

AN EVALUATION OF WORLD BANK SUPPORT, 2000–2010

Social Safety Nets

Overview



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The goals of evaluation are to learn from experience, to provide an objective basis for assessing the results of the Bank Group's work, and to provide accountability in the achievement of its objectives. It also improves Bank Group work by identifying and disseminating the lessons learned from experience and by framing recommendations drawn from evaluation findings.

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Social Safety Nets

—OVERVIEW—



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Cover: Children in Ethiopia. Beneficiaries of the Productive Safety Net Program supported by the World Bank as well as a consortium of several other donors. The program provides work opportunities to create local infrastructure and cash transfers to food-insecure households. Photo courtesy of Jennie I. Litvack.

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The full evaluation is available at <http://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/content/ieg/en/home/reports/ssn.html>

Abbreviations

AAA	Analytic and advisory activity
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group
CCT	Conditional cash transfer
LIC	Low-income country
MIC	Middle-income country
SSN	Social safety net

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The 26 desk-based country case studies and 4 country case studies were prepared by Dayl Donaldson (East Asia), Victoria Monchuk (Middle East and North Africa, Jamaica), Hjalte Sederlof (Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia), Rachel Slater (Ethiopia), Sonya Sultan (Africa, South Asia), and Carlos Eduardo Velez (Colombia). Analysis of the case studies and their application to the many evaluation questions and subquestions posed by this evaluation was done by Victoria Monchuk and Sonya Sultan. Melvin Vaz designed the data analysis template. Hjalte Sederlof analyzed the application of the social risk management framework.

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Ursula Martinez conducted the staff survey of SSN response to the food, fuel, and financial crises, as well as the analysis of trust funds, analytic and advisory activities and the history of SSNs at the World Bank. She also conducted client interviews to assess the sharing of global knowledge, along with Victoria Monchuk. Robert Gillingham assessed the Bank's support for economic reform through development program loans and their treatment of SSNs, with inputs from Ximena del Carpio and Ursula Martinez. Domenico Lombardi conducted extensive interviews with more than 40 Bank staff and managers to assess how the Bank's organizational structure affects its work on SSNs. William Ascher wrote a background paper on the political economy of SSNs. Jonathan Rodden examined the issues involved in supporting SSNs in decentralized settings.

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per, and Martin Rama (Lead Economist, East Asia, World Bank) was peer reviewer for the final report. The many thoughtful and thorough comments from all these reviewers improved the report and are much appreciated.

Recent crises—fuel, food, and financial—have underscored the urgency of developing social safety nets (SSNs) in all countries. These crises have pushed millions of additional people into extreme poverty, reversing previous gains in poverty reduction. Even before they were hit by the crises, many countries were not on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals because of chronic poverty and inequality. The consequences of increasing weather variability, climate change, and natural disasters have made things more difficult everywhere.

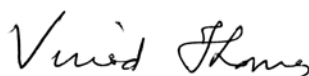
When households are hit by shocks, SSNs can be used to protect particularly vulnerable people by providing liquidity, offering short-term employment, and discouraging negative mechanisms for coping with the setbacks. Many countries, especially high- and middle-income countries, have some form of targeted SSN programs, and they are spreading to low-income countries, too.

During fiscal years 2000–10, the World Bank supported SSNs with \$11.5 billion in lending and an active program of analytic and advisory activities and knowledge sharing, much of it during the last two years in response to the triple crisis. Prior to the crises, the Bank focused its SSN support mainly on addressing chronic poverty and investing in the human capital of the poor. The crises pointed out weaknesses in countries' SSNs, as many middle-income countries found

that their poverty-targeted SSNs were not flexible enough to increase coverage or benefits as needed, while low-income countries lacked poverty data and systems to target and deliver benefits.

Bank support evolved in positive directions over the decade. Since the triple crisis hit, the Bank increased lending and analytical support greatly as it helped countries cushion their impact on their poor and vulnerable households and prepare SSNs to address future shocks. This recent crisis-related expansion of support included both low- and middle-income countries, increasing SSN activity greatly in many low-income countries. In addition, over the decade, the Bank began to move from a project-focused approach that emphasized delivery of social assistance benefits toward an approach that focused on helping countries build SSN systems and institutions to respond better to poverty, risk, and vulnerability.

To build on results achieved to date, the Bank needs to engage now, when future shocks can be anticipated and appropriate systems put in place to help countries develop SSNs that effectively protect the poorest and most vulnerable. To this end, the Bank would want to focus on strengthening its engagement in low-income countries, emphasizing SSN systems and institutional capacity, and improving the results frameworks of operations that support the development of SSN systems.



Vinod Thomas
Director-General, Evaluation

Social Safety Nets: An Evaluation of Bank Support

Events of the past decade have underscored the vital need for social safety net (SSN) programs in all countries, especially in times of crisis. Many countries have some form of targeted SSN program, especially in high- and middle-income countries (MICs), but SSNs are increasingly spreading to the lowest income countries. Over fiscal years 2000–10, the World Bank supported SSNs with \$11.5 billion in lending and an active program of analytical and advisory services and knowledge sharing, much of it during the last two years of the decade in response to the food, fuel, and financial crises. Yet the crises also pointed out weaknesses, as many MICs found that their poverty-targeted SSNs were not flexible enough to increase coverage or benefits as needed, and low-income countries (LICs) lacked existing programs, poverty data, and systems to target and deliver benefits.

Bank support evolved in positive directions over the decade. The Bank began to move from a project-focused approach that emphasized delivery of social assistance benefits toward an approach that focused on helping countries build SSN systems and institutions to respond better to poverty, risk, and vulnerability. Stronger demand for SSN support in MICs led to significantly stronger engagement there than in LICs. However, the recent crisis-related expansion of support included also LICs and permitted initiation of Bank support in 15 new countries. The Bank's support to SSNs throughout the decade has relied strongly on both lending and knowledge sharing to engage clients.

Bank support has largely accomplished its stated short-term objectives and helped countries achieve immediate impacts. But to achieve the longer-term goal of developing country SSNs, short-term objectives need to be better defined, effectively monitored, and anchored in a longer-term results framework. Weaknesses in poverty data, program designs, and monitoring indicators need to be addressed to ensure target groups are adequately reached.

Although the Bank made substantial progress over the decade, key areas of Bank support need strengthening. First, the Bank needs to engage consistently during stable times to help countries develop SSNs that address poverty and can respond to shocks. Second, continued emphasis is needed on building SSN systems and institutional capacity. Third, stronger engagement is needed in LICs. Fourth, short- and longer-term results frameworks for Bank SSN support need

to be strengthened. This involves improving the quality of objectives, design, and monitoring within projects, as well as developing a longer-term results framework for building effective SSNs to protect the poor and vulnerable. Finally, continued effort is needed to ensure strong cross-network coordination on SSNs. The Social Protection Strategy currently under preparation is picking up on several of these issues and is seeking strategies to address them.

Background and Context

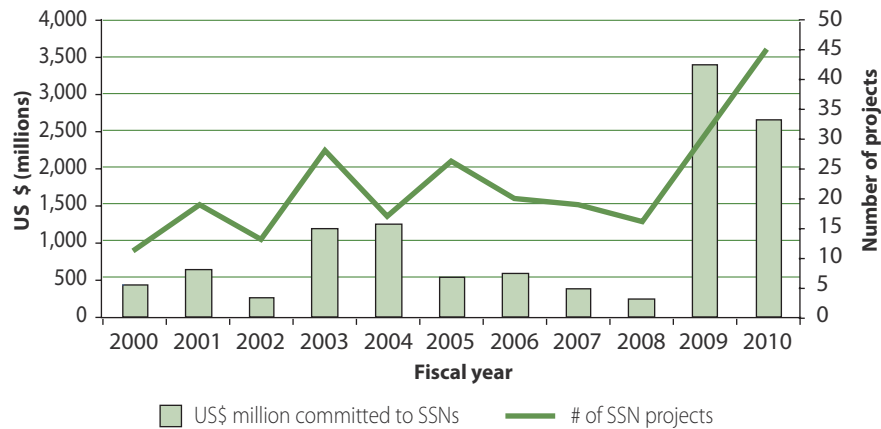
SSNs—programs designed to protect the poor and vulnerable from shocks and contribute to reducing poverty—are important elements of a country's poverty reduction and growth strategy. The critical need for such programs in all countries, especially in times of crisis, has been underscored over the past decade. It was particularly evident following the food, fuel, and financial crises, which pushed an additional 65 million people into extreme poverty around the world.

The Bank defines SSNs as noncontributory transfers targeted in some way to the poor and vulnerable. This is a narrow definition and constitutes only one component of a country's social protection system; it is also just one of the many tools available for poverty reduction. SSNs address chronic poverty and inequality, help the poor invest in developing human capital, and protect the poor and vulnerable from individual and systemic shocks, including during economic reforms.

SSN programs are a dynamic and growing area of World Bank work. Over fiscal years 2000–10, the Bank loaned \$11.5 billion to support such programs in 244 loans to 83 countries. Half of the lending occurred in the last two years of the decade, when the SSN portfolio doubled from three to six percent of the Bank's lending. Throughout the decade, Bank lending for SSNs increased during periods of crisis, with a particularly strong spike in 2009 and 2010 with the food, fuel, and financial crises (see figure 1).

The Bank also conducted 297 analytic and advisory activities focused on SSNs and 92 impact evaluations of 24 Bank-supported SSN programs (the largest body of evidence from impact evaluations of any sector) and produced hundreds of training seminars, study tours, and publications. Together, the Bank's lending and analytical support interact

FIGURE 1 Trends in World Bank Commitments and Project Approvals, by Fiscal Year of Approval



Source: IEG portfolio review.

with economic, political, and institutional conditions to enable the Bank to have an impact in a country.

The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) has never evaluated SSNs before, but with the demand for Bank support at an all-time high, an assessment of the Bank’s work in this area is timely. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess how effective and relevant the Bank has been in its support for SSNs and to draw lessons that can be applied to future support. Although the evaluation covers the whole decade, trends within the decade have also been examined, as experience in this area is evolving quickly.

Major Findings

Throughout the decade, countries and the Bank focused SSN support mainly on addressing chronic

poverty and human development and focused less on SSNs that can address shocks. During much of the decade, most countries enjoyed strong and stable economic growth. SSNs focused on addressing the needs of the chronically poor or vulnerable as well as developing the human capital of the poor. These areas of support were relevant and important, yet the Bank and its client countries did not focus much on developing flexible SSNs appropriate for responding to systemic shocks. When the food, fuel, and financial crises hit, lessons from previous crises were once again underscored. Those countries that had developed SSN programs or institutions during “stable times,” such as Indonesia, were better positioned to scale up—and the Bank was better able to help them—than those that had not. Results from IEG’s survey of Bank staff indicate that only 16 percent of countries’ SSNs were well positioned to respond to the crises by being able to identify and reach affected poor households. The two most common constraints for Bank support were weak country institutions and inadequate data.

Over the past decade, a small number of countries have dominated the SSN lending portfolio. The top 10 borrowers for SSNs over the decade represent 70 percent of Bank SSN lending (see figure 2). Yet these countries represent only 15 percent of poor people in Bank client countries. This concentration of lending has been mainly to MICs with large Bank lending programs, with the exception of Ethiopia and Pakistan. (When the SSN lending is compared to overall Bank lending, the results are reversed: the top 10 borrowers represent 52 percent of Bank lending and 68 percent of the poor).

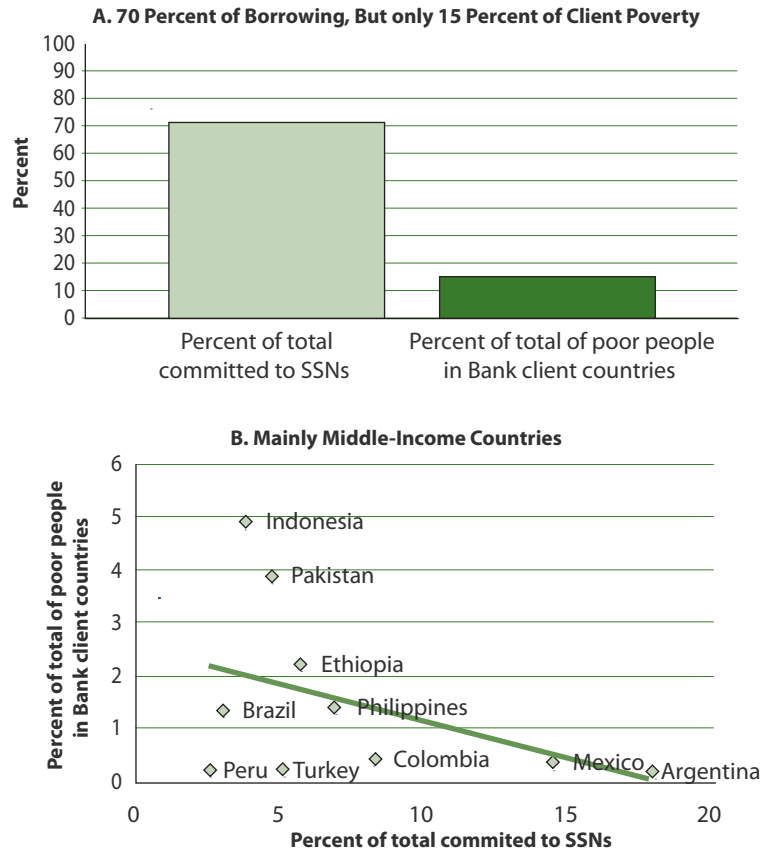
The lack of adequate SSN programs in many countries led the Bank to support SSN instruments that were not designed for crisis response. Although existing instru-



Photo by Jennie I. Litvack.

Men and women participating in a public works program in the World Bank-supported Tanzania Social Action Fund.

FIGURE 2 Top 10 SSN Borrowers



Sources: IEG portfolio review and World Development Indicators.

Note: Poverty data: FY00–07. Commitment data: FY00–10. Appendix D, table D.3, presents SSN lending and poverty by countries,

ments enabled countries to provide benefits to various subsets of poor and vulnerable people, modifying the target groups or scaling up the program to address new needs proved difficult. Moreover, experience has shown that it is often difficult to scale back benefits once a crisis subsides, especially when SSN programs are not designed to be flexible or are delivered on a temporary basis. Staff survey results indicated that 80 percent of countries now have plans to strengthen their SSNs to respond better to crisis. For example, in the Republic of Yemen, the Bank supported a labor-intensive public works program as a direct crisis response. At the same time, efforts were made to strengthen the cash-transfer program to serve as the main SSN for poverty reduction and crisis response in the future.

During this period, the Bank began to make an important shift from an approach based mainly on projects that emphasize delivery of social assistance benefits to helping countries build SSN systems and institutions that can respond better to various types of poverty, risk, and vulnera-

bility within a particular country context. The systemic approach involves developing various capacities, such as data to identify vulnerable groups, targeting systems to ensure the right groups receive benefits, payment mechanisms to channel resources to beneficiaries, and monitoring and evaluation systems to measure program implementation and impact, as well as a set of coordinated programs appropriate for different groups of poor and vulnerable people. Only 14 percent of the 30 case study countries that IEG examined embraced a systemic approach to addressing different types of risk in the first half of the decade, but 46 percent did so by the second half of the decade.

The Bank was most effective in helping countries where it had had steady engagement through lending, analytic and advisory activities, and dialogue over the decade. This longer-term engagement enabled the country to develop SSN institutions and the Bank to develop a deeper understanding of country dynamics. This was evident in such countries as Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, and Moldova (see box 1).

BOX 1 SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT AND BUILDING SSN INSTITUTIONS

In the early 2000s, the World Bank was closely involved in helping the **Brazilian** government consolidate four CCT programs into the flagship social assistance program, *Bolsa Familia*. Throughout the decade, the Bank used a range of instruments which permitted multiyear financing, and analytical and technical engagement in the development of the program. This included various loans such as a programmatic human development reform loan and two results-based adaptable program loans focusing specifically on *Bolsa Familia*. The Bank used an innovative programmatic analytic and advisory activity program to provide analytical and technical support on a demand driven basis over a period of several years. With strong field-based staff able to respond quickly and sensitively to government requests, the Bank was able to serve an important role in strengthening a major government program. The combination of approaches allowed for a long-term, ongoing partnership between the government and the Bank and permitted deepening of the technical aspects of the program.

Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program, the largest scale SSN supported by the Bank in an LIC, is an example of a program that benefited greatly from multiyear capacity building, adaptation of program design over time, and exemplary donor coordination. The World Bank and other donors supported the government's transition from a situation of annual emergency food appeals to the development of a predictable social safety net able to provide work opportunities and direct assistance to needy families during the season of annual drought. A three phase adaptable program loan has enabled the Bank to support Ethiopia continuously through financing and analytical and technical support as it prepared, supervised and evaluated each stage. Evaluation evidence indicates that program workfare beneficiaries are more likely to be food secure, borrow for productive purposes, use improved agricultural technologies, and operate non-farm business activities. Moreover, the program prevented beneficiary households from sliding deeper into poverty and selling household assets, thus protecting them from the worst effects of the shocks. Ethiopia has focused narrowly (and effectively) on food insecurity in rural areas but is now engaged in the preparation of a broader social protection strategy that will address other sources of vulnerability as well.

Although **Moldova** is the poorest country in Europe, poverty levels dropped from greater than 63 percent in 2001 to close to 12 percent in 2007. The Bank sustained its engagement in the process throughout the decade, mainly through analytic and advisory activity. A series of sector pieces and technical papers built understanding and appreciation of targeted benefits and formed the basis for a number of reforms aimed at rationalizing and targeting the existing social assistance programs. Overall, the Bank's approach, carefully considered the government's political concerns regarding the speed of reforms and appears to have been effective. In practice, it entailed developing an understanding of important issues and building capacity during the first half of the decade. This later enabled the successful implementation of reforms with Bank financial assistance, when circumstances permitted.

Sources: IEG case studies.

The Bank lending, analytical, and capacity-building support for SSNs was significantly more concentrated in MICs than LICs throughout the decade. The type of assistance varied as well, with greater emphasis on institution building in MICs (57 percent of operations) than LICs (24 percent of operations). Despite a recent increase in LIC engagement, SSNs remain a much less significant part of the development agenda in LICs than MICs. Five percent of MIC lending and 13 percent of MIC projects are focused on SSNs; only 2 percent of LIC lending and 6 percent of LIC projects focus on SSNs.

The stronger emphasis on MICs is driven by both country demand for SSN support and Bank supply of support. On the demand side, MICs have a higher capacity to borrow and spend than LICs and can invest in more costly institutional development and scale-up programs, rather than short-term relief programs and pilots, which are typically used in LICs. In addition, with high poverty rates, tight budgets, and many competing pro-poor needs, LICs may place less emphasis on SSNs as elements of their poverty alleviation programs.

On the supply side, the Bank's low level of engagement in LICs may have perpetuated those countries' low level of attention to SSNs. Bank resources for dialogue generally accompany Bank preparation and supervision of operations, thus countries with active lending programs are provided more opportunities for dialogue (and potential for future lending) than those without lending programs. This is indicated in results from regression analysis which shows that countries receiving greater volumes of SSN loans are more likely to receive further Bank SSN lending. While this reflects client satisfaction with Bank services and enables the steady engagement so important for SSN development, it perpetuates a situation of low Bank engagement for countries with initially low demand.

Country demand for SSNs may be higher in MICs, but SSNs are also important in LICs to protect against systemic shocks and to help alleviate extreme poverty and food insecurity. The largest scale SSN supported by the Bank in a LIC was the Ethiopia Productive Safety Net Program, which benefited greatly from capacity building,

adapting the design as the program progressed, and an exemplary experience in donor coordination. The Bank needs to engage in LICs, at least through analytical and advisory services, to help countries understand the value of SSNs and improve their capacity to design and implement programs that are appropriate in their context.

Operations supporting SSNs generally have achieved satisfactory outcomes. The positive results are particularly notable in LICs, where 88 percent of projects achieve at least moderately satisfactory ratings compared to an average of 74 percent for other sectors. Consistent with project ratings, the evidence from impact evaluations on SSNs shows positive short-term impacts on measures such as household consumption, school attendance, and children's health. However, these impact evaluations are for programs overwhelmingly concentrated in the Latin America and the Caribbean Region. Some positive impacts have been recorded for SSNs for protecting the poor during shocks, but very few studies have examined this question.

Although short-term achievements have been encouraging, results frameworks of operations supporting SSNs need to be further improved. Results frameworks have focused insufficiently on the poor and vulnerable. By the Bank's definition, SSNs support programs targeted to the poor or vulnerable in some way. Yet IEG found that objectives and performance indicators were often not specific enough to ensure effective monitoring of the effects of the SSN project on the poor or vulnerable. Only 59 percent of operations supporting SSN had objectives that specifically targeted the poor and vulnerable, and 47 percent of operations supporting SSN did not have even one indicator to monitor progress on reaching the poor. When the poverty focus was mentioned, it was often in general terms of "poverty reduction" rather than part of a time-bound objective

directed toward a specific subset of the poor. Results frameworks have improved throughout the decade, but further improvements are necessary.

The quality of results frameworks matters because clear objectives and monitoring indicators are necessary for coherent project design, in particular regarding coverage, level and duration of benefits, and targeting. As an illustration, IEG examined in-depth public works programs, where documentation lacked important detail regarding which groups of poor and vulnerable people would be employed by the public works and how the participation of and benefit to these groups would be monitored. Box 2 presents key questions to ask for improving frameworks for SSNs.

Short-term SSN project objectives have not been adequately anchored in a longer-term results framework. Whereas Bank-supported operations are short term in nature, the development of effective SSNs often takes longer, involves multiple sequential phases of support, and requires complementary inputs from other sectors. Bank-supported operations can accomplish limited objectives (and be considered satisfactory) and still not lead to effective country SSNs to protect the poor and vulnerable unless this longer-term development is anticipated, implemented, and monitored. Whereas Bank supported projects may be formally accountable for only those achievements occurring only during the life of the project, the effectiveness of the Bank's support for SSN development also needs to be measured against longer term objectives that extend beyond the project cycle.

This concern was evident in IEG's examination of conditional cash transfers (CCTs) where both project results and impact evaluation evidence from more than 60 impact evaluations measured short term achievements. Although CCTs often succeeded in accomplishing their

BOX 2 IMPROVING RESULTS FRAMEWORKS FOR SSNs: KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK OF EACH PROGRAM

The results frameworks and design of Bank-supported SSN programs can be improved by answering the following questions about each operation:

- Why were these particular objectives selected and how will they help the country move toward the longer-term goal of establishing effective and efficient SSNs and development objectives (such as the poverty, health, and education Millennium Development Goals)?
- Which particularly poor or vulnerable groups does this SSN seek to help?
- How will the SSN program and components selected help achieve the shorter-term objectives and contribute to longer-term objectives?
- What complementary or subsequent measures would be necessary for achievement of the short- or longer-term objectives?
- How will the design details selected help the program achieve the shorter-term objectives?
- How will the KPIs help track progress toward the shorter-term program objectives as well as the longer-term SSN objectives?

limited objectives of transferring cash to poor families and getting children to attend school, the achievement of the longer-term objective of improving learning outcomes over time was rarely documented. Because the rationale for CCTs in many countries is to invest in the human development of poor children so they can escape intergenerational poverty traps, monitoring the achievement of the longer-term objective is necessary for success.

Much effort has gone into rigorously evaluating the impact of various SSN programs on specific outcomes, but very little has been done to examine the cost of achieving those outcomes and weighing alternative policy options. The goal for SSNs, as in all areas of public policy, is to have the biggest impact possible for the least cost. For this reason, cost-effectiveness analysis can be useful in assessing the cost per unit of impact of a particular policy and comparing that result to other options. Yet only 12 percent of SSN operations assessed the cost and anticipated outcomes from alternative programs. This may be because of the lack of specific objectives and indicators, the presence of indirect effects or the difficulty in obtaining data on benefits and cost. However, even where impact evaluations have been conducted and have provided precise evidence of benefits, this information has rarely been used to weigh options and see where the largest impact can be achieved for the least cost.

SSN programs have a unique set of fiscal, political, and institutional risks, in part because of their need to expand and contract to meet needs. The size of the Bank's financial contribution to SSN programs ranges from 9 percent of Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* program to 100 percent of the CCT component of Macedonia's cash transfer program. Programs in MICs are often supported largely by government resources, whereas programs in LICs are usually heavily donor dependent, given countries' limited capacity for redistribution.

In LICs, the major risk to fiscal sustainability is reduction in donor support; in MICs it is change in government priorities and budget support for SSNs. In a few upper-middle-income countries, such as Colombia and Mexico, Bank-supported SSN programs have grown throughout the decade as they have gone to national scale, and there are concerns about pressure on national budgets and questions of fiscal sustainability. These programs are still relatively small (around 0.5 percent of gross domestic product), but Bank support to program expansion, as in all areas of government expenditure, should be consistent with budget management strategies. It should be monitored to ensure sound design to achieve stated objectives, and as to avoid creating large, permanent entitlements.

Donor support for SSNs in LICs is often fragmented. In only one of the LIC case studies undertaken by this evaluation—Ethiopia—did IEG find strong Bank participation in a well-coordinated, jointly financed effort. This is a missed opportunity for the Bank, as donor-dependent countries need a well-coordinated effort to harness the various sources of aid and advice, improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their programs, as well as enhance their fiscal sustainability.

In some SSN programs, fiscal pressure arises from the difficulty of scaling back a program that has been expanded unless the benefits of the program itself are known to be temporary. Argentina faced such a challenge with its emergency Heads of Households Program throughout the decade, but after several years of effort (and Bank support), the country successfully wound down the program designed for crisis response while continuing to strengthen its permanent SSN. In other cases, crisis provides an opportunity to introduce or enlarge a SSN program that is needed at the time and remains in place to address the needs of specific groups among the chronically poor and vulnerable when the crisis subsides.

Political economy issues have been important in determining the shape of SSN programs. An important factor in the Bank's ability to be relevant and effective in its support for SSNs is its knowledge of political economy and how it is used. IEG's case studies found that new political leadership was responsible for SSN reform (positive or negative) in half of the 30 countries. IEG also found that new political space for SSN reform often opened up during crisis: 70 percent of cases where SSN programs were introduced occurred after a major country transition or crisis because there was political appetite for it. SSNs are among the most politically sensitive areas of development policy, as they involve redistributing resources. Therefore, understanding how politics affect the ability of a country to design and implement SSNs is important for the Bank's effectiveness. The Bank's support to Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* was technically oriented but politically savvy—it provided appropriate input, in the right way, when most needed.

Strategic engagement has strengthened the effectiveness of Bank support for SSNs in many countries. Strategic engagement involves situating the SSN dialogue in wider country dialogue, having a vision of how to build an effective overall SSN system (for example, how various SSN programs complement each other in the country context), and using the right instruments at the right time with the right stakeholders. In almost two-thirds of countries studied, the Bank supported SSNs in the context of country economic dialogue, Country Assistance Strategies, or sector discussions. However, in less than one-third of the countries is there evidence of the Bank having an overall vision of how its support helps build an effective SSN system.

Before the Asian Financial Crisis in the late 1990s, there were no formal SSNs in Indonesia. When the crisis hit, the government introduced a series of subsidies (food, fuel, and electricity) as a response, as well as new safety net programs known collectively as the *Jaring Pengaman Sosial*. In 2005, because of the fluctuations in oil prices, an effort was undertaken to reduce the highly regressive fuel subsidies (which cost 5 percent of gross domestic product). The government was able to secure political support for the economic reform in part by committing to a pro-poor agenda. At the same time, the government used fiscal space freed up from the subsidy reduction to fund an unconditional cash transfer. The introduction of the unconditional cash transfer allowed the government to remove fuel subsidies without major public protests. In subsequent years, the safety net focus both by the government and the World Bank was able to shift from programs to protect people during emergencies toward building SSN systems that were able to respond to a range of household risks.

Sources: IEG case studies.

In some countries, the Bank was able to take advantage of political openings for SSN advancement when broader economic reforms were introduced. Bank and country experience suggests that associating SSNs with economic reform is an excellent way of garnering political support for both the reforms and the SSN agenda (Colombia, Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey, and Yemen). Box 3 showcases how Indonesia has shifted from a situation of no SSNs, to the development of programs to protect people during emergencies, and now toward building SSN systems able to respond to a range of household risks.

SSNs are a challenge within the Bank, as they fall within the supervisory responsibility of the Social Protection sector family, yet less than half of projects containing SSN components are managed by staff in that sector family. Sources of tension exist with regard to budget arrangements, task management, and accountability, although the extent varies by Region.

Recommendations

Because this evaluation assesses the World Bank's support for SSNs, the recommendations are for the Bank, with the objective of improving SSNs in countries.

- **Engage during stable times to build SSNs that can help countries respond effectively to shocks.** This requires steady country dialogue and support for developing SSNs, whether by lending, country-specific analytic and advisory activities, or engagement in global knowledge and learning. Although the Bank's focus on systemic shocks has accelerated since the most recent crises, greater attention is needed to design SSNs (in combination with other relevant programs) that adequately address systemic shocks. As such shocks are transitory in nature, an important characteristic is the ability to expand and contract to reach different population groups as needed. Access to reliable poverty data, crisis monitoring systems, and flexible targeting systems are important elements to develop appropriate SSNs.
- **Support the development of SSN institutions and systems.** Further accelerate institution building, particularly in LICs, where capacity constraints are severe and the building blocks for SSN administrative systems may need to be built from scratch. In MICs, the approach will require continuing the effort to harmonize programs within the broader social protection framework.
- **Increase SSN engagement in LICs.** The Bank needs to maintain special efforts (financing and internal incentives) for LICs to develop SSNs that will protect their poorest and vulnerable and prepare for shocks. Depending on the country context, these may include improving country capacity, adapting SSN programs to the institutional environment, improving poverty data and analysis to identify the particularly vulnerable groups and assuring effective donor coordination for SSNs (for financing and technical assistance) to increase efficiency of government programs.
- **Improve the results frameworks of Bank supported SSN projects** to (1) more clearly identify and address the needs of specific groups of poor or vulnerable, and (2) identify how project objectives fit within longer term objectives for development of country SSNs. This involves improvements in the quality of objectives, design, and monitoring within projects, as well as development of a longer term results framework or "roadmap" for building effective SSN programs and systems.
- **Clearly define objectives and assess benefits, costs, and feasibility of policy alternatives to ensure the most appropriate use of SSNs.** Clearly define objectives and use cost effectiveness type analysis to assess policy alternatives to ensure the most appropriate use of SSNs. Comparing alternative options for reaching the specific objective(s) is particularly important in contexts of high poverty and tight budgets and encourages specific SSN objectives.
- **Improve internal coordination of SSNs.** Review budget systems to see if the incentives they create for managers and task team leaders constrain cooperation between Bank units. Share expertise across sectors and networks to enhance Bank support.

Introduction

Management welcomes this comprehensive review of the World Bank's support for social safety nets (SSNs) over the last 10 years. It is careful, detailed, and fair. Its analysis of how the Bank's safety nets work has successfully met client needs—especially during the recent food, fuel and financial crises—is particularly timely. The Independent Evaluation Group's (IEG) recommendations for how we can improve our safety nets work going forward closely match management's own strategic directions for Social Protection and Labor more broadly (as represented in the concept note for the proposed Social Protection and Labor strategy for 2012–22, endorsed by the Committee on Development Effectiveness in January 2011). Moreover, the detailed analysis in the report will be useful to add to the diagnostics and background work being done for the strategy.

Management welcomes the overall findings of the review, which documents several achievements of the Bank's work over the past decade:

- **Substantial portfolio.** The World Bank has loaned \$11.5 billion to support SSNs through 244 loans to 83 countries and has conducted nearly 300 analytic and advisory activities (AAA). The World Bank has also created a substantial inventory of knowledge products and related activities, including flagship global training courses and South-South learning fora.
- **Ability to help countries respond to crisis.** In response to the food, fuel, and financial crises, the World Bank's lending volume for SSNs increased from \$1.2 billion in FY06–08 (precrisis) to \$9.0 billion in FY09–11 (postcrisis). Between FY08 and FY10, 58 borrowers received lending and grant assistance for SSNs. The Rapid Social Response Multidonor and Catalytic Trust Funds and Japanese Social Development Fund Emergency Window (contributed by Japan, Russia, Norway, and the United Kingdom), as well as the Global Food Crisis Response Program, allowed a significant increase in capacity building and AAA in low-income countries (LICs), especially in LICs with which the Bank had not previously had dialogue on SSNs.
- **Solid portfolio performance.** Even with its rapid expansion, the SSN portfolio remains one of the best in the Bank. IEG rated 86 percent of projects with an SSN ob-

jective as moderately satisfactory or higher, compared with 78 percent of all other Bank projects. This higher performance is particularly striking for LICs, where 88 percent of projects with an SSN objective were rated moderately satisfactory or higher, compared with 74 percent of all other operations.

- **Use of impact evaluation.** Over the past decade, 92 impact evaluations have been carried out on 24 SSN programs supported by the Bank, which in turn has generated a large, substantial evidence base not available, as yet in other sectors. These evaluations show positive short-term results on household consumption, school attendance, and children's health. Only a small number of studies have examined long-term impact, but there is some evidence that the immediate improvements in welfare created by SSN programs may be sustainable over time. The companion piece to this IEG evaluation presents a valuable summary of all the available evidence while adding two new long-term evaluations.

That said, it is important to recognize that the world of safety nets is extremely dynamic, and new knowledge and new practices are constantly evolving. Over the course of the last 10 years, the size and number of effective programs, together with the amount of safety nets know-how and evidence, have expanded at great speed. This performance has caught the close attention of the international community as well as the media and other development stakeholders. Countries are devising new SSN approaches every year, guided by the continual harvesting of new evidence as to what works and what does not. This does suggest the vital importance of analyzing trends over time and not just settling on average findings over the course of the last 10 years. It is also important to recognize the degree to which the SSN revolution has been, and continues to be, led by the South, especially some large middle-income countries (for example Brazil, India, Mexico, and South Africa), which implies that knowledge work and South-South learning in particular is highly significant to the ongoing success of SSNs worldwide.

Nonetheless, the importance ascribed to safety nets varies greatly from country to country and is often low in low income countries. SSNs' redistributive and poverty-reducing role is well understood, but countries take very different positions about how much redistribution they

want in their societies, and whether SSNs are the right tools to deliver it. SSNs' role in risk management and resilient growth is also powerful, but the evidence for this is being built only slowly and is only beginning to filter out to central ministries, politicians, and the general public. As a result, there is less social consensus around the desirability of safety nets than, for example, around the goals for universal primary education or availability of clean water supply. Consequently, the World Bank will work with many countries to analyze what role safety nets could play in their contexts, and to gather evidence, but should not expect to have an active lending portfolio in every country.

Management Comments

Management broadly agrees with the findings and recommendations of this review. In fact, three of the recommendations—namely to increase work in the LICs, to move to a systems approach, and to improve results frameworks—are fully reflected in the main pillars of our new Social Protection and Labor Strategy, which is currently being shaped by a series of global consultations. This section provides management's specific comments on each of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Engage during stable times to build SSNs that can help countries respond effectively to shocks. Management agrees that this is a desirable direction and one on which the Bank can act. Indeed, the Bank has been working more vigorously in this area since the food, fuel, and finance crises of recent years hit. Having said that, the focus of the Bank's assistance depends on the priorities assigned to the topic. However, management is optimistic about being able to continue to engage in crisis preparedness at higher than precrisis levels, because of the following factors:

- With respect to crisis preparedness, the triple wave of crises in 2008 and 2009 has raised countries' demand for SSNs—a demand that is likely to be reinforced by the more recent resurgence of high food prices.
- With respect to both crisis preparation and engagement in LICs, the Japanese Social Development Fund Emergency Window, the Global Food Crisis Response Program, and the Rapid Social Response Multidonor and Catalytic Trust Funds have been extremely important in giving the Bank important means of involvement, funding 66 projects in 41 countries, of which 21 are in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- We have a number of concrete actions in hand that can build on these opportunities to expand the development potential of SSN programs, as detailed in the Management Action Record.

Management expects the Bank to sustain continuous engagement through a country-specific and time-varying blend of lending and all forms of nonlending support: formal economic and sector work, nonlending technical assistance, capacity building through training or South-South learning, involvement in donor coordination or impact evaluation, and so on. Measuring progress on this front will be principally a qualitative exercise. Looking only at lending volumes will not be enough to show progress. In fact, we expect our financing to taper off eventually as countries that have already borrowed extensively from the Bank recover eventually from crisis.

Recommendation 2: Support the development of SSN institutions and systems. The Social Protection and Labor Strategy that is under preparation stresses this as a key focus area. The Bank will engage in this work at two levels:

- Assisting countries to establish the “building blocks” of administrative capacity. These would include a targeting mechanism so programs reach the right beneficiaries, payment, and management information systems, and monitoring and evaluation. This work is already prominent in SSN operations and can be readily tailored to help in all country settings.
- Understanding and improving the positive synergies between different social protection programs and regulations, such as social assistance programming, unemployment insurance, and contributory pensions. This is partly a design issue, but it can be assisted by shared technical platforms for eligibility, payments, and so on. Working at the systems level in this second sense is more feasible in countries that have multiple social assistance programs in place or those where the Bank has a well-established dialogue. In other settings, an appropriate entry point may be to work on establishing or improving a single program, as a first step toward building more complex systems and their supporting technical elements.

Recommendation 3: Increase SSN engagement in LICs. This is also a desirable direction, one that is highlighted in the Social Protection and Labor Strategy. Management expects that engagement will be sustained for LICs, as in Recommendation 1 for countries more generally, by a country-specific blend of lending and all forms of nonlending support. Work in this area must be sensitive to the very different visions from one country to another with respect to the role of safety nets, the capacity to finance them, and consequent differences in the choice instruments selected and the details of their implementation. The Bank will continue its engagements with countries to customize their strategy and take the next step pertinent in each context.

Measuring progress on these fronts will be principally a qualitative exercise. Because the Bank has already engaged

with a high percentage of LICs in the last three years, a simple country count of engagement is unlikely to reveal the extent of progress; rather, progress will need to be measured through the depth, breadth, and longevity of engagement in countries. There are, however, two caveats worth noting with respect to the specifics of the SSN engagement in LICs:

- The Bank's level of SSN engagement at the country level will always be determined by demand and policy selectivity. The latter point on selectivity is especially relevant, given the limited amount of the Bank's highly concessional IDA resources available for country use. Countries may also lack the broad national agreement on the role of safety nets necessary for their effective, sustainable operation.
- The World Bank is actively involved in donor coordination through existing global and country-level frameworks; but it must be acknowledged that the degree of engagement may vary by country (as some national governments may assign other donors to the lead role in some cases), and successful coordination requires the active and willing engagement by other donors and partners.

With respect to improvements in data collection as a means to guide social safety net assessments, it is important to recognize two different sides of the issue. The first is the collection of basic poverty data to inform strategic choices, and the second is the development of targeting systems. These are both important and constrained in LICs, but progress can be made on the two independently. It is unlikely that rapid progress can be made in increasing the number of countries with robust coverage of safety net participation in their household survey data. Representative information on social assistance programs is typically only a feature of large, stable social assistance programs, which for the most part are missing in most LICs.

Progress in the collection of multipurpose household survey data providing information on poverty has been steady but slow. National household surveys are produced throughout the world, and the Bank supports and maintains these databases. In many cases, Bank teams have been heavily involved in the process of designing and conducting these surveys. These efforts, coordinated by the Global Poverty Working Group sponsored by the Poverty Reduction Board and Development Economics, has recently resulted in the single largest update ever of the database of poverty indicators—disseminated in the World Development Indicators report and on-line via the Open Data Initiative (from 230 data points covering 104 countries to almost 600 data points covering 115 countries). However, it should be noted that these are rarely Bank-led activities, but very complex national endeavors, where Bank support involves funding

(in most cases through trust funds), technical assistance, and capacity building. As such, progress is slow, particularly in LICs with low administrative and technical capacity. In Africa and to a lesser extent in South Asia, poverty figures in particular, and household surveys in general, are available on average with considerable lags, low frequency, and problems of comparability. Steady support from the Bank and donors is required to continue national efforts to improve household surveys data collection.

Recommendation 4: Improve the results frameworks of Bank-supported SSN projects. Management fully appreciates this recommendation. That the Bank is already moving in this direction is borne out by Human Development Network Anchor's recent "Results Readiness in Social Protection and Labor," which is now being disseminated to project teams (cited in the IEG report). This internal review shows a positive trend: more recently approved projects have better results frameworks. However, there are also notable areas in which task teams can do better: formulating project development objectives and aligning monitorable indicators along the results chain. Building on the recommendations in the Social Protection Team and IEG reviews, the Social Protection Team anchor's results team will support task teams in applying lessons learned to the design of results frameworks for projects in the SSN portfolio.

Management would also point out, however, that the long-term results and outcomes of SSN interventions go well beyond the scope of individual projects. Management views its range of instruments to help governments build a long-term vision in an inclusive way—including AAA, training, and South-South learning as well as lending—and the vehicles that would contain long-run SSN strategies as country Poverty Reduction Strategies, national social protection strategies, and the like. Where such strategies exist, they may be referred to in the Project Appraisal Documents of specific operations. But it is unrealistic to expect that all Project Appraisal Documents will be able to make such references, particularly in the first operation of engagement in a country with only a nascent safety net sector or in crisis response projects.

These longer-term outcomes can sometimes be picked up in follow-on projects but are more commonly being dealt with by specially designed impact evaluations carried out by Bank staff or by researchers outside the Bank. The report on impact evaluations accompanying the main IEG SSN evaluation offers some examples of such long-term assessments, which bypass the regular project cycle (for example, the evaluations of Colombia's *Familias en Acción* and Pakistan's Punjab Secondary School Stipend Program). Given that most evidence in impact evaluations of SSNs comes from conditional cash transfer programs, IEG recommends expanding impact evaluations

to other programs. Management agrees and has already reformulated the clusters under the Bank's Development Impact Evaluation initiative to include unconditional cash transfers and public works. Management therefore commits to continue its efforts to increase staff and client awareness of the importance of undertaking such longer-term impact evaluations and of making data from projects accessible to the research community at large.

Recommendation 5: Clearly define objectives and assess benefits, costs, and feasibility of policy alternatives to ensure the most appropriate use of SSNs. While management agrees conceptually with the importance of comparing alternative means of reaching strategic goals, it has two problems with the application of this recommendation in specific project contexts.

- First, the comparison of alternate policies or programs at the higher level (for example, SSNs versus other types of interventions), or of alternative SSN interventions (for example, public works versus conditional cash transfers), is addressed not during project development, but through strategic analytic work—safety net assessments, public expenditure reviews, poverty assessments, support for countries as they prepare poverty reduction strategies and the like—undertaken at strategic junctures of continuous engagement (see recommendation 1). The Human Development Network has developed methodological tools (such as the “Human Development in Public Expenditure Reviews” guidance note, guidelines for Risk and Vulnerability Assessments, criteria for safety net assessments in Grosh et al. 2008) and literature to benchmark such work (Fiszbein and Schady 2009 on conditional cash transfers; del Ninno, Subbarao, and Milazzo 2009, and Subbarao and others 2010 on public works; Bundy and others 2009 on school feeding; and so forth). IEG's companion volume, the meta-evaluation, will add to this literature.
- Second, the task of comparing policy options is complicated by SSNs' multiple objectives, which rule out simple rates-of-return analyses. The Bank's conceptual definition of SSNs views their prime objective as reducing poverty through cash and in-kind transfers, and the ADePT SP program developed by Human Development and Development Economics provides robust, comparable measures of this. But it is not sufficient to capture other objectives of SSNs. To help World Bank staff and country clients build the basis of more regular application of cost-effectiveness analysis, Human Development will provide enhanced training as part of the ongoing suite of impact evaluation courses.

In the Management Action Record, management largely follows IEG's suggested focus on the formulation for lending operations, but with the understanding that at that stage of decision making, the range of options governments can consider is rather narrow, essentially focusing on alternative features of a given type of program or, more commonly, further development of an existing program. Management will focus its efforts on the core objectives of income support and effective institutions for the delivery of SSNs. To work toward being able to do better assessments, management proposes three areas:

- To foment cost-effectiveness analysis in more of the significant body of impact evaluations
- To conduct a global benchmarking of targeting performance of transfer programs of many types and using different targeting instruments
- A series of knowledge pieces on the cost-effectiveness of different aspects of delivery systems to identify the most effective design options.

By carrying out results readiness work and strengthening operational teams, management is taking actions to assist client countries in prudent and strategic choices about the choice of instruments, the size and selection of target populations and benefit levels and hence is helping to promote sustainability of safety nets. .

Recommendation 6: Improve internal coordination of SSNs. The fact that SSN components occur in projects mapped to many sectors other than Social Protection implies a need to ensure that the technical quality of the work is equally high and the advice consistent, no matter which sector is in the lead. This IEG evaluation report provides somewhat limited analysis of whether this has been achieved, but raises no explicit flags and provides some small reassurances. A number of mechanisms and practices are already in place to ensure that the knowledge function for SSNs cuts across boundaries: for example, cross-board membership, cross-sectoral thematic group and Global Expert Team membership, and consultation and collaboration on a series of flagship initiatives. As part of ongoing business modernization, management is strengthening sector boards to enable them to better manage the allocation of expertise across the Bank and revising the budgeting system for cross support to remove disincentives and encourage cross-unit collaboration and will report progress in the context of regular Board updates. Management proposes to continue and reinforce some of these mechanisms and to focus on improving the outreach of knowledge and quality assurance services.

Social Safety Nets: An IEG Evaluation of World Bank Support, 2000-2010

Draft Management Action Record

IEG Findings and Conclusions	IEG Recommendations
<p>1. SSNs for Shocks: Throughout the decade, countries and the Bank focused SSN support on addressing chronic poverty and human development and focused less on SSNs to address shocks. During the last few years of the decade, the focus of countries and the Bank expanded as addressing systemic shocks took on greater importance. The urgency of preparing for systemic shocks became particularly clear after the food, fuel, and financial crises, during which lessons from previous crises were underscored: those countries that had prepared during good times—by developing permanent SSN programs or institutions—were better positioned to scale up, as needed—and the Bank was better able to help them—than those that had not. The Bank was most effective in helping countries in which it had been steadily engaged through lending, AAA, or dialogue over the decade. Such engagement enabled the country to develop SSNs and the Bank to develop a deeper understanding of country dynamics.</p>	<p>Engage during stable times to build SSNs that can help countries respond effectively to shocks.</p> <p>This requires steady country dialogue and support for developing SSNs, whether by lending, country-specific AAA, or engagement in global knowledge and learning. As such shocks are transitory in nature, an important characteristic of an SSN is its ability to expand and contract to reach different population groups as needed. Access to reliable poverty data, crisis monitoring systems, and flexible targeting systems are elements to develop appropriate SSNs.</p>
<p>2. Systems Approach: During this period, the Bank began to make an important shift from an approach based mainly on projects that emphasize delivery of social assistance benefits to helping countries build SSN systems and institutions that can respond better to various types of poverty, risk, and vulnerability within a particular country context. The institutional development approach was driven mainly by middle-income countries (MICs), for which this was the most common objective of Bank-supported SSN programs.</p>	<p>Support the development of SSN institutions and systems. Further accelerate institution building, particularly in LICs, where capacity constraints are often severe and the building blocks for SSN administrative systems may need to be built from scratch. In MICs, the approach will require continuing the effort to harmonize programs within the broader social protection framework.</p>

Acceptance by Management	Management Response
<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p>	<p>Management agrees with the recommendation: The Bank’s client countries need broad-based and flexible SSN systems that address chronic poverty and its consequences but can also be scaled up to protect the poor from economic shocks—whether at the global, country, or household level.</p> <p>During the 2008–09 crisis, increased demand from clients and the extraordinary amount of resources deployed by the World Bank have helped to build a strong pipeline of activities that will persist into the immediate future, including in many countries that did not have prior SSN dialogue. The Bank will continue to provide client-driven assistance to respond to crisis situations, and to help countries build systems that alleviate chronic poverty, through its full menu of products—investment and policy lending (including new instruments, such as P4R), grants, and analytical activities. A key element of this would be capacity building and knowledge exchanges. These all will be financed through normal Bank budget allocations and supplemental seed funding from donors.</p> <p>It will also launch new activities focused on helping countries build greater capacity to respond to future crisis. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed 2012–22 Social Protection and Labor strategy emphasizes continuing the move toward building country Social Protection (including SSN) scalable and flexible systems that can be used to address both shocks and chronic poverty. New Social Protection and Labor (SP&L) strategy (including results framework) developed, expected to be submitted to the World Bank Board (FY12). • For the poorest client countries (which usually have inadequate SSN systems), the Bank will use demand-driven grant financing from the first round Rapid Social Response (RSR 1) multidonor trust fund to help countries to increase crisis preparedness—by building monitoring systems, flexible targeting and scalable SSN delivery systems, or devising crisis contingency plans. To meet unfulfilled country demand, the Bank will also seek additional donor support for a second round of Rapid Social Response (RSR 2). Donor consultations for second round of RSR (FY12–13). • The Bank will continue capacity building to enhance crisis resilience of client countries (LICs and MICs) through: South-South learning events (between MIC and LIC clients), continued offering of core training programs targeted to the representatives of client countries and staff of donor agencies. Organize new South-South learning events, and continue the annual SSN core course (FY12 and ongoing).
<p style="text-align: center;">Agree</p>	<p>Management agrees with the central role of the systems approach for safety nets and for social protection in general, as reflected by its support for the shift in project designs noted by IEG. The Bank will continue supporting the systems approach in both LICs and MICs, adapted to country needs and capacity levels, and is aiming to implement this recommendation as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed 2012–22 Social Protection and Labor (SP&L) strategy puts systems as a central theme for the SP&L practice in the World Bank in its engagements with clients and partners. The strategy will emphasize deepening the Bank’s knowledge and practice for building effective SP&L systems in different country contexts and capacity levels. It will also emphasize labor-market continuity of SSNs programs and will coordinate with the IFC on private sector job creation. New SP&L strategy developed, submitted to World Bank Board (FY12). • The World Bank will develop and apply new County Policy and Institutional Assessment measures, with guidelines, for benchmarking Social Protection, including a new measure for Social Protection systems. This will become part of the regular process of monitoring progress towards system building. New County Policy and Institutional Assessment criteria and accompanying guidance note on Social Protection systems (FY12 onward). • For LICs in particular, the Bank will draw lessons on developing the building blocks for SSNs in LICs through its current activities (supported by RSR and other crisis-related instruments) focused

Draft Management Action Record (continued)

IEG Findings and Conclusions	IEG Recommendations	
<p>3. SSN Engagement in LICs: The Bank focused its lending, analytical, and capacity-building support for SSNs significantly more in MICs than in LICs throughout the decade. Despite a recent increase in LICs engagement, SSNs remain a much less significant part of the development agenda in LICs than in MICs. Country demand for SSNs may be higher in MICs, but SSNs are also important in LICs, as they help protect against systemic shocks as well as help the poorest and most vulnerable people. The Bank’s low level of engagement may have perpetuated countries’ low level of attention to SSNs. The Bank needs to be engaged (at least through analytical and advisory services) to help countries understand the value of SSNs and improve their capacity to design and implement the programs, as appropriate in each country’s context.</p>	<p>Increase SSN engagement in LICs. The Bank needs to maintain special efforts (financing and internal incentives) for LICs that permit countries to develop SSNs that will protect their poorest and prepare for shocks. Depending on the country context these may include: improving country capacity, adapting SSN programs to the institutional environment, improving poverty data and analysis to identify the particularly vulnerable groups, and assuring donor coordination for SSNs (for financing and technical assistance) to increase efficiency of government programs.</p>	
<p>4. Project Performance and Quality of Results Frameworks: The Bank’s support for SSNs has been effective in helping countries reach short-term objectives and achieve short-term impacts, such as increased school attendance or immediate consumption. However, short-term SSN project objectives have not been adequately anchored in longer-term results frameworks. Anticipating and planning for complementary inputs from other sectors (including inputs on monitoring poverty and vulnerability) needs more attention. There is also a need to mobilize resources from outside the project cycle to track progress toward the longer-term objectives, including selective longer-term impact evaluations. Results frameworks for projects with SSN components</p>	<p>Improve the results frameworks of Bank supported SSN projects to (1) more clearly identify and address the needs of specific groups of poor or vulnerable, and (2) identify how project objectives fit within longer-term objectives for development of country SSNs. This involves improvements in the quality of objectives, design, and monitoring within projects, as well as development of a longer term results framework for building effective SSN programs and systems.</p>	

Acceptance by Management	Management Response
	<p>on building administrative systems, institutions and delivery capacity for SSNs. These lessons will be disseminated internally and externally. Success stories notes on good practices in LICs (launched FY12, fully posted and disseminated FY13).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bank will develop new knowledge tools and data products to assess performance of SSN/ SP&L systems through a global inventory of social programs, their rules and their interactions in delivering benefits at the household level. Global inventory of SSNs developed and maintained, and existing SP&L systems mapped with the new “SP Atlas” (first posted on Web FY12, fully launched and updated by FY13–14).
Agree	<p>Management agrees with the importance of continuing focusing efforts on improving capacity of LICs to deliver sustainable SSNs for the poor and also to protect access to basic services by the poor through all available instruments: lending, grants, AAA, training, and knowledge-sharing activities. To continue efforts to improve capacity of LIC SSNs, the Bank is committed to the following actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proposed 2012–22 SP&L strategy identifies increased engagement in LICs as the key action to increase coverage of the poor by social protection. The strategy will emphasize deepening the Bank’s knowledge and practice for supporting work in LICs, adapted to different contexts and capacity levels. New SP&L strategy developed, submitted to World Bank Board (FY12). To implement this strategic direction, the Bank will continue and enhance capacity building and knowledge sharing activities for operational staff of the Bank and client countries focused on LICs. South-South learning events and knowledge exchanges (FY12–14). To maintain the existing momentum in IDA countries, the Bank will seek to sustain the engagement with LICs through continuous country dialogue, strategic AAAs, and other forms of capacity building. The Bank will commit to report annually on the range of activities in LICs and specifics of major country level engagements in LICs. Annual reports will provide details on country-level engagement by regions and central vice presidential units in lending and nonlending services (FY12 onward). To go beyond core work, the Bank will proactively seek additional donor resources to supplement Bank budget funding for SSNs capacity building in LICs. Donor consultations for second round of RSR (FY12–13). The Human Development practice with Poverty Reduction and Economic Management will invest in a suite of knowledge products in the next two fiscal years, including tools to improve data adequacy on SSN targeting and delivery of benefits (including gender differentiated data). New knowledge products on building blocks of SSNs in LICs produced and posted on safety net Web site (analysis conducted in FY12–13, posted FY14). The Bank will continue its yearly coordination meetings on social protection together with the International Labour Organisation, United Nations agencies, and all key bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as actively participate in country-specific donor coordination meetings. Ongoing annual donor coordination meetings and participation in other donor coordination activities (FY11 onward).
Partially agree	<p>Management partially agrees with this recommendation. Management agrees with and fully appreciates the need for improving results frameworks and of identifying project impacts on beneficiaries, as was borne out by our 2010 internal Social Protection Team results-readiness review. However, as long-term results and outcomes go beyond the scope of individual projects, management will focus on strengthening the application and consistency of medium term indicators in the results chain to monitor performance of projects, and through strategically targeted knowledge work. The Human Development network will also promote strengthened and consistent quality across the Bank through tools, analysis of outputs, impact evaluation, and support to task team in results. The Bank has agreed to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SP&L Sector Board will introduce the use of core sector indicators, as appropriate, for all new investment projects. New core sector indicators for social protection developed, validated, and introduced (FY12).

Draft Management Action Record (continued)

IEG Findings and Conclusions	IEG Recommendations	
<p>focused insufficiently on clearly identifying the poor and vulnerable target groups. (By the Bank’s definition, SSNs support programs targeted to the poor or vulnerable in some way.) Yet IEG found that objectives and performance indicators were often not specific enough to ensure effective monitoring of the effects of the project on the poor or vulnerable. Project objectives need to be defined more precisely, monitorable key performance indicators need to be better aligned with those objectives and accompanying monitoring and evaluation arrangements need to track their performance.</p>		
<p>5. Weighing Policy Options and Using Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: The goal for SSNs, as in all areas of public policy, is to have the biggest impact possible for the least cost. For this reason, cost effectiveness analysis can be useful in assessing the cost per unit of impact of a particular policy and compare that result to other options. SSN operations have usually been undertaken without explicitly considering alternatives for achieving specific objectives (for example, by using cost-effectiveness analysis).</p> <p>This may be because of the lack of specific project objectives and indicators, the presence of indirect effects, or the difficulty in obtaining data on benefits and cost. However, even where impact evaluations have been conducted and provide precise evidence of benefits, this information has rarely been used to weigh various options or assess where the largest impact can be achieved for the least cost.</p>	<p>Clearly define objectives and assess benefits, costs, and feasibility of policy alternatives to ensure the most appropriate use of SSNs. Comparing alternative options for reaching the specific objective(s) is particularly important in contexts of high poverty and tight budgets and encourages specific SSN objectives.</p>	
<p>6. Bank Internal Coordination: SSNs are a challenge within the Bank, as they fall within the supervisory responsibility of the Social Protection sector family, yet less than half of projects containing SSN components are managed by staff in that sector family.</p> <p>Sources of tension exist with regard to budget arrangements, task management, and accountability, although the extent varies by Region.</p>	<p>Improve internal coordination of SSNs.</p> <p>Review budget systems to see if the incentives they create for managers and task team leaders constrain cooperation between Bank units.</p> <p>Share expertise across sectors and networks to enhance Bank support.</p>	

Acceptance by Management	Management Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The HDNSP anchor will review and, as necessary, amend the existing Results Readiness Guidance Note for SSN to strengthen the focus on medium term key performance indicators and their fit within longer term objectives. HDN will reach support operational staff working on the results frameworks of Specific Investment Loans, Development Policy Loans and P4Rs and evaluation of safety nets components with tools, training and customized support via its toolkits, publications, website, training events, quality enhancement clinics and the like. Regarding the above three points, support for results in projects (FY12 and onward).
Partially agree	<p>Management only partially agrees with this recommendation for reasons stated in the accompanying text. Management recognizes that at the broad intersectoral level, choices about whether to invest in safety nets or other sectors are made at the level of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, or with respect to country engagements, in the Country Assistance Strategy or Country Partnership Strategy. In its proposed actions, management follows IEGs' suggested focus on the formulation lending operations, but with the understanding that at that stage of decision-making the range of options under consideration by government is rather narrow, essentially focusing on alternative features of a given type of program or more commonly, further development of an existing program. In the tools to improve consideration at this stage, the Bank will focus its efforts on the core objectives of poverty reduction through cash or in-kind transfers and building effective institutions.</p> <p>Three specific actions proposed are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of SSN primers assessing the cost-effectiveness of different delivery systems for cash transfers, namely: beneficiary registry systems, payment systems and management information systems. These will be available to strengthen the economic analysis and design of the capacity building or service delivery component of SSNs projects. Deliver a series of SSN Primer Notes on the cost-effectiveness of delivering cash transfers: beneficiary registries, payment mechanisms and MIS (FY12–14). The Social Protection ADePT module reports on targeting effectiveness of SSN transfers. It will be applied across countries of the world to produce summary outcome indicators made available in Social Protection Atlas (including gender disaggregated data). “Social Protection Atlas” (first posted on Web FY12, fully launched and updated by FY13–14). To encourage more cost-effectiveness analysis within the panoply of impact evaluations, a new module on the topic will be developed and included as a component of the general impact evaluation regional training courses being coordinated by Human Development Network Chief Economist's office. Include a cost-effectiveness module in the general impact evaluation training courses (FY12 forward).
Agree	<p>Management agrees with this recommendation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of ongoing business modernization, management is strengthening sector boards to enable them to better manage the allocation of expertise across the Bank and revising the budgeting system for cross support to remove disincentives and encourage cross-unit collaboration and will report progress in the context of regular Board updates. Bank management is committed to continued strengthening of the SSN community of practice and its intersectoral linkages by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing review by Social Protection Sector Board of thematic coding system for new social protection lending and AAA activities, which will improve capacity to monitor portfolio and cross-sectoral linkages in operations with Social Protection components. Maintaining cross-sector board membership and ongoing coordination and dialogue between Human Development Network SP&L and Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Poverty and Equity. Cross-Board membership and informal dialogue (continues FY11 and onward).

Draft Management Action Record (continued)

IEG Findings and Conclusions	IEG Recommendations	

Acceptance by Management	Management Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reaching out to other sector teams with key SSN knowledge products and providing operational support to all teams engaged in SSN regardless of their sector affiliation. Dissemination across sectors of existing and new knowledge products, including proactively reaching out to task team leaders managing lending operations with SSN themes (FY12 onward). • Continuing consultation and collaboration in topical and key knowledge products by Social Protection and Labor, Education, Health, Nutrition, and Population; Poverty Reduction and Economic Management poverty; Agriculture and Rural Development; Sustainable Development Network as topical, for example, SP&L staff will be involved in on-going products managed by other networks. Ongoing examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel subsidy reform and the role of safety nets—with the Energy Anchor, Sustainable Development Network. • Climate change adaptation and safety nets—with Social Development. • Nutrition and Social Protection/scaling up nutrition—with Health, Nutrition, and Population. • Food price monitoring—with Poverty Reduction and Economic Management poverty. • Labor market work on informality—with Poverty Reduction and Economic Management poverty and Finance and Private Sector Development.

Chairperson's Summary: Committee on Development Effectiveness

On May 25, the Committee on Development Effectiveness (CODE) considered the document *Social Safety Nets—An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 2000-2010* prepared by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) and Draft Management Response.

Summary

In its statement, IEG provided the global context, underscoring the urgency of developing adequate social safety nets as a cushion against shocks on the poor and vulnerable and to countries' poorest when not in crisis. The evaluation assessed the Bank's effectiveness and relevance in helping countries to develop and implement SSNs in the past decade and to determine trends to help inform future support, drawing on evidence from the portfolio, country cases, and other sources. In its opening remarks, Management welcomed this timely and relevant evaluation, which echoes Management's strategic directions for the proposed *Social Protection and Labor Strategy for 2010-2022*, (SP&L Strategy), under preparation--the Concept Note was discussed by CODE in January 2011. Management broadly agreed with IEG's recommendations including the need for greater emphasis on SSN programs and systems to prepare countries better for shocks and greater emphasis on low-income countries. Management agreed with the need to strengthen the results framework for SSN projects and evaluate longer-term impacts of projects, but noted minor differences about how this might be achieved. IEG emphasized that development impact of SSNs requires a country team effort, and accountability extends beyond those working on social protection. It also underlined the need to en-

sure that Bank-supported interventions be appropriately anchored in a strong results framework and viewed as part of a road map of helping achieve countries' longer-term development objectives aspired with SSNs.

The Committee appreciated IEG's comprehensive evaluation and Management's Draft Response. Members stressed the need to focus on the long-term development impacts of SSNs, while recognizing the difficulty in designing a comprehensive and systemic results framework that could assess both short-and-long-term needs. They agreed with enhanced focus on low-income countries (LICs), while underscoring that this focus should not divert attention away from middle-income country (MIC) needs. Also highlighted was the need to leverage the Bank's SSN experience to date and to put in place systems/cushions for unexpected shocks and crises. As the IEG evaluation noted, when hit by the recent food, fuel and financial crises, the vast majority of countries were not well prepared to respond. Members raised questions about the sustainability of SSNs, emphasizing the need for prudent choices of instruments, target groups—including addressing gender issues--benefit levels, and the use of innovative financing schemes. They stressed due consideration of political economy issues. The need for a systemic approach to SSNs, based on country-appropriate institution building over time and complementary interventions was noted, as were the importance of South-South learning and technical assistance. Questions were raised regarding broadening the narrow definition of SSNs, including looking at more traditional systems of social protection. Members also highlighted the importance of addressing inter-generational transmission of poverty.

Anna Brandt, Chairperson

Statement of the External Advisory Panel

Armando Barrientos, Ravi Kanbur, Gordana Matkovic

Social safety nets (SSNs) are an important component of effective development strategies in a world where chronic poverty and inequality persist and where global economic developments present opportunities as well as risks. As part of an overall framework of poverty reduction, protecting the poor and most vulnerable from the consequences of these new risks and from the normal risks they face, as well as targeting resources for poverty reduction through transfers, is a key role for governments in developing and transition economies. It should therefore be a central plank in the World Bank's support to its member countries. This Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) assessment will be an important input to the ongoing discussions on developing the World Bank's new strategy for social protection.

We follow the Bank's definition of SSNs as “noncontributory transfers targeted in some way to the poor and vulnerable...[to]... address chronic poverty and inequality, help the poor invest in developing human capital, and protect the poor and vulnerable from individual and systemic shocks, including during economic reforms.” Of course this is just one part of an overall system of public intervention in pursuit of poverty reduction, but it is an important and growing component. The evaluation provides very useful information on the extent to which the Bank has expanded its support to SSNs, and shows that the major expansion has come in middle-income countries (MICs) rather than in low-income countries (LICs).

The evaluation finds that the Bank's SSN projects do better on average than Bank projects in other sectors; further, the gap is more marked in LICs. This is an encouraging basis on which to examine the details of Bank support to SSNs, with a view to improving its effectiveness. There are several dimensions along which improvements can be made.

Perhaps the most important recommendation of the evaluation is that support for SSNs needs to be treated systemically and systematically, rather than as one-off interventions in response to crises or particular political exigencies. The emphasis needs to be placed on institutional building. This recommendation flows from the evaluation's detailed assessments on the design and performance of SSNs supported by the Bank, and to some extent it encapsulates the other recommendations: to engage governments in dialogue on SSN in “normal times,” to develop results frameworks that

incorporate short term objectives with the goal of reaching longer-term development impacts, and to improve the internal coordination of the Bank's support to SSNs.

Although the actual modality of financial support for SSNs will be through individual operations, the evaluation makes clear that success of these operations depends on locating the support within an overall assessment of the needs left uncovered or inappropriately covered by the current collection of interventions, and an agreed strategy to move toward a system of social protection more broadly conceived. A comprehensive social protection assessment, done not under crisis conditions but in the framework of an ongoing dialogue with the government, can reveal gaps in coverage, inefficiencies in the existing interventions, and the data and monitoring and evaluation requirements. It can also lay the foundations for a results framework for SSN operations, which the evaluation emphasizes have been insufficiently focused on the poor and vulnerable. Such an assessment, done jointly with the government, is essential in developing a SSN strategy for the country and for identifying further interventions, project or analytical, that the Bank can support, including institutional strengthening for analysis design and implementation of SSNs.

With this background, we would like to highlight three issues on which Bank management should commit a response in light of the findings and recommendations of the evaluation.

First, management should commit to raising the issue of such a systemic assessment with country governments and, where there is a demand, work with the government and local analysts to produce an operationally oriented comprehensive social protection assessment as part of the overall dialogue on growth and poverty reduction. As the findings of the report indicate, it is important that the assessments include close attention to the political economy and institutional environment within which SSNs work or are expected to work, in addition to more technical design and implementation issues.

Second, in the light of the findings in this report, it makes sense for the Bank to reflect further on the factors preventing a stronger engagement with SSNs in LICs and to explore ways in which a more balanced approach could be achieved. There is already sustained dialogue on social protection in some MICs, and this can be built on.

But it is particularly important to extend this to other countries, and it is particularly important in LICs where, as the analysis in the evaluation shows, the lack of experience with SSNs, for the Bank and the government, may become a self-fulfilling prophesy. The issue may be left underexplored and underinvestigated, despite the manifest needs of the poor.

Third, Bank management should commit itself to improving coordination across various units that engage in SSN activities. As the evaluation makes clear,

SSNs are a challenge within the Bank, as they fall under the general responsibility of the Social Protection Sector, yet less than half of projects containing SSN support fall under that Sector board. SSNs involve all networks and 13 sector boards.... Analytical work is often undertaken by regional Poverty Reduction and Economic Management (PREM) Network Poverty units, investment projects and technical knowledge of SSNs are housed in the regional Social Protection department (which also produce considerable analytic and advisory activities), and multisectoral Development Policy Loans involving SSN components are supported by the regional economic policy unit within PREM. IEG research on the Bank's organizational structure and its affect on SSN work indicates

that although the matrix system enables expertise to be drawn from various areas, it also risks making coordination challenging. It creates weak incentives for collaboration, and ultimately affects the quality of the work in countries.... Yet accountability mechanisms are inconsistent with the multisectoral nature of the work involved, as there is no clear mechanism of cooperation, recognition, or quality control procedures for cross-sectoral situations.

The evaluation itself does not have much in the way of concrete suggestions for improvement, although it does point to good practices like the Global Expert Team. Moreover, issues of matrix management are of course broader than for SSNs alone. However, Bank management should respond to the findings of the evaluation by setting out how it proposes to address the organizational challenges identified by the evaluation in the specific context of SSNs.

To conclude, we welcome this evaluation. The Bank has responded vigorously to the needs for SSNs, especially during the recent crises. IEGs findings and recommendations can serve to underpin a strengthening of the Bank's support to SSNs, especially in taking a systemic and systematic approach to the problems, expanding coverage in LICs, and in improving internal Bank coordination in working on SSNs.

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