



RESULTS SERIES

CHILDCARE GOES MOBILE IN BURKINA FASO



Public works programs provide an important safety net for vulnerable households through temporary jobs during adverse times.

THE CHALLENGE



Support for childcare is often inadequate and young mothers face the choice of passing up the opportunity to work or leaving young children unattended.

THE RESULT

-  An innovative, low-cost mobile childcare model for public works also offering vaccine checks and parental training.
-  The model will be expanded to 21 municipalities in Burkina Faso and is already being used in Cameroon, select sites in Madagascar, and Ethiopia.

Public works programs in Burkina Faso provide an important safety net for vulnerable households through temporary jobs. Yet, they may present a difficult choice for mothers: pass up the opportunity to work or leave your young children unattended. The World Bank Group's ([WBG Youth Employment and Skills Development Project](#)) found that many young mothers working on the construction sites could not find childcare, so they brought their children to work and left them near dangerous work premises.

Focus group discussions and interviews with participants led to an innovative proposal: mobile crèches [day care centers] following women as they move from one worksite to another. Offering safe shelter and meaningful stimulation for children of public program workers, the crèches were usually set up under a tree or in an empty building provided by the local authority, or in a large weather resistant tent. To keep costs low and achieve greater sustainability, crèches were built using existing tools and services with local partners, as much as possible. Among other things, parental training materials (on child rearing, nutrition etc.) used for the Social Safety Net project were successfully reused for the mobile crèches.

The Burkina Faso government and other partners joined the WBG team in the pilot, funded in part by the [Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality](#). Childcare assistants—often women who were pregnant or unable to participate in manual labor—were trained in early child development



by the Ministry of Education, which also supplied an educational program based on the national preschool curriculum. The Ministry of Health and local health centers sent health specialists to check vaccination records and set up appointments for further care.

The crèches offer a childcare solution that not only keeps children safe and provides them with meaningful care and stimulation, but also enables their mothers to benefit from temporary work opportunities, while increasing the efficiency of public works. It even creates new jobs, as childcare assistants receive the same wages as other workers participating in the public works program. Many mothers have shown enthusiasm for organizing the crèches and even contributing a modest amount of money for children's food preparation. Moreover, breastfeeding is encouraged and the women at the public works sites are provided opportunities to step away and breastfeed their children throughout the day.

After the successful pilot in three locations, the plan is to expand the crèches to 21 municipalities across Burkina Faso. The mobile crèches model can easily be replicated at a very low cost and early lessons indicate that it can also be replicated in different contexts, such as agriculture projects, refugee camps and outdoor work sites in general.

This model – and its potentially transformative impact on public works - continues to attract interest in other countries. Neighboring Cameroon has already successfully set up four mobile crèches sites and the plan is to extend it to every public works site across the country. Mobile crèches in Madagascar have been implemented in select sites as part of one of the accompanying measures of the Productive Social Safety Net Program and the mobile crèches will be extended to all 278 program sites. In Ethiopia, 45 crèches (both mobile as well as childcare center facilities) are planned in two regions, as part of the Rural Productive Safety Nets Program (RPSNP). Partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo are working together to locally adapt the mobile crèches design and a scoping mission is planned. Moreover, as part of an impact evaluation of the public works program, one analytical module will look at the impact of the mobile crèches for women's participation, well-being and welfare effects.

Although these initiatives may vary to fit different country contexts as the model is replicated, using existing services and collaboration with local partners means mobile crèches have great potential to provide a sustainable and cost-saving solution to a lack of childcare for public works programs – and beyond.



The Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality is a World Bank Group multidonor trust fund investing in knowledge, diagnostics, impact evaluations and data to help policy makers and practitioners close gender gaps in countries and sectors. Learn more on www.worldbank.org/gender/ufge

