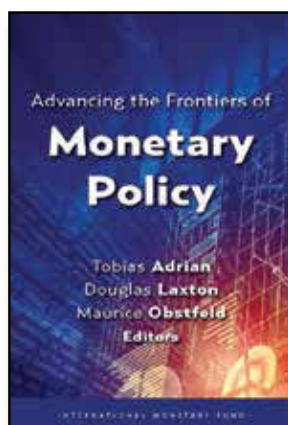




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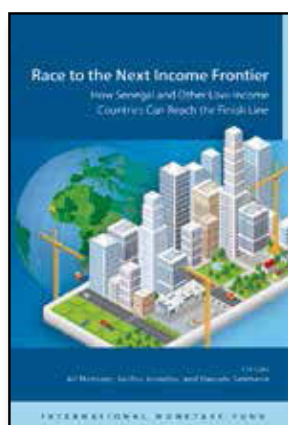
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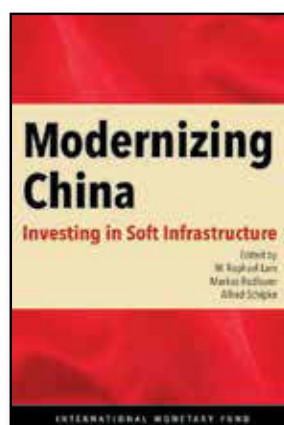
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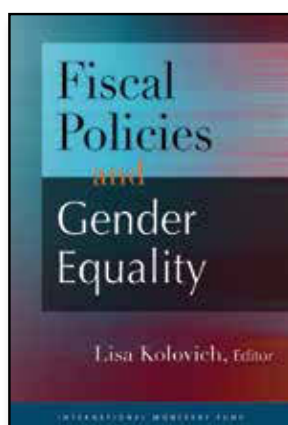
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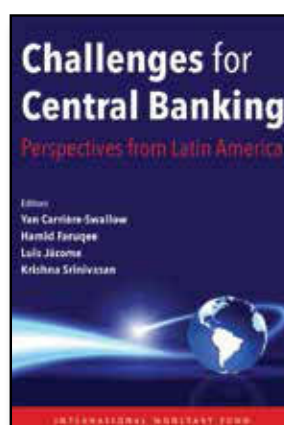
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The Poverty-Corruption Nexus

Laura Alonso explains why the battle against corruption must be waged on many fronts

David Pedroza

LAURA ALONSO was appointed head of Argentina's anti-corruption office by President Mauricio Macri in 2015 after serving in the Chamber of Deputies and as executive director of the Argentine chapter of Transparency International. She is a graduate of the University of Buenos Aires and holds a master's degree in public administration and public policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science. In this interview with *F&D*'s David Pedroza on June 22, Alonso explains why addressing corruption is crucial in the fight against poverty, how various actors from the public and private sectors must be involved, and how technology can be deployed to improve transparency.

F&D: Which areas of government are most affected by corruption?

LA: At a level of what could be called “big corruption,” the highest levels historically seen in Argentina—the risk zones—are the usual ones: big infrastructure works, extractive industries, and customs. That is why we are attacking it with different measures, to try to lower the risk, increase control and transparency of the procurement and contracting processes—the behavior and assets of public officials and the strengthening of the internal audit system of each area.

F&D: You have said that the Argentine government sees the fight against corruption as part of the fight against poverty. What is the relationship?

LA: People living in poverty are victims of corruption because it generates, along with inefficiency and poor administration of the state, low-quality public services and infrastructure investment, which directly affects the quality of life of these people. The first victims of corruption are always those most in need. They are also deprived of new employment opportunities, because we all know that corruption is, sadly, a factor that deters quality private investment.

F&D: How should the private sector get involved?

LA: It is vital to involve the private sector in the prevention of corruption through good business practices and also by encouraging companies to report when irregularities arise in public procurement or contract negotiations. In the case of public-private alliances, the anti-corruption office launched a high-level reporting mechanism, which received technical advice from the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] and the Basel Institute on Governance. During the first public-private partnership project of the National Directorate of Roads, eight contracts have already been signed, and no reports of corruption were recorded for this process, which shows that both the process design as well as the incorporation of integrity clauses—and this high-level reporting mechanism—contributed to generate trust among investors who came in massively to bid, including foreign investors who had never done so in Argentina.

F&D: How has the government used technology to fight corruption?