

Shanghai Implementation Strategy

Regional Implementation Strategy for
the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 and
the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific 1999

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INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that the proportion of persons aged 60 years and older in the world will double between 2000 and 2050, from 10 to 21 per cent (i.e. from 600 million to 2,000 million in absolute number). In 2025, it is projected that 15 per cent of the world population will be aged 60 and over. Among the world's population aged 60 years and above, 52 per cent live in Asia and the Pacific in 2002, and this is projected to increase to 59 percent in 2025. Asia and the Pacific is the most rapidly ageing region of the world. As the region urbanizes, the availability of traditional family support is likely to be reduced.

The challenges brought about by the regional trend of population ageing and its implications are enormous, not only for individuals, but also for every aspect of community, national and international life. Many countries within the Asia-Pacific region are already taking active measures to deal with the challenges of population ageing and to create a “society for all ages”. The Macao Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific endorsed by Governments in the region in 1999 addresses seven areas of concern relating to ageing and older persons. They are: (a) the social position of older persons; (b) older persons and the family; (c) health and nutrition; (d) housing, transportation and the built environment; (e) older persons and the market; (f) income security, maintenance and employment; and (g) social services and the community. The Macao Plan of Action provides a regional platform for members of the region to cooperate and share their experiences in policies and programmes to meet the challenges of ageing. The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) adopted by the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002, in concordance with the Macao Plan, has also set out priority areas and action points that guide efforts towards the goal of ensuring that societies and individuals age with security and dignity while maintaining their full participation and human rights.

The results of the regional survey on ageing conducted by ESCAP in June 2002 with the support of the Government of Macao, China reveal common trends and priorities in national policies and programmes on ageing as well as diversities in policy development and implementation among the countries and areas in the region. While it is generally acknowledged that ageing is a positive outcome of combined social, economic and health advances, the challenge faced by many countries in the region is to develop appropriate policies and take practical measures to transform this positive concept of ageing into reality. Countries that have already developed national policies on ageing will no doubt move on to a more prepared and structured strategy in dealing with population ageing over 30 to 50 years. A national strategy on how to prepare society for the challenges of ageing is essential in ensuring that the goals of active ageing are achieved. The regional implementation strategy aims to provide guidelines on the implementation of commitments on ageing made under the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and

the Pacific.

REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

I. Older persons and development

1) MAINSTREAMING AGEING INTO DEVELOPMENT POLICY AND PROMOTING FULL INTEGRATION AND PARTICIPATION OF OLDER PERSONS

While most countries in the region have attached high priority to ageing issues at both national and international levels, a considerable number of countries have encountered difficulties in mainstreaming ageing into all relevant policy areas. The difficulties include lack of funds, insufficient training for implementation, ineffective inter-department cooperation and shortage of staff.

Older persons are at a greater risk of being denied the opportunity to participate in society and to benefit from economic and social development. Large numbers of older persons in the region live in rural and remote areas without much family and community support and face problems in having access to infrastructure and services. The crucial roles played by older persons in families and communities and their contributions are often insufficiently recognized and their potentials and experiences are often under-utilized. Creative solutions are required to prevent isolation, neglect and abuse of older persons.

Key actions:

- Take population ageing into account in relevant policy planning;
- Collect and utilize appropriate data to guide policy, in particular age- and gender-disaggregated data from censuses;
- Place emphasis on seeking ways to increase the efficiency of existing systems and open up new sources of revenue;
- Strengthen national capacity for policy making and implementation through the provision of training opportunities, technical assistance and advisory services on implementation;
- Promote inter-departmental collaboration within countries such that the policies in response to population ageing are able to adopt a holistic approach and be pursued in a coordinated way over a wide range of policy areas;

- Recognize and support the valuable contributions of older persons, especially unpaid activities, such as care for family members, transmission of cultural values, household maintenance and voluntary services in the community, and view those as an integral part of national policies regarding resource mobilization;
- Promote the social, economic, political and cultural participation of older persons through advocacy, educational activities, removing barriers, and encouraging representation of older persons and their representative organizations in decision-making processes on issues of their concern.

2) PROVISION OF SOCIAL PROTECTION AND SECURITY

In many countries in the region, people working in the informal sector, staying in rural areas and engaged in subsistence activities are often not covered by adequate social protection or security. While attempts have been made to introduce more comprehensive long-term provision, currently pension schemes often have very low coverage, are unable to take care of the group of older persons who have retired from work or are presently without work and earnings, or they cater mainly for employees in the public sector. How to meet the present needs of the growing number of retirees, while formulating a long-term viable pension system, becomes a pressing concern of both developed and developing countries in the region.

The key strategy in this area is to address the issue of how to adapt existing social protection/social security systems to demographic changes and changes in family structures. To be effective, they must be supported by high level of employment, comprehensive health services and educational systems which enable both the young and the older persons to effectively participate in the labour force. Reforms of existing pension systems and development of alternatives to provide formal retirement protection has grown in urgency in the region. It has been evident from the experience of the advanced countries that no government could afford to support any universal provision with low tax revenue. There are choices within two polarized fiscal policies: high taxation for a more universal provision or a reasonable taxation to support only the most needy. The trend is to shift the emphasis more to individual or corporate savings, financial investments and contributory schemes, such that the individual can secure a better income for his/her old age.

Key actions:

- Establish sustainable social protection/social security systems now taking into account the long lead time necessary to ensure provision for older persons in future decades;
- Establish or develop a regulatory framework for occupational and private pension

provision; and recognize the growing trend of governments to encourage private savings and investments during working age and the introduction of contributory pension schemes;

- Provide adequate social protection/social security coverage for the labour force in general, including the agricultural and informal sectors and older persons in particular, recognizing the role of government as supporter and regulator, which on the one hand assists employers to adjust to structural changes and other economic shocks, and on the other hand, guides and monitors;
- Gather periodic information and better utilize existing data on the conditions of living, sources of income and expenditure patterns of older men and women to provide a reliable basis for formulating policies on income security.

3) ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY IN OLD AGE

Poverty alleviation is a priority for many countries in the region where the prevalence of poverty is high. Older persons are consistently among the poorest groups in the region. The economic crisis in the late 1990s further indicated heightened prevalence of poverty and incidence of extreme poverty in the region, with resulting increased unemployment and vulnerability, particularly among older persons.

In the absence of more formal employment opportunities and adequate social protection/social security provision, it is important to develop alternative approaches to income security for older persons.

Key actions:

- Include older persons as a target group in poverty alleviation programmes at all levels, including income generation schemes and savings and credit programmes with emphasis on high risk groups such as women;
- Ensure that older persons are provided with adequate social protection, social security, including social assistance;
- Support the capacity of older persons to undertake income generation schemes;
- Ensure the inclusion of older persons and promote their participation in poverty assessments and in the development and implementation of national poverty reduction strategies.

4) OLDER PERSONS AND EMERGENCIES

Older persons, especially those without families, are particularly vulnerable during natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies. While less able to find food and shelter during disasters, older persons, however, also provide assistance during emergency situations through assuming primary care giving roles, their ability to cope, and their life skills in rehabilitation and reconstruction of communities after emergencies.

Key actions:

- Take concrete measures towards identifying and locating older persons, especially those without families, and providing them with special protection and assistance during and after natural disasters and other emergencies;
- To include older persons' contributions and vulnerabilities in needs assessments and reporting in emergencies, as well as during reconstruction and rehabilitation of communities after emergencies.

5) PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTITUDES TOWARDS AGEING AND OLDER PERSONS

Older persons are entitled to be treated in accordance with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, namely independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment and dignity. An all-round approach that emphasizes education, advocacy, legislation and demonstration is required.

A major challenge is to undo or alter the often negative stereotypes of older people among the general population. Despite the fact that strategies that promote positive images of ageing have been developed to varying degrees and levels, the stereotyping of older people as dependent, frail, troublesome and without contribution and creativity is still prevailing, especially when they are portrayed in the mass media.

Key actions:

- Promote through such measures as media campaigns and school curricula, recognition of the contribution of older persons to society which extends beyond their economic activities, and benefits families, communities and society as a whole;
- Promote demonstration projects which highlight the abilities of active, healthy, creative and productive older persons, volunteer projects or inter-generational learning

projects;

- Encourage the media to promote positive images of ageing in newspaper and magazine articles, films, and radio and television programmes;
- Encourage older persons to consciously enhance their image by accessing themselves through all available means.

6) EMPLOYMENT OF OLDER PERSONS

Measures to achieve productive ageing through the continued employment of older persons in the workforce are yet to succeed in the region. Increasing aged dependency ratios will put stress on the working-age population to support sustainable income security systems for older persons.

In the more developed countries, retirement alternatives have been examined, such as delaying retirement age and gradual or flexi-age retirement arrangements. On the saving side, people are encouraged to save more for their old age while governments are increasingly emphasizing contributory public pension arrangements for workers in the formal sector. There is also evidence of greater interest in governments providing minimum subsistence benefits through non-contributory pensions for the rural population or means-tested benefits for the poor and needy in the informal sector. There are also suggestions to utilize cross-generational contributions, requiring children to pay for their parents' daily expenses.

Key actions:

- Provide incentives and remove disincentives for people to remain in the workforce where appropriate;
- Promote employment and employability through retraining programmes and lifelong education, and encourage positive employer attitudes towards the recruitment and retention of older workers;
- Seek effective measures to combat unemployment, and create new job openings through implementing active labour market policies, such as setting up mechanisms for job matching, job-search assistance, training, vocational guidance, and counseling, including for older persons who wish to work.

7) RECOGNIZING GENDER SPECIFIC ISSUES IN AGEING

One of the impacts of population ageing in the Asia-Pacific region is that women form the majority of people in very old age (75 and above). They are more vulnerable, and are more likely to lack income security and skills and to be widowed. Women also are the primary care givers. Many women work only in the home, experience broken work patterns and lower income levels, and in many cases work in the informal sector resulting in the inability to accumulate sufficient retirement income. It is thus important for policy makers in the region to adopt a gender perspective in their formulation of policies and plans of action.

Key actions:

- Enhance support for family caregivers, the vast majority of whom are women, to combine work and family life;
- Promote and support greater male responsibility in the family, including the care of older persons;
- Increase the participation of women in the labour force through education and training, adopt measures to open job opportunities for them and reconcile their professional and family responsibilities, and avoid discriminatory action in salary scales and pension systems;
- Eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and empower them through the promotion of economic and social independence, as well as participation in social and political arenas.

II. Advancing Health and Well Being into Old Age

8) ENSURING THE QUALITY OF LIFE AT ALL AGES, INCLUDING INDEPENDENT LIVING, HEALTH AND WELL BEING

Good health is one of the prime factors ensuring a person's physical, psychological, social and spiritual well-being and quality of life during old age.

A life course and intersectoral approach to health and well-being is the best approach to ensure that both current and future generations of older persons remain healthy and active. Such an approach should address the determinants of health, including behavioural, socioeconomic and environmental factors. Policies should aim to reduce the main risk factors associated with major diseases and increase factors that protect health throughout the life course and provide access to care services.

While some countries in the region are striving for adequate provision of basic health care services for the entire population, others are turning to the provision of primary health care services as the preferred option to improve, maintain and manage the health of their populations, including that of older men and women. As individuals age, non-communicable or chronic diseases become the leading causes of morbidity, disability and mortality. Non-communicable diseases are most effectively managed, including from a cost perspective, through the primary health care sector.

Key actions:

- Promote policies and programmes that support active ageing which is the process of optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance the quality of life as people age;
- Promote a life course perspective on health and ageing, through such measures as promoting good nutrition, healthy lifestyle and avoidance of risk factors;
- Ensure a continuum of health care programmes based on a primary health systems approach, including locally based health care practices, health education, health promotion, disease prevention and a coordinated referral system to hospital and other health care services;
- Develop an age-appropriate primary care system integrated with current primary health systems, including financially and physically accessible primary care services, and other elements such as health education, health promotion, disease prevention, and a coordinated referral system to hospital and other health care services;
- Support the training and availability of health workers.

9) PROVIDING QUALITY HEALTH AND LONG-TERM CARE

The combination of demographic ageing and the deficiencies of accommodation and environmental planning make the provision and development of long-term care a serious challenge in many Asia-Pacific countries. However, long-term care systems in many parts of the region are immature and consist of fragmented residential care and some limited official and voluntary home and community care. The majority of care for dependent older persons is provided by family members with scarce community-based resources. In addition, there is often the lack of quality assurance mechanisms and regulatory provisions in formal long term care.

Key actions:

- Pay special attention to the needs of older persons living in rural and remote areas or living alone;
- Improve access to and quality of long-term care for older persons, and develop social support systems to enhance the ability of families to take care of older persons within the family;
- Adopt a comprehensive planning approach taking account of available resources within the community, such as neighbours and volunteers, and direct effort to develop inter-departmental as well as inter-sectoral collaboration. The active involvement of NGOs and the private sector are vital in this regard;
- Provide integrated care services which support individual to age in place in their community for as long as possible;
- Promote mental as well as physical wellbeing of older persons.

III. Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environments

10) OLDER PERSONS AND THE FAMILY

There is widespread recognition of the importance of family and community support for older persons across the region. Although the ability of families to care for their older members is under pressure as a result of urban and labour migration, unemployment, and economic restructuring with resulting internal family pressures, families remain the primary carers of the vast majority of older persons. However, the numbers of older persons at higher risk of dependency and disability are increasing at the same time as the ability of families to provide care is decreasing.

While strengthening traditional support systems and multigenerational solidarity and assisting older persons without family support are accorded high importance, the results of the 2002 survey on ageing conducted by ESCAP showed that providing carer support services such as in-home care for homebound older persons and family elder care training are lower priorities amongst some of the countries. However, in order for families and communities to continue to care for older persons, strong support from governments and other actors may be required.

Key actions:

- Undertake measures to strengthen family cohesiveness and multigenerational solidarity;
- Develop and/or strengthen a range of community-based services that support older persons with or without families and family carers in which caring responsibilities can be shared amongst individuals, families, communities, NGOs and the government.

11) SOCIAL SERVICE AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Care for older persons in terms of both home care services as well as community support is one of the important emerging concerns of population ageing in the region. The demands in these aspects have called for more effective coordination and cooperation among agencies and government departments providing services. Other equally important aspects include the correct assessment of needs and matching of appropriate services for older persons. Other important factors are the monitoring of standards and quality of services specially targeted for older persons.

Key actions:

- Develop schemes for comprehensive need-based assessment which act as a gate-keeper to enable older persons to receive a comprehensive assessment of their needs from an inter-disciplinary team;
- Establish standards to ensure quality care in formal care settings, as such measures require governments to take a more active role in formulating accreditation and quality assurance systems. However, instead of putting emphasis on setting regulations and enforcement, governments should advocate a shared responsibility for ensuring quality among service providers, user representatives (older persons) and the government itself.

12) HOUSING AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

One of the many challenges posed to the countries in the region is to provide appropriate living environments for older persons which enable their full participation in the community. To this effect, improved housing characterized by barrier-free and age-friendly designs need to be constructed, thereby enabling families to effectively take care of older persons.

Recognizing the rapid development of the technology and knowledge-based economies which have resulted in the digital-divide and widening gap between countries as well as communities, older persons should have the opportunity and facilities to benefit from the technology development.

Key actions:

- Improve the housing and living environments which emphasize barrier-free, age-friendly and integrated designs and communities, thereby ensuring older persons a dignified and independent living;
- Promote equitable allocation of public or affordable housing, which supports "ageing in place" based on individual preference;
- Provide training and learning opportunities for older persons in the use of technology within their communities.

13) CARE AND SUPPORT TO CAREGIVERS

Within the region, relatively lower priority is attached to supporting caregivers through training, information, psychological, economic, social and legislative mechanisms. This may lead to deprivation of services for caregivers, in many cases, elderly women and female spouses. The HIV/AIDS pandemic in several countries in the region has also added to the responsibility of caregivers. More attention is required by governments to render direct care and support to caregivers.

Key actions:

- Promote and provide direct support to family carers, in the form of material aid, tax reduction, subvented housing or training on home care and to develop an integrative model combining both formal and informal care into enhanced community care to help support and relieve the care burden of family members;
- Promote and encourage community-based programmes which assist and act as relief mechanisms for family members and carers;
- Promote support systems to elderly caregivers of people living with HIV/AIDS, AIDS orphans and older persons living with HIV/AIDS.

14) PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS

It is recognized that neglect, abuse and violence against older persons takes many forms- physical, sexual, psychological, emotional and financial.

The rights of older persons as an important consumer group with common needs, interests and preferences, to receive proper goods and services must be recognized.

Key actions:

- Take active measures to ensure that older persons have access to information regarding their rights.
- Take into account the views of older persons on the design of products and delivery of goods and services;
- Place emphasis on the suitability of services and the right of choice by older persons whose specific needs and preferences should be recognized;
- Facilitate and regulate the development of the market by providing appropriate safeguards to prevent exploitation of older persons;
- Take active measures to combat discrimination, abuse and violence against older persons.

IV. Implementation and follow up

15) NATIONAL MECHANISMS ON AGEING

It must be emphasized that Governments and other national actors should play a key role in the implementation of commitments on ageing.

Many countries in the region have developed national policies, plans of action or legislation on ageing. For those who have adopted a national plan of action on ageing in response to the recommendations of the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, the challenge is to implement their plans and find ways to overcome difficulties in resources, knowledge, expertise and other areas. For those countries that have not yet developed a national plan on ageing, immediate action should be taken.

Key actions:

- Put into place comprehensive and systematic frameworks at the national level for gathering data and information and undertaking research to identify the circumstances and needs of older persons, as well as options and priorities for policy action on ageing;

- Encourage the use of the Research Agenda on Ageing for the 21st Century endorsed by the Valencia Forum and presented to the Second World Assembly on Ageing as a guide to the formulation of national research frameworks;
- Enhance the participation of NGOs, older persons' associations and other sectors of civil society in the implementation of the regional and international plans of action on ageing, through their participation in the review of national policies and programmes and national implementation, while private sector representation or participation in major projects and programmes should also be encouraged;
- Establish indicators to measure the impacts of strategies to facilitate governments and other national actors in the implementation process;
- Develop, in those countries that do not yet have a national policy or plan of action on ageing, measures that would allow a systematic review of implementation of their commitments on ageing.

16) REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Countries in the region vary greatly in their economic, social and political situations. Despite the economic, social and cultural diversities in the region, population ageing is a common challenge that every country will face. Regional and international cooperation will facilitate the exchange of information and experience among governments, and their development partners in the implementation of programmes for older persons and to cope with population ageing.

Key actions:

- Promote regional and international cooperation to support national implementation processes;
- Facilitate more inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral collaboration among relevant organizations in the region;
- Promote inter-country exchanges of information and experience on ageing through participation in sub-regional, regional and inter-regional activities, including South-to-South cooperation;
- Promote the inclusion of ageing-related issues in policies, programmes and meetings of all relevant regional bodies;

- Encourage United Nations bodies and agencies and other international organisations to appoint and/or strengthen focal points on ageing, conduct training activities and support advocacy aimed at the mainstreaming of ageing issues in development policies and programmes;
- Strengthen the role of ESCAP as the United National regional focal point on ageing and promote its role in providing technical assistance and advisory services as well as coordinating regional activities on ageing;
- Support regular review by ESCAP, as specified in the Macao Plan of Action on Ageing for Asia and the Pacific, of national policies on ageing and implementation of international and regional commitments on ageing through regional surveys and review meetings;
- Support ESCAP in its role of facilitating the development of a regional network on ageing.