-specific gender dynamics); and finally, that economic and social risks and vulnerabilities are inherently influenced by gender relations – i.e. women, men, girls and boys not only experience different types of risks, but cope with them in different ways (Holmes and Jones 2013). Therefore, it is clear, that gender-sensitive social protection measures are necessarily transformative (Sabates-Wheeler and Roelen 2011), as they necessitate a recognition of women’s needs and priorities, as well as aim to reduce vulnerability through changes in social and economic structures.

These ideas can be further explicated through a discussion of the concept of unpaid care work. It is well established that irrespective of household income, women and girls carry out a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work responsibilities (Antonopoulos 2008; Budlender 2008; ECOSOC 2016; Elson 1995; Eyben and Fontana 2011; Razavi 2007). This gendered division of labour has profound implications for the lives that women lead, their options and their status in society. It comprises their ability to access education and decent work, and leaves women and girls physically and emotionally depleted (Chopra and Zambelli 2017) It also indirectly increases their vulnerability from the market, as they are pushed into insecure, back-breaking, informal sector jobs (Antonopoulos 2008; ECOSOC 2016; Kabeer 2008a; Sabates-Wheeler and Kabeer 2003) This disproportionate burden of care is mediated through socio-cultural norms which dictate the skewed division of labour in the household and powerful ideologies of feminine duty that shape women’s perceptions of choices available to them (Chopra and Sweetman 2018). This is often reinforced by labour market norms that dictate the types of jobs that women and men can do. As expressed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), ‘every day, around the world, rural women and girls face persistent structural constraints that prevent them from fully enjoying their human rights and hamper their efforts to improve their lives as well as those of others around them’ (FAO, IFAD, and WFP 2012).

Thus, while women and girls need more social protection measures in order to cope with these vulnerabilities, their time poverty restricts their access to these measures as well as their participation in decision-making processes to design suitable programmes. Gender sensitive social protection measures must take into account not only women’s needs, time and energy constraints, but also aim to make social and economic structures more equitable in order to give women more power. This may imply, for example, not just greater access to transfers and other programmes, but also radical transformations in how they are delivered – for example through removing conditionalities that assume that women have time to fulfil these. In the same vein, UN WOMEN (2015, p. 185) state: ‘Policy and programme features that perpetuate gender stereotypes or social stigma need to be removed. Social transfer schemes, for example, should not impose conditionalities that increase women’s unpaid care and domestic work and should gradually work towards universal coverage in order to avoid stigma’. The discussion above highlights that gender-sensitive social protection ‘should include a thorough assessment of the needs of caregivers and care receivers to make sure that policies contribute to the recognition, reduction and redistribution of unpaid care and domestic work’(UN WOMEN, 2015, p.176).

Therefore, in order to increase the potential of social protection programmes and policies to progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment, it is critical to consider three aspects:

- a) How does the programme conceptualise and recognise the multiple roles that women play: as workers, as carers and/or as rights-bearers;
- b) How does gender play into the institutions delivering this programmes/policy? These institutions include the human resources that are involved in delivery;

- c) How does this programme/policy seek to invert existing gender relations – in the household; and in the community, as well as in the market and the State?

2.2 Infrastructure, gender equality and women's empowerment

There are multiple, yet underexplored links between infrastructure, gender equality and women's empowerment. A significant aspect to consider is that of women's time burden – which is directly linked to the availability, accessibility and quality of physical infrastructure needed to carry out tasks of unpaid care work. This is especially pertinent for women living in rural areas, as 'rural women spend more time than urban women and men in reproductive and household work ...this is because poor rural infrastructure and services as well as culturally assigned roles ...' (FAO, IFAD, and WFP 2012, 1). Poor infrastructure means that women have to spend more time on household chores such as fetching water, firewood, and walking long distance on foot, and thus have less time available on income-generating activities or to spend time with their children. It has also been acknowledged that 'lack of access to basic infrastructure affects time use and reduces women's ability to devote more time to market activities' (EBRD 2015). This explains why, in Pakistan's urban slums, lack of access to toilets poor drainage, unpaved streets, and other unfavourable environmental conditions were negatively associated with women's empowerment (Lotia et al. 2017).

Infrastructure thus has a direct impact on gender equality and on women's empowerment, with women having less time to engage in decision-making within the household as well as less control and participation in the labour market in situations of no/ low infrastructure. As evidenced by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), 'infrastructure investments ... have a catalytic effect and particularly benefit women and girls by releasing them from part of their domestic responsibilities' (UNDP and World Bank 2005). Similarly, the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) noted that basic infrastructure such as clean water, safe cooking fuels, electricity and transport has a significant impact on the time spent on household chores (ICRW 2005). Khan (2018, p.1) has also documented the impact of infrastructure on women's lives through mobility, access to jobs and unpaid care work, highlighting that there is 'a positive connection between women's access to infrastructure and positive health and economic outcomes for the entire household'.

A significant determinant of women's experiences and participation in the labour market, as well as in carrying out their unpaid care work tasks, is transport infrastructure. Investment in transport infrastructure, such as rural roads can facilitate access to markets and help women earn incomes– for selling produce or for travelling to their workplaces, thereby increasing employability. Early studies of large infrastructure programmes showed mixed results, suggesting that infrastructure measures were not that effective in improving local livelihoods (Ali-Nejadfard 1999). Since then, these studies have been critiqued on the basis that they did not take gender aspects into account (Fernando and Porter 2002). Recent evaluations have shown that enhancing rural accessibility has a positive effect especially on women's livelihoods (Ahmed and Nahiduzzaman, 2016). In Cambodia, the rural road improvement project reported 75% of beneficiaries (primarily women) having an increase in farm produce sales because of road improvements (ADB 2017). Chopra and Zambelli (2017) have also documented that women who spent more time and money travelling for work in Nepal, India, Tanzania and Rwanda, were depleted rather than empowered. Malik et al., (2018) report that women have unique transport needs – they tend to spend more time than men on public transport, yet are disproportionately subjected to harassment, and this fear of sexual harassment and victimisation restricts their access to jobs. Therefore, if transport infrastructure is affordable and safe, women can have greater choice in terms of workplace, as well as greater bargaining power with families over their mobility – this can mean greater gender equality as well as enhanced power over their own lives. Conversely, lack of safe transport infrastructure leaves women and girls vulnerable to violence, as well as subject to constraints on mobility because of perceived risk – thereby constraining their

empowerment potential. Transport infrastructure also facilitates access to public services such as health care facilities and schools for girls, and participation of women in community decision-making.

Another link between physical infrastructure and gender equality or women's empowerment pertains to the energy spent by women in undertaking both paid work and unpaid care work tasks, and therefore their health and well-being. Lack of infrastructure for example means trekking long distances on uneven roads to fetch water and firewood, a role that is generally accorded to women and girls (Chopra and Zambelli 2017). These tasks increase women's drudgery and impacts negatively on their health, for example women reported health problems including aches and pains and serious conditions such as uterine prolapse (Chopra and Zambelli 2017). Moreover, poor water and sanitation can cause disease and increase women's vulnerability to violence if these spaces are not well planned (ICRW 2005). Lotia et al. (2017) found that the lack of toilets in urban slums in Pakistan led women to wait till dark to relieve themselves, leaving them vulnerable to assaults.

Finally, there is a strong link between infrastructure and gender norms. The connections between safe transport and norms around mobility have already been discussed above, but there are other links such as the impact of infrastructure on community networks. A World Bank review found that infrastructure projects can broaden community networks as more women are connected through new opportunities (better roads, access to services) and by strengthening collective action (World Bank 2010). As Khan (2018, p.4) states, 'Infrastructure investment can also help accelerate women's economic empowerment if they are designed to loosen traditional gender roles and social norms; (...) this investment goes beyond physical public works infrastructure and involves making women part of the infrastructure development'. This can be done through increasing women's mobility in terms of usage of transport infrastructure and by promoting the space for them to enter traditionally male dominated sectors and jobs – such as in India and Ethiopia in the construction sector (ICED 2017). It is clear therefore that in order to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, investment in gender-sensitive infrastructure that is accessible, affordable and safe, is essential.

In addition to physical infrastructure, it is also relevant to consider human resources as an important component to the provision of public services as well as delivery of social protection measures. Examples of human infrastructure include: recruitment, training and retention of teachers, health workers, nurses, pre-school workers and doctors. While both women and men use these services, gender comes into this in two ways: firstly, women and girls are often the primary recipients and users of these services – as discussed in the next sub section on public services. Secondly, many of these jobs are overwhelmingly populated by women – especially those in the low paid and insecure care-giving industry, such as nurses, primary health care workers, teachers and pre-school workers. On the contrary, women are either excluded or given inferior jobs with lower pay in the construction industry, not giving them the opportunity to participate in building physical infrastructure (European Commission 2010). This highly gendered occupational segregation is inherently in opposition to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, and therefore needs careful redressal.

In considering financial infrastructure for gender equality, macro-economic policy in terms of revenue generation and spending becomes critical. Feminist Economists have critiqued the assumption that macro-economic policies are gender-neutral, as this ignores the 'distributive consequences that impact differently on women and men and influence gender dynamics more broadly' (UN WOMEN 2015, 192). There are three biases prevalent in macro-economic policy – deflationary bias (when the interests of creditors and banks are prioritised over those of women who are provisioners of the last resort); the male breadwinner bias (which ignores the role of unpaid care work) and commodification bias (where public service provision is minimized) (Elson and Cagatay 2000). These biases result in restrictive policies that don't address the structural disadvantages faced by women, and instead, result in 'insufficient resources to sustainably finance social policies that support gender equality or

to ensure that the ways in which spending and taxation are conducted have positive, rather than negative, distributive consequences' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p. 197). This results in budgets that are not always responsive to women's needs and priorities. Hence, 'Gender Responsive Budgeting' (GRB) becomes essential for gender equality. GRB involves 'government planning, programming and budgeting that contributes to the advancement of gender equality and the fulfilment of women's rights' (UN 2016). GRB requires resources and infrastructure to collect and analyse the gendered impacts of macro-economic policy. Therefore, building gender sensitive macro-economic policy involves undertaking gender-disaggregation for beneficiary assessment, public expenditure analysis, tax incidence analysis, as well as analysis of invisible costs. GRB points out that high public expenditure that can be financed by high tax revenues (collected through ways that have positive distributional consequences for women) is conducive to gender equality.

From the above discussion, it is clear that making infrastructure gender-sensitive is essential for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment. However, evidence shows that 'large scale public investment such as infrastructure usually do not consider the impact on unpaid domestic work as a benefit, nor improvement in women's lives in general' (Khan 2018, 2). While it is true that infrastructure benefits the general public, it is important to underscore that women are the primary users of this infrastructure as their roles rely greatly on it. Therefore, infrastructure can address some root causes of gender inequality such as time poverty (IFAD 2017). For this to happen, 'benefits [for women] must be intentionally built into program design and consistently followed up and monitored' (Khan 2018, p 3).

In sum, gender-sensitive infrastructure programmes/ policy must consider three aspects. Firstly, reflect on the roles that women play, and the ways in which infrastructure can support these roles. This includes not just their productive activities, but also women's unpaid care work and domestic activities. In fact, in recognizing women's various roles and seeking to support these through infrastructure provision, the often invisibilised links between women's paid work and their unpaid care work are highlighted. Secondly, infrastructure programmes/ policies should analyse the needs and constraints faced by women, and how these can be addressed through gender-sensitive infrastructure planning. In doing so, involving them becomes critical: 'women's perceptions and opinions must be taken into consideration when developing infrastructure projects to make them effective and sustainable' (ICRW 2005, 3). A positive example comes from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), who have included innovative gender-inclusive designs into their infrastructure projects and measures to ensure women's personal security in public transport, as well as supporting women's participation in decision-making about local budgetary priorities in small town development (ADB 2017). Finally, it is critical to understand and address gender biases inherent in the macro-economic framework, as this 'either enlarges or constrains [the] scope to advance substantive equality for women' (UN WOMEN 2015, 196).

2.3 Public services, gender equality and women's empowerment

In considering how macroeconomic policy choices can bring about gender equality, consideration needs to be given to the fact that the economy is a gendered structure. This is clear in that: a) there are multiple links between paid work and unpaid care work, yet unpaid care work is largely undertaken by women; b) labour markets are segmented and women have less bargaining power than men; and c) there are gender-intensified constraints in access to resources and markets (Cook and Razavi 2012). Therefore, in order to achieve gender equality, these constraints need to be addressed. This can be done through high public expenditure on: infrastructure that reduces time and drudgery of unpaid care work; on high social security income transfers; and on provision of services that facilitate labour market participation of mothers and other carers. While infrastructure and transfers have been

discussed in the sub-sections above, this sub section focusses on the connections between public services and gender equality.

Public services include water, gas and electricity services, as well as care services. The issue of care is predominant in determining the need for, use of and effect of public services on gender equality. As it has been explained above, heavy and unequal care responsibilities borne by women, restrict their time, energy and participation in other activities. State-provided public services have the potential to alleviate some of this burden very effectively. The care diamond envisages four key institutional actors in the provision of care – the State, the family, the market and the not-for-profit sector (Razavi 2007). Therefore, if the State fails to provide care services, other actors, such as the family (predominantly women) have to assume this role.

While services such as water, electricity and gas are critical in reducing women's time poverty as well as the drudgery that they otherwise face in undertaking their daily domestic tasks, care services such as crèches, health care, schools and pre-schools, promote gender equality in various ways. Firstly, care services reduce time constraints faced by women in taking care of their families. Secondly, these services can redress 'women's socio-economic disadvantage by enhancing their ability to participate in paid work – [they] can also contribute to the transformation of gender stereotypes by allowing women to move out of the home and into the public domain' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.171). In this way, public services are essential for recognizing the roles of unpaid care work performed by women, for reducing the drudgery associated with these roles, and for redistributing these responsibilities from the women, to the State. There is also evidence to show that 'the effect of social services on poverty and inequality can exceed that of social transfers' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.156).

Therefore, services that take into account and address the practical and strategic needs and priorities of women and men can be key in achieving gender equality through countering social and economic inequalities (ActionAid 2016; Zambeli et al. 2017). For example, in rural Senegal, the time savings associated with small piped water systems and increased water availability allowed women to enhance productive activities and initiate new enterprises (UN WOMEN 2015, 157). In Morocco, water connections increased women's leisure time, including socializing with neighbours (UN WOMEN 2015, 157). This link arises because women are the primary users of public services as they go about fulfilling their unpaid care work responsibilities of water and fuel collection, care of their family and domestic chores.

Conversely therefore, government cuts on public service provision has 'a direct and disproportionate impact on women' (Zambeli et al. 2017, 6). Lack of water provision increases the time and energy that women have to spend on water collection. Poor healthcare and education services may mean that women and girls have to stay at home and undertake increased share of care activities. Lack of sexual and reproductive health services can lead to unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and a resultant increase in care responsibilities. Lack of electricity and gas connections may mean women walk long distances and spend more time on collection of fuel. Therefore, 'where basic social services are lacking and care needs are great, women and girls' unpaid workloads increase' (UN WOMEN 2015, 157). Recent research found there was also a strong link between lack of public services and women's engagement in the market economy. In Ghana, for example, lack or poor provision of services such as water and electricity affects businesses where women's economic activities are concentrated, such as hair and beauty salons, tailors and grocers (Zambeli et al., 2017, p.11). In South Africa, lack of access to safe transport means that women either cannot look for jobs beyond the township where they live, or when they do, they face daily insecurity and risk being attacked (Zambeli et al., 2017, p.11). The above discussion highlights that public services have the potential to increase women's engagement in the market economy as well as support women in carrying out their unpaid care work responsibilities – thereby initiating women's empowerment and gender equality.

However, public services are often inadequate and poorly delivered – which is often due to lack of funds – which spirals into lack of human resources and physical infrastructure. It is important to highlight that public services while dependent on macro-economic structures and policies, also have the effect of limiting macro-economic development. For example, child development, education, health and social care policies, or policies supporting youth transitions into the labour market, have direct implications for productivity, growth and economic performance (UN WOMEN 2015, 208).

A critical aspect of public services is their quality –from a gender equality perspective this means that they are ‘available, accessible, acceptable, adaptable, and safe’ (ActionAid 2016, 5). Even when public services are available, access to these is restricted. This is because of either gender bias in their design and implementation, or because of high costs (affordability). Public services may often be designed and managed by engineers and planners who may either be primarily male, or not familiar with women’s needs (Harman 2015). Costs may be high as services are delivered by private institutions, who privilege profits over catering to needs and priorities of women. Structural inequalities such as discriminatory social norms, stigmatization and fear of violence are further barriers for women’s access to public services. The quality of public services is often low, again depicting restricted budgets and lack of participation by end users (primarily women) in decisions related to public services. The issue of restricted financial infrastructure has been discussed above in relation to the macro economic framework and gender responsive budgets. As concluded by a recent study, ‘to achieve gender-responsive public services, it is key to increase women’s and girls’ power in relation to decisions on public services. Improving the governance of public services does not guarantee that a service is gender responsive and of high quality, but it increases the chances that progress will be made over time’ (ActionAid 2016, 4).

In conclusion, gender-sensitive public services, especially care services, are considered to be ‘crucial to the achievement of substantive equality for women and girls’ (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.176). According to a recent study, a gender-responsive public service is one that ‘identifies that males and females (and specific groups of women and persons with different gender identities and sexual orientation) often have different – practical and strategic – needs and priorities for what services are provided, as well as how these services are provided’ (ActionAid 2016, 5). It is in recognising and addressing the strategic needs of women, that public services have the potential to be transformative, thus changing existing roles and women’s subordinate position towards greater gender equality (ActionAid, 2016).

Section 3: Connections between Social Protection, Infrastructure and Public Services for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment

While the above sub sections have discussed the individual links of each of the three main focus areas to gender equality and women’s empowerment, this paper argues that these focus areas by themselves can only partially achieve substantive gender equality. As the Progress of the World’s Women articulates: ‘In order to address the rights of caregivers and care receivers comprehensively, however, a combination of investments are required: in basic social infrastructure, from water and sanitation to public transport systems; in social services, from primary health care to school feeding programmes; and in social transfers, from disability benefits to paid parental leave’(UN WOMEN 2015, 176). This section pulls out the interconnections between these three focus areas and puts forward the argument that progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment **requires** a holistic approach taking all three focus areas into account.

Figure 1: Interconnections between three focus areas

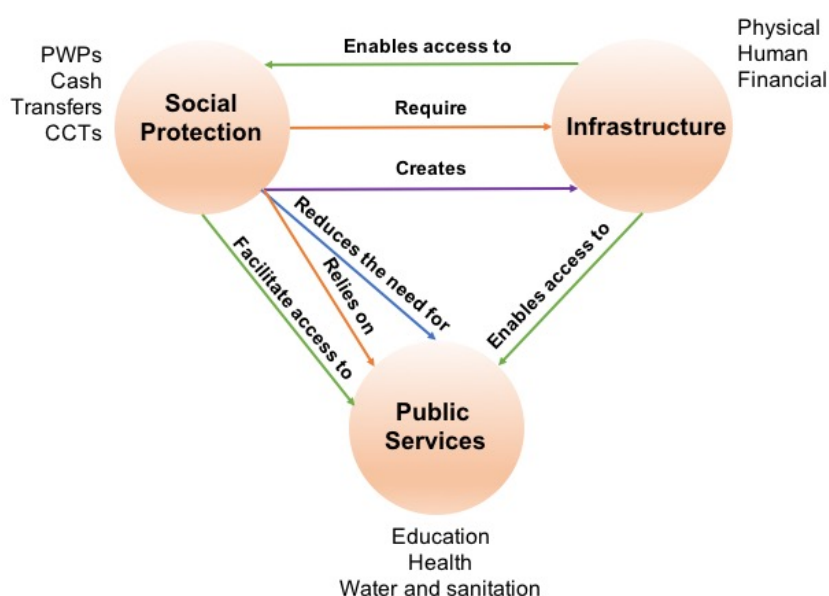


Figure 1 above teases out the links between social protection, infrastructure and gender equality. As the figure demonstrates, social protection programmes require infrastructure in order to be delivered to the beneficiaries. This infrastructure includes human resources – capacity constraints have been recognised as a significant concern to achieve gender-sensitive social protection, as ‘staff at the local level have limited technical capacities in general and even weaker gender mainstreaming proficiency...’ (Holmes and Jones, 2013, p. 191). Social protection provisioning also requires physical infrastructure like roads, electricity and bank accounts, and the access to these is also gendered. In case of conditional cash transfers, public services such as education and healthcare are required so the beneficiaries can comply with the conditionalities imposed by the programme. It is critical to note that another key challenge to deliver gender-sensitive social protection services is the high administrative costs, and the limited amount of financial resources (Holmes and Jones 2013). This is because ‘low levels of spending...translate into serious shortcomings...including staff shortages and motivation’ (UN WOMEN 2015, 157).

Connections between social protection and public services have been recognised in the literature as being critical for the success of social protection: ‘For social protection programs to achieve their productive potential, multi-faceted programs, simultaneous investments in complementary policies, services and interventions, as well as appropriate sequencing, are crucial’ (Mathers and Slater, 2014, p.24).

Social protection programmes such as public works are especially useful in creating infrastructure. In some places, these have been tied to building schools and community centres for public services – and in a few places, these can address women’s needs by building assets that are useful to women. There is a twin-sided relationship between public services and social protection, as some public services - such as care services for children, the elderly and the sick – can reduce or even eliminate the need for social protection measures, as these public services act as a safety net, recognising women’s priorities. On the other hand, social protection measures such as childcare vouchers and pensions can facilitate access of poor families to essential public services. Similarly, infrastructure such as roads and transport facilities can also facilitate access to both social protection programmes (such

as attending to a public works programmes or accessing their bank accounts) as well as to public services.

These connections become especially critical for women and girls, because of their unequal workload and high unpaid care work responsibilities. As explained in the sub sections above, a focus on the gender-sensitivity of infrastructure, social protection, and public services necessitates a recognition of women's dual burden of unpaid care work and paid work. This implies that women's interests, needs and priorities are recognised as critical by these three focus areas. Gender-sensitivity also implies a recognition of the different roles that women play in their homes and communities – as workers, as carers and as rights-bearers.

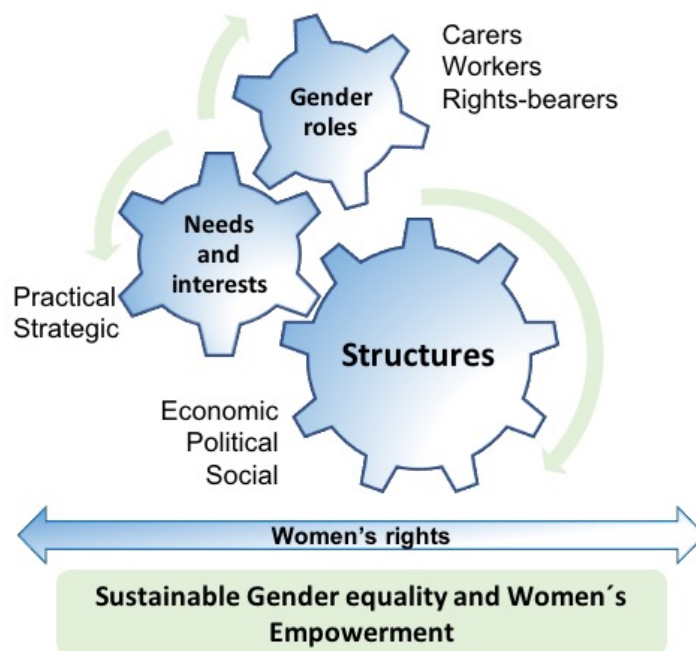
Some examples depict the virtuous cycle of positive change that interlinking these three focus areas can initiate: A cash transfer to a woman has a multiplier effect if the woman can decide to spend this on her business (woman as worker), which is made possible because there are childcare services in her community (*public services*), and she can sell her goods in the nearby market without incurring high monetary, safety and time costs for travelling (*transport infrastructure*). Alternatively, the woman can choose to work in public works programmes (*social protection measure*) that have flexible timings, so she can drop her young child (woman as carer) to the pre-school (*public service*) and be involved in building a water reservoir (*infrastructure*) near to her community that she has meaningfully participated in deciding upon (woman as rights-holder), while her daughter goes to school (*public service*). The daughter is able to have time to go to school (*public service*) as she does not have to help her mother with water collection, because there is piped water and electricity (*infrastructure as well as public service*) available within their home. The family may also have access to scholarships (*social protection measure*) for the daughter to go to school. Importantly, both these two hypothetical cases rely on changes in social and economic institutions – the first one assumes a gender-sensitive market where the woman can sell her produce for adequate wages; and the second one is based on equitable decision-making structures at the community level which enable women to participate and share their priorities. It is therefore, easy to imagine how the social norms could change in both cases, resulting an enabling environment where women's rights principles are effective, women have greater decision-making power, and a more equitable distribution of care work within the household.

It is equally valid to imagine how each of the three focus areas work better because of these interlinkages and the underlying rights-based approach in the above examples: the scholarship would be better utilised by families to improve educational attainment for girls (social protection); children's developmental outcomes would be improved because of good-quality crèches and pre-schools that had been developed through meaningful consultation (*public services*); appropriate use, coverage and maintenance of water reservoir, electricity and piped water sources would be ensured (*infrastructure*); and women's use of safe public transport would increase (*infrastructure*). This then implies that interlinkages and connections between these three focus areas can help each of these sectors to achieve their own goals too, at the same time as furthering women's rights.

While it is clear that these interlinkages set forth a positive multiplier effect both in women's lives and in achieving their own goals, the question that remains to be seen, is whether these are **necessary** for progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment? This paper argues that without considering these interlinkages, in fact progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment stalls very quickly, and may even regress in the long term. This is because of the very definition of substantive gender equality and women's empowerment, which necessitates transformation in economic and social structures through 'redressing socio-economic disadvantage; addressing stereotyping, stigma and violence and strengthening agency, voice and participation' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.43). As discussed at the start of Section 2, this transformation can only come about through interventions that work across three main dimensions: a) recognise the multiple roles that women

play – as workers, as carers and as rights-holders, b) consider their varying needs and priorities (including both practical and strategic needs), and above all, c) seek to alter women’s positions in multiple institutions – social, economic and political. These three main dimensions are depicted in Figure 2 below. This is the main argument of this paper – that sustainable gender equality and women’s empowerment can only be achieved and sustained through holistic, gender-sensitive interventions – which are by definition, not restricted to any one focus area, but encompass all three focus areas, irrespective of the starting point being either social protection, infrastructure or public services.

Figure 2 The three dimensions of positive change, cross-cutting with women’s rights



The following section now examines case studies to illustrate these arguments. Cases where there have been interconnections between these three components and cases where there are no interconnections, are examined in order to assess which of these have been more effective (and why) in achieving and sustaining progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment.

Section 4: Building interconnections (or not): Case Studies

This section introduces eight case studies that present examples from the three components, social protection, infrastructure and public services. Social protection examples include cash transfers such as Chapéu de Palha Mulher in Brazil, a Pilot Conditional Cash Transfer in Egypt; Juntos in Peru, and Ethiopia’s Safety Nets Programme and Public works programmes such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in India, and South Africa’s Expanded Public Works Programme. For Infrastructure, we have chosen to look at Bangladesh’s Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme; and Multiple Use Water Systems in Nepal represents an example of a public services initiative. These examples present national level initiatives, as well as small-scale programmes – and have been chosen purposively rather than as a representative sample. Each of these examples clearly demonstrate the different ways in which the components can be interconnected, or on the contrary, to show the disconnect that exists in practice. While not all the programmes are large-scale national level programmes such as India’s MGNREGA, Ethiopia’s PSNP,

Juntos in Peru, or the EPWP in South Africa, taking small-scale examples like Chapéu de Palha Mulher in Brazil, the Pilot Conditional Cash Transfer in Egypt, Bangladesh's EIIP, and the Multiple Use Water Systems in Nepal into account can also be useful to withdraw positive lessons for the future design or expansion of programmes and policies within each of these three focus areas. In addition, all of our chosen examples show some level of innovation, at either small-scale or at national level, and in that sense, are intended to be read as positive examples in themselves. At the same time, these examples also illustrate the connections between the three focus areas as presented in Figure 1 above. Finally, each of these cases underscore the importance of taking a rights-based approach to incorporating women's roles, needs and interests, and structures, in order to achieve substantive gender equality.

Case Study 1: Chapéu de Palha Mulher, Brazil

Our first case study is that of a social protection programme with a difference. Chapéu de Palha Mulher is a State-funded social inclusion initiative that provides professional training designed for women living in poor and rural communities in the north-eastern state of Pernambuco, Brazil. Most of the women living in these communities work as sugarcane farmers.

The aim of the programme is for the women to have an alternative income-generating activity during the off-harvest months – for which they are provided training. The programme also includes stipends that aim to provide sustenance during off-harvest, and as a complement to existing benefits such as bolsa familia. The training aims to give women access to a growing employment market, therefore focussing on the construction and industry sectors (such as welding, soldering, electrical works and taxi driving). These professional trainings are usually by request of the women themselves, in male-dominated occupations, this 'challenges gender-based segmentation in the labour market and provide work that is better paid' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.55). This reflects how the programme recognises and promotes women's roles as paid workers in the economy, yet takes the needs and interests of women into account, at the same time as challenging the gender segregation in the labour market.

'Admitting women to learn skills such as welding and plumbing has also challenged attitudes within government training institutions, creating the basis for sustainable change' (Cornwall, 2016, p.347)

A critical component of the programme is a mandatory three-month course imparted by feminist trainers on rights and citizenship. This covers topics such as the history of slavery; the struggle of women, black and indigenous people for equality; gender stereotypes; and the government's human rights commitments under the Constitution. This course provides a 'space for critical reflection and discussion' that can set out to change the 'structures that keep gender hierarchies in place and constrain women's enjoyment of their rights' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.55). The course also recognises women's different roles, as mothers, but also as rights-bearers.

'In a State Secretariat survey, women responded that not only had the programme brought them income and training that could lead them into employment. It had also opened their eyes to their rights as citizens and brought them a sense of personal transformation' (Cornwall, 2016, p.347)

Women are provided with stipends for attending the course, as well as given transportation and food in order to facilitate their access to the training sites (Cornwall 2016). Provision of transport infrastructure, and provision of childcare facilities have furthered both the uptake and the impact of the programme.

This programme has been recognised as being transformative, with the course on citizenship raising awareness amongst women of their rights and choices; opening up employment opportunities in non-traditional sectors and creating local women's secretariats allowing women to have greater decision-making power and participation in their communities; as well as partnering with local women's organisations to work on social norms regarding women's roles and their mobility (Cornwall 2016, 347).

The programme has had a positive impact in channelling social policies to households through women, without instrumentalising them (Cornwall 2016). In this way, the programme provides 'resources, services and spaces that respond to women's immediate needs while disrupting the structures that reinforce their subordination and constrain their practical enjoyment of their rights' (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.54).

While basing itself on an existing safety net programme, the provision of employment training complements the social protection aim of the programme. Key to the success of the programme is the links it has made with infrastructure and public services – specifically transport, and childcare – and its attempts to transform economic and social structures. It therefore leads to gender equality in a way that just a safety net or an employment training programme would not be able to do by itself. The key reasons for the programme having made significant progress on gender equality are therefore three-fold: a) it recognises women's multiple roles (as workers, as carers and as rights-bearers) and needs (for childcare, safe transport and employment training) – in addressing these roles and needs, it links up with public services and infrastructure; b) it includes their voice in decisions about employment training and on their rights, thereby taking into account their interests and priorities. And c) it addresses the structural constraints that women face, including social norms, and job market discrimination.

Case Study 2: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), India

A more limited scenario of success would be that of a public works or employment programme which provides some employment training and recognising the care responsibilities of the woman, provides childcare on site. However, without interventions that addressed the gendered nature of labour markets, and without working to address gender norms, programme success would stall - as women would not be able to get decent jobs, and might be faced with constraints on their mobility and types of work they were allowed to do.

Further, if there is no infrastructure to help the women get to the public works site, women would have to spend an hour each way walking on rough paths to get to the programme site. This was the case of the India's largest public works programme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) – which has been very successful in generating employment for the rural poor and improving livelihoods of large numbers of families. In terms of gender equality outcomes however, progress is more patchy. While there have been studies documenting the high numbers of women participating in the programme and the positive influence of women being able to earn an income through the MGNREGA, the programme's progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment is limited (Chopra forthcoming).

While the Act made provisions for childcare facilities on public works sites, lack of gender-sensitisation amongst programme implementers (lack of human infrastructure), no monitoring, and stringent funds (lack of financial infrastructure) meant that there were no crèches available on site. Zaidi et al. (2017) document women leaving younger children with older siblings (primarily girls), and also women choosing not to work under MGNREGA if they had any other choice. Lack of electricity, water and fuel in villages meant that women faced considerable drudgery in carrying out their domestic chores (Zaidi

et al. 2017). This also limited their time and energy to participate as active decision-makers in community meetings, which in the programme design are deemed primary for deciding which assets to build. Further constraints to women's participation and in expressing their priorities comes from gender norms that restrict their mobility, voice, and prescribe a strict division of labour in the household. There are no provisions within the MGNREGA to address these structural constraints.

Further, the programme has also failed to make any connections with public services such as water and gas connections. Zaidi et al (2017) found that girls were vulnerable to being taken out of school in order to undertake domestic chores and sibling care, while their mothers worked under MGNREGA. This creates a vicious cycle of gender inequality that transcends generations; in addition to leaving women and girls exhausted and depleted because of the drudgery they face in both paid work and unpaid care work (Chopra and Zambelli 2017).

This shows the critical importance of three aspects, without which gender equality cannot be achieved: firstly, interlinking the three components of social protection, infrastructure and public services; secondly, recognising women not just as workers, but also as carers and as rights-bearers who are able to express their needs and priorities; and thirdly, designing and implementing a transformative approach that addresses structural constraints and power relations, both in the market and in families and communities. The next case study also highlights these aspects, albeit through a different channel.

Case study 3: Pilot Conditional Cash Transfer Programme – Egypt

Egypt's conditional cash transfer programme was started as a pilot, in the Cairo neighbourhood of Ain el Sira from 2008 to 2012. The programme was based on ethnographic research, which highlighted the need for income, and also 'the failures of the state provision and mistreatment by service providers and a desire for decent work and better living conditions'(Cornwall, 2016, p.349). Run by the Ministry of Solidarity, a key premise of the programme therefore, was that this social protection measure would have a transformative effect through a focus on strengthening citizenship for women; this way, women would 'come to see the transfer as an entitlement rather than a hand out' (Cornwall, 2016, p.348). According to the main designer and researcher involved in the pilot, this was a feminist social protection programme, that 'recognise[d] and enhance[d] women's identity as citizens and enables them to assume the roles they choose and fulfil the obligations they value. It is an approach that defines, targets and alleviates poverty in accordance with the views, priorities and experiences of the women beneficiaries of social protection programmes' (Sholkamy, 2011, p.1). Accordingly, the programme sought to value women's role as unpaid carers – by making it explicit that the cash transfer received, compensated for women's time that they spent in attending programme meetings and social worker visits.

Also, the programme recognised the significance of supportive relationships as part of the process of transformation, putting the quality of the relationships between intermediaries who would visit and enrol women into the programme, and the women, at the heart of the intervention (Cornwall 2016). Social workers underwent training that involved valuing rights and justice, thereby playing an active role in supporting women to access State services, and to recognise their entitlements to such services as rights-bearers. It was found that there were relationships of respect and solidarity between frontline workers and the women, as they accompanied rather than directed them (Cornwall 2016). In this way, the programme built links with the human infrastructure of the programme, the intermediaries, in order to increase effectiveness of delivery, as well as to improve public services that the women were encouraged to engage with and access.

According to Sholkamy (2011, p.1), the objective of this programme went beyond social protection as a short-term measure, to include a longer-term objective which ‘combines social protection with measures that seek to redress gender imbalances by restoring the accountability of the State to poor women and their families’.

The programme’s success can be said to rely on four aspects: firstly, the programme encouraged women’s engagement in paid work, departing from previous practices that made transfers contingent on proof of unemployment. Instead, the programme recognised the multiple roles that women played – including their care responsibilities and paid work, where women were encouraged to see the transfer as a means to engage in work on better terms. This also allowed women to make decisions that would otherwise have been taken by men, allowing them to invest reliable resources (transfers) in their children’s education, clothing, nutrition and home improvements.

Secondly, this programme employed self-monitoring tools that enabled women to monitor their compliance, thereby avoiding a State social worker gaining too much top-down control; and creating a process of internal governance while facilitating collective action among women – thereby including women’s needs, interests and priorities, and increasing their decision-making power as rights-bearers.

Thirdly, this programme went beyond its remit of social protection, to make links with banking services (infrastructure) that both protected the cash from possible family or community thefts and increased the women’s decision-making power as they could save and strategise about their money (Cornwall 2016). Another critical link that the programme established was with human infrastructure – training for front-line workers delivering these transfers had transformative effects on the way these programmes were received, thereby stimulating collective engagement from the women.

Finally, the programme sought to effect transformations in economic and social structures through combining ‘material support with processes that seek transformations in women’s own subjectivities and in their individual and collective agency’ (Cornwall, 2016, p.349). The citizenship approach to cash transfers, and linking social protection interventions with employment training not only reduced poverty, but also ‘produced broader empowering outcomes for beneficiaries’ (Sholkamy, 2011, p.4).

It is critical to note that in the above example, there was no emphasis on linking women to public services, which if included, would have strengthened the project’s outcomes even further. While the project considered women’s roles in terms of caring for children, it did not establish connections with provision of water and gas services, which take up women’s time and energy. The project also did not make links with transport facilities for example – which would be crucial for girls going to school; or for women to access labour markets – as privileged in the next case study.

Case Study 4: Bangladesh’s Employment Intensive Infrastructure Programme (EIIP)

It is important to highlight quite a different pathway of success towards gender equality and women’s empowerment, as exemplified by Bangladesh’s EIIP. The EIIP aims at improving accessibility through rural road construction, with a key feature being deliberate incorporation of opportunities for local employment during both construction and management.

The project was based on local needs, and accordingly, two rural roads were constructed. The project introduced five innovative practices and policies, which were the key success factors, particularly in terms of integrating the extremely poor women:

- (a) specific market sections’ development for the disadvantaged women group;
- (b) participation in road construction, maintenance and tree plantation;
- (c) rural road infrastructure design through gender-sensitive approaches;

- (d) partnership with local government organizations; and
- (e) institutionalizing gender issues through project implementing agencies. (Ahmed and Nahiduzzaman 2016).

This shows that women's needs and interests were taken on board, and their voice included in the project design. The project has been deemed to be a success in terms of creating and improving employability among the socially and economically marginalized women, who were previously left without any livelihood opportunities (Ahmed, 2007 quoted in Ahmed and Nahiduzzaman, 2016). Subsequently, women have been found to be engaged in various forms of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises in their communities such as grocery shops, home-based handicrafts making, food catering services, etc., with an increase in food consumption as well as enhanced expenditures on family health and education (Ahmed, 2009 quoted in Ahmed and Nahiduzzaman, 2016).

The major success factors of the programme have been in terms of generating evidence of women playing entrepreneurial roles and gaining meaningful financial returns from these activities (Khandker, Bakht, and Koolwal 2009). However, one wonders whether this has led to a situation of greater empowerment and gender equality in terms of a redistribution of power. While the programme incorporated women's voice as rights-bearers in planning the infrastructure programme related to roads, there was no intervention to link this to their larger participation in accessing public services or other benefits.

Specifically, the programme does not take into account the roles of women as carers, focusing primarily on their role as workers. This implies that while some of the interests and needs of women are incorporated into the programme, women's unpaid care work needs are invisibilised. This, coupled with lack of social norm change interventions, may imply that women are left exhausted and depleted as they undertake both paid work and unpaid care work as dictated by prevalent gender norms. Alternatively, and equally seriously, this may have negative implications on older women and younger girls who may be left to carry the care tasks that women who were engaging in paid work, were not able to do. As discussed above, this intergenerational transfer of care would mean that the empowerment of women would be limited and individualised as well as unsustainable. Progress towards gender equality would also be limited in this case, and perhaps even regress in the long term. Finally, while the project provided accessibility for women to go to the market, there were no interventions aimed at correcting the gendered nature of labour market, neither was there any intervention to link women to existing public services. Lack of infrastructure and public services around water and fuel in this area would increase the drudgery faced by women and girls. This would mean progress on gender equality would be very slow and might even stall. On the contrary, an explicit link to public services in the design of the programme, such as in the next case study, would increase its transformative potential.

Case Study 5: Juntos - Peru

Peru's conditional cash transfer programme – the Programa Nacional de Apoyo Directo a los Más Pobres, or “Juntos” (National Programme for Direct Help to the Poorest, “Together”) was created in 2005. Its vision included ‘regular access to quality basic services in education, health nutrition, corresponding to full exercise of their citizenship, and to improve their quality of life and human capital development, thereby reducing the intergenerational transfer of poverty’ (Juntos 2015a, quoted in Cookson (2018), p.39). The programme aimed to do this through transfer of money on fulfilment of health and education related conditionalities.

This programme mirrors other conditional cash transfers in Latin America that have been critiqued for their re-enforcement of the symbolic and social roles of women as mothers, leaving them to fulfil

programme conditionalities (Molyneux 2007, 2009). Through these programmes the State is actively involved in ‘the structuring of asymmetrical and unequal gender relations and this has a long-term consequence for the satisfaction of social need’ (Molyneux 2007, iii) In Peru similarly, the programme has been critiqued for reinforcing gender roles, with the experience of mothers responsible for meeting programme conditionalities not being considered in impact evaluations: ‘rural mothers do a lot of walking and waiting. In the absence of safe and reliable transportation, and sometimes even roads, pregnant women walk to deliver their babies in clinics, and mothers walk to deliver their children to health appointments and school. They walk back and forth between home and the clinic until they encounter it open and staffed for service...’ (Cookson, 2018, p.149).

A further critique of the Juntos programme related to the poor quality of public services and inadequately staffed programme – the cost of both of which was borne by women. ‘Juntos required children to attend under resourced schools, generating perverse outcomes that included attending classes without teachers, using toilets without water, and finding libraries without books’ (Cookson, 2018, p.64). Women were confronted with discrimination and humiliation meted out to them by school authorities. Similarly, health services continued to be inaccessible and of poor quality. So, while the programme led to an increased demand for public services, the quality of these services left much to be desired.

This example also highlights the critical link between infrastructure, public services and social protection programmes, which in this case intensified the pressure on families, and especially women: ‘Instead of making it easier for rural families to access services, the State’s response was to incentivize families to make the journey in spite of the difficulties’ (Cookson, 2018, p.43). As evidenced by the Peruvian case, poor infrastructure severely affects the quality of public services. Lack of financial infrastructure would imply that there are little incentives for personnel to join, leaving many vacancies; this can also lead to a lack of training and poor performance. For example, if this was a school, this would imply absenteeism amongst teachers, vacant posts and a mismanaged school – which is what was reported by many Juntos beneficiaries (Cookson, 2018). Lack of physical infrastructure may also include poor roads, which would deter parents from sending their girls to school; or lack of proper building and sanitation facilities in the school – once again, a strong deterrent to school attendance by girls.

Even if there was adequate infrastructure related to the public service that was included in the conditionality, lack of other services such as water or gas could result in girls being pulled out of school in order to help their mother with unpaid care work responsibilities. In the case of Juntos, ‘...[lack of] access to paid domestic labour and well-developed infrastructure—such as potable water, electricity, and transportation that enables individuals to travel to grocery stores and pharmacies...’ increased the amount of time that women and girls spent on unpaid care work (Cookson, 2018, p.27).

In terms of human infrastructure, the State employed a cadre of hardworking frontline bureaucrats to enforce and monitor conditions. But lack of resources meant huge case-loads, and the only way that local managers could meet their professional responsibilities was to rely on the help of the women they managed. Juntos mothers were required to ‘manage up’ through attending meetings to save local managers travel time (Cookson, 2018). This of course had a cost for women, in terms of time that they spent on Juntos. Not only was this cost is not recognized in terms of monetary payments to these ‘mother leaders’ as the women were called, but their contributions as workers was also invisibilised, even as the unpaid labour of these women subsidized the cost of implementing Juntos. This programme therefore effected a double disadvantage on women: firstly, they were not supported by the programme in transforming social norms or larger economic and market structures, instead, their roles as carers was reinforced through the requirement of them having to meet programme conditionalities. Secondly, their time constraints as arising from a gendered division of labour and

from their heavy and unequal care work responsibilities were not recognized; and neither was their contribution as workers in the programme acknowledged or valued.

This case study exemplifies several aspects that therefore impeded progress on gender equality and women's empowerment: firstly, women's multiple roles as carers and as workers was not recognized; and they were not given any space to participate in decision-making as rights-bearers. Secondly, the programme was based on the needs and priorities of policy makers, rather than that of women. Thirdly, while the programme itself necessitated linking up a social transfer with public services, lack of infrastructure (financial, human and physical) actually strained women's abilities to meet programme conditionalities. Finally, the programme did not work towards changing any relations of power – in families, communities, in the market or with State authorities. Thus, it can be concluded that this programme made little, if any, progress towards women's empowerment or gender equality in Peru. Instead, as Cookson emotively describes, the programme has left Peru's rural women waiting: 'In between journeys...they wait for attention from school staff, nurses, and bureaucrats in government offices. They wait for politicians to fulfil promises, and they wait for the State to deliver what wealthier, urban regions already have: teachers, doctors, water, jobs, and a sanitation system' (Cookson, 2018, p.149).

Case Study 6: South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)

The EPWP was launched in 2004 in South Africa, with a mandate to provide short to medium term employment opportunities to workers from poor households – through provision of jobs, skills training and work experience (Mccord 2005).

The programme's main innovation was to link up with the care sector by providing jobs in the fields of early childhood development and community home-based care. In this way, it sought to 'address economic empowerment through job creation...by mobilizing an underutilized domestic resource – namely labour' (Antonopoulos, 2009, p.5). In addition, by explicitly including care work within its ambit, the government aimed to achieve multiple goals, including improvement in childcare, provision of employment opportunities for women, and promoting the professional development of women working in the child care field (Lund 2009). At the same time, the programme would also 'free parents and other adult carers to take up opportunities for education and employment' (Department of Social Development 2006, 12). This was especially important for the Home/Community based care component, where it was envisaged HIV and AIDS patients would receive home-based care, counselling and better nutrition, which would reduce the demands that women in these families faced on their time (Antonopoulos 2009).

The programme has been applauded for being gender-sensitive in terms of addressing care work challenges (Holmes and Jones 2013). The programme made explicit links between a social protection programme (as job creation) and public services (community healthcare and ECD), in effect also creating the infrastructure (recruitment and training of home care workers and ECD workers) required for delivery of their component. In doing so, it recognizes the importance of women's roles – as unpaid carers in their families and communities – and provides the policy space to substitute this for paid care work. It thus acknowledges women's roles as workers, which is strengthened through provision of skills training and extending service delivery to poor communities.

The introduction of a social service component to the EPWP in terms of job opportunities for care of young children and home-based care has been recognized as 'an important innovation that supports gender equality...this has benefited women directly since many of the social sector work opportunities have been allocated to them. It may also have benefited women and girls indirectly by alleviating the burden on unpaid family caregivers' (UN WOMEN 2015). As Budlender has documented,

‘It seems, then, that the EPWP could help to address the unpaid labour burden of women in respect of children, sick people and the elderly. It could also help to relieve women who have responsibility for caring for household members, for some hours during the day, so that they can, among other things, try to earn income. If – as one would expect – it is mainly women who are employed in these projects, the EPWP would also provide some of the poorest women with a small income for a limited period’ (Budlender, 2011, p.35).

However, there are several challenges in the way that the programme has been designed, that still restrict progress towards gender equality. Firstly, the programme does not link with public services such as provision of water, sanitation or gas and electricity; neither does it work very closely with health services. This translates to women (and girls) still spending vast amounts of time and energy on collection of water and fuel, thereby constraining their choices and opportunities to do other activities like paid work or study. Secondly, it does not address structural constraints in the labour market – in fact, home care workers are notoriously low paid in the EPWP (Budlender 2011), which leaves workers overworked and feeling devalued. Thirdly, women’s voice is not given much importance - women’s participation in planning their work within the EPWP is low, and there are no trainings regarding citizenship or their rights in the larger context, despite the government working with not-for-profit organisations to implement the programme. Finally, there are no interventions on addressing social norms that dictate the existing division of labour within households and communities.

Case Study 7: Productive Safety Nets Programme (PSNP), Ethiopia

Launched in 2005 as a key component of the country’s food security strategy, the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) in Ethiopia provides food and cash transfers to over 7 million chronically food-insecure people, particularly in rural areas, in order to smooth household consumption and prevent the depletion of household assets (UN WOMEN 2015). It has a public works component that aims to create infrastructure and community assets – which include roads, water and fuel sources. But for those households whose members are unable to work, the same transfer is provided without any work requirements.

The PSNP has been hailed as having several gender-responsive elements – specifically, ‘its design pays attention to gender-specific vulnerabilities resulting from family composition, socio-cultural roles and lifecycle factors’ (Holmes and Jones 2013, 106). It acknowledges that not only are female-headed households more labour-poor, but also that ‘women face higher levels of time poverty; and women with small children need special provisions to enable them to work’ (Holmes and Jones, 2013, p 106). This highlights the recognition of women’s roles as carers in their households, which is also provided for through prioritizing projects that reduce women’s time poverty (Berhane et al. 2013). For example, community water-points and fuelwood sources are prioritized in amongst the type of community assets that are created through the public works component.

The PSNP takes account of women’s practical needs also by foreseeing the provision of community based childcare services and reduced working time for women with children. It also provides for women to receive direct support without work requirements before and after childbirth (Holmes et al. 2011; Jones, Tafere, and Woldehanna 2010). It also allows for the cultivation of private land-holdings of female headed households through public works labour, thereby responding to social norms that constrain women’s ability to plough their land (Lavers 2014).

The project has had several positive evaluations which highlight the various ways in which the PSNP recognizes women’s constraints, prioritises their needs, and improves access to public services. For

example, one evaluation found that road construction and improvement has facilitated access to health care, including for pregnant women seeking maternity care. (Hoddinott et al. 2013). Women represent approximately 40 per cent of public works participants – this high rate has been possible because of the recognition in the PSNP that ‘women are more hard-pressed for time than men, which means they need paid forms of work which enable them to juggle their domestic work and care responsibilities’ (Holmes et al., 2011, p.259).

An interesting feature of the PSNP’s design that mirrors India’s MGNREGA, is that community creches are planned for, in order to allow women with young children to be able to work. Also, there is provision of flexible timings on public work sites, in order to accommodate women’s needs to fit in their domestic responsibilities alongside paid work. However, the implementation of these ‘women-friendly’ measures was found to be inadequate during the first and second phases of the programme, with on-site day care, reduced working time and less physically demanding tasks for women being scarcely offered (Berhane et al. 2013). The programme has also been criticized for not addressing unequal gender relations at the household and community level: participation in the public works as well as payment for work, is on a household basis – this ignores gendered power relations over work and decision-making regarding money earned (Jones, Tafere, and Woldehanna 2010). Similarly, extension services are designed around needs of male farmers, and women’s unequal access to agriculture extension services and credit are not addressed (Jones et al., 2010).

Further, while there are provisions to promote women’s involvement in community decision making about the programme (Sharp, Brown, and Teshome 2006), these and other gender-responsive elements are not monitored, and there are no specific targets related to these. Hence, the PSNP ‘vividly illustrates the potential of employment guarantee schemes to include gender-responsive elements. It also demonstrates how difficult it is to make these elements work on the ground. ‘This underlines not only the need for gender-responsive programme design but also the importance of monitoring implementation and of effective mechanisms for improving programme performance with regards to women’s rights’ (UN WOMEN, 2015, p.145).

The PSNP has also been criticized as falling short of its transformative potential because of inadequate attention towards promoting women’s meaningful participation in the programme, as well as not addressing gender inequalities in food security and agricultural productivity at household and community levels (Jones, Tafere, and Woldehanna 2010). While there is a strong focus on creation of tangible infrastructure, a gendered assessment of these would be useful:

‘it could be argued that health clinics located closer to the community and with a higher ratio of outreach workers or child care services are as, if not more, important in ensuring a productive and healthy agricultural workforce as roads or terraces. Moreover, the community assets selected require inputs that are generally more in keeping with a male norm (given the physical strength requirements) rather than considering a broader range of activities which may be more suitable to the diverse capacities of women and men at different stages of the lifecycle’ (Holmes and Jones, 2013, p.106) .

Finally, supportive human and financial infrastructure would increase the gender responsiveness of the programme also at the community level, as currently, there is ‘very limited investment in capacity building for programme implementers and communities ’ (Holmes and Jones, 2013, p.110). It is optimistic therefore to expect women to exercise their voice and agency in public works meetings, if there is no previous awareness-raising and mentoring support from the programme (Holmes and Jones, 2013, p. 109).

The case of the PSNP is one where social protection programmes have inbuilt connections with physical infrastructure, yet it falls short of making links with human and financial infrastructure. It also

does not connect up women and other beneficiaries with public services, thereby leaving them vulnerable to continuing pressures on their time and energy. Even as the programme recognizes women's diverse roles as carers and as workers within the programme, it fails however, to address economic and social structures that serve to continue women's subjugation, such as social norms, labour market systems and macro-economic structures – thereby constraining the potential of the programme for positive change.

This highlights the main argument of the paper – that programmes and policies that want to make sustained progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment need to make connections across the three components. It is in making these connections, that women's multiple roles and needs taken into account, and more critically, these programmes start working towards a redistribution of power and addressing the structural constraints that women face. Our final case study is of a programme that takes these structural constraints as its starting point.

Case Study 8: Multiple Use Water Systems: Nepal

Two sister projects have been implemented by an International NGO in the far and mid-west regions of Nepal, with the aim of empowering women by improving access to water for both domestic and productive uses through the construction of multiple-use water systems (MUS) (Van Koppen and Kuriakose 2009). 'MUS are meant to reduce the time women spend fetching water for domestic uses through improved water access with a piped distribution system leading to taps, and at the same time to support women's productive engagement in vegetable farming' (Van Koppen and Kuriakose 2009).

Recognition that women's access to water resources was being shaped by caste and class, and addressing this through MUS, was a critical component of the project. Accordingly, the project targeted poor, low caste, *Dalit* women, who were being systematically discriminated against for accessing community resources such as natural water springs. This was recognized as adding 'time, work, and ultimately emotional stress burden on *Dalit* women' (Leder et al., 2017, p. 240).

The programme also encouraged women's involvement in small-scale commercial horticulture through horticulture training, supporting this through installing water systems that were specifically designed to provide water for both domestic and productive needs (Leder, Clement, and Karki 2017). In addition, the programme 'clearly envisioned a linear impact pathway linking enhanced access to water to economic empowerment, which in turn was to support women's agency and leadership, and ultimately to lead to social change' (Leder, Clement, and Karki 2017, 238).

While the project was assessed to be fairly successful, it was highlighted that a critical factor of success was the 'projects' abilities to acknowledge and address how the dynamic interplay of cultural norms, gender roles, and power relations shape access to and control over water resources, particularly in the context of male emigration' (Leder, Clement, and Karki 2017, 238). Reiterating that women's empowerment was shaped out of power relationships at household and community level and in relation to project staff, the study demonstrated that 'inter and intra-household relations of different kinds – including caste, age, and family positioning – have to be taken into account when aiming at empowering 'women' through water security interventions, as these shape who and how one can gain and benefit from enhanced access to water resources and expand one's agency' (Leder et al., 2017, p. 247). In fact, it was seen that household support was necessary for women to be able to take part in training and group meetings – hence the recommendation was to consider social relationships and intersectionality into account (Leder et al., 2017).

This case study shows that working with existing power structures including men, yet changing these structures to include women's voice and participation was critical: 'the success of the programme in

empowering women lies in the ability to consider intra-house hold relationships and the differentiated abilities women have to expand their agency depending on their household situation' (Leder et al., 2017, p. 248). Sensitivity to women's time schedules, their care roles, and involving women in water resource management, in addition to recognition of their multiple identities were other factors that led to success.

In sum, this case highlights the strengths of an infrastructural project that considers women's roles as carers, as workers (in horticulture initiatives) and as rights-bearers (in planning and managing MUS for water management). It also considers the role of power structures and addresses these relations of power to a certain extent. Clearly, a more explicit emphasis on public services including the role of the State, and other infrastructure like roads would increase the progress that this project made towards gender equality and women's empowerment. In addition to infrastructural provisions, it would also be essential to provide social protection measures to the most marginalized households. Finally, sensitization of women beneficiaries would help them in identifying not only their practical needs, but also work towards realizing their strategic needs and priorities.

Summarising lessons from case studies

Cash Transfers: As part of social protection initiatives, some cash transfers as described above have demonstrated in practice, the promotion of gender equality when integrating the other two components, infrastructure and public services. An example of this is how through banking services and infrastructure, women can become socially and economically empowered. Another example is the importance of investing in transport infrastructure in order to reduce the time and risk that women spend on the road in order to participate in the programme or performing their other activities. It can also be seen in the examples above, that conditionalities work best when paired up with good quality and accessible public services. In these ways, many cash transfers are already taking women's varying needs and practical interests into account.

However, when it comes to either addressing women's strategic needs, or changing institutional structures, cash transfers (especially conditional ones) are still under the risk of perpetuating power imbalances and reproducing gender stereotypes by implementing policies that are based on traditional gender roles and by ignoring issues such as unpaid care work and women's time. Some lessons that would therefore be important for CCTs to learn, would relate to understanding women's different roles as carers, workers and rights-holders, and integrating a consideration of these roles in the design of the relevant programme. Furthermore, in addition to practical trainings, it would be important to provide women with the knowledge and the resources so they could challenge social structures. As rights-holders, CCTs could also provide them with information on their rights and how to claim these. While many CCTs are State-funded and State-run, the State also needs to regulate private sector involvement (through businesses or charities) to ensure that all cash transfers realise and promote women's rights and take their different roles into consideration.

Public Works Programmes (PWPs): The above examples have shown that women participate in high numbers in PWPs, and that States continue to play a significant role in the provision of these programmes. However, as shown above, high participation is not sufficient for either women's empowerment or gender equality, especially when the role of women as workers is prioritised, yet their role as either carers or rights-holders is not considered. In these cases, while some practical needs are taken into account such as that of income, other practical and strategic needs remain invisible such as access to childcare, social protection, and equal participation in the design of PWPs. The above examples also show that for PWPs to achieve substantive gender equality, synergy is needed between infrastructure and public services. Currently, there are some positive examples of coordination with public services such as care provision for children while the women are at work,

however, infrastructure that impacts aspects such as women's mobility, and time poverty significantly, still remain ignored.

A significant lesson that can be learnt by PWPs is that taking infrastructure into account, such as the quality of the roads, or public transport, can have a significant impact for participating women, as it can enable access to the work site, or reduce travel time in order for them to be able to participate without high time, financial and safety costs. Finally, it was shown in the above examples that PWPs rarely include a transformative element (beyond perhaps legislating for equal pay for equal work), which limits their achievement of substantive gender equality. Some examples on how PWPs could include this, would be to address the gendered nature of labour markets and challenge current gender norms through recruiting women for work that would be portrayed as traditionally masculine.

Infrastructure and public services: A key lesson from the above examples is that in order for infrastructure and public services Initiatives and policies to work towards gender equality, States must take various factors into account. Women's needs and interests (both practical and strategic) must be included in both design and monitoring of the interventions. Another key lesson is that provision of infrastructure and public services needs to consider the different roles that women have to play. Increasing women's access to good quality public services while improving infrastructure that allows them to access these public services, have shown positive results in terms of increased access to social protection (especially PWPs and cash transfers), time poverty, and in reducing women's vulnerability and therefore the need for social protection. Involving women in the design of infrastructure services and public services can also increase women's participation and decision-making while promoting their roles as rights-bearers such that they are able to claim for and realise their rights.

However, as our examples have shown, it is still common for infrastructure programmes to include women in only one of their multiple roles. For example, women are only considered as workers, with a focus on how their income increases when participating in road construction. Yet, the implications of this on their time, or on the inter-generational transfer of care responsibilities from women to their daughters or to older women, is often ignored. Similarly, the timings, location or affordability of public services are set in place without due consultation with women, and therefore ignore women's practical needs and roles as carers or as rights-bearing participants. Instead, women are considered to be passive recipients of these public services, which then fails to give them an active stake in the adequate functioning of these services. Finally, instead of the State being able to either provide inter-linked services or protect women's rights through regulation of the private sector, increased non-regulated privatization of both public services and infrastructure will only serve to heighten the disconnect between the three focus areas. Therefore, an important lesson for the current provision of both infrastructure and public services will be that falling short of establishing inter-linkages and effecting transformations in social and economic structures to recognize women as rights-bearers, will further restrict progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality.

Section 5: Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight the conceptual and empirical interconnections between three focus areas of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) priority theme - social protection, public services and infrastructure, for gender equality and women's empowerment. In doing so, the paper has set out an understanding of the terms gender equality and women's empowerment as being different in terms of outcome v/s process, but inherently similar in terms of necessitating a redistribution of power.

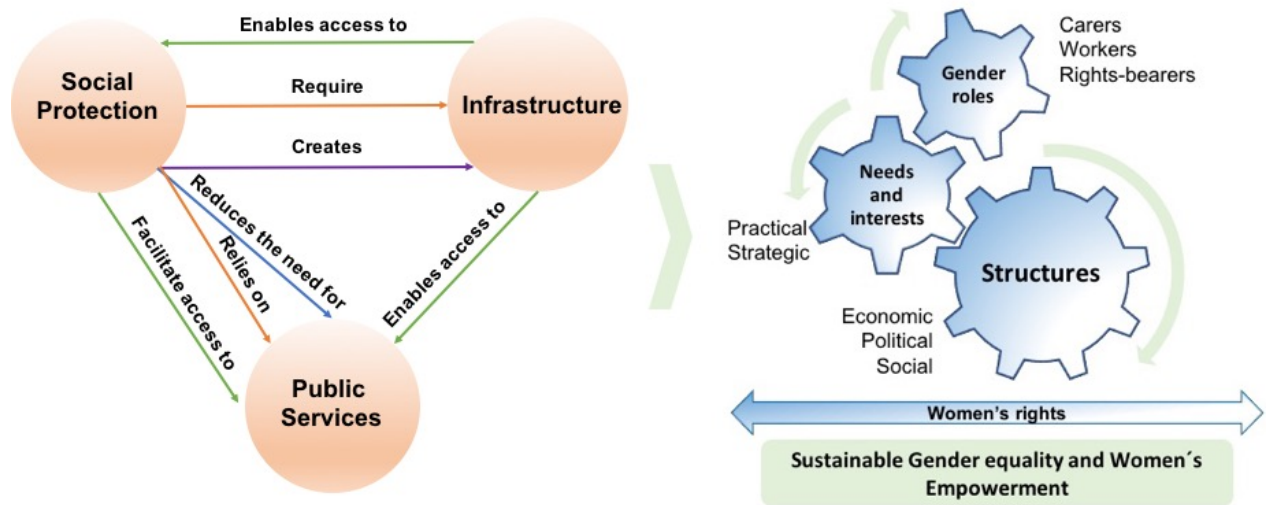
It has been shown that each of the three focus areas (social protection, infrastructure and public services) encompass a wide variety of programmes and policies that fall under these umbrella terms. In exploring how these three focus areas may lead to gender equality and initiate a process of women's empowerment, this paper demonstrates three main ideas. Firstly, it is shown that recognition of women's multiple roles – as carers, as workers and as rights-bearers – is essential for positive gender outcomes. Secondly, the paper discusses how women are defined and framed within programmes/ policies – i.e. which of women's interests, needs and priorities are understood and incorporated, and how that again makes a difference to progress towards gender equality. The paper demonstrates that asymmetries of power create women's subordination, which programmes need to address in order to incorporate women's strategic needs. Thirdly, it is argued that the importance that is accorded to transforming economic and social structures of power, impacts the extent to which gender equality can be achieved by the relevant programme/ policy. The role of the State as a duty-bearer, as well as the role of women's collective action is essential to transform these institutions, and redress specific disadvantages that women face. The presence of all three dimensions, which are underpinned by principles of human rights (participation, accountability and monitoring) constitute what can be termed as a 'transformative' approach seeking to redistribute power relations. In other words, a gender-sensitive approach to social protection, infrastructure and public services is defined as one that recognises women's multiple roles, takes into account their interests, needs and priorities, and seeks to transform economic and social institutions such that their rights are realised in practice.

This paper has also teased out the multiple interconnections between the three focus areas – highlighting that while there are important distinctions between these concepts, programmes sitting under any one focus area necessarily rely on and build on the other two focus areas if these are to work well. The building blocks of how these interconnections work in tandem to enable progress towards sustainable gender equality and women's empowerment, is captured in Figure 3 below. This shows that in order to set in motion a process through which gender equality can be achieved, interconnections between the three focus areas are necessary – as these connections facilitate movement along three dimensions:

- a) Recognise and take into account women's multiple roles (as workers, carers and rights-bearers) in different institutions (families, communities, market and the State);
- b) Recognise and incorporate different interests, needs and priorities that women may have – including both practical and strategic (for example that of saving time, reducing drudgery, safety and security; income generation and career growth; health and well-being for themselves and their families; rest and leisure; participation in decision making processes within their family and their communities);
- c) Transform women's positions and their power through changes in social and economic structures (for example through gender sensitive budgeting and labour market norms and opportunities to address women's socio-economic disadvantage, work on social norms to address division of roles and violence, strengthening women's agency, voice and participation to influence policies and programmes)

Conversely therefore, disconnects between these three focus areas act as barriers to achieving and sustaining gender equality and women's empowerment – especially in the medium and long term.

Figure 3 Essential interconnections for gender equality



Having set out the conceptual argument for making connections between social protection, infrastructure and public services, this paper then sets out 8 case studies, demonstrating how far these three focus areas are working in tandem within different country contexts. The cases where more progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment can be seen, are the ones where policies/ programmes have worked to integrate the three focus areas in a way that they are recognising multiple roles, needs and priorities of women, and are working to transform structures of power. Conversely, lack of synergy between the areas of social protection, infrastructure and public services give rise to trade-offs, as these programmes/ policies fail to identify women’s multiple roles and needs, fall short of incorporating women’s interests and priorities; and do not aim to transform existing relations and structures of power.

What is interesting to note across the case studies, is that irrespective of their starting point, successful case studies have connected across the three focus areas in different ways. Brazil’s Chapeu de Palha Mulher programme showed the importance of this connection, starting from the field of social protection. It also highlighted the importance of challenging power imbalances through implementation of citizenship trainings and professional skills that were responsive to demands of the labour market rather than to traditional gendered divisions of labour. A similar focus on women as rights-bearers was shown in the case of the CCT in Egypt, which also started from being a social protection programme. Yet, it made links with human infrastructure of the programme as well as banking services, resulting in increasing women’s agency.

However, the Egypt CCT case study did not make any linkages with public services or other essential infrastructure such as transportation. The dangers of this siloed approach are well reflected in the case of Peru’s Juntos programme, which instead of achieving gender equality, ended up reinforcing women’s role as mothers and care providers. India’s MGNREGA and Ethiopia’s PSNP present similar characteristics – while designed to address gender equality and consider the needs and interests of women, both programmes fail to make connections with public services. While both programmes have been applauded for high numbers of women participating, their progress in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment are at best limited and unsustainable because of their design weaknesses, as well as poor implementation and monitoring.

A successful case of South Africa’s EPWP highlighted the importance of the links between social protection (job creation), public services and human infrastructure. However, the lack of a

transformative component means that this programme too falls short of initiating a sustainable process of women's empowerment and gender equality. Specifically, this, as well as the examples from Bangladesh's EIIP and Nepal's MUS have illustrated the importance of public services such as water, sanitation and gas. As discussed in the paper above, when these projects do not link social protection, infrastructure and public services together, this stalls progress on gender equality and women's empowerment. These disconnects may even lead to regressive outcomes in the long run – for example in terms of gender inequality and disempowerment of women and girls.

It is clear from both the theoretical framework and the assessment of the case studies therefore, that gender-responsive policy design and implementation rests on three main principles: a) It is critical to establish links between social protection, infrastructure and public services, in order to address women's roles as carers, workers and rights-bearers; b) It is necessary to take into account women's interests, needs and priorities into account, so that programmes and policies are aware of the ground realities of women's lives; and c) It is only through explicit recognition and incorporation of a transformative agenda that seeks to transform economic and social institutions that women's position can change and a redistribution of power can be achieved. This explicit recognition involves therefore, working in multiple institutional spaces – the family, the community, the market, and the State – with an explicit acknowledgement of the role of the State as a duty-bearer for ensuring equality of rights in law (formal equality) and their realisation in practice (substantive gender equality). This then, is the *raison d'être* for linking the three focus areas of social protection, infrastructure and public services – because only through these connections can multiple institutional spaces be transformed so as to realise women's rights, initiate women's empowerment and make progress towards sustained gender equality.

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