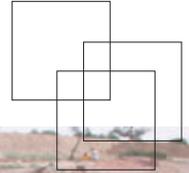




International
Labour
Office

Towards the right to work

**A GUIDEBOOK FOR DESIGNING INNOVATIVE
PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES**



Guidance note 2 The spectrum of public employment programmes (PEPs)

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A GUIDEBOOK FOR DESIGNING INNOVATIVE PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMMES



Guidance note 2

The spectrum of public employment programmes (PEPs)

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Guidance note 2

The spectrum of public employment programmes (PEPs)

Objective

The objective of this note is to provide policy-makers and practitioners with an overview of various types of public employment programmes¹ (PEPs), covering the spectrum from public work programmes to employment guarantee schemes (EGSs) and their characteristics. The note presents some of the key dimensions of these programmes and provides them with guidance on how to analyse them.

Key dimensions of programmes

Public employment programmes and employment guarantee programmes vary considerably from country to country or even from region to region within countries. In order to analyse the different types of programmes, it is useful to consider some of their key dimensions, particularly when comparing different programmes and drawing lessons from other existing programmes.



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¹ M. Lieuw-Kie-Song; K. Philip; M. Tsukamoto; M. Van Imschoot: *Towards the right to work: Innovations in public employment programmes (IPEP)*, ILO Employment Working Paper No. 69 (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2011).

Box 1. Programmes on a continuum: a definition of terms

This paper uses three terms to refer to the programmes discussed.

Public works programmes (PWPs) refer to the more common and traditional programmes; although these may be a temporary response to specific shocks and crises, public works programmes can also have a long-term horizon.

Employment guarantee schemes (EGS) refer to long-term rights-based programmes in which some level of entitlement to work is provided. These are explained in much more detail in this note.

Public employment programmes (PEPs) include PWPs and EGSs as well as a wide spectrum of options between them. The term is used to refer to any direct employment creation by a government through an employment programme – rather than through the expansion of the civil service.

Scale

The first dimension relates to the scale of the programme. Both PEPs and EGS can be found on practically any scale. Some programmes are very small and focus on a specific area. Others are very large national programmes and are important in terms of their macroeconomic impacts.

The scale of the programme can be measured or expressed in different ways. It is generally useful to have both absolute measures as well as relative measures, especially when programmes are compared across countries.



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Absolute measures

- Number of work opportunities created over time (month, year, programme life).
- Number of workdays or person-years of work created.
- Programme budget in local currency of US dollars.

Relative measures

- Programme budget/expenditure as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP).
- Programme budget/expenditure as a percentage of government expenditure.
- Number of work opportunities or person-years of work created as a percentage of the number of unemployed/potential target group/workforce.

Relative measures allow for comparisons of programmes in countries of different sizes. The table below provides examples of various programmes in these absolute and relative terms. It clearly also demonstrates that some programmes that may appear small in absolute terms, because they are in small countries, can be very large in relative terms.

Table 1. Examples of programmes and their size in relative and absolute terms, by country

Programme name	Country	Date	Expenditure (millions of US\$) for given year	Expenditure as percentage of GDP	Number of work opportunities	Work opportunities as percentage of labour force
CfWTEP ¹	Liberia	2009	1.5	0.17	8 500	0.82
EPWP ³	South Africa	2008/2009	2 830	1.0	570 000	2.8
FAIMO ⁴	Cape Verde	1998	10.8	2	15 000 -20 000	...
		1992	19.7	5		...
		2000	11.5
Jefes ⁵	Argentina	2003	3 056	0.9	2 210 000	13.0
KKV ⁶	Kenya	2009	43	0.12	300 000	...
MGNREGA ⁷	India	2008/2009	5 461	0.45	45 500 000	9.7
Projected	Kosovo	2010	3	0.1	5 000	0.6
PSNP ⁸	Ethiopia	2006/2007	280	2.0	1 500 000	4.8

¹ CfWTEP, Cash for Works Temporary Employment Project.

² Estimate as no reliable census and labour force data available for Liberia.

³ EPWP, Expanded Public Works Programme.

⁴ FAIMO, *Frentes de Trabalho com alta Intensidade de Mão de Obra* (Work team employed by the State for construction of infrastructure works).

⁵ Jefes, *Plan Jefes de Hogar Desocupados* (Program for Unemployed Male and Female Heads of Household).

⁶ KKV, *Kazi kwa Vijana* (Jobs for Youth).

⁷ MGNREGA, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

⁸ PSNP, Product Safety Net Programme.

... = data not available.

Sources: NationMaster.com. 2011. *Statistics*. Available at: <http://www.nationmaster.com/index.php> (28 Mar. 2011); Government of South Africa. Department of Public Works, 2010. *EPWP 5-year report*. Available at: <http://www.epwp.gov.za> [5 Dec. 2011]; and see in further reading list: Kostzer, 2009; McCord, 2009 and World Bank, 2009.

When a programme is relatively small in terms of a country's share of GDP, government expenditure or workforce, its impact on the economy as a whole is limited, although at the local level it may still be significant. However, when a programme is large and involves a large share of GDP, government expenditure or the workforce, its overall effects are significant and care should be taken to ensure that they are desired. On one hand, large programmes can have negative effects by crowding out other government expenditure on, for instance, education. On the other hand, they may be positive and improve education and health infrastructure, or enable participants to cover the costs of health and education. Large programmes may also influence the labour market, in particular, wage rates by either pushing up rates in certain sectors or by depriving sectors or regions of labour. While pushing up rates may be desirable where workers are exploited and have to work for wages below official minimum rates, it can deprive local economic activities of labour if prevailing wage rates are pushed up too high.

Rules for participating in a programme

Another key dimension of these programmes is the rules that are applied with regards to the participation of workers. One involves rotating work opportunities if the scale of the programme is too small to offer jobs to all those willing to work at the set wage rate. Participants may only re-enrol when it is their turn and this needs to be monitored by the community itself, or by project implementers who keep records of members who have already participated. This approach is most common in emergency programmes or relatively small temporary programmes. The rationale for rotating or limiting participation is typically to ensure that opportunities are distributed equitably and are not based on the participants' need for income.

Other, larger programmes allow people to take part on multiple occasions and, in some circumstances, there is no limit to how many times they can participate in the programme. In these cases, the aim is to provide participants with work as and when they need it. In some programmes, there may be a cap on the total work provided. In India, MGNREGA fixes the cap at 100 days per year per household. In Ethiopia, the PSNP provides households with 30 days of work per household member per year.²



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² Five days of work per household member per month is provided over a period of six months during the year, amounting to 30 days per household member per year. A household of five could thus be provided with 150 days of work over a year.

Work can also be provided on a regular basis. This can be on certain days a week, at certain hours a day, or even during certain months of the year. If work is scheduled in consultation with the participants, it is generally easier to provide regular work during periods when it is most needed, rather than on a 'on demand basis', which is more difficult to manage. The PSNP provides work on a regular basis, typically scheduled during periods of low agricultural activity.

Conceptually, it is useful in this regard to also distinguish between universal and targeted participation. In a universal programme, there are usually no restrictions on participation. Work is provided to anyone who wants to work. In India, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme is essentially universal in rural areas. Another approach is to have targeted programmes, whereby a set of criteria is defined based on the people being targeted. Only those who meet these criteria are able to participate in the programme. Within this defined target group, some programmes aim to reach the entire group, as with the PSNP, while others aim only be able to reach part of the group.

Emergency measure or a long-term intervention

Another key distinction is in the intended lifespan of the programme. Short-term programmes respond to a specific situation or crisis and are usually closed down or suspended when the crisis is over. These programmes typically have objectives directly related to alleviating the problems created by the crisis. Long-term programmes address long-term or structural problems of underemployment and unemployment, as well as infrastructure deficits and other needs.



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The design of long- versus short-term programmes is usually very different. Short-term programmes must be able to respond rapidly to crises that have caused a sudden loss of income, assets or livelihood for particular target groups. As a result, activities associated with these emergency programmes are simpler and they can start without too much time being dedicated to design and planning.

As a rule, long-term programmes have objectives that address or alleviate ongoing or structural problems related to poverty and unemployment. Many also have a strong focus on the productivity of the work, as it is important that the benefits of these programmes extend beyond the income provided to participants. If the work is perceived to be mostly work creation with very few or limited outputs of value, the programmes tend to be vulnerable to criticism and loss of political support. In many cases, they are then unable to continue due to political pressure on governments to fund other priorities.

Long-term programmes also often have institutional arrangements that involve a wider range of ministries and levels of government. It is critical that they be properly located within the government system. In a crisis situation, emergency programmes that encroach on the mandate of other ministries or levels of government tend to be tolerated. But in the case of long-term programmes this encroachment often causes difficulties and it is more important that the programme be correctly integrated within the overall system of government mandates and responsibilities.

Benefits to participants

There are also programmes that, in addition to providing income, try to provide other benefits to participants such as skills development, small business development or employment services. The intention of this type of programme is to assist participants to graduate or exit from the programme, for instance, by providing them with training or internships, so they can take up other forms of employment or economic activity. Such programmes can be effective, but are often relatively costly. They may also try to create work that is related to specific fields of training so that workers also gain some practical experience and so enhance their employability.

Programmes that provide employment services typically register all participants with their skills profiles, so that they can be matched to vacancies in the economy.

Primary objective: social assistance programmes versus service/infrastructure delivery programmes



Another important distinction between programmes relates to their primary objective and whether it is social assistance or protection, or whether it is the provision of infrastructure or services, in which case the creation of employment/income is only a secondary objective (as an outcome of the provision of services and infrastructure).

Generally, programmes that have social protection/assistance/provision of income as a primary objective are set up operationally to ensure that wage payments are made even when there are operational setbacks. This is to ensure that the social protection outcomes are not compromised because of problems related to the implementation of the work activities. Programmes that have social protection as their primary outcome also tend to invest more in targeting processes to ensure that those who most need protection are included. As part of this, they often have a central registration, recruitment and selection process through which participants are placed on relevant projects. Both MGNREGA and PSNP have centralized registers that direct labour to projects.

However, programmes with infrastructure or services as their primary outcome frequently invest less in the recruitment process and workers are often recruited for the specific purpose of the project. The labour intensity of such programmes is much lower, as it is largely determined by the nature of the required infrastructure or services. The labour intensity may be very low indeed if infrastructure requiring substantial material inputs is required. For example, in the Infrastructure Sector of the EPWP in South Africa the infrastructure to be delivered were seen as primary (see Box 2).

Box 2. How different policy assumptions inform implementation practices

Let us consider a fairly typical situation in which there are delays on a particular project due to a third party's oversight and there is no work available for participants.

- In a programme that is designed with social protection as its primary goal, the policy would be to keep paying the participants, as the primary purpose of the project is to transfer income.
- In a programme that has the delivery of assets as its primary objective, the policy would be to discontinue paying the participants, as continuing to do so would increase costs and the likelihood that the asset or service being created would not be finished by the end of the project.
- A programme that has employment as its primary objective might require that participants be shifted to another set of activities to ensure that they keep working.

Records of those employed are often only kept at the project level and, as a result, it is often difficult to track participants or control whether or not they have participated in a programme on multiple occasions, for example, in the EPWP, recruitment is carried out at the project level and there is no central database of participants.

In cases where the delivery of a service or asset is primary, these typically determine the duration of employment or service and only limited provision is made to ensure the duration of employment.

Different approaches

Different approaches to designing and analysing PEPs match the relative policy priority given to their three core outputs: employment, incomes and assets and/or services. These approaches often have a theoretical underpinning that either implicitly or explicitly prioritizes one of the three outputs over the others. The most common approaches are informed by the following perspectives:

- an employer of last resort (ELR) perspective considers the employment output as paramount, and in some cases establishes an employment guarantee³;

³ See the following publications:

L. Randall Wray: *The employer of last resort programme: Could it work for developing countries?* (Geneva, ILO, Economic and Labour Market Papers, 2007).

W. Mitchell and W. Mosler: *Fiscal policy and the job guarantee*, Working Paper No. 01-09 (Newcastle, NSW, Centre of Full Employment and Equity The University of Newcastle, 2001). Available at: <http://e1.newcastle.edu.au/coffee> [6 Dec. 2011].

H. Minsky: *Stabilizing an unstable economy* (New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1986).

- from a social protection perspective, security of income and transfers take precedence⁴;
- a labour-intensive investment approach typically emphasizes the quality and nature of infrastructure or services provided⁵.

These three approaches are also summarized in Table 2 below along with an ‘outcome driver’ for each of them. In this context, the outcome driver can be seen as the overarching rationale for why a government may adopt a particular approach. Understanding these approaches and how they influence programme design and objectives is very important.⁶ Problems may arise in the evaluation of programmes when there is no clear alignment between programme approach, objectives and design. For instance, if the design approach is informed by a focus on social protection, the programme objectives relating to infrastructure provision and maintenance are typically more modest.

⁴ See the following publications:

A. McCord: *Recognising heterogeneity: A proposed typology for public works programmes*, SALDRU Working Paper 26 (Cape Town, University of Cape Town, 2009).

K. Subbarao: *Systemic shocks and social protection, role and effectiveness of public works programmes*, SP Discussion Paper No. 0302 (Washington, DC, World Bank Institute, 2003).

S. Devereux and C. Solomon: *Employment creation programmes: The international experience*, Issues in Employment and Poverty Discussion Paper No. 24 (Geneva, Economic and Labour Market Analysis Department, International Labour Office, 2007). McCutcheon, 2004.

⁵ R. Islam, et al.: *Employment-intensive growth for poverty reduction: what can labour-based technology in infrastructure contribute?*, Proceedings of the First International Conference on Employment Creation in Development, Johannesburg, 2-5 April 2001 (Johannesburg, Research Centre for Employment Creation in Construction, University of the Witwatersrand, 2001).

G. Edmonds, *A strategy for a Public Works Programme as part of a Social Safety Net – issues and approach*, ILO SSN Public Works Adviser (Geneva, International Labour Organization, 2009), unpublished document.

⁶ The type of difficulties that may arise in not articulating objectives accurately is exemplified by the review and analysis of the EPWP in South Africa. While the programme articulated a number of objectives, including employment creation and skills development, it also had a very specific quantitative target of providing at least one million work opportunities over its five-year cycle. Despite achieving this target within a four- rather than a five-year timeframe, some analysts still refer to this programme as a failure as it did not meet all the stated objectives. At the same time, the Government of South Africa lauds it as a success, albeit recognizing a number of shortcomings that the programme is aiming to address in its second phase.

Table 2. Approaches and objectives to designing and analysing PEPs

Objectives	Employment	Social protection	Delivery of infrastructure/ services
Macro objective	Mobilize surplus labour for productive activities.	Provide a minimum transfer or income security to those defined as in need.	Public investment in infrastructure or delivery of services.
Micro objective	Provide a minimum level of income through providing paid work.	Provide safety net to allow for a minimum level of consumption/ prevent distress/sale of assets.	Improve access to infrastructure or services to the individual of members of their community.
Outcome driver	Reduce unemployment	Improve social protection/safety net.	Maximize benefits of public investment.

Types of programmes

There is a wide set of terms to describe these programmes but they are not used consistently. They vary not only regionally, but also among academics and between different United Nations (UN) specialized agencies. For infrastructure programmes, the ILO uses the terms labour-based and labour-intensive to mean different types of programmes. Labour-intensive programmes are similar to the Cash for Food or Work programmes described in Table 3. Labour-based programmes are similar to Employment and Asset Creation Programmes.

Table 3. Key characteristics of Cash or Food for Work and Employment and Asset Creation Programmes

Programme design elements	Key programme characteristics	
	Cash or Food for Work	Employment and Asset Creation
Description	Creation of maximum employment for a given level of resources.	Optimum employment creation through appropriate combination of labour and small equipment to produce acceptable quality.
Resource commitments and implications	Number of jobs created depends on the budget and the wage rate.	Requires satisfactory level of technical input in terms of personnel, material and simple equipment.
Implications for the wage rate	Often the wage rate has been set somewhat lower than prevailing wage rates and opportunity cost of labour.	Needs to be set in relation to prevailing wage rates and opportunity cost of labour.
Beneficiary targeting	Self-targeting if wage rate sufficiently low, additional criteria needed for beneficiary selection.	Self-targeting. However use of prevailing wage rate may imply beneficiary selection.
Effectiveness in asset creation	Generally low – difficulty in providing adequate technical support and supervision.	Very effective if adequate technical support and required level of management and supervision.

Source: Edmonds, G. *A Strategy for a Public Works Programme as part of a Social Safety Net – issues and approach*, ILO SSN Public Works Adviser (Geneva, International Labour Organization), unpublished document.



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Other terms commonly used to describe these programmes are:

- employment creation
- employment generation
- job creation
- public works
- conditional cash transfers with a work condition make-work.
- employment based safety net

Further reading

-  Devereux, S.; Solomon C. 2006. *Employment creation programmes: The international experience*, Issues in Employment and Poverty Discussion Paper No. 24 (Geneva, Economic and Labour Market Analysis Department, International Labour Office).
-  Edmonds, G. 2009. *A strategy for a Public Works Programme as part of a Social Safety Net – issues and approach*, ILO SSN Public Works Adviser (Geneva, International Labour Organization), unpublished document.
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Checklist

THE SPECTRUM OF PEPs

Respond to the following questions



Many public employment programmes (PEPs) are multifaceted, but what is the main priority, the secondary priority, etc. (e.g. increasing employment content, social protection coverage and income security, asset creation or budget-based)

Reasons for developing a PEP (e.g. as part of an employment strategy, part of a social protection strategy, to complement and intensify employment component in national public investment programmes (PIPs), to better respond to recurring crises, to climate change and environmental protection)

What change / shift are you trying to achieve (e.g. increased job creation, income security, asset creation, community and social works, environmental rehabilitation and protection, livelihoods)?

Will the programme be for a limited duration or ongoing? If limited, what will be the duration? What are the timelines?

PEP developed as part of a social protection initiative

Based on a rights-based guarantee (e.g. stable and predictable income offered over a period of time when not receiving unemployment benefits, ILO C102 Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952)

Will it be based on an implicit guarantee or as part of a social safety net (e.g. this would imply a short-term public works or community programme)

PEP developed as part of an employment strategy?

Based on a rights-based guarantee (e.g. stable and predictable work offered over a period of time, ILO C122 Employment Policy Convention, 1964)

Will it be based on an implicit guarantee or as part of a safety net (e.g. in response to a crisis implying a short-term public works or community programme)

Will this PEP be developed as part of an infrastructure programme?

Will it be to supplement or increase the employment content of existing national PIPs?

THE SPECTRUM OF PEPS

Respond to the following questions



What will be the intended scope (e.g. national, regional, community, household, individual level)?

Will the PEP focus on one sector, or be multi sectoral?

Will the priorities be set nationally or regionally, or community driven.



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