

## State Welfarism and Social Welfare in Asia

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper has analyzed and discussed the social welfare policies of the Asian countries—the responsibilities of international activist institutions and the State towards individuals in terms of state welfarism and social and economic protection, and the conventional family system, which was and still is the core responsible institution for the well-being of its members. The paper has presented economic and poverty indicators (19), demographic, social and economic indicators associated social welfarism (16), satisfaction related indicators (7), and funding related indicators that have association with social welfarism (9). This has also analyzed and discussed the gap between the international propaganda on social welfare, social policies of the Government and its actual delivery and the situation of vacuum being created due to the moribund family system of slothful state welfarism, in the new living context created by the notion of right-prone individualism. The study has identified along with their history of starting social security provisions the present state major workfare and welfare and welfare protection in the Asian countries, thereby explored countries falling into five levels of social welfare system by taking a combined state of poverty, vulnerable employment, and government expenditure on education, health and social protection, namely (i) early stage of welfare system; (ii) transition to take-off stage of welfare system; (iii) take-off stage of welfare system; (iv) transition to drive to maturity stage of welfare system; and (v) the drive to maturity stage of welfare system. Finally, the paper has presented the critical areas for dialogue where the synergy of the propagandist international activism, state slothfulness, moribund family dynamics, and right-prone individualism interface for a reliable and sustainable social welfare with affection, protection, nurturance, and protection thereby live in peace and harmony with dignity.*

**Key words:** Welfarism, Social welfare policy, State, Government, Asia

### 1. Introduction

Thinkers since historic time have written about and advocated for idealistic societies where people would live not only in peace, harmony, and tranquillity with liberty and freedom, but also with prosperity and affluence in an environment of social equity, social equality, social justice, and being content. Creation of such a society at present time has become the major mission of each modern nation-state. In putting such a noble idea to practice, the Article 25 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* has provided a person or an individual with “the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.” (United Nations, 2010). These freedoms and rights cannot be controlled and obstructed by the State or the family. To fully ensure these rights, Article 30 declares that “Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.” (United Nations, 2010). Further to Article 25 and Article 30 of the UDHR which guarantee the rights of the individual, Article 22 states ‘everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security’; Article 9 of the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) states ‘the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance’ (Office of the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights, 2010). The International Covenants on Human Rights has further specified the social security, including social insurance (Article 9); to the widest possible protection and assistance for the family, especially mothers, children and young persons (Article 10); to an adequate standard of living (Article 11); to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (Article 12); and to education (Articles 13 and 14). Similarly, various conventions of the International Labour Office (ILO), clearly declare welfare provisions to be guaranteed by the State. Such provisions including the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention 1952 (No. 102), which provisions for medical care, sickness benefit, unemployment benefit, old-age benefit, employment injury benefit, family benefit, maternity benefit, invalidity

benefit, and survivor's benefit (International Labour Organization, 2010a); the Invalidity, Old-Age and Survivor's Benefits Convention 1967 (No. 128), which specify the three specific benefits (International Labour Organization, 2010b); the Part-Time Work Convention 1994 (No. 175), which guarantees the statutory social security schemes for the part-time workers (International Labour Organization, 2010c); and the Home Work Convention 1996 (No. 177), which provisions for 'statutory social security protection' along with other rights enjoyed by other wage earners (International Labour Organization, 2010d).

These provisions which cover over a dozen social risks by social security provisions; and other national constitutional and legal rights clearly show that the primary responsibility rests on the State, or supra-individual/family institution. Most modern nation-states have not only accepted these rights by ratification and accession of the Declaration and other Conventions, but also defined and defended the basic rights of its citizen and vowed through constitutional and legal provisions as well as government and political parties manifestos to guarantee those rights for the well-being of an individual (and the family, or through the family) in the society. Thus, most countries, including countries in Asia have and brought themselves to play the major role in the life and well-being of an individual, and are principally prepared for welfarism. In reality and practice, welfarism has become the key policy issue as well (Gentilini, 2009; Overbye, 2005).

The social and economic protection of an individual and/or a family throughout the history and until the recent past used to be provided by the family institution, which consists of a group of people closely related by blood and marriage, comprising a single generation or several generations. The family institution has been continued by the process of marriage and childbearing, and it has become the oldest institution of humankind and a primary institution for taking care of its members. The functions of family members, which are based on value system, are defined by their status and geared towards working for the family well-being with unlimited obligations and limited rights, consequently sharing name, fame, or defamation; property and prosperity or poverty; happiness or misery and agony; and fortune or misfortune. The family leadership arranges and manages all members basic livelihood, education, marriage, property in case of separation, and respect upon death. Thus it a total package of living together with affection, protection, nurturance, and help; working for earning a living and sharing; and socializing to live in peace and harmony with dignity.

Ironically, the UDHR recognizes individual as the basic human institution and family as a social institution and their entitlement "to protection by society and the State" and both the State and international institutions have put very significant obligations towards a family for the well-being of its members. However, with the modus operandi of the state welfarism and rightist individualism as well as due to huge changes occurring in living, working, socializing, governance and spiritualization situations of each family member, like in the developed countries, the family relationship in Asia is changing. The family dynamics and cohesion is in the process to moribund, and the old customary value system of the family is in the process of loosening its grip, relevance, and strength over family members, willingly or unwillingly. The new children's generation have their new requirements, new aspirations, new hopes, and new threats arisen from the contemporary living, working, socializing, governance and spiritualization conditions and environment, and they are particularly concerned to economic and social demands and requirements. On the other hand, the elderly members require special care too. Family leadership are facing many difficulties to obligate these demands as the family management approach employed and successful in the past is not only obsolete, but also immoral and illegal with the new world social system, national social order, and national family laws.

With changing concept of the primary institution of the society from family to individual, the old system is gradually lacking its vitality whereas the State have promoted welfarism in such a way that State take care of an individual from cradle to grave. Thus, personalized welfarism has become the major task of the governments whereas individual (and/or family) good fortune, name and fame, property and prosperity, happiness and being content have remained the destiny of life of an individual, along with the desire of peace, social harmony, social equity, social equality, and social justice.

Along with the propagation of the welfarism by the national governments and political parties as well as the international organizations, and particularly in response to the social security provisions to the government employees as well as private sector employees in the recent years under which the respective employees (including their family members) are taken care for the rest of their life, the welfarism provision has emerged not only as a demand from the general public who are in the state of poverty, or vulnerable to poverty, and who

could not be provided with a workfare, but also social welfare has become the obligation of the governments and the right of the common people that they should be provided with unconditional welfare.

The irony is that countries are in a state of distributing the pipe dreams and perspiring aspirations of the needy people only, they have to provide tangible materials or services immediately or at least assure that the welfare provisions are provided gradually and they will be fulfilled in the foreseeable future. In a state of public confidence lost, it is not only the sitting governments face their insecurity the whole nation would fall into doldrums by losing social peace, harmony, and tranquillity. To recover from such disaster, states may need years if not decade of hard work with right decision to come back to normalcy. In the meantime, until a single segment of the society is in poverty/destitution, frequent threat of vulnerability, exclusion and social injustice the country cannot sustain the prosperity achieved by other segments of the society either.

This paper, in the above context has analyzed and discussed the social welfare policies of the Asian countries—the responsibilities of international activist institutions and the State towards individuals in terms of state welfarism and social and economic protection, and the conventional family system, which was and still is the core responsible institution for the well-being of its members. It has also discussed the gap between the international propaganda on social welfare, social policies of the Government and its actual delivery and the situation of vacuum being created due to the moribund family system and the state of slothful state welfarism, in the new living context created by the notion of right-prone individualism. Finally, the paper has presented the critical areas for dialogue where the synergy of the propagandist international activism, state slothfulness, moribund family dynamics, and right-prone individualism interface for a reliable and sustainable social welfare with affection, protection, nurturance, and assistance thereby live in peace and harmony with dignity.

To make points with facts and figure and to analyze the state of welfarism this study has taken data from International Human Development Indicators 2011 (United Nations Development Programme, 2011) and supplemented by the data from the Asian Development Bank database. Necessary calculations are done from the derived dataset, which was transferred to SPSS for easy handling.

## **2. The Welfarism Perspective**

Historical writings reveal the fact that in case of famine, flood, war, crop failure and other natural and human-made disasters royalties, feudal, and religious institutions used to provide assistance to poor and general public to rescue them from the state of devastation. Sometimes before the Industrial Revolution, views have been expressed on the need of security in case of self-sufficiency failed among families and societies. The present version of welfare State emerged in the western democracies after 1930, particularly after the Great Depression. It was a response to the need for social protection system which can protect individuals and families from the vulnerability of employment failure. Now a vast literature exists on the idealistic societies and the developmental view of social welfare of individuals and families (Abramovitz, 2001; Atkinson, 1990; Esping-Andersen, 1996; Sen, 1996, 1999). Moreover, while expressing the need for social welfare to be generously provided by the State, the concept has reached far ahead, i.e. ultimately the State has to turn into a welfare State.

Now, the social welfare has been propagated as the right of an individual or a family by the international community and the State has recognized it. But State welfarism is not that much simple (Lazar & Stoyko, 1998; Park, 2008). By simple idealistic thinking and acceptance of the UDHR and other international Conventions and national welfare legal provisions, the idealistic situation of welfarism could be that people would remain totally free of obligation towards oneself and/or family, and if required for a decent living, all social and economic needs for living, working, socializing, governance, and spiritualizing would be fulfilled by the State. Such an idealistic situation is not attainable in the near future, particularly in the developing and least developed countries. So there is a dilemma among States that they are committed to welfarism, but not in firm state of delivery.

The present day literature is, however, divided into three areas concerning social welfare system. The concept of welfare was somehow developed along with the concept of public workfare, followed by private workfare that the employer takes care of the employee and the employee takes care of the work he/she is assigned and its meaning extended beyond when the welfare component with an employment system was covered by 'social security' system, and the concept of welfare came as mutually exclusive to workfare, that is 'workfare' if not 'welfare' in a narrow sense. There are many reasons to its widening in meaning that there must be equal

opportunities for participation in all avenues of livelihood and equitable redistribution of income. Poverty should not be remained side by side in a developed society, and vulnerability should be managed by reliable social protection system. Since the Government provides work and takes care of its employees (and their family members) for the rest of their life, it becomes the obligation of the government that those who could not be provided with workfare should be provided with welfare if and when the avenues of self-sufficiency in livelihood and self-protection from poverty and vulnerability system failed (presumably) temporarily or even uncertainly.

This study has taken a total view of the welfare system, thus include the *social security view* (Caballe & Fuster, 2003; International Social Security Association, 2008; Johnson & Williamson, 2006; Karunaratne & Goswami, 2002; Neilssen, 1998; Overbye, 2005), *social protection view* (Baulch, Wood, & Weber, 2006; Burda, 1997; Casey, 2009; Cornelisse & Goudswaard, 2002; Euzeby, 2010; Gentilini, 2009), and *social safety nets view* (Calomiris, 1999; Kamath, 2010; Paitoonpong, Abe, & Puopongsakorn, 2008) as they are taken in their present meaning. A substantial public spending should be geared towards the direct welfare impact (Van de Walle, 1998) covering old age people (Asher & Nandy, 2008), medical care and benefit in case of sickness, unemployment, disability, maternity, employment injury and other states of livelihood failure and vulnerability to those who are short fallen of workfare instead.

### **3. The State of Social and Economic Performance in Asia in View of Welfarism**

The Asian region including the two largest countries by population size —China and India—consists of 3.967 billion people out of the total 6.909 billion people in the world that means 57.4 per cent of the world population live in the 33 countries of Asia. It comprises some of the richest countries and some of the largest economies as well as some of the poorest countries in the world. At present the economic performance of the Asian countries is very high in average, however, there are still high income inequalities and substantially higher proportion of population at risk of multidimensional poverty. Moreover, at least every one individual out of four in the medium & low human development index (HDI) countries (a grouping of countries based on human development index) are still earning below 1.25 dollar a day and fall below the national poverty line (see table 1).

Table 1  
Macroeconomic and Poverty Indicators in the Asian Subregions

Economic and Social Problems Associated to Welfarism	Asia	East-Northeast Asia	Southeast Asia	South Asia	Central & West Asia	High HDI countries	Medium & Low HDI Countries
GNI per capita PPP\$	9,564	23,360	10,245	3,263	5,234	24,094	3,447
Income Gini coefficient	36.7	35.6	39.9	37.5	33.6	32.9	38.5
Population at risk of multidimensional poverty (2000-2008)	10.2	5.4	1.08	13.2	10.6	2.8	13.5
Population below PPP\$1.25 a day (2000-2008)	16.4	3.6	16.4	30.5	13.2	1.1	24.6
2Population below National Poverty Line (2000-2008)	21.7	7.8	15.7	24.4	40.0	12.9	26.6
Formal employment (% of total employment)	51	74	49	35	55	74	37
Vulnerable employment (% of total employment)	48	26	51	60	45	26	61
Unemployment rate of primary or less education level	5.7	4.0	4.4	4.6	8.1	7.0	4.1
Unemployment rate of secondary or above education level	18.6	4.5	24.0	20.0	26.1	12.5	27.7
Child labour (% of children ages 5-14)	11.5	4.5	13.7	18.8	5.4	1.9	16.1
Population with at least secondary education	48	66	38	20	78	68	35
Mean years of schooling	7.6	9.8	6.7	4.8	9.7	9.7	6.4
Expected years of schooling	11.9	14.1	11.7	9.7	12.8	14.1	10.8
Difference between expected and actual schooling	4.3	4.3	5.1	4.7	3.1	4.3	4.3
Population without access to improved water	14.29	7.40	16.44	16.62	13.67	4.43	17.57
Population without access to improved sanitation	26.39	23.75	26.89	43.62	7.57	6.00	33.19
Consumer price index, average annual change 2000-2008	6.55	2.41	6.69	7.49	9.37	4.09	8.06
Population living on degraded land (% of total population)	11	9	9	8	15	7	12
Corruption victims (% of people who faced a bribe)	12.96	8.40	8.75	12.83	21.14	12.20	13.44

Some other indicators of workfare are also not encouraging as 48 per cent of the total employment is vulnerable. It is more severe in South Asia and among the medium & low HDI countries as 60 per cent or more of the total employment in these two groups of countries is vulnerable. Similarly the unemployment rate is substantially high among people with secondary or higher level of education than primary or lower level. It has complicated the established interpretation for strong relationship between level of education and employment. Things are more complicated when there is over one fourth unemployment in Asian region on the one hand, and on the other hand more than one tenth of all children age 5-14 in average (18.8 per cent in South Asia) are working instead of going to school which is the minimum school level for the universal compulsory education and one of the bottom lines for welfare provision of international organizations, national governments and the desire of family members. It clearly shows from table 1 that the mean year of schooling in Asia is only 7.6 as against 11.9 years of expected schooling. Consequently, there is only 48 per cent population in Asia with secondary education and above, and such population in South Asia is only 20 per cent.

Regarding basic social amenities that constitute the part of welfarism provisions, 14.3 per cent of all Asian still do not access to improved water. The situation of sanitation is further worse that over one fourth (26.4%) do not access to improved sanitation, which is worst in South Asia with 43.6 per cent. Data for access to affordable and

decent housing is not available for analysis, but available data shows that 11 per cent of the Asian population lives on degraded land and the condition of Central & West Asia is the worst (15%) in this regard.

Table 2 shows the demographic, social and economic indicators that have association with welfarism. It is clear from the table that the average population growth rate and total fertility rate are higher in Asia and particularly in countries with medium & low HDI compared to high HDI countries in the region and the developed countries (United Nations Development Programme, 2010). The gross national income per capita is substantially low in Asia and particularly among medium & low HDI countries, but the median age of population is low and dependency ratio is high, giving heavier burden of family to the poorer people. Furthermore, the economic opportunities are less as the foreign direct investment net inflow is less in medium & low HDI countries as the correlation coefficient between the gross national income (GNI) per capita and foreign direct investment (FDI) net inflow is 0.478, which is statistically significant at 0.01 level of significance, which means that higher the GNI per capita of a country in Asia, higher the foreign direct investment net inflow.

Table 2  
Social and Economic Indicators that have Association with Welfarism in the Asian Subregions

Social and economic indicators	Asia	East-Northeast Asia	Southeast Asia	South Asia	Central & West Asia	High HDI countries	Medium & Low HDI Countries
Average population growth rate (2005-2010)	1.28	0.50	1.52	1.78	1.05	1.01	1.39
Total fertility rate	2.35	1.52	2.31	3.08	2.30	1.72	2.63
Life expectancy at birth	70	76	71	66	69	76	67
Urban population (% of total population)	48	70	49	28	49	74	35
Population median age	28	37	28	24	26	34	26
Dependency ratio (per 100 people ages 15-64)	51	42	50	60	49	43	54
Proportion of population age 0-14 years	27.6	17.9	28.4	33.5	28.0	20.4	31.1
Proportion of population age 15-64 years	66.0	71.0	66.3	62.0	65.7	69.9	64.1
Proportion of population age 65 years and above	6.4	11.1	5.3	4.4	6.2	9.8	4.8
Foreign direct investment net inflow (% of GDP)	4.80	7.85	5.04	2.04	4.99	6.06	4.10
Official Development Assistance total % of GDP	4.46	2.40	3.00	8.42	2.27	0.68	5.40
Official Development Assistance per capita \$	39	47	26	55	34	31	41
Proportion of ODA allocated to social sectors	47.2	44.2	41.5	44.2	56.6	52.6	45.9
Remittance inflow (total % of GDP)	6.7	0.9	3.6	8.2	14.5	1.6	9.5
Remittance inflow per capita \$	85	48	34	66	193	94	80
Internet user (per 100 people)	21	42	25	7	14	48	9

The foreign direct investment could be compensated by the official development assistance (ODA) and remittance that richer countries remit money in the name of development assistance and people from poorer countries remit money working in richer countries. However, data from Asian countries shows that although both ODA and remittance constitute 5.4 per cent and 9.5 per cent of the total gross domestic product (GDP) among medium & low HDI countries respectively, the combined per capita ODA (41 dollars) and remittance (80 dollars) inflows are lower on aggregate among the medium & low HDI countries than the high HDI countries in Asia (see table 2). Unlike FDI, the relationship between the GNI per capita and ODA and remittance are though negatively correlated, but not statistically significant. It is thus confirmed that the propagandist international organizations and richer countries are not helping the poorer countries significantly in economic terms.

Despite all the above described state of poorer performance particularly in medium & low HDI countries there is no significantly difference between the high HDI and medium & low HDI countries concerning satisfaction on the

major indicators of welfarism, i.e. job satisfaction, satisfaction on health and satisfaction on standard of living at personal basis as well as satisfaction with affordable housing and healthcare showing family concerns (see table 3 for the specific figures at the level of satisfaction on the above indicators). Similarly, there is no difference between these two groups of countries on the persons having social support network. The exception is on satisfaction with education system and school on which there is even higher satisfaction among people in medium & low HDI countries than people in high HDI countries.

**Table 3**  
Social and Economic Satisfaction Related Indicators that have Association with Welfarism in the Asian Subregions

Economic and Social Problems Associated to Welfarism	Asia	East-Northeast Asia	Southeast Asia	South Asia	Central & West Asia	High HDI countries	Medium & Low HDI Countries
Job satisfaction (% of employed population)	78	76	80	77	76	76	78
Health satisfaction (% of all respondents)	77	74	81	79	73	75	78
Satisfaction on standard of living (% of all respondents)	61	65	65	60	55	60	62
Satisfaction with affordable housing	54	57	56	52	51	56	53
Satisfaction with healthcare	62	60	81	52	52	62	62
Satisfaction with education system and schools	71	55	87	71	62	62	75
Persons having social support network	77	84	81	63	78	78	76

The question arise now how the welfare provisions are funded. The people of Asia have a 16 per cent saving which could be invested for welfare. However, as the governments have set the welfare standards it is extremely important to understand how much the governments are spending on the major areas of social welfare. Data shows that government in Asian region are spending 23.6 per cent of their GDPs. Although there is slight variation among sub-regions, showing Southeast Asia spending more than others, there is no significant difference between the high HDI and medium & low HDI countries (see table 4 for comparison). Similarly, there is no difference on government expenditure on education and health, which are the two most important component of welfare building process. However, per capita expenditure on health is significantly different among sub-regions, and between the high HDI and medium & low HDI countries. South Asia and the medium & low HDI countries are spending much less than their counterparts. Similarly, as expected, there is significant difference in the government expenditure on social security among sub-regions and between high HDI and medium & low HDI countries. The East-Northeast Asian countries, the Central & West Asian countries and countries with high HDI are spending more than the other sub-regions (Southeast Asia and South Asia) and medium & low HDI countries (see table 4 comparison). Similarly, there is significant variation among Asian sub-regions in all indicators. This is confirmed by the positive correlation coefficient of 0.396 that richer the countries spent more on social security and vice versa. When calculated GDP per capita expenditure on social security, high variation between groups of countries observed. The East-Northeast Asia has spent most (\$1527) whereas South Asia has the least (\$29) per capita. There is similarly huge difference between the high HDI countries (\$1102) and medium & low HDI countries (only \$31). If taken the six advanced countries in Asia (Brunei Darussalam, Hong Kong, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and Taiwan, the GDP per capita government expenditure on social security is 1662 dollars, which is even higher than the high HDI countries as they have large coverage and extent in all areas of social welfare (United Nations ESCAP, 2008).

Table 4  
Social Welfare Funding Indicators that have Association with Welfarism in the Asian Subregions

Economic and Social Problems Associated to Welfarism	Asia	East-Northeast Asia	Southeast Asia	South Asia	Central & West Asia	High HDI countries	Medium & Low HDI Countries
Adjusted saving (% of GNI)	16.13	18.63	16.57	24.22	5.93	15.27	16.45
Total government expenditure (% of GDP)	23.61	19.81	28.02	21.56	23.82	22.34	24.38
Government expenditure on education(% of GDP)	3.73	3.44	3.40	4.28	3.70	3.51	3.88
Government expenditure on health(% of GDP)	1.97	2.50	1.20	2.58	1.50	1.89	2.04
Government expenditure on social security(% of GDP)	2.75	5.02	1.30	1.35	3.80	4.48	1.59
Expenditures/primary student (% of GDP per capita)	12.59	16.62	10.03	15.32	9.35	12.86	12.41
Expenditure on health (PPP\$ per capita)	414	1189	431	154	265	1048	143
Government expenditure on social security (\$ per capita)	459	1527	185	29	114	1102	31
Tax revenue (% of GDP)	12.6	16.4	12.0	11.4	13.4	14.5	11.9

If compared with OECD countries the government expenditure in Asian countries is very low. The OECD countries spent an average of 13.2 per cent of their GDP on social protection, between 2.4 per cent (Korea) and 19.1 per cent (Austria), and the EU average is even higher, i.e. 14.6 per cent of their GDP (World Bank, 2006). Similarly, the Asian countries have significantly lower tax revenue (only 12.6% of their GDP) compared to 20.8 per cent of the OECD countries, which though not necessary, make the Asian countries' expenditure lower than OECD. The corporate economy in the OECD countries makes higher tax revenue collection thereby provisions of social security easier than the large informal economy in most Asian countries.

#### 4. Contemporary Social Welfare Policies and Government Actions on Welfarism in Asia

The developed countries have by now become clearer on the issues particularly the coverage, extent and process of social protection, both contributory and non-contributory. On the contrary non-contributory social assistance provisions, which are the major constituents of welfarism state mainly guaranteed minimum income including universal old age pension, universal healthcare, housing, family benefit, lone-parent benefit, conditional unemployment benefit and childcare benefit are not well separated in scope and integrated in extent. Countries in the Asian region, however, have managed to provide workfare protection i.e. the contributory social security provisions since long, particularly old age, disability and survivor; sickness and maternity; and work injury (see table 5).



Table 5  
Status of Major Workfare Protection and Welfare Protection in Asian Countries

Country Name	Workfare protection						Welfare protection								
	Old-age, disability and survivor	Provident fund only	Sickness and maternity	Work injury	Active labor market benefit	Family benefit	Employment housing benefit	Other employment benefit	Universal old-age pension	Universal disability pension	Universal healthcare	Unemployment benefit	Universal family benefit	Universal public housing benefit	Other direct social protection benefit
Afghanistan	C		C	C							T				
Armenia	C		C	C					T		T	T			T
Azerbaijan	C		C	C					T		T	T	SA		
Bangladesh	C		C	C	RF				LI						
Bhutan		C													
Brunei Darussalam	RF		C	C	C				T	T	T				
Cambodia	C		C	C				SI							
China	C		RF	RF		RF									
Hong Kong, China	RF		RF	RF	SSA	RF									
India	RF	T	RF	RF			USSSS			SA					SA
Indonesia	C		C	C											
Iran. Islamic Rep.	C		C	C	C	RF									
Japan	RF		C	C		RF		NPP		NHI		RF			
Kazakhstan	C		C	C	C	C		SI				C			
Kyrgyz Republic	C		C	RF	C	C		SA	SA	MB	C				
Lao PDR	C		C	RF											
Malaysia	RF	C	RF	C											
Myanmar			RF	C											
Nepal	RF	T	RF	RF	RF			SA	SA						SA
Pakistan	C		RF	C	RF										
Philippines	C		C	C											
Republic of Korea	RF		RF	C	C			BOP							SI
Singapore	RF		RF	RF						MB					
Sri Lanka	C		RF	RF						T		C			
Taiwan	RF	NPP	C	C	C					MB					
Thailand	C		C	RF	C	C		SA		SI					
Turkmenistan	RF	SI	RF	RF	RF			SA		T					
Uzbekistan	RF	SA	RF	RF	RF			SP	SP	MB		SA			
Vietnam	C		C	C	C			VC							

Note: C – Coverage  
LI – Low income-household  
SSA – Social security assistance  
BOP – Basic old-age pension  
USSSS – Unorganized sector social security scheme.  
RF – Regulatory framework  
HL – Housing loan  
NPP – National Pension Plan  
MB – Medical benefit  
SA – Social assistance  
SI – Social insurance  
NHI – National health insurance  
SP – Social pension

Cambodia, DPR Korea, Maldives, Mongolia and Tajikistan have no data and not included in the table.

The old age, disability and survivor provisions were started very early in the Kyrgyz Republic (1922), Japan (1941), Taiwan (1950), Malaysia (1951), China (1951/53), Iran and Singapore (1953), as well as India and the Philippines (1954), and the latest in Bangladesh (1998) and Lao PDR (1999) (see table 6 for the timeline of countries). There is no access to data for some countries (Bhutan, Cambodia, DPR Korea, Maldives, Mongolia and Tajikistan) and their status in this regard is not clear. However, with the growing pressure of the employed who play critical role in the government, of ILO, and of the national worker groups there must be similar provisions to match their socioeconomic and political conditions. Similarly, the provision of sickness (and maternity?) was started in Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1912, followed by Japan and the Kyrgyz Republic in 1922, other countries followed

their own provision of old age, disability and survivor provision. The work injury social security was even started before the previous two provisions in some countries, including Japan (1911), Kyrgyz Republic (1922) most of the former British colonial countries (1923), Taiwan (1929) and Singapore (1933). In addition to those three provisions described above several other provisions namely provident fund in case of the private sector workers, and also additional benefit to government employees, unemployment benefit, family benefit and employment-housing benefit are found common (see table 5 for the list of all available provisions under workfare) in most Asian countries as well.

Table 6  
 Starting Periods of Social Security Provisions in Asian Countries

Provisions	Before 1960	1960 – 1980	1980 – 2000	After 2000
Old age/Disability/Survivor	Kyrgyz Republic, Japan, Taiwan, Brunei, China, Malaysia, India, Iran, Singapore, Philippines, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Sri Lanka, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Vietnam, Nepal, Hong Kong, Pakistan, Rep of Korea, Indonesia, Kazakhstan	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Lao PDR	
Sickness & Maternity	Usually before the Old age/Disability/Survivor provision. As early as in 1912 (Armenia), Japan (1922) and as late as Kazakhstan and Lao PDR (1999)			
Work injury	Usually before the Sickness & Maternity provision, and as early as in Japan (1911), the latest Brunei Darussalam (1957)			

The workfare protection provisions popularly known as social security provisions are either the provision of coverage under the employment plan or are included in the regulatory framework. If we take the three major provisions, countries like India, Hong Kong, Nepal and Singapore have put these social securities under the regulatory framework; Azerbaijan, Armenia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Iran, Kazakhstan, the Philippines and Vietnam under coverage provisions; and the remaining countries under mixed provisions (see table 5 for details). On mixed provisions, for example, Japan has old age, disability and survivor security under the regulatory framework and the other two securities under coverage whereas it is exactly opposite in China. In the meantime, the family benefit is under regulatory framework in both the countries.

When it comes to the issue of welfare system, majority of the Asian countries have no clear and specific reliable provisions. Out of the 33 country taken for this study, only 13 show some clear provisions for the universal old age pension and universal healthcare. Countries like Japan, Brunei Darussalam, and the Republic of Korea have more reliable welfare system; countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyz Republic, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have the provisions intact, but may not be sufficient for the minimum level of living. Countries like Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan have reliable universal medical benefit, yet shortfall on the universal old age pension plan like Japan, and the needy people still depend on social assistance. The universal old age pension in Thailand and Nepal are under the social assistance provision, which, however, are not the means-tested guaranteed minimum assistance that is sufficient for a decent standard of living, rather they are the gestures of welfare system on the one hand and whereas the recent universal healthcare system in Thailand (also social insurance system) is reliable and fully secured on the other hand. But in Nepal the healthcare is provided to the destitute only.

Under the non-contributory social transfer system people in the OECD countries are secured of guaranteed minimum income, housing benefit (separately or incorporated into the guaranteed minimum income, family benefits, lone-parent benefit, employment conditional benefits, and childcare benefits(World Bank, 2006). Thus the question raised in this study who guarantees the welfare if not workfare is largely fulfilled by the governments in the developed countries, though they push their workforce for workfare through various incentive schemes. In the meantime, they are also increasing the age to qualify for old age pension and tighten conditions for social assistance. Such guaranteed provisions are not so far available in most of the Asian countries. Whatever are available they are not sufficient and reliable either.

Welfarism has remained largely as propaganda and vows of governments in any form and of political parties, so far. What the state and governments have vowed to provide and secure the provisions of full welfarism has not been fully and properly established; and what have been established have gross deficiencies in reaching the needy people on time, and in sufficient quantity. In the meantime most production, distribution and delivery systems have not been routine activities of the government. In other words, many of the provisions are yet to be established, many of them are not functioning properly and the sustainability of some highly applauded provisions is largely questionable.

Given welfarism and the State of welfare system along with the slothful actions of the governments, in Asia, countries can be divided into three groups: (i) early stage of welfare system, typically in underdeveloped countries (least and developing countries) which have not so well organized the stage of welfarism though they are committed to State welfare system; (ii) take-off stage of welfare system in developing countries and countries in transition, which are committed to welfarism and organizing for State welfare system; and (iii) drive to maturity stage of welfare system in the developed and advanced countries, which have already incorporated welfarism in their social policies by now, are reasonably well organized, are means-tested, and have been able to provide reasonable and reliable welfare substances, and trying to have attain a status of welfare State.

In response to the national and international pressures, encouragements and assistance for some sort of welfare system, particularly all countries have committed through signing the UDHR and/or setting provision of welfare State in the constitution or in substantive laws, and in their national policies in addition to some actions taken in the direction of social welfare at least in case of natural and human-made disaster, war and conflict, accidents, to the people with highest needs, and to a gesture towards the process of welfarism there are some countries still in the early stage of delivery. Based on state of poverty and employment vulnerability (state of multidimensional poverty, earning less than PPP\$ 1.25 per day poverty, vulnerable employment, i.e. non-corporate, irregular, petty self-employed, farm, daily wage jobs and child labour); and government social welfare expenditure state (combined education, health and social protection), five countries have appeared in the early stage of welfare system (stage 1), six countries in the take-off stage of welfare system (stage 2), and three countries (Armenia, Brunei Darussalam and Japan) in the drive to maturity stage of welfare system (stage 3). However, six countries are in between stages 1 and 2, and eight countries (Hong Kong, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Thailand) are in between stages 2 and 3 (see table 7 for the total list of countries under specific stage).

Table 7 Level of Social Welfare under Poverty, Vulnerable Employment, and Government Expenditure on Education, Health and Social Protection

Stage	Early stage of welfare system (Stage 1)	take-off stage of welfare system (Stage 2)	drive to maturity stage of welfare system (Stage 3)
Clear in one of the defined stages	Bangladesh Cambodia Nepal India Lao PDR	Azerbaijan Bhutan China Mongolia Philippines Sri Lanka	Armenia Brunei Darussalam Japan
Indicators across two defined stages	<b>In between Stages 1 &amp; 2</b>		<b>In between Stages 1 &amp; 2</b>
	Indonesia Pakistan Philippines Tajikistan Uzbekistan Vietnam		Hong Kong, China Kazakhstan Kyrgyz Republic Malaysia Maldives Republic of Korea Singapore Thailand

Note: Afghanistan, DPR Korea, Iran, Myanmar and Turkmenistan are not included due to lack of data on included indicators.

The irony is that some of the countries like India, which has generous social security to the people who work for the government, managed to provide regulatory provision of provident fund to those who work in private sector, fell short for universal social protection, particularly old age pension and healthcare. Studies have shown that only clear social policies based on dynamic economic system supported by visionary public budget and taxation policies can reduce poverty, stimulate economic growth and provide a sustainable and reliable social welfare system (Hutesebaut, 2003; Justino, 2007) with enough justification (Zedner, 2003).

## **5. Conclusion**

Individualization of the family institution by the right based propaganda, its wholehearted acceptance by the state, and the weakening of family support system push for the universal coverage of old-age pension, universal healthcare and family support. In Europe and OECD countries, non-contributory and mostly universal social transfers which are designed for lifecycle protection constitute guaranteed minimum income, housing benefit, family benefit (universal or means-tested), lone-parent benefit, conditional employment benefit, and childcare benefit (non-parental care or parental care) have been active since long (World Bank, 2006). Only Italy does not have both the guaranteed minimum income and family benefit (universal or means-tested), rest either give guaranteed minimum income or family benefit, or both. Belgium, Portugal and Spain do not have housing benefit. However, in Asia, except OECD countries most countries particularly those in the early stage, in the transition stage from early to take-off stage, and take-off stage do not have such policies though as discussed above there are some policies in gesture to these provisions. This leaves no option for the government in Asian countries to consider for less than a universal non-contributory welfare system for the short-run, i.e. until a sustainable contributory policy which guaranteed minimum income is put on proper place.

As the governments in the Asian region could not provide the full social welfare system (United Nations ESCAP, 2008, 2010) they include in their policies some provisions that show early indications in all areas of welfare system. In absence of the direct fund transfer like the national pension plan, national health plan, and universal family benefit of Japan they have to search for other instruments. There are numerous instruments, in border sense the contributory and non-contributory pension provisions and social funds. However, to diversify the instruments and make the welfare system workable for events, short-term and medium-term, direct cash transfer, material transfer, allowances, loan, insurance, social assistance, incentives, subsidies, compensation, employment through public works, relief and so on.

Firstly, they have provisions for childcare, elderly care and care of persons with disability through the creation of care centres or provide some sort of allowance, subsidies or full care to some who have failed to receive family protection.

Secondly, poverty is the major area where universal welfare is sought. As countries could not provide the guaranteed minimum income and family benefit (universal or means-tested) they have policies for food subsidies, youth employment scheme, and guaranteed employment in public work (India) for poor families, microcredit and so on.

Thirdly, under the health care policies, some countries have already started universal social insurance (Thailand) and most other countries provide free health check-up services to the general public and free medicine to the poor families, yet they are not the means-tested poor.

Fourthly, clearer policies are on education that they will have universal free and compulsory school education in all countries. Some of them have started free lunch-programme to attract all poor students as well. A policy of technical education and vocational training has been started in almost all countries to facilitate poor students to participate in a more employment oriented education (United Nations ESCAP 2008).

The countries at present are in dilemma. On the one hand there are international propaganda and pressure on gradually providing universal welfare for every citizen concerning to the sufficient support for a decent living and government and political parties vow to these provisions as the right of the general people; there are resource constraints as well as the actions are not directed directly to those provisions on the other hand though

governments are formulating policies that strengthening capacity building of the working people, supporting the activities through resources, and insuring in case of workfare failure.

The debate is continued on the design, functionality (structure, process and stage of welfare), and the components of social welfare system; and more minutely on recipient/claimant, coverage and extension of the welfare; substances of the welfare; instrument of the welfare; and the institutions providing the welfare (Gonzalez-Eiras & Niepelt, 2008; Horton, 2006; Hutesebaut, 2003; Lazar & Stoyko, 1998; Mares, 2005) to enter into welfarism, gradually and systematically strengthen it, sustain it, and ensure a welfare State. The responsibilities and rights on the relationship among an individual and his/her family and between individual and the State have not been well defined and demarcated in most of the Asian countries, and the new welfarism has not been well established either, though UDHR declares a full right to virtually everything required for the well-being of an individual or a family. The benefits, help and assistance, or complementary provisions provided by the government to the actual needy population are extremely limited and grossly insufficient for living, working and socializing of an individual with economic sufficiency and social dignity and content, without the individual/family contribution. As those needy families are poor, the protection from the family are not sufficient to meet the requirements for a decent living neither.

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