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**BACKGROUND PAPER FOR THE
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Public Works and the Jobs Agenda: Pathways for Social Cohesion?

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1. Introduction

As interventions targeted towards the poor and vulnerable, safety nets include design features which -by their nature-promote social cohesion e.g. inclusion of the most vulnerable and poor; participation of beneficiaries in program processes. Among Social Safety Nets, a number of advantages have been claimed for Public Works that most other SSN schemes do not share. For example, public works create temporary employment and, if designed optimally, may present a graduation pathway from poverty through employment in the formal sector and improved community services.

This note discusses the way in which public works may enhance social cohesion, and how -if poorly designed- they may undermine such objectives. While ‘hard’ evidence on these linkages is limited, a review of international experience suggests a number of important pathways through which programs are being leveraged. Three main pathways are considered, and include: promoting voice and participation through program processes; improving social inclusion and equality through temporary labor market participation; and smoothing social tension and building trust in response to sudden shocks—as well as longer term fragility. Furthermore, this note draws especially on case study experiences from five flagship public works programs set in different contexts, including: India’s Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Ethiopia’s Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), Argentina’s Jefes de Hogar Project and finally El Salvador’s Programa de Atención Temporal al Ingreso (Temporary Income Assistance Program, PATI). Given the increasing prevalence of public works during recent crisis events, the note also considers policy implications for other countries at more nascent phases of program development, including Liberia, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone.

The note is devised as a background contribution to the 2013 World Development Report, focused on Jobs. In particular, the note aims to inform a central hypothesis of the WDR, which posits that jobs can be transformational by three means: enhanced living standards, improved productivity and, finally, greater social cohesion. The note focuses on the link between public works programs and social cohesion, and the notion that temporary employment gained through public works can be unique in promoting engagement, trust and civic inclusion¹. The note focuses primarily on public works programs, since—among safety net interventions—they are labor based, and mainly targeted towards able bodied people.

2. Overview and General context

Broadly speaking, public works programs are social protection instruments used in diverse country contexts, in both low and middle income countries, with the twin objectives of providing temporary employment and generating/maintaining some infrastructure. Similar to other safety net objectives, public works provide an established economic benefit to the recipients. Yet, public works programs may also have additional features, which may render them more attractive, particularly in countries where social tensions, unrest and instability exist. Two of the world’s most recognized public works programs include the large-scale schemes of Ethiopia

¹ It should be noted that public works also contribute to the other channels. This is an issue discussed in more length in Almeida, Robalino and Weber (2011). For further information on public works more generally refer to Kalanidhi et al. (2012).

(Productive Safety Net Program, PSNP) and India (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, MGNREGS) reaching almost 8 million and 55 million households respectively. In recent times, the experiences of these programs, in particular, have catalyzed the use of public works in countries as diverse as Liberia, Bangladesh, El Salvador, Djibouti and Timor-Leste. In addition, there are also cases where public works have been introduced effectively in middle income countries facing macro-economic crisis. During the 1990s, public works were successfully introduced in Korea, Thailand, Argentina and Mexico. More recently, PWPs were employed as programs of last resort in Latvia.

Primary objectives of public works programs include: mitigating shocks (covariate and idiosyncratic), antipoverty, and providing a bridge to more permanent employment.² The specific objectives of public works programs vary according to each country's short and long term needs. This includes needs emerging from shocks to which the country is subjected to, as well as the desire to promote longer term development outcomes that can be achieved through infrastructure development and skills training. Table 1 provides an overview of how these different objectives map to different models of public works.

Table 1. Country Circumstances and Public Works Models

Primary objective	Model		
	Short-term safety net	Longer-term safety net	Public works plus
Mitigation of covariate shocks	X		
Mitigation of idiosyncratic shocks	X	X	
Poverty relief and food security		X	X
Bridge to more permanent employment		X	X

Source: Subbarao et al (2012).

As indicated in Table 1, social cohesion does not typically feature as a primary objective of public works programs. Instead, this note argues that social cohesion priorities are typically secondary objectives, across diverse types of programs. In line with the WDR Report 2013 on Job, this note defines social cohesion as the capacity of societies to peacefully manage collective decision making. This relates social cohesion to the processes and institutions that shape how groups interact. This definition, however, does not imply that collective decision making should be imposed from above, but rather that channels for voice, accountability and inclusive participation of diverse groups can contribute to social cohesions.

² Note, these objectives reflect the safety net orientated approach of public works programs. Another important objective of public works program is to generate public goods for the community, though not necessarily restricted to them. It is important to stress that although the provision of public goods is not the primary objective of the public works program, it is indeed crucial.

A cohesive society aims to minimize inequalities, marginalization and disparities in both the social and economic spheres, to reduce poverty and vulnerability. Economic growth in many countries, however, is accompanied by worsening inequalities. In these contexts, large scale public works programs can be useful in reducing poverty and food insecurity, especially amongst vulnerable groups, in program processes, and through empowerment gained from income and asset transfers. To illustrate the linkages between public works and social cohesion, we focus on four flagship examples of public works programs, as summarized in Table 2. As elaborated in Sections 3 through 5, this table identifies three pathways through which social cohesion may be advanced:

- **Promoting voice and participation through program processes:** Participatory aspects of program design can provide a channel for voice of excluded groups; as well as an opportunity to interact with local government establishments and officials.
- **Improving social inclusion and equality through temporary labor market participation:** Empowerment of certain excluded groups (women, ethnic, caste, lagging regions, and disaffected youth) through employment may have long term effects on equity, social cohesion and inclusion.
- **Smoothing social tension and building trust in response to sudden shocks, as well as longer term fragility:** During a time of crisis and recovery, jobs may infer a sense of dignity and social identify. This can be particularly relevant in low income settings where formal labor markets are absent. In post conflict settings interventions may be especially targeted at ethnic populations, disaffected communities and disenfranchised youth.

Table 2. Global Public Works Programs: Synopsis and Links to Social Cohesion

	Status	No. Beneficiaries	Timing	Payment modality	Female participation	Social Cohesion Features
Argentina Jefes*	Closed (2002 - 2009)	2 million HH's (2003)	Year round program	Cash	71%	Preserving stability in the face of macroeconomic crisis, promoting channels to formal sector employment and building trust and engagement with governing institutions
Ethiopia PSNP**	Active since 2005	7.6 million people (2009)	Year round program	Cash and Food	41%	Promoting participation and voice, especially through program processes (targeting, public works planning)
India MGNREGS†	Active since 2006	54.9 million HH's (2011)	Year round program	Cash	49%	Enhancing social inclusion and quality through income and asset transfer, especially female members of community. Also promoting participation through community planning and oversight.
El Salvador PATI††	Active since 2010	Expected 50,000 people (2011)	6 month program	Cash		Preserving stability by providing unemployed youth and women head of households with a salary for 6 months of community work and a two-week entrepreneurial training, to curb the rise of social and gender violence

Source: Subbarao et al (2012, forthcoming).

*Head of Household Program **Productive Safety Net Program †Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Program †† Programa de Atención Temporal al Ingreso (Temporary Income Assistance Program)

3. Promoting Participation and Voice through Program Processes

A unique feature of public works is the degree to which participatory aspects of a program may provide a channel for voice of excluded groups. Communities are increasingly participating in various aspects of program implementation—a trend that brings both opportunities and challenges. The increasing involvement of communities is consistent with increasing decentralization of, and the use of bottom-up approaches in, safety net program implementation. Community participation in public works programs has many advantages. Armed with better access to information, community residents are better able to select, design, implement, and monitor projects (Conning and Kevane, 2001). This yields spillover benefits, such as strengthening social capital and social organizations. In this sense, community involvement in

program implementation has the potential to promote ownership of programs, improve executive of activities, as well as possibly increase public accountability and transparency.

There are several ways in which communities can be involved in program implementation. Most commonly, communities can determine the eligibility criteria for beneficiary selection and/or identify beneficiaries, select projects, monitor activities, and even help fund the projects. The degree of their involvement, and scope of activities in which communities are involved, vary greatly across countries. The success of their involvement, also, depends on how their participation is built into the program design, and in this respect, the experiences of Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net (PSNP) are greatly instructive.³

The Ethiopian PSNP beneficiaries are targeted using a combination of geographical, community-based, and administrative targeting methods. The beneficiary selection process takes place at the community level, where Community Food Security Task Forces identify eligible participants. Impact evaluations have pointed to community involvement as an important factor in strengthening targeting outcomes. Specifically—as noted by Coll-Black et al. (2011)—in the 2010 evaluation, communities showed greater understanding of the targeting criteria across regions of program implementation. Community targeting is also seen to help avoid resentment against beneficiaries that could lead to distrust or conflict within communities, as might otherwise occur in a Government targeted safety net. This ensures that PSNP does not undermine social relations at the community level. A recent review of global experiences across 42 programs found that 83% of programs used community-based poverty ranking as a targeting method, either alone or in combination with another method.

Under PSNP, the communities are also given significant responsibility for planning, designing and implementing subprojects. The very nature of the PSNP PW subproject planning process involves community members coming together to understand the resources available to them, their needs, and how they can collectively manage environmental challenges. The community first discusses the problems they are facing. They then analyze these problems to understand the underlying causes. The community can then propose solutions to the causes of their problems. These solutions are prioritized, and a program-specific work plan is developed. In this manner, social cohesion is fostered by the PW planning process. In 2008 alone, approximately 60 percent of PSNP subprojects were proposed by the community, while in 2011, the figure increased to 90 percent. Notwithstanding this success, there have still been challenges in enabling community participation. Timing of projects has been a recurring concern, with humanitarian needs sometimes forcing “off the shelf” projects. Regarding the quality of the Community Public Works Plans, there is still work to be done on improving the participatory approach and skills development.

The experiences of PSNP are echoed in a variety of other contexts. For example, in Yemen, during the second phase of the Public Works program, the active participation of poor communities became the cornerstone of the success of delivered services. Community

³ The PSNP was designed to replace annual appeals for emergency food aid with a more predictable safety net to address country-wide vulnerability, defined by chronic seasonal food insecurity. Although not designed with a specific social cohesion objective in mind, gains in social cohesion have emerged over time. While the PSNP does not have a specific mechanism for evaluating impacts of the PW program on social cohesion, there are a number of studies and assessments that indicate linkages related to program design features including targeting and project selection.

involvement encompassed identifying, prioritizing, and selecting projects according to the community's needs; providing contributions (in cash or in kind) as a prerequisite to implementation; and implementation, operation, and maintenance of projects. This process increased community awareness of the program's development aspects, and its understanding of implementation issues. Moreover, it promoted a strong sense of ownership—which was evidenced by community contributions, which reached 11 percent of total project cost—and improved community members' abilities to assume responsibility of completed projects, thus guaranteeing sustainability.

For many participants, public works programs become the first opportunity they have to interact with local government officials, which suggests an important pathway to promote citizen engagement and voice. According to the 2008 Financial Transparency & Accountability Survey, in the case of Ethiopia,⁴ two thirds of respondents said that the program meetings represented the first time they had attended a meeting for an organization in their neighborhood. Of the respondents who said they had been asked to comment on the PSNP selection criteria, only 14 percent said they had ever been asked to give their opinion on services provided by their Woreda Administration. Additionally, close to 71 percent of respondents agreed that the selection process, including for PSNP projects, was indeed a participatory process involving the community. Several male and female respondents also noted that the community participation elements of the program had provided more opportunities for citizens to articulate suggestions and concerns about community needs to government officials, although this was still quite limited⁵.

The potential for engagement and participation can also be seen through the growing use of social audits under India's MGNREGS, which acts as a further dynamic that fosters and promotes community participation⁶. Social audits are a process by which citizens come together to review and monitor government actions on the ground and use the mechanism of a public hearing to place accountability demands on the government. The legal mandate to conduct social audits under the MGNREGS acted as a catalyst for some state governments and Non Governmental Organizations to take innovative steps towards institutionalizing social audits in the delivery system. The most successful of these efforts has been the state of Andhra Pradesh, which today is the only state government in the country to have developed a detailed institutional system for the regular conduct of social audits on MGNREGS works in the state. Between 2006-March 2011, at least one round of social audits had been conducted in all 656 Mandals (the lowest administrative units) in the state; 95 percent had two social audits and 60 percent had completed 3 rounds of social audits. The introduction of social audits through program processes is seen to promote social mobilization in a way which may not happen otherwise. Generally speaking, it is rare for citizens to mobilize spontaneously without an external

⁴ GoE (2008). *The Ethiopia PSNP in the Financial Transparency & Accountability Survey*. Final, October ('FTAPS report').

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ India's MGNREGS adopts a rights-based approach to the provision of 100 days of employment upon demand in rural India, for men and women alike. With a budget of almost 4 billion USD, or 2.3 percent of total central government spending, the program is by far the best endowed antipoverty program in India.⁶ The program is centrally funded, but implemented at the state level by village assemblies (Gram Panchayats) rather than by contractors. MGNREGS entitles every rural household in India to a minimum of 100 days of paid work per year and includes a minimum quota of 30 percent for female participation. This is an unrestricted entitlement with no eligibility requirements. However, it was assumed that the nature of work under MGNREGS and the wage rate would ensure that the program is self-targeted and attracts only the poor.

stimulus—either from the civil society (as in the case of the first few social audits of MGNREGS in the state of Rajasthan) or the government (as was the case in Andhra Pradesh). With respect to Andhra Pradesh, an important aspect of this institutionalization is that the government agency responsible for implementation is independent from the one in charge of social audits, though both report to the same ministry. Also, highly transparent processes and records are publicized in the local language on the programs website.

While the above case studies highlight the potential of public works to promote program participation and voice, it should be noted that community participation is not always positive. The same informational advantages it provides can lead to corruption and to program capture by local elites, with program benefits diverted from the poor to serve the better-off. Evidence suggests that this is a potential issue in countries with highly non-egalitarian societies, in which communities are not accountable to their members as government institutions are likely to be (Platteau and Abraham, 2002). In addition, community-based targeting may yield inconsistent results across communities and affect access to, or the level of, interventions (Hoddinott, 1996). The feasibility of community participation should be carefully analyzed based on the specific context, taking into account the community structure and social dynamics.

4. Improving equality and social inclusion

Public works programs have the capacity to promote inclusion of vulnerable groups including women and youth. This is achieved through labor market participation in temporary works projects. It can also be achieved by implementing a public works plus model, which includes providing training or access to credit to improve participants' chances of obtaining permanent employment or of becoming self-employed once they exit the program. Graduation strategies are at the core of these models. The strategies aim to increase household income, individual skills, or human capital, so as to promote better long-term welfare and poverty reduction. This section now explores the evidence and implementation experiences of different countries in improving equality and social inclusion of women and youth, as well as strengthening community and social networks through access to community and health services.

4.1 Female participation

Social inclusion has proven to be particularly relevant from the gender perspective, which encompasses several issues. Providing access to direct wage employment for women will protect them from loss of earnings. Women's participation in the labor force, in turn, and their control over their own resources, is associated with substantially greater improvements in child welfare, as well as women's health and status in the community. Through public works programs in particular, women may also benefit from the assets created and their participation in the decisions around which assets should be created (Dejardin, 1996; and Swamy, 2003). Moreover, most public works schemes place a particular emphasis on female participation, often through mandated quotas. A recent review of 49 global programs found that average female participation was approximately 40 percent (Subbarao et al. 2012). Recent experiences in India and Ethiopia highlight the potentials—and limitations—of promoting female participation.

India's MGNREGS is a result of the Government of India's stated principles of 'inclusive growth,' and the desire to ensure that economic growth trickles down to rural areas, including women. When MGNREGS was enacted in August 2005, there was optimism that the initiative would transform rural India, particularly through the increase in living standards of typically excluded groups, i.e. women, ethnic/caste groups and backward regions. Active since 2006, the program currently covers almost 56 million households, representing the largest safety net scheme in India. To support female participation the program introduced a minimum quota of 30%.

Recent evidence points to the success of MGNREGS in narrowing the gender wage gap, with implications for social cohesion, (Azam and Dasgupta, 2011). Women's involvement in MGNREGS has, on average, been much larger than what was mandated legally, with women accounting for almost half (48 percent) of employment registered in administrative data for 2009/10. The absence of a wage differential in the stipulated wage across gender under the program is in contrast to non-public works in rural areas, where female workers are paid much less than the wages paid to their male counterparts. Azam and Dasgupta (2011) argue that owing to the MGNREGS program, wages for female casual workers have increased approximately 8 percent more in participating districts compared to non-participating districts, and this increase in female real wages has also pushed up the overall average real wages in those districts. It should be noted, however, that there may be strong inter-state variation in these results, given the scale and status of program implementation, as well as the degree of labor mobility.

This increase in female wages is a striking success of MGNREGS, in improving the conditions and the bargaining power of disadvantaged workers.⁷ Holmes and Jones (2011) point out that the program has enabled poor households to increase spending on food, health and education, in support of many women's traditional roles as caregivers. Access to financial services, through bank accounts opened in women's names, also seems to be helping improve women's status and empowerment. These impacts are facilitated through a series of program design features, including:

- MGNREGS is a rights based program, which affords the possibility to empower the rural population to join the labor force, knowing they are likely to get work. While it would be naïve to think that this will overturn a long historical legacy of exclusion and elite rule, creating a legal right is certainly a positive first step. The higher wage offered in MGNREGS works, compared to prevailing casual wages, add additional incentives for female workers to enter the labor market.
- The act stipulates that work be provided locally, within five kilometers of the residence. This makes participation in the program feasible for women, as they continue to bear the main responsibility of household work (Khera and Nayak, 2009).
- A further incentive for women workers is that each work site has to ensure that proper childcare is provided, although in practice this has not fully materialized. There is some

⁷ Dutta et al (2011) further note that the programs' targeting of social groups (casts and tribes) is another dimension of interest. Qualitative studies have suggested that the scheduled casts (SC), scheduled tribes (ST), as well as female beneficiaries, have benefited disproportionately from the scheme (e.g. Dreze and Khera, 2009). They estimate that 42 and 34 percent of rural ST and SC households respectively participate, but there is a wide variation across states.

emerging evidence which shows that the implementation demands under the program often make it difficult for poorer states to meet with the demand—thereby limiting availability of the scheme where it might be needed most (Dutta et al. (2011), forthcoming).

Similarly, in Ethiopia's PSNP, the (2008) Contextual Gender Analysis found that women participating in public works programs earned greater respect in their communities. For women PW workers in male-headed household (MHH), it was reported that men had begun to take on some domestic tasks and their husbands regarded them with more respect. This suggests that the PSNP is having a positive effect on the gender division of labor and power within the household, leading to strengthened social cohesion in decision making at the household level. There is also some evidence to suggest that the PSNP has reduced the need to travel for work opportunities. In Tigray, women reported that PW transfer meant they did not have to migrate (Holmes, R. and N. Jones, 2010). Although the payment levels for PSNP activities are low, especially in some locales, the institutionalization of a minimum benefit range was viewed positively by participants who argued that they were now less vulnerable to 'labor abuse'. For instance, interviews with teenage girls and young women suggested that the program had reduced their need to work as domestic employees in nearby towns, roles which are often subject to low remuneration and abuse by employers. Additionally, PSNP Rapid Response Missions often ask beneficiaries what they would do if there were no PSNP. Mission reports reveal that in the absence of PSNP, beneficiaries would have to migrate in search of employment.

Notwithstanding the above possibilities, there are numerous critiques that public works may raise unfair burdens on women, adding extra tasks on a household schedule, while introducing undue pressure to enter the labor force. Gender neutrality in such programs should never be taken for granted or assumed. Design features can be adjusted in a number of ways to address barriers to women's participation—such as specific cultural and social constraints, as well as the demands on their time from domestic activities—and mitigate provisions included in the design. Simple measures to encourage women's participation include the following:

- Locate PW projects close to beneficiaries' homes.
- Set a quota at the recruitment stage for a minimum percentage of women in the program. It must not be assumed that the existence of a quota will, by itself, necessarily encourage women's participation in the absence of other measures undertaken simultaneously.
- Provide child care facilities at project sites, preferably run by senior women experienced in child care and paid as workers under the program. Provide covered rest areas (for protection against the sun) and toilet facilities at worksites.
- Adjust wage payment modalities, as women may prefer to work for piece wages rather than daily wage rates, because this affords them greater flexibility in coordinating this work with their other chores. Care needs to be taken regarding how piece wage rates are determined. Often, women can be exploited into working long hours with very low compensation (especially when works are implemented by contractors), unless work norms and associated payments are carefully specified.

4.2 Youth integration

Disengaged youth bears great near-term risk to social stability, and long-term risk to a nation's economic development. Forty percent of young people, interviewed in half a dozen countries, cited unemployment as the main reason for joining gangs and rebel groups (WDR 2011). It is also an issue of high policy relevance giving changing population cohorts and the emergence of a 'youth bulge' across many development countries. In this context, an emerging trend in public works programs is targeted towards youth population cohorts to promote employment, skills acquisition or simply societal integration in a production fashion.

Public works programs have a mixed record in supporting employability, as they generally involve jobs with low status that rarely lead to future earnings opportunities. Yet, there are indications that such programs can be designed to invest in skills with benefits for social cohesion. For instance, in El Salvador, the Temporary Income Assistance Program (PATI) was launched in 2010 with the aim of providing cash assistance and job training to youth and women head of households (roughly 60 percent) to help them find employment or become self-employed after the program. More importantly, the PATI program specifically targeted women and youth that live in municipalities characterized by high levels of social exclusion and high rates of social and gender violence. Although the PATI program does not have a formal component on violence prevention, anecdotal evidence suggests it is nevertheless contributing to lowering the occurrence of violence. For example, one of the municipalities moved from the 14th to the 24th place in the municipal violence index during the year in which the PATI pilot was implemented. Even though this improvement cannot be attributed solely to PATI, it is clear that the program played a role in this positive change. The program activities and training also promote camaraderie and a sense of community among the youth. The community, too, benefits from the skills acquisition, awareness and empowerment of their youth, an effect that beneficiaries and program managers are calling "PATIMANIA". However, the PATI program is insufficient (nor designed) to restore social cohesion as a stand-alone intervention. This suggests that PATI will have to rely strongly on the success of complementary programs for a broader, longer-term cohesion-enhancing approach. Similar interventions occur under South Africa's Employment Public Works Program, which provides training opportunities beyond the skills acquired on the job to prepare participants for possible longer-term employment, self-employment, or further education and/or training. For example, youth employed as manual laborers on a labor-intensive road project may be offered training in building skills such as bricklaying, if there is demand for such skills in the labor market. The number of average training days varies from 10 in the environmental sector to 30 for those participating in social activities. All training activities may result in some type of accredited certification.

These types of experiences are catalyzing a push towards youth targeting in more nascent public works schemes. For example, when the Sierra Leone Cash for Work (CfW) Project was mounted in response to the food crisis in 2008, the project roll-out was marked by an increased focus on youth. In addition to targeting unemployed youth, one innovation was the identification of youth groups to implement worksites and form small contractor groups (Andrews et al. 2012). The program has now evolved as the Youth Employment Project, which includes a component addressing supply-side labor market constraints for very low-skill unemployed or underemployed poor youth, and providing skills training to a limited number of individuals interested in pursuing careers as a small works contractors. This new feature partially addresses

the concerns raised by beneficiaries regarding the short-term nature of the program and its inability to link beneficiaries to future employment opportunities.

4.3 Strengthening community and social networks

The degree to which public works promotes community wide social cohesion is not well documented.

As already noted, community participation in program process provides a channel to involve typically excluded groups. Similarly, investment in public works projects might yield productive spillover effects at the community level to beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries alike.

In the case of Ethiopia, while hard evidence is weak, a number of different evaluations point to the possible community wide impacts of public works programs. The 2006 Trends in PSNP Transfers Study revealed that PSNP cash transfers are used in diverse ways. While the households in the lower quintile use their transfer to buy staple food items, those in the highest quintiles are more likely to use PSNP cash for social obligations and to lend or give to others. This finding suggests that the closer the PSNP beneficiaries get to graduation (i.e., the longer the time spent in the program), the more likely they will be able support traditional social networks of the community. It is in this way that the PSNP has a restorative effect, allowing beneficiaries to re-engage in their community. In addition, households have better access to informal sources of credit within the community, as the income they receive from the PSNP is seen as a quasi-guarantee (Holmes, R. and N. Jones, 2010).

The same study found that both men and women highlighted that, as a result of greater livelihood security, they had greater opportunities to become involved in social networks, especially through participation in religious and traditional festivals and celebrations from which they were previously excluded. This new found social inclusion was highly valued by a number of interviewees, and could arguably be said to be of particular significance for women, given the generally lower levels of participation and mobility women have in rural village life. There was also an acknowledgement that in some cases, village security had increased to a degree as there was notably less theft due to lower levels of desperation among the poor and vulnerable (Evers, B. J. Garsonnin, A. Wondiu, and A. Aberra, 2008).

In addition to creating household assets, the PW program is essentially building assets for the entire community. Beneficiaries are organized into work teams in their local area. The teams work on projects to create public works subprojects such as soil and water conservation structures, pond construction, among other things. Most of the activities undertaken by Ethiopia's PSNP are focused on soil and water conservation activities reflecting the needs of poor agricultural communities. These and similar works have already brought demonstrable benefits to communities. For example, improved water conservation has led to increased agricultural productivity and an increase in groundwater recharge such that dry springs have started to flow again. In addition, communities have enhanced income generation and improved access to markets, education, and health facilities (Grosh et al. 2008). They have also catalyzed interest in similar work activities in contexts such as Ghana and Rwanda.

5. Smoothing social tensions and building trust in response to shocks and fragile situations

During a crisis situation public works may promote social inclusion by inferring a sense of dignity and value in an individual through participation in temporary employment. This section looks at the experiences in context of response to macroeconomic shocks as well as ongoing fragile situations.

5.1 Macroeconomic shocks

In response to short term idiosyncratic or covariate shocks, temporary employment can influence the behavior of those who hold them or seek them, by shaping their attitudes, trust in others and willingness to engage in dialogue or confrontation. There could be a direct pathway, deriving from the fact that employed people are happier, all else equal, than the unemployed (Graham, 2009; and Layard, 2005). Examples are prevalent especially in middle and high income contexts facing macroeconomic shocks, including Argentina, Korea and more recently Latvia.

This section focuses on the illustrative example of Argentina in reaching the poor and mitigating the impact of a severe economic and social crisis. In 2002, the deep economic, social and governance crisis facing Argentina brought the country to the brink of collapse.⁸ The Government's main response was to create a massive emergency workfare program to expand financial support to families in danger of economic deprivation. Instituted under the constitutional "right to social inclusion," the Heads of Household Program (Programa Jefes de Hogar- PJH) aimed to provide direct income support for families with dependents for whom the head (Jefes) had become unemployed due to the crisis. Government launched PjH to scale very quickly: to 574,000 beneficiaries in May 2002 and to nearly 2 million beneficiaries in May 2003. The Program transferred AR\$150.00 (currently US\$48.00) per month to beneficiaries meeting specific eligibility criteria (for example, unemployed, heading a household, participate in 4-6 hours of work as a condition for payment).

The program contributed to calming the highly tense social atmosphere by transferring rapidly needed income support to poor, unemployed workers with dependants. According to the results of the impact evaluation, it prevented an estimated additional 10 percent of the participants from falling below the food poverty line, and allowed an extra 2 percent of the population to afford the food component of Argentina's poverty line (Ravallion and Galasso, 2004). Targeting of the poor proved especially effective, with 89 percent of its beneficiaries coming from the poorest 50 percent of population. Of the total number of beneficiaries, female participation constituted 70 percent. The program was also effective in building on previous experiences under the Trabajar Public Works program from 1997-2001.

With an eye to social cohesion and a need to restore government legitimacy, the Government placed special emphasis on governance and accountability structures. Specifically, the program included the establishment of "consultative councils"—both at the local and national level. These councils were created to address the issue of how citizens relate to national programs by

⁸ After four years of recession, the economic and social crisis was entrenched. Poverty had shot up: in May 2002, over 50 percent of the urban population had fallen below the poverty line, the rate of unemployment had increased to 21.5 percent, overall, and to above 40 percent for poor, unskilled workers. Key indicators of well-being, such as the infant mortality rate, deteriorated for the first time in 30 years.

giving municipalities and local consultative councils a significant role in program implementation (as the beneficiaries were spread over the 28 provinces and 2,300 municipalities). The main objective of the local councils was to control the allocation of benefits and provide transparency to this activity, which had been stained by a long tradition of political patronizing. They would also control the registration, incorporation, and execution of the program at local level.

While perceptions about the consultative councils varied, evidence suggests that they proved to be instrumental in the Government's efforts at "social contention," helping the country avoid even further deterioration of social conditions, particularly in times when the government was highly discredited. In different seminars and qualitative studies (evaluation of the social monitor, 2003; social assessment of the Heads of Household Transition Project, 2006; ICR workshop, 2006), members of civil society organizations, Government authorities and beneficiaries agreed on two important points. The first was that the Program had played an important, positive role during the crisis. Nearly all beneficiaries, interviewed in 2006, expressed the view that the program had been indispensable to prevent households from falling into extreme poverty, to provide some stability in household income, and to guarantee a minimum income, even though the household needed to complement the transfer. However, the second issue was that there were irregularities in its implementation, especially in the beginning, and that rules needed to be created for the program that would be followed by all. This tension was also reflected at the central level, where coordination between the Ministries of Social Development (MDS) and Labor to implement the Program, created some initial strain.

Argentina is one of a few countries to have such well documented response of its public works program in a crisis setting. A more recent impact evaluation tracks the success of the Workplaces with Stipends (WWS) program in Latvia which was introduced as an emergency intervention in response to the high unemployment rates resulting from the 2008 financial crisis. In response to the crisis, the government of Latvia spent about \$80 million between 2009 and 2011 on the Workplaces with Stipend Emergency Public Works Program; this was, about 0.25 percent of GDP, or 2.5 times its expenditures on poverty-targeted safety nets. The main purpose of the program was to create temporary employment for individuals who had lost their jobs but were not receiving unemployment benefits, and to enrich communities with maintenance activities. A recent evaluation found successful targeting of poor and vulnerable people, and minimal leakage to non-poor households.⁹ Almost 83 percent of WWS beneficiaries were in the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution, and the program was credited with raising the income of participating households by 37 percent in the short term (Azam et al. 2012).

⁹ The WWS program targeted all registered unemployed people who were not receiving unemployment benefits; opportunities were provided on a first-come, first-served basis. The WWS program participants, half of whom were women, were eligible to work up to six months, with a two-week minimum requirement. The WWS opportunities included work on public infrastructure maintenance, environmental clean-up, social services (working through civil society organizations), and municipal and state services (excluding municipal and state enterprises). The program benefits were rationed using a self-targeting mechanism with two main components: (1) a relatively low stipend was offered to WWS participants (approximately 80 percent of the net minimum wage, or \$200 per month); (2) WWS opportunities were labor intensive and thus generally unattractive to better-off households.

5.2 Fragile situations

Public works can also serve as a crucial source of survival in fragile and post conflict settings, where threats of violence and instability can undermine peace building efforts. As communities recover from conflict, public works programs remain a popular intervention as they concurrently provide short-term employment opportunities and support community empowerment; this helps build longer-term trust with communities that may prevent violence from reoccurring.

While the evidence on the use and application of public works in fragile settings is quite thin, this section looks at experiences from a few recent documented settings. For example, the 2007-08 food crisis saw a scale-up of public works schemes in fragile situations. The experiences of Liberia and Sierra Leone, in particular, confirmed the attractiveness of public works programs in a context of ongoing fragility. In both countries, the productive potential of public works programs was realized as a mechanism to promote temporary employment in a situation of limited labor opportunities. While complex to initiate, they demonstrated the importance of existing institutional mechanisms to support the introduction of public works operations in a context of crisis. Flexibility at the community level proved vital in terms of rationing program participation and correctly allocating beneficiaries. Third-party involvement was also key, whether for payments (EcoBank in Liberia) or in community-level facilitation (in Sierra Leone). While these experiences have laid the foundation for follow-up programs, they have also pointed up the need for evolution in order to meet the local context. This includes improved targeting mechanisms and tailoring programs toward most-vulnerable groups such as youth and women (see Andrews et al. 2011, 2012).

Recent experiences under Sri Lanka's Emergency Northern Recovery Project (ENREP) focus more squarely on the social cohesion aspects of public works. ENREP was established with the aim of resettling 100,000 of the returnees, as they sought to resume their economic and social lives after the end of the civil conflict. Today, the ENReP public works (better known as cash for work or CfW) is the largest provider of public works for the people resettled in the Northern Province. The World Bank recently undertook a brief review to better understand public works as a tool for providing emergency relief and building community infrastructure. The findings of this review showed that carefully planned PWs programs can stimulate vulnerable people to re-engage in economic and livelihood activities with a sense of renewed hope. However, it also found that the focus of donor and humanitarian agencies, in implementing PWs programs in post-war contexts, differ considerably. While some projects emphasized community infrastructure building, the ensuring of household food security; income generation promotion and self employment support were the focus of other agencies.

In general, the PWs programs in post conflict Sri Lanka had been appreciated by the majority of participating households. Positive aspects or strengths of the ENReP PWs were: a) timely implementation, as soon as people began to resettle back in their own villages; b) the provision of a separate grant component (equivalent to 10 days of work) to clean house premises/home gardens; and C) outreach to the most vulnerable families, such as female headed HHs, disabled and elderly HHs. Weaknesses identified by the review included delayed payments, poor selection of projects at community level, lack of flexibility to extend public works for late comers, low wage rates, and the abrupt termination of projects (WBI, 2012). Apart from the above mentioned gains and challenges, however, the most noted outcome has been the 'social capital' built through public works. Community gatherings for PWs projects, sharing of labor

and meals, working as groups (team work), and involving elderly members and children as indirect beneficiaries of the PWs program had contributed towards promoting a sense of belonging and (renewed) community ownership among the newly resettled families. It had been said that PWs projects were the first community level gathering after having arrived from the IDP camps/welfare centers.

A couple of quotes from a beneficiary of PWs:

In response to a question on what she felt about the ENReP PWs, Sachchithananthan Subodhini, 36 years from Thervipuram in the Puthukkudiyiruppu Division of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, said that she was "Very happy. As a result of cash for work, the whole village is working as one; for our own community and village. You should come and see some of the places we have cleaned. You can even sleep on it." The same beneficiary, reflecting on her life journey since being displaced in 1995 said that "PWs had helped bring the community together. Prior to PWs, the village seemed abandoned but the shramadana (translated as volunteer work) helped to get the community back to its original state".

6. Conclusions

Public works programs appear to have an extra value added vis-à-vis other safety net instruments in promoting social cohesion—particularly where social tensions, unrest and instability exist—owing to specific design and implementation features such as community participation, creation of assets that have spillover effects for community. While the evidence base on impact is weak, we see public works contributing to social cohesion objectives across a range of low income and fragile settings—typically as an indirect effect. The three main pathways to social cohesion include: promoting voice and participation through program processes; improving social inclusion and equality through temporary labor market participation; smoothing social tension and building trust in response to sudden shocks, as well as longer term fragility.

In terms of promoting voice and participation through program processes, communities can be especially engaged in targeting and project selection processes. This has been evidenced in countries, such as India, Ethiopia and Yemen. For many participants, public works programs become an entry point in interacting with local government officials, thereby bolstering local accountability mechanisms as well. Recent innovations on this front are reflected through India's MGNREGS program. At the same time, care is warranted that the same informational advantages participation provides, do not lead to corruption or program capture by elites.

An emerging evidence base shows particularly promising results on the degree to which public works promotes inclusion and equality, particularly from the gender perspective. Evidence from India and Ethiopia points to female beneficiaries reporting increased control over their own resources, improved societal status, benefits from assets created, among others. Similarly, recent impact studies point to a striking narrowing of wage gaps, despite some regional variation. Youth integration in PWP, as well, is proving to have strong potential in contributing to the overall societal stability. This is of particular importance in fragile and post-conflict settings, where public works have played a big role in curbing the rise of societal violence, generating social capital in efforts of achieving post-crisis resettlement, and providing employment and

training for youth and at-risk populations. The sustainability of such programs, however, is often compromised by stop-start donor funding; as well as complexity in terms of designing training or vocational opportunities.

In times of crisis—including macroeconomic shocks—public works programs can be leveraged to build trust and engagement with new or existing governance and accountability structures. In Argentina, for instance, the Jefes program granted local consultative councils a major role in program implementation, which in turn proved to be promising institutions of promoting social control. Nevertheless, the social value of community services varied on the activity. In such instances, the types of work matter, particularly in creating “worthwhile” jobs, a sense of accomplishment among the beneficiaries, and valuable community assets

Going forward, a number of design and implementation principles ought to be taken into account. In designing public works, program objectives need to be clearly identified. For example, India’s MGNREGS is clearly predicated around rights and inclusion, making the realization of social cohesion more realistic. In other contexts, cohesion emerges as an indirect benefit, a process in which there may be tensions between program objectives. The case of Argentina shows tensions between poverty reduction and employment generation objectives. Design features are critical to realize different objectives around social cohesion. For example, gender neutrality cannot be taken for granted; Therefore, programs need to consider simple measures to encourage female participation, such as locating projects close to home, adjusting wage payment modalities, introducing quotas for recruitment etc.

Clearly a major agenda going forward is how to build a stronger evidence base on social cohesion, and this will suggest tailoring program evaluation and monitoring instruments in advance to ensure complex community dynamics can be addressed. To this end, the blending of qualitative and quantitative instruments may be especially important, as illustrated in the context of understanding social cohesion aspects under the PSNP. In terms of the major empirical gaps that require further analysis, one might consider:

- Better understanding of community structures and processes, which can be inherently complex. For instance, the targeting of community members and use of community targeting mechanisms are often raised as means of building cohesion. While this is very likely the case in some regards, the opposite may be true. Relying too heavily on community targeting may indeed have a negative impact on cohesion, thereby reinforcing these barriers rather than breaking them down.
- In the design process of programs, it is important to take into account features that may undermine social cohesion and lead to social exclusion of particularly vulnerable groups e.g. work standards and norms that cause undue burdens on a household, or social stigmas associated with enrolling in safety nets programs. This may suggest the value of community involvement in project planning e.g. under Ethiopia’s PSNP. For example, the timing and the duration of projects should be considered. In short term contexts, as well, it can be difficult to build up the capacity and resources required to promote social cohesion; and challenging to step away from the trade-offs between scaling up quickly and expanding program coverage.

- The motivation behind public works as a preferred instrument, is strongly dependant on political economy forces, including popular support for ‘productive’ social protection investments, as well as seeing public works as a mechanism of realizing the ‘right’ to work and earn a livelihood. In cases where services and public works are delivered through top-down national programs, there will be little incentive for communities to take responsibility in promoting social cohesion (particularly related to crime and violence reduction). A mixture of state and non-state, bottom-up and top-down approaches, is a better underpinning for longer-term institutional transformation.

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