The Incidence of Public Spending on Healthcare:
Comparative Evidence from Asia

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The article compares the incidence of public healthcare across 11 Asian countries and
provinces, testing the dominance of healthcare concentration curves against an equal
distribution and Lorenz curves and across countries. The analysis reveals that the
distribution of public healthcare is prorich in most developing countries. That distri-
bution is avoidable, but a prooor incidence is easier to realize at higher national
incomes. The experiences of Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand suggest that increas-
ing the incidence of prooor healthcare requires limiting the use of user fees, or
protecting the poor effectively from them, and building a wide network of health
facilities. Economic growth may not only relax the government budget constraint on
prooor policies but also increase prooor incidence indirectly by raising richer
individuals’ demand for private sector alternatives. JEL Codes: H22, H42, H51.