

The politics of gender and social protection in Indonesia: opportunities and challenges for a transformative approach

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Indonesia experienced impressive economic growth from 1970 to the late 1990s, averaging 7% annually. Prior to the 1997/98 Asian financial crisis, economic growth had fuelled the improvement of some welfare and social indicators, including the poverty rate, which fell from 40.1% in 1976 to 11.3% in 1996. Other such indicators, such as the infant mortality rate, primary school enrolment and life expectancy, also improved significantly. This was accompanied by the provision of basic public infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, water supplies, roads and electricity.

However, the 1997/98 crisis reversed these positive trends and led to a large increase in the level of poverty in 1998 and 1999.¹ The economic turmoil led to political and economic reform which resulted in positive social and political changes, as well as re-energising the positive trend in poverty reduction,² but the pace of poverty reduction since the crisis has not achieved pre-crisis levels. Some possible explanations of this slower pace include the fact that the level of economic growth itself has been relatively low compared with the pre-crisis period. Other factors include the budgetary implications of the transition from centralisation to decentralisation and the democratisation process.³

A study by the World Bank (2006) identified several determinants of poverty in Indonesia, includ-

ing education, occupation, gender, access to basic services and infrastructure, as well as geographical location. Gendered patterns of poverty have specific characteristics. The level of poverty is marginally lower among female-headed households,⁴ but male-headed households still have significant advantages. For example, in 1999, holding other characteristics constant, urban male-headed households had expenditure levels 14.4% higher than those of urban female-headed households. This gender gap was even more striking in rural areas, with a 28.4% difference between male- and female-headed households in terms of expenditure levels. By 2002, the gender expenditure gap had widened to 15.8% for urban and 31.1% for rural households. Further, female-headed households experience different risks and vulnerabilities (see Table 1) which can hamper their welfare during shocks such as conflict, health and economic risks (ibid.).

The government of Indonesia has acknowledged the importance of gender to development and poverty alleviation, and has made efforts towards the advancement of women, through the ratification of international agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1984; the passage of laws and regulations related to the mainstreaming of gender in development; and the establishment of institutional policies and programmes that address women's specific needs (UN Women, 2011). Examples include the 2000 Presidential Instruction on Gender Mainstreaming



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Table 1: Overview of key gendered economic and social vulnerabilities in Indonesia

Gendered economic vulnerabilities	Gendered social vulnerabilities
Monetary poverty: While the National Socioeconomic Survey (Susenas) 2007–9 indicated the same poverty incidence among male- and female-headed households, the definition of the latter tends to overlook single mothers living with their parents and couples with the wife as the main breadwinner.	Time poverty and gender distribution of unpaid work: There are double burdens for women who do market work as they are still responsible for all or most domestic work. 2009 Sakernas data show that women's participation in unpaid family labour is much higher than men's (32.4% vs. 8.1%).
Wage rates: Female workers received only 71–6% of their male counterparts' wages in 1999–2004 (Pirmana, 2006). However, the gender wage gap declined by 15% between 1996 and 2009 (Matsumoto, 2011).	Land certification: Indonesian Family Life Survey data show a decreasing long-term trend in female ownership of household assets, from around 35% in 1997 to 32% in 2007.
Formal employment opportunities: According to the 2009 National Labour Force Survey (Sakernas), there is a gender gap in almost all employment indicators: labour force participation rate (51% for female and 83.7% for male), unemployment rate (8.5% vs. 7.5%) and underemployment rate (36.6% vs. 22.3%). 64% of women are in the informal sectors against 60.1% of men. Around 75% of overseas migrant workers are women and in 2008 most of them worked as domestic helpers, based on data from the National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Overseas Workers (BNP2TK).	Labour union and political participation: There is no affirmative action for women, as shown in low representation of women in labour unions. However, there has been slight progress in women's political participation, from 11% in 2004 to 18% in 2009, in large part because of new election law quotas advocated by women's groups (Bappenas, 2010).
Access to credit: In general, access to credit is a problem for the poor. There is no significant difference in indebtedness between women (28.1%) and men (27.3%). However, women prefer informal lending channels (World Bank, 2009).	Gender-based violence: This is an endemic problem. There has been uneven implementation of laws aimed at eliminating violence, particularly at the local level, where autonomous decision making does not recognise national legislation and priorities and women face obstacles accessing justice. Violence has been linked to women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, as cause and consequence—in 1989, women made up 2.5% of people living with HIV/AIDS, but by 2009 the figure had jumped to 25%, with the majority married women infected by their partner (UNWomen, 2011).
	Educational attainment: The gender disparity in most education indicators—including the literacy rate, the enrolment rate, the dropout rate and the completion rate—has narrowed since 2003.
	Maternal mortality: Progress towards achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on maternal mortality has been quite slow. The ratio declined only from 390 per 100,000 live births in 1991 to 228 in 2007 (Bappenas, 2010).
	Fertility rate and family planning: The total fertility rate decreased from 5.6 children per women in 1970 to 2.6 in 2003 and remained unchanged in 2007. Moreover, gender statistics for 2009 indicate that 97% of married couples aged 15–49 years that participate in family planning use contraceptives for women. This shows no improvement in terms of family planning participation in the past decade and that perceptions of family planning as a woman's matter persist.
	Malnutrition: At 18.4%, the reduction in the malnutrition rate among children aged five years and below has surpassed the MDG target for both boys and girls (Bappenas, 2010).

in National Development, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) 2008 Guidelines on Implementing Gender Mainstreaming in the Regions and the Ministry of Finance (MoF) 2009 Regulations on Gender-responsive Budgeting. Despite numerous commitments to improve women's conditions since the reform, however, effectively promoting gender equality in Indonesia is still challenging. Table 1 identifies some important gendered social and economic challenges.

To alleviate the impact of the 1997 crisis, the government initiated a social safety net for the poor (*JaringPengaman Sosial*, or JPS), including food, education, health and employment components. Some of these have evolved into broader social protection programmes. Table 2 provides details of selected social protection programmes currently implemented in Indonesia. The crisis was also an impetus for 'big bang' decentralisation.⁵ The

motivation for this had many sources, including strong pressures from (particularly the resource-rich) regional governments (both provincial and district) to ensure a large share of natural resource exploitation. Different stakeholders, including local politicians, students and businesspersons, also wanted to address a historical legacy of a very powerful central government and limited attention to sub-national diversity. Donors (mainly the International Monetary Fund, IMF, and World Bank) also requested decentralisation as part of the government's reform agenda.

However, decentralisation has created very wide economic disparities between provinces, as well as between districts within provinces. It has been difficult to implement decentralisation to so many provinces and districts, which together contain around 300 tribes with different languages/dialects, religions and cultures. Meanwhile, geographi-

cally speaking, these provinces and districts are spread out over five main islands—Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi and IrianJaya—as well as the 17,508 islands that make the whole of Indonesia the largest archipelago in the world.

This background note analyses three important interrelated issues: gender, social protection and

decentralisation. It reviews the extent to which social protection strategies and programmes are effectively addressing gender inequities, with a particular focus on the political economy dynamics of implementation at the sub-national level in the decentralisation era. It synthesises findings from an Australian Development Research

Table 2: Overview of selected social protection programmes in Indonesia

Programme	Description	Target group
Social assistance		
Food subsidy (<i>Raskin</i>)	In-kind transfer (food subsidy). Includes 15kg of rice per month at subsidised price of Rp 1,600 per kg, a reduction of about 68% of the market price (currently Rp 5,000 per kg).	Since 2006, the programme has used poverty data (PSE05 module) provided by Statistics Indonesia, making those below the poverty line and vulnerable to poverty eligible. Before 2006, targeting was based on National Family Planning Agency data: those categorised as 'Pre-prosperous' and 'Prosperous I' were eligible. Beneficiaries: 17.5 million poor households.
Unconditional cash transfer (<i>Bantuan Langsung Tunai</i> , or BLT)	Cash transfer for poor households in times of economic shock.	Those categorised as poor (including chronic) and near poor. The programme covered only 15.5 million in the first round; complaints and Statistics Indonesia's updating of poverty data increased this number to 19.1 million poor households in 2008 (beneficiaries are different to those in Raskin as a different type of targeting is used).
Conditional cash transfer (<i>Program Keluarga Harapan</i> , or PKH)	Cash to women classified as from chronically poor households. The allowance is given on the condition that households take care of their children's health and education.	Only those categorised as chronically poor with children under five or of primary and junior high school age and/or chronically poor pregnant mothers access the programme. Beneficiaries: 816,000 chronically poor households in 2010, scaled up to 1,116,000 in 2011.
Social services		
Health Insurance for the Poor (<i>Jaminan Kesehatan Masyarakat</i> , or Jamkesmas)	Provision of free basic medical services with referral system to public hospitals for the poor.	Individual targeting based on household welfare condition: chronic poor, poor and near poor. Beneficiaries: 76.4 million poor people.
Social assistance		
School Operational Assistance (<i>Bantuan Operasional Sekolah</i> , or BOS)	General subsidy for all students at elementary or secondary school.	All primary and secondary schools receive the grant conditional on their willingness to be audited. At the household level, all households with primary or secondary school-age children may be eligible regardless of their welfare status. The programme also provides specific allowances to support students from poor households. Beneficiaries: 27.6 million primary students and 9.6 million secondary students.
Social insurance		
Social Insurance for Formal Workers (<i>Jaminan Sosial Tenaga Kerja</i> , or Jamsostek)	Insurance and security to protect against social and economic risks and ensure an income for employees and their family members. The insurance covers work-related accidents, health care, old age and death.	Beneficiaries: 23.73 million employees in the formal sector.
Social welfare services		
Social Welfare for Elderly (<i>Jaminan Sosial Lanjut Usia</i> , or JSLU)	Provision of cash transfer of Rp300,000 (around \$33.30) per person per month.	Scaled up from 2,500 beneficiaries in 6 provinces in 2006 to 10,000 in 28 provinces in 2010 and targeted 13,250 beneficiaries in 2011.
Child Social Welfare Programme (<i>Program Kesejahteraan Sosial Anak</i> , or PKSA)	Provision of cash transfer to children in need.	Targets include street children; abandoned children; abandoned infants; disabled children; children with special needs; and children in trouble with the law (e.g. crime suspects, children in jail and children in court). Beneficiaries: 147,321 children in 33 provinces in 2010.
Social Welfare for Disabled (<i>Jaminan Sosial Penyandang Cacat</i> , or JSPACA)	Provision of cash transfer of Rp300,000 (around \$33.30) per person per month.	Targeted 17,000 disabled people in 2010.
Social welfare services		
Gender quota	Quota in general elections and parliament, as well as in programmes such as that for community empowerment (PNPMM <i>Mandiri</i>); development of the National Strategy on Gender Mainstreaming; the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and the National Strategy on HIV/AIDS.	

Award policy research project undertaken by the SMERU Research Institute, Jakarta, and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London, which included a primary research component in Pasaman Barat district in West Sumatra province and Timor Tengah Selatan (TTS) district in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province.

The politics of mainstreaming gender into social protection: a conceptual framework

The effective mainstreaming of gender into social protection requires careful consideration of the politics that underpin diverse social protection strategy and programme approaches across country contexts. The steps involved in embedding a gender-sensitive approach in social protection policy and programming are relatively straightforward (on Indonesia, see e.g. Arif et al., 2010). But mainstreaming gender into any policy sector is as much a political issue as it is a technical one. This is perhaps particularly the case with social protection, as discussions on social safety nets are very often underpinned by polarised views on gender roles and responsibilities the world over—as highlighted, for example, by debates about the ‘nanny state’, a ‘family wage’ and ‘the costs of care’ (Folbre, 2008).

When it comes to social protection in the developing world, there is a growing body of work that looks at the politics of social protection, including the ways in which programme choices are shaped in response to elite and public buy-in, as well as the reasons that underlie varying implementation practices at the grassroots level (de Britto, 2008; Hickey, 2007; Zucco, 2008). Interest in the gender dynamics of social protection in general (e.g. Kabeer, 2010; Molyneux, 2006) and in political economy dimensions in particular is more recent (Jones and Holmes, 2011). To explore the political economy of gender and social protection in Indonesia, we draw on a framework developed by Holmes and Jones (2012, forthcoming) that explores the effect of gender relations on shaping the institutions, interests and ideas behind social protection policy and programming in developing countries.

Although increasingly at risk of becoming a catch-all phrase adopted by a wide variety of actors and disciplines, the concept ‘political economy’ generally refers to an analytical approach whereby development policy and programme outcomes involve a process of bargaining between state and society actors, mediated by interactions between formal and informal institutions (Helmke and Levitsky, 2004). Importantly, it differs markedly from an approach based on the external imposi-

tion of normative ideals about ‘good governance’ and instead seeks to assess and engage with existing power structures and ways of working (Booth, 2011; Grindle, 2011). Accordingly, our research focuses on what Rosendorff (2005) dubs the ‘3Is’ of political economy and their role in shaping social protection policies and programmes.

- 1. Institutions:** institutional arenas (such as elections and party politics, the legislature, policy frameworks on decentralisation and informal politics) and the opportunities or constraints they present for negotiation on the development of social protection policies and programmes.
- 2. Interests** of the key actors likely to win or lose as a result of policy shifts (e.g. political elites, bureaucratic agencies, donors and civil society champions) and the relative balance of power between them (e.g. power imbalances between ministries of finance/economics and those of social welfare).
- 3. Ideas** held by political elites and the public on poverty, vulnerability, inequity and its causes, the nature of the social contract between state and citizens and the merits of particular forms of state support. This may include, for instance, notions of the ‘deserving poor’, concerns about ‘dependency’ and entrenched attitudes towards inequality.

Integrating a gender lens into this framework adds another layer of complexity. A gendered political economy approach explores how ‘households, markets and states as gendered institutions are created and regulated in part by socially constructed norms at local, national and international levels’ (Roberts and Waylen, 1998: 184). As such, a gendered political economy approach has important implications for understanding women’s participation in the formal economy and public sphere, in that it underscores the need to complement efforts to promote women’s individual human capital development with an acknowledgement and factoring in of women’s care and domestic work roles and responsibilities, and the effects these have on, for instance, their time, capacity-strengthening opportunities and self-identity. It also necessitates a re-conceptualisation and re-valuing of the private–public divide whereby the domestic sector is recognised as playing ‘a foundational role in the production of people who possess not only the capacity to work but also to acquire other more intangible social assets—a sense of ethical behaviour, a sense of citizenship, a sense of what it is to communicate—all of which permit the forming and sustaining of social norms’ (Elson, 1998: 197).

The three Is of gender and social protection in decentralising Indonesia

As can be seen from Table 2, Indonesia's social protection infrastructure is relatively comprehensive. There are some important gaps, however, in terms of how these policies incorporate gender. Further, there are important challenges to implementation at the local level. Drawing on 32 key informant interviews and 4 participatory workshops with sub-national officials, our research identified a number of key challenges that need to be reflected and addressed in social protection strategy documents and their rollout. We discuss these here, clustered according to our 3Is.

Institutional challenges

First, most social protection programmes, including *Raskin*, are designed and financed by central government authorities, with regional governments responsible only for their implementation. They are seldom informed by local realities, and as a consequence can neglect gendered vulnerabilities at the local level. The programmes come to the district with rigid implementation guidelines that leave only limited room for district governments to adapt them to local needs rather than executing them based on the given guidelines. Local governments also have limited budgets to develop their own social protection programmes. For instance, about 80% of the development budget in the Social Affairs Office in NTT province comes from the central budget and the remaining 20% from the provincial budget.

'All designs came from the centre. The district's authority is small. Why do I say that the district's authority is small? Because there is nothing we can do with that amount of money, because it is a grant' (male, district workshop, TTS).

In this sense, gender-sensitive indicators could be a useful way to ensure gender dimensions are included when developing a policy or designing a programme. An example of national regulation related to gender that has had a positive impact at the local level is the quota for 30% women in the local legislature. Although this quota has not been achieved, the existence of a law in relation to this has raised awareness about the importance of women's role in politics and parliament.

'Relating to regulation, in the District Education Office, for example, there are more than 500 schoolmasters, and only very few of them are women. If there were a regulation on it, no one would dare to go against it, so there would be room for women' (male, district workshop, TTS).

A second institutional challenge relates to how gender is mainstreamed in the context of decentralisation. In order to integrate a crosscutting issue such as gender into policy and programme design and implementation—including social protection—there need to be mechanisms to ensure it permeates into local governance structures. In Indonesia, despite regulations and mandates to incorporate gender into policies and programmes at different levels of government—such as the 2000 Presidential Instruction on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development, which gave a stronger mandate to all ministries, agencies and local governments to integrate a gender perspective into planning—very little has been done in practice. In 2007, the National Development Planning Agency (*Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Nasional*, or *Bappenas*) evaluated the implementation of gender mainstreaming in a number of ministries, agencies, provinces, districts and municipalities and found it had not been implemented well in most development sectors (*Bappenas*, 2010).

The National Medium-term Development Plan 2010–14 mandates for the first time the integration of gender mainstreaming policies into the planning and budgeting process and the inclusion of gender-disaggregated indicators and targets from various ministries and agencies. It also proposes the establishment of gender mainstreaming institutions and gender focal points at the different levels to lead or coordinate gender-related activities, which should potentially shape the design of social protection programmes. In this regard, gender working groups and focal points have been set up in several provincial and district offices, including in Pasaman Barat district and West Sumatra province. However, the effectiveness of these is variable, as they have limited power or influence in practice. Similarly, in TTS district and NTT province, responsibility for implementing the gender mainstreaming strategy is located in the Women Empowerment Office, which is widely seen as powerless and having little penetration into other government agencies.

'Gender focal points are not maximally functioned yet. There have been some trainings but sometimes their understanding, care and drive in doing the planning which considers gender issues are not really focused on gender issues' (female, academic, NTT).

Some of the reasons given for the poor performance of gender working groups and focal points include lack of commitment from political leaders, financial barriers and lack of incentives.

'Actually, it is just commitment. They do not lack understanding; they know what gender mainstreaming is and they accept it. They know what gender mainstreaming, where it is heading, but again it depends on the policymakers. If the top has decided the priorities, then the section heads have to carry them out' (female government official, West Sumatra).

'In the year 2011 we received approximately Rp500 million (\$45), now we get only around Rp300 million' (female, Women Empowerment Office, TTS).

Despite recent progress, the research found that women in NTT and TTS as well as in West Sumatra and Pasaman Barat have limited space in decision-making processes in both the executive and the legislative branches. Thus, despite the 30% quota to guarantee women's representation, there are still very few women in local parliaments. There are three main causes of this. First, the rule is considered vague and there is no penalty for parties which ignore the quota. Second, not many women are involved in politics, so the recruitment of candidates to run for parliament is dominated by men. Third, a patriarchal culture means many women in the districts are reluctant to seek active participation in politics. This contributes to a limited impetus at local level to propose a strong gender focus in policies and programmes.

Finally, a further reason for potential limits on the pursuit of effective gender mainstreaming, as argued by Women Empowerment Office staff, is that there are no female staff members on the Position and Rank Consideration Board (*Baperjakat*), which is responsible for promoting and rotating all civil servants. Members of this board are high-rank bureaucrats, in positions which females still cannot access.

Challenges relating to actor interests and incentives

A second set of political economy challenges relates to actor interests and incentive structures. First, given the considerable power and authority transferred to regional governments in the process of decentralisation, local politicians are often unwilling to cooperate with the central government unless they see a direct personal benefit (Booth, 2005). As a consequence, line ministries now have to negotiate and bargain with local governments in the design and implementation of new programmes. This is particularly relevant in the cases of social protection programmes, most of which are developed by the central government, and of gender mainstream-

ing, which, as noted above, has been promoted by national-level policies but has so far had limited traction at the local level.

In particular, interviews with various key informants and responses at workshops with government officials indicated that gender mainstreaming in local government policies has not been in the interests of stakeholders. Gender mainstreaming is not considered politically attractive, so politicians competing for local office do not include gender issues on their agenda. This low prioritisation is shaped by a perception that average citizens do not attach much importance to gender issues—although this may be the result of a lack of understanding on how gender dynamics plays out in their lives. For example, in West Sumatra and Pasaman Barat, the perception is that gender risks and vulnerabilities are addressed by virtue of having a matrilineal system;⁶ in practice, this is seldom the case. In the case of NTT and TTS, on the other hand, gender is not yet a key issue for voters as their culture is still highly patriarchal.

Second, there is no interest in focusing on gender in policy and programme design and implementation because no specific budget is allocated to facilitate this. Policymakers generally misunderstand gender mainstreaming to be a programme instead of a development strategy, and thus see it as requiring its own budget. Since it does not have one, it is not prioritised. The central government, on the other hand, does understand gender mainstreaming as a development strategy, and pushes for its incorporation across development planning, for which it does not see it as requiring a specific budget. This is also problematic, as resources are necessary for capacity building and gender monitoring, among other inputs. This confusion is stalling the process.

'We lack a budget to perform gender mainstreaming activities' (male, District Workshop, Pasaman Barat).

Some donor programmes have tried to minimise these drawbacks, as in NTT, by building the capacity of local government, including in gender mainstreaming, and requesting their commitment, such as in the form of a funding contribution or staff time allocation, although this has not happened in all provinces. This is done to increase local government ownership and capacity as well as programme sustainability for the time when the donor is no longer providing funds.

Therefore, an important concern related to gender mainstreaming in the provinces and districts studied relates to an inadequate understanding of gen-

der issues and how these have a major impact on people's lives. This is linked to a lack of knowledge generation and dissemination at the local level on gender dynamics and the problems created by gender inequality. Research into gender inequality and its impact on policy has also been inadequate.

'If we keep on saying and giving real evidence of this, their mind must be opened somehow. Do not just come and shout that women should be given chances, do not dictate to them, since it is going to make them resistant. Instead, give them evidence and best practices as well' (female, academic, NTT).

'If anyone can show that the gender issue is a very important one based on reliable data, then surely I would fight for policies and budgets for gender mainstreaming in the region' (male, Province Workshop, West Sumatra).

Finally, numerous government regulations, mainly those of central government — such as the Presidential Instruction on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development, the MoHA Guidelines for Implementing Gender Mainstreaming in the Regions and the MoF Regulations on Gender-responsive Budgeting — which are expected to guide gender mainstreaming in the regions, provide only sanctions for regional governments that do not meet certain requirements. For instance, a key informant interview in West Sumatra revealed that failure to comply could result in a delay in local budget disbursement. Incentives rather than disincentive mechanisms are needed to increase the participation of regional governments in gender mainstreaming.

Challenges in terms of ideas

The third set of challenges that needs to be tackled if social protection policies and programmes are to effectively address the economic and social vulnerabilities and risks experienced by men, women, boys and girls involves an understanding of and engagement with the ideas underpinning policy debates about vulnerability, risk and social protection.

An important challenge at the level of ideas is that knowledge on gender issues as well as gender mainstreaming policy remains lacking in our research areas. 'Gender' is generally understood to be synonymous with 'women', so for most of our informants it means discussing the status of women in many aspects of life. There is hardly any knowledge on issues around gender dynamics, particularly in terms of differentiating impacts on men, women, boys and girls.

'I think this (prioritising gender mainstreaming) is about the extent to which it has impacts. Because of our [budget] limitation, sectors that see a significant impact will be prioritised. In Minangkabau, I think the gender issue is not a high risk, or there are not yet people dying because of gender problems. Since poverty and unemployment are more important, they are prioritised. Gender is important, but not more important compared with current government priorities. That's why gender mainstreaming is not performing well here' (male, Province Workshop, West Sumatra).

Material provided for gender capacity building is too general and practical examples on how to incorporate gender into different government agencies are still lacking, particularly for agencies which manage very technical affairs, such as Public Works Offices.

'People do think that gender issues are important, but sometimes they don't know how to start and what to do' (female, non-governmental organisation (NGO) activist, NTT).

The limited understanding on gender issues found in the research sites in West Sumatera and Pasaman Barat could be conceptualised in the following way. First, there are no adequate mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge on gender-related issues in general and gender mainstreaming in particular. Even though gender-related training organised by the provincial or national government is frequently attended by various officials from relevant district/province offices, participants are usually of low rank and have no influence on gender mainstreaming in the policymaking process. They also tend not to share their new knowledge and skills with the rest of their office members. Additionally, high turnover of staff in local government offices often limits continuity and knowledge sharing.

Second, no serious study on the condition of gender dynamics in the area has been undertaken. Although regulations stipulate that local governments must conduct a gender analysis, and the central government has even provided technical guidance on how to do this, none of the local offices interviewed had ever conducted such a study.

'Almost all province offices have not yet conducted such a study [gender analysis]. They just make it up. If there is one, it's just by accident rather than by design. All province offices have not yet conducted one' (male, Province Workshop, West Sumatra).

Given some of the existing misconceptions of gender, people assume their traditional values, which are based on the matrilineal system, already put women in a special position; because inheritance is traced back to the mother's line, efforts to foster gender parity are no longer considered necessary. Such an understanding exists not only among policy makers but also among community figures and society in general.

'Gender mainstreaming must be prioritised if we see future problems caused by gender inequality. However, appreciation of women [here] is already high, so such cases will not happen here. That's why gender mainstreaming is not necessary. Here we have traditional leaders, traditional women figures (bundokanduang). Hence, maybe in Minangkabau gender mainstreaming is not required' (male, Province Workshop, West Sumatra).

However, different views emerged from academics and NGO activists, as well as the media, who claimed that the matrilineal system argument is just an excuse for government reluctance to mainstream gender. Although macro indicators such as the Gender-related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure suggest that gender inequality is not prominent in this area, gender-related issues, such as domestic violence, are actually quite significant. A women's NGO in Padang, West Sumatra, claimed that incidence is quite high in the province and has increased over the years.

According to the local authorities, gendered analysis of policies and programmes is not always necessary. For example, respondents in Pasaman Barat considered programmes such as health insurance, whether funded by the central, province or district budget, gender neutral because men and woman get sick in the same way so are given an equal opportunity to seek treatment. Other programmes, such as scholarships, *Raskin*, etc., are also considered gender neutral as they are seen to benefit the family, and men and women equally. This reflects a lack of understanding of how gender dynamics shape these programmes and their outcomes.

In relation to social assistance programmes such as *Raskin*, there are widespread concerns about the risk of state support fostering dependency among the poor, which poses further obstacles to more substantial investments in social protection. Almost all local staff interviewed in NTT considered national social assistance programmes (e.g. *Raskin* and BLT) ineffective. They argued that *Raskin* spoiled people and made them lazy, and felt that assistance should

be given only to the elderly or the sick. In contrast, they supported programmes such as health insurance, scholarships and other programmes with empowerment aspects.

'I agree with Jamkesmas because sick people cannot work, but I disagree with Raskin because they can actually work—and they are given rice' (female, Regional Development Planning Agency or Bappeda, NTT).

In sum, gender has not yet become an important discourse, for either the government or society, and various gender mainstreaming programmes are not running. There is a huge knowledge disparity between central and local government, with the latter lacking a sufficient understanding of basic concepts related to gender. It is thus important for gender advocates at the central and local level to increase knowledge and understanding among policymakers about the concept of gender and its significance, as well as how to apply it in the context of development policy in a decentralised era.

Policy implications

This study suggests that understandings of gender among governmental officials as well as the general public in Indonesia are still poor. This contributes to the limited role of social protection programmes in addressing gendered risks and vulnerabilities. Despite the decentralisation policy implemented over the past decade in the country, sub-national governments' efforts to tackle poverty and gender vulnerabilities have not been optimal. Thus, the political economy dynamics of decentralised policy and programme implementation need to be addressed urgently and systematically.

The above findings lead us to the following recommendations:

1. Given poor understandings of gender at all levels, **further investment in gender awareness and capacity building is still much needed.** Support from central government and donors to capacity building should not be limited to government officials but extended to other stakeholders, in particular non-governmental actors, including NGOs and religious organisations, which are more likely to transfer it on a larger scale to society.
2. It is important to **promote more incentives for regions which perform well in tackling poverty and gender vulnerabilities** rather than punishing those which fail to meet requirements (such as incorporating gender-responsive budgeting into

budget plans). Incentives could be in the form of tax incentives or extra funds from the central transfer. It may be necessary to complement such measures with performance assessment criteria to help hold actors at all levels accountable for delivering on gender mainstreaming goals and targets.

3. It is also key to **invest more in the generation of gender-disaggregated data and analysis to promote evidence-based policy and programme design and the development of gender-sensitive indicators for better targeting, monitoring and evaluation**. Activities in this regard should not end after the data are compiled: the analysis and use of disaggregated data are also critical.

4. Since most existing social protection programmes are under central government authority, with rigid guidelines and limited room for regional governments to incorporate gender (unless it is built in already), **improving awareness on gender equity should start from the central level and reach out to provincial and district governments**. Simultaneously, however, **promoting more decentralised models of social protection programming and budgeting is also critical**.

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References and endnotes

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Endnotes

1. The lowest ever rate of poverty before the crisis was 11.3 % in 1996. However, the calculation method was revised in 1998 and backdated to cover the 1996 data. Using the new method, the poverty rate in 1996 was 17.5%; by 1998 and 1999, the poverty rate had risen significantly, to 21.4% and 23.4%, respectively.
2. Indonesia achieved lower-middle-income status in 2004 when its per capita gross national income (GNI) (as a basis of classification) reached \$1,070. In 2010, GNI per capita was \$2,500. In 2010, Indonesia ranked 108 out of 169 on the Human Development Index and 100 out of 138 on the Gender Inequality Index.
3. Setting up new local government institutions and establishing new districts, sub-districts and village administration, as well as holding direct elections of district and provincial leaders, required a high level of budgetary allocation.
4. Note that the World Bank (2006) compares the correlates (which indicate that female-headed households are significantly worse off) and the simple descriptive analysis (which indicates that female-headed households are marginally less poor). We must also be cautious about the Statistics Indonesia definition of female-headed households, which tends to exclude some single mothers who live with parents and couples where the wife acts as a *de facto* breadwinner.
5. The devolution of power from a very centralistic government to nearly 500 districts and 33 provinces was implemented within 2 years of the decentralisation law's enactment.
6. A matrilineal system is a form of hereditary succession or other inheritance through which the subject's female relatives are traced back in a matrilineal line. In societies using a matrilineal system, the inheritance pattern reflects the importance of the mother's brother not the biological father, given that he is not a member of their matrilineal family. This system is the basis for social organisation (such as the division of group/tribe/clan, etc.) as well as resource organisation (that is heritage, in both physical forms, such as land, houses and fields, and non-physical forms, primarily a noble heir).

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