The World Bank and the Provision of Assistance to Redundant Workers: Experience with Enterprise Restructuring and Future Directions

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Background and The Bank’s Role ................................................................................... 1

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY .................................................................................... 3

III. METHODOLOGIES ..................................................................................................... 3
    Database ........................................................................................................................... 3
    Project Selection Criteria ................................................................................................. 4
    Lending Classification ..................................................................................................... 5

IV. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS ...................................................................................... 10
    Breakdown of the Bank’s Labor Assistance over Time ................................................ 10
    Major Labor Assistance Programs ................................................................................. 17

V. CONCLUSIONS .......................................................................................................... 22
    Summary of Findings ..................................................................................................... 22
    Lessons Learned ............................................................................................................. 24
    Future Directions ........................................................................................................... 24

Bibliography ...................................................................................................................... 27

Appendix: World Bank Lending Information ................................................................... 29
SUMMARY FINDINGS

This paper summarizes the World Bank’s experience in dealing with redundant (laid-off) workers. It identifies World Bank lending of 88 loans in 47 countries that have contained labor assistance to redundant workers related to enterprise restructuring or privatization since 1987. The paper classifies total World Bank lending into three broader categories that consist of different forms of labor and income support. The findings show that the total number of such loans more than doubled from 1994-98, and most of Bank’s labor assistance goes towards long-term capacity building to develop the institutional framework needed to support redundant workers. Training, labor market mobility and severance pay programs were the three major labor programs used most frequently. The paper examines regional differences in total amount of labor assistance and regional difference in using the particular type of labor assistance. The findings also show how major type of labor assistance program changes over time, for example, severance pay program surpassed training program in 1997.
I. BACKGROUND AND THE BANK’S ROLE

Attempts to improve the performance of public enterprises by enhancing the efficiency of resource allocation is leading many governments to shed a significant amount of labor. Increased competition, diversification of ownership, and introduction of more capital-intensive techniques has lowered the demand for labor and caused job losses in the short term (the demand for labor may increase in the long run because of restructuring, but there may be a lag between restructuring and the creation of new jobs).

In most Eastern European countries, redundancies brought about by privatization and the introduction of hard budget constraints on enterprises has resulted in large-scale job losses. Similarly in East Asia, external shocks and the recent financial crisis and subsequent corporate restructuring have resulted in increased unemployment, for example, unemployment in the Republic of Korea has increased from 2.0 percent two years ago to 7.2 percent today. Likewise in China unemployment has surged as the country has moved to slash the number of bloated state-owned enterprises and the government sector. Some 11.5 million workers had been made redundant by the end of 1997, and an estimated additional 30 million could join their ranks in the next three years, boosting the unemployment rate to 8 to 10 percent.

Enterprise restructuring entails significant labor and social costs. Now more than ever, the provision of assistance for workers made redundant has become a central issue of enterprise restructuring within many governments. In recent years, protecting vulnerable groups and providing income and assistance with finding a new job to redundant workers have been emerging as major tasks that governments need to engage in to win the support from labor.
that they need to continue their economic reforms.\textsuperscript{2} Even though different governments have employed a variety of economic restructuring practices, labor losses seem to be an unavoidable outcome in the short term. In those countries that lack social safety nets and where labor market programs are weak, recovering from job losses is particularly difficult.

The importance the World Bank attaches to maintaining high levels of employment is reflected in its increased lending to support public enterprise restructuring in recent years. Since 1987, 88 Bank operations in 47 countries have contained significant levels of assistance to workers made redundant because of enterprise restructuring or privatization. The sums involved for such lending more than doubled from 1994 to 1998. Bank have learned that good macroeconomic policies—combined with relevant social policies—provide a favorable environment for sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. Tables A1 and A2 in the appendix break down Bank lending for assistance to redundant workers by country and year.

Two main reasons explain why the Bank is paying more attention to laid-off workers. The first is the Bank’s primary objective in poverty reduction. Laid-off workers have been referred to as the transient poor (Subbarao and Braithwaite 1997). Most transient poor people have the potential to recover income losses and not join the ranks of the long-term unemployed if appropriate support in the form of cost-effective labor programs are provided. The second reason is the Bank’s increasing emphasis on social stability as a prerequisite for long-term economic growth. Evidence shows that most laid-off workers are politically vocal, and strong labor resistances to downsizing can slow down the reform process. For instance, the social unrest prompted by the recent Asian economic crisis has led international organizations to pay a great deal of attention to social sector development. This raises the question of how to ensure long-term economic stability and minimize labor losses.

This study reviews the Bank’s experience in dealing with laid-off workers. For example, it answers the questions of how much support has the Bank given to labor assistance programs in recent decades, what types of lending are most likely to contain a

\textsuperscript{2} For example, fearful of labor unrest and the financial crisis, the Chinese government decided to pour money back into the moribund state enterprises to delay possible large-scale layoffs. It has also intervened with state banks to arrange for more credit to be provided to the inefficient enterprises (the state banking system is already in deep financial trouble). Meanwhile, the government is setting up various labor market programs to help laid-off workers find new jobs.
labor assistance component, what types of labor programs are most often used in the provision of such assistance.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper attempts to answer some of these questions through a comprehensive review of World Bank lending operations. More importantly, the study also reviews how Bank support for redundant workers has changed over time and the rational for Bank support of government intervention in labor markets and social protection. In particular, this paper attempts to provide primary information so that future studies can achieve the following four objectives:

1. **Awareness**— to assess the importance of effective labor programs and social safety protection systems in contributing to successful enterprise restructuring
2. **Training and knowledge dissemination**—to disseminate information about best practices in labor and social safety programs in the context of public enterprise restructuring to our clients working in this field
3. **Recommendations on policy and program design**—to help Bank staff design effective labor redeployment programs and social safety nets for redundant workers through a review of the Bank’s operations and analytical work
4. **Lending practices**—to assess World Bank lending practices by examining labor and institutional components of restructuring projects.

Note that this study is limited to a broad review of the Bank’s labor assistance activities, and thus most of the findings are general rather than specific. Nevertheless, the study will serve as a first step in understanding the Bank’s experience with assisting redundant workers to date, and serve as a basis for future research.

III. METHODOLOGIES

This section explains how we developed the database based on a set of project selection criteria and how we classified pertinent projects into three categories.

**Database**

Using project document information reports and project appraisal report, we identified 88 projects in six regions during 1987-98 that involved major labor adjustment components. Basically, the projects fall into the areas of public enterprise reform, industrial
restructuring, privatization, emergency social funds and structural adjustment, employment and training labor market development, and social protection and social safety nets. These projects were identified using three of the World Bank’s standard databases: the Lending Operational Database, the Project Information Center, and the Image Bank Database

**Project Selection Criteria**

The study’s primary objective was to find out how much assistance the World Bank has provided to redundant workers through its lending activities in recent years. The criteria used to select projects for inclusion in the study are as follows:

- Does the project contain a labor adjustment component or address social concerns in connection with layoffs? If yes,
- Then, is the labor adjustment component designed specifically to assist redundant workers? If yes,
- Then, were workers displaced because of public enterprise restructuring, privatization or corporate restructuring? If yes,
- Then, were labor difficulties one of the major reasons behind public enterprise restructuring?

Based on the above criteria, We selected a number of projects that also met the following conditions:

- The projects contained a labor component to assist workers affected by a large-scale layoff caused by public enterprise restructuring, privatization or corporate restructuring.
- The layoffs were an outcome of restructuring in the form of bankruptcy, liquidation, privatization, or labor downsizing.
- The purpose of the restructuring was to improve labor productivity and reduce losses through labor retrenchment.
- The projects were generally managed by ministries of labor or by privatization restructuring agencies.

Those strictly defined criteria helped to rule out civil service reform projects, general labor and employment projects, traditional social safety net or social fund investment projects, and industrial restructuring projects that did not involve privatization and its potential labor downsizing. We wanted to exclude such projects because, for example,
general labor and employment projects usually target those who are unemployed for reasons other than enterprise downsizing or restructuring, such as slow economic growth, the loss of international markets, or the lack of appropriate human capital. In addition, general social safety net projects generally focus on poverty reduction and are aimed at poor and vulnerable members of society. Most of the lending goes to improve the quality of basic social services and to create employment opportunities. By contrast, laid-off workers affected by industrial enterprise restructuring tend to be skilled or semiskilled, incentive oriented, experienced, relatively young, and more politically vocal. They differ from the long-term unemployed and the poor in that what they need most is effective employment assistance, not passive social assistance or protection.

**Lending Classification**

Based on the information gleaned from the project document information reports and project appraisal reports, we classified the 88 lending activities that met the selection criteria into three major lending categories as follows:

- **Type 1**—immediate labor assistance provided to redundant workers in the context of specific industrial sector restructuring
- **Type 2**—short-term, rapid intervention to provide labor and income support to redundant workers at a broader level
- **Type 3**—long-term capacity building for labor support and the provision of income support to redundant workers at a broader level.

The first category of projects is short-term in nature, the second and third categories contain both short-term and long-term objectives. Note, however, that there is no absolutely clear-cut demarcation between short-term and long-term labor assistance. Short-term intervention is always an integral part of medium- and long-term labor adjustment programs and social sector institution building. For example, some of the recent social sector loans to Asian countries were used not only to cushion the immediate impact of the financial crisis and economic restructuring on those affected, but also to improve the overall systems of social protection in these countries in the long term.

The following paragraphs and tables provide examples of Bank projects that fall under each of the three categories of activities, not only to illustrate its efforts to help laid-off
workers by designing various kinds of labor programs, but also to underscore the Bank’s increasing realization of the importance of the social and labor environment for achieving a productive labor force in the context of public enterprises.

In type 1 activities workers are displaced at the time of public sector restructuring and are compensated when they leave the enterprise. In most cases, enterprises are responsible for compensating workers using a variety of labor retrenchment methods. The most common compensation scheme is severance pay. Table 1 presents five projects that illustrate the

**Table 1:**

**Examples of Projects Involving Immediate Labor Assistance in the Context of Specific Industrial Restructuring**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/project</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Labor programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argentina</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Enterprise Reform Adjustment</td>
<td>Assist the privatization and restructuring of public enterprises</td>
<td>Telecommunication railroads, oil, natural gas</td>
<td>Severance pay, Early retirement, labor redundancy plan, strategy development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brazil</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Railways Restructuring And Privatization</td>
<td>Increase labor productivity through labor retrenchment</td>
<td>Railroads</td>
<td>Severance pay, Early retirement, Training, job search Assistance and outplacement, Voluntary separation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pakistan</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railways Privatization Project</td>
<td>Develop cost-effective and high-quality railways</td>
<td>Railways</td>
<td>Severance pay, Retraining, Outplacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poland</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Coal Restructuring Project (in preparation)</td>
<td>Improve labor productivity Implement the social package provided to redundant miners.</td>
<td>Coal sector</td>
<td>Unemployment benefit, Small business assistance, Provision of miners social package including miners' leave, social allowance, and unconditional lump sum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Russia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal Sector Restructuring, Coal Sector Adjustment Loan, Coal Sector Adjustment Loan II</td>
<td>Reduce government subsidies to loss-making mines. Improve labor productivity and coal production</td>
<td>Coal sector</td>
<td>Severance pay, Social programs, Social asset transfer, Labor mobility program, Unemployment benefit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
World Bank’s provision of immediate labor assistance at the industry level. The range of restructuring industries supported by the Bank includes telecommunications, power, railways, oil and natural gas, and the coal sector.

The objective of type 2 activities is to speed up re-employment outcomes in the short term. The governments concerned intend to make a special effort to help redundant workers return to the work force and contribute to economic growth through various rapid policy interventions. In this case, governments provide traditional income support to workers, such

Table 2:
Examples of Projects Involving Short-Term Rapid Intervention to Provide Income and Labor Support to Redundant Workers at a Broader Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/project</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Labor programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Korea Second Structural Adjustment Loan</td>
<td>Support the major structural reform programs that the government has launched in response to the economic crisis and to mitigate the social costs of Adjustment</td>
<td>Improving labor market flexibility, legalizing layoffs, extending unemployment insurance to firms with less than five workers, expanding public work programs, strengthening employment services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam Employment Generation and Social Safety Net</td>
<td>Mitigate the social and financial costs of state-owned enterprise reform and build social safety nets for poor rural communities and for urban workers losing their jobs.</td>
<td>Building social safety nets for formal sector worker through providing severance compensation packages and job training. Generation program by designing a community-based rural infrastructure Projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macedonia Economic Recovery Loan/Credit</td>
<td>Support a program of stabilization and structural reforms in the areas of public enterprise reform, labor market and social safety net reform.</td>
<td>Implement active labor market programs to deal with redundant workers and unemployment. It includes training, purchasing pension credits, financing “forced vacation” and lump sum severance pay. Develop measures to foster cost-effective and sustainability of the social safety nets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
as unemployment benefits and minimum income support, along with various labor redeployment services that include the extension of unemployment insurance, the rapid expansion of public works programs and employment services, and the immediate provision of retraining and counseling services. Table 2 provides three examples of such activities.

Type 3 projects are ones where the government intends to provide a program of broader, long-term institutional and policy support to redundant workers. In general, projects in this category include labor market mobility, labor market information, labor policy (for example, labor codes, unemployment and employment legislation), pension reform, social safety nets, and employment and vocational training services, as well as some structural adjustment loans. Table 3 presents some examples of these projects. While they might not contribute directly to short-term labor redeployment, these projects are designed to make employment services and training more efficient and effective in assisting the unemployed. The Bank’s experience with type 3 projects reveals (a) that most transition and developing countries, such as China, the former Soviet Union, and countries in the ECA Region did not have social insurance and major labor market programs in place in the past; and (b) that these countries urgently need to develop labor market policies that would ease large-scale downsizing within public enterprises.
### Table 3.
**Examples of Projects Involving Long-Term Capacity Building of Labor and Income Support to Redundant Workers at a Broader Level**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Project</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Labor Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>China</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor Market</td>
<td>Facilitate the development of functioning labor markets and promote urban labor mobility, Improve the delivery of labor market services, and training to facilitate the redeployment of surplus workers in state owned enterprises.</td>
<td>Promoting labor market services, Developing labor market information and job information dissemination, employment data development, vocational training programs, institutional development to promote market-based employment services, labor market mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Project</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kyrgyz</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Safety Net</td>
<td>Improve efficiency of employment services and training program Improve capacity to deliver unemployment benefits and labor redeployment</td>
<td>Providing social assistance, unemployment monitoring, employment services, unemployment benefits, labor redeployment including training and retraining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poland</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment Promotion</td>
<td>Improve the cost-effectiveness of existing employment and social welfare programs Test mechanisms for job creation by the unemployed through micro-enterprise Development</td>
<td>Providing income support, Enhancing labor market information, Improving rapid response to mass layoffs, introducing career counseling, job search and labor techniques, promoting labor market mobility, Improving labor productivity through training and retraining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Russia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprise Housing</td>
<td>Relieve financial and managerial responsibility of housing for enterprises so that they can focus on core business activities. Providing market-based housing and housing privatization to improve labor market mobility</td>
<td>Improving Labor market mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divestiture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rationale for the third type of lending is consistent with the sequencing argument that social insurance and labor redeployment programs are critical parts of public enterprise
restructuring, and thus should be in place before large-scale enterprise layoffs take place. In other words, when a country undertakes enterprise restructuring in the absence of labor market or social insurance programs, large-scale labor retrenchment is likely to be risky. Thus enterprise restructuring will encounter fewer labor difficulties and will recover from labor losses more quickly in those countries where labor market and social insurance programs are in place.

World Bank labor assistance is also found in some privatization and technical assistance lending operations. Some of these projects have clearly defined objectives to alleviate the adverse employment impact of industrial restructuring. For example, most of these projects are set up to help governments prepare and implement their privatization programs. Measures to promote privatization include developing information and reorientation programs to assist workers laid off from state-owned enterprises, improving relations between labor and management, and providing compensation for laid-off workers. For example, the 1992 Peru Privatization Technical Assistance Project had a significant component on advising displaced workers on possible saving and investment options and on setting up micro-enterprises.

IV. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

This section summarizes the World Bank’s experience with assisting redundant workers based on the database.

Breakdown of the Bank’s Labor Assistance over Time

The following subsections address such questions as when the Bank started providing assistance to redundant workers, how such assistance has changed over time, and how such assistance has varied from region to region.

Early Assistance

Two projects in the Africa (AFR) Region and one in the Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ECA) Region show that the World Bank started paying attention to labor issues in the late 1980s. However, the amount of labor assistance provided to redundant workers did not increase much until 1994, following global economic restructuring (table 4). The earliest recipient in ECA was Hungary, which underwent a significant amount of labor restructuring in support of the steel and coal mining sectors, was the first recipient of Bank lending for
restructuring. Labor components included an employment fund, unemployment allowance, retraining allowance, early retirement provisions, support for public service employment, and support for individual businesses (Hungary Industrial Sector Adjustment Loan, number L3020, 1989). In Africa, the Bank provided loan to Senegal to industrial sector adjustment, labor component included support programs of assistance to displaced employees as well as training and retraining program (Senegal Industry Sector, C 1868, 1987).

Regional Differences

World Bank labor assistance to redundant workers varies greatly among regions. Table 4 breaks down the number of projects with labor adjustment components by region. Before the Asian financial crisis, the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Region and the ECA Region received the most Bank labor assistance. These two regions accounted for half of all lending to the six regions.

Before the Asian financial crisis in 1998, the AFR Region was the third largest region receiving labor assistance. Here the Bank’s labor assistance was more concerned with civil service reform that resulted from large-scale staff retrenchment, and such projects were not included in the database. Economic reform in African countries did not involve a large industrial restructuring and privatization component. In the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) Region, few projects were devoted to labor assistance until the onset of the economic crisis, when millions of workers were laid-off as a result of corporate closures, but by 1998, the EAP Region was the prime recipient of loans involving labor assistance, and such loans to the EAP Region accounted for half of total labor assistance lending for that year. The South Asia (SAS) and Middle East and North Africa (MNA) regions account for only a small share of the Bank’s labor assistance to redundant workers as a result of public enterprise restructuring concerning labor restructuring as a result of large-scale layoff.

One possible reason for the regional differences in the provision of labor assistance lending could be that World Bank lending for public sector enterprise restructuring and privatization only reflects a small share of total privatization activities, and thus the regional picture could be different if lending by other organizations and the private sector were included. Another reason for the difference could be that few privatization or industrial
restructuring activities are going on in particular countries or regions, which would therefore have less need for labor assistance.

Table 4.
Total Number of World Bank Loans with Labor Assistance to Redundant Workers by Region 1987-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>EAP</th>
<th>MNA</th>
<th>SAS</th>
<th>AFR</th>
<th>ECA</th>
<th>LAC</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank Documents

Two Major Increases

The World Bank’s labor assistance to redundant workers was uneven throughout 1987-98, and experienced two major increases (table 4). The first occurred in 1994, mainly in response to deteriorating economic conditions following enterprise restructuring and privatization in Eastern and Central Europe. For example, in Russia, economic reforms resulted in high inflation, declining output, and instability for millions of workers. The need for social protection for displaced workers was particularly acute at that time. Bank lending support to the region was used largely to develop adequate public social services, liberalize labor market policies, provide proactive employment services, and ensure universal provision of basic medical care and education benefits. The second increase was in 1998 as a result of rapid intervention in response to the economic crisis and labor difficulties in East Asia. Its
total number of labor adjustment components contained in various types of lending activities increased 100 percent compared with the number in 1997.

Types of Projects
Industrial restructuring and privatization projects, public enterprise restructuring support activities, and lending for social safety protection are the three major types of projects likely to have major labor and income support components. In addition, some projects concerned with social security system development, privatization, employment promotion and vocational training, and social fund development also contain major or minor labor and income components to assist redundant workers.

Three Major Forms of Support
Of the 88 lending activities discussed here, 22 were for industrial-level support, 26 were for short-term support, and 40 were for long-term support (table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Short term support at industrial level</th>
<th>Short term support at a broader level</th>
<th>Long term support at a broader level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFR</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first type of labor support (type 1) involves industrial restructuring and privatization. Most of the restructuring projects concern ports, postal facilities, power plants, railways, or the telecommunications sector. The Bank’s assistance to workers laid off as a result of this type of restructuring is relatively limited, but is increasing rapidly (figure 1). So far, it only accounts for 25 percent of total Bank lending to support redundant workers in terms of number of projects. Of all Bank lending for direct support of industrial restructuring and privatization since 1987, only some two or three projects each year address labor redundancy issues. For instance, in the ECA Region, including three coal sector adjustment loans to Russia,
throughout 1990s, the Bank supported only seven industrial restructuring projects (out of total 26 projects) that involved labor adjustment components. However, the picture changed significantly in 1998, when of a total of 22 loans that involved direct assistance to redundant workers at the industrial level accounted for one-third of them, an increase of 58 percent compared with 1997. The most common method of compensation for this type of project is severance pay.

Figure 1:
World Bank Labor Assistance to Redundant Workers at Industrial Level and Broader Level, 1987-1998

If we classify the lending according to the term of the objective, it can be divided into short-term and long-term labor support (figure 2).

The second type of labor support, type 2, is short term in nature and reflects the Bank’s experience in using rapid income and labor support intervention for redundant workers. Some argue that if high unemployment during transition is inevitable, governments can smooth the path of transition and intervene to save jobs in the short run through immediate action. Analysis revealed that most Bank assistance with short-term labor market intervention occurred during periods of regional economic decline, for instance, the ECA

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3 Hungary Industrial Restructuring III, loan number 3020, 1989; Ukraine Coal Sector Adjustment Loan, number L4118, 1998; Croatia Railway Modernization and Restructuring Project, loan number L4433, 1998; and the Poland Hard Coal Project, currently in preparation.
Region in 1994 and the EAP Region in 1998. In 1998, of 23 projects involving major labor adjustment, 15 were short term in nature. The recent financial crisis in some EAP countries resulted in a significant amount of lending in response to mass layoffs. Most of this short-term lending has the dual objectives of short-term labor assistance and long-term capacity building with the aim of ensuring social and political stability. Thus 1998 saw the largest increase in short-term policy intervention and labor assistance.

**Figure 2:**

**Two Type of World Bank Lending to Redundant Workers in Response to Public Enterprise Restructuring and Privatization, 1987-1998**

![Bar chart showing short-term labor and income support and long-term capacity building in labor and income support from 1987 to 1998.](chart.png)

Note: Short-term labor and income support also include immediate income support to redundant workers at the industrial level.

The labor instruments for short-term labor adjustment include extending unemployment insurance, expanding public works programs and employment services, and providing retraining and counseling services. For example, a 1995 social protection project for Kazakhstan was set up specifically to deal with unemployment issues resulting from enterprise restructuring and privatization. Funds went to toward setting up an employment fund, delivering employment services, and introducing unemployment benefits. The compensation for being laid-off is calculated as a percentage of their average wage over the previous 12 weeks. In Macedonia the Employment Fund, which was also created using World Bank project funds, provides the unemployed with unemployment benefits, training
reimbursement, moving expenses connected with relocation for a new job, and health insurance and retirement benefits. Under present arrangements, workers from bankrupt and liquidated enterprise are eligible for 30 months of unemployment benefits. Unemployment benefits are equivalent to half the average wage of the previous three months, with a minimum of 80 percent of the minimum wage and no maximum.

Most of the Bank’s labor retrenchment assistance has been directed toward long-term capacity building to help governments develop the institutional framework needed to support redundant workers. These lending activities range from labor market development project to social security market development, employment and promotion, social safety protection, enterprise housing divestiture, as well as some structural adjustment loans. Moreover, if we look at labor assistance over time (see last column of table 4), during the first wave of labor assistance most of the lending was also for long-term support.

One of the possible explanations for this distribution of lending by type of loan is that most developing and transition economies have little experience with social insurance programs for the unemployed. When globalization and mass privatization shook the social fabric of these countries; social problems started to multiply along with economic inequality. For instance, neither China nor Russia had any experience with open unemployment issues, and therefore social insurance programs and social safety nets for the unemployed were virtually nonexistent. Both these countries had lifetime employment systems and cradle-to-grave welfare services in effect that guaranteed each worker’s job security and entitlement to basic social security benefits. Until recently, unemployment was theoretically illegal in Russia. In China, entitlements to social benefits are linked to workers’ employment.

In response, it seems reasonable for the Bank to provide long-term support and ensure delivery of a systematic social safety net and to address market failure in the course of providing labor services to individuals affected by restructuring. This is why most of the Bank’s labor assistance is concentrated in providing support for public enterprise restructuring and lending for social safety net development, including projects to set up employment services, unemployment funds, and training and retraining activities and to improve labor market mobility. Haltiwanger and Singh collected 41 Bank-supported labor retrenchment program across 37 countries (including civil service reform projects), their
findings concluded that in most of transition economies, the public sector retrenchment was part of a fundamental change in the role of the public sector in the economy. In these cases, the labor assistance program usually paid much greater attention to institutional capacity building (unemployment benefits, relocation assistance and training assistance) that acted as the safety net for worker reallocation.

This indicates that while labor retrenchment by compensating workers at the time of downsizing is important, it cannot on its own achieve long-term labor and human development objectives. Those countries that lack traditional social safety nets for the unemployed urgently need to develop labor policies that would combine labor retrenchment programs at the industrial level with broader labor and income support at the national level.

**Major Labor Assistance Programs**

To understand what types of labor programs the World Bank supports, We classified all labor assistance components into a few major categories (table 6 and appendix table A3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Training/retraining</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Labor market mobility/job information development</td>
<td>23</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severance pay</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment service/counseling</td>
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<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor adjustment &amp; labor redundancy program design</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed insurance/living allowance</td>
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<td>7.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall social safety net assistance</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension/income support</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job creation (public work &amp; private sector development)</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small business assistance</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voluntary departure schemes</td>
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<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Earlier retirement</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shareholding through asset transfer &amp; employee participation</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revision of labor contract and labor law</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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</table>

Source: World Bank documents
and then ranked them based on their share of the total. In this way we found that the most common components of World Bank public enterprise and privatization labor assistance projects is training or retraining (18 percent of all project labor components), followed by labor market mobility and information development (11.5 percent of components) and the provision of severance pay (11 percent of components).

The number of industrial restructuring projects using severance pay along with incentives for voluntary departure has increased since 1995 (figure 3). The Bank first started indirect financing of severance pay as part of public sector reform programs in the middle of 1990. By 1998 all ten restructuring loans granted that year used severance pay as the major means of compensating laid-off workers. In addition, an increasing number of labor downsizing programs have been using voluntary exit schemes to shed labor.

Figure 3:
Change in Number of Training and Severance Pay Components, 1987-1998

Figure 3 shows that training or retraining was the dominant component of labor assistance programs before 1997, but was surpassed by severance pay in 1997 (see box 1 for a history of the Bank’s involvement in financing severance pay). Possible reasons for this change are as follows:
• Some cross-country training program evaluations show that training and retraining programs appear to be costly and not the most effective approach to labor assistance (Dar and Gill 1995).

• Training programs have a significant impact on employment and earnings, but could suffer from targeting problems (Fretwell, Beck, and Johnson 1998).

• In global privatization and industrial restructuring situations where labor unions are strong, they demand that workers should be compensated directly at the time of downsizing. Severance pay is a ready solution to such demands.

• The World Bank did not become directly involved in severance pay until 1996, although two projects indirectly financed severance pay before that time.

   However, in many developing countries and transition economies severance pay can pose a significant obstacle to privatization or become a drain on the national budget.

   **Box 1. History of the World Bank’s Involvement in Severance Pay Programs**

   The issue of whether the Bank can directly finance severance pay has a long history. One of the first occasions when severance pay financing was proposed was in connection with the closure of an iron ore mine in Liberia in 1985. At that time the Bank took the decision that it could not become involved in the provision of compensation to dismissed workers, because with the mine’s closure, the proposed project could not pass the productive investment test of the Bank’s lending Articles.

   The Bank reviewed the issue of financing severance pay in 1992 and with the clearance of the Legal Department, proposed that severance payments might be permitted under investment lending if their financing were part of a broader package of actions that could be seen as an investment in higher productivity. However, it did not become Bank policy until 1996. In March 1996, an operational directive was issued to provide guidance to Bank staff on dealing with severance pay in Bank operations (see World Bank 1996; Kikeri 1997).

   Some examples of the use of severance pay to compensate displaced workers include a railway restructuring and privatization project in Brazil, which provided incentives for early retirement and voluntary exit using severance pay. Four major restructuring projects in Croatia, Hungary, Russia, and Ukraine also used severance pay to compensate displaced workers. In addition, as in most cases, these labor retrenchment projects are, also accompanied by retraining and relocation, unemployment insurance, labor-intensive public works programs, social insurance and retirement benefits, pension reform, vouchers, and micro credit support to individuals.
Table 7:
Distribution of Components by Type and Region, 1987-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Severance &amp; retraining</th>
<th>Small business assistance</th>
<th>Unemployment Insurance/living</th>
<th>Early Retirement job information</th>
<th>Labor market mobility/retirement support</th>
<th>Overall Social Safety net assistance</th>
<th>Job creation (pub. work, priv. redundancy)</th>
<th>Employment service net assistance</th>
<th>Shareholding program design</th>
<th>Employment counseling</th>
<th>Voluntary departure employment participation schemes</th>
<th>Labor law design</th>
<th>Total Components</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EAP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>MNA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAS</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>23</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: World Bank documents
The review shows that 40 percent of severance pay programs are found in the LAC Region. Why do the types of labor programs used vary across regions? Which countries are most likely to borrow money to finance severance pay? To try and understand the reasons for this, further research is needed to verify the following assumption: those countries that have a long tradition of using social security programs are more likely to borrow from the World Bank to support their industrial restructuring. For example, World Bank data show that EAP countries, which traditionally lack social security programs, have no record of borrowing money to cover severance pay. By contrast, five of Brazil’s industrial and privatization projects involved direct Bank financing for severance pay. Another notable example is Argentina, where severance for laid-off state enterprise employees was financed largely by funds from the Bank’s Public Enterprise Reform Adjustment Loan (1991), whose conditions stipulated that a certain proportion of the funds be set aside for severance pay (Kikeri 1997). Argentina and Brazil both have relatively sound social security programs that include protection for redundant workers. Brazil set up its unemployment benefit program in 1965 and made subsequent revisions to the program in 1986 and 1990. In general, unemployment benefits provide 36 months of 50 percent of the average earnings during the last three months of employment. In addition, in many instances employers are required to pay lump sum severance indemnities to displaced workers.

Also, Haltiwanger and Singh found a different pattern across continents, the transition economies in Eastern and Central Asia relied much more heavily on worker safety net. An important component of the safety net enhancement was often the stipulation of some form of training assistance. Countries in the Latin and some others relied much more on direct compensation to workers, such as severance pay and enhanced pensions, for example, 74 percent of labor retrenchment cost in Latin America are severance pay.

Another important labor program is unemployment insurance. In the ECA Region, the most used labor programs are unemployment insurance, training, employment services, and labor market development. Most of the transition countries created unemployment insurance programs as open unemployment started appearing during the early years of transition. While high unemployment benefits may help to speed up restructuring, they also increase long-term unemployment. Over time, in response to fiscal constraints, many
transition countries have reduced the level of benefits provided, eliminated the generous eligibility conditions, and cut the duration of benefits.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The results are based on a study of 88 Bank projects from 1987-98 identified as having a labor adjustment component and that conformed to certain specific criteria. Those projects that met the criteria were broken down into three different types of projects.

Summary of Findings

Of the 88 loans in the study, 40 (45 percent) provided long-term support, 26 (29 percent) provided short-term support, and 22 (26 percent) provided support at the industrial level. Most Bank assistance for labor retrenchment goes toward long-term capacity building to help governments develop the institutional framework needed to support redundant workers. These loans ranged from projects involving labor market development, social security system development, and employment promotion to enterprise housing divestiture and some structural adjustment programs.

Most of the projects were designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of employment services and training in assisting the unemployed, particularly through improved capacity to redeploy labor. The pattern of lending indicated that most transition and developing countries, especially in the ECA (during the early stage of reform) and EAP regions, did not have experience with social insurance and major labor market programs and urgently needed to develop labor policies to ease the difficulties inherent in large-scale downsizing within public enterprises.

The Bank’s experience seems to support a sequencing argument, that is, social insurance and labor redeployment programs are critical aspects of public enterprise restructuring, and should be in place before any large-scale layoffs. In other words, if a government carries out large-scale enterprise restructuring in the absence of labor market or social insurance programs, such action entails risk. Furthermore, experience has shown that countries that have labor market and social insurance programs in place recover more quickly from enterprise restructuring and encounter fewer labor difficulties than countries that do not.
The second most common type of labor support is short-term, and reflects the Bank’s experience in using rapid intervention to provide income and labor support to redundant workers. Some argue that governments can smooth the path of transition and intervene to save jobs in the short run through immediate action if high unemployment is inevitable during transition. The Bank’s experience shows that short-term assistance for labor retrenchment tends to increase rapidly when a region’s or country’s economy is declining and the open unemployment rate is high. Most Bank assistance for short-term labor market intervention occurred during periods of regional economic decline, for example, in 1994 in the ECA Region and in 1998 in the EAP Region. The instruments used for short-term labor adjustment include extending unemployment insurance, expanding public works programs and employment services, and providing retraining and counseling services.

The third increasing form of labor support occurs at the level of specific industrial restructuring or privatization, and Bank involvement is relatively limited, but has recently increased rapidly, especially in 1998. Severance pay is the most common compensation scheme in this type of project. In the context of this type of project, the main challenge is addressing labor redundancy issues adequately and in a timely fashion at the time of industrial restructuring.

The Bank’s earliest assistance to redundant workers was to two projects in the AFR Region in 1987 and another in the ECA Region in 1988, but the level of assistance since that time has been uneven. It experienced two major increases. The first occurred in 1994, mainly in response to deteriorating economic conditions following enterprise restructuring and privatization in the ECA Region. The second increase was in 1998 as a result of rapid intervention following the economic crisis and labor difficulties in the EAP Region. The total number of labor adjustment components contained in various types of lending increased 100 percent over the number of such components in 1997.

Half of the Bank’s lending for labor assistance in developing and transition economies has gone to the LAC and ECA regions. The third largest region receiving labor assistance is the AFR Region. However, in 1998 lending to the EAP Region involving assistance to redundant workers alone accounted for half of total lending that year. The SAS
and MNA regions account for only a small share of the Bank’s lending for assistance to redundant workers.

Of the 200 labor components identified in the 88 projects reviewed, training, labor market mobility and information development, and severance pay were the three major labor programs used most frequently. When examined by region, 40 percent of severance pay programs were in the LAC Region, 35 percent of training programs were in the ECA Region, and 70 percent of labor market mobility and information development programs were in the EAP and ECA regions. The ECA Region also accounts for the most unemployment benefits and employment service components, 64 and 68 percent, respectively, of those supported by the Bank. Training was the dominant labor assistance program before 1997, but that year it was surpassed by severance pay.

**Lessons Learned**

The Bank is shifting its attention to address the immediate impacts of restructuring on labor. Bank experience suggests that labor retrenchment programs that compensate workers at the time of downsizing is important, but it cannot achieve the objective of sustainable human resource development on a long-term basis. Effective programs to redeploy labor require combining labor retrenchment programs at the industrial level with long-term capacity building in running income and labor support programs at the institutional level. Those countries that lack of traditional social safety nets for the unemployed urgently need to develop labor policies that would combine labor retrenchment programs at the industrial level with broader labor and income support at institutional level.

**Future Directions**

This study has served as a first step in understanding the Bank’s experience to date with providing assistance to redundant workers. The hope is that it will serve as background for future research and for policy considerations in this field. Future studies should consider the four issues described in the following paragraphs.

*Is Sequencing an Important Factor in Enterprise Restructuring?*

Whether social insurance and labor redeployment programs are critical parts of public enterprise restructuring that should be in place before a government undertakes a large-scale
enterprise layoff is open to debate. Bank experience is insufficient to answer this question. To this end, more information is needed on enterprise restructuring and privatization financed by other agencies (including government and private sector entities), along with comparative country case analyses and analytical work.

The central question in relation to sequencing is whether the Bank should provide assistance in the social or labor sectors before restructuring, at the time of restructuring, or after restructuring. Is the sequencing of Bank assistance in this context important to begin with? The evidence to date as gleaned from this study appears to indicate that sequencing is important, but further work is needed on this issue.

Some countries received Bank social sector lending before subsequent lending for public sector restructuring, for example, the China Labor Market Mobility Project, Enterprise Housing and Social Security Reform Project, and Vocational Education Reform Project. These projects were considered necessary to support the establishment of a social security system before state enterprise restructuring and labor retrenchment. Similarly in Russia in 1996, the government expanded and revised its guidelines on mine closure to ensure that no mine would be closed and no employee made redundant unless an adequate social safety net was in place. By contrast, some countries started by borrowing for public sector restructuring first, then followed up this with borrowing for social sector lending if mass layoffs had occurred, as was the case in most transition economies.

Given such differences, the immediate questions that arise are as follows. Why does the sequencing of Bank lending differ among countries? Does it affect the outcome of Bank lending for public enterprise restructuring? Does a country’s macroeconomic and labor market situation matter? Why do some countries receive more social sector lending than others?

**What Determines the Form of Labor Assistance Used?**

Why do the major types of labor programs vary across regions? What are the determining factors for certain types of labor assistance: the initial social safety net and labor market conditions, the scale of public enterprise restructuring, the extent of open unemployment, the prevailing macroeconomic fiscal conditions, or the levels of human resource capital? Which type of labor program is most cost-effective: training,
unemployment benefits, or severance pay? The data show that the Bank has recently begun to use more severance pay programs than training programs to assist redundant workers, but why?

What Are the Experiences of Various Regions and Countries?

Any examination of the experiences of various regions and countries with labor assistance requires a comprehensive assessment of the outcomes of regional or country labor assistance programs. In some regions, evaluation programs are almost nonexistent, while other regions, such as the ECA Region, have already completed several major evaluations of the impact of active labor market programs. Thus there is an urgent need to develop the institutional capacity to evaluate labor market outcomes to draw useful lessons for others.

How Should Social Insurance and Labor Market Programs Be Monitored and Evaluated?

Can we rank countries according to the condition of their social insurance and labor market programs? What major indicators should we use to develop a comprehensive index? Therefore, more analytical work is needed in the future. The answers to these all these questions require further research.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


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</tr>
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Source: World Bank Documents
## APPENDIX A2:

Bank Lending for Labor Assistance to Redundant Workers by Year, 1987-1998

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Bank Lending for Labor Assistance to Redundant Workers by Year, 1987-1998

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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>Hard Coal Project In Preparation</td>
<td>(In Preparation)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>Pension Reform Implementation Project</td>
<td>PID 7089</td>
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Source: World Bank Documents