

## **BRIEFING PAPER**

### **PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING**

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*Note: The views expressed herein are for information, debate, and discussion and do not necessarily represent formal policies of AARP.*

## **Progress in the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing**

The fifth anniversary of the Second World Assembly, which took place in April 2002 in Madrid, Spain, will be marked by the Commission for Social Development at its forty-fifth session in February 2007. The Assembly's anniversary coincides with the beginning of the first cycle of the review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The purpose of this briefing note is to explain the relationships between the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action and the process of its review and appraisal. The major part of the note is devoted to the modalities and procedure for the first cycle of the review and appraisal exercise in 2007-2008.

### ***Implementation of the Madrid Plan: strategy***

The implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action is guided by the decisions of the Second World Assembly on Ageing and subsequent implementation mandates of the United Nations General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development.

The Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid developed and approved two principal documents: the Political Declaration and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing<sup>1</sup>. The most important content of the Political Declaration is the commitments of governments to act on ageing. The United Nations Member States that gathered in Madrid in 2002 committed themselves to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including age discrimination; to effectively incorporate ageing within social and economic strategies, policies and action; to protect and assist older persons in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation; and to provide older persons with universal and equal access to health care and services.

Governments around the world also expressed their commitment to act at all levels, including national and international, on three priority directions: older persons and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments.

In its two hundred thirty-nine recommendations for action, the Madrid Plan suggests what should be done, and by whom. The principal site of action is the national or even local level. The Madrid Plan of Action defines several crucial elements of the national implementation process and identifies priorities for international action.

The ultimate *goal* of the Madrid Plan of Action is reaching a society for all ages. The principal *content* of the implementation efforts is adjustment to an ageing world. Such an adjustment should not be seen as a passive and reactive process but instead as a well-

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<sup>1</sup> Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Report of the Second World Assembly on Ageing. Madrid, 8-12 April 2002. United Nations, New York, 2002. Available: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/397/51/PDF/N0239751.pdf?OpenElement>  
Assessed: January 17, 2007.

planned progression from a today's ageing society to a future society for all ages. The adjustments have to be made at all levels of society – from the macro level of a nation state to the micro level of individuals advancing through their life course into older age. The Madrid Plan of Action underlines that the success of the adjustment efforts will be measured in terms of social development, the improvement in quality of life of older persons, and the sustainability of the various formal and informal systems that support the quality of life throughout the life course<sup>2</sup>.

Specific policy action should support this multi-level adjustment. Two types of policy approaches are necessary: ageing specific and ageing mainstreaming.

The first policy approach, ageing specific, includes policies and programmes designed to address the needs of older persons.

The first International Plan of Action on Ageing<sup>3</sup>, which was adopted by the World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna, Austria, in 1982, provided specific recommendations for action in seven areas of concern to “ageing individuals”, in other words – in areas requiring policy action that is ageing specific. Those seven areas included health and nutrition; protection of elderly consumers; housing and environment; family; social welfare; income security and employment; and education. Following the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, the UN Principles for Older Persons<sup>4</sup> emphasized the need for policies and programmes to ensure independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity of older people. The Second World Assembly on Ageing, in its Political Declaration, reaffirmed the principles and recommendations of the Vienna Plan of Action and the United Nations Principles for Older Persons<sup>5</sup>. Thus both the Vienna Plan and the UN Principles will continue to constitute most essential components of the framework for policy action on ageing in the twenty-first century.

The principal content of the second key approach to implementation of the Madrid Plan is inclusion, integration, or mainstreaming, of ageing and older persons into national development planning and action. The major goal of this type of policy is to mobilize older persons as additional resources for development, and, simultaneously, improve their wellbeing. Through various forms of inter-generational transfers and relations, the ageing mainstreaming policy could also improve the welfare of family and community members of all ages. If designed properly and implemented carefully, policies to mainstream ageing could benefit both older persons and society at large. Thus mainstreaming does not aim at separating ageing. Instead, its very essence is to *integrate* ageing into existing processes, work programmes and development budgets and *include* older persons in policy implementation and evaluation as essential participants and contributors.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., paragraph 14

<sup>3</sup> Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing. United Nations, 1982. Available: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/ageing/ageipaa.htm> Assessed: January 17, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Principles for Older Persons. United Nations, 1991. Available: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/iyop/iyoppop.htm#Principles> Assessed: January 17, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Political Declaration of the Second World Assembly on Ageing, Article 3. United Nations, New York 2003.

This could be attempted through *focused, or targeted*, mainstreaming.

Targeted mainstreaming would strive to link ageing to a recognized development concern or priority instead of trying to “add” ageing into *all* policies and programmes. The first step in targeted mainstreaming is to identify the major development challenge, which of course would be specific for region, country and down to local community. The next step is to define and promote the existing or possible role that older persons are playing or can play in addressing the identified development challenge.

For instance, the obvious development challenges in sub-Saharan Africa include the HIV/AIDS epidemic and, often consequently, extreme poverty. There is growing evidence, although mostly anecdotal, that older persons are acting as "new" leaders of families and households devastated by the epidemic. Here the developmental contribution of older persons to society is undeniable, which makes chances to mainstream concerns of older leaders of households and guardians of orphaned children into national policy and programmes more realistic.

### ***Implementation of the Madrid Plan: Preliminary Assessment***

During the five years since the Second World Assembly on Ageing, various actions on ageing are being implemented by different players: government, civil society, including non-governmental organizations, the UN system, as well as academia and the research community<sup>6</sup>.

Implementing Madrid’s decisions, governments are focusing primarily on building or strengthening their national capacity on ageing. National capacity to implement the Madrid Plan of Action is closely tied to the *institutional framework* in place to ensure follow-up of policies and programmes on ageing. Among other essential elements of national capacity are *human resources*; mobilization of *financial resources*; *research, data collection and analysis*; and a sound *policy process*, including the use of mainstreaming.

The *institutional framework* in place to ensure follow-up of policies and programmes on ageing varies in different countries from fully established government offices on ageing at the ministerial or similar level to small, often single person focal points on ageing within various ministries dealing with social issues. A number of countries, including Austria, Chile, Guatemala, India and Mexico have established *independent* advisory bodies, such as committees or commissions composed of academics, the private sector and NGOs to address ageing issues and the concerns of older persons.

Many countries are striving to improve their capacity for meeting the *human resources* needs of an ageing society. In Chile, for example, the government plans to train health professionals to specialize in geriatrics in order to serve in doctors’ offices across the

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<sup>6</sup> For more details on the implementation process readers are referred to the reports of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and the Commission for Social Development (2003-2007) on Follow-up to the second World Assembly on Ageing. Available: [www.un.org/esa/socdev.ageing](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev.ageing)

country. In Ukraine, a State Educational Geriatric Centre was established in July 2005. The Centre aims to develop and implement educational programmes for medical and social workers, as well as volunteers, in the field of care for older persons.

*Mobilization of financial resources* for programmes and policies dealing with older persons, such as social security, pension plans and health care, is most visible in high income countries. However, the most recent experiences of some developing countries, such as Botswana, Brazil, Mauritius, and Namibia, have shown that social pension programmes could be both effective and affordable way of targeting aid to the poorest people and their dependants.

Countries in different regions are demonstrating a growing capacity to gain accurate and timely information on the ageing process through *research, data collection and analysis*. In Thailand, for example, the Second National Long-Term Plan for Older Persons (2002–2021) includes research strategies to support policy and programme development and to monitor and evaluate the National Plan. In Europe, the European Research Area in Ageing (*ERA-AGE*) aims to promote the development of a European strategy for research on ageing. And in the Latin American region, several countries, including Argentina, Columbia and Venezuela have built up their capacity to perform research and analysis on social and bio-medical aspects of ageing. Considerable achievements in conducting research on population and individual ageing have been demonstrated by Australia and the United States of America.

Countries in various parts of the world are designing and implementing *policies and programmes* within a broad framework provided by the Madrid Plan of Action. Income security actions, ranging from comprehensive social protection schemes in European Union to limited cash programme in Indonesia, feature most prominently in national implementation actions. Aside from developing specific policies on ageing, countries are also putting greater emphasis on *mainstreaming* ageing issues. For instance, Lesotho, one of the least developed countries, placed the financing and administration of its universal social pension plan within the remit of Lesotho's National Vision and Poverty Reduction strategy programme. Several countries with economies in transition, such as Azerbaijan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, have specifically targeted older persons in their Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).

The above examples of national efforts to implement the Madrid Plan of Action are just a very preliminary indication of what has been a follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing in specific areas of national capacity building. More information is expected to follow during the first cycle of the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan during 2007-2008.

### ***Review and Appraisal: Principal Modalities and Central Approach***

The Madrid Plan of Action designated the Commission for Social Development to be responsible for follow-up and appraisal of the implementation of the Plan. At its sessions

in 2003 and 2004 the Commission decided on the principal modalities of the review and appraisal. They include:

Review and appraisal will be undertaken every five years;

- ✦ Each review and appraisal cycle will focus on a theme based on the priority directions of the Madrid Plan of Action;
- ✦ A specific theme emanating from the Madrid Plan of Action will be identified by the UN Secretary-General for the first cycle;
- ✦ Review and appraisal will include two dimensions: ageing-specific policies and ageing-mainstreaming efforts; and
- ✦ The bottom-up participatory approach will be the major format of the review and appraisal exercise.

The bottom-up approach is defined as an open-ended, participatory process that seeks to incorporate and link local and national activities to UN regional intergovernmental bodies and up to global level of the review and appraisal<sup>7</sup>. The *central idea* of the bottom-up approach is to engage older persons in participatory assessment of whether or not the objectives of the Madrid Plan are being achieved at local, national, sub-regional and regional levels.

The bottom-up participatory approach has a dual function in the process of implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. The first one is of “technical” nature as the participatory approach will be used for in depth evaluation of national efforts to implement the Madrid Plan.

The second function of the bottom-up participatory approach aims at directly involving older persons in actions on their behalf thus promoting their participation in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action. The immediate purpose of the participatory approach is to ensure that older persons have an opportunity to express their views on the *impact* of national policy actions affecting their lives. However, the overall goal is to ensure that older persons are involved in *all phases* of policy actions on ageing, including policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Therefore, the participatory approach to review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan could be viewed as an *entry point* for engaging older persons in all spheres of the Plan’s implementation. This is in full agreement with the aim of the International Plan of Action *to ensure that persons everywhere are able to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rights*<sup>8</sup>.

As a technical approach to the review and appraisal exercise the participatory approach has its advantages and limitations. Some of its major *advantages* include:

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<sup>7</sup> The Framework for Monitoring, Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Available: [http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/MIPAA\\_frmwrk.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/MIPAA_frmwrk.pdf) Assessed: January 2007.

<sup>8</sup> The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, paragraph 10

- ✦ gathering information directly from older persons, the primary stakeholders in the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action;
- ✦ discovering emerging issues quickly; and
- ✦ giving regular feedback to stakeholders as a basis for making necessary adjustments to existing policies and programmes.

The *limitations* of participatory assessment include:

- ✦ the complexity of the process,
- ✦ the difficulties in assuring the continuing availability of core stakeholders originating from the same community, and
- ✦ the availability of sufficient expertise to analyze and process information.

Other possible challenges include how to assure that the bottom-up review and appraisal is representative and its results are informative and valid for policy adjustment.

The participatory approach should not be seen as a panacea that is aimed at replacing all other methods of monitoring, review and appraisal. Instead, it calls for their supplementation through a wider use of qualitative methods. While concrete methodology may vary, qualitative and participatory content should be strengthened and more fully utilized. In addition, the quantitative monitoring of social situations, such as through censuses, surveys and civil registration, can play a very important role by helping to identify local and national priorities on ageing for more targeted participatory inquiry.

To ensure its success, it needs a **catalyst** and a **facilitator**. Government should be seen as the principal catalyst and end-user of policy-relevant information, involving, as necessary, facilitators with sufficient experience in conducting participatory research. Such facilitators should be looked for among community workers or members of non-governmental organizations active at the local level, as well as academia and research institutions. In this regard, it is necessary to have an established national mechanism on ageing, which would have overall responsibility for the implementation, monitoring and appraisal of national action on ageing.

A bottom-up, participatory approach to assessing the implementation of MIPAA includes several key components:

1. Awareness raising/advocacy;
2. Assessment of needs and setting of targets;
3. Mobilization of key stakeholders;
4. Gathering of information;
5. “Distillation” of the local findings into policy-relevant formats; and
6. Adjustment of policies and programmes in accordance with the conclusions and recommendations of the review and appraisal.

The bottom-up participatory approach is a novel way to review the implementation of international policy documents such as the Madrid Plan of Action. In order to help national governments with all stages of bottom-up review and appraisal of the implementation of

the Madrid Plan of Action the Secretariat of the UN programme on ageing has prepared Guidelines for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing using the Bottom-up Participatory Approach.

### ***Review and Appraisal: First Cycle***

The Commission for Social Development, which met from 8 to 17 February 2006, decided on the schedule, content and theme of the first cycle of the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action. The decisions of the Commission regarding the modalities of the first cycle of the review and appraisal of the Plan could be summarized as follows<sup>9</sup>:

1. The Commission decided to start the first global cycle of review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action in 2007 at its forty-fifth session and to conclude it in 2008 at its forty-sixth session.
2. The Commission also endorsed as the global theme for the first review and appraisal of the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action: “Addressing the challenges and opportunities of ageing”.
3. It recommended that the format of the concluding event (in 2008) of the first cycle of review and appraisal include, along with plenary debate, a series of panel discussions and events related to the theme of the first review and appraisal cycle.

The Commission also endorsed the calendar for the first cycle of the review and appraisal. The following activities are envisioned **for 2007**:

#### **(a) The Commission for Social Development:**

- ✦ Will mark the fifth anniversary of the Second World Assembly on Ageing.
- ✦ The Secretary-General will submit to the Commission a report on major developments in the area of ageing since the Second World Assembly (report on the world ageing situation), which could include short regional contributions (regional ageing situations) by the regional commissions.
- ✦ Member States will inform the Commission about the actions they have taken since the Second World Assembly to implement the Madrid Plan of Action (for example, new laws, policies and programmes, the establishment of coordinating mechanisms and information campaigns) and exchange information on which area each country will determine for itself to evaluate using a bottom-up participatory approach;

#### **(b) Member States:**

- ✦ National and regional processes of review and appraisal will begin. Countries will review and appraise the national policies and strategies that they identified.
- ✦ Information on the initial experience and good practices in organizing and conducting bottom-up participatory evaluation at the local and national levels will also be collected, analyzed and presented to the regional commissions;

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<sup>9</sup> Commission for Social Development resolution 44/1

**(c) Regional commissions:**

- ✦ In cooperation with other entities, will assist countries, upon their request, in conducting their national review and appraisals and encourage participatory approaches to the process;
- ✦ Will convene regional conferences (pending the availability of sufficient resources) to consider the findings of national reviews, share experiences and good practices and identify priorities for future action.
- ✦ Will submit the conclusions of the meetings and individual national reports to the Commission for Social Development in 2008.

**In 2008:**

**(a) The Commission for Social Development:**

- ✦ At its forty-sixth session in February 2008, will conduct the global segment of the first cycle of the review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action.
- ✦ The modalities of this segment could include a series of plenary meetings or deliberations of a series of round tables. A series of parallel events, including panels, workshops and seminars organized by all major stakeholders will be conducted, including the presentation of findings of independent monitoring projects.
- ✦ An outcome document could include the conclusions of the first review and appraisal exercise along with the identification of prevalent and emerging issues and related policy options.

Overall, it is expected that the future review and appraisal exercise will involve all major stakeholders, ensure broad participation of older persons and promote the implementation of the Madrid Plan of Action.