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**The *Right* to a Job, the *Right Types* of Projects:
Employment Guarantee Policies from a Gender Perspective**

by

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ABSTRACT

There is now widespread recognition that in most countries, private-sector investment has not been able to absorb surplus labor. This is all the more the case for poor unskilled people. Public works programs and employment guarantee schemes in South Africa, India, and other countries provide jobs while creating public assets. In addition to physical infrastructure, an area that has immense potential to create much-needed jobs is that of social service delivery and social infrastructure. While unemployment and enforced “idleness” persist, existing time-use survey data reveal that people around the world—especially women and children—spend long hours performing unpaid work. This work includes not only household maintenance and care provisioning for family members and communities, but also time spent that helps fill public infrastructural gaps—for example, in the energy, health, and education sectors. This paper suggests that, by bringing together public job creation, on the one hand, and unpaid work, on the other, well-designed employment guarantee policies can promote job creation, gender equality, and pro-poor development.

Keywords: Unemployment, Poverty, Employer of Last Resort, Employment Guarantee Schemes, Gender, Household Production, South Africa

JEL Classifications: B5, E24, E61, E62, H1, J16

INTRODUCTION

Structural adjustment and financial liberalization have resulted in uneven and, more often than not, disappointing patterns of socioeconomic development. Put simply, the expectation that unfettered markets lead to higher growth rates, job creation, and hence, to decreased poverty and more equitable income distribution never came to pass. Investment did not always flow where most needed, as in the case of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. In those cases that it did, healthy growth rates did not necessarily lead to reduction of poverty and income inequality, as the experience of most Latin American countries can attest to. Perplexed governments, international development agencies, and the Bretton Woods institutions have arrived at the conclusion that “trickle down” effects do not take place in a timely fashion and it is generally acknowledged that fresh ideas are needed.

In the search for new directions we must keep in mind that since poverty is the result of different processes, one size will not fit all. Some people find themselves in poverty because they are (or become) landless. Other people are caught in the grinds of meager wages and precarious, unregulated work conditions. Yet others lack the skills and education level to match them to better paying existing vacancies. Clearly, the policy recommendations in each of these cases would be quite different. There also exists another group of people whose economic suffering is largely based on chronic and severe lack of employment opportunities stemming from the inability of the private sector to create a sufficient number of jobs to absorb surplus labor. Ready, willing, and able to work, this army of the unemployed simply cannot find a job.

Unemployment, underemployment, and forced “inactivity” confront many people in developing and developed countries alike. This issue has invited much research and commentary in the economics profession and a review of this literature is beyond the scope of this paper.² Whatever the reason may be, the requisite structural transformations and growth rates needed to absorb those forced into idleness are too high for most countries, and hence unattainable within a short- to a medium-term horizon. In such instances, the government acting as an employer of last resort (ELR), and thus implementing a public employment guarantee policy (EGP), can go a long way. The

² For an excellent discussion of the issues, see Islam (2006).

focus on this paper is on this very issue. ELR and EGP ought to be considered as an instrumental part of the *policy mix* that shields people against unemployment and inactivity.³

In addition to income generation, these programs have the potential to contribute in many ways to improved living conditions. They can create infrastructural assets with the potential to crowd in new investment. When designed in ways that take into account the needs of those engaged in low productivity subsistence activities and agriculture, they can increase food security. In underserved areas they can result in environmental restoration, water conservation, and empowerment of local communities to design projects that increase the quality of life. As we will see shortly, they can also be effective in reducing the burdens of women and children who perform long hours of unpaid work and unpaid care work. Finally, as progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has been slow in some countries, public job creation ought to be given due consideration as a policy option toward that end.

The paper is organized as follows: Section I discusses the importance and historical context of employment guarantee policies. Section II is devoted to the interface of gender issues and EGPs. We start by establishing the link between unpaid work and the economy and proceed to identify key areas in which new public job creation would reduce existing time burdens for women. Section III highlights selective aspects of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) of South Africa in regard to gender issues that were raised in the previous section, and concludes by summarizing briefly the employment and income outcomes of a hypothetical simulation that contemplates scaling up a sector of the EPWP.

³ They include sectoral growth trends that favor large-scale enterprises and dismantle medium-size and/or small-size firms, overall low employment intensity of investment, war and conflict, international agreements that privilege the economies of some countries while disadvantaging others, the weakening of the state's ability to exercise expansionary monetary, fiscal, and exchange rate policies, integration difficulties of specific groups into the economy, deeply rooted inequalities in access to resources and to education, rural seasonal unemployment, and the precarious nature of self-employment (Islam 2004; Cornia 2004; Milanovic 2003).

I. EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE POLICIES

The idea of government acting as the *employer of last resort* by guaranteeing employment, has a very long history that can be traced back to enlightened rulers in India—as far back as the fourth and fourteenth century—who introduced such programs to avert famine (Drèze and Sen 1989). Over the years, many countries have undertaken what has variably been known as “employment guarantee schemes,” “public employment programs,” “food for work,” and “public works programs.” Such government-led relief projects have been implemented to provide the means of survival to those most affected by natural disasters and economic crises (Hirway and Terhal 1994). In most cases, these were temporary emergency programs, which were to be phased out as conditions improved; however, the case has also been made for using such measures on a permanent basis (Minsky 1986, Papadimitriou 1998, Wray 2007, Mitchell 2001) to guard against the many undesirable effects of underemployment and to promote the right to a job as a guaranteed entitlement.

Historical Foundations of ELR and EGPs in the North and the Global South⁴

In the period following the industrial revolution, countries with relatively well-developed markets in the North experienced periodic production and financial recessions. Despite colonial rule that provided them with cheap raw materials, ample product markets and other privileges, crises kept reoccurring and unemployment swings followed suit. Against the prevailing wisdom, J.M. Keynes understood early on that underemployment of labor and other resources was part and parcel of the normal functioning of the market-oriented economic system. Full employment equilibrium in his view was rather the exception. The Great Depression validated his views quite powerfully as unemployment in the United States stood at 25 percent by 1933. His earlier views had recommended government intervention as the only solution to pushing the economy away from a stagnant state and policymakers were now listening, at last.

A much-cited example is that of the New Deal program, an intervention beyond the current uses of countercyclical fiscal and monetary policy. Introduced by Roosevelt in the United States in 1933, it provided direct public employment to the jobless in a host of

⁴ Kaboub 2007

different project areas (Kaboub 2007). Environmental and electrification projects were developed alongside the construction of new roads, bridges, schools, and other related public assets. Unemployment fell dramatically but for political reasons the program was discontinued a few years later. Nonetheless, in the years that followed many economists were converted to the notion that another depression was possible and that it was the business of government to implement countercyclical monetary and fiscal policy. Some economists, prominently among them Sir William Beveridge⁵, but also John Pierson and John Philip Wernette called for the government to guarantee full employment through direct job creation at fair wages, as needed (Kaboub 2007). Stabilization policies were adopted widely in most countries, but the institutionalization of employment guarantee as a policy instrument was short lived and overall it did not take a stronghold.

At the same time, around the middle of the last century, economists concerned with development issues began to view public employment creation programs as a means to address the endemic problem of low levels of employment and the concomitant underutilization of labor resources. Hirway (2007) traces this view to Nurkse and Hirschman and more recently to Tinbergen who have argued that surplus labor in developing economies suffered from a shortage of capital formation and that constructing productive assets would expand employment opportunities while potentially encouraging crowding-in of new investment. Tinbergen in particular, viewed public works programs as “transitional” ones that moved a labor surplus economy closer to full employment through “strategic use of surplus labor” in generating productive assets that, although needed, the private sector would not provide (Hirway 2007).

Hyman Minsky (1986), an economist mostly known for his work on financial fragility, cited the need for governments to serve as an *employer of last resort* (ELR). In his view market economies did not possess an internal mechanism to identically match jobs to those seeking them. Concerned with poverty in the United States, he advocated that the “war on poverty” ought to be fought through public job creation. Much like the liquidity role that the U.S. Federal Reserve facilitates in financial markets, in labor markets only the government could create “an infinitely elastic demand for labor at a

⁵ In his book, *Full Employment in a Free Society*, Beveridge advocated that the government ought to guarantee full employment, which for him was defined as always having more available vacancies than unemployed people, not slightly fewer jobs than those who need them

floor or minimum wage that does not depend upon long- and short-run profit expectations of business. Since only government can divorce the offering of employment from the profitability of hiring workers, the infinitely elastic demand for labor must be created by government” (Minsky 1986).

Minsky envisioned ELR as a permanent policy whereby the state assumes a buffer-stock employment role, absorbing the unemployed during contractionary periods and releasing them back into the market as needed. In addition to providing much needed jobs, ELR would have the added benefit of price stabilization, as it would reduce wage fluctuations over the medium term. In the late 1980s and 1990s the role of the government as provider of social entitlements and guarantor of employment disappeared from the policy dialogue table. Instead, it gave way to the “invisible hand” in the form of neo-liberal policies in the north and structural adjustment policies in the south. The role of the state was to be minimized through the selling of public assets and drastic reductions in public services; expanded and highly unregulated entrepreneurial freedom was presumed to result in economic growth that would take care in a more efficient manner all of citizen’s needs that the newly diminished role of the state would no longer provide.

This exclusive emphasis on market-driven growth and price stabilization as the singular anchor of monetary policy also culminated in the polarity of “good economic outcome/bad social outcome” thinking. The former (economic policy) was understood as creating an economic environment conducive to investment and growth, predicated among other things on “smaller government.” The latter (social policy) was assigned the responsibility of supporting the vulnerable, poor, and poorest in an attempt to create a more humane and equitable society by providing a safety net (Barrientos et al. 2005).

Indigence, increased vulnerability, lack of employment opportunities, precariousness in job creation, sub-living standard wages, spatial displacement and deterioration of income distribution are viewed as *social ills* to be relegated to poverty alleviation programs. Yet, the root cause, the very economic policy orientation that contributes to the “ills” remained intact. As the government reduced its public goods provisioning and service delivery role and as economic outcomes failed to promote a more equitable and just society, inequalities ended up rising and thus, much of *social*

protection policy pointed towards *compensatory* measures and away from *entitlements*. By assigning to social policy what economic policy was breeding we ended up with ineffective interventions (Cagatay and Elson 2000; Antonopoulos and Fontana 2006; Razavi 2007).

If the inability of the markets to generate sufficient employment is taken up as a serious problem, it is essential to consider ELR and EGPs as permanent policies—not temporary measures—much like Central Bank interventions. Budgetary allocations and institutional frameworks must be developed in ways that make them viable instruments with a long horizon in mind (Wray 2007). In developing and developed countries, fiscal restraint and the drive to streamline government spending led to a shift away from “entitlements” and towards “self reliance.” At present a post-Washington consensus has opened up space for policy reversals in that government spending is contemplated once again as necessary and desirable (Sachs et al. 2004, Roy et al. 2006) and this presents an opportune moment for rethinking the role of employment guarantee instruments.

Broader Aims of EGPs

Based on the supposition that protracted unemployment, discouraged worker effects, and forced “inactivity” are cyclical and/or structural problems in the global south and north alike, ELR and EGPs are entitlement programs that guarantee *the right to a job* (Forstater 1998, Mitchell 2001, Papadimitriou 1998). In cases of structural unemployment, when combined with other interventions that promote community-based assets and small enterprises, ELR programs can result in localized engines of economic development. They are not proposed as a panacea. Rather, they tackle poverty that is experienced by those whose income deprivation and social exclusion is due to joblessness. Finally, although they contribute to poverty alleviation, such government initiatives were not envisioned as “targeted” social protection programs for the poor; they were meant to provide a universal guarantee of employment, an entitlement on demand, and for the duration deemed necessary by the participating members themselves. In effect, the design of projects has historically resulted in self-targeting and this has been discussed extensively elsewhere.

In the twenty-first century many economists view employment guarantee programs as a means to promoting pro-poor development (Bhaduri 2005, Kregel 2006). EGP and ELR interventions could modify the economic growth path so as to include segments of the population that are excluded from remunerative productive employment *if* space is created for labor-intensive based development (ILO, EIIP). Within such policy space, the adoption of well designed projects will lead to job creation for the unemployed and “inactive” poor, contributing to (1) prevention of starvation and eradication of poverty of the poor at the bottom, (2) regeneration of natural resources, which are rapidly depleting and degrading under the neo-liberal policies and on which the livelihood of the majority of population depends, (3) growth of agriculture and allied activities that would establish strong linkages between primary and non primary sectors, and (4) construction of infrastructure that would improve quality of life as well as create enabling conditions for overall economic growth (Hirway 2006).

These features also make EGPs an ideal tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For the most part, discussion on the feasibility of the MDGs has focused on the lack of financing resources and on ways of bridging the funding gap, with many ongoing exercises centered on the costing of MDGs. Their objective is to gauge the total resource requirement of achieving the MDGs. Resource allocation and policy selection is critical in this context, and guaranteeing employment ought to be given due consideration especially within the MDG framework.

There are multiple channels through which employment can speed up the achievement of MDG targets and many have focused on this issue recently. (Islam 2006, and numerous publications of the UNDP International Poverty Centre in Brasilia). Well-designed employment guarantee policies for necessary infrastructure and social services can go a long way toward the achievement of MDGs. A good place to start would be to include an employment-intensity mandate for all MDG related projects (for physical and social infrastructural asset creation).

Government led job creation has not only been advocated at the theoretical level. Over the years, India, South Africa, Argentina, Ethiopia, Korea, Peru, Bangladesh, Ghana, Cambodia, France and Chile, among many others, have intermittently adopted

policies that effectively rendered them “employers of last resort.” There exists a large degree of variation between countries in regard to the reason programs were initiated.

Often, especially in Latin America, these programs have been used as part of a populist agenda as in the case of short lived “social funds.” In other cases, for example in the Indian state of Maharashtra, they became permanent basic entitlements during seasonal unemployment and drought periods since the mid-1970’s; yet, in other instances, i.e., Argentina in 2001 and Korea in 1997, to ameliorate the after-effects of a financial crisis; in Bangladesh and Ethiopia, to enhance food security; and in South Africa, to alleviate chronic poverty and increase employment among the most devastated pockets of the population in the post-apartheid era⁶.

In addition to duration and motivation in jump-starting such programs, differences also exist in the source of financing, types of projects undertaken, selection criteria for participation, mode of remuneration, institutional arrangements, degree of decentralization, level of transparency and community involvement, and length of guaranteed employment for participants.

II. GENDER DIMENSIONS OF EGPs

While not the case in every single country, on a world scale the majority of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty are women. The vulnerability of women to poverty is strongly linked to the gender division of labor in paid and unpaid work (as well as asymmetries in access to and decision making over use of assets and resources). They are income-poor, but also overtly taxed in terms of the time they allocate in caring for the sick, fetching the wood, collecting the water, preparing meals, etc. As a consequence, the *overhead unpaid work time* (Harvey and Taylor 2000) that poor women have to spend in securing inputs for household production use and in providing care for family members is of concern and constitutes a dimension of asymmetry between them and the rest of the population (Budlender 2002).

An intuitive way of grasping poor women’s positions is arrived at by estimating (a) the number of paid hours they would need to work to reach the poverty line and (b)

⁶ An Appendix at the end of this paper provides more detail on country level experiences.

adding to that the number of hours of unpaid work they perform⁷. In South Africa for the year 2000 (and leaving aside for the moment the fact that employment opportunities may not have existed) unskilled women would have had to work four extra hours⁸ per day to earn the poverty level income, as compared to unskilled men.⁹ Meanwhile, Time Use Survey data (2000) reveal that women on average spend two extra hours and fifteen minutes on unpaid work each day¹⁰, which adds up to about six extra hours of work per day for women vis-à-vis men. Besides being income poor, women's time for sleep, self-care, political participation, and relaxation is unfairly taxed on both accounts, as explained above.

Among poor women, who are primarily the main providers of unpaid work and unpaid care work for their households and communities, infrastructure that enhances access to communal resource inputs and provisioning of basic social services is of extreme importance. To make sensible use of public funds, a selection criterion for EGP projects requires that participants be provided with productive and useful jobs. A key finding in reviewing a number of EGP projects is that they consistently miss thousands of "hidden vacancies" that can potentially expand the menu of new employment-intensive projects. These productive but "hidden" jobs exist in invisible unpaid work areas that can

⁷ This is a modified version of Vickery's (1977) seminal paper on time poverty which was based on the idea that the working poor (versus the non-poor) need to spend longer hours performing paid work if they are to secure sufficient income just to reach the poverty line. She then proceeded to argue that they would have less time for household production, keeping free time as an inviolable constant at about 10 hrs per day while in our view it is the "free time" that is reduced, resulting in decreasing human capabilities and health effects.

⁸ Author's calculation: women received on average roughly seven or eight rand per hour and men around eleven to twelve. Given existing wage differentials of unskilled females to males to earn 560 rand per month men needed to work 50 hrs per week; women needed to devote forty percent more hrs to reach the level of income. The four extra hours estimate is based on a five day week at 10 hours per day for men. Alternatively, for a six day per week scheduled work, men would need to work around 8 hrs a day and women around 13 hrs.

⁹ Hourly wage calculations are based on LFS 2000 and TUS 2000. The year 2000 is chosen for consistency purposes as TUS was conducted in this year. Calculations are from the Levy research project on "Impact of Employment Guarantee Policies on pro-poor growth and gender equality" with particular contributions from Kalie Pauw and Rosemary Leaver.

¹⁰ For comparison, it is worth noting that the equivalent figure in the Netherlands and France is around two hours while in Italy and Mexico it is over four and a half hours. UNDP (2006) *Human Development Report*, UNDP: (New York) and ECLAC (2007) *Women's Contribution to Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean*. In Benin for instance, collecting water and wood and carrying it home takes on average three and a half months of women's time per year (Charmes and Hirway 2006). We must also note that for the majority of countries the combined paid/unpaid work time for women is higher (Antonopoulos forthcoming).

be reduced if EGPs include projects that result in (a) asset creation that facilitates gaining access to goods that are gathered from communal lands through unpaid work, such as water and firewood (b) assets that enhance productivity in subsistence unpaid work and unpaid family work of products destined to reach markets (c) direct replacement of unpaid work in the area of public service delivery of care. All these represent valuable inputs for poor people, and women in particular, as they enter into livelihoods: from tending gardens, cooking food, providing sanitation of living quarters to home maintenance and caring for the ill.

In poor communities, deficits in public service delivery are compensated for by long hours of unpaid work performed mostly by women and children. This work is undervalued, undercounted, and unprotected. Perhaps, not quite considered proper “work” it has also remained “invisible” to employment guarantee job creation. If projects are created in these areas, women may undertake *some* of these EGP jobs, but not necessarily. Men may also do so, and that would be an interesting process of transforming gender relations within households and communities. Worth may be assigned to paid care activities anew, and that would be a welcomed outcome since at the moment they are at the bottom of the wage structure in all countries. In either case, the point to note here is that as road construction yields benefits, so too do water wells, woodlots, and provisioning of home-based care, to give some examples.

Unpaid Work and the Economy

Unpaid work activities entail every day routine household maintenance work, such as cooking, cleaning, shopping, and caring for family and community. It also includes providing care to the chronically ill in hospitals due to lack of nurse-aides, sanitation personnel, cooks, etc; or at home, due to shortened hospital stays dictated by structural adjustment policies of the late 80s and 90s. It is time spent performing unpaid work in these areas that we will refer to as “subsidies” to public sector service provisioning (Picchio 2003, Antonopoulos and Fontana 2006).

In developing countries in particular, a substantial amount of time is spent to provide for the health, water, sanitation, and other needs of the family. This may be due to insufficient income, and hence inability to buy services in the market, or due to public

sector deficits in provisioning, or both. Time use data and satellite accounts allow for estimations of the volume of unpaid work performed in provisioning of goods and service delivery that households do not have alternative means of accessing. This is beyond the scope of this paper but it suffices to mention that recent UNIFEM estimates of unpaid work performed by women and children indicates the production of over eighteen trillion USD of goods and services annually.

This work places an enormous time-tax on some people asymmetrically, particularly on poor women and children in developing countries, limiting other aspects of social engagement. In some cases, it reduces the time spent in self-employment, subsistence production of foodstuffs and market participation; a case in point here is taking care of HIV/AIDS patients in Sub-Saharan Africa which pushes poor families deeper into poverty. In other cases it limits involvement in political processes, attending school and to medical appointments, skill upgrading, artistic expression, community participation, and leisure. Internalized as one's "destiny," an unchangeable, unfortunate duty but still inviolable obligation, the disproportionate engagement of parts of the population in unpaid care work can lead to social exclusion, time-poverty, and even to depletion of human capabilities.

Gender dimensions of EGP are pertinent in two distinct areas¹¹. The first relates to women's equitable access to jobs created through EGP, which would result in appropriate men and women participation ratios. Much like women's participation in labor markets, this requires that female supply of labor issues are addressed (Krishnaraj et al. 2004a and 2004b). The second entails project design that is responsive to asset creation and service delivery that poor women need (King-Desjardin 1996). At the local level, women's participation and input is crucial is determining specific projects. At the aggregate level, and given women's responses in focus groups and other NGO studies which provide ample testimony to that effect, time use data reveal the types of jobs that would result in reducing unpaid work and unpaid care burdens. The following then can be asked and answered:

a) Under what conditions will women and men be able to register for available jobs on an equal footing?

¹¹ for a thorough introduction see King-Desjardin (1996).

The issue here is whether gender differentiated entry barriers and job assignment segregation exist in such programs and the extent to which such barriers can be identified and removed at the design phase. Existing patterns of division of labor, social reproduction, reproductive health issues, and other relevant specificities come into play, which require appropriate provisions to ensure female participation. Some of these entail location of work site and length of work day; equal pay for equal and comparable work (time-motion studies); gendered nature of work assignments which may exclude women from some jobs; mode of remuneration, piece rate or day schedule for example; availability of crèche (an on-site childcare provision); and allocated time and shade to feed young children.

Observed ratios of registered men to women give a clear indication on the issue. What may be easy interventions to allow women to participate in larger numbers? It is tempting to draw conclusions and provide a tentative answer by reviewing the existing literature but a much more in depth analysis is required. These interventions are of importance clearly, but so are male-migration patterns, whether women are heads of households or not, whether gaining access to market jobs is easier for men than women, etc.

There exists immense variation across countries in regard to participation rates and equitable remuneration between men and women, as the Appendix A highlights. The existing evidence shows overwhelmingly that women want to enroll in EGP projects and wish to have a say in the choice of works (Tcherneva and Wray 2005, Devereux and Solomon 2006). A frequent issue that comes up is that institutional barriers exist that prohibit women from participating in decisions regarding selection of projects and, design, implementation, and evaluation, even when there is space for community participation.

b) To what extent do projects that are oriented toward physical and social infrastructure assets benefit women via reducing unpaid work burdens?

There is a severe deficit of gender-specific analysis of impacts of EGP infrastructure creation (Devereux 2005, Devereux and Solomon 2006). This points to the need to develop gender-aware models that can link EGP to household level data. From our perspective gender access to and ownership of various resources such as land are

important in determining and analyzing the types of assets that women and men benefit from. In addition, we need an analytical framework that can account for unpaid work before and after EGP. This would permit simulations that can inform the design of EGPs and also assess impacts on households of different socioeconomic characteristics and on women in particular.

A gender informed analysis, from our perspective, would have as its starting point the recognition that women are the bearers of responsibilities for most social reproduction activities. As a consequence, women assign greater priority to EGP job creation that replaces unpaid work and results in assets that reduces unpaid work burdens¹². Men, on the other hand, might emphasize improved access to markets and would therefore favor assets such as road construction and road maintenance. But these scenarios need to be contextualized in accordance with the variations throughout the world.

The point is that if decision-making is bottom-up and women are included in the selection of labor-based programs, women will be able to make these critical decisions themselves. Lack of local involvement and participatory decision-making are often cited as reasons for the failure of EGP development projects in general. Without women's inputs in selection, design, and implementation of employment creation programs, the risks of failure (especially with respect to meeting women's needs and circumstances) are high, because they could not possibly take account of women's and men's different needs and expectations *vis-à-vis* various kinds of infrastructure.

In India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) incorporates several gender dimensions and provisions have been included mandating for example at least one third of its beneficiaries to be women; ensuring locally available employment, thus reducing a male-bias as men are more likely to migrate; allowing for spaces to feed and take care of children, etc. As compared to previous employment schemes in India, such as the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) and Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) these are credible advances on the gender front. Appendix A highlights gender dimensions of public employment for selected programs throughout the world.

¹² see mid-reviews of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, India and www.solutionexchange.org

Gender Awareness in Project Design

Many low-income countries, in addition to large deficits in social services, face a severe lack of basic physical infrastructure. Water delivery systems, electrification, road construction, drainage and sanitation, buildings for schooling and health services are in short supply. More often than not, long unpaid work hours co-exist with deficits in employment, especially for unskilled workers. In some countries EGPs have taken the form of employment intensive infrastructure projects¹³, which substitute labor for machines within the same budgetary allocation for creation of public physical assets, such as road construction in many African countries. A case in point here is the Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa. In other cases projects are devised that guarantee a fixed number of workdays, as through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in rural India, which constitutionally mandates a hundred days of work per annum to rural poor unemployed workers¹⁴.

An important but overlooked aspect of these initiatives is that female participation rates have been very often high, which points to the existence of unemployment among women but also to hidden unemployment in the form of what is commonly referred to as the “inactive” population. In Maharashtra, India, women comprise 53 percent of the program participants and earn about thirty percent of household income (Engkvist 1995). Chile’s Minimum Employment Program (PEM), originally set up in 1975, had reached a 73 percent female participation rate by 1987 (Buvinic 1996). When the Jefes program was introduced in Argentina in 2001, it anticipated 400,000 participants, heads of households, and to the surprise of officials it reached close to two million people or five percent of the population (Tcherneva 2005). In a year’s time, 75 percent of registered participants were women. These programs therefore enhance employment opportunities for women.

Nonetheless, public employment guarantee programs have generally invested much more in infrastructure projects such as construction and maintenance of roads and have placed less emphasis on projects that provide *social services* or those that target *the*

¹³ ILO 2003.

¹⁴ Appendix B provides a short review of programs adopted in India, South Africa, and Argentina. These countries have in recent times engaged in extensive EGP initiatives as part of their national socioeconomic agenda. Many other country experiences, listed by region, have been summarized and can be found in the same Appendix to this paper.

*efficiency and enhancement of public service delivery*¹⁵. Building a hospital will not be sufficient unless its staffing includes nurses' aides, personnel that cleans and sanitizes the premises, prepares the meals, and assists the patients with daily functions. Encouraging educational attainment will require the construction of the physical space and the presence of a teacher. School attendance will be enhanced if girls are not required to help their families take care of the chronically ill at home by fetching water and providing care, as is often the case in households with HIV/AIDS virus inflicted members in many parts of the world. Implementation of these programs, when they address infrastructural deficits in public service will benefit women and children by alleviating work that is drudgery and places disproportionate time burdens on them.

Public job guarantee programs designed with these concerns in mind will have three distinct benefits. First, it will generate income for participants, setting simultaneously a wage floor for all, including some benefits (depending on the design of the program). These newly created jobs may or may not be always filled by women. It could be that women are the ones employed as construction workers while young men provide home-based care to those chronically ill. In all cases, in addition to income, capacity building and skill acquisition will be gained to varying degrees. Second, the goods and services delivered will become part of the basket of consumption for underserved communities and populations, in itself a contribution to pro-poor development. Third, and quite significant for promoting gender equality, this may turn out to be a very powerful redistributive policy of unpaid work burdens.

The importance of employment guarantee programs in our context is that they can reduce, if well designed, unpaid work while redistributing the cost of reproduction by creating jobs for both women and men instead of reinforcing the existing gender based division of unpaid labor. If such projects are not gender informed, the danger is that they may create a typical "double" day effect for women. One way to avoid a "double" day for many women would be to socialize care work through EGPs.

¹⁵ One exception is the Jefes program in Argentina; a large number of projects are designed specifically to cater to community needs by providing a wide range of goods and services. (Tcherneva and Wray 2005). Also recently, some opening has been created within the Expanded Public Works Programmes in South Africa.

III. THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

South Africa is in a unique position regarding the potential of EGP's to promote gender equality. Since the dismantling of apartheid in the early 1990s, South Africa has enacted several employment generation initiatives. Their mixed but encouraging success eventually culminated in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), a 20 billion rand national initiative. Inaugurated in 2004 as a medium-term active labor market policy it aims to create one million new jobs for unemployed low-skilled workers over five years.¹⁶

One of the stated goals of the EPWP is to create jobs and reduce poverty among those who find themselves excluded from the mainstream economy, many of whom are women. According to recent estimates 30 percent of the population live below the poverty line¹⁷ designated at R322 per month and women account for over half. In regard to unemployment, the official rate is around 30 percent for women and 21 percent for men. For African women and men, the official unemployment rates are higher, 36 percent and 26 percent respectively (LFS 2006). It is worth noting that women also comprise the majority of discouraged workers, at 62 percent. Age is also a significant predictor of unemployment and of “inactivity” (over 60 percent for those between the ages of 20-34 years).

If patterns continue unabated, South Africa's current growth rate coupled with existing declining labor-intensity trends, unemployment will reach the range of 33 percent by 2014. (Pollin et al. 2006). A recent study estimates that even under the most expansionary fiscal and monetary policy regime, unemployment will still be around 15 percent¹⁸. To redress the severity of unemployment, part of the accepted policy response includes employment creation through EPWP. Traditionally, both in South Africa and internationally, such initiatives have concentrated on labor-intensive infrastructural projects. Such projects aimed at the creation and/or maintenance of roads, bridges, etc.

¹⁶ The EPWP was introduced as a repackaging of the successful elements of the Community Based Public Works Programme (CBPWP) and the Poverty Relief Fund, largely modelled on the Gundo Lashu project (McCord, 2004), a program implemented in 2001 through the Limpopo Province Roads Agency with funding from DFID – South Africa and technical assistance from the ILO (ILO 2007).

¹⁷ Income and Expenditures Survey (2005), Statistics South Africa

¹⁸ Pollin et al. (2006)

These have been extremely important and the ILO has been a strong partner of such initiatives for over ten years now.

From a gender perspective though, some *types* of projects, equally if not more labor intensive, are critically important and EPWP has already created the policy space for social sector infrastructural projects to be undertaken. Provided that multiple stakeholders (women, policy makers, community organizations, NGO's) enter a productive dialogue that points out *what* is mostly needed at the community level, EPWP can occupy a unique place in the international arena of pro-poor, pro-gender equality project design.

EPWP consists of four sectors and three among them are most pertinent in the context of our discussion: the infrastructure, environmental, and most importantly the social sector. If projects are designed in ways that are aware of the extra burdens placed on poor women, women can benefit in two distinct ways: first and foremost, their unpaid work burdens (including unpaid care work) can be reduced and second, women can benefit by enrolling in such projects as workers and receiving income. But what is critically important is that women who are presumed to be the beneficiaries of such projects are actively invited to participate at the level of design and implementation from the very beginning of the process. This will not only be empowering for women but will result in assets and services that will allow “ownership” of the process and its benefits. Making it a priority to reduce unpaid care work in general and to ensure that when women participate as EPWP workers they do not end up working even longer hours (combined paid and unpaid work time) is very important.

The specific choice and design of EPWP employment intensive projects must clearly emerge by careful consideration of local conditions and, in our view as we already stated, through community-based planning where the “voices” of those presumed to benefit provide key inputs to project design. The examples we provide below are simply indicative of the range of projects and jobs that could reduce the unpaid work (time-taxing) burdens on women:

- construction of durable housing and latrines for ultra poor and poor households
- construction of approach roads, feeder roads, paving of internal roads
- construction of water harvesting structures and improving traditional structures

- regeneration of common lands, plantation, and reforestation
- laying of water pipelines in underserved areas
- organizing the collection and distribution of water and firewood
- construction of public use ovens and midday meal kitchens
- waste land (public) development; watershed development for land cultivation
- home-based care assistance for the bed-ridden and disabled and mobile clinics
- early childhood development
- nurses aides and custodial personnel for clinics and hospitals
- school teachers' assistants, day care assistants for children of EGP workers and low income households

It is extremely encouraging that most of the above suggestions can be easily incorporated within the existing framework of EPWP. Many projects would be classified under the infrastructure and environment sectors. Still, the focus and specificities of the design of these projects would end up promoting gender equality and reducing drudgery. One can imagine the collection and distribution of water and wood and the cleaning up after permanent patients being provided by trained young men, leaving more time for women to engage in other activities, productive, political, or self-caring ones. Such interventions will improve productivity of labor (unpaid and paid), may result in crowding-in, but above all they will make living with dignity a stronger possibility.

Especially important is the inclusion of Home and community-based care (HCBC) as well as early childhood development (ECD) programs within the social sector. To make these effective interventions though, appropriate budgetary allocations must be made with the focus on improving livelihoods of poor women and their communities. At the moment, EPWP provides (1) R15 billion for infrastructure investments—increasing the labor-intensity of government-funded infrastructure projects, including building of roads, bridges, and irrigation systems; (2) R4 billion for environmental investments—creating work opportunities in public environmental improvement programs; and (3) R600 million for social services—creating work opportunities in public social programs, with a focus on home-based care workers and early childhood development.

It is our view, we must note, that much more is needed in this area. Though of critical importance, existing projects should be expanded beyond the current focus on

“learnerships” for people that provide care to HIV/AIDS patients and their children. The burdens of unpaid work, which women and children perform while caring for PLWA, must become visible and alternatives must be made available through specific social sector EPWP job creation within the social sector. In addition, the budgetary allocations seem to be extremely restricted. We must also keep in mind, as explained previously, that there is an interface between income poverty and time poverty, and women in poor households that have PLWA suffer all the more. Therefore, parallel to cash benefits currently stipulated, to even the playing field, EPWP care workers should be provided not only with training but also with work hours to substitute for unpaid work of overworked household members. In addition to current duties they can be assisting with fuel and water collection when needed, household maintenance that becomes overbearing when nursing someone around the clock, assisting with transportation and attending of appointments, etc¹⁹.

Despite notable improvements from previous initiatives in targeting, it has been argued that the EPWP may not offer the best poverty alleviation strategy for South Africa primarily because it provides employment too short in duration and it pays low wages (Streak and van der Westhuizen 2004). Given the short duration of employment, the EPWP has the potential to function well in the context of cyclical problems of varying degrees of severity, but to make a dent in structural unemployment the program would need to be scaled up (McCord 2004). The view is clearly emerging that in achieving its poverty reduction goal EPWP should be scaled up.

The results of the EPWP mid-term reviews are not publicly available yet. Among previous program evaluations, opinions differ in regard to the issue of targeting versus self-selection. Targeting, especially that of women, was a major difference between the Gundo Lashu and the Zibambele programs. While both programs used a wage right below the prevailing minimum in an attempt at efficient self-selection targeting, the Gundo Lashu program also used official quotas for participation articulated in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 1997 as a secondary criterion (60% women, subsequently lowered to 40% under the EPWP, 20% youth aged between 18 and 25 years, and 2%

¹⁹ There is a dearth of information in regard to detailed nationally representative studies and data collection on household coping mechanisms and unpaid work. Proper evaluation of EPWP projects ought to remedy this.

those with disabilities), allowing for the inclusion of a broad demographic grouping in the program. In the Zibambele program, in contrast, poverty is explicitly used as the targeting criterion, and within the group identified as the poor, membership of female-headed households is used as the next criterion to reach the subset of the most disadvantaged. Thus, while both programs address poverty in their policy objectives, the Zibambele program uses criteria that are more likely to ensure that the poor participate (McCord 2004).

Scaling up the Social Sector?

By its very nature social sector job creation is highly employment intensive as its activities are primarily service delivery focused. It is then reasonable to make the assumption that in comparison to infrastructural projects it uses more labor and fewer machines or other intermediate inputs, although some budgetary allocations would be devoted to materials and administration. If we classify labor inputs according to skill level and gender in four categories, the likelihood of unskilled females becoming EPWP workers in social service delivery is quite high.

In what follows we report some preliminary results of one extreme experiment that serves as a benchmark for other simulations but also highlights the differences of EPWP job creation that attracts and provides jobs to female unskilled persons, especially originating in ultra poor households, in the delivery of public services (which would substitute for unpaid work and unpaid care work). This may be achieved through targeting or self-selection. The example is chosen for illustrative purposes and is part of a much larger exercise that aims to detect the impacts of employment guarantee policies on income, primary and secondary employment, growth of output, and expansion of fiscal space for the case of South Africa²⁰.

The benchmark experiment allocates R10 billion in direct unskilled labor employment and traces the impacts on the rest of the economy, thus isolating secondary income multiplier effects from other sectoral secondary income effects. The highest

²⁰ A full report will be made available in the middle of November. The LIGESA (Levy Institute Gender SAM South Africa) is based on the PROVIDE SAM 2000 for South Africa and was modified to include gender dimensions by a team of South African Economists. Cecilia Punt, team leader of PROVIDE, and Kalie Pauw provided invaluable inputs. Rudi von Arnim, Marzia Fontana, Taun Toay provided valuable inputs and Haider Khan served as an external advisor.

impact is for female unskilled workers, for which the increase is 25 percent, reflecting their initial small share in total income. Other labor categories benefit as well, indirectly. Indirect job creation is highest for the female unskilled under the “male unskilled” scenario. A striking, but expected, result is that the income of the ultra-poor increases the most (by over 63 percent) when public work employment income is effectively channeled to them. Overall, it is households in urban slums that benefit more than households in other locations. The result that deserves most attention is that the highest impact on poverty reduction is achieved when female unskilled labor is targeted. The effect is larger than when unskilled males are targeted suggesting some important gender implications. The household group that appears to benefit the most from expansion of unskilled female employment is that of African households located in urban slums. Finally, the increase in GDP is estimated to be about 2.6 and in the absence of leakages (import-export, etc.) around half of the original expenditures would be providing additional tax revenue base.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

There is a particular urgency, and immense opportunity, to place the institutionalization of employment guarantee on the public dialogue table. The basic idea is straightforward: governments must step in to fill the employment deficit lackluster investment or jobless growth creates. We should not miss the opportunity to confront this issue, especially as we talk about the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, poverty alleviation, and pro-poor growth. Well-designed public job creation has the potential to steer the economy in a direction that is both efficient and equitable and to improve women’s position by reducing the time-tax imposed on them.

Perhaps an even stronger argument for EGPs rests with the fact that joblessness has repercussions that extend beyond income loss. Amartya Sen²¹ summarizes it aptly in *Development as Freedom*: “There is plenty of evidence that unemployment has many far-reaching effects other than loss of income, including psychological harm, loss of work motivation, skill and self-confidence, increase in ailments and morbidity (and even mortality rates), disruption of family relations and social life, hardening of social exclusion, and accentuation of racial tensions and gender asymmetries.”

²¹ This quotation is from Wray and Forstater 2004.

Finally, one cannot place enough emphasis on the ethical importance of avoiding exclusion of segments of the population from employment opportunities (Wray and Forstater 2004). It has been convincingly argued that “forced” migration, ethnic antagonism, susceptibility to dangerous ideologies, and anti-democratic political movements are linked to economic deprivation (Nafziger et al. 2000, Ocampo 2006). The argument for full employment is indeed based on the idea that the right to work is important in and of itself (Wray and Forstater 2004).

Access to a job is not a panacea. Healthy growth rates, environmental sustainability, decent work conditions, and a government that safeguards public good provisioning on a permanent base and strives for universal entitlements are key ingredients for a humane, caring economy. But for the poor and ultra poor willing to work and not having access to a job, public inaction constitutes social assignment of some to extreme hardship, poverty, and social exclusion.

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Appendix A

COUNTRY	PROGRAM	GENDER DIMENSIONS
Argentina	<i>Programa de Jefes y Jefas de Hogar Desocupados (JHD)</i>	High female participation (69%) was an unintended by-product of program design. Social service projects were gender informed, i.e. skill creation as carpenters, establishment of community soup kitchens and childcare centres.
Bangladesh	Maintenance and tree plantation under the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)	On average, 60,000 women participate annually. Institutionalized equal pay for equal and comparable work established. Provides a training component as well.
	Rural Maintenance Programme (RMP)	Employs women as laborers and supervisors for a period four years, plus provides training.
Bolivia	Emergency Social Fund (ESF)	Benefited over 1 million poor over 4 years, less than 1% of whom were women.
Botswana	Labour-Based Relief Programme and Labour-Intensive Rural Public Works Programme	60-70% female participation; offers time for breastfeeding without pay-cut implications and the promotion of women to supervisory roles.
Chile	Minimum Employment Program (PEM)	75% of the workers were women versus only 30% in the higher paying Program for Heads of Households (POJH).
El Salvador	Fund for Social Investment (FIS)	Works closely with NGOs and other community-based groups in targeting women.
Indonesia	<i>Padat Karya</i> programs	Low participation rates for women at only 19%.
Malawi	WFP Food-for-work	Women were over-represented due self-selection from males' monopoly on MASAF's cash wages.
	Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF).	PWPs offered targets of 40% female participation with actual rates ranging from 42% (road rehabilitation) to 27% (bridge work contracts).
Peru	<i>Programa de Apoyo al Ingreso Temporal (PAIT)</i>	Targeted women, but often delegated them to inferior roles that men would not tolerate.
Senegal	Agetip	Lacked cooperation mechanisms with NGOs and did not have poverty criteria, resulting in limited impacts on the lives of women and the very poor.
Sri Lanka	National Housing Development Authority (NHDA)	Through Community Development Councils (CDC), women organized and supervised construction work.
Uganda	Various rural public works programs in the west	Despite CBO selection, women's representation and participation are limited; although, women play a stronger role relative to Sierra Leone.
Zambia	Micro-Project Unit (MPU)	Despite task-based divisions, women were still forced to "subcontract" men for some of the tasks.
	Food for Work	Social-infrastructure creation was 90% female.
Zimbabwe	Rural Transport Study (RTS) sponsored programs	Program design incorporated input and participation of women, reducing burdens associated with travel and transport costs.

APPENDIX B

India

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA): The experience of India is quite unique. For many decades, popular mobilization sought to link public job creation to the “right to a job,” the “right to food,” and other basic entitlements, and many schemes were adopted as detailed below. These efforts culminated in the historic passage of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in August 2005, making India the first country ever to provide legal enforcement of the entitlement to the right to work as part and parcel of the fundamental right to live a life with dignity. This employment guarantee legislation provides manual labor to poor rural workers at the statutory minimum wage for up to 100 days. The act came into force in the poorest 200 rural districts on February 2, 2006, and is due to be extended to the whole of rural India within five years.

Prior to the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, India had witnessed a long history of employment generation schemes. The Employment Guarantee Scheme of Maharashtra (EGS) was introduced in 1972/73, when the State of Maharashtra faced an acute drought. The initiative guarantees work to any who apply, which must be provided within 15 days of being demanded. The permissible works are rural, especially agricultural, infrastructure (which includes minor irrigation works), soil conservation, afforestation, de-silting of tanks, stone-cutting and road construction and maintenance. Wages are paid at piece rates. The 1989 Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) merged two operational programs, the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), which have mandates similar to the EGS. An important and novel innovation is that 80 percent of the combined central and state budgets for JRY were released directly to the Village Panchayat, to be utilized for village works, with the remaining 20 percent being spent by the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). JRY stipulated that 30 percent of employment opportunities should be given to women. JRY was initially dispersed throughout India, without any specific focus on “backward areas” until late 1993, when it started to concentrate on “backward districts.” The JRY has been restructured and renamed the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY), in which each Gram Panchayat has

responsibility for preparing an annual action plan for taking up works, according to the felt needs of the people. (Hirway and Terhal 1994, Devereux and Solomon 2006).

NREGA has many similar features but also some distinguishing ones. Most notable among them is the accompanying Right to Information Act (RTI). From an institutional legislative point of view, the RTI Act provides citizens' access to any records held by the government or its agencies. The NREGA also makes references to transparency and accountability, citizen access to copies of records, and social audits. The guidelines detail proactive disclosure, whereby the government has a *duty* to inform people; providing access to all records for inspection, and the right to receive certified copies of any document *on demand*; and social audits, an ongoing process through which citizens can participate in the monitoring and implementation of the NREGA. It gives any citizen the legitimacy, to not only seek information, but also to record complaints, make suggestions, and demand answers in the public domain within a two-week time frame.

The second notable aspect is that NREGA includes several gender dimensions. Gender provisions have been included, mandating, for example, at least one third of its beneficiaries be women; ensuring locally available employment, thus reducing male rural-urban migration and lessening women's workload; allowing for spaces to feed and take care of children; and providing maternity leave time without penalty. As compared to previous employment schemes in India, such as the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), and Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), these are credible advances on the gender front.

But challenges remain. The importance of the Right to Information Act must be re-emphasized. It has made possible the inclusion of a gender perspective in social audits. Over 100 sites are being investigated, and the evidence is coming out. The overall finding is that women's participation in a selection of works is crucial. Members participating in social audits stress the "need to ensure that works focus on reducing women's workloads and enhance the availability and productivity of local natural resources, which are critical sources of livelihood activities for women." Online discussions through Solution Exchange provided documentation to this effect. This is a virtual space sponsored by the United Nations Country Team in India, and it offers development practitioners space to

provide and benefit from each other's observations. Several ongoing discussions are extremely pertinent to NRGEGA. (www.solutionexchange-un.net.in).

Argentina

Programa de *Jefes y Jefas* de Hogar Desocupados (JHD) was born via a presidential decree in January 2002 and signed into law on April 3, 2002. It represents the government's primary program to deal with the economic crisis that faced Argentina with the collapse of its currency board in 2001. Other safety net programs were reduced to shift funding to *Jefes*. Between April 3 and May 17, 2002, unemployed heads of households with underage children, persons with handicaps, or a pregnant woman were eligible and registered in a national database in preparation for program implementation. *Jefes* paid half of the poverty line income for half-time work, approximately the equivalent of US\$ 160 per month in exchange for 20 hours of work in community projects, including community services, small construction, maintenance activities, and participation in training programs, including finishing basic education.

The *Jefes* program had reached around 2 million beneficiaries by the end of 2003. One of the most surprising results of the program was the large influx of women—they accounted for over 60 percent of program participants in the beginning, and nearly 75 percent in 2005 (Tcherneva and Wray 2005). The hourly wage was set low enough for self-selection of indigent groups and also not to discourage beneficiaries from seeking more permanent (better paying) jobs. The design and implementation of *Jefes* was built on the success of *Trabajar*. From 1997 to 2002 and across all of Argentina's 23 provinces, *Trabajar* had provided wages to beneficiaries in return for their work on small infrastructure projects proposed by local governments and nongovernmental organizations. Similarly, the Labour Emergency Programme (PEL), initiated in 2001, provided temporary employment and vocational training to the unemployed, through projects that either created employment or affected employment creation (Devereux and Solomon 2006).

Of particular importance, it contains a subprogram for community development, which aims at creating productive employment for vulnerable women, especially heads of households. Activities specifically include those that are not traditionally performed by

women, such as bricklaying, building, and carpentry. Expenditure on Jefes reached 1 percent of GDP in 2002 (Marshall 2004). The early experience of the Jefes program shows that a large program can be implemented quickly without major problems.

It is also important to note that program participants receive additional benefits. Many Jefes projects provide free childcare for participants (with the care provided by Jefes workers)—this is significant, given that many participants are mothers with young children. Projects also provide literacy programs for adults, tutoring for children, counseling for families with drug abuse or domestic violence problems, and family planning. In interviews, many of the women working in the program emphasize that close proximity of their job to home is critical. Many of them had never been able to work outside the home, even before the economic crisis, because long commutes would take them too far away from their children. Jefes jobs in their neighborhood allowed them to check on their families throughout the day.

Currently, the program is being scaled back. On February 14, 2006, President Néstor Kirchner announced that the Jefes program would be “redesigned” and partially replaced by two separate programs: (1) unemployment insurance (cash transfer), which will pay 225 pesos monthly, for a maximum of two years. The program will focus on training and job search and is designed for the “economically active.” The Labour Ministry expects 500,000 participants and (2) Plan Familias, a cash-transfer welfare program for poor families. It will pay a monthly benefit on a scale from 150 pesos for a family with one child, up to 275 pesos for a family of six children.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh boasts one of the most cost effective job creation programs at one dollar (US\$ 1) per job (Devereux and Solomon 2006:6). While the long-standing Food-For-Work (FFW) program is the main employment creation program in Bangladesh, the Rural Maintenance Program (RMP) offers new direction for cash-based, long-term employment (four-year contracts). The RMP is a relatively small cash-based project run jointly by CARE Bangladesh and the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), from which poor women are given year-round work, such as the maintenance of rural earthen roads (with an average of 60,000 destitute women per year being supported

by the program). The project employs different forms of community participation in the choice of beneficiaries, lowering Type I and II errors (Mujeri 2002: 35; Devereux and Solomon 2006:11). Programs under the LGED are largely two-fold: employment in construction activities (the bulk of employment is created for unskilled and semi-skilled labor, both male and female, who are usually poor); and employment in maintenance and tree plantation (more stable employment is generated for groups of destitute women) (Mujeri 2002: 42; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 21, 31). Furthermore there is a training component of the LGED, which covers social awareness, technical and job-related skill development and management. In addition, when women are employed to do maintenance and tree plantation, they are given training and social development inputs on income generation.

Sri Lanka

Through its National Housing Development Authority (NHDA), the government adopted an urban housing policy to initiate housing programs and build amenities like wells in low-income settlements. Community Development Councils (CDCs) were given say on the design, placement, and contractor choice for projects (including choosing themselves as the builders); thus, programs created a cost-effective way of providing basic services and infrastructure in low-income areas and involving communities in improving their environment. Between 1985 and 1999, the NHDA issued more than 400 community contracts for infrastructure and housing works, including the construction of drains, toilets, sewerage systems and roads. Communities provide counterpart funding in the form of labor, cash, or materials. Women in the community took a leading role in motivating people, collecting household contributions and daily supervision of the construction work. They also organized community meetings (Jayaratne 2003; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 12).

Nepal

The Dhaulagiri Irrigation Development Project (DIDP) in Nepal in 1989 was aimed at securing reliable irrigation water to small-scale mountain farmers, in order to increase food production and contribute to poverty alleviation. Food production in most sub-projects implemented, increased by 20-30 percent post-project (Lokollo 1999). In order

to sustain the new irrigation infrastructure, popular participation involved farmers in construction/rehabilitation of irrigation schemes and used the network as a means to develop institutional, financial, and administrative units. Farmers and committee members have also received relevant training to develop and improve local skills (Devereux and Solomon 2006: 11).

Cambodia

“The employment potential for labor-based techniques [in Cambodia] is very high. ... [with rural road creation involving] 5,000 unskilled workdays per km as opposed to 200 workdays on an equipment-based operation. ... It is estimated that using labor-based methods to carry out a program of rural road upgrading, combined with labor-based maintenance of the existing maintainable road network could generate between 3.7 and 6.7 million days of work per year... Taking the maximum figure, this is equivalent to 33,000 full time jobs, and would create opportunities for 100 rehabilitation contracts and 270 maintenance contracts per year.” (Munters 2003: 7, 45, 48; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 27). For such programs in Cambodia, the average cost of construction of one kilometre of road is US\$ 15,000, with the lowest cost recorded in the labor-based work carried out by contract under the Rural Infrastructure Improvement Project (US\$ 11,116 per km), while the highest costs were recorded by the equipment-based contracts of the Urban Restoration Project of the Department of Public Works and Transport (US\$ 20,678 per km) (Munters 2003: 45). Nevertheless, only 37 percent of total costs of labor-based rural road works went on wages for unskilled labor and 11 percent was paid to skilled labor (Munters 2003: 43).

Indonesia

Following the financial crisis, the government’s official 1998/99 Social Safety Net program created a series of emergency job creation measures, collectively known as *Padat Karya*. The programs were a revival of earlier effort by the same name to build infrastructure (village roads, schools and irrigation channels) throughout rural Indonesia during the 1970s and 1980s. The Social Safety Net was not one single job creation program, but a variety of projects with the commonality that they theoretically drew on labor-intensive methods to undertake small-scale village-based infrastructure or public

works projects. Since its re-launch in 1998, *Padat Karya* has expanded to comprise 13 sub-programs, involving eight executing agencies and reaching more than 300 districts. *Padat Karya* programs had low participation rates for women (19 percent) compared with men (81 percent) (Sumarto et al. 2001), largely a result of the heavy physical labor required on most projects, and because the program was targeted at household heads (which, in the Indonesian context excluded most women by definition). The program has been criticized for its lack of “adequate attention to the need for a disaggregated database and supporting community-level structures to ensure proper targeting and sustainability,” (Islam et al. 2001: 64-65; Devereux and Solomon 2006:14). In response to such criticisms, several new initiatives have been developed, including new employment programs that emphasize empowerment and use community-based approaches to generate employment and incomes.

Korea

During the East Asian meltdown of 1997-1998, Korea moved from a nation essentially without a social safety net (due to near full employment pre-crisis) to a “Master Plan for Tackling Unemployment,” (Kwon 2002a: 5). Under this initiative, the Employment Insurance Programme was extended; emergency public works programs were implemented to create jobs for unemployed workers who would otherwise not have any social protection; a new income support program for the poor, the Minimum Living Standard Guarantee (MLSG), was introduced; and the health care system was reformed over 1998-2000 (Atinc 2000, Kwon 2002b: 1-2, 9-10). For the public works, there were four categories of work: infrastructure-maintaining projects including cultivating forest, building small public facilities and repairing public utilities; provisions for a workforce for social service and charity organizations such as community centers and welfare institutions; environment-cleaning work, which includes roadside cleaning and rubbish collection; and information-technology related projects, which are targeted at the young, and computer-literate people (Lee 2000: 7). The whole package of programs under the “Master Plan for Tackling Unemployment” accounted for ten percent of Korean government expenditure, with PWPs claiming 1.62 percent at their height (Kwon 2002b: 11).

Brazil

In Brazil, programs of direct employment creation have not been implemented at the national level; although, a number of emergency programs to create jobs for the urban poor were planned at the federal level in 1997 and 1999, after the devaluation, but never implemented. There are several state and municipal programs, namely Sao Paulo, all of which are small-scale and have minor labor market impacts (Marshall 2004: 30). Instead of ELR programs, Brazilian labor market-interventions focus on subsidizing the cost to employers to take on new employees (especially those prone to poverty). Such efforts began in late 2003 when the “First Employment” (*Primeiro Emprego*, PPE) program was launched, which aims to secure jobs for 16-24 year old workers without previous work experience, no secondary degree and who come from families with a per capita income of up to one half minimum wage—a group representing 44% of the unemployed. The aim is to assist 250,000 young workers in a given year (Marshall 2004: 31).

Bolivia

Established in 1986, the Emergency Social Fund (ESF), was a demand-based approach aimed at the creation of large infrastructure through PWP. The programs failed to reach the groups most affected by trends in liberalization and privatization, namely specific industry workers; furthermore, the participation of the poorest two deciles was disproportionately low. The programs did, however, benefit over 1 million poor during its 4 years, administering \$240 million. Despite such impressive figures, the focus on heavy-construction resulted in an extremely poor female participation rate (<1%) (Graham 1996, 3). The programs were also costly by comparative standards, with the cost of creating one job eight times that of Bangladesh (Devereux and Solomon 2006: 6). The project did, however, surpass partisan politics and helped bolster NGOs’ and localities’ ability to administer funds independent of central authority. The broad base of support also prevented any one group from taking credit.

Chile

Unlike many countries that liberalized, Chile had an extensive social welfare system prior to adjustment. Large-scale PWP were introduced between 1975-1987 to combat severe unemployment (30% at its height in 1982), and employed up to 13 percent of the workforce. Wages for PWP workers were $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ of the minimum wage to ensure self-targeting (Graham 1996: 6-7). There was a sharp difference in the participation rates of the two major initiatives, with 75 percent of the Minimum Employment Program (PEM) comprised of women versus only 30 percent in the higher paying Program for Heads of Households (POJH). Such stark contrast led to discrimination of PEM workers as inferior and unproductive. Later, the Fund for Solidarity and Social Investment (FOSIS) incorporated beneficiary participation and brought women into a productive focus over a solely reproductive role (Graham 1996: 7). In Chile and Peru, most workfare programs were closed in the late 1980s due to a combination of poor design, stigmatized participants, and political manipulation (Márquez 1999: 10; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 8, 19-20).

Peru

The *Programa de Apoyo al Ingreso Temporal* (PAIT) was a PWP modelled on Chile's experience. The program employed 500,000 for 3-months in Lima's shantytowns, but was top-down and plagued by clientelism and political manipulation of workers (Graham 1996: 8-9). While the program targeted women foremost, it often delegated them to inferior roles that men would not tolerate. *Fondo Nacional de Cooperación para el Desarrollo Social* (FONCODES), a 1991 social fund similar to ESF, has incorporated greater elements of success (international backing, a clear priority and private sector directions), but is still marred by special interests. Despite being politicized, FONCODES funded almost 16,000 community-based projects, for a total budget of about 465 million soles (roughly US\$285 million) between December 1991 and May 1995. The average project size was quite small (about US\$18,000) and focused on community-based endeavors aimed at nutrition, family planning, rotating credit schemes, and projects for the construction or rehabilitation of schools, health posts, water and sanitation systems,

rural roads, electrification schemes, and small-scale irrigation works. In 1993, FONCODES expenditures accounted for roughly 0.55% of GNP.

El Salvador

The Fund for Social Investment (FIS) was launched in 1989 with \$33 million from the IDB and \$6 million of the El Salvadorian government's funds; subsequently, the program has attracted \$12 million from other donors and \$15.88 million in counterpart funds from beneficiaries and soliciting agencies. Like the ESF, administration costs have been kept to 5% of total spending. The program gives primary focus to mothers and then women in general, with priority also going to impoverished areas involved in the civil war, then to poor areas in general, and finally to sites of conflict. From its inception until September 1992, the program had administered \$30.6 million to 1,432,926 persons, a very impressive record in a country of just over 5 million. The FIS works closely with NGOs and other community-based groups, in which women are well represented (Graham 1996).

Mexico

The proposed National Solidarity Program (Pronasol) was a large-scale version of the Bolivia's demand-based social fund, earmarking \$240 million over four years, that never realized its projected potential. The program was intended to work with locally elected Solidarity committees (of which there are 64,000 nationwide) and would have blended many development strategies (food support, social services, infrastructure, micro-credit and a women only fund aimed at supporting small industries (Graham 1996). *Programa de Empleo Temporal* (PET), a 1995 effort following the economic crisis, aimed to develop communities through labor-intensive projects. By 2000, PET was addressed to marginal rural areas, and improving social and productive infrastructure. PET's budget also earmarked 20% of its funds for natural disasters relief efforts atop of normal PET activities. Starting with 660,000 beneficiaries in 1995, the program had increased to one million participants by 2000 (Marshall 2004: 30-31).

Botswana

Like other middle-income countries (Argentina and South Africa), Botswana's employment programs are usually financed entirely out of domestic fiscal resources (Devereux and Solomon, 2006: 5). Following the 1980s droughts, 23 percent of Botswana's workforce was employed in the "Labour-Based Relief Programme," which in 1986, translated to three million days of paid employment for 74,000 workers, out of a total workforce of 320,000 (Devereux and Solomon 2006: 26). During the 1990s, the wage rate in the Labour-Intensive Rural Public Works Programme was fixed by the government at 70 percent of the minimum wage for unskilled formal sector workers. Since this wage was applied uniformly across the country, it had different implications for self-targeting in different areas, resulting in a rationing of jobs and the inclusion of the less impoverished. Despite inclusion errors, the high rate of female participation (60-70 percent of total employment) is an indicator of overall effective poverty targeting (Tesfaye 1995; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 9). Furthermore, certain gender sensitivities can be observed in the program design that are absent in many other nations, such as time for breastfeeding without pay-cut implications and the promotion of women to supervisory roles (Dejardin 1996; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 32-33). The duration of employment was a major shortcoming, however, where "the temporary nature of income did not translate into appreciable investment at the household level" (Tesfaye 1995: 151).

Senegal

In 1987, DIRE compensated civil servants who had voluntarily retired and would-be government employees with up to US\$50,000 for business start-ups. The lack of follow-ups, support, and training made for poor success rates. Funding was administered by the Public Treasury, which subsequently "lost" \$3 million. The funds were targeted mostly at privileged men and marked by clientelism. Civil unrest in 1988 led to the creation of Agetip (influenced by Bolivia's ESF). The program focused on labor-intensive infrastructure projects (no social aspects) and was administered by an independent agency with a private sector director. From the beginning of 1990 to the end of 1991, the program created 11,000 temporary jobs with spillover to the private sector (Graham 1996: 4). The program lacked cooperation mechanisms with NGOs and did not have

poverty criteria, resulting in limited impacts on the lives of women and the very poor (Graham 1996: 5).

Morocco

Created in 1961, *Promotion Nationale* (PN) is an autonomous public entity in charge of mobilizing under-employed or unemployed labour force for the implementation of labour intensive projects, calling upon a simple technology likely to provide employment to unskilled workers. It is one of the major programs of social protection in the country, the oldest, most important and best targeted social program in Morocco. This institution aims at limiting rural migration through a permanent improvement of local income and living conditions. It thus constitutes a safety net for a large part of the population particularly in rural areas. PN mobilizes labour of the poor rural populations, in order to address unemployment and attenuate rural migration ; direct its intervention in the rural zones to the construction of water supply channels and cisterns, the digging of wells and the construction of rural roads and reforestation ; contributes to cleaning, maintenance of parks and improvement of the quality of life and environment in the urban areas as well as support sector projects carried out within the framework of the social development strategy. The Moroccan experience in the public works of unemployed through the PN is remarkable. Indeed, 45 years after its creation, PN has at its credit an important and single assessment regarding the fight against unemployment with small management costs. On average the operating costs represent only 6% of investments costs, which is definitely lower than the average costs of the public administration and lower in comparison of other countries where it is around 10%. In spite of certain difficulties and limitations which particularly hinder the action of the organization regarding the geographical targeting of rural poor zones, PN programs remains one of the most efficient mechanisms of social protection of the country. It is also a buffer stock in period of economic crisis or severe drought. In other to contribute effectively to the fight against unemployment according to the employer of last resort model, PN has to offer more jobs for all those willing to work ; to remove constraints which weak the turnover of the beneficiaries in urban areas and fight against the acquired advantages, to encourage the Local Communities to deal with the staff costs which weigh the PN budget down and

to reallocate the communities program budget to the equipment of the rural areas, as well as to pursue the reduction of the credits allocated to the urban areas and to increase allocations to the rural locations in order to improve the targeting of the poor populations and to modernize the information system by disaggregating by sex data related to beneficiaries. (Hind Jalal, personal communication, *mimeo*)

Zambia

1980 witnessed a lower per capita GDP in Zambia than the 1960s, allowing a pro-reform government, in 1991, to implement free-market strategies *and* make reaching marginalized groups a priority. The Micro-Project Unit (MPU) targeted the poor and followed an ESF focus on renovating existing infrastructure (Graham 1996: 6). Labor on infrastructure projects such as road maintenance or dam construction was categorized by task as “light,” “moderate,” or “heavy” and women and men worked together in gangs, with men taking on the heavier tasks (e.g. breaking stones and compacting the road surface) and women taking the lighter tasks (e.g. head-loading baskets of stones from the quarry to the roadside). Despite the task division, women were still forced to “subcontract” men for some of the tasks, in exchange for half their cash-for-work income (Devereux and Solomon 2006: 31). A wage rate set higher than the national or local minimum wage, caused the number of jobs offered on the program to be rationed (Devereux and Solomon 2006: 8). The Zambian government also instituted a Food for Work scheme, which paid workers in food for labor on social infrastructure (building pit latrines was cited as a project). 90 percent of these workers were women, reflecting a social stigma in men working for payment other than cash and the fact that only the poorest segments of society will work for food.

Ghana

Similarly to Zambia, Ghana saw its real per capita income fall 30% from 1970 and 1982; for 1975 to 1983, real minimum wage fell by 86%. By some measures 35.93% of Ghana was poor in 1988. The Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) began in 1988 with \$85 million in international donations. The program was designed to specifically target women and other vulnerable groups, but caved to pressures from donors and vocal urban lobbying. The program blended labor-intensive

infrastructure generation with micro-credit endeavors. There was also a food-for-work program in the north during the dry season. Certain success can be claimed, such as small contractors training to rehabilitate and maintain feeder roads, which resulted in three times (320 percent) more employment creation than capital-intensive methods. These positive results are mainly achieved where there was careful site selection, close supervision of the production process, and application of proper production techniques (Graham 1996).

Uganda

In western Uganda, local communities work together with government officials to identify problems on rural public works programs, making amendments to improve their design or to better address local needs. This positive interaction between program implementers and beneficiaries promotes a perception that the government is both responsive and accountable to local residents. By means of “impact workshops,” communities identify who benefits from the improved roads. Women’s representation and participation are, however, still limited in decision-making and project selection, especially for infrastructure projects (*ASIST Bulletin* No.10, 2000; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 12).

Malawi

In the late 1990s, two employment-based safety net programs were running alongside one another (often simultaneously in the same villages)—a food-for-work program implemented by WFP and a cash-for-work project implemented by the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) (Devereux and Solomon 2006). The participation of women in the food program was over-representative (in line with similar programs elsewhere) (Devereux 1999). In MASAF programs, women’s participation varied greatly, with road rehabilitation contracts offering 42 percent participation (which exceeded the gender target of 40 percent), but bridge work contracts only offering 27 percent to women (Lwanda and Esterhuizen 2005; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 32). The “Rural Access and Mobility Pilot Activity” (RAMPA), which is being implemented within the framework of the Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Programme in Malawi, has encountered planning problems. “Access profiles” prepared to enable prioritization of

interventions and integration into District Development Plans (DDPs) have amounted to little more than shopping lists that were produced on the basis of secondary data. As a result, the level of community participation in the process was inadequate, which made the implementation of identified projects difficult since most of the pre-set priorities had to be changed after consulting local communities (Lema 2005; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 12-13).

Tanzania

Tanzania's Special Labour-Intensive Public Works Programme was jointly implemented by the Government of Tanzania, UNDP, and the ILO, but was co-funded by Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, and the European Union (Tesfaye 1995: 159; Devereux and Solomon 2006: 5). The high wage rate resulted in the number of jobs offered being rationed (Devereux and Solomon 2006:8). Also, program timing coincided with the agricultural season, resulting in relatively low stabilization effects on incomes (Subbarao 1997: 6; Devereux and Solomon 2006:16). Nonetheless, there are successful programs, such as the Rehabilitation and Maintenance of District and Feeder Roads project in Mwanza, which rehabilitates and maintains a network of nearly 200 km of roads. Some stretches linking fishing villages to vital arteries of the road network have already seen a three-fold increase in traffic in 2000 (Melgaard 2000; Devereux and Solomon 2006:11).

Zimbabwe

The Rural Transport Study (RTS) sought to improve access to transport in two districts. A number of access interventions were selected by a consistent process of community participation, especially that of women, since they bore most of the transport and travel responsibilities. Footbridges, footpaths, and borehole construction were among the interventions implemented. These interventions clearly had direct positive implications for women, in terms of enhancing their access and reducing their travel time to fetch water. Women have greatly benefited from the boreholes and footpaths, because they do 95 percent of water collection by head-loading (Lema 2003; Devereux and Solomon, 2006:36).

Australia

Post-war Australia was characterized by a commitment to full-employment through Keynesian policies, fiscal spending aimed at stimulating aggregate demand and a strong public sector presence in the labor market (Quirk et al. 2006). Neoliberal policies took over in the mid-1970s and, despite a brief flirtation with employment-centred social policy under the Hawke Labour government in the mid-1980s, private sector agents guide employment. The government has replaced the Keynesian Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) with a scattering of programs such as “Work for the Dole” and private-oriented Centrelink and the Job Network, which have poor track records (Productivity Commission 2002: Chapter 10; Cowling and Mitchell 2002: 12-14). Perhaps not coincidentally, unemployment hovered near 9 percent in the 1990 and remains near 5 percent today. This is a sharp contrast to averaging near 2 percent from the mid-1940s to the mid-1970s. Furthermore, in 1973, the public employment share was around 3 percent higher than was in 2002 or roughly 500,000 jobs smaller in relative terms (Cowling and Mitchell 2002: 16).

France

In December 2005, France launched an ELR in six districts, to be evaluated in the first quarter of 2007 before being officially adopted nationwide. Workers laid off from companies of less than 300 employees will be eligible for a “Professional Transition Contact” (*contrat de transition professionnelle: CTP*), guaranteeing them employment also providing “individualized coaching” and follow up for the passive unemployment category. The total cost of the program is estimated at 70 billion euros or 4% of GDP (3% activity income, .4% training programs, and .6% individualized follow up) if all the unemployed were to enter the program immediately. This would be a less expensive program than the current 4.2% of GDP spent on unemployment compensations and other employment programs (Kaboub 2007).