



SDA
SOCIAL PROTECTION IN ASIA
A policy-research and network building program

Newsletter 9, March 2011

Welcome to the last edition of the Social Protection in Asia (SPA) newsletter. As this phase of the SPA Programme gets over, we bring to you news on the latest dissemination events that have been carried out in the last quarter, and the usual mix of useful resources and events listing.

Social Protection in Asia: Southeast Asia and China Regional Workshop

The Southeast Asia and China Regional Workshop of the Social Protection in Asia programme was held during 18-19 December, 2010, as a dissemination event where the findings of the five SPA teams in China and Vietnam were presented and debated with government officials from the two countries. The workshop particularly intended to reach out to local officials on the ground level, who are often excluded from such deliberations. The idea was to bring the on-the-ground perspective of the frontline social protection practitioners to help shed a new light on the research findings.

The workshop was held in Beijing Normal University, where 40 scholars and government officials from China and Vietnam gathered for eight sessions where papers were presented and open discussions held. The issues in each session ranged from an overview of social protection in China, challenge of migration in China, impact of natural disasters on social protection in China, old age and social protection, social protection in Vietnam, health insurance and social protection in China, and lastly, measures taken by the Chinese government in expanding social insurance coverage. The workshop concluded with the research teams deliberating on areas of future research. And key policy issues that need to be addressed.

The workshop intended to further the goals of the SPA programme by disseminating the results of the various projects among policymakers, and to help adapt those results in a manner that will be most useful to the real conditions on the ground. To achieve these goals, the workshop attempted to carry out two intertwined sets of tasks:

- i) disseminate the results of the SPA project at several levels of government at the same time by inviting officials from all levels: national, provincial, county and township.
- ii) create a dialogue across several dimensions that usually have limited communication (academics-practitioners, local-central government, China-Vietnam), with the objective of giving a thrust to new issues and perspectives.

Social Protection and Inclusive Development: Emerging Issues and Perspectives in South Asia

A one-day consultation workshop on Social Protection and Inclusive Development: Emerging Issues and Perspectives in South Asia, was held at Colombo on 23 February, 2011 to explore the issues of inclusive development and social protection in South Asia. The workshop was attended by



about 30 participants from different countries of South Asia (mainly from India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka) and representatives of ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF, IDRC and other governmental and non-governmental organisations. The participants discussed the synthesis report of the SPA projects and based on the discussion and learning, raised issues for further research and study.

The first session focused on the issues of emerging perspectives on social protection. It was emphasised that the need for social protection interventions had increased because of increase in fluctuations in the economies of the world coupled with sharp economic downturn, which had resulted in sharp increase in poverty, especially in Asia. The issue of existence of a plethora of social protection interventions in countries like Bangladesh and India was also raised. Emphasis was made on a broader approach to social protection interventions, with stress on issues of structural inequalities, risks and vulnerabilities while designing such interventions. Discussants also highlighted the importance of design of social protection policies, and argued that design can play significant role in deciding the outcome of the social protection interventions. To address the issue of vulnerabilities of women, especially in the context of India, it was opined that the social protection policies in India should combine both promotional and protective aspects.

The discussions in the second and concluding session on future agenda for policy research on social protection and inclusive development summarised the issues raised in the previous sessions. The issue of child rights and protection of children as an important part of social protection intervention was raised. The role of social security measures in moving to a virtuous cycle of development was also discussed. The link between the ILO's decent work agenda and social protection interventions were also explored. A multi-dimensional approach was also suggested for designing social protection interventions. Emphasis was also put on potentialities of enhancing social protection expenditure as a ratio of GDP and not be seen in static term.

Social Protection in Southeast Asia: Emerging Issues and Perspectives for Research and Policy

The final dissemination event of the SPA programme was held on 30 March, 2011 in Jakarta in collaboration with the SMERU Research Institute, with an aim to engage with policymakers from countries in the Southeast Asia region on key messages of SPA and share experiences in expanding social protection in the region. The workshop was attended by policymakers and relevant stakeholders from India, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia. The workshop comprised of three inter-connected sessions on dissemination of SPA key learning, exchange of cross countries experiences in expanding social protection and presentation of studies on impact and effectiveness of several social protection interventions.



The keynote speech described the Indonesian experiences in 1998, 2005, and 2008 when oil prices went up, leading to increased poverty and unemployment and forcing the government to go through several policy phases to protect the poor and the vulnerable groups.

The session on key findings and messages of SPA research pointed out two key lessons: first re-emphasising at the individual level the transformative potentialities of social protection interventions, i.e., transformation in the abilities of the poor to cope with the risks and vulnerability; second, at the institutional level, enhancing the abilities of the poor to cope with risk and vulnerabilities, escape the structural trap of poverty, and claim their rights and entitlements.

The interactive session on cross-country experiences facilitated exchange of experience among several Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia) in providing social protection for their community. The discussions covered the ongoing implementation and future prospects of social protection, as well as the challenge each country faced in the effort to increase programme effectiveness and expand it.

There was a session on presentation of studies on the impact and effectiveness of several social protection interventions in the region. The presentation from Vietnam was based on a study of rural-urban migration of temporary workers in the informal sectors in the cities of Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi. The Indonesian presentation assessed the unconditional cash transfer (BLT) programme.

The concluding session saw presentations from Vietnam and Indonesia on emerging issues of research in the respective countries. In Vietnam these included a road map for universal targeting; building government donor partnership for implementing strategy; policy to support special groups; gender streamlining in social protection; food security; strategy for participation of informal sector; community based schemes; and impact of aging population on social protection. Two main issues for Indonesia included vulnerable households exposed to poverty, and globalisation and the main challenges were targeting of beneficiaries and transition from poverty. The concluding remarks summarised the proceedings of the workshop, which spelt out the path for providing social protection, mainly in the areas of access to food, housing, education and related services.

Useful Resources

Global Monitoring Report 2011: Improving the Odds of Achieving the MDGs

This year's Global Monitoring Report: Improving the Odds of Achieving the MDGs, by the World Bank and the IMF, takes a closer look at the



diversity of country progress, presents the challenges that remain, and assesses the role of growth, policy reforms, trade, and donor policies in meeting the MDGs. This year's report also presents findings and lessons from impact evaluations in health and education to better understand results on the ground.

World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development

With more than 1.5 billion people living in countries affected by conflict, the World Development Report 2011 (WDR) looks into the changing nature of violence in the 21st century. The report underlines the negative impact of persistent conflict on a country's or a region's development prospects, and notes that no low income, conflict-affected state has yet achieved a single Millennium Development Goal.



Enhancing Social Protection in Asia and the Pacific

On 21-22 April 2010, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) organised a social protection conference in Manila, which brought together people from ADB, its developing member countries, partner agencies, research institutes, and civil society organisations to exchange valuable experience and information and discuss ideas on how to develop social protection and expand it for the well-being of people in Asia and the Pacific. This book features selected papers from the conference that respond to the need for integrated and inclusive social protection to improve the quality of peoples' lives and livelihoods.



Assessing the Structure of Small Welfare States: Social Policies in Small States

The country case studies and thematic papers in this series, published jointly by UNRISD and the Commonwealth Secretariat, examine social policy issues facing small states and their implications for economic development. They show how, despite their inherent vulnerability, some small states have been successful in improving their social indicators because of the complementary social and economic policies they have implemented.

EVENTS

The Social and Transformative Impacts of Cash Transfers and Social Protection, 6 May, 2011, Overseas Development Institute and screened live online

South-South Learning Forum 2011: Building Resilient Safety Nets, 30 May-3 June, 2011, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



ABOUT SPA

Social Protection in Asia is a research, networking and advocacy programme that aims to create a regional voice and develop a research base for advocating innovative and informed policy on

Social Protection issues.

The SPA programme is managed by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)

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