MEASURING WELL-BEING "BEYOND GDP" IN ASIA, SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND KOREA

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Abstract

Well-being and sustainability are complex issues that cannot be successfully captured by a single indicator such as GDP (Gross Domestic Product). For the Asian countries, the rapid economic growth often came at the cost of economic, social and environmental inequalities and depletion of the resources that sustain well-being over time. In this context, existing well-being measurement initiatives in the region, such as the Quality of Life Indicators in Korea, Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index and Quality of Life Index in the Philippines, shed some insight on dimensions that should be considered for measuring well-being *beyond GDP* in Asia. Dimensions of housing, health, education, environment and civic engagement recur across several Asian well-being measurement frameworks, as well as dimensions such as family and culture which are more characteristic of the region. Identifying vulnerable population groups and securing better evidence on social mobility are also necessary to better measure progress in the region. Going forward, it would be helpful for countries to exchange knowledge on how well-being data available can be used for policy making in a more concrete way, for example, by including it in national development plans or budgeting processes.

Résumé

Le bien-être et la durabilité sont des questions complexes qui ne peuvent être appréhendées par un seul indicateur tel que le PIB (produit intérieur brut). Pour les pays asiatiques, la croissance économique rapide s'est souvent faite au prix d'inégalités économiques, sociales et environnementales et de l'épuisement des ressources qui soutiennent le bien-être au fil du temps. Dans ce contexte, les initiatives existantes de mesure du bien-être dans la région, telles que les indicateurs de qualité de vie en Corée, l'indice du bonheur national brut au Bhoutan et l'indice de qualité de vie aux Philippines, donnent un aperçu des dimensions qui devraient être prises en compte pour mesurer le bien-être au-delà du PIB en Asie. Les dimensions du logement, de la santé, de l'éducation, de l'environnement et de l'engagement civique sont récurrentes dans plusieurs cadres de mesure du bien-être en Asie, de même que des dimensions telles que la famille et la culture, qui sont plus caractéristiques de la région. Il est également nécessaire d'identifier les groupes de population vulnérables et d'obtenir de meilleures données sur la mobilité sociale pour mieux mesurer les progrès réalisés dans la région. À l'avenir, il serait utile que les pays échangent leurs connaissances sur la manière dont les données disponibles sur le bien-être peuvent être utilisées de manière plus concrète pour l'élaboration des politiques, par exemple en les incluant dans les plans de développement nationaux ou les processus budgétaires.

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1 Introduction

Countries in Asia have achieved remarkable economic progress over the last half a century. Despite these achievements, key challenges, such as demographic change, inequalities in social development and opportunities, and environmental degradation, remain. The OECD's longstanding work on measuring economic performance and social progress beyond GDP, also known as OECD's work on well-being, has shown that well-being approaches help frame economic, social and environmental challenges in a holistic manner. These approaches have also been underpinning new policy tools, such as New Zealand's Well-being Budget, that governments have put in place to address cross-cutting issues that require the consideration of the interrelated drivers and consequences of economic and social changes. In this context, the *International Conference on Measuring Well-Being "Beyond GDP" in Asia, South-East Asia and Korea ("Conference")*, held in Seoul in September 2023, offered an opportunity to review multidimensional approaches to measuring the outcomes that matter to people, and discuss how applying a well-being approach to policy could support countries in addressing the highly interconnected challenges they face on a variety of dimensions.

This working paper builds on the key issues paper for the conference and is structured following the panel sessions during the Conference. Section 2 sets the scene by introducing various efforts by international organisations, such as the OECD and the United Nations, to highlight the relevance of well-being and the measurement of societal progress 'beyond GDP' for the region. Section 3 identifies common dimensions of well-being, topics and measurement gaps in the regional context. Section 4 focuses on Korea and introduces examples of existing initiatives and approaches in Korea which measure well-being *beyond GDP*, in particular, Korea's Quality of Life indicators. Section 5 presents how enhancing well-being of vulnerable populations as well as of children, can help achieve greater equality between population groups. Section 6 includes suggestions as to how well-being data available in Asia can be used in policy. Finally, section 7 concludes suggesting next steps and how the OECD can support the region in further developing well-being approaches.

Strengthening engagement with Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific at large has long been a priority for the OECD, as exemplified by the launch of the Southeast Asia Regional Programme (SEARP) in 2014 and more recently signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 2022. As such, the Conference and this working paper may constitute the first milestone of a broader OECD project on multidimensional well-being in Asia, Southeast Asia and Korea. The discussions at the Conference have contributed to the development of the conceptual and measurement framework of this potential project, by building on the most promising well-being initiatives in the region, and by reflecting on the policy processes where the well-being evidence would be most relevant.

2 Insights on measuring well-being from an international perspective

Introduction

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is an internationally recognized measure of the economic production and performance of a country. It has been used for measuring the growth of economies for a large part of the twentieth century and, as such, it is still the "predominant political benchmark" (UN, 2023[1]). In absence of better alternatives, GDP has become a proxy for measuring value and wealth creation, development progress, and the yardstick for development financing (UN, 2023[1]). Furthermore, while not designed for this purpose, it is often used to represent societal progress or the economic well-being of the population.

Despite its wide use as a measure of economic development, changes in GDP only measure changes in economic production. It is insufficient for describing and tackling various social and environmental challenges that are of increasing importance and does not capture the complexities of these issues. For example, GDP does not provide a picture of economic, social and environmental inequalities and of the important stocks that sustain well-being over time. GDP also lacks information on important aspects of well-being that matter most to people: whether people are healthy (physically and mentally); whether social support and cohesion are strong in the society; and whether people think that their life has a purpose, for instance. These important aspects of life need a proper accounting, beyond GDP (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009[2]; UN, 2023[1]; United Nations, 2022[3]; OECD, 2011[4]; OECD, 2020[5]). GDP as a proxy of national prosperity can also be misleading as some activities that impair, rather than foster, well-being (such as wars and illegal activities) increase GDP. As the OECD's work has shown over the last two decades, GDP growth does not necessarily translate into better living conditions for all.

Well-being and sustainability are multifaceted concepts that cannot be successfully captured by a single indicator. Rather, a multidimensional, dashboard approach may be more helpful in identifying areas which call for greater policy attention. The complex challenges faced by today's policy makers require a more comprehensive accounting of social, economic and environmental issues and their dynamic interrelations. For example, in Asia, the considerable socio-economic progress made by East and North-East Asia has come at the cost of environmental sustainability, while South-East Asia is one of the regions most vulnerable to the impact of climate change (UNESCAP, 2023[6]).

In this context, countries around the world are developing multidimensional welfare or well-being initiatives to measure, monitor and pursue well-being in a holistic manner. For example, two-thirds of OECD countries have developed national frameworks, development plans or surveys with a multidimensional well-being focus to monitor progress and inform policy processes (OECD, 2023[7]). There is also a growing commitment to measuring economic advancement beyond GDP, using multidimensional frameworks and indicators. *Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index*, *Quality of Life Index (QLI) in the Philippines* and Korea's *Quality of Life Index* are some notable examples in the Asian region. While these national multidimensional welfare or well-being initiatives take different shapes and sizes, they share common

features: a multidimensional coverage of various aspects of well-being and a focus on both sustainability and inclusion (OECD, 2023[7]).

International organizations are also supporting countries in advancing work on well-being measurement and monitoring, as well as on integrated policy approaches to integrate well-being evidence in policymaking processes. Many national well-being initiatives often draw on existing work and established, consensus-based frameworks developed by international organizations such as the *OECD Well-being Framework* and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, targets and indicators ("*UN SDGs*") (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division, n.d.[8]; UN, 2015[9]). Other international initiatives, such as the UNEP's *"Inclusive Wealth Report"* (UNEP, 2022[10]) and the World Bank's *"Changing Wealth of Nations"* (World Bank, 2021[11]), have also highlighted that wealth is not just economic and have developed methods to account for total wealth (natural, human, social, produced and financial capital) and assess changes across all countries, regardless of income level (UN, 2023[1]).

International efforts for measuring well-being

The OECD Well-being Framework

For nearly two decades, the OECD has been advancing work on the measurement of well-being, inclusion and sustainability, and on how these measures can be used to inform better policy-making. In particular, the OECD has complemented macroeconomic indicators like GDP with the OECD Well-Being framework, which provides a comprehensive assessment of people's material living conditions and quality of life, and the inclusiveness of these outcomes, today and in the future. The OECD Well-being Framework (Figure 2.1) based on the recommendations by the Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi-led Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, 2009[2]) and various national initiatives in the field, guides the OECD's work on monitoring trends in the diverse experiences and living conditions of people, as well as in the sustainability of well-being across member and partner countries. This Framework was developed by the OECD Statistics Directorate in 2011, under the guidance of the Committee on Statistics and Statistical policy.

The OECD Well-being Framework includes both material (e.g. income, wealth, jobs, housing) and non-material (e.g. environment, education, safety) dimensions, as well as more relational aspects of well-being (e.g. social connections) (Box 2.1). The *How's Life?* reports (OECD, 2011[4]; 2013[12]; 2015[13]; 2017[14]; 2020[5]) regularly assess and monitor well-being, leveraging existing internationally harmonized data, based on the *How's Life? Well-being database* (OECD, n.d.[15]). The dashboard underpinning the Framework features over 80 well-being indicators, together with disaggregated data (by age, gender and education), deprivations and dispersion measures, covering 41 countries and with time series dating back to 2005 where possible (OECD, n.d.[15]). Despite some persistent measurement gaps, every domain of the OECD framework can be described with international data. The dashboard has also been comprehensively reviewed and adapted in 2019 to ensure its alignment with more recent developments in data availability, quality and in national measurement practices (OECD, 2020[5]).

Box 2.1. The OECD Well-being Framework

The OECD Well-being Framework (Figure 2.1), **with over 80 indicators, provides a structure for operationalizing the notion of well-being in different contexts.**

- **Current well-being** is comprised of 11 dimensions: these relate to material conditions that shape people's economic options as well as quality-of-life factors that encompass how well people are (and how well they feel they are), what they know and can do, and how healthy and safe their places of living are. Dimensions addressing community relations encompass how connected and engaged people are, and how and with whom they spend their time.

- **Inequalities** are systematically considered, in addition to averages: gaps between population groups (e.g. between men and women); gaps between those at the top and those at the bottom of the distribution in each dimension (e.g. the income of the richest 20% of individuals compared to that of the poorest 20%); and deprivations (the share of the population falling below a given threshold, e.g. a minimum level of skills or health).

- **Resources for future well-being** are measured in terms of a country's investment in (or depletion of) different types of capital resources that last over time but that are also affected by decisions taken (or not taken) today. They include natural capital (stocks of natural resources, land cover, species biodiversity, as well as ecosystems and their services), economic capital (man-made or produced capital and financial assets), human capital (skills and the future health of the population) and social capital (social norms, shared values and institutional arrangements that foster cooperation).

Figure 2.1. The OECD Well-being Framework
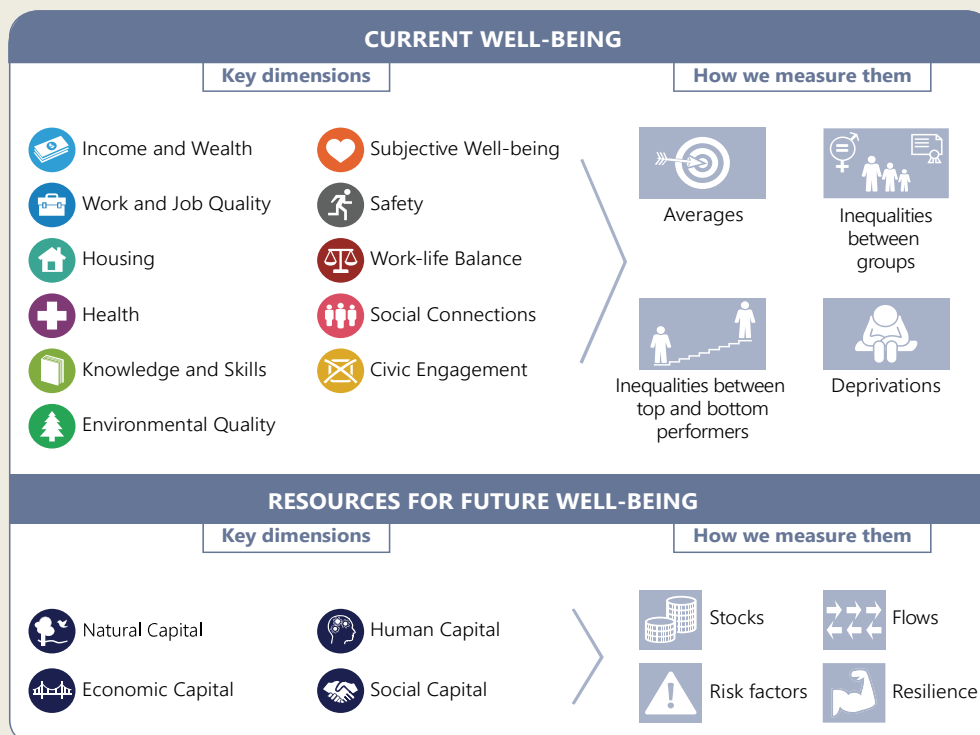
Source: OECD (2020[5]), *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en.

The OECD Well-being Framework has been used to assess the impact of both pressing and long-standing challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021[16]), mental health (OECD, 2023[17]), the built environment (OECD, 2023[18]) and digitalisation (OECD, 2019[19]) on people's well-being. The well-being lens has also been used to implement regional analysis of well-being. For example, the *report "How's Life in Latin America? Measuring well-being for policy making"* (OECD, 2021[20]) i) describes well-being and sustainability in Latin America, leveraging existing evidence, ii) identifies priorities for addressing well-being gaps and iii) describes how well-being frameworks are used in policy within Latin America and elsewhere around the world. Another report *"How's Life in Your Region? : Measuring Regional and Local Well-being for Policy Making"* (OECD, 2014[21]) presented the OECD analytical framework to measure well-being at the regional level, while discussing methodological and political solutions for selecting regional well-being outcome indicators. Furthermore, the OECD Regional Well-being web tool was developed as an interactive website for the public to measure well-being in their respective region, enabling comparison with 446 OECD regions based on eleven topics central to people's well-being (OECD, 2018[22]).

Updating the System of National Accounts

The update of the System of National Accounts (SNA) aims to broaden the framework to better account for people's well-being and sustainability, following the mandate of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC). Several international organizations, including the OECD, the United Nations (UN), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Eurostat and the World Bank, have joined forces to revise and update the System of National Accounts (SNA) (UNSC, n.d.[23]). Dedicated task teams have been established to undertake the technical research and draft guidance notes (UNSD, n.d.[24]), with the OECD leading the work of the Well-being and Sustainability Task Team (WSTT). The 2025 SNA will include more detailed information on important topics affecting household well-being, such as health care and education, and will enhance the link between the economy and the environment with more granular breakdowns for natural capital (including renewable energy resources) (Van Rompaey and Zwijnenburg, 2023[25]). Depletion of natural resources will be reflected in net measures, recognizing the use of these resources as a cost of production, at the expense of future generations. The new SNA will also include complementary measures, among others, to account for household unpaid activities (such as care giving and cleaning) and to provide insights into the distribution of income, consumption and wealth across different household groups. Finally, the SNA update will give greater visibility to digitalization and free digital services, which are also relevant aspects for current well-being (OECD, 2023[7]).

System of Environmental-Economic Accounting

The System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) Central Framework and the SEEA Ecosystem Accounting present an integrated statistical framework that measures the contribution of natural assets and ecosystems to the economy as well as the impacts of the economy on the environment and on the natural capital that a country is endowed with. By using the same accounting rules, definitions, and classifications for environmental information as those used for economic information in the SNA, the SEEA uses a language which economic policymakers and the financial sector are more familiar with (United Nations, 2022[3]).

Expansion of the "Beyond GDP" agenda: recent initiatives in the United Nations, ASEAN and Europe

The Rio+20 Conference with the Commitment *"The Future we want"* (United Nations, 2012[26]) laid the foundations for defining key pillars of the 2030 Agenda. The 2030 Agenda, with its 17 inter-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets, spans 231 unique indicators agreed by the international statistical community to monitor progress. The SDG agenda has been fully embraced by National Statistical Offices (NSOs) of the Asian region, and National development plans (NDPs) are being

aligned with it. For example, the Philippine Statistics Authority monitors the country's achievements in the SDGs, which also informs the national government's priority development agenda (as embodied in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP)) (Guillen, 2017[27]). The SDGs framework itself embodies many aspects of a well-being approach, with a vision of progress that is multidimensional and centered on inclusive and sustainable outcomes for people and the planet. In addition, key performance indicators on well-being are often integrated within the National Development Plans to monitor progress in a transparent and quantifiable manner (OECD, 2023[7]).

To accelerate action towards the SDGs and keep the *"Beyond GDP"* ambition high, the UN Secretary General António Guterres has proposed the development of a set of 10 to 20 headline indicators to focus and balance policy efforts, building on existing indicators (SDG indicators in particular) and current statistical frameworks (UN, 2023[1]). The UN high-level forum "Statistical measures beyond GDP", organized in occasion of the 54th session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in February 2023, has mirrored the growing demand from policy makers, governments, academics and the public to move the measures of societal progress beyond GDP (UNSD, 2023[28]). More recently, in preparation for the Summit of the Future in 2024, the United Nations Network of Economic Statisticians has been organizing "Beyond GDP" Sprint 2023 meetings until October 2023 to ensure that the momentum of this issue is sustained (UNSD, n.d.[29]). The UN Secretary General has suggested launching technical work on the *"UN Data Agenda for Beyond GDP"* after the 2024 Summit of the Future, building on its outcomes (United Nations, 2022[3]). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also has a long history of working on human development through the Human Development Index (HDI), which combines well-being achievements in three dimensions: health, education and income (Conceição, 2023[30]). Its *Gender Social Norms Index*, published in June 2023, is also in line with efforts to measure progress beyond income, but rather than measuring achievements, it quantifies gender biases and prejudices in political, educational, economic, and physical integrity dimensions (Conceição, 2023[30]).

The *"Beyond GDP"* agenda is also expanding on the regional scale. In the Asia Pacific region, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) organized a *"Measuring Progress Beyond GDP"* side event to feed into deliberations under the "Beyond GDP" Sprint of agenda item 3(o) (UNSD, 2022[31]) of the 53rd session of the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2022 (UNESCAP, 2022[32]). In 2022, the 8th Asia-Pacific Committee on Statistics, with representatives from National Statistical Offices, decided to feature the production and use of complementary progress measures in its future work with an emphasis on climate change-related statistics (Beaven, 2023[33]). During the 79th session of UNESCAP in May 2023, governments from across Asia and the Pacific also adopted ten UN resolutions to strengthen regional action and partnerships towards achieving the UN SDGs (UNESCAP, 2023[34]).

The Association of Southeast Asian Countries (ASEAN) also aims to measure what matters in order to realize an *inclusive and resilient ASEAN Community* enshrined in the ASEAN Vision 2025, also aligned with the SDGs (Musngi, 2023[35]). ASEAN's Framework for Sustainable Development of ASEAN Statistics (BFSDAS) includes socio-cultural indicators to measure progress in the region (i.e. population and housing; labour and migration; environment; poverty and inequality; gender statistics; health and well-being; education; women, children and youth; elderly and persons with disabilities; sports and culture; disaster statistics; social protection) (Musngi, 2023[35]). For example, ASEAN's advocacy effort on nutrition security to reduce the number of undernourished children as well as obesity in children and adults, benefited from using multidimensional evidence such as food availability, undernourishment and economic growth, child malnutrition and poverty, in designing more holistic sustainable actions that address underlying determinants of malnutrition in a complementary manner (ASEAN, 2016[36]; Musngi, 2023[35]).

In Europe, the Council of the European Union has acknowledged that the economy of well-being contributes to the European Social Model, empowering all people by promoting upward social and economic convergence (The Council of the European Union, 2019[37]). The European Commission has also developed the Transitions Performance Index (TPI), which is both a scoreboard and a composite

indicator that monitors progress towards fair and prosperous sustainability (European Commission, 2022[38]). Eurostat has also been monitoring progress towards the SDGs in the EU context, with around 100 indicators structured along the 17 SDGs (European Union, 2022[39]). In 2023, the *"Beyond Growth – Pathways towards Sustainable Prosperity in the EU"* event organised by the European Parliament, brought together an extensive range of European actors, from EU institutions, academia and civil society, to discuss new models of prosperity beyond growth (European Parliament, 2023[40]).

3 What are the common dimensions across Asia that should be considered for measuring well-being and what data are available to measure them?

Introduction

The Asian region has achieved remarkable economic progress over the last half a century, making it the fifth largest world region in GDP terms. Despite these achievements, key challenges, including demographic changes, inequalities in social development and opportunities, and environmental degradation, remain. A well-being approach to policy, based on concrete well-being evidence, would support Asian countries to address the highly interconnected challenges they face on a variety of dimensions. Against this backdrop, this section aims at identifying the common dimensions which need to be considered to measure people's well-being in the region, looking at both the outcomes that matter today and the key resources and capitals that drive and sustain well-being outcomes over time.

Countries of the Asian region, ASEAN-10 countries[1] in particular, have shown resilience in the face of global economic uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine (OECD, 2023[41]). The economies of South-East Asian countries are expected to grow on average by 4.6% in 2023 and 4.8% in 2024, keeping the growth momentum (OECD, 2023[41]). New technologies and digital infrastructure are spreading rapidly throughout Southeast Asian countries, with the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating the adoption of new digital solutions, and the region is projected to be one of the world's fastest-growing data centre markets in the next few years (OECD, 2023[42]). However, efforts to make growth more inclusive and sustainable should follow the remarkable improvements in average living conditions in these countries. For example, the OECD highlighted the importance of reshaping discriminatory social norms in Southeast Asia to promote women's empowerment, which can help address the challenges to the care economy in the region that is experiencing a rapidly ageing population (OECD, 2024[43]).

The sustainability of well-being is also being undermined by damages to resources that support well-being for current and future generations, such as environmental degradation. The projected adverse impacts on GDP due to climate change are relatively high in Southeast Asian countries, where GDP is projected to fall by 3.13% by 2047 on average (OECD, 2023[42]). Climate change is noticeable through an increasing number of natural hazards and extreme temperatures and has important implications for people's well-

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[1] Brunei Darussalam, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam

being in the Asian region (OECD, 2023[42]). According to the *"State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey"*, conducted by the ASEAN Studies Centre at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, more than half (52.7%) of the ASEAN respondents viewed climate change as a "serious and immediate threat to the well-being" of their respective countries (ISEAS and Yusof Ishak Institute, 2020[44]). ASEAN Secretariat's Musngi (2023[35]) pinpointed digital transformation, demographic change and climate change as key challenges facing the region during the Conference.

These megatrends underpin the rationale for why countries in Southeast Asia as well as in the wider Asian region would benefit from adopting a multi-dimensional approach to well-being measurement and policy. Applying a well-being lens to policies with well-being evidence unearthed by multi-dimensional measurement can help guide countries tackle multi-faceted challenges that are often interconnected. For example, addressing digital divide for rural women in Southeast Asia may facilitate their access to new market opportunities and market information, effectively unlocking women's entrepreneurial activities in rural areas (OECD and ASEAN, 2021[45]).

Existing measurement initiatives in the region and related dimensions

Countries in the Asian region are increasingly recognizing the importance of applying a well-being perspective, and a variety of *"Beyond GDP"* well-being measurement initiatives and frameworks are being developed, showing both commonalities and differences. Many of the initiatives are generally aligned with the UN's 2030 Agenda as well as the OECD Well-being framework.

Below are some selected well-being measurement initiatives in the Asia-Pacific region and their methodologies with a focus on dimensions included:

- Bhutan's **Gross National Happiness Index (GNH Index)** is a composite index which ranges from 0 to 1, that tracks the Bhutanese population's overall well-being and happiness. It is based on 33 indicators spanning 9 domains, with the latest survey results released in 2023. The *happy* people refer to those who have achieved sufficiency in at least 66% of the weighted domains or indicators. The 2022 GNH Index value is 0.781 with 48.1% of the Bhutanese people classified as either 'deeply' or 'extensively' happy. GNH index is based on the GNH questionnaire which includes questions about life satisfaction, emotional experience, physical and mental health, access to services, and health behaviours, how individuals spend their time, educational attainment, access to education, and the quality of education, questions about cultural identity, connection to culture, and cultural values, trust in institutions, social connections, community involvement, environmental protection, income, and housing (Ura et al., 2023[46]). The GNH dimensions generally overlap with the dimensions of the OECD Well-being framework, but dimensions of work and job quality and economic capital are not addressed by the GNH, while the OECD approach does not address cultural identity, connection and values.

- In the Philippines, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) spearheaded a study in 2015 to determine the long-term aspirations of the Filipinos ("AmBisyon Natin 2040"), and based on this, began to develop the **Quality of Life Index (QLI) in the Philippines** (Edillon, 2022[47]). QLI, to realize "AmBisyon Natin 2040", has 12 domains under *three pillars*: family and friends, community- connectedness, work-life balance, culture and religion under the pillar *Matatag* (strongly rooted); education and knowledge, material living conditions, recreation (sports and leisure), transport traffic and mobility under the pillar *Maginhawa* (comfortable); health status, safety and security, environmental quality and participation and governance under the pillar *Panatag* (Secure) (Edillon, 2022[47]). In March 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) approved the conduct of the National and Regional Survey Research to estimate a QLI for the Philippines by NEDA (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023[48]). NEDA is conducting a nationally and regionally representative survey of at least 22,000 households to solicit responses that will

determine the quality of life of Filipinos (Edillon, 2022[47]). Main domains explored by the survey will include demographic characteristics, schooling status, economic characteristic, overall quality of life and quality of life domains (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2023[48]). The QLI still needs to be adopted as part of the regular surveys conducted by the PSA and some of the QLI domains and indicators may need be altered in order to address unexpected socio-economic challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Edillon, 2022[47]).

- Thailand has been active in developing a variety of well-being indices and incorporating them in their National Development Plans, spanning a Well-being Index (8th Plan (1997-2001)), Economic Strength Index and Sustainable Development Index (9th Plan (2002-2006)), Green and Happiness Index (11th Plan (2012-2016)), and Human Achievement Index (11th Plan (2012-2016)) (Sakondhavat, 2022[49]). Among these, the **Human Achievement Index (HAI)** has been published biennially since 2014, as the result of the collaboration between the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) and the UNDP Thailand. UNDP Thailand has adapted the concept and methodology of the Human Development Index (HDI) to develop HAI. HAI is a composite index, covering 8 dimensions of current well-being (i.e. health, education, employment, economic situation, housing, family, transport, participation (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC), 2024[50])) and using 32 indicators, and has been tracked in the regional and provincial level (Sakondhavat, 2022[49]). HAI does not take into account resources for the future (e.g. human, natural, social and economic capital) and mostly focuses measuring current well-being. Separately, the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) conducted a questionnaire in 2021 and identified income (27.1%), health (22%) and life satisfaction (16.6%) as the top 3 topics that people focus the most in measuring one's quality of life (Sumano, 2023[51]).

- Malaysia's Department of Statistics has developed the **Malaysian Well-being Index (MyWI)** in 2018, with the latest (fourth) edition released in December 2022 (Department of Statistics, 2022[52]). MyWI is comprised of two sub-composites, social well-being (with 9 components: housing, entertainment and recreation, public safety, social participation, governance, culture, health, environment, family) and economic well-being (with 5 components: transportation, communication, education, income and distribution, working life), and there are 66 indicators under these two sub-composites. It sets the baseline year in 2000 (=100) and measures the progress in social and economic well-being in terms of each indicator. At the regional level, **the Happiness in Penang (HIP) Index** has been develop by the state government-funded think tank, Penang Institute, which attempts to measure happiness levels across different domains: freedom and governance; economic well-being; environmental sustainability; and livability and social well-being (Pey, Dr and Vaghefi, n.d.[53]). The HIP index uses the Alkire-Foster methodology and those who are considered unhappy would have achieved less than 50% sufficiency across the weighted indicators (Pey, Dr and Vaghefi, n.d.[53]).

- In Korea, Statistics Korea has been publishing the **Quality of Life Indicators in Korea (KQoL)** annually since 2014. KQoL summarizes changes and the current situation of quality of life and well-being in Korea, by describing trends in 71 indicators (42 objective and 29 subjective) under 11 dimensions (more details are provided under section 4). The criteria for selecting indicators were data quality (i.e. official statistics, coverage, time-series); relevance (i.e. face validity, output orientation, understandability, policy responsiveness, relevance to the national context); and impartiality (not influenced by political orientation) (Choi et al., 2022[54]). In an effort to promote better use of KQoL, Statistics Korea is trying to further disaggregate indicators by population group and regions (Choi et al., 2022[54]). For example, efforts to measure the QoL for different age groups of life stages (i.e. children and youth, adults, elderly) and to standardize disaggregated sub-national indicators are underway to enhance well-being measurement (Choi et al., 2022[54]).

- In Japan, the "Liaison Conference of Relevant Ministries and Agencies on Well-being" was established in July 2021, to share information, strengthen cooperation, and horizontally deploy best practices for the promotion of well-being initiatives across 11 Ministries (Government of Japan,

2021[55]). The Japanese Cabinet Office is also conducting an **annual Survey on Satisfaction and Quality of Life** since 2019, constructing a set of indicators (dashboard) and measuring 'overall life satisfaction' as well as sector-specific levels of satisfaction spanning 11 well-being dimensions which draw on the OECD Well-being Framework (Japan Cabinet Office, 2022[56]).

- In Singapore, various measures covering well-being or sustainability indicators are included in its government's two key releases, the Singapore Public Sector Outcomes Review (SPOR) and Singapore SDGs. The biennial SPOR, which began in 2010 with the latest released in 2022, takes stock of how Singapore has fared in 4 key areas of 1) *opportunities for all*, at every stage of life (education, quality jobs, family, health and wellness, retirement, social safety nets); 2) *quality and sustainable living* (housing and amenities, transport, environment and sustainability, arts and heritage); 3) *our shared future and place in the world* (external and homeland security, legal and diplomacy, government and regulations, building our future together, strengthening our supply chain resilience); and 4) *strong and resilient economy* (economy and labour market, economic opportunities, business environment, infrastructure and logistics, cyber and data security). For example, it looks at indicators such as satisfaction with the cleanliness of public spaces (for *quality and sustainable living*), employment rate of senior residents (for *opportunities for all*), and local farm production as of % of total consumption (for *our shared future*). Singapore is also tracking its progress on SDGs, with SingStat presenting the progress on dedicated webpage, and also working closely with the ASEAN Working Group on SDG Indicators (Neo, 2023[57]).

- New Zealand has a long history of measuring people's well-being, notably with the Social Report that was published from 2001 to 2016 and with the Treasury's *Living Standards Framework Dashboard* developed in 2018. New Zealand General Social Survey (NZGSS), in particular, is carried out every 2 years, forming an important element in New Zealand's well-being measurement (Smith, 2023[58]). In addition, New Zealand implements a separate survey, *Te Kepenga*, to measure the well-being of the Māori population, addressing both the same well-being domains as the NZGSS and domains focusing on Māori culture (Tibble, 2023[59]). For example, its question on whānau (extended family) well-being, helps to measure reported, not measured, subjective well-being, and it was reported that safety has much stronger impact on whānau well-being than on overall life satisfaction (Tibble, 2023[59]; Smith, 2023[58]).

Dimensions of housing, health, education, environment and civic engagement (participation) recur across several Asian well-being measurement frameworks (Table 3.1). On the other hand, dimensions related to subjective well-being or life satisfaction are not found universally, and only appear in some frameworks (Bhutan, Korea, Japan). There are also some dimensions that are not included in the OECD Well-being framework, such as culture (Bhutan, Thailand Human Achievement Index (HAI), Malaysia). Family and community (Korea, Thailand HAI, Philippines, Japan) is another example of such dimension; even though the OECD framework includes social connections, some Asian countries have specified *family*, for example Japan's well-being survey reports on satisfaction with ease of taking care of family members. During the Conference, speakers pointed to issues of health (including mental health), income, environment, inequalities and economic and social vulnerability, as dimensions that are highly relevant for Asia and need to be considered in well-being measurement. Dimensions such as social inclusion and cohesion (including tackling discrimination), sense of belonging, culture, access to technology/bridging the digital divide were also mentioned. Kato (2023[60]) highlighted healthcare challenges in the region, especially for economically poor older generation, based on the study in the Philippines and Vietnam, where 86% of older people with unmet need for healthcare cited financial reasons for not going to the doctor even though they felt ill.

Table 3.1. Dimensions of selected well-being initiatives

Selected well-being initiatives in the Asian region and their alignment with the OECD Well-being Framework

Well-being Initiative	OECD Well-being Framework	Bhutan GNH Index (2022)	Philippines Quality of Life Index (2022)	Thailand Human Achievement Index (HAI) (2017)	Malaysia Well-being Index (MyWI) (2021)	Korea Quality of Life Indicators (2022)	Japan Cabinet Well-being dashboard (2022)
Dimensions of current well-being	income and wealth	living standards		income	Income and distribution	income·consumption·wealth	household finances and assets
	work and job quality			employment	working life	employment·wage	employment environment and wages
	housing	living standards	material living conditions	housing and living environment	housing	housing	housing
	health	health	health status	health	Health	health	health
	knowledge and skills	education	education and knowledge	education	education	education	education level and educational environment
	environmental quality	ecological diversity and resilience	environmental quality		environment	environment	natural environment
	subjective well-being	psychological well-being				subjective well-being	satisfaction with the quality of life; enjoyment and fun of life
	safety	community vitality	safety and security		public safety	safety	personal safety
	work-life balance	time use	work-life balance; recreation		entertainment and recreation	leisure	work and life
	social connections	community vitality	family and friends; community-connectedness	family and neighborhood life	family	family·community	social connections
	civic engagement	good governance	participation and governance	participation	governance, social participation	civic engagement	politics, government and courts
Additional dimensions		*cultural identity, connection to culture, and cultural values*	*culture and religion, transport traffic and mobility*	*transportation and communication*	*Culture, Transportation, communication*		*ease of raising children, ease of taking care of family members*

Note: Japan Cabinet Well-being dashboard measures satisfaction with each of the dimensions.
Source: Rearranged from "Bhutan GNH 2022" (https://ophi.org.uk/bhutan-gnh-2022/); "Quality of Life Index In the Philippines" (https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/event-documents/Philippines_GDP-Well-being_SIdeEvent_Commisssion78_26May2022.pdf); "Thailand's Social Development in Q2/2017"(https://www.nesdc.go.th/nesdb_en/ewt_dl_link.php?nid=4356&filename=social_dev_report); "Malaysian Well-being Index report (MyWI) 2021" (https://www.dosm.gov.my/uploads/release-content/file_20221206151702.pdf); "Quality of Life Indicators in Korea"(https://kostat.go.kr/board.es?mid=b10105000000&bid=0060); "Survey report on Satisfaction and Quality of Life 2022: Trends in well-being in our country", https://www5.cao.go.jp/keizai2/well-being/manzoku/pdf/report06.pdf.

The international community in the Asian region is also working together to advance the *Beyond GDP* agenda, as previously mentioned in section 2. For example, UNESCAP organized the side event to 78th Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, *"From GDP to well-being and sustainability: Means and measures"* in May 2022, during which various regional initiatives to measure sustainable development beyond economic growth were identified (UNESCAP secretariat, 2022[61]). T20 Indonesia [2] released a policy brief in 2022, calling for G20 countries to move beyond GDP by complementing it with *inclusive wealth indicators* by 2025; with inclusive wealth measuring the assets that underlie human well-being such as natural, human, social, produced and financial capital (Smith, Zoundi and Bizikova, 2022[62]). In 2023, T20 India published a policy brief, *Beyond GDP: Measuring the Value of Wellbeing*, which noted that to better represent the ground realities, some indicators relevant for developing countries such as inequality in income and wealth, prevalence of poverty, underemployment, prevalence of various diseases like tuberculosis and diabetes, and the quality of education, need to be considered. (Kumar et al., 2023[63]). It recommended promoting an equitable measurement framework that captures wellbeing and sustainability to complement GDP measures, while also promoting investments in strengthening national statistical systems for quality and timely data collection and dissemination (Kumar et al., 2023[63]).

In addition, ASEAN, in an effort to monitor its progress towards meeting the SDGs, published the *Snapshot Report for the ASEAN region*, based on 29 SDG indicators (ASEAN, 2022[64]). A quality assessment of data was carried out to obtain a set of SDG indicators that can yield regional estimates which are representative of a greater number of ASEAN member states, and 29 indicators were selected based on data availability (from National Statistical Offices) and consistency in definition with global standards (ASEAN, 2022[64]).

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[2] T20 Indonesia refers to the 2022 edition, hosted by Indonesia, of the Think20 - the official engagement group of G20, which serves as an "idea bank" for the G20 by bringing together think tanks and high-level experts to discuss policy issues relevant to the G20.

4 Korea's experience in measuring well-being beyond GDP

Introduction

Improving quality of life has been one of the top priorities of the Korean government since the turn of the century. This shift in national policies has been crucial in dealing with a variety of social issues faced by Korea in recent years, such as low birth rate, rapidly ageing population, relative poverty, and high suicide rate. Despite strong economic growth and the development of a democratic society in Korea, the level of life satisfaction and happiness have not improved in parallel (Statistics Research Institute, 2023[65]). Thus, Korea has been actively refocusing national policies towards promoting happiness and improving the quality of people's lives, in line with global movements to explore horizons *beyond GDP*. Statistics Korea (KOSTAT) has been at the forefront of these efforts, particularly by examining *the "Quality of Life indicators"* in Korea since 2014 (Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. Developing "Quality of Life Indicators in Korea (KQoL)"

Since 2011, Statistics Korea has been working on the "Quality of Life Indicators in Korea (KQoL)" initiative, making its measurement results public from 2014. Internal and external experts' opinions were incorporated over the years to identify dimensions and to select key indicators that matter most to the Korean people. For example, selected indicators and dimensions have been revised numerous times by the Committee for KQoL. Selection criteria for the indicators included 1) *relevance* (whether the indicator can measure as intended, focusing on the outcome, with ease of understanding, reactiveness to policy, and suitability for the Korean context); 2) *quality of data* (whether official data and time series are available, covering the target population as much as possible); and 3) *neutrality* (can be selected and measured without any political bias). Public consultations also provided important inputs for the KQoL. Based on the results of two online surveys (24 530 participants) conducted the previous year, Statistics Korea undertook an overall restructuring of the KQoL framework in 2018. Another public consultation in 2020 also contributed to discerning 'dimensions of importance' and 'key indicators' for each dimension.

Source: Statistics Research Institute (2023), 국민 삶의 질 2022,
https://sri.kostat.go.kr/board.es?mid=a90401000000&bid=11477&list_no=423793&act=view&mainXml=Y; Statistics Research Institute
(2017), 국민 삶의 질 지표 개편,
https://kostat.go.kr/board.es?mid=a90106000000&bid=12316&act=view&list_no=418664&tag=&nPage=1&ref_bid=.

Existing measurement initiatives in Korea

The current *Quality of Life Indicators in Korea (KQoL)* provide well-being data on 11 dimensions, spanning from the individual level to the community level and to environmental conditions. Subjective well-being dimensions are embedded within a broader system of well-being factors at individual, community and societal levels. At the individual level, indicators such as income and wealth, health, education and housing are included, related to the goal of "capable individual". At the community level, indicators related to civic participation, recreation, and familial community are included, related to the goal of "mutually supportive and active community". The most outer circle shows environmental conditions, with indicators related to environment and safety, with the goal of "safe and sustainable environment" (Choi et al., 2023[66]).

In February 2023, Statistics Korea published its latest (and fifth) report of the series, *"Quality of Life Indicators in Korea 2022"*, which included 71 indicators under 11 dimensions (encompassing 42 objective and 29 subjective indicators) (Table 4.1) (Statistics Research Institute, 2023[65]). Trends and indication of whether each indicator improved, deteriorated, or did not change were also presented. The dashboard of KQoL of June 2023 showed that 48 indicators (67.6%) improved, 21 deteriorated (29.6%) and there was no change for 2 indicators (2.8%) in 2022 from the previous or the most recent year of measurement (Choi et al., 2023[66]).

Table 4.1. Quality of Life Indicators in Korea (KQoL)

Dimension	Objective indicators (42)	Subjective, perception-based or self-reported indicators (29)
Family· Community	Live-alone elderly rate **Social Isolation** Participation rate in social institutions	Family relationship satisfaction Sense of belonging to a community
Health	**Life Expectancy** Healthy life expectancy Physical activity rate Obesity rate **Suicide rate**	Self-reported health Stress self-recognition[1]
Education	Preschool enrollment rate Population with tertiary education Employment rate of college graduates	Degree of education cost burden[2] Efficiency of school education[3] **School life satisfaction**
Employment· Wage	**Employment rate** **Unemployment rate** Average monthly wage Working hours Proportion of low-paid workers	Job satisfaction
Income Consumption Wealth	**Gross National income per capita** Equivalised median income Household net wealth Household debt ratio **Relative poverty rate**	Income satisfaction Consumption satisfaction[4]
Leisure	**Leisure time** Travel days per person Ratio of expenditure on leisure Participation in culture, art and sport events	Sufficiency of leisure time **Leisure satisfaction**

Dimension	Objective indicators (42)	Subjective, perception-based or self-reported indicators (29)
Housing	Home-ownership rate **Rent to income ratio** Residential area per capita **Dwelling without basic facilities** Commuting time to office	Housing environment satisfaction
Environment	**Fine dust concentration level** (Particulate Matter Concentration, PM2.5) Urban parks area per capita Waterworks supply rate in rural area	Climate change recognition[5] Air quality satisfaction **Water quality satisfaction** Soil quality satisfaction Noise level satisfaction Green environment satisfaction
Safety	Homicide rate Child abuse rate Crime victimization rate Child mortality rate from safety accidents **Industrial Accident mortality rate** Number of fire fatalities Road traffic accident fatality rate	**Feeling safe walking alone at night** Perception toward societal safety[6]
Civic engagement	Voter turnout rate Volunteering rate	Perception of political empowerment[7] Citizenship (Civic consciousness)[8] **Corruption Perceptions Index** Interpersonal trust Institutional trust
Subjective Well-Being		**Life Satisfaction** Positive emotions Negative emotions

Source: Rearranged from "Quality of life Indicators in Korea 2022", Statistics Korea, 2023.
Notes: Indicators in bold are headline indicators for each dimension.
1. Percentage of respondents responding that they felt "very stressful" or "somewhat stressful" during the last two weeks.
2. Percentage of respondents (heads of households with children who attend schools) responding that the education costs place "much strain" or "some strain" on their household budget.
3. Percentage of respondents responding that school education is "very efficient" or "somewhat efficient".
4. Percentage of respondents responding that they are "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their general consumption lifestyle/level (e.g. food, clothing, housing, leisure activities etc.).
5. Percentage of respondents responding they are "very anxious" or "somewhat anxious" about climate change (e.g. extreme heat, flood).
6. Percentage of respondents responding that the overall society is "very safe" or "relatively safe".
7. Percentage of respondents who perceive themselves as politically empowered.
8. Percentage of respondents who perceive their civic responsibilities as important.

In addition to Statistics Korea's KQoL, the National Research Council for Economics, Humanities and Social Sciences and Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs have also published *"Development of the Quality of Life Index"* in which they tried to calculate a quality of life index for Korea by using 20 indicators under 10 domains (i.e. subjective well-being, health, education/capability, work, economic living standards, sociocultural capital, safety, governance, social safety net, and environment), and showed that there is still room for improvement in areas such as life evaluation, suicide rate, GDP per hour worked, and relative poverty (Kim and et al, 2021[67]).

What are the issues at stake?

According to the "Quality of Life indicators in Korea 2022", level of trust and leisure activities began to climb again in 2022 after a steep dip during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Life satisfaction and air pollution levels (PM 2.5) improved compared to the 2021. Overall, indicators related to health, education, income, housing, environmental quality and safety have continuously improved since 2010. By contrast, the share of elderly people who live alone, the obesity rate, and the household debt ratio continued to deteriorate; while the child abuse rate continued to increase as well (Statistics Research Institute, 2023[65]).

In addition to measuring well-being for the overall population, the Korean government has developed measurement frameworks and indicators to better monitor the well-being of specific population groups and regions that need further policy attention. Some examples are children and youth, young adults (aged 19-34) and the elderly. Efforts to capture regional disparities in terms of well-being are underway, as well as the development of innovative indicators to assess changes in people's lives in the digital age.

Well-being of children and youth

For the first time in 2022, Statistics Korea published the report, *"Child and Youth Well-being in Korea 2022"*[3]. The report provides well-being data for social policymaking related to children and youth, who generally record low levels of subjective well-being despite showing high academic achievements (Statistics Research Institute, 2022[68]). Korean children experience high academic achievement pressure and consequently short leisure time and sleep time, which has been highlighted as a major factor explaining the low subjective well-being level of Korean children (Yoo, 2023[69]).

8 dimensions (and 60 indicators) have been identified to describe child and youth (aged 0 to 17) current well-being, its evolution and inequalities: 1) social background (unlike other dimensions, this dimension gives more of a macro-description of the environment surrounding the children and youth), 2) material situation, housing and environment, 3) health, 4) learning and competence, 5) leisure, activity and participation, 6) safety and behaviour, 7) relationships (e.g. with friends, family, someone to depend on), 8) subjective well-being (Statistics Research Institute, 2022[68]). The report has helped raise awareness on the state of well-being among the younger generation in Korea: 9.8% of the children and youth were below the relative poverty line in terms of household income in 2020, down from 16.0% in 2015; the suicide rate has increased to 2.7 per 100 000 in 2021, up from 2.0 in 2010; study time for elementary students was 5 hours 9 minutes in 2019 with a decreasing trend since 2014; 95% of children and youth responded that their rights were being respected at home and at school; of the share of children experiencing bullying reduced to 5.9% in 2020 from 8.5% in 2018; life satisfaction for those aged 9-12 scored 6.99 (out of 10) in 2020, down from 7.39 in 2017 (Statistics Research Institute, 2022[68]).

Well-being of the elderly

Countries experiencing low birth rates and ageing population are increasingly interested in policies targeting the elderly. In particular, the elderly population living alone can be vulnerable not only in terms of economic conditions and physical health, but also in terms of mental health (Statistics Research Institute, 2023[65]). The percentage of the population aged over 65 who lives alone increased from 16.0% in 2000 to 20.1% in 2022 (ibid.). In this context, during the 2021 National Quality of Life Measurement Forum, Statistics Korea and the Statistics Research Institute (SRI) decided to start working on the definition of a framework of indicators that can shed light on the quality of lives of the population aged 65 or older (Statistics Korea, 2021[70]). In doing so, they recognized the importance of seeing the elderly as independent socio-economic entities rather than targets of welfare programs, and also noted the

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[3] The English version of the summary of the report was published in June 2023.

importance of a *community-based* ('ageing in place') care system, rather than leaving care responsibilities falling on individuals, family members or medical facilities (Statistics Korea, 2021[70]).

The preliminary research of Statistics Korea and SRI produced a well-being framework for the elderly of 82 indicators with 8 dimensions. To give an overall picture of well-being among the elderly, 18 key indicators were selected: the ratio of aged population, life expectancy, suicide rate, out-of-pocket medical expenses, percentage of people in long-term care, income security, relative poverty rate, public pension receipt rate, participation in social organizations, main leisure activity, marital status, social network (percentage of respondents with people to depend on when feeling ill or when in need of lending money, or when in need of person to talk to), percentage of household dwellings below the minimum housing standard, pedestrian traffic accident fatality rate, abuse victimization rate, discrimination experience rate, perception on parental support, and subjective well-being (Statistics Korea, 2021[70]). During the 2021 Forum, Statistics Korea and the SRI stated that further work will be conducted to develop new indicators related to inter-generational exchange, community care system, status of the elderly in care facilities, and well-dying, in order to better measure well-being of the elderly and to complement the current framework (ibid.).

Regional Well-being

Propelled by increased usage of well-being data by government ministries and the call to compare different regions (Statistics Korea, 2022[71]), in 2020, Statistics Korea joined forces with local governments, the Ministry of Interior and Safety, and the Presidential Committee for Balanced National Development to implement social surveys at the regional level that have common well-being indicators. Since 2020, 17 regional governments (covering all 229 municipalities in Korea) have carried out social surveys which include 21 well-being indicators (subjective well-being, trust in others, social support, sense of local community belonging, average monthly income, experience of difficulties in livelihood, fear about crime, evaluation on safety, quality of environment, satisfaction about various dimensions including social services, jobs, education, leisure, housing, transportation and time-use) (Statistics Korea, 2022[71]). Data are comparable across municipalities and at the regional and national level using the same indicators even though the local governments conduct the surveys individually at the local level. This sub-national disaggregation is expected to encourage policymakers to use regional social indicators (Choi et al., 2023[66]).

Well-being in the digital age

Tackling the digital divide and measuring quality of life in the digital era have become topical for the Korean government. Digital transformation can expand opportunities, but it can also pose risks for people's well-being, ranging from cyber-bullying, the emergence of disinformation, to cyber-hacking (OECD, 2019[19]). With the highest level of internet access among OECD countries (almost 99% of the population have access to internet in Korea (OECD, n.d.[72])), these risks and opportunities are pronounced in the Korean society and impact the well-being of Korean people in many different respects. On top of this, the internet has become accessible to Koreans almost anytime and everywhere: 97% of the Korean adult population uses smartphones, including the older generations such as those in their sixties (98%) and their seventies (81%) (Gallup Korea, 2022[73]). Improving digital literacy, especially for the elderly has become an essential priority for the Korean government, which is trying to tackle the issue of the digital skills divide. In 2023, Statistics Korea also started discussing the matter of measuring quality of life in the midst of the digital transformation. The 9th National Quality of Life Measurement Forum held in June 2023 discussed the topic of "Social change and quality of life due to digital transformation" (Statistics Korea, 2023[74]). Some of the indicators suggested by the Korea Information Society Development Institute included indicators that capture both digital opportunities and risks. In terms of opportunities, the indicators suggested are, internet usage for online education, ratio of online to offline purchases, internet banking usage, internet usage for

participation in expert networks and R&D intensity in nano bio and medical companies. As for the risks, suggested indicators included the digital divide (i.e. the gap in internet usage between vulnerable households (e.g. low-income, with disabilities etc.) and non-vulnerable households), percentage of the population feeling technostress (anxiety or distress caused by new technology), ratio of having received work-related online messages afterwork, and ratio of over-dependency on smartphones (i.e. a condition in which excessive smartphone use results in increased salience to the smartphone, decreased control over its use, and problematic consequences) (Statistics Korea, 2023[74]; National Information Society Agency and Ministry of Science and ICT, 2022[75]).

What are next steps?

Well-being measurement in Korea is well advanced and information is available to the public through a dedicated quarterly updated database and an annual report on "Quality of Life Indicators in Korea (KQoL)". Statistics Korea also holds a National Quality of Life Measurement Forum annually that aims to disseminate knowledge on measurement of well-being in Korea. KQoL are tailored to the Korean context and so they well represent the characteristics of the fast-changing Korean society.

Efforts have also been made to measure well-being for some of the most vulnerable population groups, as well as at different geographical levels; national, regional and at local administration level, and across wide-ranging topics, joining forces across institutions. For example, during the Conference, Kim (2023[76]) elaborated on how multidimensional understanding of well-being and happiness can facilitate discovery of new social risks and more vulnerable classes, highlighting social isolation in Korea as one such issue. Her study has shown that compared to other OECD countries, a relatively low percentage of Koreans responded positively when asked if they had someone to count on to help them when they were in trouble, suggesting high level of social isolation (Kim, 2023[76]). When the effect of household income and the effect of social isolation on happiness costs were compared, it was found that 4.79 times more income was needed to compensate for the effect of one unit of social isolation on happiness costs in Korea, underlining the importance to look at beyond economic indicators (Kim, 2023[76]). Im (2023[77]) also introduced the concept of 'social flourishing', emphasizing the need to focus on *shared, subjective* and *social* reality, which may be measured by elements such as sharedness (i.e. existence of fundamental values and beliefs, and sense of identity commonly shared among people in the society), openness, inclusiveness, social wisdom, social hope and economic prosperity/security.

However, for these more recent well-being measurement efforts to be better utilised and understood in policy settings, statistical authorities and policymakers in Korea need to ensure continued alignment of different well-being frameworks and indicators developed concerning specific topics, or at different regional levels. Enabling smooth communication of the findings between data producers and data users is also necessary.

5 Unpacking well-being challenges in Asia: measuring the well-being of vulnerable populations and groups left behind

Introduction

Inequalities in Asia remain significant, across individuals of different age, income, level of education, gender, ethnicity and place of living. Inequalities are also multidimensional and persistent, compounding across several life domains, across life spans and over multiple generations. Adopting a well-being lens can help examine the interrelations between these different dimensions and how inequalities often transmit over time and across places. In fact, Asian countries are increasingly using well-being frameworks or multidimensional indices to understand the well-being of vulnerable populations and groups left behind. Several countries have adapted the *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI[4])* to their national contexts. Some have tailored the MPI or designed specific well-being frameworks to zoom in on specific population groups (e.g. children) or regions. Other countries have monitored progress on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to measure well-being of vulnerable groups, with several implementing voluntary national reviews (VNR).

Existing measurement initiatives in the region and related measurement challenges

National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)

The MPI is a multidimensional poverty measurement tool that provides a comprehensive assessment of poverty based on sufficiency measures. Gender, age and urban/rural areas are the socio-demographic characteristics most recurrently investigated, followed by subnational region and household size or type (Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network, n.d.[78]). The national MPI is used to complement income-based poverty measurements as it measures and compares deprivations directly (Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network, n.d.[78]). Multidimensional poverty is also monitored as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicator 1.2.2. "reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living

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[4] The MPI has been developed by the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) at the University of Oxford with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) for inclusion in UNDP's flagship *Human Development Report* (HDR) in 2010. It has been published annually by OPHI and in the HDRs ever since with a coverage of over 100 countries. A person is defined multidimensionally poor when deprived in a third or more of ten (weighted) indicators over the three equally weighted dimensions (Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network, n.d.[78]).

in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions" (UNDESA, n.d.[79]). The strength of the MPI methodology lies in its simplicity and its aggregation and disaggregation properties at different level of analysis (national, subnational and supernational). However, the calculation of the MPI at individual level requires a wealth of information from a unique source or that can be linked across sources, thus may only enable poverty assessment on a limited number of dimensions or time points.

Countries, such as Bhutan, Nepal, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, calculate the national MPI to identify those who are multidimensionally poor (Multidimensional Poverty Peer Network, n.d.[78]). In addition to the three core dimensions of MPI (i.e. health, education and living standards), countries such as the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, have expanded the scope to include employment, financial security and access to information (i.e. usage of telecom services and assets for accessing information). Bhutan has recently complemented its original MPI with the *Moderate MPI*, aiming to capture future expectations and aspirations of citizens and policy makers. For example, the Moderate MPI relies on i) more ambitious cut-offs for identifying deprivations (e.g. drinking water piped into the house and flush toilets, moving *beyond* availability of drinking water in the household surroundings), and on ii) educational indicators that mirror middle income development structures (e.g. school lag, moving *beyond* attendance[5]) (National Statistics Bureau of the Royal Government of Bhutan and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), 2023[80]).

Table 5.1. Selected national Multidimensional Poverty Indices in the region: common dimensions and specificities

Country MPI (start year/update)	Global MPI (2010)	Nepal MPI (2017/2021)	Sri Lanka MPI (2021)	Bhutan Moderate MPI (2022)	Thailand MPI (2019)	Philippines MPI (2018)	Vietnam MPI (2015)
Responsible agency	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) and UNDP	Government of Nepal National Planning Commission	Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), Ministry of Economic Policies and Plan Implementation	National Statistics Bureau (NSB) of the Royal Government of Bhutan	Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC)	Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA)	Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA)
Dimensions	Health	Health	Health	Health	Healthy living	Health and nutrition	Health
	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education	Education
	Living standards	Living standards	Living standards	Living standards	Living conditions	Housing, water and sanitations	Housing, Living standards
	Additional dimension				Financial security	Employment	Access to information

Source: Adapted from the Multidimensional Peer Network, https://www.mppn.org/multidimensional-poverty/who-uses/ and Bhutan Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022 (National Statistics Bureau of the Royal Government of Bhutan and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), 2023[80]).

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[5] School attendance is considered deprived if a school-aged child is between 5 and 16 years of age and is not attending school up to the age they should complete class ten, or they are lagging two grades for their age.

Initiatives tailored to specific population groups or subnational regions

Sri Lanka and Thailand have designed Child MPIs, recognising the lifelong impact of child deprivations. For example, the Child MPI in Sri Lanka targets children aged 0-4 and is directly linked to the national MPI. The Department of Census and Statistics (DCS) of Sri Lanka has added the dimension of "child development" (with two indicators: *undernutrition* (being underweight or stunted) and *early childhood development*) to its national MPI to better capture two deprivations of early childhood (Department of Census and Statistics (DCS), 2021[81]). On the other hand, the Child MPI in Thailand aims at capturing key aspects of deprivation for children aged 0-17 years. The index is the result of the cooperation between the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC) and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) Thailand and is not directly linked to the national MPI. While dimensions of Thailand's Child MPI broadly overlap with the national MPI (i.e. education, health, living conditions/standards), indicators in each dimension have been specifically selected and tailored to children. For example, the dimension of *"child welfare"* includes two indicators (*child protection* and *living conditions*).

Korea has developed a unique well-being framework for children and youth, *"Children and Youth Well-being in Korea 2022"*, providing well-being data for social policymaking related to children and youth (Statistics Research Institute, 2022[68]). It provides well-being data on 8 dimensions (and 60 indicators) related to children's and youth's (aged 0 to 17) current well-being, its evolution and inequalities: 1) social background (unlike other dimensions, this dimension gives more of a macro-description of the environment surrounding the children and youth), 2) material situation, housing and environment, 3) health, 4) learning and competence, 5) leisure, activity and participation, 6) safety and behaviour, 7) relationships, 8) subjective well-being (Statistics Research Institute, 2022[68]). In addition to literature reviews, developing indicators and collecting data, small group interviews and focus groups interviews with children, youth, parents and teachers were conducted to measure children's well-being (Yoo, 2023[69]). Children were asked to draw 'mind maps' to reflect words of their happy and unhappy life, and this children's voice-driven approach helped paint a more accurate picture of children's well-being (Yoo, 2023[69]).

Based on Vietnam Household Living Standard Surveys (VHLSS) from 2010 to 2016, Vietnam's Mekong Development Research Institute (MDRI) examined the change in inequality in Vietnam over time, investigating the gap in living standards between population subgroups (Tung, 2023[82]). Its analysis showed that inequality exists between males and females, among areas, and in poverty rates between Kinh majority and ethnic minorities in Vietnam (Tung, 2023[82]). At the subnational level, the city of Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam has piloted the Ho Chi Minh city MPI, in collaboration with UNDP and Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) for poverty monitoring, evaluation and policy formulation (Ho Chi Minh City and the UNDP Vietnam, 2014[83]). It aims to account for the specific urban contexts in mapping material deprivation (i.e. the headcount income poverty is 0.1% in the city, compared to 11.1% at national level (Ho Chi Minh City and the UNDP Vietnam, 2014[83]))).

SDG monitoring and voluntary national reviews (VNR)

Voluntary National Reviews (VNR) and SDGs monitoring are two additional ways Asian countries have undertaken to measure and monitor the well-being of vulnerable population groups. Many Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Korea, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand and Vietnam undertake VNR, which is a voluntary accountability and progress monitoring mechanism that leads to assessment of national progress made in implementing the SDGs (UN OHCHR, n.d.[84]). While some SDGs target poverty (SDG 1), women (SDG 5) and inequality (SDG 10) directly, vulnerabilities are identified across all the SDGs (e.g. Indicator 11.1.1 "Proportion of urban population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing"). Measurement challenges faced during the implementation of VNRs should be addressed to better assess progress made for vulnerable population groups.

What are the issues at stake?

Inequalities can be multidimensional, encompassing both economic and non-economic facets. While income and wealth inequality and poverty are probably the most well-known manifestations of inequality, disparities are visible in every aspect of people's lives: from health to education, from social connections to safety. Since 2011, the OECD *"How's Life?"* reports have been measuring and monitoring well-being outcomes and their distributions across the population in eleven dimensions of well-being: income and wealth, work and job quality, housing conditions, work-life balance, health, knowledge and skills, subjective well-being, safety, social connections, environmental quality and civic engagement (OECD, 2020[5]). Social gradients exist in many of the well-being dimensions, for instance higher incomes are often associated with higher education and better health (OECD, 2017[14]).

Inequalities can transmit over time and impact a wide range of well-being outcomes, impairing social mobility and equality of opportunity. Social mobility refers to the extent to which individuals change their socio-economic situation with respect to their parents (*inter-generational mobility*) or during their lifetime (*intra-generational mobility*). The *intergenerational* transmission of advantage and disadvantage perpetuates inequality because unequal starts have a persistent impact on a wide range of well-being outcomes later in life (Bowles and Gintis, 2002[85]; D'Addio, 2007[86]; Causa and Johansson, 2009[87]; Corak, 2013[88]; OECD, 2018[89]). For example, children whose parents have a tertiary degree are 45 percentage points more likely to graduate from university themselves compared to those whose parents have less than a secondary degree, across the OECD (Balestra and Ciani, 2022[90]). The Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) programme, aimed at generating evidence for learning outcomes of six countries from ASEAN: Cambodia. Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines and Viet Nam. Its findings confirmed that children from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds tended to achieve significantly higher scores in reading, writing and mathematics, highlighting the learning gap between children in these countries (Musngi, 2023[35]; UNICEF & SEAMEO, 2020[91]).

In terms of *intra-generational mobility*, evidence shows that people in poverty struggle to escape (*sticky floors*), while those with high incomes tend to remain at the top of the income ladder (*sticky ceilings*). Apart from income, other well-being dimensions – e.g. physical and mental health and social capital – are rather enduring over a person's lifetime, tend to influence each other, and thus compound advantage or disadvantage (Balestra and Ciani, 2022[90]). In the ASEAN countries, about 27% of the female rural population of working age is of the ages 15 to 24 years, compared to 18% in the OECD countries. Jobs and income uncertainty for the young women in rural areas may, in addition to keeping these women disenchanted and discouraged, have serious long-term effects on employment, entrepreneurship and innovation (OECD and ASEAN, 2021[45]).

Places also contribute to shaping inequalities. Local contextual factors – across regions, but also within cities – play an important role during childhood and continue to affect people's opportunities during their lifetime through access to public services and job, training and digital opportunities (OECD, 2018[92]; 2021[93]; 2021[94]). The quality of local areas during childhood also plays a key role, as households with lower socio-economic status often live in neighbourhoods that are more affected by exposure to pollution and noise or with higher violent crime rates (Clarke and Thévenon, 2022[95]). National studies suggest that differences in intergenerational mobility between regions in the same country are wide and can be larger than cross-national comparisons (Balestra and Ciani, 2022[90]). The mechanisms behind these territorial differences remain largely under-explored. A number of studies and experiments have highlighted the role of different factors, such as pollution (Currie, 2011[96]; O'Brien et al., 2018[97]) and social networks (Chetty et al., 2022[98]). Several factors – including high house prices and family ties – often limit people's opportunity to move to areas with better opportunities (Cavalleri, Luu and Causa, 2021[99]; Causa and Pichelmann, 2020[100]), thus constraining the extent to which geographical mobility can help overcome geographical inequalities.

Current megatrends and recent shocks can highlight or exacerbate existing vulnerabilities. High cost of living pressures, economic slowdown, geopolitical tensions, digitalisation and climate change are slowing or reversing many of the Asia-Pacific region's hard-won gains in well-being, equality and sustainable development (UNESCAP, 2023[6]). These megatrends are more likely to hit low-income families, low-skilled workers and more broadly those lacking (or with very few) resources to face these challenges. For example, climate change will likely hit more vulnerable areas, such as rural communities (OECD, 2021[101]). The East Asia and Pacific region is one of the most impacted regions that will likely experience multiple layers of climate and environmental shocks and stresses. In this region, children are more vulnerable than elsewhere: 41% of children in the region face 5 or more shocks, compared to the global average of 14% of children (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO), 2023[102]). Porio (2023[103]) examined shifting patterns of informality and vulnerability in Manila in the Philippines, highlighting the social vulnerability of the population in informal settlements that are increasingly at risk of climate-related disasters, especially coastal flooding. Demographic change will also likely weaken the growth prospects of rural regions that are experiencing faster aging, limiting further their ability to invest in the provision of key services, such as health care and education (OECD, 2019[104]). Another example is the rapid digitalisation and automation of activities, which is expected to lead to artificial intelligence and robots replacing a non-negligible fraction of jobs across the board, with a stronger impact for low-skill jobs (Nedelkoska and Quintini, 2018[105]; OECD, 2019[106]; OECD, 2023[107]). In South-East and Pacific Asia, access to affordable internet and digital devices is still insufficient and the gender digital literacy divide needs to be addressed through the development of advanced digital competencies to ensure girls' empowerment (UNICEF East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (EAPRO), 2023[108]).

6 How can well-being data be used in policymaking?

Introduction

Moving 'Beyond GDP' means not only measuring and monitoring people's well-being, but also integrating well-being dimensions in policy strategies. Well-being approaches to policy are used increasingly by OECD countries in national policy processes, to support more integrated, coordinated, and forward-thinking solutions that can better address the interdependencies between economic, social, and environmental policy objectives (OECD, 2023[7]). Emerging policy practices have sought to integrate well-being evidence into budgeting, policy appraisal and evaluation, and strategic priority setting. Rather than being a simple add-on to existing economic policy practice, well-being frameworks and evidence have been used to overcome traditional policy silos, encourage more collaborative and effective ways of working across government and then support a more efficient and effective use of public resources (OECD, 2023[7]).

Applying well-being approaches to policy

Countries are experimenting different methods and processes depending on their policy contexts and some notable policy examples are also appearing in the Asia Pacific region. Multidimensional well-being frameworks are often used in the context of decision-making at the whole-of-government level (e.g. strategic priority-setting) or in aspects of policy design and analysis where multiple government objectives are simultaneously being balanced (OECD, 2023[7]). Three of the key emerging areas for the application of well-being approaches are i) budgeting, ii) policy appraisal and evaluation, and iii) strategic coordination and performance management.

Budgeting

Assessing and managing synergies and trade-offs among different government objectives are particularly important in budgetary priority-setting and implementation. This is a key example of a cross-government activity where well-being approaches have been used to better understand such synergies and trade-offs (OECD, 2023[7]).

Since 2019, New Zealand has been publishing a *Well-being Budget* every year. The *Wellbeing Budget* is the main source of budget information, as it sets out the Government's priorities for the budget (Government of New Zealand, 2023[109]). The Treasury's Living Standards Framework (and dashboard), adapted from the OECD Well-being Framework, informed the longlist of 12 well-being priorities for the 2019 Budget. Based on these priorities, the Cabinet selected a final list of 5 well-being budget priority areas after an extensive process of expert consultation and cross-Ministry deliberation: i) transitioning to a sustainable and low emissions economy; ii) harnessing the social and economic opportunities of digital technology; iii) lifting Māori and Pacific incomes, skills, and opportunities; iv) reducing child poverty and improving child well-being; and v) supporting mental well-being for all New Zealanders (New Zealand

Government, 2018[110]). The final 2019 Well-being Budget directed all new annual spending towards the five priority areas, representing about 4 per cent of total government expenditure. The New Zealand Treasury has continued to develop its methods for applying well-being evidence in the budgetary process, accompanied by institutional reforms to encourage more coordinated, long-term funding for priority issues (OECD, 2023[7]). Australia has also initiated efforts towards generating well-being evidence for use alongside the budgeting process. The 2022 Australian Budget committed the Treasury to developing a national well-being framework incorporating input from public consultation (Government of Australia, 2022[111]).

Strategic coordination and performance management

Examples of using a well-being approach to underpin high-level strategic coordination and priority-setting exercises are i) performance frameworks (including key performance indicators), ii) inclusive growth strategies, and iii) national development plans. In this context, well-being frameworks define a clear, shared, and measurable vision of the goals a country wants to achieve, thus supporting coordinated action across different departments and levels of government, and to structure engagement across different sectors and groups of society (OECD, 2023[7]).

In Bhutan, its Gross National Happiness Index (GNH Index) is used to track and monitor national progress, to set national targets, and to bound ministries together as a coordination tool. It is used to design programs and interventions for indicators that are lagging behind, especially at the initial stages of 5-year national development plans. For example, when the GNH Index on political participation was shown to be falling in 2015-2022, interventions were discussed to raise people's voting capacity (Zangmo, 2023[112]).

In Mongolia, there are two main policy documents, *Mongolia Vision 2050* (with 9 development goals and 100 indicators to track the progress) and *New Recovery Policy*, at the national level that use well-being indicators to design long-term development policy. In addition, the Mongolian Parliament in 2021 has requested the National Statistical Office of Mongolia to develop a *beyond GDP measure*, which can help Mongolia's sustainable development by moving forward beyond its current economy based on mining industry (Batmunkh, 2023[113]).

In Korea, Quality of Life Indicators in Korea (KQoL) present a shared goal of enhancing the quality of life across ministries and are used as policy benchmarks, for example, they were used in designing the 2nd Social Security Master Plan (2019) by the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Office for Government Policy Coordination as well as in three major government projects to protect people's lives, focusing on suicide prevention, workers' industrial accident compensation and reducing traffic fatalities. Efforts are also underway to strengthen the policy applicability of KQoL indicators, with a consideration of their relevance to budgeting. Although it remains to be passed, 39 members of the National Assembly have also proposed the "Act on the Promotion of Gross National Happiness" in March 2023, which includes developing happiness indicators and implementing a national master plan for promoting happiness (Song, 2023[114]).

In the Philippines, well-being data and a set of 9 key statistical indicators including poverty reduction, employment generation and human development, developed by the Philippines Statistical Authority (PSA), are used to measure the progress of the Philippine Development Plan, a 6-year plan that outlines the government's priorities for economic and social development (Mapa, 2023[115]).

The key performance indicators (KPIs) of Japan's Cabinet Office present another example. Following the release of the Japan Cabinet Office's *Basic Policies for Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform* document in June 2021, the concept of well-being became established in the public policy agendas of central ministries and agencies in Japan, and efforts are being made to understand how well-being KPIs could be best employed in the Japanese national and local contexts. These efforts include i) the establishment of a Liaison Conference of Relevant Ministries and Agencies on Well-being in July 2021, to share information, strengthen cooperation and horizontally deploy good practices in order to promote

initiatives on well-being (Government of Japan, 2021[55]), and ii) an annual Survey on Satisfaction and Quality of Life (since 2019) to understand the structure of Japan's economy and society for policy management (including through the use of the data to inform the Cabinet Office's KPIs). The survey measures (subjective and objective) are presented in a Cabinet Office Well-being Dashboard spanning 11 well-being dimensions (chosen with reference to the OECD Well-being Framework) (Japan Cabinet Office, 2022[56]; Japan Cabinet Office, 2023[116]). A Cabinet Decision on June 16, 2023, *Basic Policy on Economic and Fiscal Management and Reform 2023*, has in its chapter 4 the government's plan to accelerate the introduction of well-being indicators in KPIs in various government basic plans; explore the concept of child well-being indicators; facilitate utilization of well-being indicators by local governments; and enhance well-being of individuals and the society by education that unlocks the full potential of children and leaves no one behind (Yokoyama, 2023[117]).

Policy appraisal and evaluation

To implement strategic processes of well-being planning and priority setting, including budgeting practices, it is necessary to adapt tools and methods for appraising, analysing and evaluating different policy options and programme outcomes. Some national agencies have adapted cost-benefit analysis (CBA) and well-being valuation methods to integrate well-being considerations into the analysis of trade-offs between different policy and programme options. Others are strengthening modelling and forecasting techniques to predict the potential impact of government policies and decisions on societal outcomes more accurately And others are developing new well-being impact assessment and evaluation methods (OECD, 2023[7]).

In 2015, the New Zealand Treasury developed an adapted cost-benefit analysis tool (CBAx) to help agencies take a consistent approach across government to cost-benefit analysis, including common values and assumptions; take a long-term and broad view of societal impacts, costs and benefits; rigorously assess these by monetising and discounting impacts, where possible, and; be transparent about the assumptions and evidence base (New Zealand Treasury, 2023[118]). With over 270 values, the CBAx spreadsheet covers different social impacts, derived from market valuations, revealed preferences, discrete choice experiments, contingent valuation and values inputted by departments themselves. Recognising that the cost-benefit analysis can only be one of many inputs into the decision-making process, the New Zealand Treasury considers also non-monetised impact assessments and broader evidence and assumptions to inform value for money advice, alongside wider issues such as strategic alignment with political priorities (New Zealand Treasury, 2022[119]).

Another example is in the Australia Capital Territory (ACT), where the state government has developed a well-being impact assessment template to help plan for and make decisions based on a fuller understanding of the impacts of proposals (including both co-benefits and trade-offs) on well-being in the region. The well-being impact assessments were used in Cabinet and Budget processes for the first time in 2021-2022, with concerted efforts to inform and train civil servants on their use (ACT Government, 2023[120]).

7 Conclusion

Understanding what moving *"Beyond GDP"* entails is a prerequisite for advancing the well-being agenda. Generally speaking, the international community has already succeeded in coalescing around a vision of *"Measuring well-being beyond GDP"* that builds on the following common principles: the need to look at a broad spectrum of economic and non-economic factors that matter to current generations; the need to consider the capitals that drive well-being over time and therefore are responsible for the well-being of future generations; and finally the need to look at distributional aspects.[6]

International organizations have been assisting countries in the advancement of well-being measurement, including furthering work on new data and data techniques. These efforts have leveraged existing information and developed new high-quality information from international and national official sources, while also exploring new data collection techniques and data sources beyond the spectrum of the official statistics (United Nations, 2022[3]). Mobilizing new data sources and developing very short-term forecasting tools such as nowcasting, may contribute to deepening of statistical measurement of economic performance and well-being (PSE, 2021[121]). However, one needs to be mindful that data collection requirements may pose a significant burden on countries, which have different levels of capacity to collect data (Beaven, 2023[33]).

What is next for this agenda?

Despite the great progress made by the region on measuring well-being in the last couple of decades, as discussed in previous sections, both the statistical and policy agendas ahead, as identified by conference participants, are still very rich.

First, **having a common set of established measurement tools, which is context-relevant, would help advance the well-being agenda in the region**. Methodologies, as well as dimensions and indicators, vary widely across regional well-being initiatives. It is generally difficult to compare data across Asian countries when using a broad range of well-being dimensions. Song (2023[114]) pointed out that although there are some indicators that are more comparable in the Asian region due to cultural similarities (e.g. focus on family), there still exist significant geographic, linguistic, and economic differences that hamper comparison even between East Asian countries. Despite the large efforts made, notably in the context of the SDG agenda, there is scope for further harmonizing definitions and methodologies, through ways that are more inclusive and context-relevant in the region. Sumano (2023[51]), for example, pointed out that cultural context should be more carefully considered when applying the international well-being measurement methods in national/regional policy-settings. For instance, Thai people traditionally tend to live together in one big room, thus indicator such as 'room per person' would not necessarily be suitable to describe the status of housing conditions in Thailand (Sumano, 2023[51]). It is also important that

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[6] Despite these commonalities, there are variations at indicator and data levels, and also national-level frameworks. These differences are often due to the need to consider country-specific or contextual factors, and the need to incorporate inputs form a variety of sources during the public consultations and co-designing processes of many national well-being initiatives (OECD, 2023[7]).

countries continue monitoring people's ever-changing needs and expectations as dimensions of well-being could constantly evolve (Neo, 2023[57]). For example, in Singapore, the *Forward Singapore* exercise, launched in 2022, seeks to explore the values and priorities to strengthen social compact going forward (Neo, 2023[57]).

Second, **capacity building for data producers as well as policymakers would support greater uptake of well-being data**. From the data producers' side, lack of capacity to collect timely and accurate data from different sources and compiling them with a framework should be addressed (UNESCAP, 2020[122]). Efforts are also needed to enhance capacity of data users to interpret or analyse new data and communicate the analytical findings with policymakers (UNESCAP, 2020[122]). Also, data producers and policymakers need to better understand the role that resources for the future (i.e. social, human, natural and economic capital) may have in addressing current challenges such as inequalities, demographic change and environmental degradation. Capacity building, however, needs to be tailored to national and regional circumstances to be effective (Smith, Zoundi and Bizikova, 2022[62]), as the level of understanding and readiness to act on well-being issues may vary widely.

Finally, securing **granular data on vulnerable population** groups in the Asian region is crucial in understanding their deprivations and needs. For example, data disaggregation (e.g. by sex, area of residence, ethnicity and disability status) needs to be strengthened in Southeast Asia (UNESCAP, 2023[123]), in order to uncover current inequalities as well as inequality of opportunities. Beyond data granularity, additional **evidence on social mobility** is necessary in order to design and implement targeted policies to support more equal opportunities, as outlined in section 5. Evidence on social mobility and its evolution in the medium and long term are key in analyzing past determinants and anticipating future trends (Balestra and Ciani, 2022[90]). In particular, monitoring child well-being is important as inequalities are very often rooted in early-life disadvantage. In this context, the *OECD Observatory on Social Mobility and Equal Opportunity* was launched in November 2022, to help bring the Organisation's work in this area to the next stage by generating new evidence and deepening the analysis of the factors that impact social mobility and equal opportunities (OECD, n.d.[124]).

Going forward: Establishing platform for sharing knowledge

The importance of establishing platforms for discussion to design collaborative strategies for fostering well-being data in Asia were reiterated during the Conference (Mapa, 2023[115]). There are still many challenges to overcome in using well-being indicators in policy cycles in the Asian region, but broader efforts to create platforms to exchange best practices and enhance knowledge sharing are already underway. For example, ASEAN has established ASEAN Community Statistical System (ACSS) in 2011, of which its Committee, the highest policy making and coordinating body on statistical matters, work together on Sustainable Development Goals Indicators and in sharing, analysing, disseminating and communicating data (ASEAN, n.d.[125]). Also, in late 2023, the OECD has launched a new *Well-being Knowledge Exchange Platform* (Box 7.1)*,* to draw together international examples that bring well-being evidence into policy practice and assist in their further development through peer learning and technical support. The Platform will provide both a resource hub, and a community of practice for policy-makers and statisticians to address both the measurement and policy implementation challenges. Through online materials, workshops, webinars and dedicated meetings, it will create a space for sharing experiences and solutions across countries (OECD, 2023[7]). In-depth discussions between data producers and policymakers can also help to improve the comparability of well-being evidence, and to enhance its relevance and credibility.

Box 7.1. The OECD Well-being Knowledge Exchange Platform: to catalyse peer learning and further develop well-being policy practices

The systematic integration of evidence from multidimensional well-being dashboards is a rapidly developing but still relatively new area of public policy practice. It is clear from existing initiatives that the establishment of a framework (and accompanying indicators) is just the starting point. In November 2023, the OECD launched a new Well-being Knowledge Exchange Platform, to draw together international examples that bring well-being evidence into policy practice and assist in their further development through peer learning and technical support.

The Platform will create a space for sharing good practice and addressing common challenges on well-being measurement and policy between governments. It will provide a way to scale up and open up national and bilateral discussions to all interested OECD members, and will address questions from three angles:

- **Measurement**: recognising that measurement is the bedrock for integrating well-being evidence into policy, it will bring together both statistical and policy perspectives on strategic issues (such as effective reporting of complex multidimensional datasets) and emerging topics related to well-being metrics.
- **Policy ecosystem**: addressing the range of supportive tools, methods and knowledge for developing and embedding the strategic policy use of well-being frameworks.
- **Well-being lens**: Understanding how a well-being lens can give a more integrated and systemic view of solutions for specific policy challenges (e.g. climate change, mental health) or sectoral issues (e.g. transport).

The Platform features a range of activities, including an online resource repository, providing an inventory of country experiences and relevant OECD work; a series of structured knowledge exchange webinars and workshops, to address specific topics identified by members; and substantive research to produce case studies, methodological development and policy advice on priority topics.

Source: OECD (2023), Economic Policy Making to Pursue Economic Welfare: OECD Report for the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, May 2023, Japan, OECD, Paris, https://www.oecd.org/economy/G7_Beyond_GDP_Economic_policy_making_to_pursue_economic_welfare_2023.pdf.

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