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The October edition of the Newsletter covers recent ICSW activities in the South-East Asia and Pacific region. The annual 12th ASEAN Government-NGO forum, convened in Myanmar, highlighted a range of social development issues through the prism of the changing demographic structure in the region, including the opportunities and challenges posed by the ageing societies. The feature article addresses these issues in the Malaysian context.

The news section of the Newsletter profiles the recent peace dialogue in Geneva, where ICSW took part.

As usual, we also present information on some books of interest to our readership.

Sergei Zelenev, ICSW Executive Director and Editor of the Newsletter.

continued on page 2

INSIDE

ICSW SEAP joins the 12th ASEAN GO-NGO Forum on Social Welfare and Development

1

Social Protection for the Elderly: The Case of Malaysia

3

continued from page 1

ICSW SEAP joins the 12th ASEAN GO-NGO Forum on Social Welfare and Development

Members and officers of the ICSW SEAP participated in the 12th ASEAN GO-NGO Forum on Social Welfare and Development, held last 17 October 2017 at Yangon, Myanmar. The theme of the forum was "Strengthening Social Protection to Address Challenges of Ageing Societies". The forum is held annually and seeks to increase and strengthen cooperation between ASEAN region governments and civil-society organizations in establishing joint projects. Attended by 80 delegates from governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from ASEAN member countries, the event was opened by Union Minister of Myanmar Dr. Win Myat Aye, who delivered the Welcome Address. In his speech, the Union Minister underscored the importance of social protection schemes and encouraged inclusive discussion on social protection issues in the context of the priority theme of the Forum. He also invited the participants from the ASEAN member countries to share best practices and lessons learned regarding the implementation of existing commitments. During the workshop session, the NGO participants shared constructive models of partnership between governments and NGOs in addressing issues relating to the expansion of social protection policies and programs for the ageing population and how these can be further enhanced. The discussion revealed the growing importance of finding effective solutions to the social protection of older persons in the region, as well as the rich menu of existing approaches.

ICSW SEAP consolidated and presented in the plenary session the outputs of the workshops. It also presented the

conclusions of the national seminar in Kuala Lumpur highlighting various approaches adopted by NGOs in partnership with their respective governments to address the opportunities and challenges of ageing. Specifically, Malaysia's Home-Help model highlighted the government's support in funding training programs for NGO volunteers to effectively conduct care services in the homes of the elderly. The NGOs were enlisted to run the center activities for the older persons built by the Government of Brunei Darussalam. Thailand representatives shared some results of setting-up a training center for regular training courses for older persons that will allow them to enhance their skills and knowledge in their efforts to find gainful employment.

Indonesia has embarked on a Social Welfare Insurance scheme where the government pays NGOs to mobilize their people in the provinces and remote islands to collect data, monitor implementation and carry out evaluation on ageing population research. International NGO--*HelpAge International* has extended support in a home-care program for the elderly in Cambodia, while support for social work case management aimed at helping ageing groups in Myanmar was carried out in partnership between the government and the alliance of NGOs. Singapore highlighted their Helping Hands approach, where the government provides funding for a number of NGO initiatives for older persons, as well as extending technical support. The intergenerational approach with older persons has helped empower the senior citizens in the country. Philippines shared the fact that NGOs are part of the process in reviewing and monitoring government budget spending.

Sustainable funding for NGOs has been a constant challenge in their efforts to carry out effective programs for the ageing population, and support from the

government in that connection has been deemed crucial. National Integrated Social Protection Programs have a big impact on the well-being of family units, and budget financing of the system is vital. This evidence-based conclusion was reflected in the key recommendations by NGOs to policy-makers. Capacity-building for NGOs is also needed to empower NGOs in their advocacy work, and all agreed that the NGOs must be engaged in the formulation of a regional plan of action on any ASEAN-related Declaration on Ageing Population or Older Persons.



Social Protection for the Elderly: The Case of Malaysia

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Background

Malaysia has met with remarkable success in its development efforts. The various economic plans undertaken since the 1970s have brought progress, enabling a once low-income country to attain a per-capita income of \$10,700 in 2014. The poverty rate was reduced from 52 % in 1970 to less than 1 % in recent years. Historically, the focus of development has been on infrastructure

and agriculture, and heavy investment has gone into educating its people. The strategy seems to have worked well, with the development-oriented state driving the economy.

The strategic export focus on several economic sectors contributed to growth in the mid-1980s. The vigorous industrial policies fundamentally transformed the structure of the economy from a commodity-based economy to secondary manufacturing one with big foreign interests. The impact has been positive on economic productivity and has improved the lives of Malaysians. The social sector has benefited, primary- and secondary-education opportunities have been made universal and have expanded to reach almost every corner of the nation, which has supported much of the economic activities of the 1980s and onwards. Healthcare received the attention of the government, especially rural healthcare, which became an exemplary program for developing countries, thanks to the compulsory rural-posting program for every young medical practitioner. Healthcare, which is universal and publicly funded, has improved and has been made more accessible to many parts of the country.

Ageing Population

Various initiatives have seen women and men gained better access to education, and greater investment in the economy has improved employment opportunities. This has led to delayed marriages and deferred decisions on having children. Fertility has therefore decreased sharply from 4.74% in 1971 to 2.3% in 2014 and is on a downward trend. In addition, improvement in healthcare has caused a demographic change from high to low mortality. That in turn has resulted in the reduction of the proportionate share of population aged below 15 from 45 percent in 1970 to 28 percent in 2010 and is projected to fall further to 17 percent in 2050. By 2050, the proportion of people

aged 60 and above is projected to be 23 percent of the total population. Life expectancy for Malaysians was 75 years in 2016, and for people who are 65 years old in 2016; they are expected live to the age of 80 for men and 82 for women. (DOSM). However, the mandatory retirement age in Malaysia is only 60 years. The increase in life expectancy would mean people would spend longer time in retirement. That begs a question of whether there are enough savings to sustain their livelihood in their twilight years. Notwithstanding the universal public healthcare, there are other health needs that are not necessarily covered under the present public healthcare system. The socio-economic consequences of ageing present challenges for the current social-protection system. The demands of post-modern families in Malaysia and elsewhere are known to have reduced co-residence and eroded traditional family support system for the elderly.

Inequality and Social Protection

Malaysia has successfully addressed poverty, but income inequality remains a challenge for Malaysia, despite its inclusive growth policies. Between 1970 and 2014, Malaysia's Gini coefficient has dropped from 0.51 in 1970 to 0.40 in 2014. That means that over the past 40 years the income inequality in Malaysia has improved, but the gap is still wide, especially compared to other countries in the region. Malaysia's income gap is certainly higher than countries with similar per-capita income.

To somewhat address the gap and assist the poor, two cash-transfer programs have been introduced. The poor receive some welfare assistance (means-tested), which is administered by the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry, and the government grants some aid to the poor (BR1M), i.e. those earning less than RM3,000 (\$715) per month. BR1M is a cash-transfer equivalent to \$300 annually and commenced in 2012. The income gap

affects individuals' access to basic protection against risks such as old age, unemployment, disabilities and environmental disasters.

The Old-age Financial Protection Provisions

Currently, there are several financial protection programs for the elderly in the country. The table below shows the programs mapped out, using the World Bank's five-pillar typology. Briefly, Pillar 0 provides basic benefits through social pensions or at least social assistance. This is a means-tested program meant for the poor at \$72 per month, and 141,493 or 5.2% of the elderly received the benefit in 2015. The public old-folks homes are very few and not well staffed (Mansor& Ahmad, 2013), and the public day care centers, though improved over the years, only cater for a small number of elderly; Pillar 1 is a mandated, unfunded, defined benefit or contribution scheme, which may include the civil-service pension, which is non-contributory, and coverage for workplace accidents under the Social Security Organization (SOCSO), which is a contributory scheme. The civil-service pension is partly funded by the Pensions Trust Funds (KWAP). Pillar 2 is a mandated, fully funded, occupational or pension schemes such as the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) for formal private-sector employees. The armed forces fund is contributory and funded through the Armed Forces Fund Board (LTAT). The EPF, a compulsory savings (contributory by employers and employees) for formal private-sector employees is the main safety net that forms the backbone of financial protection for Malaysians, aside from the public-sector pensions and several company-based pension schemes (small in number). The EPF savings scheme allows withdrawals on a lump sum or agreed schedule basis when the depositor reaches retirement age.

Pillar 3 is a form of voluntary, fully funded, occupational or personal scheme; while

Pillar 4 provides access to informal and other formal provisions, personal assets, and various private retirement schemes (PRS) approved by the Central Bank of Malaysia (BNM).

In addition, the state provides social assistance including cash aid for the low-

income group (BR1M), the affordable housing scheme (PRIMA), and welfare assistance for the poor. For Muslims there is cash assistance from the collection of zakat (tithe) paid once a year by the Zakat Board of Malaysia.

Malaysia's Pension Programs

Name of Program Institution	Benefit Type	Financing Type	
Pillar 0: Basic benefits through social pensions or at least social assistance	<i>Bantuan Orang Tua</i> (Cash benefits)- means tested <i>Rumah Seri Kenangan</i> (retirement homes) <i>Pusat Jagaan Harian Warga Emas</i> (elder daycare centers)	Basis cash benefit of RM300(\$ 72) per month In kind benefit In kind benefit	General revenue General revenue General revenue
Pillar 1: Mandated, unfunded, defined benefit or contribution schemes	Civil Service Pension Fund Social Security Organisation(SOCSO)	Old-age, disability, survivorship Work injury, disability, survivorship	General revenue Employer contribution; Employer and employee contribution
Pillar 2: Mandated, fully funded, occupational or personal schemes	LTAT (armed forces) EPF (private sector)	All benefits Lump sum/phased withdrawal	Employer and employee contribution Employer and employee contribution Voluntary contribution by self-employed
Pillar 3: Voluntary, fully funded, occupational or personal schemes	PRS: Private Retirement Scheme	Lump sum, (fixed term) annuity	Voluntary premium, tax incentives RM 3,000
Pillar 4: Access to informal and other formal provisions, and personal assets	Family Basic universal health care Public housing	Cash and in kind benefits	Family members, budget-financed, budget support

Issues and Challenges

The changing age structure will inevitably involve challenges for the government in terms of healthcare, old-age care and pensions systems. Yet without adequate policies on social protection older people will slide into poverty, increase their vulnerability and be socially excluded.

It is estimated that only one-third of those in the Malaysian labour force will have some level of financial security in their old age, i.e. public-sector employees, the military and a small number of employment-based pensions. The rest of the private-sector employees have little savings left, since lump-sum withdrawals are allowed, or they had insufficient savings to begin with. The informal sector is totally uncovered. Many studies reported that there is a low savings level among the Malaysian elderly. The problem is believed to be more pronounced among elderly women, because they live longer and are more likely to be living alone.

There is also an issue of fragmentation across the private and public providers. There is also a lack of central coordination among the various ministries and agencies concerned. There is only an inadequate single database and no interface, as data is sporadic across agencies. Therefore, problems arise in the inclusion and exclusion of participants, resulting in target errors and leaving out those who are really deserving. There is also the issue of the incompleteness of the existing public programs relating to old-age financial protection, whereby Pillar 0 is means-tested and many poor elderly do not receive the BOT. The debate of means-tested versus universal was never taken up in public-policy forums, and yet there is evidence elsewhere indicating that means-tested programs are more costly than universal ones.

Hence, it is imperative that the nation have a comprehensive social protection system to ensure that the elderly can become active members of Malaysian society.

Building an Inclusive Society

The National Transformation Framework introduced by the Malaysian government seeks to drive the country towards being an advanced nation by 2020. Social Protection has been framed as part of an inclusiveness-first strategic thrust in the government's Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2015-2020). Malaysia is also working towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and inclusiveness is mentioned in six of the seventeen goals. The social protection goals spelled out in SDG (2014) among others calls for ending poverty in all its forms everywhere, ensuring healthy living and promoting well-being for all at all ages, and promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth and full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Perhaps a more integrated social-security scheme incorporating the Employees Provident Funds (EPF) and the Social Security Organization (SOCSSO), with safety nets such as BR1M and other welfare schemes, is worth studying so as to avoid any overlap and improve efficiency in administration.

There are good national institutions, such as the EPF and SOCSSO, to mobilise savings and at the same time, provide a social safety net for the retired and those injured at work. The savings are invested and their returns enjoyed by the savers after their retirement. The scheme in some ways should cover the self-employed too.

Going Forward - Establishing the Malaysia Social Protection Council (MySPC)

A recent development, the establishment of the Malaysia Social Protection Council (MySPC) in October 2016 is a move in the right direction. The objective of MySPC is to formulate a social protection policy that is integrated, holistic and comprehensive. The council is chaired by the Prime Minister and assisted by technical committee and

under the direction of the minister in the Prime Minister's department in charge of the Economic Planning Unit (EPU).

Conclusion

While individuals, families and the private sector have a role to play, the current residual role played by the government has to be reviewed, especially with regard to old-age financial protection.

Social Protection Policy for the elderly seeks to create an enabling environment that offers everyone an opportunity to make informed choices about active, healthy and positive aging. The current old-age financial protection provisions can certainly be improved further in order to ensure better security for older persons.

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5th Edition of the Geneva Peace Talks. International Day of Peace - 21 September 2017

By Odile Frank, ICSW Special Representative to the United Nations Office in Geneva

The fifth edition of the Geneva Peace Talks was held on the theme "Building Bridges", with the aim of removing walls, breaking out of silos, and working together in the growing global climate of uncertainty. The talks sought to skirt conflicts and together resolve to find common ground on which to build peace.

The four objectives of the Geneva Peace Talks – to demonstrate peaceful solutions, showcase inspiring stories, raise awareness of the role of each and every one of us, and inspire action – were amply met by the array of personalities who shared their personal stories or thoughts on achieving peace.

The array of eleven speakers was indeed stellar. They included:

- **Heba Aly**, journalist and head of IRIN news, who argued that humanizing the enemy reduces the hard split between "them and us" and observed that the business model for the media had become financial and founded on entrenched ideas, whereas quality independent journalism was paramount

- **Azra Hadzic**, an architect who has engaged for more than 20 years in the painstaking work of architectural and archeological conservation of protected monuments in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Christian Picciolini**, who made the remarkable personal shift from American skinhead to respected peace advocate; he stressed the harmful roles that ignorance and isolation play in the development of hate among youth in their search for identity
- **Sihem Bensedrine**, head of Tunisia's Dignity and Truth Commission, who stressed the vigilance and unending effort needed to tackle counter forces that arise incessantly, given that the majority in favor of social peace is slowly but surely growing
- **Saba Temelso** and **Dan Stein**, who focus on cooking and food as fundamental unifiers; Dan started a Swiss NGO Cuisine Lab as well as the Refugee Cultural Festival, and Saba, an Eritrean refugee who is passionate about cooking, is a chef at Cuisine Lab
- **Hyung Joon Won**, a brilliant violinist who argued and demonstrated that peace as harmony is practised globally by musicians because, although they play on different instruments, they listen to each other and work together to achieve the luminous sum of their parts
- **Hassan Ismail**, focal person for Interpeace's Kenya Program, who has broad and long-standing experience in peacebuilding in Kenya and Somalia, and who stressed that no conflict is static, that conflicts are always evolving, and responses must follow, or even anticipate, their evolution
- **Sonja Stojanovic Gajic**, Director of the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy, who highlighted the difficult questions to be asked about insecurity: who is protected or excluded, are the threats real, at what price security? That calls for engagement with both implementers and detractors
- **Brigadier General Álvaro Pico Malaver** of the National Police of Colombia, a highly qualified and experienced officer in the field of human security management, who is Colombia's Head of the Police Unit for Peacebuilding (UNIPPEP) and on the Commission for peace negotiations with FARC

The Talks were closed by a musical offering from **Djaza**, a trio who presented a repertoire of traditional Algerian music called Chaâbi, that arose in the Casbah of Algiers in the early 20th century, and which blends classical poetry with lyrics on love and everyday life.

The highlight of the Talks, undoubtedly, was the opening interview with **Kofi Annan**, who spoke on the role of youth in peacebuilding. He stressed that inequality, climate change and the situation of the Middle East, which has grown far beyond the issue of Palestine and Israel to encompass the entire region from Morocco to Afghanistan and Pakistan, including the 7 year-war in Syria, a proxy conflict directed by outside forces, are changing our world and the major challenges before us.

Most importantly, however, Kofi Annan reminded us all of the power of the ballot, and he urged youth to engage in voting, because elections credibilize the winners and protect the losers, and thereby are means to forestall conflict. Critically, he pointed to the important paradox that people are fighting and dying for the right to vote.

Kofi Annan's point underscores the paradox that has prevailed throughout human history and across the world still today. Peace is most fervently to be hoped for, but security without freedom can demand a price that most will not pay. Liberty, the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms have always and are likely for a long time to come, to

take precedence over peace at any price. The challenge for all of us is to push to the point where peace is everywhere a culmination of the development of truly free societies.

The Geneva Peace Talks are a public event co-organized by the [United Nations Office at Geneva](#), [Interpeace](#) and the [Geneva Peacebuilding Platform](#) to celebrate the International Day of Peace. The fifth edition was held in partnership with the [Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces](#) and the [Global Shapers Community Geneva](#). It was also made possible with the support of the Swiss Confederation, the Republic and State of Geneva, the City of Geneva, and [Mirabaud](#).

The live recording of the full event is available at www.genevapeacetalks.ch.

New publications—the finds of the month

Shaping Social Development from Overseas? New Directions in Social Policy in Indonesia.

Authors: [Kelly Stetter](#), [Aida Lizbeth Becerra Garza](#)

UNRISD Policy Brief 17, Geneva 2017



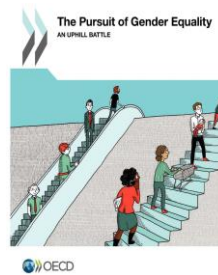
This case study, part of the UNRISD research project New Directions in Social Policy, investigates the innovative approach of international aid agencies to social reform processes in Indonesia, and their impact on domestic institutions and actors.

For more details:

[http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/\(httpPublications\)/5DF690889031607DC12581A200567EDF?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/80256B3C005BCCF9/(httpPublications)/5DF690889031607DC12581A200567EDF?OpenDocument)

The Pursuit of Gender Equality An Uphill Battle

OECD, Paris, 2017



This report published by OECD examines recent developments in gender equality in education, employment, entrepreneurship and public life. It contains one overview chapter and 24 short chapters, each with key findings and policy recommendations.

For more details:

<http://www.oecd.org/publications/the-pursuit-of-gender-equality-9789264281318-en.htm>

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