

Public Works and Social Protection in sub-Saharan Africa

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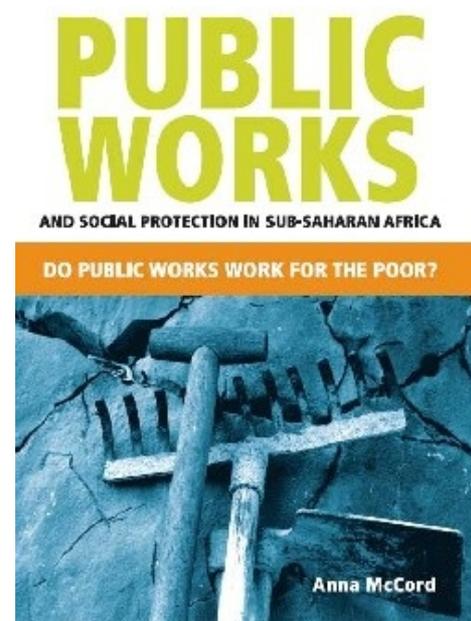
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About this Publication:

Public Works Programmes (PWPs) are widely implemented throughout Asia, Latin America and Africa, often with funding from major international donor agencies. They are perceived to present a 'win-win' policy option, providing employment to the chronically poor while also creating assets for the state, and in this way offering a welfare transfer which is also a tangible economic investment.

The prevailing view among donors and government agencies with responsibility for social protection is that Public Works Programmes are preferable to other measures to assist unemployed people living in chronic poverty. But is this view in fact correct?

This book critically explores the concept of the Public Works Programme (PWP) and interrogates its social protection performance in the context of chronic poverty. It reviews over 200 PWPs in eastern and southern Africa using original research drawn from extensive field analysis, interviews and survey work, and examines case studies of six international PWPs – in India, Argentina, Ireland, Ethiopia, Indonesia and the USA.

The author explores the function and limitations of PWPs, and outlines major programme choice and design issues, drawing lessons from the international context, and challenging the assumptions underlying these policy preferences, thus opening the way for more informed and appropriate policy selection. The book makes a case for a reconsideration of the function of PWPs in the current social protection discourse, and argues that the current PWP approach may not look so attractive from the beneficiary perspective.

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Chapter 1: Sub-Saharan African public works in context

Chapter 2: Defining public works

Chapter 3: The social protection function of public works programmes

Chapter 7: The role of skills development

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Chapter 10: Case study labour market insights

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Of Interest and Benefit to:

Academics and students in development economics and sociology, policy-makers and -designers, and donor officials, such as World Bank and DFID.