

SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN MALAYSIA. DO WE NEED INTEGRATION?

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ABSTRACT

Issues and challenges on social protection vary from one country to another. However, in many cases, the daunting problem is the implementation process which involves identification, distribution, adequacy, and targeting measures of the benefits to the intended target group of vulnerable people. This paper tries to explore the causes of these problems which are the integration and coherence of the social protection providers. In Malaysia, social protection programmes are considerably adequate, but there is still an issue of several qualified beneficiaries that fall through the net due to the redundancy of benefits and programmes to the people. Thus, the dynamic social protection programmes' implementation through integration amongst numerous providers is required to ensure effective administration in this area, to avoid waste of resources. Using Malaysia as a case study, this paper will also make a comparison with other countries, particularly on the form of social protection integration for better coverage to the vulnerable groups. Data for this research has been collected through the qualitative approach, using interviews with key informants of social protection providers or implementers, as well as secondary data from government statistics and publications. Data analysis from this study shows that the social protection integration can be categorized into two main findings; firstly, the need for integration for social insurance providers which have many similarities allowing it to be better managed through consolidation. Secondly, a semi-integrated approach is required for public assistance programmes due to gap of portfolios of the public assistance schemes and programmes by different institutions. It is also suggested to standardize the social assistance amongst states for better equality and justice, and the importance to have a lead-agency in implementing social protection programmes in Malaysia. Through this study also, it gives benefits to the government especially the policy maker to plan and review as well as will be a guide in addressing social protection issues in Malaysia. Besides, it also enables the authority body to analyze and evaluate the current programme in a precise manner.

Keywords: Social protection, policy implementation, integration

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Social protection is part of human rights (Norton, Conway, & Foster, 2001) and it needs to be recognized and served by the state. The emergence of the evolution in social protection is becoming a prominent issue in many parts of the world as it contributes to social and economic sustainability and development amongst the public (Asher & Nandy, 2005).

In many countries, social protection is now a main agenda in the state, especially amongst developing nations. The change in demographic trends, rapid ageing community, globalization, inflation, emergence of epidemic diseases, and increase in medical and socio-economic cost has driven the need for effective and dynamic social protection programmes (Samad, Awang, & Abdullah, 2011). The increased awareness and realization of the significance of dynamic social protection began, especially, after the world economic crises in 1996 and early 2000 which abruptly affected the socio-economics of the people in the affected countries (Paitoonpong, 2001). It is important to have a comprehensive social protection system that may cover the whole population. Issues on poverty are always associated with the poor coverage of social protection (Barrientos, Hulme, & Shepherd, 2005). Thus, the need for effective policies and programmes is inevitable and starts with good implementation. The institutionalization, management, and administration of social protection requires dynamic implementation. So far, social protection in this country is considerably sporadic, disintegrated, and has limited coverage (Mansor & Awang, 2002; Rusma, 2006).

Objectives of research

The aim of this paper has been to explore the need for social protection integration amongst the implementation agencies. This is due to various and scattered benefits and programmes being offered by different institutions or agencies, which may result in the waste of resources and duplication of benefit dispersion. It has also been to explore the form of integration appropriate for the Malaysian social protection system or programmes in Malaysia.

Methodology

Information and data for this paper was collected through the literature of social protection obtained from relevant articles and journals. Some statistics from the Malaysian Government were also referred to. The analysis for the Malaysian case study was

collected through a qualitative research through the interview process with eight personnel from various social protection institutions in Malaysia. Selection of informants were based on the experience and richness of data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The findings have been classified into several themes that represented the opinion of the respondents about the need for social protection integration in Malaysia.

2.0 SOCIAL PROTECTION IN MALAYSIA AT A GLANCE

The definition of social protection varies amongst international institutions, countries and studies. In many researches, the terms social protection and social security are often used interchangeably (Margaret Grosh, Carlo del Ninno, Emil Tesliuc, & Ouerghi, 2008). According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in the Social Protection Strategy (SPS) on 13 September 2001, social protection can be defined as: "Set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income".

This definition has shown that, the social protection programmes should address all segments of the population's; active or inactive labour markets. Thus, it requires a certain concentration and focus for each group which will result in various agencies implementing the social protection programmes.

The World Bank has viewed social protection as being in three broad categories, i.e., social insurance, public assistance, and labour market incentives. Public Assistance Programmes are offered only for those individuals who can demonstrate need, and the amount of the benefit is based on the extent of the demonstrated need. The final decisions on both eligibility and benefit amounts of this scheme are made on a discretionary basis by the officials administering the public assistance programmes. Thus, it always becomes an issue of discrimination, bias, and unequal distribution of assistance amongst the community (Introduction to Social Security, 1984).

Public assistance is also the federal and state system's method for providing welfare payments to the aged, blind, and disabled, and to families with dependent children in the forms of social support, money or goods granted by the state to a person or family based on income; they are also commonly known as welfare benefits (Social security. A workers' education guide, 1992).

In Malaysia, the public assistance programme is implemented by several ministries and agencies at the federal and state levels. At the federal level, the target group and focus is based on the portfolio of the ministries. However, the agency that is involved largely in social protection programmes is the National Welfare Department under the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development. At the state level, the implementation of public assistance varies according to the abilities of the state. However, the provision under the Federal Constitutions of Malaysia has stated that there is a sharing of responsibilities at both the Federal and State levels under the Concurrent List.

Meanwhile, social insurance programmes are offered regardless of need to all persons who can satisfy certain requirements. These include all insurance arrangements in which the government acts as the insurer, subsidizes the operation, or requires the insured to purchase the protection. This can also be considered as the government insurance programmes with certain characteristics that distinguish them from other government insurance programmes. The social insurance programmes are generally compulsory. There are specific earmarked taxes funding the programmes; the benefits are heavily weighted in favor of low-income groups and the programmes are designed to achieve certain social goals (Social security. A workers' education guide, 1992). The only institution carrying out the responsibility for the social insurance programme in Malaysia is the Social Security Organization (SOCSO). The programme available under SOCSO is to provide employment injury and invalidity pension benefits for related and non-related work injuries, diseases, and death.

Pension and retirement benefits are very crucial throughout the globe as the population is ageing tremendously fast. The need for sufficient savings and adequate protection at the golden age is a must. In Malaysia, the Employees Provident Fund (EPF), Public Service Department, and Armed Forces Fund Board are the responsible bodies for this purpose. The EPF has been established for old age benefits provided for the private sector and non-pension optional public-sector employees. Meanwhile, public sector employees' and armed forces' protection for pension and retirement benefits is shouldered by the Public Service Department and Armed Forces Fund. On the contrary, income protection for pensions and savings for the private sector or self-employees is on a voluntarily basis under the Private Retirement Scheme.

Labour market programmes are also available in Malaysia which provide protection and rights for employees during difficult times, such as injuries, death, maternity, invalidity, and many more. The Department of Labour under the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia is responsible to review, implement, and enforce the rules and regulations for employees. However, poor population groups, such as the inactive labour markets in developing countries, are for the most part not reached by formal social protection systems. In fact, more than half of the world's population is not covered by any type of formal social protection although most of the population are vulnerable to four main types of risks such as those related to the individual life cycle, economic, environmental as well as social and governance related (Ortiz, 2001).

The tables below summarizes the available social protection programmes in Malaysia.

Table 1: Selected provisions enacted for social protection

| Social protection | Provisions of Law |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Social insurance | Employees' Social Security Act 1969 |
| Pension & retirement benefits | Employees' Provident Fund Act 1952 Malaysia Pension Act 1980 Armed Forces Fund Act 1973 |
| Public assistance | Destitute Persons Act 1977 Child Act 2001 Person with Disabilities Act 2008 Schedule 9, Federal Constitution Malaysia |
| Labour Programmes | Market Employment Act 1955 Employees' Social Security Act 1969 Workmen Compensation Act 1952 Minimum Wages Order 2012 |

Table 2: Social Protection programmes in Malaysia

| Social Protection | Programmes | Provider |
|--|---|---|
| Public assistance | i. Financial and welfare assistance ii. Home-help service iii. Zakat | Federal and State government through several ministries Pusat Zakat and Baitulmal – State level |
| Social insurance & pension and retirement benefits | i. Public sector pension ii. Retirement and protection for armies iii. Old age protection and savings iv. Employment injury and invalidity v. Workmen Compensation Act vi. Sickness and maternity benefits vii. Healthcare viii. Private retirement scheme ix. Savings scheme | Public Service Department Armed Forces Fund Board (LTAT) Employees Provident Fund Social Security Organization Ministry of Human Resources Ministry of Human Resources EPF, SOCSO PRS Council EPF |
| Labour Market Programmes | i. Retrenchment benefits ii. Retrenchment monitoring operation room iii. Electronic labour exchange iv. Vocational training programmes for retired / retiring service men v. Job coaching vi. Return to Work vii. Microcredit | Ministry of Human Resources Ministry of Human Resources Ministry of Human Resources Public Service Department Ministry of Human Resources SOCSO Agencies under the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development |

Sources adapted from the SSRC Report, (Mansor, et al., 2014)

This paper has focused more on the public assistance programmes. These programmes are usually fully funded by the government and require a means test to identify the qualified beneficiaries. Amongst the organizations responsible for public assistance are: the Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Human Resources, Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry, and other public departments and agencies according to the respective area (Samad, Awang, & Abdullah, 2011). In public assistance, the benefits are in the forms of housing, education, food, and basic needs subsidies, with the objectives of providing a minimum income to persons who are really in need. Apart from this, the emergence of the social safety nets concept basically focuses on providing assistance and benefits for income generation to the qualified beneficiaries in order to uplift them from the poverty trap (Noraini, 2006; Samad & Kaslam, 2008).

Several other ministries have been identified in implementing the role of providing social protection programmes. However, there is no clear information about the organizations responsible to monitor the schemes and programmes as a coordinating body.

Table 3: Role of Government Departments in the Social Protection in Malaysia

| Ministry / Department / Agency | Role / Target group |
|--|--|
| Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development -(MoWFCD) | • hard core poor and poor, old citizens, disabled, single mother, orphan, victim of natural disaster |
| National Welfare Department | |
| Ministry of Health | • health services, hospital and treatment, social works services, |
| Ministry of Education | • education services, poor children, children with disabilities |
| Ministry of Human Resources | • unemployment, placement of person with disability |
| Ministry of Rural and Regional Development | • hard core poor and poor, unemployed, income generation, housing, basic necessities |
| Ministry of Housing and Local Government | • hard core poor and poor, old citizens, disabled, single mother, orphan, victim of natural disaster |
| Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry | • hard core poor and poor, unemployed, income generation |

In Malaysia, the problem of social protection is considerably manageable. The main concern is the dynamics of the social protection administration by the providers and implementation agencies. In many cases, the daunting problem is the implementation process which involves identification, distribution, and adequacy, as well as targeting measures of the benefits to the intended target group of vulnerable people (Samad & Abdullah, 2010). Thus, it is important to see the need for integration and coherence of the social protection providers. In Malaysia, social protection programmes are considerably adequate (Saidatulakmal, 2006), but there is still an issue of several qualified beneficiaries that fall through the net due to the redundancy of benefits and programmes for the people. Thus, the dynamic social protection programmes' implementation through integration amongst the numerous providers is required to ensure effective administration in this area, particularly to avoid the waste of resources.

3.0 INTEGRATION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION PROGRAMMES

3.1 Concept and Reasons behind it

Social protection reforms have introduced many new ideas and improvements for the management and administration of social protection programmes and services. One area of concern is privatization which became a debatable area in the 1990's due to incapability of the government in providing dynamic protection for the public. Many states introduced this approach as an effort to strengthen the existing system. Some bring successful stores while others, do not (Ramesh, 2002).

Besides privatization, another effort by the government is through the integration of social protection programmes. Laroque (2007) defines integration of social protection as "including within the same branch of risks that were previously treated separately, or that different risks are no longer so clearly distinguishable from each other". The merging of social insurance and public assistance programmes also can be seen as part of integration, eventually merged into administrative structures.

The trend of the integration of the social security system can be traced from the implementations made in other countries. Though the forms of integration vary from state to state, the main objectives are to have more uniform coverage of the population, a less segmented system, and to suppress special advantages accorded to certain groups under common law (Laroque, 2007). In many cases, the issue of poor integration and coherence needs to be highlighted because it will lead to inconsistency and unequal distribution due to poor or redundant identification of the beneficiaries. However, it is important to have a state as a control and monitoring base, especially for public assistance that applies the discretionary basis in benefits identification and distribution.

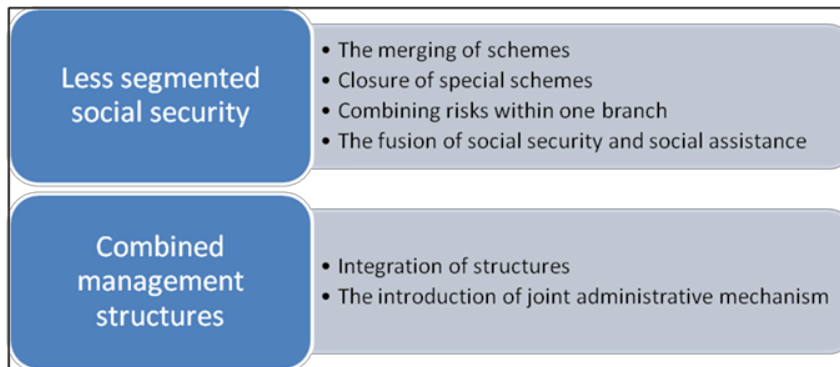
According to Mabbett and Bolderson (1998), there are two main types of institutions outside the central government involved in the administration of social protection benefits, the subnational (local and state) government and the autonomous social insurance institutions which generally involve the social partners. However, this situation may lead to several limitations for effective protection to the public, such as a lack of revenue, social dumping, and market competition in private insurance.

Thus, these problems suggest that a redistributive social security system has to be centralized; because, the central government has the power to formulate policies and allows the scope for efficiency improvements through managerial autonomy. In the case where the social protection institution administers benefits as an agency of the central government, the more widespread situation is that the social partners are important participants in the policy process and implementation (Mabbett & Bolderson, 1998). The best example is Centralink in Australia which is responsible to carry out the social protection role for the public implemented on behalf of more than 18 departments / ministries / agencies for social protection.

3.2 Types of integration

There are a few types and approaches on integration in social protection which can be clustered into two broad categories. The first category is less segmented social protection which carries the process of merging the schemes, closure of special schemes, combining risks within one branch and the merging of social insurance and public assistance. The second category is towards the combination of management structures which are achieved through the integration of structures and introduction of a joint administrative mechanism (Laroque, 2007).

Diagramme 3.2 : Social Protection Integration Approach



The first category of integrated social protection incorporates the merging of schemes under less segmented social protection. Here, the approach is to combine several schemes into one uniform or possibly, universal scheme. The combination is in forms of merging any social protection programmes which have likely quite similar characteristics like a pension scheme or health benefits for invalidity or injury. The other merging effort is for the benefits that address the same population or target group, like the unemployed and the aged. The other form is by establishing a concept of a universal scheme through the combination of social insurance and public assistance. The Finnish Parliament adopted a specific legislation to serve one uniformed law for their entire private sector pension, but combined the pension scheme for the self-employed, agricultural workers, seafarers, and government and local civil servants, which resulted in the replacement of three previous Acts.

The second approach incorporates the closure of special schemes implemented when there are certain schemes or programmes that are no longer considered or valid for that particular time. It may be due to the establishment of new comprehensive schemes for better coverage, or perhaps these schemes are no longer relevant at the particular time and scenario due to a change of government, structure of economics, and many more. Another variation in the closure of a special scheme is the absorption of one scheme by another, especially when two or more schemes have some similarities in terms of the benefits. Usually, this absorption applies for the retirement scheme when the demographic base has become or is becoming too narrow due to an insufficient number of contributors. The integration of civil service and private sector pensions in Luxembourg is the best example for this approach (Laroque, 2007).

The next approach is combining risks within one branch, for example, combining occupational disease and invalidity from various diseases. In some cases, like in Britain and Sweden, the scheme offered under sick leave, disability, or inability to work after a period of time may lead to confusion of the distinction between sickness, disability, and unemployment benefit programmes. The fusion of social security and public assistance usually happens in other Bismarckian counties. For certain cases, it even combines the social insurance and social assistance, especially due to the development that leads to confusion between both systems. Germany, for example, has combined the social insurance and public assistance schemes for unemployment into a single unemployment benefits scheme. This approach will bring better financial resources and enforcement (Laroque, 2007).

The second broad category for integrated social protection is the combined management structures, which is an effort to merge the management and administrative operations of a social protection programme within the framework of social protection reforms. The first approach is through the integration of structures, which has been implemented in Germany, Turkish, Slovenia, and Sweden. This method combines and integrates not only the management bodies supervised by the ministries, but also the ministries themselves. The benefit of this approach is that it will provide greater autonomy for the institutions in managing the programmes for social protection.

Another method for the combined management structures is the introduction of joint administrative mechanisms. It involves the merging of administrative processes for different schemes, like integrated procedures; for example, a single form is used for the application of various benefits. This method has been implemented in Columbia. In addition, there is also a merger of schemes as practised in the French Social Scheme for the Self-Employed. The advantages of this approach are that it will simplify the procedures and ensure better service and cooperation from the contributors (Laroque, 2007).

4.0 FINDINGS

This research has involved eight (8) informants from amongst the social protection implementers in the interview process to obtain meaningful information in understanding the phenomenon of the implementation of social protection programmes, and whether integration is needed.

Theme 1: Issues of targeting, distributing, and coherency

In this research, it is proven that there are a few problems in implementing social protection programmes in Malaysia.

Targeting

“Usually, it is roughly around 50% from the applications we receive who are really qualified for the benefits and have proven their income is below the poverty line income. The information received through interviews and validation from the head of the community is still exposed to fraud”.

Informant 3

“Yes, we admit we still have problems to identify the rightful beneficiaries in the public assistance programme. This is due to the challenges of getting the accurate and reliable data to prove the application received is genuine and correct”.

Informant 6

The issue of targeting is one of the major challenges in social protection. Errors in targeting have been discussed in many previous research works by (Cornia & Stewart (1993) and Swaminathan & Misra, (2001). In local studies, it has been proven by a study by (Ragayah (2006) and Ragayah Haji Mat Zin, Hwok Aun Lee, and Abdul-Rahman (2002) followed by similar findings from the World Bank in 2010. The cause of error in targeting is due to the absence of an integrated system to validate the authenticity and genuine application from the claimants. It is also because of the lack of effectiveness in the management and administration of the institution through the system, procedures, manpower, and others (Grosh, Del Ninno, Tesliuc, & Ouerghi, 2008).

Distribution

“There are a few cases where the payment has been made even though the beneficiaries are dead. This was due to the next of kin still being able to withdraw the money through the ATM”.

Informant 5

“...even though the beneficiaries are already dead, the withdrawal activities are still happening. We cannot trace this until we make the monitoring process at the field work”.

Informant 1

Distribution issues have been widely discussed in the study of social protection and poverty. As mentioned in many research works from many intellectuals, social protection and poverty are areas that are highly interconnected with one another. Therefore, research in the field of social protection will not be able to run away from emphasis on distribution, also called aid delivery, to individuals who are truly eligible to receive the assistance provided by the government (Barrientos, 2011; Barrientos & Santibáñez, 2009; and Leung, 2006).

Theme 2: Need for integration

“We can avoid the payment for the already dead beneficiaries (Old Age Benefits) if we can have an integrated system which can link our system (e-Kasih) with the National Registration Department.”

Informant 2

“This system actually relies on the implementers. If the key player (implementers from the selected ministries) has supplied all the information accordingly, then the data is highly reliable.”

Informant 4

“The existing system is definitely good, but not strong enough. It should be integrated with other social protection institutions, such as SOCSO and EPF, in order to validate the vulnerability of the applicants for any benefits under public assistance.”

Informant 3

Experience, as seen in many countries and studies, proves that social protection systems are often implemented by different ministries and departments with different focuses, responsibilities, and portfolios. This has led to the overlapping of efforts, the distribution of aid, and the weakening co-ordination between these institutions of public assistance (Gentilini & Omamo, 2011). In many cases, the weak co-ordination issue needs to be addressed as it will lead to inconsistencies and uneven distribution amongst the beneficiaries. This is due to the problem of duplication in the early process of the identification of beneficiaries. As such, instruments in policies and social protection programmes should be coordinated and integrated (Norton, et al., 2001). If there is no collaboration, resource wastage will occur; whereas, with it, existing resources can be more efficiently and equitably distributed to more qualified individuals.

These findings have shown the importance of integration in social protection programmes in administration, sources of information, nature of benefits, and the need for a centralized database to accelerate cohesion and improvement of the existing system in Malaysia.

5.0 DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

5.1 Integration of the Social Insurance Institutions

There are basically two broad categories of findings in this study. In the social insurance perspective, there is a need for social protection integration in the form of combined management structures by using a joint administrative mechanism. This is due to several “similarities” of the background for both the social protection institutions, i.e., SOCSO and EPF, which basically impose compulsory contributions to all employers and employees registered under both schemes. Both systems also provide coverage specifically for formal sector employees (Navamukundan, 2000), and use an information system for the database to keep all the records of contributions and payments of benefits.

Nevertheless, SOCSO is administered under the Ministry of Human Resources while EPF is under the Ministry of Finance. However, the integration of both institutions will contribute towards better services in the forms of a “one-stop-centre” for the formal sector employees in forwarding their applications, better coverage, and a single account for contributions and self-keeping record purposes. There are a few advantages of social protection integration for administrative purposes. Firstly, a greater number of contributions under the same characteristics enables better investment opportunity which will contribute towards better returns for sharing dividends with the contributors. Secondly, there will be a lower cost for maintaining the database of the contributors’ records. Other than that, both social insurance institutions can share their expertise in financial, investment, programmes development, and risk management. Fourth, the wider the institution, the greater the autonomy which may provide better enforcement of the provisions.

For schemes and protection which are similar, both organizations can implement the closure of special schemes and the combination of risks within one branch as proposed by Laroque (2007). Thus, it can increase the amount of benefits and protection for shared benefits in order to provide better coverage.

5.2 Integration of the Public Assistance Institutions

Eight experienced officers from one public assistance institution (in one state of Malaysia, Melaka), namely the SWD, from various departments were interviewed for this study. Several themes were found in these interviews about the roles and functions of the SWD. Most of the officers felt that the scope of the SWD is very broad and they explained this with a few themes like, “anything under the sun”, “we are the Centre of money sources (subsidies)”, “we do everything”. However, the respondents did not agree with the separation of the functions of the SWD into other institutions, nor to integrate or consolidate it with other social security or public assistance providers. This was because they felt that the portfolio for the SWD is perfect and every other social protection providers like the Department of Health, Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, and Rural Development have their own focus and expertise in their own areas.

The SWD is under the administration of the MoWFCDD, which has five departments and agencies. The portfolio of the MoWFCDD is very wide. Thus, the respondents suggested the restructuring of the SWD functions. The Socio Economics Assistance Department was suggested to have a specific full-fledged department under the MoWFCDD that would monitor the monetary and financial assistance for the qualified recipients and beneficiaries. The same opinion was held for the Disabled People Development Department under the SWD, which was strongly suggested to have a separate department from the SWD. This is because, the needs and development for disabled people are wider than other vulnerable groups. The development of disabled people involves many issues in terms of this group. Amongst these are poverty, problems of placement in work opportunities, appropriate education and training, and health management. It is justified due to several classifications of the categories of the disabilities which require different approaches in addressing their special needs.

The other departments proposed two suggestions. Firstly, have one single reliable integrated shared database system for beneficiaries involving all of the recipients from each social protection provider. It is important to have all the records of the beneficiaries, what types of benefits are delivered, processing records, and a qualifying review record in order to avoid duplication of benefits to the people and redundancy of the procedures to be fulfilled by the applicants. It will also provide better information for the government on social security statistics. It is undeniable that Malaysia has the database called e-Kasih established under the Implementation Coordination Unit, Prime Minister’s Department in 2009. However, the information offered is still inadequate for more effective management in social protection through the social security providers (Samad, Awang, & Abdullah, 2011).

The need to have a one-stop centre for all of the social security providers is also one form of integration approach mentioned by the respondents. In Melaka, for instance, the intervention of politics has contributed to the realization of this effort. Several main social protection providers, either Federal or State agencies like the SWD, Department of Rural and Regional Development, KOPEMA, and PEMBELA are located within one building called Kota Cemerlang. Thus, it provides better interaction and facilitates the access for benefits and services for the customers.

Based on the research, there are 2 main findings in this paper. Firstly, the need for integration for social insurance providers which have many similarities allowing it to be better managed through consolidation. Secondly, a semi-integrated approach is required for public assistance programmes due to gap of portfolios of the public assistance schemes and programmes by different

institutions (Laroque, 2007). This study gives benefits to the government especially the policy maker to plan and review as well as will be a guide in addressing social protection issues in Malaysia. Besides, it also enables the authority body to analyze and evaluate the current programme in a precise manner.

6.0 THE WAY FORWARD

In Malaysia, the role of social protection lies upon the responsibility of the Federal and State governments. The social insurance is clearly administered by social protection institutions as agents for the central government, and this is standardized throughout the nation. However, the public assistance programmes are under the Federal Assistance Scheme and State Assistance Scheme. Due to criticism and dissatisfaction that the Federal Assistance is higher than the State Assistance, the government has introduced the family basic Assistance Scheme under the MoWFCD. However, the assistance for microfinance and microcredit for income generations are standardized across the nation.

Since there are various ministries involved under the social protection programmes, it is important to highlight the issue of who will monitor the programmes coherently. Based on the Budget Speech 2010, the government in the Implementation and Coordination Unit has developed an internet database called e-Kasih to avoid the duplication of data in the public assistance. By using this database, the vulnerable people and their representatives will be able to register with the e-Kasih in order to get the benefits. However, it has been found that the government needs to establish a specific coordinating body to monitor the public assistance programmes.

It is too unclear to claim that the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) or National Economic Advisory Council (NEAC) has to shoulder the responsibility as the monitoring agency. However, the establishment of the e-Kasih database is to collect and store the data pertaining to the social protection programmes which is considered to be a good effort.

In other countries, a specific ministry is set up to monitor the implementation of the social protection programme for the public. This will reduce unnecessary redundancy of work and may benefit the public. In Australia, for example, Centralink is responsible for social protection and the administration of the social protection.

At present, the social protection and social protection programmes are implemented by various ministries and organizations. These institutions need some form of integration, and need to be proactive and forward-looking in regards to social protection issues to ensure good governance and, transparency, as well as accountability for extensive implementation. The scope and dimension of social protection for the population demand a full-fledged ministry with a capacity to manage the complex managerial responsibilities involved in administering social protection programmes (Navamukundan, 2000).

Benefits and shortfalls of social protection integration.

The consolidation of social protection schemes has advantages and disadvantages. When the administration of social protection programmes is managed under a comprehensive uniformed scheme, the principle of solidarity and stability can be achieved. It will help the public to clearly understand their rights and the clear autonomy on which the institutions are obliged or responsible for specific areas of vulnerabilities. The merging of social protection institutions may lead to greater synergies between the policies whilst the centralization of the decision-making and management structures may result in empowering responsiveness and coherence in the social protection system.

The quality of services provided by social protection institutions may also be improved by shortening the process and removing the redundancy of the procedures, as well as the risks of duplication and gaps. Consolidation of communication and the database through an information system and technology can also be integrated through the establishment of the one-stop-centre concept for easier access for social security administrators as well as beneficiaries.

Nevertheless, social protection integration also has its drawbacks which are frequently associated with the size of the social security programmes or institutions. A larger size may constitute an obstacle to efficient management, whilst the emergence of different problems will lead to inefficient coverage. It is because each vulnerability has its own need and different coverage (Laroque, 2007).

7.0 CONCLUSION

In summary, this paper concluded that, there is a need for a leading agency to manage certain degree of integration in social protection programmes in Malaysia to overcome issues of redundancy in benefits similarity, non-standardization in administration, and poor access of information. The integrated system, agency or at least the data will accelerate cohesion and improvement to the dynamism of existing social protection. The form of integration may vary from one issue to another. However, the early stage of integration will involve challenges to redesign the programmes, and requires an understanding among the key-players and political will on social protection programmes in Malaysia.

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