

Annex W

Transformative Universal Social Protection in Asia

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the context



The current global systemic crisis has exacerbated poverty and inequality around the world; new risks and vulnerabilities have emerged and intensified in the context of multiple crises

To what extent have governments particularly in the region responded to the need to effectively provide a system of cover for those negatively affected?



the context

Recent public discourse and interest in social protection was triggered by crises, notably the financial crisis of 1997 and the global financial crisis of 2008.

A variety of actors engaged in shaping discourse and practice: governments, multilateral financial institutions, civil society groups and social movements

However, many government policies tend to be oriented more towards the approach prioritized by the WB: the risk management approach, and where provision of SP are seen mostly to fall on non-state actors (e.g., the market, NGOs, communities) and a much more muted role for the state.

conference on social protection



Thus, a SEA conference on the need to enhance social protection in the context of universalizing socio-economic security was organized by Social Watch-Philippines, GCAP-SENCA and GCAP-Philippines (April 2010, Manila)

Social protection usually consists of the following:

social insurance- refers to employment-related programs financed from contributions from employers and employees based on earnings.

social assistance- provides income or cash transfers to those who are unable to work or excluded from gainful employment on the basis of their vulnerability status or their rights as citizens. Income-generating interventions such as public employment programs also fall in this category.

Social assistance is usually financed through general taxation and external resources.

Active labor market programs- aimed at increasing skills, employment and long-run earning potential of beneficiaries through training, apprenticeships, job search assistance, and the like.

Universal Social Protection

Universal social protection means that the entire population is covered with adequate benefits which are framed within a set of citizenship rights and/or entitlements which will wipe out the worst forms of poverty, and help people to live a life of dignity as it protects living standards, and provides levels of consumption to those at risk of falling into, or already living in, poverty (UNRISD)

what is social protection?

social protection: a set of measures to address:

- 1) vulnerability associated with being poor (for which social assistance is needed),**
- 2) vulnerability with the risk of becoming poor (for which social insurance is needed), and**
- 3) social injustice arising from structural inequalities and abuse of power (for which social equity is needed)'**

(Devereux, Sabates-Wheeler, 2004)

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN, 1948

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the **economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality** (Art. 22)

Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection (Art. 23)

more on legal covenants, and constitution

Art. 9. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights:

“The state parties to the present covenant recognize the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance.”

RP Constitution, Art. II, Sec. 9:

“The State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that **provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living and improved quality of life for all.**”

transformative social protection

In countries where poverty is widespread, social protection programs should be geared towards **promoting sustainable livelihoods and redistribution**. Furthermore, social protection should **go beyond income maintenance** and must **tackle the problem of low incomes and their structural causes**.

Social protection as a **complement to economic policy**- public Investment in human development is an important component of Economic development as it enhances productivity, generates Employment, nurtures and cultivates a class of local entrepreneurs and builds a domestic workforce attractive to business, Among others.

forms of SP

Social Protection can come in the form of:

- A basic income grant provided unconditionally to all citizens
- without means testing or a work requirement.

Ideally, a basic income grant would replace all other forms of non-contributory social assistance available in a country, thus avoiding the costs and the stigma associated with means testing, targeting and conditionality.

- partial schemes that would provide a low – and slowly increasing – basis to which other income, including remaining social security benefits and other income supplements could be added.
- Alternatively, grants could be provided to certain categories first (children, the elderly) and then extended progressively to The whole population (UNRISD)

Forms of SP

Countries that have experimented with a partial basic income grant include Brazil, where the right to a basic minimum income for all nationals and residents was legislated in 2004;

Singapore, where, at the end of each fiscal year, the state redistributes any national budget surplus in cash to every citizen as a bonus of citizenship. (UNRISD)

UN system, ILO,WHO on the social protection floor

•a guaranteed set of basic social transfers in cash or in kind to all. Transfers are granted to all residents as a right, and their financing is a collective responsibility, most likely to occur through general taxation.

Countries may choose how to realize it.

Features of the basic SP package: universal old-age and disability pensions, basic child benefits, universal access to essential care, And social assistance/100 days employment scheme

Studies show that costs falls within the range between 3.7 per cent and 10.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) for a number of low-income countries in 2010; in other words, it is economically feasible!

Various paths in implementing Universal SP

top down approach:

Occurs when the national/central government expands public programs; likely to occur in countries that can build on a legacy of comprehensive public social protection programs, that are committed to expanding coverage and improving equity and that have the political and fiscal resources to do so;

bottom-up approach:

involves the integration and scaling up of local programs and is often discussed as a viable path for poorer countries characterized by multiple, fragmented and largely informal protection mechanisms. However, the fiscal and administrative challenges in terms of standardization, unification and institutionalization are steep (UNRISD)

engendering social protection initiatives

1. Inclusion of women in social protection programs without addressing gender issues can lead to a 'feminization of responsibility and obligation' and an increase in workload. Studies have brought out the ways in which the policy response to 'feminize' anti-poverty programmes in fact ends up placing even more obligations and responsibilities for social reproduction on women's shoulders.

2. In addition to recognition of specific social identities such as gender/ethnicity/caste our vision of social protection has to incorporate a redistributive agenda and counter the residualist, minimalist and paternalistic approaches dominant today.

on social protection

Most countries in Asia have social protection systems, but these are inadequate to protect the poor against worsening living conditions brought about and compounded by the effects of multiple crises.

Moreover, studies show that most existing social protection systems in the region only deal with those who have formal employment and exist in the form of private and statutory insurance and welfare payments and benefits.

The ones that need protection the most and urgently, the informal sector that are the majority of Asia's poor, remain without any form of public social protection.

Status of SP in SEA

At best, social protection programs are largely a collection of targeted measures and safety nets; fragmented, piecemeal, and residualist in character.

Plagued by usual errors associated with targeting: inclusion and exclusion errors, and politicized. Targeting can also be costly.

Given that a significant percentage of the population, and especially the poor, are living in a state of perpetual crisis, such measures and intervention are often inadequate, too little and too late.

Status of SP in SEA

.Most social protection programs fall under the three categories: contributory social insurance programs, non-contributory social welfare programs and social safety nets programs, and active labor-market programs. Civil society initiatives include self-help projects, microfinance, advocacy and campaigning.

While good practices have been cited (e.g. health insurance system in Thailand), social protection policies and programs have not been free from problems: for example, full implementation and funding (common argument, especially by the state: inadequate resources for social protection).

practice: issues and challenges

5) The question may be raised against such crisis-driven measures and interventions: are they only populist policies driven by political agendas, emanating from a risk management approach that does not address structural causes of poverty and inequality? Or Are such measures strongly founded on a rights-based approach?

6) Bad governance has also been cited as an obstacle to the full implementation of social protection programs, leading to decreasing level of confidence in the ability of the state to provide for the needs of its citizens.

re-examining concepts and notions

Expanding our imagination for alternatives.

When we think of alternatives, we must think BIG. First, we imagine the alternative, then we ask the question, how do we get there.

Otherwise, we fall into the trap of narrow thinking from which the notion of targeting emanates.

universalism in western europe

In Western Europe, the powerful construction of universalism that did not happen overnight but took 200 years of struggles of forces of construction, such as labor.

What this means is that what we are told, that the idea of universalized social protection in developing countries cannot happen, is false.

challenges

Expand and re-imagine the concept, orientation and notion of social protection as something that is a right and entitlement, beyond risk management and crisis intervention.

Social equity and social justice to address increasing vulnerabilities of all groups and sectors (the basis for universalism).

Build a broad-based alliance between the poor and the middle classes to promote social solidarity and support for universal programs

what we plan to do

A. Information and Knowledge Sharing on transformative and universal social protection

- Document and share best practices on transformative SP; provide links such that stories and information are shared
- Examples in Asia:
 - Thailand- Universal Cooperative Scheme; Universal Tax-Financed 500 Baht Pension Scheme
 - Cambodia- The Social Protection Strategy for the Poor and Vulnerable
 - China- New Rural Cooperative Medical Scheme
 - India- National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme; Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (health service coverage)

what we plan to do

B. Conduct Policy Research in possible areas:

- How to operationalize? Top down, bottom up, gradual?
- Conduct gender analysis of social protection in
 - Countries in our region
- On the economic and fiscal viability of SP package at the country level

what we plan to do

B. Advocacy and capacity building

- Advocate for social protection of migrant workers and campaign for the signing of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, especially among the receiving countries;
- Campaign for social policy on women and men that addresses specific needs on reproductive health issues such as cervical cancer, prostate cancer, etc.;
- Ensure social protection for people with disabilities and the informal sector;
- Campaign for universal access to basic services so that every person in every country has access to clean water, health and education services; access to such services should not be based on citizenship;

what we plan to do

- Lobby the ASEAN to set a minimum percentage of national budget or GDP that ASEAN countries should spend on social protection;
- Engage the ASEAN summit on social pillars and utilize it as an opportunity for exchange;
- Engage regional structures and arenas such as the ASEAN, ADB, GMS (Greater Mekong Sub-region); campaign and lobby for an ASEAN Social Cultural Community to address social protection issues and come up with a five-year plan;
- Mobilize existing networks and alliances such as Social Watch, GCAP, TSPA, SPA, and those of the indigenous people and people with disabilities;

what we plan to do

D. Immediate steps

Engage governments at the national level for expanded notion and practice of transformative and universal social protection

- Request Social Watch to serve as the focal point for the advocacy of transformative social protection/ universalizing socio-economic security (USES).

Thank You!