Public Works as a Safety Net
Design, Evidence, and Implementation

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ODI March 6th
DESPITE GLOBALIZATION AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION, THE POOR ARE EXPOSED TO GREATER RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES. TO MITIGATE THESE RISKS, PUBLIC WORKS HAS EMERGED AS A CRITICAL SOCIAL PROTECTION RESPONSE.
Why now?

NOTWITHSTANDING THE RECENT EXPLOSION OF OPERATIONS AND TECHNICAL LITERATURE, KNOWLEDGE GAPS REMAIN:

• Little has been codified on what works, what does not work
• New models of public works are evolving
• New questions and concerns around public works programs
• Yet no synthesis of issues and country experiences
What’s different?

EVIDENCE DRIVEN. POLICY MAKER AND PRACTITIONER FOCUSED:

• Publication draws from over two decades of analytical and operational experience of authors
• Combines empirical literature on analytical aspects with country program experience drawn from over 50 countries
• Complemented by proceedings at South-South Learning Forum on Public Works with almost 300 practitioners in 2010, which generated case study evidence
The book begins with objectives and the evolving models of public works program, mainly as a safety net. And delineates the cross-country patterns in public works program.
Program by objectives

By Region

By Income Level

- Africa
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- South Asia
- Middle East and North Africa
- East Asia and Pacific
- Europe and Central Asia

Number of programs

- Low income
- Lower-middle income
- Upper-middle and high income

Legend:
- Bridge to self-employment
- Reintegration into labor market
- Antipoverty
- Employment guarantee
- Seasonal
- One-time shock
## Correlation of public works program models and objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Objective</th>
<th>Short-Term Safety Net (e.g., Ghana)</th>
<th>Longer-Term Safety Net (e.g., Ethiopia, India)</th>
<th>Public Works Plus (e.g., Argentina, Djibouti)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mitigation of Covariate Shocks</td>
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<td>Poverty Relief and Food Security</td>
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<td>Bridge to More Permanent Employment</td>
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Blending design, evidence, and implementation

- Targeting methods
- Benefit levels, wage setting
- Institutional aspects, and funding
- Project selection
- Additional features, graduation

- Beneficiary selection
- Project selection
- Management information
- Financial reporting
- Worksite management
- Communications
- Procurement
- M&E

- Empirical data
- Literature
- Operational materials
- 7 case studies
Governance and corruption

- Focuses on role of good governance, clear roles, incentives, and legal frameworks, e.g., Ethiopia, Cambodia
- Highlights program-level controls and innovations, e.g., IT based MIS in Andrah Pradesh, India
- Takes stock of results in bottom up, community led processes:
  - A round of social audits, A.P., India led to recovery of Rs 235 million out of Rs 1 billion in misappropriated funds
  - Community participation in Ethiopia enabled two-thirds of beneficiaries to participate for first time in neighborhood meetings

“Too much money ends up in officials’ pockets”
ECONOMIST
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Monitoring and evaluation

A GOOD M&E SYSTEM SUPPLIES FEEDBACK TO ENHANCE PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

Key impact evaluations are showing progress, mainly arising from income transfer. Impact of community assets are more difficult to discern:

- Jefes (Argentina) prevented an estimated additional 10% of participants from falling below the food poverty line, and allowed an extra 2% of the population to afford the food component of Argentina’s poverty line
- MGNREGS (India) wages for female casual workers have increased approximately 8% more in participating districts
- PSNP (Ethiopia) increasing food security and livelihood assets; especially when combined with other programs
A note on data

Making Public Works Work

Del Ninno, Subbarao, Milazzo (2009)

- 43 countries
- 49 PW programs
- 20 year period

Data on
- Program objectives
- Targeting approaches
- Wage levels
- Type of works
- Funding mechanisms
- Cost of labor

2010 SP South-South Learning Forum Survey

- 42 countries
- 53 PW programs
- 2009 snapshot

Data 36 variables on
- Program objectives
- Program scope
- Targeting mechanism
- Payment methods
- Institutional arrangements
- Financial arrangements
- Monitoring and evaluation
A note on data

Making Public Works Work

2010 SP South-South Learning Forum Survey

= 62 Countries

77 PW Programs

Programs with rich data on PW design and implementation!

Public Works as a Safety Net

Design, Evidence, and Implementation
A note on case studies

7 COUNTRY CASE STUDIES

Result of South South Forum 2010

Public Works as a Safety Net
Design, Evidence, and Implementation

Rwanda: Wage setting
Ethiopia: Project Selection
India: MIS
India: Social Audits
Ethiopia: Impact Eval.
Cambodia: Institutions
Liberia: Crisis Response
Examples: India and Liberia

1. **INDIA AP MGNREGA : MONITORING THRU TOP DOWN AND BOTTOM UP MEASURES**
   - Program level controls included IT based management information system. Key features (i) real time monitoring (ii) wage payments through smart cards (iii) Electronic muster and measurement system
   - Bottom up measures included a round of social audits, with significant lessons emerging.

2. **LIBERIA : DEVELOPING A SAFETY NET FROM PUBLIC WORKS RESPONSE TO CRISIS**
   - Objectives & Scope: Cash for Works Food Crisis Response for 17,000 HH (2007/08), providing 680,000 work days
   - Light Evaluation combined quantitative and qualitative techniques to identify impact and implementation experiences vis-à-vis poverty impact, targeting, payments and institutions.
   - Evolution: Transition to broader safety net under Youth Employment Skills Project
5 Lessons to Take Forward

1. **THE USE OF PUBLIC WORKS IS EXPANDING**
   PWs have emerged as a critical social protection response tool, in situations of increased risk and vulnerability. It has shown promise to promote gender empowerment through participation.

2. **PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMS ARE COMPLEX, BUT CAN BE CUSTOMIZED**
   In addition to low income settings, public works now play an important role in middle income countries, fragile states, and countries facing social tensions, e.g., Arab Spring. This typically involves customization in design to expand program objectives beyond income support, i.e., promoting labor market participation and pathways out of poverty.
5 Lessons to Take Forward

3. **INNOVATIONS ARE MAKING PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION SMARTER AND MORE EFFICIENT**
   Many countries are developing stronger IT based MIS to automate program processes. This helps leapfrog implementation bottlenecks in facilitating beneficiary identification, tracking, payment, and program monitoring.

4. **A COMBINATION OF PROGRAM LEVEL AND BENEFICIARY INPUTS CAN HELP PROVIDE THE CHECKS AND BALANCES NEEDED AGAINST ERROR, FRAUD, AND CORRUPTION**
   Combining top-down and bottom-up processes helps to promote transparency, and reduce issues of corruption that have pervaded public works schemes in the past.

5. **EMPIRICAL GAPS REMAIN**
   More needs to be learnt about the effectiveness and impact of new experiences and new approaches and to address issues including governance, and the impact on poverty and the labor market.