
Sustainable Development: Food Security and Social Safety Nets in the CLMV Countries¹

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AS THE NEWER members of ASEAN, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam (CLMV) consider deeper regional economic integration as a necessary and unavoidable process that will ultimately benefit them but will also present challenges. In this context, the key question for the CLMV countries is how they can catch up with the more advanced economies in the region given their limited resources and the limitations on their knowledge and practical experience.

While advocating rapid and sustainable development in the longer term, the CLMV countries need to address several challenges inherent in their socioeconomic situation that may be magnified as ASEAN integration deepens. On the one hand, the CLMV countries are in the early stages of development and still experience a sizeable development gap with respect to ASEAN-6.² On the other hand, the CLMV countries face a severe lack of institutional and financial capacity to properly address the impacts of adverse shocks. Finally, social structures with sizeable proportions of people living in or near poverty or in disadvantaged areas give rise to much concern over the sustainability of social stability, especially in the presence of shocks.

In that context, ensuring both food security and effective social safety nets aimed at more sustainable development plays a critical role in ensuring more viable participation in the regional economic integration process. Each of the CLMV countries has its own framework for food security and social safety nets, and they remain heterogeneous in terms of financial capacity, demographic structure, and institutional settings that may in turn affect the sustainability of food security and social safety nets themselves. In that context, intra-CLMV support is important, and it may take the form

of technical support, agricultural trade, or other forms of budgetary support. As such, this chapter discusses the current state of social safety nets and food security in the CLMV countries with reference to how they may impede sustainable development in the long run.

CONCEPTS OF SOCIAL SAFETY NETS AND FOOD SECURITY

Social protection has several definitions depending on the scope it covers. Aris Ananta provides a rather good recapitulation of the concept. In its most primitive form, social protection is narrowly defined as being inclusive of interventions in the labor market, social insurance, and social safety nets. Accordingly, social protection only comprises activities related to the protection of child laborers, protection of industrial relations, pensions, and social funds to support vulnerable groups.³ Although these represent specific areas of popular concern in most countries, social protection should occupy a wider scope. Specifically, social protection should cover all public interventions that enable individuals, households, and communities to manage risks and support the critically poor.⁴ In other words, a social protection system should directly target poverty and vulnerability and cover all efforts to minimize incidences of each. The focus of the social protection system thus changes from short-term “social safety nets and social funds” to protection of basic consumption levels, particularly for poor groups, and to investment in human capital to help people escape the intergenerational poverty trap.⁵ In this regard, social protection serves as an attempt by the state to correct market failures, which happen at times and can lead to a severe deterioration in people’s living standards.

Within the social protection system, thus, food security and social safety nets play important roles. In the first instance, food security refers to attempts by the state to guarantee a minimum level of consumption of food products. Depending on the consumption patterns in different countries, the targeted food products under food security programs may vary. For instance, some countries (like Vietnam) seek to ensure security in rice consumption, while African countries target cassava as a food security crop. But even with sufficient consumption levels of food products, food security may not be ensured if those food products fail to provide enough nutrition. This aspect of possible malnutrition may invoke concerns in food security programs.

Food security has different levels: national, regional, and household. Addressing food insecurity at each level requires a different approach, with

different resources. Programs at the national and regional levels may focus more on development of infrastructure and food production, while those directly targeting households seek to enhance their food sufficiency.

Meanwhile, social safety nets take the form of non-contributory transfer programs that are aimed at preventing the poor or those vulnerable to adverse shocks and poverty from falling below a certain income or consumption level. Examples of such transfers may include monetary transfers, in-kind transfers, and price subsidies for basic products (e.g., education, electricity, etc.) providing either regular or contingent support. As part of the social protection framework, social safety net programs can be provided by the public sector, generally the state or development partners. Alternatively, the private sector (such as nongovernmental organizations, private firms, charities, etc.) may help to maintain sustainable income or consumption above a minimum level. By nature, thus, social safety nets aim at reducing vulnerability and poverty among various social groups.

In the context of accelerating globalization and regionalization, food security and social safety nets are becoming more closely linked. This is because shock-induced price volatility in international and regional markets can be quickly transmitted into the domestic economy, which may lead to sudden changes (even reversals) in food production decisions and thus in food security. For instance, farmers may decide to move away from agricultural production if the price is expected to remain low for a long time; yet if the price then surges unexpectedly, attempts to increase export of agricultural outputs may threaten food security in the domestic economy, particularly for the poor and disadvantaged groups.

The regional integration process also adds further impetus for considering food security and social safety nets. More fundamentally, during this process, food security and social safety programs must somehow connect more with attempts to generate employment for the poor and vulnerable groups. Such attempts will ensure certain flows of income to the targeted groups and, in turn, help them purchase locally produced or imported food products. But while integration is expected to bring about new opportunities and net benefits to the participating economies, those opportunities and net benefits are not equally accessible to all groups in the economies. Attention thus should be paid to those who are likely to suffer from integration-induced impacts either indirectly, by increasing their ability to adapt and mitigate risks, or directly, by enforcing transfers (perhaps from those who have benefited). In particular, small farmers should be targeted, since they lack sustainable food sufficiency and are exposed to the risk of agricultural land reclamation for urban or industrial development.

By targeting the poor and vulnerable groups, food security and social safety nets are indispensable components of social protection. Social protection cannot be implemented in the absence of viable efforts to ensure food security and social safety net programs. Leaving certain proportions of the population with insufficient access to food will deter progress toward hunger eradication while undermining confidence in the poverty reduction programs. Meanwhile, a lack of effective social safety net programs may magnify people's exposure to adverse shocks (such as natural calamities, diseases, etc.), which may threaten the livelihood of vulnerable groups as well as overall social stability. To proceed along the line of social protection, one should acknowledge the importance of developing food security and social safety net programs. Nonetheless, the scope of social protection goes well beyond food security and social safety nets, so efforts are needed to make food security and social safety nets consistent with the broader framework of social protection.

FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL SAFETY NETS IN THE CLMV COUNTRIES⁶

Food Security

Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam (CLV) have enjoyed significant progress in reducing hunger incidence. Compared with the base period of 1990–1992, the number of undernourished people in Cambodia decreased by almost 33.0 percent in 2010–2012, while that of Laos went down by 9.8 percent. Vietnam's progress in hunger reduction was most dramatic, with the number of undernourished dropping by 75 percent in the same period.⁷ In other words, Vietnam has already fulfilled the World Food Summit goal for 2015⁸ and progressed far more rapidly than Southeast Asia as a whole (which has achieved hunger reduction of only 51 percent). Meanwhile, Cambodia should dedicate further efforts to achieving this goal, while Laos needs a significant change in approach to realize the goal by 2015.

The data show even greater progress when considering the proportion of people living in hunger. Compared with the base period of 1990–1992, the proportion of the population that was undernourished in Cambodia went down by 57.5 percent in 2010–2012, while that of Laos dropped by 37.8 percent. Vietnam's figure was again the most impressive, reaching 83 percent, meaning that the country's hunger incidence in 2010–2012 was around one-sixth of that in 1990–1992. In this regard, Vietnam and Cambodia already proceeded beyond the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) to cut the

proportion of the population that is undernourished by 50 percent by 2015. Meanwhile, Laos needs to progress further on hunger reduction before the country can fulfill this MDG target.⁹

The Global Hunger Index (GHI) also shows a significant reduction in hunger incidence in the CLV countries. Vietnam has the most notable achievement, with its GHI rating falling continuously from 25.6 in 1990 to 15.5 in 2001 and to 11.2 in 2012. Meanwhile, that of Laos decreased from 28.6 to 19.7 in 1990–2012, and the figure for Cambodia went down in a similar pattern from 31.8 to 29.6. Still, as classified by their GHI rating, the CLV countries remain in states of serious hunger, despite improvements relative to their previously alarming levels.¹⁰

There are several reasons for the CLV countries' progress in hunger reduction. First, their paddy output has been rising in recent decades. For instance, Vietnam's paddy output went up drastically from 19.2 million tons in 1990 to 32.5 million tons in 2000 and to more than 42.3 million tons in 2011. Meanwhile, thanks to mine clearance, improved security, and reclamation of unused or deforested land, cultivation areas for rice in Cambodia expanded from 1.9 million hectares in 1990–1991 to 2.6 million hectares in 2009–2010, while rice yield also increased from 2.1 tons per hectare to 2.6 tons per hectare during 2000–2008.¹¹

Second, together with regional trade expansion, trade in agricultural products within the CLV countries and with other countries has also grown significantly. While rice trade among the CLV countries may not be significant, as they (especially Vietnam and Cambodia) are largely net exporters of rice, this still helps enhance food security in the region since it provides protection against supply disruptions in their domestic markets.

Nevertheless, certain features of food insecurity remain a concern in the CLV countries, though the extent tends to vary from one country to another. On the one hand, undernourishment still prevails. In Cambodia, the majority of farmers enjoy no net surplus of paddy rice and thus become vulnerable to food insecurity.¹² As of 2008, 65 percent of Cambodian farmers still produced less than enough or just enough for consumption needs. The problem is also prevalent in Laos and Vietnam, with the respective proportions of undernourished people reaching 28 percent and 9 percent in 2011.¹³

On the other hand, even for the populations who could avoid undernourishment, malnutrition could become a major concern in the CLV countries. According to a 2010 survey in Vietnam, 17 percent of children suffered from malnutrition.¹⁴ The situation is worse in Cambodia, where 40 percent of children under five years of age suffered from chronic malnutrition as of 2010, and 11 percent were acutely malnourished.¹⁵ While the

official malnutrition rate in Laos has not been published in recent years, officials there remain wary of the state of malnutrition in their country. Accordingly, even though the CLV countries have progressed toward the MDG goal of hunger reduction, the process may risk being reversed if nutrient supply is not ensured.

Social Safety Nets

Social safety net programs constitute only a small part of the social protection and poverty-reduction system in Vietnam. Such programs include interventions under geographically targeted development and poverty reduction programs and under household-targeted programs such as subsidized access to health insurance for the poor and near-poor. Parts of the social safety net programs are also developed and implemented at the district and commune levels, which are not covered in national policies.

In the geographically targeted development programs, poor people are not the direct specific targets, yet poverty is addressed indirectly through general socioeconomic development. This includes national targeted programs (such as general education, electrification, etc.), budget reallocation mechanisms, and targeted anti-poverty programs. Specifically, the provinces formulate their need-based development plans to submit to the central government, and these plans lay the foundation for subsequent budget allocations.

The geographically targeted poverty reduction programs are aimed at addressing structural poverty in remote regions, many of which have a high share of ethnic minorities. The most notable program since the late 1990s has been Programme 135, which—via targeted resource allocation to geographic regions with high concentrations of ethnic minorities and with the poorest communes—is aimed at equipping local people with market-oriented production capabilities. This program has focused largely on investment, with the majority of expenditures going to infrastructure development. Meanwhile, the program does not incorporate any instruments for contingent support to people experiencing adverse shocks, even though there is some monthly subsistence benefit for children in primary and preschool education. Another program, targeting the poorest 63 districts, was implemented in 2009 as part of the stimulus package following the global financial crisis and economic downturn. This program targets poor areas instead of poor households, with support going directly to agricultural production, job creation, and income generation, including preparations for labor export and programs to enhance education and training.

Box 1: Experience of poverty reduction in China and Vietnam

Vietnam and China experienced some common trends and characteristics regarding poverty during their reform processes. First, poor people are largely concentrated in rural, mountainous, and remote areas with poor infrastructure and other unfavorable conditions. Second, poverty incidence is highest among ethnic minority populations. Third, farmers are likely to be the poorest in the population. Finally, the poor tend to have more children, have less access to land, and be less educated.

Several major factors affecting the pace of poverty reduction have also been identified. First, poverty reduction is closely linked with growth in GDP per capita, though economic growth is not sufficient for poverty reduction. Second, macroeconomic fluctuations and external shocks can adversely affect the poor, as they typically have limited opportunities to insure against income shocks. Finally, government investment and spending—particularly in technology, infrastructure development, and education—have been crucial to growth and poverty reduction in China and Vietnam.¹⁶

Among the key challenges with the geographically targeted programs has been the lack of adjustment to outbreaks of major adverse shocks. As noted by the World Bank, such programs were not adjusted or expanded in response to the economic crisis in 2009 and could not be used as a safety net after the crisis. For instance, people who lost their jobs in urban areas or industrial zones received little support (in terms of income or access to job opportunities) upon returning to their previous jobs or to their rural areas of origin.¹⁷

Despite the lack of adjustment in existing programs, Vietnam made several efforts to provide social relief during the domestic economic downturn in 2009. As part of the stimulus package adopted around Tet—the Vietnamese New Year—in February 2009, the government provided a once-off targeted transfer to poor people (VND 200,000 per poor person, or about US\$9.50). Numerous other poverty reduction and social security policies were implemented in 2009 using resources from the stimulus package. For example, Vietnam emphasized attempts at constructing water systems for populated areas and areas with large populations of ethnic minorities and constructing housing projects for workers in industrial parks. Credit subsidies were also offered to support the purchase of agricultural machines, payment of wages and salaries, and the provision of social insurance for enterprises. Those programs have contributed to the stabilization and improvement of people's lives, especially poor people.¹⁸

Meanwhile, Vietnam has a variety of programs aimed at households, including preferential access to credit, education and social service subsidies, and cash transfers. First, the country set out a range of policies and projects under the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy

as well as under the National Targeted Programme for Poverty Reduction (NTP-PR) to enhance access to economic assets and services for poor people. Those policies and projects are summarized in table 1. Second, non-contributory social assistance cash transfers are provided to different social groups, especially those who are particularly vulnerable to adverse shocks, mainly in the form of income transfers. Nevertheless, these cash transfers are not adjusted and, by design, fail to serve as a tool to cope with income shocks.

For the past several decades, Cambodia has carried out various projects and programs with a view to ensuring social safety nets, and the country was supported by various major donors in this process. Still, Cambodia suffers from a lack of an effective and affordable social safety net system.¹⁹ In fact, the current social safety net system in Cambodia focuses on support for pensioners (including civil servants and veterans), support for employees in the formal private sector, food for school students, food for workers, and scholarships targeted at female students. Cash transfers are also available solely as support for the victims of natural disasters.

Nonetheless, there are limitations to the existing social safety net system. First, the programs and projects still target particular geographic areas, sectors, and social groups. Second, the programs employ different methodologies for identifying beneficiaries. Third, the social safety net programs are often funded largely by development partners through specific projects, while the broader framework for social protection and harmonization of donor support remains ineffective.²⁰ In addition, there is a lack of effective coordination between the relevant ministries, local agencies, and civil society organizations.²¹

Laos still has very limited experience with social safety nets. Social security and health insurance are still confined to employees in the public sector and in the formal private sector in urban areas. There are only a few elements of social safety nets that are being used as instruments against adverse shocks. As one example, the country has adopted some cash transfer programs for disaster relief, particularly in rural areas. Transfers of cash or food for work are also available. Finally, support is provided to school children (via feeding programs) and those children and women who are at risk of being trafficked.

Like the situation in Cambodia, however, such transfers are largely implemented and financed by international donors in cooperation with the relevant ministries. Therefore, it appears that the support has been fragmented and uncoordinated. At the same time, the scope of such transfer programs remains quite limited. The existing schemes for social safety nets in Laos usually seek to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters or target

Table 1: NTP-PR policies and projects and objectives

| NTP-PR Project or Policy | Objective |
|--|--|
| Policies and projects facilitating production development and increased income for poor people | |
| 1 Policy on preferential credit for poor households | Enhance poor people's financial capital in order to make investments that will increase cash income |
| 2 Policy on provision of productive land for poor ethnic households | Provide poor ethnic minorities with a principal asset—land—through which to increase food security and income-earning potential |
| 3 Project on agricultural-forestry-fishery extension and support for development of production and occupation | Increase the human capital base of poor people to enable them to make commercially oriented decisions that maximize the use of the household's available assets |
| 4 Project on development of necessary infrastructure for communities with special difficulties in coastline and island areas | Strengthen the enabling environment in poor communes to enable poor households to access markets and income-earning opportunities and to stimulate commercial activity in poor areas |
| 5 Project on vocational training for poor people | Strengthen the human capital of poor people, equipping them with knowledge and skills to access employment or market opportunities |
| 6 Project on replication of good practices in poverty reduction | Develop models and share experience to ensure that production models are transmitted from successful areas |
| Policies facilitating poor people's access to social services | |
| 7 Policy on healthcare for poor people | Enable poor people to access state health services free of charge in order to enjoy better health as an end in itself and also to be more productive |
| 8 Policy on education for poor people | Enable poor students who would otherwise be unable to attend school to participate in education, strengthening their human capital, their future employment and income-earning prospects, and the long term economic prospects of their households |
| 9 Policy on housing and clean water supply | Improve the environmental sanitation conditions in poor communes to improve communal health and the productivity of villagers who should then be less prone to disease |
| 10 Policy on legal support for poor people | Enable poor people to access information and support in pursuance of their rights to access state services |
| Projects on capacity building and awareness raising | |
| 11 Project on enhancement of poverty reduction capacity | |
| 12 Monitoring and evaluation | |

Source: NTP-PR Mid-Term Review (cited in Human Development Sector Unit 2010).

only the very poorest areas, and they are very short in duration. Accordingly, there remain various social groups who have to cope with shocks without any support.²²

In summary, the CLMV countries have made progress on ensuring food security while attaching greater importance to strengthening social safety nets with a view to addressing shocks. The increasing attention toward developing the social safety nets in recent years was largely induced by the severity of shocks at both the global and regional levels, including the global financial crisis, food price shocks, and natural calamities. In this regard, there has been a closer link between ensuring food security and enhancing social safety nets in the CLMV agenda. Nonetheless, social safety nets are being developed as new shock-mitigating instruments, while the existing programs and projects have not been adjusted in response to the shocks. Moreover, except in Vietnam, the social safety net programs and projects are largely donor driven and, notwithstanding their relevance to actual needs, remain fragmented and uncoordinated. Finally, the institutions that help invoke social safety nets against adverse shocks lag far behind in terms of efficiency given the CLMV countries' lack of experience with the instruments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the above discussion of food security and social safety nets in the CLMV countries, with a view to enhancing the efficient use of such instruments, several major lines of action can be recommended, to be undertaken with possible support from Japan.

First, the CLMV countries should change their approach by identifying and formulating action plans that target poor and near-poor households more directly. At this stage, the various poverty reduction programs and activities still target socioeconomic development, hoping to produce positive spillover impacts to poor and near-poor people. While these programs serve the purpose of enhancing access to economic assets and opportunities, they fail to incorporate sufficient flexibility. In other words, by design they seek to achieve certain goals related to poverty reduction and food security within the broader framework of socioeconomic development and are too rigid to be adjusted when a major shock occurs. Moreover, as poverty reduction and food security are indirect targets, the extent of adjustments that are necessary cannot be identified with any level of accuracy while a shock is occurring.

By attaching greater importance to reducing poverty at the household level, the CLMV countries should put poor (and if possible near-poor)

people at the center of their food security and social safety net programs. While this involves more efforts by governments and civil societies, the outcomes would certainly be more fruitful. The successful experience of Vietnam in providing cash transfers to poor people during the Tet holiday should be replicated. This poor people-centered approach, if enacted, would also be attractive to donors like Japan and would therefore help raise additional resources.

Second, using this approach, the CLMV countries should amalgamate and develop a consistent framework at the national level to ensure food security and to strengthen social safety nets. While the CLMV countries have certainly made progress in consolidating food sufficiency, they should dedicate further efforts to address malnutrition. Given that the CLMV countries are net exporters of food products while a significant portion of the population still suffers from food insecurity, the complicated net impacts from food price hikes require broader consideration to smooth out transfers from net beneficiaries to those who are worse off following such hikes. Cooperation between ASEAN and Japan may be used to benefit the CLMV countries by giving their agricultural products more open access to Japan's markets.

At the same time, the framework for social safety nets should attain wider scope and greater consistency. Specifically, it should set out the roles for different agencies, civil society organizations, and donors in contributing to better social security and in enhancing people's capacity to cope with shocks. The geographic areas and sectors with existing or potential concerns should also be identified, thereby helping align development programs and projects. The connection between social safety nets and socioeconomic development should be further enhanced, particularly for poor and remote areas. In this regard, Japan's support for infrastructure development and better connectivity of the poor and remote areas should play an important role.

Third, community-based monitoring mechanisms should be strengthened in the CLMV countries to ensure more timely identification of poor households and people. This should be part of a decentralization framework that permits greater voices from the local communities. This mechanism has already been implemented to some extent in the CLMV countries and helps generate household- and individual-level data on the different dimensions of poverty. Yet the connection between the mechanism and the relevant government agencies, civil society organizations, and donors should be reinforced to avoid double monitoring and related waste of resources. With the help of community-based monitoring, governments' social safety net programs may become more effective as they can target the relevant households without leakages or exclusions.²³

Finally, the CLMV countries should work more closely with development partners such as Japan to engage them in food security and social safety net programs. On the one hand, in consultation with local governments, donors and other agencies and organizations may develop and implement relevant programs to build capacity in areas related to ensuring food security and social safety nets. Examples of such areas may include identifying different dimensions of poverty at the household or individual level, maintaining sufficiency of nutrients in daily food intakes, and coping with various types of natural calamities. On the other hand, by working with different donors and development partners, the CLMV countries should better harmonize their activities and contributions to food security and social safety net programs, thereby avoiding the fragmentation and lack of coordination among donors' activities. Vietnam has so far done a good job at harmonizing donors' efforts, and this experience should be disseminated to Laos and Cambodia promptly.

In this context, Japan, in coordination with other donors, can help the CLMV countries achieve food security and social safety nets at the regional level. To complement efforts at both national and subnational levels, the line of action at the regional level should focus more on provision of regional public goods. Specifically, infrastructure, service links, and access to basic utilities for poor and vulnerable groups should remain the core pillars of development programs supported by Japan and other donors, even though this only addresses poverty indirectly.

At the same time, Japan can participate more actively in regional initiatives such as the ASEAN Food Security Information System and the ASEAN+3 Emergency Rice Reserves, which also benefit food security in the CLMV countries, even though they are net exporters of food products. Various studies support this recommendation.²⁴ It is worth noting that the participation of Japan is in line with Article 20 of Japan's 1999 Basic Law on Food, Agriculture and Rural Areas, which states that "national food security cannot be achieved without regional and global food security." Thus, a regional food security framework needs to incorporate the following elements:

- Channels for sharing information and knowledge, including a comprehensive and standardized food information system
- Assessment, early warning, and prediction
- Response plans
- Steps to address food insecurities, including investment in production capacity, post-harvest infrastructure, and distribution and market systems; as well as poverty and hunger alleviation²⁵

Considering Japan's vast experience, it can also play an active role in supporting the CLMV countries' social safety net programs, starting with **dissemination of expertise**. For example, Japan may consider sharing its experience managing funds for elderly people. In addition, Japan can teach the CLMV countries how to formulate relevant mechanisms and build capacity to provide contingent support, particularly during times of crisis. The CLMV countries should by no means expect an event of equal severity as the recent tsunami and nuclear crisis in northeastern Japan, but they could still learn from how Japan has coped with these crises.

In addition, Japan may consider supporting the CLMV countries in various ways. Japan may support **the enhancement of institutional and technology capacity** in the CLMV countries. A key area would be the development of an overall consistent framework for reducing poverty that incorporates food security and social safety net programs. While this depends on the recognition of the framework's importance by the CLMV countries, technical assistance from Japan may play a critical role. Japan can enhance productivity in their agricultural sectors by transferring technology and know-how and supporting collaborative research and development (R&D) activities. The CLMV countries (and ASEAN more widely) are likely to become the resource base, particularly in agriculture, for Japan.

Japan can also work with the CLMV countries to **develop infrastructure aimed at enhancing connectivity for poor and remote or mountainous areas**. Based on lessons from Vietnam, this may contribute to reducing poverty in the region. Importantly, financial support from Japan may target the primary infrastructure network linking with the secondary network. Japan can take part in developing regional funding schemes to co-finance national investments in agricultural and rural infrastructure. Moreover, as economic relations with the CLMV countries proliferate, Japan may be in a good position to link poverty reduction and social safety nets with the development of economic zones. In this process, involvement from the Japanese side may include both enterprises (as creators of employment for local people) and the government (via technical and financial support).

At the regional level, Japan may also channel **support to various other initiatives** focused on food security and social safety net programs (or, more broadly, poverty reduction) for the CLMV countries. First, detailed research on the current situation, issues, and future trends of food insecurity, malnutrition, and vulnerability among social groups in the CLMV countries may constitute a pillar for future resource allocation. Second, via dialogue with the CLMV countries, Japan may propose some joint mechanisms to address both macroeconomic instability and food insecurity. Finally, Japan may help the CLMV countries develop a community-based monitoring

system at the regional level, which can be readily linked to the existing circumstances within each country. Of foremost importance in this process is renewed commitment alongside investment within the developing countries themselves.²⁶

In general, these recommendations are not really new when compared with the visions, approaches, and programs proposed in the existing ASEAN-Japan cooperation frameworks to narrow the development gap, develop agriculture, ensure food security and social protection, and manage natural disasters (see appendix). They are more or less consistent with those frameworks. But three points warrant special emphasis.

First, issues of food security and social protection in the CLMV countries should be viewed in the much broader context of regional development and integration. As emphasized by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), “A challenge here is how far we can utilize private market forces to achieve inclusiveness rather than heavily depending on social policy for direct income distribution.”²⁷

Second, to be effective, any ASEAN-Japan or CLMV-Japan cooperation initiative needs to be accompanied by an appropriate implementing institution. Thus, capacity building is a most essential element for support.

Third, regional cooperation for social protection has become increasingly possible thanks to wider and deeper interconnections in areas such as science, technology, and business. The region has also become more vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. But the regional framework also faces obstacles. One is the uncertainties associated with the capability to anticipate an impending food crisis or potential disruptions in the production of food.²⁸ Another is the potentially high cost of sustaining various kinds of “regional public goods” and operating them effectively. That is why there is a need for more in-depth research, taking into account the dynamic changes and new development now occurring in the region and in the world.



This chapter has covered issues of food security and social safety nets in the CLMV countries with a view to addressing their major challenges through actions that can be taken with support from Japan. But the issues should not be considered only within the framework of CLMV-Japan cooperation. They can be extended to a broader framework of ASEAN-Japan cooperation.

In fact, following the Tokyo Declaration for the Dynamic and Enduring Japan-ASEAN Partnership in the New Millennium (2003), and in order to implement the Joint Declaration for Enhancing ASEAN-Japan Strategic

Partnership for Prospering Together (Bali Declaration), ASEAN and Japan adopted a Plan of Action 2011–2015, which presented five strategies:

Strategy 1: strengthening political-security cooperation in the region

Strategy 2: intensifying cooperation toward ASEAN community building

Strategy 3: enhancing ASEAN-Japan connectivity for consolidating ties between ASEAN and Japan

Strategy 4: creating together a more disaster-resilient society

Strategy 5: addressing together common regional and global challenges

The ASEAN-Japan Plan of Action emphasizes a number of activities to enhance ASEAN-Japan cooperation and Japanese support for ensuring food security and developing agriculture, as well as for creating a disaster-resilient society in the region (see appendix). Moreover, the Jakarta Framework endorsed by ASEAN leaders at the 2011 Bali ASEAN Summit consists of interdependent pathways for moving ASEAN forward beyond 2015 to become a community with the following traits:

- a dynamic, resilient, competitive, and sustainable regional economy
- a thriving, healthy, equitable, and harmonious regional community
- a globally connected, influential, important, and engaged ASEAN

Several topics have been defined for studies to “clarify” the Jakarta Framework, including those associated with the issues of social protection (e.g., growth, poverty, and income inequality in ASEAN; exploring the food security and environment nexus in ASEAN; addressing the social safety net challenges in ASEAN; and disaster management in ASEAN).²⁹ Those approaches, views, and studies could serve as a good background and foundation for further strengthening meaningful cooperation between ASEAN and Japan in the areas of food security and social protection.

**APPENDIX: ASEAN-JAPAN COOPERATION ON
SOCIAL PROTECTION AND FOOD SECURITY**

| | AEC Mid-term Review, 2012 | Jakarta Framework, 2011 | Tokyo Declaration on ASEAN-Japan Cooperation, 2003 | ASEAN- Japan Plan of Action 2011–2015 |
|--|---------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Narrowing the development gap | | | | |
| - Priority in ASEAN integration/ ASEAN-Japan cooperation | X | X (including geographic inclusiveness, | X | X |
| - Initiative for ASEAN Integration | X | industrial inclusiveness, | X | X |
| - Small and medium enterprise development | X | and social in- clusiveness) | X | X |
| - Connectivity/subregional development | X | | X | X |
| Agriculture development | | | | |
| - Minimization of “core non-tariff measures” to lower non-tariff barriers | X | | X | X |
| - R&D cooperation and technol- ogy transfers | X | | X | X |
| - Capacity building, sharing best practices | X | | | |
| - Development of regional funding schemes to co-finance national investments in agricul- tural and rural infrastructure | X | | | |
| Food security | | | | |
| - (Full) implementation of ASEAN +3 Emergency Rice Reserves | X | X | X | X |
| - Food safety cooperation | X | | X | X |
| - Networking for capacity build- ing and information exchange | | | X | X |
| Social protection & disaster management | | | | |
| - Regional schemes for unskilled labor mobility & migrants | X | | | X |
| - Early warning system, moni- toring, disaster relief, and responses | | | | X |
| - Schemes/networking for capac- ity building and training | X | | X | X |

Source: Author's compilation from various sources.

NOTES

1. The author would like to thank the members of the Economic Community Study Group for their comments, especially at the workshop on “ASEAN-Japan Strategic Partnership in Southeast Asia” in Tokyo on February 2–4, 2013.
2. Vo Tri Thanh, “Narrowing the Development Gap in ASEAN: Approaches and Policy Recommendations,” research paper for the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, 2008.
3. Aris Ananta, “Sustainable and Just Social Protection in Southeast Asia,” *ASEAN Economic Bulletin* 29, no. 3 (2012), 171–83.
4. World Bank Group, *Social Protection Sector Strategy: From Safety Net to Springboard* (Washington DC: World Bank, 2001).
5. Ananta, “Sustainable and Just Social Protection.”
6. This section focuses specifically on the situation in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Reference to the situation in Myanmar is only drawn where possible due to limited access to data for the country.
7. Calculations from Population and Undernourishment Incidence data of the World Bank, <http://worldbank.org/indicator/SN.ITK.DEFC.ZS>.
8. That is, to reduce the number of undernourished people by 50 percent by 2015.
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