

Madrid Plan and Social Policy for Older Persons in Sri Lanka: In Search for a Sustainable - Localized Solution

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Introduction

Social Policy is considered to be a part of public policies, which strive to uplift human well-being that of economic conditions of the people. Though public policies mainly consider governing mechanism of a particular country, human well-being and public welfare are highly considered by social policies. In terms of development, therefore, economic policies must be considered alongside giving a substantial priority to social policymaking. As the poverty level rises, particularly in the so-called third world countries, governments are intrinsically bound to a responsibility to address the situation with a careful intervention, hence careful social policy making is of vital importance. Social policy mainly prevails over education, health care, and social services. Most of the countries, not limited to the countries who follow asocialist ideology, spend a substantial amount of money on social services, in which the elderly care is involved.

Though the older persons are revered in most of the Asian traditions, UN (2017) has identified that globalization, rapid urbanization and industrialization have brought about radical social changes, which have weakened the traditional support system for aging population. Furthermore, even no other appropriate support system established. This would be a critical case in which the growing older persons (now it is almost 12.5 percent of Sri Lankan population and predicted to increase at 24.8 percent by 2040 according to the population survey 2010) would severely experience.

Sri Lanka, as a developing nation has undergone several calamities due to multidimensional problems, however, the services directed towards elderly care has still been in a good status, though some issues are presented. Recently, the government ratified some of the international conventions so as to compile a better and locally qualified convention, and it has some improvements. However, it is questionable as to what extent the government can attend to this particular issue, despite its low level of economic growth. This paper thus examines the existing policy process in Sri Lanka together with pragmatic cases, against the recommendations provided by the Madrid Plan.

Research Problem

Sri Lanka, a country with expecting an increasing number of older persons which is considered to be an intriguing social problem in a way, has engaged in making social policies pertinent to the problem and taking necessary actions, alongside having some substantial developments. The country, however, depends upon the social policy

experiences from the international arena and adopting then ratifying them necessarily has been the policy accord that has been practiced over the course of past two-three decades. The problem of the research, therefore is how and to what extent the Sri Lankan government would be able to attend this particular societal issue through local level initiatives in which the public, private and people's commitment and partnership is comprised of.

Objectives

The objective of the research is to compare the existing social policy process towards the elderly care with recommendations provided by the international social policies on older persons (Madrid Plan). Identifying the possibilities of public, private and people's partnership in making sustainable solution for the problem of Ageing in Sri Lanka is another objective of the research.

Methodology

Policy analysis more often depends on positivistic tradition as it deals with quantitative logic and which provides a foundation to a researcher to measure the situation in numbers. However, here phenomenology was entertained as the methodology. Phenomenology is one of the high-level qualitative methodologies, and the main intention behind the methodology is to reveal the existing experiences through an actor's perspective. Under the phenomenology, case study method was used to collect the ground level data (10 cases). The facts related to policy formation and other philosophical grounds were examined using the five E-Policy analysis approach. Data, thus collected were analyzed using thematic analysis approach.

Analysis

As it is witnessed, Sri Lankan policy agenda is more often based on the Madrid plan, provided that there are some exceptions as to address the local level problems related to older persons in the country (for example, pension schemes for older persons who are under the poverty line – commonly known as '*pin padi*', can be considered as an effective localized policy provision). Much of the regulations stipulated in the Madrid Convention were used in the country agenda as the same way, and it seems that there was no prior policy review to adjust the global policies into a local context. As a consequence, much of the policies included in the country agenda were out of use. For example, expanding and developing adult education to provide opportunities for the elderly to upgrade their knowledge and skills is one of those policies and of course a quite effective one, however, no active programme were developed in local communities until today. Despite having relevant social policies, some rural older persons still feel that 'they are now *out of use* and *excluded* from the community as *significant others* would not be able to attend older persons' matters' ("*api ohe innawa, jeewithe thibenakam. apita ithin dan wena karnda dekuth naha*")

As a responsible public institution, the government of the country specified its role in the welfare process, especially towards the older persons and their well-being. Appreciably, the government's intervention to the problem is identified carefully and enacted some regulative provisions in order to establish relevant programmes aiming at elderly people of

the country. "National Secretariat for Elders" was established as an initiative effort followed by many other productive programmes. However, private and community participation is not specifically identified in the Sri Lankan agenda towards the welfare of the older persons.

Government alone would not be able to provide necessary facilities unless the private sector and civil society participation are strengthened. Though the Madrid Plan has signaled the partnership among Public (Government), Private and Civil sectors, Sri Lankan policy makers have not given sufficient attention to it, since the vast intervention of the government overthrew the private and civil sector involvement, indirectly.

The recent discourse of human development mainly adopted the visions provided by Sustainable Development Goals or 2030 agenda. Human well-being, thus identified with triple – E Concept (Environment, economy, equality). Though we are still lacking in establishing relevant programmes in line with 2030 agenda, many developing countries including China, Indonesia started innovative programmes through sustainable policy adjustments to the local level problems including ageing.

In conclusion, the paper argues that, as far as the population ageing is considered, not only the government intervention but private and people's sector contribution is also required so as to address the problem in a sustainable manner. Population ageing is a never-ending problem as the population growth increases. Nevertheless, the developing countries like Sri Lanka, expose to this particular problem, despite having a less GDP. At this situation, it obviously makes an imbalance between Economic policies and Social policies, since compromise cannot be entertained. Therefore, it is suggested that the government must not solely responsible for the above problem, but the public, private and people (civil society) partnership must be established, and it would be a sustainable solution, in which the problems around population ageing are attended.

Keywords: Ageing; Madrid Plan; Policy Problems; PPP Concept; Vienna Plan

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