

THE JOINT OECD/KOREA REGIONAL CENTRE ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL POLICY: NOW AND IN THE FUTURE



Willem Adema, D.Phil

Head of Asian Social and Health Outreach, OECD

With technology facilitating ever closer relationships between economies, it is essential that the global issues that are of concern to the OECD, its member states and non-member economies are being addressed in close-cooperation. The increasingly important economies of Asia already play a vital role in global co-operation and it is therefore timely, perhaps even visionary, that the Korean authorities have taken the initiative to establish the Joint OECD/Korea Regional Centre on Health and Social Policy in Seoul (RCSP). Through sharing of expertise, best practices, and general policy experiences the RCSP intends to take a significant contribution in the Health and Social policy area where authorities face considerable challenges posed by ageing populations, the prevalence of poverty and the weakening of traditional family ties.

What does the RCSP aim to accomplish?

The Joint OECD/Korea Regional Centre on Health and Social Policy aims to:

- promote deeper policy dialogue between OECD countries and non-OECD Asian economies as well as between the OECD, Korea and other Asian OECD members;
- provide capacity-building assistance in the Asian region; and,
- conduct information-sharing and policy analysis on health and social policy topics and translate these research outcomes into policy action.

This clearly is an ambitious agenda covering a wide range of work. In the first instance, the RCSP's key to success will be to focus on the most pressing issues for co-operation together with the stakeholders in the region. The ensuing range of activities will include holding meetings to share information and best practices, setting up data collection mechanisms, but also the provision of training courses, translating OECD studies and the organisation of seminars by visiting OECD experts to anyone who wishes to come and listen.

Health Policy

Many experts in the region have a certain reputation to uphold in health accounting and the RCSP was honoured to host a meeting of the Asia Pacific National Health Accounts Network (APNHAN). This meeting that took place in 5-6 December in Seoul brought together delegates from Australia, Bangladesh, the Peoples Republic of China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Korea, Samoa, Sri Lanka and Thailand as well as representatives from

the OECD, ILO and the WHO. The meeting addressed a wide range of accounting topics ranging from specific national health accounting issues to cross-border issues as, for example, the treatment of out-of-pocket health expenditures.

At the meeting the joint OECD-Eurostat-WHO data collection effort that started this year and is based on the System of Health Accounts¹⁾ was presented and delegates discussed the possibilities to set up a similar data collection mechanism for the region. With the joint organisation of this meeting, the RCSP took the chance to place herself in the midst of the type of activity she wishes to involve in: information sharing, exchanging national experiences and best practices and to new mechanisms of international co-operation and data collection. In this sense the RCSP could not have wished for a better start for contributing to health-policy development in the region.

At around the same time, the RCSP ensured that OECD staff contributed from afar to the annual meeting of the Korean Society of Health Policy and Administration. This presentation on the experiences encountered across OECD countries with the application of the System of Health Accounts is just another example of getting a Korean audience better acquainted with OECD work.

Both experiences illustrate the scope of opportunity of OECD work. On the one hand will the RCSP foster greater regional co-operation of specific topics at hand, while simultaneously OECD-expertise will be given a greater audience in Korean and the region. In the context of the first type of experience it is hoped that the RCSP will play a pivotal role in obtaining better regional co-operation and information on health status measurement as is increasing becoming common practice in Europe. The RCSP could play a key role in ensuring that the health

1) OECD (2000a), System of Health Accounts, OECD, Paris.

status measurement standards that are now being developed are tested in a wider variety of countries and cultural settings. Thereby the RCSP will increase the chance that such standards will be adopted as international standards in as wide a variety of countries as possible. In view of the existing expertise in health accounting in many countries in the region, the need for a course in “health accounting” seems less pressing. Nevertheless, for some countries the RCSP could play a key role in developing national expertise in health accounting practices that are compatible with prevailing international practice.

Social Policy

Social policy is a complicated area to work in, if only because, in contrast to the health area, there are often many different national ministries that are somehow involved in social policy development. The listing of ministries often include: the ministries of Finance, Welfare, Labour, Health and Education, while ministries of the interior are often responsible for support-arrangements for current and former civil servants and, sometimes, military servants. Organising events in the social policy area thus involve a number of different stakeholders and this requires careful consideration of programme design and its development.

For example, in the absence of cross-country comparable and sometimes even national data on social expenditure and its financing, there is clearly demand for a course in social accounting in the region. However, before making a curriculum operational careful consideration has to be given to different needs. For example, the principals underlying the OECD Social Expenditure Database²⁾, provide a clear

2) OECD (2004b), *Babies and Bosses, Reconciling Work and Family Life*, Vol. 3, New Zealand, Portugal and Switzerland, OECD, Paris.

framework for accounting of spending items, but is not completely in line with the existing ILO framework for budget accounting or the information required for the Social Protection Index developed by Asian Development Bank. Ideally, a social accounting module provided and delivered by the RCSP addresses all these different needs and prepares national staff for collection the information underlying all these indicators. There are thus a fair few practical issues that have to be overcome before a social accounting course can be made operational. It is, however, also a potentially very rewarding challenge as in the longer run the course will help development of data collection capacity that will give policy makers in the region a first stab at using internationally comparable indicators to address urgent social policy challenges.

Increasing awareness of OECD work in Korea and Asia more generally

In the meantime, the RCSP has already started to organise seminars on highly policy relevant issues whenever, OECD experts visit Seoul. For example, Peter Whiteford who is the responsible OECD principal administrator welfare reform made a presentation at a well-attended seminar on pension reform on 11 November 2005. The author of this piece had the honour to present OECD work on “work and family reconciliation” at a seminar on 24 November in the Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Anna d’Addio will present in December on international experiences with fertility trends and relevant policy issues. The RCSP has already started to make OECD staff more aware of their Korean audience, while simultaneously raise the profile of OECD work in Korea.

Through translation of OECD studies, the RCSP will contribute to increasing access of a wider audience to OECD work. Some OECD

publications have already been translated in Korean, as for example, Towards High Performing Health Systems the report prepared by the OECD Secretariat for the Ministerial Council Meeting in 2004. However, a birds-eye view reveals that there are many other studies that could be of interest to a wider Korean audience, including different volumes in the widely sold Babies and Bosses series that addressed issues on work and family reconciliation; Extending Opportunities, a state of the art report on current social policies and challenges; Pensions at a Glance, which compares pension systems and entitlements around the OECD area; Benefits and Wages, an cross-OECD review of benefit systems and financial incentives to work; Long term Care for Older People, a review of existing long-term care policies; The OECD review of the Korean health care system; and last but not least the OECD publications with health and social indicators, respectively: Health at a Glance and Society at a Glance.

Giving body to the OECD programme of work

In future the RCSP is also expected to give body to the standard OECD programme of work and help developing and collating data on Asian non-OECD economies that is comparable with OECD statistics. For example, RCSP staff will start identifying information on existing pension systems compatible with information in Pensions at a Glance on OECD countries. Another option would be for the RCSP to undertake research to see how information on social indicators that is available for countries in the region might fit into the Society at a Glance framework. Similarly, the new OECD database on family outcomes and family policies that is scheduled to go on-line during the second part of 2006 may be enriched with indicators on Asian non-

OECD economies through the services of the RCSP. The RCSP has also already started to play its role collecting data on Korea for OECD databases, and is currently engaged in completing the questionnaires on social expenditure and net (after tax) indicators of social spending.

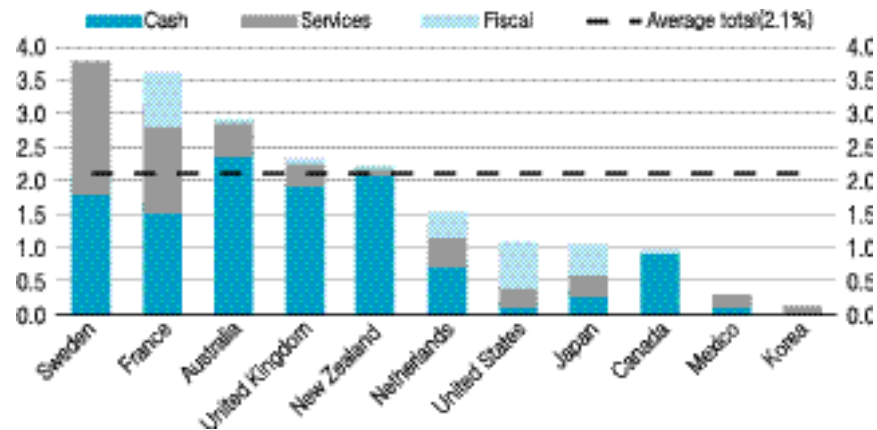
Future policy analysis

The collection of internationally comparable data is fundamental for the undertaking of independent policy analysis which one of the OECD's key functions. Indeed, when the necessary data capacity has been developed the RCSDP can contribute to this important part of OECD work. As Mark Pearson's contribution in this volume showed there are many different but inter-related challenges that social policy is facing. However, arguably unique to Asia is the speed with which the nature of traditionally strong networks of families are changing³⁾, either because of demographic trends, rapid urbanisation and/or attitudinal changes towards the nature of intergenerational care networks. Chart 1 shows that relative to European countries, public policy towards supporting families is relatively limited in the two Asian OECD countries. Indeed, policy traditionally relied on family networks for care provision to the young and the elderly. However, the demand for formal care services is likely to grow as is the need for Asian economies to have both men and women (the traditional care providers) of working age to participate in the labour market. This paradigm shift requires new thinking among policy makers on how to support families, and the RCSP may in future play a role in bringing together a network of Asian family policy experts that help develop policy solutions that benefit the region.

3) OECD (2000b), Pushing Ahead with Reform in Korea, Labour Market and Social Safety-net policies, OECD, Paris.

Public spending on family benefits is relatively small in Asian OECD countries

Public family spending in cash benefits, services and tax measures, percentage of GDP, 2001



Public support as child allowances, parental leave benefits and childcare support: spending for Australia, New Zealand and the UK includes income support for (sole) parents, while other countries typically record similar payments as 'social assistance'. Spending on health and housing support also assists families, but not exclusively, and is not included here.

Adema, W. and M. Ladaique (2005), "Net Social Expenditure, 2005 Edition", Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 29, Paris.

In sum, the RCSP faces many challenges ahead. Effective social and health policy requires a data capacity that can be used to draw lessons from country experiences. In terms of data capacity and quality, work on health accounts has progressed to a considerable extent while social accounting is often still in its infancy in the region, and this state of affairs naturally co-determines the starting point of RCSP-involvement in these two areas. However, in both policy areas the ultimate aim is the same: dialogue, information-sharing and policy analysis should facilitate RCSP-research outcomes being translated into tangible policy action. This is ambitious, but that makes it all the more worthwhile. I am looking forward to working with RCSP colleagues to helping researchers and policy makers develop the health and social polices that help further socio-economic development in the region.

요약

기술의 발전으로 국가 간 경제협력이 심화되고 있는 가운데 전 세계적 관심사에 관하여 OECD와 회원국과 비회원국 간의 보다 긴밀하고 심도 있는 논의와 협조가 필요해졌다. 특히 급속한 경제성장을 이룬 아시아는 국제적 협력을 도모하는데 있어 필수적으로 고려해야 할 대상이 되었으며, 이러한 맥락에서 한국에 OECD 아시아사회정책센터의 설립은 결코 우연이 아니다. OECD 아시아사회정책센터는 보건 및 사회정책 분야의 연구 및 성과, 폭넓은 정책 경험들을 공유하고 이를 아시아 국가에 전파함으로써 각국의 정책결정자들이 직면하고 있는 고령화 사회의 문제, 빈곤 및 전통적 가족 개념의 약화 등 이 분야의 다양한 문제들을 해결하는데 기여할 것으로 기대된다.

1. OECD사회정책센터의 역할

1) 보건정책

OECD 사회정책센터는 아시아지역의 보건계정 추계분야에서 경험과 명성을 쌓아온 여러 전문가들과 함께 Asia Pacific National Health Accounts Network 회의를 개최(12월 5~6일, 서울)하였다. 이 회의에는 OECD, WORLD BANK, WHO 등과 더불어 호주, 방글라데시, 중국, 대만, 홍콩, 일본, 말레이시아, 몽고, 필리핀, 한국, 사모아, 스리랑카, 태국 등의 대표가 참석하였다. 이번 회의에서는 국민 보건계정 이슈로부터 가계지출과 관련한 이슈까지 다양한 주제들이 논의되었다.

금년에 시작된 OECD보건계정에 대한 OECD-Eurostat-WHO의 공동자료수집을 위한 회의에서는 공동자료 수집마련을 위한 논의가 이루어졌다. 이러한 맥락에서 OECD 아시아사회정책센터는 이 지역 보건정책발전에 기여하는 최상의 출발이라 할 수 있다. 따라서 OECD 아시아사회정책센터는 구체적인 이슈에 관한 지역적 협력을 활성화하는 동시에 한국과 아시아지역에 OECD의 전문성을 소개, 전파하는 기회가 될 것이다.

2) 사회정책

사회지출 및 재정에 관한 국가 간 비교자료나, 자료 자체가 존재하지 않는 개별 국가를 대상으로 한 사회계정의 교육훈련과정은 필요하다. 다만 교육과정을 개설하기 위해서는 아시아지역에서 생산하고 있는 기존의 내용들(ILO의 재정계정, 아시아개발은행이 개발한 사회보장지표 등)과의 차이 등 다양한 요구들을 수용할 수 있는 준비가 필요하다.

이러한 훈련을 통해 장기적으로는 아시아 정책결정자들이 국제비교가 가능한 지표들을 사용하여 사회정책 현안들을 진단할 수 있는 데이터수집 능력을 개발한다는 점에서 추진할 가치 있는 사업이라 할 수 있다.

2. OECD의 활동에 대한 한국과 아시아의 인식 증대

OECD사회정책센터는 OECD활동을 한국에 소개하는 동시에 OECD 관련자들이 한국의 상황을 보다 상세히 이해할 수 있도록 하는데 기여하고 있다.

최근 센터는 OECD 출판물을 다양하게 번역하여 보다 넓은 독자층이 OECD의 연구성과를 접할 수 있는 기회를 마련하고 있으며, OECD 전문가들의 서울방문에 맞추어 정책관련 이슈를 다루는 세미나들을 개최하였거나 계획하고 있다.

1) OECD 활동의 구체화

앞으로 사회정책센터는 OECD프로그램을 구체적으로 실행하고 OECD통계와 비교 가능한 아시아 비회원국의 데이터를 대조, 개발하는 활동을 할 것이다.

즉 기존 연금제도와 관련된 정보들 중에서 OECD국가들과 비교 가능한 정보들을 수집하는 작업을 시작하거나 아시아지역 국가들에 유효한 사회지표들이 어느 수준까지 Society at a Glance와 부합하는지에 관한 연구 등을 할 수 있을 것이다.

2) 앞으로의 정책분석

최근 아시아지역은 인구구조의 변화, 급속한 도시화, 세대 간 부양에 대한 인식의 변화 등으로 전통적 가족 간 유대가 급속히 붕괴, 변화하는 특징을 보이고 있다. 전통적 부양자였던 근로 연령층 여성이 남성과 더불어 노동시장에 참여하게 됨에 따라 사회적 요양서비스에 대한 수요가 증가하고 있다. 앞으로 사회정책센터는 아시아 지역에 적합한 정책 해결을 도모하는 사회정책 전문가 네트워크를 형성하는데 주도적인 역할을 해야 할 것이다. 