

Chapter 25

Foreign Aid and Family at Risk: Role of Foreign Aid to Myanmar

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines how the foreign aid policy should and should have supported families facing risks by using the case study of Myanmar. The chapter starts by addressing the issue of poverty, which continues to be the gravest risk in the developing countries, and how family could be the cause of poverty as well as the solution of poverty in foreign aid policy discussion. The situation of poverty and migration as a risk management tool are then examined in the second section of the chapter. Interviews with migrant workers in Thailand and Japan were conducted. Finally, there is a discussion about the developments of Myanmar and how the foreign aid and international community has inadequately responded to the democratization of Myanmar and to the needs of its people.

1. INTRODUCTION

Changing the size and capacity of family, increasing instability of labor market and globalization, new social risks have emerged. How we should manage new social risks? International Social Security Association (ISSA) mentions that new social risks require the state to have a new family policy targeting parents who provides child care and pursues a full professional career (ISSA website (A)). It tries to manage risks by supporting family. ISSA also considers developing countries faces different risks and indicates “a better articulation of formal social security policies with the traditional family and community-based model could attenuate some of these problems” (ISSA website (A)).

What are the risks in developing countries? Poverty has been the key foreign aid policy issue for a long time. In the Millennium Assembly in 2000, UN member states adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration. This declaration is “the basis for a ‘road map’-the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (Sumner and Tribe, 2008, p. 23), and these are committed by the international community. The MDGs aim to eradicate poverty through eight goals with time-bound targets should be achieved by 2015 (UN Millennium Project, 2005, p. 1, 281-293). These eight goals are developed by the pre-existing agendas which were proposed by the international conferences and summits in the 1990s (Feeny and Clarke, 2009, p. 3). The Millennium Development

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Report 2012 shows “the proportion of people living on less than \$1.25 a day fell from 47 per cent in 1990 to 24 per cent in 2008—a reduction from over 2 billion to less than 1.4 billion” (UN, 2012: p. 4). This report addressed the progress of income level poverty; however, poverty means more complex and diverse situation.

The “Multidimensional Poverty Index” (MPI) is implemented in UNDP’s Human Development Report (HDR) since 2010. This index describes the deprivations of most disadvantaged population by three dimensions such as health, education and living standards (UNDP, 2010, p. 5). The HDR 2011 shows that the population below PPP \$ 1.25 a day of low human development countries is 47.3%, even though the population in multidimensional poverty 2000-2010 of those is 61% headcount (UNDP, 2011, p. 143-245). Accordingly, poverty eradication is still the most important internationally committed agenda, and it requests more efforts (see Table 1).

Foreign aid agenda has been targeting poverty. Many poverty eradication programs/projects in developing countries have been targeting family to manage risks reinforcing poverty situation. One of the concerns is family size. Estimation shows, “the average poverty incidence in 45 countries would have fallen by one third if the crude birth rate had fallen by an additional 5 per 1,000 in the 1980s” (UNFPA, 2012, p. 17). UNFPA indicates rapid population growth is a threat to poverty reduction, and “family planning program” creates the opportunity for women to join the labor force,

which provides resources to family and improve family living standards (UNFPA, 2008).

In addition, Mokomane indicates that changes in family structure are one of the factors to poverty and family poverty in particular beyond economic factors in many developing countries (Mokomane, 2012, p. 11). Various socio-economic factors shape family. One of the strong impacts on family is migration trend and it changes the situation of family. For example, remittances given by migrant family members affect the socio-demographic characteristics of the family members as well as the standard of living in Philippines (Semyonov and Gorodzeisky, 2008, p. 627). Furthermore, family policy also changes family structure like China where one child policy shapes the sex ratio and old age dependency ratio (Hesketh and Lu, 2005, p. 1172-1174). ISSA indicates the universal phenomenon of the ageing society and its rapid pace in the developing countries. It estimates 79 per cent of the world’s elderly people will be living in the developing world by the 2050, rising proportion of women in employment (over half of the developed countries, around 40 per cent in the developing countries), and social exclusion as a universal social phenomenon and these facts require to change social policy and its system (ISSA Website (B)). The UN expert meeting of the Department for Economic and Social Affairs notes wide variation of family recognition and necessity to have context specific research to identify the policies for supporting families (UNDESA, 2011).

Table 1. Situation of poverty

Countries	Population in Multidimensional Poverty Headcount (%), 2000-2010	Population below PPP \$ 1.25 a day(%) 2000-2009
Very High Human Development	2.7 (9)	0.2 (9)
High Human Development	2.4 (22)	2.6 (29)
Medium Human Development	19.4 (37)	17.6 (34)
Low Human Development	61 (40)	47.3 (39)

Source: UNDP (2011) Human Development Report

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