

Administering Targeted Social Programs In Latin America: From Platitudes To Practice

280 *Reviews*

concludes with a number of scenarios for poverty reduction over the decade 1993–2003.

An inevitable weakness of the study is the short period which it covers. This makes the references to the Kuznets curve and the long-run relation between distribution and income level which provides the starting point for the study rather inappropriate. A more relevant point of departure could have been the impact of structural adjustment on income distribution. In this context it would have been interesting to have included earlier household surveys from the beginning of the New Economic Policy in 1985.

To have done so would, however, have compounded another weakness of the study, namely the problem of comparability between the surveys of different years. Not only do the samples differ considerably in size, but they were also taken at different times of the year. One of the major problems cited by the author is the change in the average family size between different surveys, which cannot be attributed to changes in the total population over such a short period, and must be due to sampling problems. This also highlights the problem of analysing changes over relatively short periods where small errors in the data may give rise to much larger errors in the measured changes.

Despite these reservations, the study provides a useful brief analysis of urban poverty and could provide a useful starting point for anyone interested in examining the social effects of structural adjustment in Bolivia.

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Margaret E. Grosh, *Administering Targeted Social Programs in Latin America: From Platitudes to Practice* (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, Regional and Sectorial Studies, 1994), pp. ix + 174, \$10.95.

In the past decade, macroeconomic adjustment programmes worldwide have been accompanied by a shift in emphasis in the social sectors from universal to targeted service provision. Margaret Grosh's *Administering Targeted Social Programs in Latin America* provides a timely analysis of the gains that can result from such a shift, and will be required reading for policymakers and academics concerned with poverty alleviation and social welfare issues. It is an impressive piece of work, in no small measure because it is based on extensive empirical evidence compiled from 23 case studies in 11 countries in Latin America. It provides a thorough and varied description of the kinds of targeting mechanisms available and their potential effects in different country contexts.

Grosh is clearly a targeting enthusiast. Despite this, she provides a balanced assessment of when targeted services are more, or less, appropriate than universal ones. She also considers contexts where administrative constraints dictate less complex – and less accurate – targeting measures. She points out the potential drawbacks of several approaches to targeting, such as the stigma that can be attached to programmes that rely on self-selection through low wages or inferior quality foods, or the high opportunity costs of the poor's time when programme participation entails long hours in queues. She is also careful to make the important point that targeted programmes should complement, not replace social sector services such as health and education.

Administering targeted social programs in Latin America: from platitudes to practice (English). Abstract. The conceptual issues of targeting are well understood. The conceptual issues of targeting are well understood. Whether, how and how much to target social services or subsidies to the poor depends on balancing the .Request PDF on ResearchGate

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