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## **Paper Abstract**

### **Poverty, Inequality, and Recent Development of Social Protection— The Social Protection Index: Assessing Results for Asia and the Pacific**

**Sri Wening Handayani  
Asian Development Bank**

The study analyzes social protection programs in 35 countries in Asia and the Pacific. Social protection has been well documented as an essential instrument for reducing poverty and inequality. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) used its Social Protection Index (SPI) to help assess the nature and effectiveness of social protection programs and to facilitate cross-country comparisons. The analysis found that many countries, especially middle income countries, are spending too little on social protection with average social protection expenditure at 3.4% of GDP. Social insurance is the dominant form of social protection which benefits salaried employees in public and well-established private sectors. In most Asia–Pacific countries, social assistance systems appear underdeveloped, and are usually dwarfed by social insurance on spending. Few governments have explicitly chosen to target the moderately poor or near-poor who are often neglected by both social insurance and social assistance programs. Governments in Asia and the Pacific allot minimum expenditures for active labor market programs. Women have less access to social insurance, social assistance and labor market programs. The study suggests that most countries in Asia and the Pacific, particularly middle-income countries, need to scale up and broaden their social protection system.