

# Can we build a new form of social safety net through public-private partnerships in Japan?

–A case study from the Social Action Program of Osaka prefecture Council of Social Welfare–

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Abstract:

## Introduction

Due to the article 107 and 108 of Social Welfare Act in 2000, local and prefectural governments are encouraged to develop a social plan for better local welfare services and programs. Some of social plans, including the one developed by Osaka prefecture, propose community-based initiatives in order to meet unique needs of the area. Some of them are operated through government offices, some are through private organizations, and some are collaborated between government offices and private organizations.

The Social Action Program (SAP) was launched by Osaka Prefecture Council of Social Welfare (OPCSW) in 2005 as a result of discussion by Osaka Prefecture Social Welfare Committee: the committee's decision was clearly influenced by the motto of Social Welfare Act 2000. SAP is a unique program in two senses. First, the program is not designed to serve particular population; it rather serves people who are not supported by any other existing programs. In that sense, the program is considered as a new form of social safety net. Secondly, the program operates its own fund and the fund is used as a financial support for deprived population. So, the program tends to be seen as an alternative to the government social assistance program. These two unique characteristics of SAP raised a question of "what is social safety net in Japan today?"

The term "safety net" is usually referred to the government social assistance program in Japan since it is the last resort in Japan's social welfare system. SAP has, however, interfered with the government social assistance program in many cases during the last three years in its operation. Those interferences can be analyzed as a result of insufficiency in social assistance program and/or as a result of the passage of Social Welfare Act 2000- more active participation from private sector in community affairs. Therefore, the term "safety net" has been earning more than one fixed definition

recently.

This paper presents the challenges and achievements of today's social safety net in Japan, especially when the safety net is formed by public-private partnerships. In doing so, I first redefine the term "safety net" by following the recent discussion in academic articles as well as various reports. Then, the paper examines the case studies from SAP. The case studies were completed in three parts- data analysis, interviews and a survey. The details, procedures and outcomes of the case studies will be discussed in the following chapters.

Although SAP is a program active only in Osaka Prefecture so far, and the program is still three years old, community-based initiatives like SAP are expected to launch in other prefectures and municipalities in Japan, and those programs will face similar challenges as SAP has been. This paper, therefore, tries to unveil the issue underneath its surface; if we consider the surface of the issues lies on the program operations, the core of the issue is the undeveloped culture of public-private partnerships. In other words, both the government sector and the private sector are not yet familiar with the concept of governance. The new form of social safety net requires high-level of governance, and this paper examines the readiness of workers in a sphere of community, to work collaboratively between the public and the private sectors in Japan.

### Backgrounds

The idea of social safety net is not new in Japan, but recently it has been earning more attention due to the challenges that the government social assistance program has been facing. Since the beginning of 1990s, Japan has been experiencing changes in larger social landscape: namely- the economic depression, high unemployment rate, increase in aging population, increase in the number of single parent families, etc. The number of welfare recipients has skyrocketed from 586,106 in 1993 to 941,270 in 2003. The overflowing welfare recipients and applicants became a big burden to welfare offices throughout Japan, not only growing costs to run the social assistance program, which national, prefectural and local governments split in the ratio of two thirds, one sixth, and one sixth, but also shortage of staff. As a result, the accountability of the program as the last resort in Japan's social welfare system was jeopardized, and people started questioning about its sufficiency.

It was time to reevaluate social safety net, and reform of social assistance program became one of "must items" within social welfare policy discussion<sup>1</sup>. The reform of the program coincided with establishment of new community-based initiatives. Actually it

was not coincident; they were both related to larger social changes mentioned above. Community-based initiatives have been launched in reference to Social Welfare Act 2000; one of its key outcomes is that local governments are encouraged, literally stated in the Act, to develop a Community Welfare Plan through citizen participation and those plans often come along with new community-based initiatives<sup>ii</sup>. Although, SAP is not the direct outcome of Social Welfare Plan<sup>iii</sup>, it was launched because the Social Welfare Act created a political environment in Osaka prefecture, which eased its budgetary process and supported its inauguration. At the end, SAP was launched as a prefecture-wide community initiative.

SAP was designed to strengthen the existing social safety net not only through collaboration with the government social assistance program but also through working with other institutions and services such as public health centers, nursing homes, NPOs and other voluntary organizations. The program's mission was set clearly to serve deprived people who are not served by any other existing welfare programs. It, however, has left the space open for each street-level worker to run the program. The program, has been going through experimental period during the last three years, and it is subject to be evaluated.

### Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to examine recent transition in Japan's social safety net through literature reviews and case studies from SAP. Since SAP is operated only in Osaka prefecture, the discussion of this paper might be limited to issues around this particular program and area. This paper, therefore, mainly focuses on the relationship between SAP and the social assistance programs in Osaka prefecture. At the same time, other municipalities and prefectures may have similar experience with their own safety net especially when community-based initiative is launched for the purpose of strengthening its local safety net. For that reason, this paper extends its discussion to macro-level and applies its argument inductively to public-private partnerships in general.

While this paper focuses on safety net in a context of public-private partnerships, both on program operation level and on macro governance level, it will also explore two common questions: how could social safety net be built sustainable and sufficient in today's social welfare system, and what could be a better way to create a collaborative relationship between public sector and private sector. The following paragraphs will explain these two questions in detail.

Japan's social assistance program has been operated according to Social

Assistance Law, and this Act is regulated based on the article 25 from the Constitution of Japan. Article 25 is constructed by two sections- one section assures a right for Japanese citizen to have a healthy and decent life, and another section to obligate the state to protect the right. In other words, article 25 assures national minimum for every Japanese citizen. The government social assistance program

The new collaborative relationship between the public sector and the private sector within community initiatives is relatively new comparing to established contracting culture between public sector and private sector for social services.

Social safety net is considered as a system within a larger social welfare system. Therefore, this paper also tries to draw an essence from the formation of public-private partnerships and applies it to a macro-level argument: the formation of governance. Although a formation of social safety net is only one aspect of social governance, an implication from the study is considered valuable since this study examines the relationship between SAP and the government social assistance program; the social assistance program is operated under a strict law, and this law is to fulfill the national minimum set by article 25 of Japanese Constitution.

On the other hand, the main argument of this paper is how we could build a better social safety net through public-private partnerships in a sphere of community today. This argument is delivered from series of concrete case studies conducted with SAP.

### Research Methods

Several research methods are used throughout the course of this research process- from developing an overall framework to setting up a hypothesis and verifying the hypothesis.

Since the purpose of this research is to examine recent transition in social safety net in Japan, literature review was done mainly with recent Japanese articles related to the issue of social safety net. Some non-Japanese articles were also investigated, especially those literatures that have already proposed a formation of safety net through public-private partnerships. The government reports and committee reports were also reviewed.

With a given framework from the literature review, the case study with SAP was conducted. SAP collects detailed reports from each case when social workers apply for the financial support from the Social Action Fund. During the last three years of its operation, SAP provided financial supports to over 900 cases, and the collected data from those cases were analyzed.<sup>iv</sup>

Two groups of SAP workers and one group of welfare officers were interviewed as

the second stage of the case study. Two groups from SAP, one from northern part of Osaka prefecture and another from southern part, were chosen because they appeared relatively often in the data analysis. A group of welfare officers are from the same municipality as the southern group of SAP workers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the groups several times during the period of July 2006 to February 2007.

The third stage of the case study was a paper survey conducted with point-social workers from SAP (purposive samples). 37 point-social workers were active and available when the survey was conducted. The reason why point-social workers were chosen for the purpose of the survey is that 1) they are evenly spread throughout Osaka prefecture, 2) they all have taken an intensive training program when they were hired, and 3) community social workers are far more diverse in terms of their skill levels and their experience, than point-social workers are; some community social workers have worked with more than ten cases a year while some other workers have none. For the purpose of getting more accurate data set, the survey was conducted with point-social workers. The limit of this purposive sampling is that the result of this survey may only reflect a part of SAP program, and further research is needed to increase the accuracy of this research.

#### Redefining Social Safety Net: the review of literature

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2004), an English term “Safety Net” is defined as “something that provides security against misfortune or difficulty.” The term is often used to describe a physical (tangible) net such as one being hanged to catch acrobatic performers in a circus. The term is, however, frequently referred as “social safety net,” which implies collection of welfare services and social securities that prevent any individual from falling into poverty. This English term and its concept were imported to Japan, and the term is used almost in the same context in Japanese.

Once the term “safe net” was adapted to Japanese language, its definition has evolved. For example, Kaneko (1999) identifies positive use and negative use of the term. He explains that the term is originally used in a positive sense in English: financial markets, for instance, uses its safety net to create an environment for investors to co-operate without fearing risks. On the other hand, he identifies the negative use of the term, which is the idea of trade-off for free-market economy; if we have a competitive society under the principle of free-market, we would need to build a safety net for those who lost in the competition. In explaining this idea, he uses public benefits for the poor, as an example. He believes that the term safety net is generally used in the latter sense

in Japan today.

“Government social assistance program as the last safety net” is a phrase commonly used in a welfare policy discussion, especially in a context of a right to minimum-standards of living. Article 25 of Japanese Constitution states that;

*1) All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living.*

*2) In all spheres of life, the State shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health.*

Social Assistance Law was, then, enacted in order to assure Article 25. The logic was, therefore, created that every Japanese citizen has right to minimum standards of living and the government social assistance program guarantees their rights<sup>v</sup>. Because of this logic, “safety net” is often used as synonym to the social assistance program. Despite the fact that Jinno (1999) and others have pointed out that the term has been narrowly used, the term “safety net” was predominantly accepted as synonym to the social assistance program in Japan.

This logic was, however, gradually diluted recently. The policy for social assistance program has been modified, so has the definition of safety net. Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare appointed a commission in 2003, chaired by Masami Iwata, to report on the necessary changes in current social assistance program. The commission’s report came out in December, 2004, and its suggestions have been implemented into the program since year 2005. The report suggests, for example, an implementation of “self-reliance program” at each welfare office. It also suggests a collaborative relationship between welfare office and job placement office, as known as “Hello-Work.” Overall, the report suggests that social assistance program should be accessible to the needed and it should also support recipients to move out, not to push out, of the program when they are ready.

Another report called “A suggestion for New Safety Net” was co-published between Japan Association of City Mayors and National Governor’s Association in October, 2006. The report raises four suggestions; 1) welfare recipients who are under 65 and able-bodied to have five-year limit to receive social assistance, 2) welfare recipients who are over 65 should not be pressured to work and the social assistance program needs to be modified for the aged, 3) there should be a program to support those who are potential welfare recipients and prevent them from becoming recipients, 4) for the changes to be taken, the social assistance program should be coordinated with other related programs and support the shift “from welfare to work” (Kimura, 2006) Many scholars, including Ohtomo (2007), have shown their concerns toward the report. They

argue that the report is disregarding Article 25, and it is promoting “workfare policy” similar to the U.S. Welfare Reform policy under President Clinton in 1996.

Two reports above mainly suggest policy-level changes in current “safety net.” Other articles rather propose changes in a community-level, and they suggest much broader definition for the term “safety net.” For example, Makisato (2006) proposes that safety net is not only a collection of welfare services, social insurances, social security, etc., but it can be also formed by network of people in a community. Those networks are formed by residents, organized volunteers, neighborhood associations, non-profit organizations, social service agencies, nursing homes, etc. Sawai (2007) also argues that the government social assistance program is only a part of safety net, though it is essential to it; he redefines the term that safety net is a system that also supports those who are floating at the border to be self-sustaining. He also suggests that newly launched community initiatives are becoming a part of the new safety net.

The idea of broadening the concept of safety net by including community-based initiatives is not limited to Japan. Looking back the history of social welfare and social work, community organizations, such as Charity Organization Societies and settlement houses, have been always forefront of the social issues, and they were considered as safety net. However, if we look at the history of welfare states, we see that states started replacing the roles of community organizations and charity organizations, by providing social security to its citizens. Burghardt and Fabricant (1987) identify that new community-based agencies were established in 1980s in the U.S., in order to provide safety net to people whose needs were not met by government’s programs. When welfare states are not accountable to certain issues, the tendencies are that community organizations are taking more active role and responding to the needs in their community. Studies show that this trend is also applicable to other so-called welfare states in Europe as well as in Japan (Takegawa, 2006).

The term safety net has been defined according to laws and regulations for social welfare and social security and roles of the government and community organizations/voluntary sector within the defined law. The government social assistance program has quite important role in providing safety net in Japan, or at least it has been recognized as an important part, and we also see that its role has been shifting and there is a trend that community organization/voluntary sector is gaining its role in construction of safety net today.

### Social Action Program

The Social Action Program was established as a community-based initiative in

Osaka Prefecture. The purpose of the program is stated that to “establish a community social worker system to help elderly people who require support, as part of charitable contributions to the local community.” The program was originally designed as safety net for elderly, but it has extended its program area beyond elderly. In practice, the objectives of the program can be summarized to two sentences: 1) To provide a support to those who fail to access necessary welfare services, and 2) to provide financial support, up to 100,000 yen per case, from its original fund, called Social Action Fund.

The program was first proposed by the Osaka Prefecture Social Welfare Committee, and it was implemented by the Working Group for Welfare Facilities for the Aged, affiliated with OPCSW. Osaka Prefecture government, then, took the committee’s proposal and decided to subsidize the program for five years, from 2004 to 2008. 100 million yen has been subsidized by Osaka prefectural government every year in order to provide human resources. In addition to the government subsidy, the Working Group for Welfare Facilities for the Aged has pooled contribution from its member organizations (they are all nursing homes). Each organization is asked to contribute 1000 yen per person they serve during a year. With pooled money, the Working Group established the Social Action Fund. The program was launched as a community-based initiative by the private sector, but the Osaka prefectural government has been involved since the beginning of the process and has been supporting the program financially.

Along with establishment of SAP, a new department was also set within OPCSW, as an administrative office for the program. This office provides trainings and supports to social workers along with administrative tasks. Two types of social workers are involved in SAP- point-social workers and community social workers. 48 Point-social workers are hired with OPCSW, and each point-social worker is assigned her/his area. Each point-social worker is stationed at a facility of a member organization affiliated with Working Group for Welfare Facilities for the Aged. The point-social workers’ task is to become a liaison between community social workers and other community-based organizations, welfare facilities, and government offices in the assigned area. A community social worker is rather a title than a full-time position unlike a point-social worker. Each member organization affiliated with Working Group for Welfare Facilities for the Aged assigns at least one employee as a community social worker. Their occupation might be a case worker, a care worker, a care manager, etc. There were approximately 400 community social workers assigned as of June, 2007. In the original plan, the role of point-social workers would be an assistant for community social workers, and their positions were temporarily held only for the initial five years. The role of point-social workers, however, has become a crucial part of the program.

During the last three years in its operation, Social Action Fund was provided to 972 cases with approximately 85.2 million yen in total. Among those cases, the fund was most frequently used for the purpose of providing food and other daily spending (36.5%), followed by health care and medical needs (28.5%) and rent and moving costs (26.4%). Nearly half cases were related to elderly (48.4%). Overall, SAP has been quite influential to other welfare programs and services including the government social assistance program. It has been recognized by other organizations as an important part of social safety net.

## Research Findings

### *Data Analysis*

Community social workers and point-social workers from SAP submit their case report to the SAP office for each case when they apply for Social Action Fund. Each report has at least following information: personal information from each client such as name, age, sex, unit of family, address, phone number, etc., description of the case and identified needs, where the case was referred, names of other agencies and workers involved in the case, the client's use of formal services, case history since the initial contact, and social worker's comments with a plan for the case. The report is submitted with an application form, which states the reason for financial needs, and it includes an approval from a supervising director.

The cases reported to the SAP office are labeled into several categories. The categorization process is done based on the issues each case is related to (i.e. social assistance, housing/moving, health care, disabilities, debts, etc.). These categories were developed according to certain patterns from reported cases. Since the purpose of this research is to examine the recent transition of social safety net in Japan by looking at the relationship between SAP and social assistance program, the first process of data analysis is to pick up all cases related to the social assistance program, even from those not labeled as "social assistance" by the office. For the sake of this research, I defined those "related cases" as following; 1) the client had been already a recipient of social assistance, 2) the client had applied to the social assistance program, yet she/he was denied during the application process, 3) the client was not eligible for the social assistance program because she/he did not meet a required condition, and the worker helped the client to meet it. By selecting cases based on these three conditions<sup>vi</sup>, it was found that more than two thirds were identified as "related cases." This finding proves that SAP and the government social assistance program have very close tie.

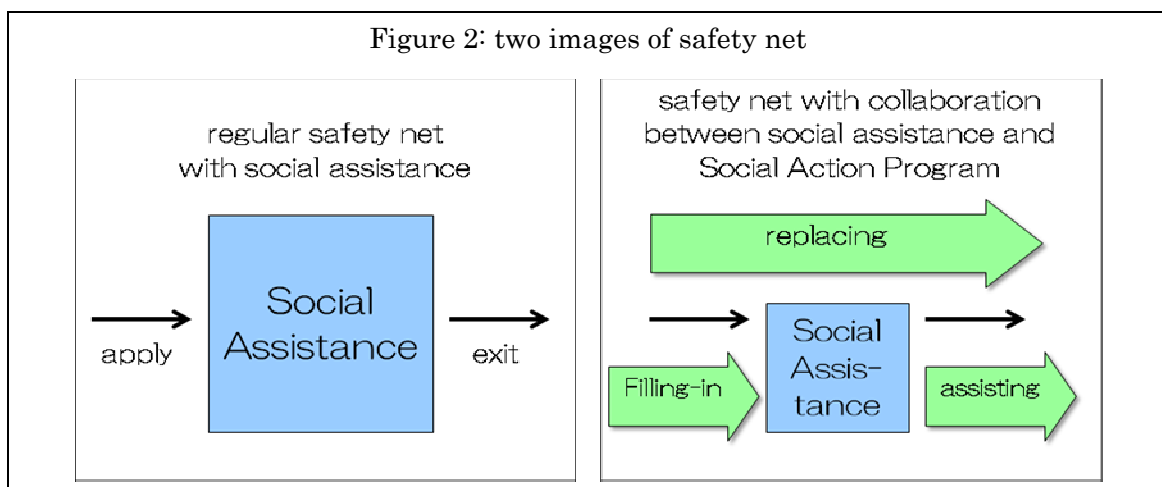
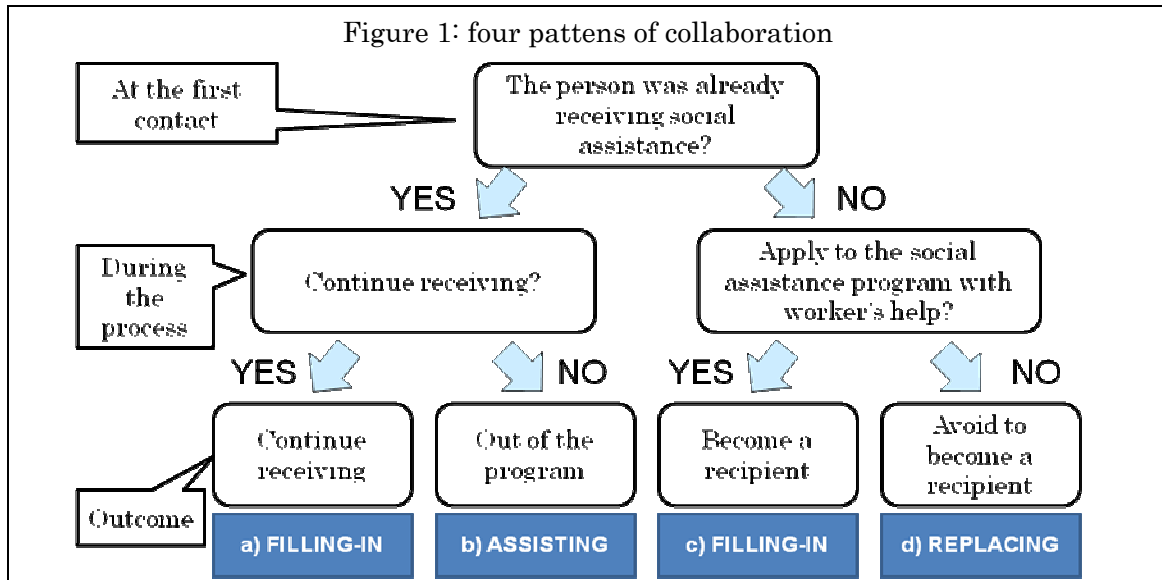
The next step of data analysis is to identify patterns within selected cases. The

interest of this step is to investigate how collaborations between two programs are formed. In other words, this process identifies how social safety net is formed between two programs in order to serve clients. We often take collaboration for granted. When the word collaboration is used, the complexity and details of collaborative work are disregarded. As it is illustrated in figure 1, I identify four patterns of collaboration between SAP and the social assistance program. Those patterns are created according to a timeframe and a condition of the client, whether receiving social assistance or not. The timeframe, in which an SAP worker is working with a client, is divided into three periods- at the first contact, during the process, and outcome. Then, each case is filtered by asking whether the client is receiving social assistance at the first contact and during the process. Through this filtering process, cases are divided into the following four patterns:

- a) The client was a welfare recipient at the first contact, and she/he remains to be while SAP worker is supporting her/him.
- b) The client was a welfare recipient at the first contact, but she/he came out of the social assistance program with an SAP worker's support.
- c) The client was not receiving social assistance at the first contact, and she/he is able to become a recipient with an SAP worker's support.
- d) The client was not receiving social assistance at the first contact, and she/he remains to be out of the social assistance program despite her/his need.

Each pattern is named as a) filling-in, b) assisting, c) filling-in, d) replacing; they describe the role of SAP in relation to the social assistance program. The pattern a) is named "filling-in" because an SAP worker supported the client despite the fact that the client is receiving social assistance so a welfare officer is supposed to provide casework and enough support to assure her/his minimum-standard. In the case of pattern a), therefore, an SAP worker "filled-in" for a welfare officer. The pattern b) is named "assisting" because an SAP assisted the mission for today's welfare officer- helping a client to become self-sufficient, meaning not depending on social assistance<sup>vii</sup>. The pattern c) is named "filling-in." Clients who fall in this pattern usually did not meet one of conditions as a welfare recipient at the beginning of the process, and an SAP worker usually helps to fix her/his condition to meet the criteria. For instance, there are many cases that an SAP worker supported the client moving into an affordable housing because the client cannot receive social assistance if her/his rent is too high<sup>viii</sup>. Therefore, it is considered that an SAP worker filled-in what was missing in safety net. The pattern d) is named "replacing" because SAP literary replaced social assistance program in the formation of safety net. In this pattern, the client has never received social

assistance despite her/his need. The figure 2 compares two images of safety net; one shows regular safety net with the government social assistance program, and another shows safety net formed with collaboration between SAP and the social assistance program.



After creating four patterns, all cases are sorted into four categories. Table 1 shows the result of the data analysis. Approximately 14.0% of cases fall into pattern a), and so as 4.8% in the pattern b), 61.8% in the pattern c) and 19.4% in the pattern d). This result can be analyzed that the collaborative relationship between SAP and the social assistance program falls in “filling-in” and “replacing,” and only a few cases fall in “assisting.”

Table 1: percentages in each collaboration pattern

a) filling-in	b) assisting	c) filling-in	d) replacing
14.0%	4.8%	61.8%	19.4%

NOTE: This figure only reflects the first two thirds of collected data.

Two conclusions can be drawn from this data analysis. First, majority (more than two thirds) of cases from SAP are related to the government social assistance program. In other words, a new safety net is formed with collaboration between two programs. Second, most collaborative work between two programs falls into “filling-in” relationship. A hypothesis for the following research steps is drawn from this data analysis; it is proved that a new form of safety net is constructed with two programs, yet the collaboration between two programs seems fragmented- no real partnership. The relationship between two programs, especially between SAP workers and welfare officers, will be closely investigated in following chapters.

### *Interviews*

With a given hypothesis from the data analysis, three group interviews were conducted. Two purposes were set for those interviews; one is to collect case examples for four patterns drawn above, and another is to observe relationship between SAP workers and welfare officers, especially how each values one another.

A typical case for the pattern a) is a case that SAP worker provides some financial support due to the client’s immediate financial needs (i.e. a client is kicked out of her/his apartment due to unpaid rent, or a client needs a medical equipment that social assistance wouldn’t pay, etc.) In this pattern, the support to the client is mainly provided by social assistance, and SAP worker helps to meet an immediate need, so the client can sustain her/his life with income from social assistance.

A case example for the pattern b) was not successfully collected from the interviews. According to submitted reports, it is assumed that a typical case is a welfare recipient single mother, who needs clothing and other commodity for her job interviews. SAP rarely provides this type of assistance because SAP’s mission is to serve those who have immediate need. This part may need to be reconsidered since it goes against the social assistance program’s mission.

The pattern c) has many more case examples than any other patterns. As it is raised above, a case of moving is a typical case for pattern c). In many cases, SAP workers try to enroll the client into social assistance despite red-taping from welfare officers. On the other hand, there are cases that welfare officers ask SAP workers to assist enrollment process. For example, in a case of a person who was suffering from alcoholic, the welfare officer was ready to enroll him to social assistance except he had to get rid of his old car. The pattern c) has produced many discussions between two programs. Both programs fulfill their function as a part of safety net, yet because there

is no clear rule in their collaboration, it is common that one program takes advantage of another, or one requests obligation of another.

The pattern d) may not involve any collaboration between two programs. It is, however, crucial to consider a role of the social assistance program in the pattern d) since it is recommended to become an “easy to enroll and easy to be out” program (Iwata, 2004). A typical example for the pattern d) is a case with a client with enormous debts. SAP workers refer them to a lawyer and provide them initial consultation costs if needed. Many cases in pattern d) are eligible to social assistance except some required conditions are not met. (e.g. They own a house, and they do not want to lose it. Or, there is an able-bodied member in the household who may be diagnosed as a mentally ill, yet the family does not want her/him to be diagnosed, probably due to stigma.)

Overall, SAP workers referred welfare officers as important partner in their work. On the other hand, welfare officers are skeptical about SAP. It is part of welfare officers’ task to control the entrance of the social assistance program. SAP workers, however, widen the entrance by consulting applicants, occasionally with a financial support. Many local governments are facing deficits and tightening its social expenditure. Therefore, welfare officers are pressured from their supervisors to turn welfare recipients self-sustained. Welfare officers did not see SAP workers as a partner in this context.

During the past several decades, social work has been practiced within welfare facilities such as nursing homes, facilities for people with disability, hospitals, shelters, etc. Their task was to provide services to clients within their facilities. The interviews conducted for this research, however, showed that social workers were working with anonymous population boundlessly. This change is clearly the result of Social Welfare Act 2000, and because of this change, interferences between SAP workers and welfare officers have become evident. The following survey explores how SAP workers’ perceived relationship with welfare officers influence the formation of new safety net.

### *Survey*

The first two stages in this case study, data analysis and interviews, have shown that SAP and the government social assistance program have overlapped its program areas. The rationale for SAP is that

The survey was conducted with 37 point-social workers during March and April of 2007, and 29 questionnaires were collected (78.3% response rate). The questionnaire was distributed, with informed consent attached, to point-social workers at their monthly meeting. The questionnaire has seven questions with a combination of nominal,

ordinal, and interval measurements.

The questionnaire is designed with three sections. The first section has questions regarding basic information about each worker such as area they serve, number of cases they have had over a year, etc. The second section contains questions regarding to the patterns of collaboration, which is defined in data analysis stage. In this survey, workers were asked to provide the number of cases, all related to social assistance programs, that they have served during the past year, including cases that Social Action Fund was not used. (This information was never collected by the SAP office.) The third section intended to uncover worker’s perceived relationship to the welfare office. For all questions, answerers were asked to write about their experience during a year from April 2006 to March 2007.

The collected data shows some diversity, but overall it shows a clear trend. The result shows that an average SAP worker had a mean of 34.40 cases, and a mean of 11.45 cases with Social Action Fund a year. As it is shown in table 2, more than half cases fall into “filling-in” (53.2% with a) and c) combined). This figure is smaller than the figure from data analysis (75.8%). On the other hand, 45.0% of cases fall into “replacing,” comparing with 19.4% from data analysis. These differences might be a result of few things; the data analysis is not accurately conducted, and point-social workers dealt with more “replacing” cases than community social workers.

Another finding is that the figure in “replacing” increases when those cases are settled “without fund” (from 40.1% in “with fund” to 49.8% in “without fund”). The same trend is observed in “a) filling-in” (the figure increases from 11.7% in “with fund” to 23.1% in “without fund”), and opposite trend is observed in “c) filling-in” (the figure decreases from 45.5% in “with fund” to 26.2% in “without fund”). It is important to note that number of cases “without fund” (225) is a little greater than the number of cases “with fund” (222). Since SAP is known with original Social Action Fund, the program is often regarded as a program “with fund,” but as this survey proves that the program has almost as same caseloads “without fund” as it does “with fund” when the cases related to the social assistance program. In other words, point-social workers, and it is probably the same with community social workers, that they provide casework and consultation to their clients before they provide financial support. Indeed, the workers tend to provide the fund more often with “c) filling-in,” which is a case that SAP workers set up a condition for clients to become eligible to social assistance. The following data analysis provides a possible reason for this tendency.

Table 2: patterns of collaboration					
	a) filling-in	b) assisting	c) filling-in	d) replacing	Total

With Fund	26 (11.7%)	6 (2.7%)	101 (45.5%)	89 (40.1%)	222 (100%)
Without Fund	52 (23.1%)	2 (0.9%)	59 (26.2%)	112 (49.8%)	225 (100%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>78 (17.4%)</b>	<b>8 (1.8%)</b>	<b>160 (35.8%)</b>	<b>201 (45.0%)</b>	<b>447 (100%)</b>

Table 3 shows the result from a question, “from what organizations and agencies are they referred among social assistance related cases?” The workers are asked to score listed organizations with 0 as no reference at all, 1 as a few reference, 2 as some reference, and 3 as most references of all. The result shows a quite clear tendency; none but a welfare office scores above 2.0. A strong tie between SAP and the social assistance program is, again, proved, and this result particularly explains that welfare offices are depending on SAP. The government social assistance program is considered as the last resort, yet welfare offices refer some cases to SAP when they consider the cases are not qualified because the clients are not meeting the required conditions. The common scenario is that SAP worker, then, help the client to meet the required condition for her/his eligibility to social assistance (pattern c), or the SAP worker provides help, with or without a fund, to meet the client’s immediate needs (pattern d).

Table 3: points of reference

ORGANIZATION & AGENCY	AVERAGE SCORE
Facilities for the aged	0.78
One-stop social care service center	1.26
Community care support center	0.89
“Care planning center”	1.22
Welfare facilities other than service for aged	0.56
<b>Government (welfare office)</b>	<b>2.07</b>
Government (Children’s aid and services)	0.85
Government (Public health center)	1.15
Government (other)	0.89
Local council of social welfare	1.15
Local guardian	0.74
Hospitals and clinics	1.26

\*0 as no reference at all, 1 as a few references, 2 as some references, and 3 as most references

The last section of the survey asks questions regarding worker’s perceived relationship to the welfare office. The workers are asked to rate the relationship from very cooperative (5) to not cooperative at all (1). The average score (mean) is 3.7; many

point-social workers perceive that welfare offices are moderately cooperative to them. The answerers are also given a comment-box to provide their reasons for rating. Some positive comments about the relationship include; “I often hold a case conference with welfare officers,” “welfare officers were not cooperative at the beginning (of the program), but they now understand the purpose of the program and we often communicate,” “we have a reciprocal relationship.” On the other hand, some workers portrayed the relationship negatively; “there are some cooperative welfare officers, but some others are red-taping to my clients,” “welfare officers refer cases to us instead of them working on those cases.” Some confusion among point-social workers is observed in this section because there is no clear definition for SAP’s program area. It seems that each worker and each welfare office are forming unique relationship between them, and it depends on the worker’s relationship skill.

The relationship between SAP and government social assistant program are closely looked at and analyzed with this survey. It is admitted that this survey has certain limitation due to its purposefully selected sample population and unidentified variables. It, however, provides some useful points of analysis between two programs. First, SAP tends to use the fund when it “fills-in” for the social assistance program. This can be explained that the fund is only used once to one client, so the fund tends to be used to enroll the client to social assistance. In other words, Social Action Fund is used as a conduit to the last resort. Second, welfare offices are the most frequent point of reference to SAP workers. Many workers consider that two programs maintain cooperative relationship while some workers consider that SAP is taken advantage by the social assistance program.

### Conclusion

The partnership between the public sector and the private sector has been discussed for decades, and it seems that the area of partnership is expanding. As a matter of fact, social safety net was the area protected by the government since the establishment of Social Assistance Law, and it is no longer a sacred field. It is expected that the area for public-private partnership will expand in the future (Deakin, 2002).

The public-private partnerships can be formed in various levels in various forms. For example, passing new regulation or an agreement such as the Compact is one form (Nagata, 2007). When the government is contracting out some services to the private sector, it is also considered one form of partnership as long as the level of funding is maintained (Kanaya, 2007). Developing a Community Welfare Plan with civic participation is also one form (Takegawa, 2006). SAP is also born out of collaboration

between Osaka Prefectural government and OPCSW, and many other programs like SAP are expected to be launched through collaboration between the public sector and the private sector. Those partnerships, however, only defines roles for each sector in a macro level; they provide a framework for collaboration but not details of how the collaboration is performed in practice.

This paper has looked at how collaboration is formed between SAP and the social assistance program in their practice. No guidelines are set between two programs, and that caused overlaps and confusion between two programs. In the worst perspective, one program sees the other threatening or exploiting.

So, can we build a new form of social safety net through public-private partnerships in Japan? We do not have a choice. With the implementation of self-reliance program, the private sector is counted on as a part of social safety net (Fukawa, 2006). Assuring the minimum-standard is no longer the obligation of the solo state. Therefore, creating a collaborative culture is the key to a better community in the era of governance.

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<sup>i</sup> The reform of the government social assistance program was carried with a similar ideology to the U.S. Welfare Reform in 1996: “from welfare to work.” The report written by a committee, chaired by Professor Masami Iwata (1998), suggests each local welfare office to run a self-support program which provides intense casework to welfare recipients including employment services and job trainings.

<sup>ii</sup> Those community-based initiatives can be seen as a symbol of recent social welfare policy changes. The philosophy behind the changes is like an idea for a typical Neoliberal state: a shift from a larger government to a smaller government, more citizen participation, mutual aid within a community rather depending upon government’s programs, and, of course not to mention, less social expenditure. Similar policies can be found in the United States’ “War on Poverty” policy among Johnson administration such as model cities.

<sup>iii</sup> SAP was proposed by Osaka Prefecture Social Welfare Committee

<sup>iv</sup> At first, the data from the first 300 cases were analyzed. Those cases are mostly from the first year of the program, and the rest is currently being analyzed.

<sup>v</sup> Japan’s Social Assistance Law regulates that a local welfare office is commanded to provide enough cash to sustain a recipient’s life. In addition, the government also covers necessary medical care, child care, long-term care, educational cost, moving cost, and other necessary costs. The government also provides casework by assigning a welfare officer to recipients, and the caseworker is supposed to provide enough attention, so minimum-standard of welfare recipients are assured.

<sup>vi</sup> The first third was filtered prior to the following research process, and the rest has been analyzed only recently. This paper is written without complete analysis.

<sup>vii</sup> The pattern a) and the pattern c) can be also considered as “assisting” since an SAP worker assisted a welfare officer in her/his assessment work, yet those collaborative works are often welfare officers’ will. This point will be discussed in the following chapter.

<sup>viii</sup> Although it is part of welfare officer’s task to assure the rights to minimum-standard for every Japanese citizen, it is more common that they get red-tape instead.