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Background Guide

United Nations
Economic and Social Council

Topic: Building Age-Friendly Communities

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Our Voice Our Future

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Welcome Letter

Dear delegates,

Welcome to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of Beijing International Model United Nations 2021 (BIMUN2021). We, the directors, are more than honored to extend our warm welcome to all the delegates.

The world's population is ageing with an unstoppable trend. With the predicted sharp rise of the ageing population in recent decades, old-age support systems are undergoing increasing pressures on providing the elderly population with enough assistance and social protection in all parts of the globe. The elders are suffering from unprecedented social inequity.

Now, as the distinguished representatives of member states, you are shouldering the responsibility to build age-friendly communities to ensure the basic right of older persons, who are also increasingly seen as contributors to social development.

By giving priority to older persons and ensuring supportive and enabling environments, we can create a brighter future for the elderly population. So please believe in your ability to make the world a better place, and be brave to express any suggestion.

The Background Guide provides you with basic information about the topic, including its current situation and problems, past actions, and possible solutions. You are encouraged to do further research on the topic based on the provided information of this Background Guide.

Best Regards,
Directors of United Nations Economic and Social Council
Beijing International Model United Nations 2021

Introduction to the Committee

As the center of the UN development system, the United Nations Economic and Social Council plays an important role in identifying emerging challenges, providing overall guidance and coordination, promoting innovation, and linking a diverse family of UN entities.¹ Building on its coordination role within the UN system, ECOSOC is a gateway for UN partnership and participation by the rest of the world. It offers a unique global meeting point for productive dialogues among policymakers, parliamentarians, academics, foundations, businesses, youth, and 3,200+ registered non-governmental organizations.²

ECOSOC is also playing a key role in the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, including economic, social, and environmental concerns. Each year, ECOSOC structures its work around an annual theme of global importance to sustainable development. This ensures focused attention among ECOSOC's array of partners and throughout the UN development system.³

Population ageing has been identified as one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century that involve implications for almost all sectors of society, from labor and financial markets to the demand for goods and services, transportation, such as housing, and social protection. In order to provide the elderly with proper social security and eliminate social inequality, ECOSOC encourages agreement on coherent policies and actions that make fundamental links across all three social dimensions.⁴

The goal of ECOSOC is to achieve sustainable development, which is the international community's priority and the main target of the post-2015 development agenda. As the umbrella for the UN's functional and regional commissions, and operational and specialized agencies, it helps the implementation of the set global norms. By using diverse platforms, it brings together all the different people and partners involved in achieving sustainable development while fueling broader awareness and action through sharing its own extensive knowledge and issue expertise.⁵

¹ ECOSOC, "ECOSOC brings people and issues together to promote collective action for a sustainable world," available at: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en>, [accessed at: Jan.13 2021].

² ECOSOC, "About Us," available at: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/about-us> [accessed at: Jan.13 2021].

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ ECOSOC, "Sustainable Development," available at: <https://www.un.org/ecosoc/en/sustainable-development> [accessed at: Jan.13 2021].

Current Situation

General Idea of the Topic

According to World Population Prospects 2019, 1 in 6 people in the world will have been over the age of 65 by 2050, compared to 1 in 11 in 2019.⁶ All societies in the world are undergoing this longevity revolution—some are at their early stages while some are much more advanced. But all will definitely pass through this extraordinary transition. The chance of surviving to age 65 will have risen from less than 50 percent to more than 90 percent by 2050.⁷

Regarding the older persons, who are increasingly seen as vital contributors to social development, their abilities to act for the betterment of their societies should be incorporated into policies and programs at all levels. In the near future, countries are very likely to face political and fiscal pressures in relation to public systems of social protection for a growing older population.⁸ However, population ageing does not inevitably lead to macroeconomic decline, and the opposite may be true with well-chosen policies.

The elderly people are suffering from the insufficient opportunity for social participation, especially in employment, which is also partly led by inadequate communication and social information. What is more, the elderly have been placed in the poor living condition that includes insufficient public health and elder abuse of which neglect has been significantly noticed by the UN. To provide the elderly with proper social security while maximizing the benefits brought by them, governments should provide the elderly people with continuing supports including education, health care, and family-friendly policies to facilitate work-life balance.

Fortunately, actions have been taken by the international community. The new approaches to understanding and addressing issues related to ageing also carry important implications for the review of internationally agreed development goals, which include those contained in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and two international days: International Day of Older Persons, and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day that were designated to clarify the core aim of the nearest stage at the international level.⁹ Nevertheless, more measures are to be taken to ensure the implementation of proposed international actions in both domestic and international levels.

⁶ UN, World Population Prospects 2019 --Highlights, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/node/1114> [accessed at: Feb. 16 2021].

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ United Nations(UN), “Ageing,” available at: <https://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/ageing/> [accessed at: Jan.13 2021].

⁹ UN, World Population Prospects 2019 --Highlights, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/node/1114> [accessed at: Feb. 16 2021].

Key Terms

Old-age Dependency Ratio

The old-age dependency ratio (OADR) is defined as the number of old-age dependents (persons aged 65 years or over) per 100 persons of working age (aged 20 to 64 years). This metric approximates the implied economic dependency associated with a growing share of the population at older ages.¹⁰ A high dependency ratio means that there are not sufficient people working to support the dependent population.

Elder Abuse

A definition of elder abuse that has gained ground for almost 20 years is “a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person.” In 2002, ECOSOC further included “neglect” as a form of elder abuse.¹¹

Neglect

Neglect is a lack of action to meet an older individual's needs, which includes not providing necessities and care, denying the person's social interactions, and failing to protect.¹²

Entitlement

The entitlement is a government program that gives benefits to specified groups, such as the elderly, disabled, and unemployed. Entitlement for elderly people may provide them with income, health, taxation, legal, and other supports.

10 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Population Ageing Highlights,” 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf> [accessed at: Feb.17 2021].

11 UN Economic and Social Council(ECOSOC), “Abuse of older persons: recognizing and responding to abuse of older persons in a global context,” ECOSOC 25 February-1 March 2002, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/210/54/PDF/N0221054.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

12 Ibid.

Past Actions

International Framework

Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002, the *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Political Declaration* (MIPAA) functions as a pivotal guide for the world to address the implications of ageing in the 21st century. Aiming to “build a society for all ages,” it sets a precedent for integrating ageing into social and economic development and human rights.¹³¹⁴

MIPAA incorporates three priority directions 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,” which are older persons and development, advancing health and well-being into old age and ensuring enabling and supportive environments, with each supported by objectives for stakeholders to take into consideration.¹⁵ Meanwhile, to ensure its implementation, review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing are held on a five-year basis.

Ever since the adoption of MIPAA, it has been applied to regional and national strategies and policies. From a regional perspective, in collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the Arab regions have conducted evaluations on regional and national implementation of MIPAA to prepare for the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing.¹⁶ On a national basis, in consideration of both regional implementation strategies and MIPAA, more Member States have responded to challenges and opportunities of population ageing by mainstreaming ageing into development policies.

International Day of Older Persons

The United Nations General Assembly designated 1st October as the International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP) on 14th December 1990.¹⁷ UNIDOP is set to integrate resources to eradicate all forms of stereotypes and inequalities on older persons and aging and to recognize older persons’ tremendous potentials and contributions for development.

13 Second World Assembly on Ageing, “Political Declaration and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing,” *Second World Assembly on Ageing*, <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/MIPAA/political-declaration-en.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

14 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs(DESA), “Guide to the National Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing,” <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2019/08/Guide-to-the-Natl-Implementation-of-the-MIPAA.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

15 Ibid

16 UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia(ESCWA), “The Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012,” ESCWA, 7th February 2002, available at: <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/sd-02-01.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

17 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs(DESA), “International Day of Older Persons –Homepage,” DESA, available at : <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/international-day-of-older-persons-homepage.html> [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

Each year, UNIDOP is commemorated by a special event at the United Nations Headquarters, led in part by the NGO Committee on Ageing (New York) and other international non-governmental organizations on Ageing.¹⁸ A list of objectives is set under each year's theme to better respond to emerging concerns. UNIDOP 2020 recognizes older persons' vulnerability toward the virus due to underlying health conditions caused by social exclusion and poverty under the influence of Covid-19.¹⁹ The theme for UNIDOP 2020, "Pandemics: do they change how we address age and ageing?" calls upon more attention on minimizing health disparities for older persons and strengthening older persons' preparedness and response action against pandemics.

Overall, UNIDOP has made profound contributions in reshaping people's way of thinking about age. On the one hand, a growing number of elderly persons have regarded their elder period as full of potentials and opportunities. On the other hand, to some extent, society has gradually become inclusive for all by combating all forms of ageism and encouraging elderly persons' participation in social and economic development.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

On 19th December 2011, the United Nations General Assembly officially recognized World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) as a United Nations International Day of Commemoration to promote public education and awareness on elder abuse, underscore human rights of elderly persons, guide and recommendations to address elder abuse and seek out more feasible preventive and responding strategies.²⁰

The day is commemorated with a specific theme concerning emerging problems and concerns each year. For example, together with the efforts made by UN Secretary-General, which put in a video message to launch a policy brief on older persons, "No person, young or old, is expendable," 2020 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day explicitly underlined that the Covid-19 pandemic had exacerbated abuses on older persons with frequently reported cases of abuse and discrimination in the accessibility to medical resources.²¹²²

Over the years, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day has significantly contributed to raising public awareness on multifaceted elder abuse and the identification of under-reported cases by mobilizing resources to refine national and regional databases and preventative and responding systems on elder abuse.

18 The NGO Committee on Ageing, New York, "Mission," *the NGO Committee on Ageing, New York*, available at: http://www.ngocoa-ny.org/about_us/mission.html [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

19 UN Group of Friends of Older Persons, "Statement by Group of Friends of Older Persons," *UN Group of Friends of Older Persons*, 20th April,2020, Availbale at: <https://rightsofolderpeople.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/GoFOP-Final-Statement-april-20.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

20 Violence Prevention Alliance, "The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse(INPEA)," *Violence Prevention Alliance*, Avai;able at: <https://www.who.int/violenceprevention/participants/inpea/en/> [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

21 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs(DESА), "World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 15th June," available at: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/elder-abuse-awareness-day>, [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

22 Ibid.

Regional Policies

Ageing in Sustainable and Smart Cities in Europe

Realizing that elderly people are generally excluded from the social and economic life of the city, particularly after they lose functional ability, fourteen cities in Europe signed up under the framework of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), for making sure that all citizens have access to sufficient, secure, and affordable housing and infrastructure and upgraded slums.

The proposed methods greatly emphasized the importance of having pleasant and neat living conditions and green spaces, and convenient public places in elderly people's lives, which not only can improve their moods but also physically improve their health conditions.²³ Besides, transportation is critically noticed in the strategy, noting that investment in sustainable, safe smart, age-friendly transport will be made and planning priorities to make public transport acceptable, affordable, available and accessible will be reset.

The strategy has been made to develop age-friendly environments in cities, however, it is still too theoretical to be implemented, with a lack of regional guidance of implementation while turning into a number of international frameworks and initiatives.

Knowledge-sharing Platform for Building Sustainable Ageing Societies in East and North-East Asia

The Knowledge-sharing Platform for building sustainable ageing societies has been established in order to create societies in East and North-East Asia where elderly people are considered as the wealth of the societies and people are expecting to grow old and citizens of all ages are involved in the society. It covers six member States – China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, the Republic of Korea, and the Russian Federation.²⁴²⁵

The Knowledge-Sharing Platform mainly focuses on three domains—older persons and development, ensuring enabling and supportive environment, and advancing health and well-being into old age, which are the three pillars of Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing.²⁶

Since its establishment, the platform has provided services to the region for reviewing national strategies concerning population ageing from the ENEA countries (e.g., the 5-year national strategies in China, Japan, and Republic of Korea) and has identified key socio-economic policy challenges that are related to population ageing in ENEA.

²³ UNECE Ageing in sustainable and smart cities UNECE Policy Brief on Ageing No.24 May 2020, available at: <https://www.un-ilibrary.org/content/papers/27083047/2/read> [accessed at: Jan.20 2021].

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific(ESCAP) Brochure-Building a Knowledge-Sharing Platform on Sustainable Ageing Societies available at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/KSplatform-Brochure-1_0.pdf [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

²⁶ Ibid.

Problems to Be Solved

Poor Living Condition

Insufficient Public Health

For decades, the world has been working on improving public health, promoting health and well-being throughout life, strengthening public health services and reducing inequalities in all aspects. However, the current public-health services are far from enough. For instance, there are now 57 age-friendly centers in Iraq and 31 in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq. But the referral system has potential flaws regarding only 7.1% of the centers in Al-Karkh, Baghdad were able to provide sufficient services while many centers even do not have adequate wheelchairs and accessible drinking water.²⁷ In other developing countries, the situation is by no means positive with many elder persons desiring easier access to safe and sound healthcare system.

In many developing countries, medical resources are maldistributed and the access to them is limited. The problem is partly caused by the unaffordable health care, ranging from about 8% of income to 46%, which is also true of elderly people with basic insurance.²⁸ Many elderly persons simply cannot afford the cost of health services, thus being forced to end up being impoverished. Therefore, it is imperative for society to mobilize resources to address these inequalities rather than reinforcing them.

It is also worth noting that in high-income countries, healthcare services have also failed to provide elderly persons with adequate long-term care services and paid little attention to minimizing the implications of chronic diseases, thus resulting in large groups of elderly persons that resort to costly acute services.²⁹ Besides, due to the complexity of diseases, sometimes patients have to resort to different departments and be prescribed by polypharmacy, given unnecessary intervention and care.³⁰ And the current indicators of ageing based on chronological age cannot feed up to the emerging diversified characteristics of elderly persons. Therefore, the validity of some age-based medical conclusions on clinical diagnosis leaves in question.³¹ Moreover, in all cities, elderly persons are calling for more home care and voluntary support to fill the gaps of health and social services.³²

27 Tariq, E., & Lafta, R.(2018). A Profile on Health-Care Services for Old in Baghdad. *Mustansiriya Medical Journal(MMJ)*, 17(1), 52–56. https://doi.org/10.4103/MJ.MJ_13_18.

28 Goepfel C, Frenz P, Tinnemann P, Grabenhenrich L, “Universal health coverage for elderly people with non-communicable diseases in low-income and middle-income countries: a cross-sectional analysis,” *Lancet*. 2014 Oct;384:S6.

29 Low LF, Yap M, Brodaty H, “A systematic review of different models of home and community care services for older persons,” *BMC Health Serv Res*, 2011;11(1):93.

30 Peron EP, Gray SL, Hanlon JT, “Medication use and functional status decline in older adults: a narrative review,” *Am J Geriatr Pharmacother*. 2011 Dec;9(6):378–9.

31 World Health Organization(WHO), *Global Age-friendly cities: Guide(WTO2007)*, 66-70.

32 Ibid.

Empty Nest

The substantial increase of the elderly population has reshaped the elderly persons' lives, including the patterns of their households. Across the globe, the living arrangements for elderly persons vary according to the different social, cultural, and economic backgrounds. Generally speaking, there stands the trend of more independent forms of living arrangements among older persons around the world.³³ One explanation for this phenomenon is that the housing in urban areas tends to be either too expensive or inadequate to accommodate extended families.³⁴

In some developing countries, elderly persons are simply forced to live alone, thus being named as "empty nesters," whose children may live and work abroad or in other cities. According to China Development Research Foundation, China has approximately 25.4 million empty nest households in 2020 and are projected to have 53.10 million in 2050.³⁵ Similarly, in the United States, one fifth of the elder persons living in the Great Lakes region are empty nesters.³⁶ The proportion of empty nesters across the globe is on rise rapidly.

Concerning these groups of elderly persons, they are particularly vulnerable to suffer from physical and mental health problems. Studies indicated that the prevalence of depression among empty-nest elderly persons was up to 74.46%.³⁷ If they receive more instrumental support instead of money support from their children, they will have significantly less feelings of isolation and higher levels of satisfaction, thus having lower risk of anxiety and depression.³⁸ Besides, the growing proportion of empty nest households also poses pressure on the national healthcare budget, social security and the pension system. Due to the fact that their children cannot offer adequate care for their parents, some governments have to build up additional intervention systems to improve the lives of empty nesters including establishing community service groups to take care of the empty nesters with chronic diseases, and organizing diverse activities to make them more socially connected. But managing such systems in the run requires stable financial support from the governments.

33 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs(DESA), Population Division(2017), "World Population Ageing 2017" , DESA Population division, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/LivingArrangements.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

34 Li, Bin, and Sheying Chen, "Aging, Living Arrangements, and Housing in China," *Ageing International* 36(4): 463–74.

35 China Development Research Foundation(CDRF), "Ageing Population: China's Development Trend and Policy Options," June.11, 2020, available at: <https://www.cdrf.org.cn/zgfbzg/5586.htm> [accessed at: Feb.25 2021].

36 Aaron Terrazas. Empty Nest Households Are on the Rise. Apr. 19, 2017, available at: <https://www.zillow.com/research/empty-nests-rise-14810/> [accessed at: Feb.25 2021].

37 Ying Liang, Wei Wu. Exploratory analysis of health-related quality of life among the empty-nest elderly in rural China: An empirical study in three economically developed cities in eastern China. *Health & Quality of Life Outcomes*. 2014;12(1):1-33. doi:10.1186/1477-7525-12-59.

38 Ibid.

Elder Abuse

Physical and Psychological Abuse

In an ageing society, people's motivation, mental abilities are decreased, thus impairing elderly persons' ability to perform activities independently.³⁹ Moreover, the rapidly changing society makes it more difficult for them to integrate into society. Therefore, they are more prone to suffer from physical and psychological abuse.

Physical and psychological abuse is prevalent across countries. 3 to 10 percent of elderly persons in Australia, Canada and UK have once suffered from abuse.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the problem is more severe in developing countries: 40 of 1000 persons in India were found to be physically abused, and 45 percent of older persons in rural Argentina and 35 percent of elders in Brazil were reported to have suffered from mistreatment.⁴¹ However, physical and psychological abuse is difficult to be identified. First of all, elderly persons often hide for family secrecy because of shame and embarrassment or to protect the perpetrator as they are more likely to be abused by their family members and their closer ones. Moreover, elderly persons are unaware of elder abuse. Even if they do, they often find it difficult to verbalize and adduce evidence for the abuse.⁴²

Also, physical and psychological abuses occur in institutional settings, especially in long-term institutional care. A study in the United States reported that 10 percent of nursing staff have committed physical abuse at least once and 81 percent of nursing staff have observed an incident of psychological abuse.⁴³ On the one hand, it is the result of deficiencies of care systems that elderly persons may not be satisfied with the poorly trained staff, dilapidated facilities, and managing mechanisms within the institution. On the other hand, the staffs, in return, are overworked, feeling exhausted and impatient to fulfill the needs of elderly persons, thus resulting in abusive acts.

Neglect

Neglect is found to be the most common form of elder abuse and presents significant differences in the rate of abuse between men and women. Similar to physical and psychological abuses, it also impairs elder person health conditions and is associated with confinement and inappropriate use of medication.⁴⁴

There are many causes for neglect. For some, neglect is caused by the course of aging and unreasonable planning by government for senior lives, such as being not financially and mentally prepared. Also, with the spouse died in advance, elderly persons are often left with no caregivers.⁴⁵ For the majority, neglect is resulted from the disintegration of extended family systems, with more children living in remote cities and even abroad.

39 Zhang, Chichen, Xiao Zheng, Ruifang Zhu, Lihong Hou, Xiaozhao Yousef Yang, Jiao Lu, Feng Jiang, and Tingzhong Yang, "The Effectiveness of the 'SMG' Model for Health-Promoting Lifestyles among Empty Nesters: A Community Intervention Trial." *Health & Quality of Life Outcomes* 17(1): N.PAG.

40 UN Economic and Social Council(ECOSOC), "Abuse of older persons: recognizing and responding to abuse of older persons in a global context," ECOSOC 25 February-1 March 2002, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N02/210/54/PDF/N0221054.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Awuviry-Newton, K., Nkansah, J. O., & Ofori-Dua, K, "Attributions of elder neglect: A phenomenological study of older peopleelderly people in Ghana." *Health & social care in the community*, 28(6), 2172–2178.

Also, the caregivers, basically their children, may fail to provide necessities due to the lack of nursing skills, enough interest to companies, caring time and accessibility to sound healthcare resources. They are simply in a sandwich situation: too burdensome to struggle with life and raise children, meanwhile, taking care of elderly persons. Therefore, in recent years, a growing number of elderly persons have started to receive residential care services though it will pose an additional financial burden on families.⁴⁶ For example, generally, residential care in Italy costs 20,000 to 40,000 euro per year, the figure of which varies according to patient's age, health condition and the quality of the service.⁴⁷ So, after receiving residential care for years, many elderly persons have been again neglected because their families cannot afford such high cost in the long run. However, even for families who can afford the high cost of the services, the situation is by no means optimistic. Many elderly persons in the residential care are seldom visited by their children or well treated by working staff. It was reported that in the United States, where there is no federal limitation on staffing ratio, 75% of nursing homes fail to reach the required minimum caring time for each patient.⁴⁸ Worse still, elder persons are increasingly vulnerable to abuse and neglect because family members are not allowed to visit them during COVID-19. Therefore, more measures should be taken to improve the quality of healthcare services.

Insufficient Opportunity for Social Participation

Age Barriers in Employment

The employment of elderly people has drawn more and more attention. The elderly people are always excluded from employment due to the stereotype that they are usually weak and needy. Basically, companies and corporations tend to hire young people rather than elderly people when the skills that they possess are identical as young people are more vigorous and competent.

As a matter of fact, the competitions among young people are already fierce enough that they barely have enough jobs. The saturated markets for employees have added more difficulties to the employment of elderly people. Moreover, there will be an increasing demand of jobs as a result of the rise of age for retirement, thus bringing more tension to the fierce job-hunting game.

While some elderly people are enthusiastically hunting for a job, it is likely that their skills and knowledge do not match the job vacancy. As a result of being left behind in the current times, they can hardly keep up with the development in technology and social opinions. Their falling behind makes it more difficult for them to have a job that matches their outdated working skills, which in turn intensifies the crisis of unemployment. Worse still, few elderly people can get jobs as only a limited number of appropriate jobs remain

46 Cannell, M. Brad, Katelyn K. Jetelina, Matt Zavadsky, and Jennifer M. Reingle Gonzalez, "Towards the Development of a Screening Tool to Enhance the Detection of Elder Abuse and Neglect by Emergency Medical Technicians(EMTs): A Qualitative Study." *BMC Emergency Medicine* 16(June): 1–10.

47 Grigoletti L, Amaddeo F, de Girolamo G, Picardi A. [Costs of psychiatric residential care in Italy]. *Epidemiologia e psichiatria sociale*. 2004;13(4):262-269. doi:10.1017/s1121189x00001780.

48 Abrams A. "A License for Neglect." *Nursing Homes Are Seeking — and Winning — Immunity Amid the Coronavirus Pandemic*. Time.com. May 2020:N.PAG.available at: <https://search-ebscohost-com.webvpn.cfau.edu.cn/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=143252190&lang=zh-cn&site=ehost-live> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

vacant due to the violent competition in job-hunting.⁴⁹ So as ECOSOC realized that the goals of full and productive employment and decent work are crucial to poverty eradication and the welfare of the elderly people, more changes are expected to be made.

Unsuitable Social Infrastructure and Service

The current social infrastructure and service have certain blindspots when it comes to elderly people's caring. Despite the funds devoted to it, the infrastructures specially designed for the elder are still in need of improvement.

First, due to the lack of land and the shortage of funds, many neighborhoods are in deficiency of recreational places. Elderly people are thus forced to make use of all places they find, which sometimes might not be proper. One of the examples is the elderly people using public square for dancing in China, which one might find disturbing and unpleasant.

Also, the elderly people may pose a threat to their own health because of the poorly picked recreational activities. Worse still, the equipment attached to the residential buildings, such as elevators, wheelchair access, blind tracks, are not convenient enough for the elderly people.

Last but not least, the social service should be designed to be more suitable for the elderly people, as they showed great difficulties in getting used to the digital services. Targeting at helping them adapt to the modernized society, communities are encouraged to put in more manpower and material resources in facilitating the elderly people. The following case study of health QR code in China serves as a perfect example.

Case Study: Health QR Code in China

Developed by Tencent, the health QR code was designed to check a person's general health condition and their whereabouts, which turned out to be a significant tool in the combat of COVID-19. However, the practice of the health QR code also revealed some problems for elderly people.

To begin with, the lack of smartphones makes it impossible for some elderly people to show their health QR code because they don't have devices to show the codes. In addition, elderly people know so little about the health QR code and the way to operate it despite the fact that many elderly people have a smartphone, thus making it a very tough task for them to use it. Although providing the elderly people's health QR code is an option for their relatives, it is unlikely for them to stick with the elderly people all day long because of their jobs. Since nowadays, a green health QR code is required almost every place, it becomes very difficult for some elderly people to keep up with the times.

In response to the above problems, local governments in different provinces have introduced policies to make health QR code easier for seniors. One that served as the best example was allowing elderly people to enter the park only by asking them to show the identification and sign on registration form. However, the policies vary from province to province, which poses another question—the standard of healthy varies from province to province. In the future, more improvements are looking forward to be made.

⁴⁹ ECOSOC, "Resolution 2008/18 Promoting full employment and decent work for all," available at: <https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2008/resolution%202008-18.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

Inadequate Communication and Information

There is a lack of communication between young people and elderly people, especially in digital ages. With the presence of mobile phones and computers, the communication between the younger generation and the older generation keeps reducing, with the gap between these two continuing to widen. There are circumstances where the youth only visit their seniors once or twice a year. Moreover, information is currently transmitted through the Internet, which makes it difficult for the elderly to get the information they need due to the difficulties of using electronic devices.

Another situation is that despite the children's deep love for their parents, they are constantly held back by endless work. They tried to provide their parents with the best they can offer to make up for the guilt of their absence. Still, the deficiency of communication remains.

Besides, the care from societies for elderly people is still far from adequate. There are not enough workers for the community to check on every door to identify the living condition of the elderly people, nor were necessary social resources such as medication provided. The information collected about elderly people is far from enough to tell if they are both mentally and physically healthy.

Rudimentary Governmental Guidance

Outdated Measures and Indicators of Population Ageing

In common sense and for most researchers, chronological age is often used as the base of measures and indicators to describe population ageing, acknowledging people over 60 or 65 years old as older persons. When analyzing population ageing, the percentage of older persons is commonly used as the main indicator. This provides a simple and easily replicable way to track various indicators of population ageing.⁵⁰

However, concerning the changing reality of our society and elderly people, whether population ageing simply means the growing percentage of older persons remains in doubt. The health status, mortality risk, level of activity, and productivity of older persons vary with different people, societies, and nations. For example, people aged 65 years and older are generally recognized as elderly people worldwide, but the average life expectancy of people in Japan is 83 years while in Somali it is only 55 years.⁵¹ If we simply estimate the percentage of elderly people as the main indicator when analyzing the ageing society of both countries, it will surely cause misunderstanding.

Therefore, several other measures and indicators should be developed and used to understand the diversity and changing socioeconomic situations of older persons.

50 UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "World Population Ageing Highlights," 2019, <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

51 World Health Organization, "Life expectancy and Healthy life expectancy", 2021, <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/indicator-groups/indicator-group-details/GHO/life-expectancy-and-healthy-life-expectancy> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

Costly Elderly Entitlement Policy

Entitlement systems for elderly people have been built over the globe, which provides cash, medicinal aid, medical care, or other entitlement for elderly people. As the population continues to age, people may witness an upsurge in the cost of entitlement policies.

This financial problem has already become a threat for some nations, which are mainly developed nations because of the ageing society. The US federal government spending on medical services for elderly people has risen about 75% over the last two decades in terms of percentage of GDP, from 2% GDP to nearly 3.5% GDP. As for the pension for elderly people, it has risen from 3.8% to 4.5% in the last two decades.⁵² The Japanese government is facing the same dilemma when caring for the old generation, which has put much pressure on both the national funding and the younger generation. This will lead to not only a larger national debt and other financial issues but also a stressful environment for the younger generation and maybe a lower fertility rate, which even worsens the situation.

Low Fertility Rate

The fertility rate is the average number of children a woman gives birth to in a lifetime.⁵³ When the fertility rate of a nation drops below approximately 2.1, its population will eventually start to shrink, followed by a larger elderly population.⁵⁴

Recent decades have witnessed a great decline in the fertility rate around the world. In 1950 the total fertility rate was 4.7, and in 2020 it almost halved to 2.4, very close to 2.1, which marks the decline of the population. In 1950, the fertility rate in every country was above 2.1, while in 2020, most of the developed countries and many of the developing countries were under 2.1.⁵⁵

52 US Government Publishing Office, “Budget of the United States Government,” 2021, <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/collection/budget/2021> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

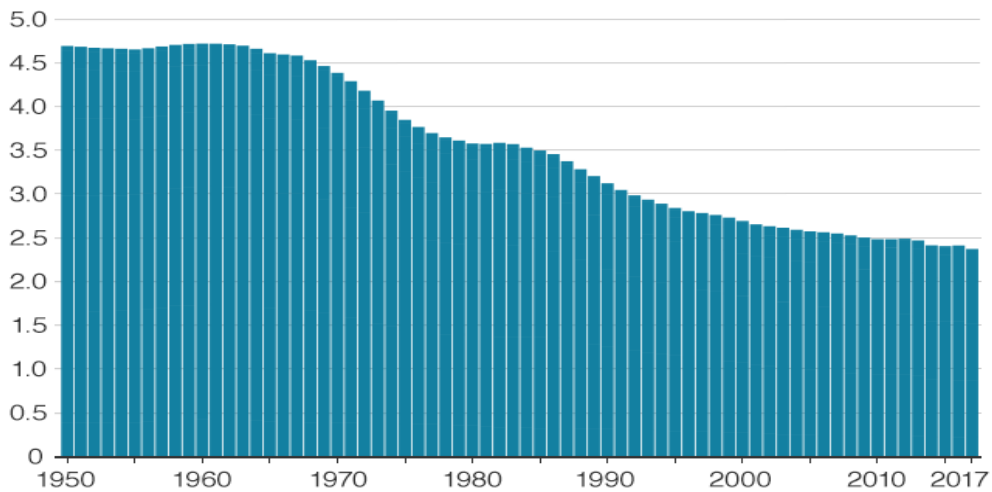
53 OECD, “Fertility rates”, available at: <https://data.oecd.org/pop/fertility-rates.htm>, [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

54 Haidong Wang, Christopher J.L. Murray, “Global age-sex-specific fertility, mortality, healthy life expectancy(HALE), and population estimates in 204 countries and territories, 1950–2019: a comprehensive demographic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019”, Global Health Metrics, 2019, available at: <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2820%2930977-6> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

55 Ibid.

Women are having fewer children

Global fertility rate (livebirths per woman)



Source: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington



Figure 1 Global Fertility Rate⁵⁶

Generally speaking, people in economically developed areas tend to have fewer children, which explains why the fertility rate in Europe, the US, DPRK, Australia, and other countries is relatively low. As expected, these countries also have a problem of ageing society. There are multiple reasons why people who are relatively well-off want fewer children. One of the probable reasons is the growing pressure on the younger generation when supporting the elderly and rearing children. Some argue that the national government should and will step in for caring the elderly, but it will finally result in a bigger burden on the government budget and social economy, which might even bring more pressure on the younger generation.

Therefore, to reduce the socioeconomic influence, the government may decide to reduce the welfare of elderly people. In recent years, Japan's government has been working on cutting the budget for health care for the elderly, which aroused tough disputes. In many other countries, the government postponed the statutory retirement age because the country faces or will face a shortage of labor. These actions might bring economic benefits but also challenges to elderly people.

⁵⁶ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, "Population Forecasting", available at: <https://vizhub.healthdata.org/population-forecast/> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

Possible Solutions

Policy Reforms

Retirement Savings

One of the essential ways to enable individuals to achieve the lifestyle they desire is to save more for retirement. This can be done either by encouraging people to save more or a state pension system that takes a contribution from workers' salaries. Here is a case the UK's government reformed the pension system that allowing more workers join the state pension scheme.

Researchers found that millions of people in the UK are not saving enough for retirement, and the situation can be worse in other countries. Therefore, the government of the UK proposed reform on pension in 2007, requiring employers to automatically enroll eligible workers into a pension scheme. Workers who are aged at least 22 and under State Pension age (SPa), earn more than 10,000 pounds per year and work in qualifying workplace would pay a contribution, which is at least 2 percent of their earnings, and of which at least 1 percent must come from the employer.⁵⁷ Up to 2015, more than 5.47 million workers have been enrolled by over 60,000 employers.⁵⁸ The figure shows that this pension scheme in UK has a wide coverage of employees, showing positive changes for them as they approach retirement age.

The retirement saving mainly consists of three pillars, statutory pension, occupational pension, and private savings. Pension system of UK is distinct from other European countries as it combines the statutory and occupational pension, or to say the public and private sector, which guaranteed that the pension based on employment is well preserved.

The pension system is a feasible measure to provide national retirement saving plans for elderly people. However, the problem is that a great number of workers may not be qualified for the state pension program, especially in underdeveloped countries where labor laws and relevant legislation have not been developed and employers tend to ignore their shares of pension for employees. Besides, the program should be well calculated and designed to ease the financial burden.

⁵⁷ UK Report on UNECE, "UK Follow-Up to the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing(MIPAA) 2016" , 2017, available at: https://unece.org/DAM/pau/age/country_rpts/2017/UK_report.pdf [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Entitlement

The governments are encouraged to provide assistance through entitlement program at a national level in the following four aspects:

1. **Income support.** A state pension scheme is often provided for elderly people in every country. A certain percentage of workers' salary is taken for the scheme, and after retirement, they will receive a pension every month. Apart from the pension, travel pass for the elderly is also an income support that allows elderly people to travel on bus, road, rail, and other services for free;
2. **Health care.** Health insurance schemes designed for elderly people are established in many countries, such as Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, Nigeria, Poland, which provide geriatric care, including custodial care, ambulatory care, many prescription drugs, and special support for people with certain illnesses;
3. **Taxation.** An income taxation relief might be provided for the elderly themselves or their children who take after them. The tax credit is provided for the elderly in some countries such as UK, the US, and so forth;
4. **Other benefits.** For example, a free travel pass is given to elderly people that allows them to travel on the road, rail, and other transportation services for free.

Reversed Family Planning

Reversed family planning is a scheme that a government adopts to encourage citizens to have offspring. Payment is usually given to parents for a newborn baby, which is called a baby bonus or child benefits, to assist with the cost of rearing children. It is believed to be effective in stimulating the fertility rate and therefore mitigate the ageing process.

Several countries, which are generally well developed or facing challenges of an ageing society, have adopted the scheme. For example, in Canada, if a family's net income is under \$31,711 and has a child under six years of age, it will receive a payment of \$6,765 per year. There is also another provincial baby bonus in Canada.⁵⁹

There are also maternal benefits in Russia, which gave capital assistance to the family having the second and each further child before. In 2020, Putin suggested extending the program to include births of first children.

Unlike Canada and Russia giving cash to families directly, Singapore's program of baby bonus consists of more elements. Except for cash gifts, a Child Development Account is built up for approved uses on the child, which includes childcare, kindergarten, optical shops, and others.⁶⁰ The government of Singapore also established a one-stop information portal for parents-to-be that offers a wide range of resources and information.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Government of Canada, "Canada child benefit-How much you can get," January, 2020, available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/child-family-benefits/canada-child-benefit-overview/canada-child-benefit-we-calculate-your-ccb.html> [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

⁶⁰ Singapore Government Ministry of Social and Family Development, "CHILD DEVELOPMENT CO-SAVINGS(BABY BONUS) SCHEME", available at: https://www.babybonus.msf.gov.sg/parent/web/about?_afrLoop=53845657080580515&_afrWindowMode=0&_afrWindowId=null#%40%3F_afrWindowId%3Dnull%26_afrLoop%3D53845657080580515%26_afrWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D1clogwxni4_4 [accessed at: Jan.23 2021].

⁶¹ Ibid.

Although reversed family planning may help with the low fertility rate, the financial burden and statistics work of such a national policy cannot be neglected.

Improving Data Collection and Analysis of Population

As explained above, the measures and indicators of population ageing are somehow outdated if the percentage of older persons is used as the main indicator. To understand the socio-economic implications of population ageing, several other measures are developed to account for the diversity of capacity and dependencies across ages. The distinction between the traditional measures and recently developed measures is whether it combines the demographic data, such as age structure, with economic influences.

Nowadays, three measures are commonly used for analyses. Namely, the old-age dependency ratio (OADR), the prospective old-age dependency ratio (POADR), and the economic old-age dependency ratio (economic OADR), as explained below.

The old-age dependency ratio is the number of old-age dependents (65 years old and over) per a hundred persons of working age (20 to 64 years old). This indicator shows the approximate economic dependency associated with an ageing society and is one of the most commonly used indicators. OADR is forecasted to increase in all countries, particularly in South-Eastern and Eastern Asia and Latin America, which implies that countries of these regions are under greater pressure of both social and economic old-age dependency.

The prospective old-age dependency ratio is based on remaining life expectancy instead of chronological age. Old age is redefined as a remaining life expectancy of 15 years and under. Comparing with OADR, trends of POADR imply slower increases in dependency in many countries. Countries of Europe have the highest POADR.

Estimated and projected prospective old-age dependency ratios by region, 1990-2050

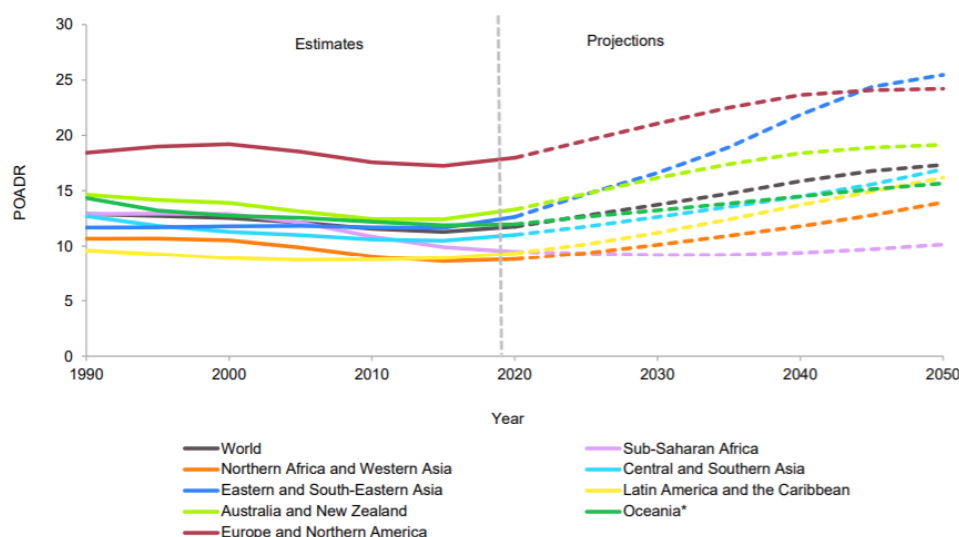


Figure 2 Estimated and Projected Prospective Old-age Dependency Ratios by Region⁶²

⁶² UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Population Ageing Highlights,” 2019, available at: <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/WorldPopulationAgeing2019-Highlights.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

The economic old-age dependency ratio is the number of consumers 65 years or older divided by the number of workers at all ages, suggesting the resource needs of older persons relative to resources produced by workers. One of the advantages of this indicator is that it incorporates the age variation into consumption and labor force participation, and therefore implies the economic influence of an ageing society. Countries with the highest economic OADR are located in Europe and Northern America.

Each indicator offers different perspectives and fits for different purposes. Comparing the three indicators, OADR is the easiest one to calculate and comprehend; POADR provides the perspective of analyzing different groups that have different life expectancy, suggesting policy makers to consider the longevity gaps when making policies; The economic OADR links ageing with generational economy, providing useful information for fiscal and social planning. All of the measures presented have its own advantages and disadvantages, and should be used depending on different objectives.

Strengthening Public Education

Publicity of Social Service and Activities at Community Level

From the perspective of the elderly people, strengthening public education requires improving publicity of social service and activities at the community level. On the one hand, the elderly people need to be informed that there are activities and services designed especially for them in order to promote and attain the goals of universal and equitable access to those services by all.⁶³ from that point, the publicity needs to target elderly people specifically by means of TV advertisements, leaflets, even door-to-door publicity, the effects of publicity would be much more precise and influential.

Once people are aware of certain services and activities, it is significant for organizers to come up with a detailed plan to teach each elderly people how to use modern tools. Also, it is important to take the learning ability of the elderly people and their passion for learning something new into consideration and make the teaching method as detailed as possible.⁶⁴ The social resources need to be used wisely so that the service and activities elderly people needed can be delivered with efficiency and effectiveness by entities that are closer to communities and are therefore have more knowledge about elderly people's needs.

Education for Younger Generation

Education represents a potent weapon on raising public awareness to promote respect and inclusion for elderly persons. As society has driven towards the trend of population aging, education should be designed and delivered to meet emerging needs and concerns, which include educating the younger generation.

One crucial step is to extend public education about ageing to younger generations, through which people can learn cultural values, especially paying respect for the elders, recognize elderly persons' contributions to society, understand the process of aging in a more sensible way and be better prepared for elder lives. The University of Hong Kong sets an example of promoting inclusion for elderly persons by integrating elder learning

⁶³ ECOSOC Decision 2004/240 Agreed conclusions of the Commission for Social Development on improving public sector effectiveness available at: <https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2004/decision%202004-240.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

⁶⁴ Ibid.

into higher education, by providing education opportunities for elderly persons to promote inter-generational learning between elders and students.⁶⁵

Also, the media can have its full play in educating the younger generation about ageing as it plays an essential role in attracting attention in a more interactive and interesting way. Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) tweeted the activities of the 2018 International Day of Older Persons, and successfully invited more younger generations to participate in the task of elderly protection.⁶⁶

Improvement of Age-friendly Infrastructure and Service

Age-friendly Buildings and Public Infrastructure

In general, the age-friendly buildings are featured by the accessible equipment in the building and the accessible services or facilities near the building. Those two factors can allow elderly people to have access to the facilities and services nearby much more conveniently thus boosting their level of social participation.

Age-friendly buildings should meet the following requirements: having elevators, escalators, ramps, wide doorways and passages, suitable stairs (not too high or steep) with railings, rest areas with comfortable seating.⁶⁷ To ensure that the requirements are met by construction companies as well as the investors of the buildings, countries are encouraged to issue regulations stipulating the basic building standards. While there is a widespread recognition of the significance of having age-friendly buildings, it is also acknowledged that many buildings, particularly those old buildings, are not accessible. Most of the cities see a need to improve the accessibility of their buildings, particularly to facilitate wheelchair access.⁶⁸

While it is essential to have all sets of indoor facilities, it is also significant to have enough public infrastructure outdoor.

For traveling, safe pedestrian crossings are needed to ensure the safety of pedestrians, riders, and drivers. Traffic lights are specially requested for those whose eyesight and hearing get worse because of old age. Clean bench is in great demand for those who cannot walk well due to the old age as it allows them to rest their legs. Conspicuous pedestrian crossings enable elderly people to walk across the roads safely.⁶⁹ All the mentioned infrastructures are essential to build a truly age-friendly society.

For living, clean public toilets with handicap access, and reserved recreation places are needed for elderly people who have no specific recreation place. Blind tracks are also important to people who have trouble in seeing clearly. All those infrastructures are in urgent need for improving the standard of the elderly people's lives.

⁶⁵ John Holford ,Steven Hodge ,Marcella Milana &Richard Waller “A model of integrating elder learning into higher education: a case from a Hong Kong university.” 39.4(2020):356-373.

⁶⁶ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs(DESA), “Older human rights champions on the International Day of Older Persons,” DESA, 27th September 2018, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/news/2018/09/older-human-rights-champions-on-the-international-day-of-older-persons/> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

⁶⁷ Global Age-friendly Cities: A Guide WHO Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data World Health Organization 2007.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

Home Care Services

Providing elderly persons with sound home care services caters to elderly persons' wishes to receive high-quality supports while staying at home. Therefore, it is imperative to establish home care systems in communities and improve the existing ones in others.

First of all, the most significant step is to integrate the development of home care services in national strategies, putting more emphasis on the organization, management, and supervision of home care services. Under the guidance of MIPAA and regional strategies, many countries have put the development of home care services on the agenda. For instance, in the First "North-East Asian Forum on Population Aging," Korea proposed the variation of community care service from institutionalized care to home care services.⁷⁰ Russia put the development of public and private long-term care for elderly persons at home on the items requiring future research and policy interventions.⁷¹

Besides, strengthening the quality of home care services requires elderly persons' participation in decision-making by entitling the elderly persons with the right to decide for themselves about the types of care they want to receive. The United States Veterans Directed Home and Community Based Services (VD-HCBS) Program has set a good example, in which eligible elderly persons can decide for themselves what kinds of goods and services they need and hire and supervise their working staff.⁷² Similar projects may be extended to all elderly persons in the community.

Moreover, many families are denied the chance to receive home care services due to the high cost. The home care service in England costs approximately £12,152 every year.⁷³ In the United States, in-home care costs approximately \$4,000 per month, while in Zimbabwe, under the home care programme, one single home visit in urban area still costs \$16 or \$23, \$38 or \$42 in rural areas.⁷⁴ To encourage families taking home care services, governments are required to provide more incentives for the development of home services, such as expanding the insurance coverage and collaborating with housekeeping cooperative enterprises. For example, in Malaysia, the government has established a cooperative system, providing members of the cooperative movement health insurance by the Malaysian Cooperative Insurance Society.⁷⁶ Despite Malaysia, many countries have such cooperative systems in terms of healthcare and long-term care services. But measures should be taken to strengthen comprehensiveness and inclusiveness.

70 The North-East Asian Forum on Population Aging(NEAFPA), "Elderly Livings and Elderly Welfare Policy in Korea," NEAFPA, 6th November, 2015, qvailable at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Session1_Mr.KimChanWoo_RoK.pdf [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

71 The North-East Asian Forum on Population Aging(NEAFPA), "Active Ageing in Russia," NEAFPA, 6–7 November 2015, vailable at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Session2_Ms.OxanaSinyavskaya_Russia.pdf [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

72 United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe(UNECE), "National Report on MIPAA+15 Third Cycle Response from the United States."

73 Bauer, A., Fernandez, J., Henderson, C., Wittenberg, R., & Knapp, M.(2019). Cost - minimisation analysis of home care reablement for older people in England: A modelling study. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 27(5), 1241–1250. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.12756>.

74 Turner-Lee, N.(2019). Can Emerging Technologies Buffer the Cost of In-Home Care in Rural America? *Generations*, 43(2), 88–93.

75 Hansen, K., Woelk, G., Jackson, H., Kerkhoven, R., Manjonjori, N., Maramba, P., Mutambirwa, J., Ndimande, E., & Vera, E.(1998). The cost of home-based care for HIV/AIDS patients in Zimbabwe. *AIDS Care*, 10(6), 751–759. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0954012984836>.

76 UN General Assembly(GA), "Status and Role of Cooperatives in Light of New Economic/Social Trends," GA, 6th August 1996, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N96/199/24/PDF/N9619924.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

Setting up Protective Mechanisms against Abuse

Establishment of Enforcement Systems

Inflict punishment on perpetrators, strengthening domestic legal frameworks and legislation, and international law functions as a fundamental tool to address elder abuse.

Without any doubt, elder abuse should be liable to punishment. In recent years, many countries have strengthened laws against elder abuse and proposed more stringent penalties. In Chile, all elder abusers will face the sentence to prison or financial penalties, be deprived of paying visits to victims, and will be required to attend therapy sessions according to the Domestic Violence Act. And many forms of elder abuse once-neglected have been incorporated into legal frameworks. As in India, the government has strengthened the inclusion of domestic law to ensure that the legislation cover abandonment, neglect, and all forms of abuse.⁷⁷ Measures have also been taken to smooth the application of legislation. For example, the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) collaborates with the Elder Justice Coordinating Council to ensure the application of the Elder Justice Act, which aims to coordinate between the federal and state government to ensure that perpetrators receive liable punishment.⁷⁸ All these measures have taken as effective deterrents to elder abuse.

However, many measures are still at a national level because the extent of elder abuse and punishment varies according to different contexts, with some countries incapable of establishing their own legal structures on elder abuse, and even though many countries have set up legal mechanisms in response to elder abuse, the unsystematic application of legislation still faces various obstacles throughout the process. Most importantly, elderly persons' voices are often absent throughout establishing and amending legislation.

⁷⁷ UN General Assembly(GA), "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing Report of the Secretary-General," GA, 22nd July 2010, available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/460/68/PDF/N1046068.pdf?OpenElement> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Intervention and Prevention Programs

Countries should also shed light on strengthening the treatment and rehabilitation of victims to mitigate the potential threats of elderly persons and strengthening the preparedness for elder abuse.

First of all, existing intervention and prevention programs should put emphasis on the rehabilitation of victims who suffered from elder abuse. For example, the non-governmental organization, *Fédération 3977* against the Abuse of Older Persons and Persons with Disabilities, France, operates a national help-line to report the cases of elder abuse and provide assistance to the victims. After they receive the call, they will establish a case file and transfer it to related parties, often local communities, to continue the support ranging from seven days to 2 years accordingly.⁷⁹ In such ways, intervention and prevention programs are guaranteed with continuity, from which help elderly persons to rehabilitate and safeguard the rights of elderly persons. Besides, more sound intervention and prevention programs have been established in response to emerging requirements. One good example is that the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse has begun to provide remedies for the victims of elder abuse in recognition of cultural differences among communities and societies and elderly person concerns.⁸⁰

However, there still lies a wide gap among countries, with some countries failed to provide sound backup programs for victims of elder abuse. Also, the mismanagement and inadequate supervision of the existing intervention and prevention programs even may cause additional trauma on the elders.

⁷⁹ UN Caribbean Conference on Ageing, Elder Abuse and the Rights of Older Persons(ECLAC), “Report of the Caribbean Conference on Ageing, Elder Abuse and the Rights of Older Persons,” ECLAC, 22, December 2015, available at: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/2016_cdcc_26_-_background_document_-_ageing.pdf [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

⁸⁰ Economic and Social Council(ECOSOC), “Statement submitted by International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council” ECOSOC, 15th December 2015, available at: <https://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/get?open&DS=E/CN.6/2016/NGO/169&Lang=E> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

Bloc Positions

United States of America

The United States of America has undergone a dramatic demographic transformation in recent decades. According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) national report on MIPAA: Third Cycle, as of 2020, there are projected 10,000 elderly persons in the US.⁸¹ Also, as a result of “baby boomer,” approximately 10,000 people turn 65 per day.⁸² With the rapidly aging population, the US has long devoted itself to safeguarding the rights and ensuring dignity and independence.

The Social Security Act, Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act represent the four pillars of the support system for elderly persons in the US, ensuring elderly persons' economic and social rights and providing sound care and opportunities. However, these do not feed up to the trend of having more diverse elderly population in terms of age, functional ability, race, and ethnicity. For example, it is extremely difficult for indigenous American elderly persons to get access to support and healthcare services.

Other barriers include stable financing for long-term services, especially home care services. Although the Affordable Care Act has provided incentives for Aging Service Network established under the Older Americans Act, which aims to make services available to elderly persons at a local level, it still requires further coordination with the Department of Health and Human Services to make valuable services more affordable to families.

On the international level, the U.S. is a strong supporter of MIPAA, under the guidance of which the U.S. has committed itself to encourage elderly persons' participation among existing human rights platforms. For instance, at the fifth and sixth UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing, the US recommended the establishment of a UN forum on behalf of elderly persons.⁸³

However, as reflected in response to Covid-19, the US still has a long way to go in safeguarding elderly persons' rights in emergencies and strengthening elderly persons' disaster risk preparedness and response.

China

According to the prediction of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), China will have reached a 491,532,000 population aged 60 and over by 2050, which is 2.5 times more than 2015, with a soaring proportion of persons aged 60 and over from 15.2% in 2015 to 36.5% by 2050.⁸⁴

Currently, the elderly who are unable to live independently due to disability or illness mainly live at home with no rehabilitation capacities or facilities, thus putting huge pressures on their families and on society in general. Worse still, due to the country's

⁸¹ United Nations, Economic Commission for Europe(UNECE), “National Report on MIPAA+15 Third Cycle Response from the United States” , UNECE, 2017, available at: https://unece.org/DAM/pau/age/country_rpts/2017/USA_report.pdf [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ ESCAP, “Ageing in Asia and the Pacific: Country Profiles,” available at: <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/SDD%20Ageing%20Country%20Profiles.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

family planning policy, most Chinese families keep single child, which makes the tradition that the elderly people are looked after by their children could hardly be maintained. The productive population in China is facing unprecedented social pressure despite the increase in their parents' income and the improvement of social security.

The low fertility rate in China is also an urgent issue led by the One-child Policy, together with the high cost of parenting and competitive and stressful education. Efforts have been made to encourage families to have more children, but a little progress has been achieved given the mentioned obstacles.

In China, the China National Working Commission on Ageing (CNWCA) and China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA) are two main bodies designated to deal with ageing issues. Legislation has been regarded as the primary means of providing protection. Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly was enacted in 1996 and was amended in 2012. Also, the Constitution of the People's Republic of China has been made to ensure people's right to assistance from the State and society when they are old, sick or unable to work.

Policies have been made to perfect the supporting system of the elderly in China, including The Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Development of China's Undertakings for the Aged (2011-2015) that aims to improve the social security system for the elderly people that covers both urban and rural residents; Plan on Construction of Social Support Service System for the Elderly (2011-2015); and The State Council's Several Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Services for the Elderly.

China now provides social protection to the elderly people from diverse aspects that include old-age pension, health insurance, and other social protection schemes such as a Minimum-living guarantee system for urban and rural residents established in 1997 and Allowance for older couples abiding by single child policy in rural areas.

Southeast Asian Countries

Countries in Southeast Asia have a relatively young demographic structure. In Malaysia, the proportion of persons aged 60 and over was only 9.2% in 2015, the figure was 10.3% in Viet Nam.⁸⁵ However, it is estimated by ESCAP that by 2050, the population of elderly aged more than 60 would have been tripled from 9,614,000 in 2015, reaching a total number of 31,432,000.⁸⁶ Similarly, Malaysia will follow the same pattern.

It is clearly indicated that Southeast Asian countries will undergo huge social pressure from the ageing population in the future, although it is now still vital. The dramatic increase in the ageing population is partly caused by the ageing trend of the current young population, which is a major part of the demographic structure; besides, Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia and Thailand are greatly attractive to those elderly people from western countries who want to live out their life in retirement given the natural endowment of these countries, especially the enchanting scenery. Therefore, the decrease of the younger productive population caused by emigration combined with the increasing population of elderly immigrants has significantly contributed to the drastically upward trend of ageing.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Considering the huge number of elderly population, measures have been taken to provide social protection to the majority. For example, Viet Nam has initiated projects that aim to train the providers of elderly care, including Central Gerontology Hospital, which provides short-term training for health providers; the elderly Mental Care System in Thailand proposed to establish home-visits to prevent and delay mental, physical deterioration.⁸⁷

However, the crux of the issue in the region is that the older generation, a huge proportion of which come from other countries, contributes to the local economy, meaning that the government cannot simply put a restriction on immigration so as to prevent the population from ageing, rather, it should strike a balance between the growing revenue generated by the immigrated elderly people and the money paid for the perfection of the local elderly supporting system.

Fortunately, countries in Southeast Asia are still in a relatively early stage of the issue; a great number of the productive population are still available for that region. A higher level of economic development is of great importance to building age-friendly communities.

Japan

Japan has struggled against the low fertility rate for decades. In 2020, the number of neonates dropped to approximately 845,000, which hit a new low this year.⁸⁸ There is no doubt that the ageing trend keeps rising with each passing day.

Facing the challenge of ageing, Japan is willing to make efforts to change the current situation and attempt to address problem through improving elderly people's life quality. First, Japan expanded employments for elderly people and females, which is helpful in solving the employment vacancy. This policy not only provides those people who are still capable of working a job to prove themselves, but also it is a firm denial to gender inequality and age inequality. So far, Japanese employment rates for people aged over 65 are near 25%, indicating the leading position in elderly people's employment in the world.⁸⁹

Moreover, Japan is well-known for its humanization designs and convenient details. Japan spends a huge amount of money every year on enhancing the living environments for elderly people and improving the facilities in nursing homes and infrastructures. The infrastructure is specially designed for the elderly people. To some extent, Japan serves as a perfect example of how to treat elderly people.

However, this perfect model has its blindspots. The social security expenditure in 2020 was about 36,000,000,000,000 yen, and the total spending related to social security in Japan was about 126,000,000,000,000 yen, which was 22% of the GDP.⁹⁰ The consequence for those thoughtful, pleasant, and well-designed infrastructures for elderly people is that the cost of it is unreasonably high. With the number of elderly people growing every year, the money that will be spent on elderly people is only going to soar. The risks hidden under these numbers might indicate a negative outcome that needs to be alerted from now on.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Lulu Zhang, Jianjun Chen, "Japan's Multiple Measures Simultaneously for Declining Birthrate and Ageing," Exponent(People's Daily), Jan. 6, 2021. available at: <http://cjkeizai.j.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0106/c368505-31991335.html> [accessed at: Feb.20 2021].

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

European States

Ageing is also a severe challenge for European states. In 2019, European Union (EU) had over 90,500,000 elderly people aged over 65, which is 20.3% of the total population.⁹¹ European states are facing the pressure of super-aged society while they also treat the ageing process as an opportunity for economic developments.

With the development of ageing, the burdens on European states' governments keep growing, which is now a vital problem. With 14% of GDP used for social pension, the French government would have definitely witnessed an over 17 billion euros gap in financing in 2025 if they do not start necessary revolutions.⁹² All states in Europe are facing the problem of social pension funds. Worse still, the struck of COVID-19 caused a soar in unemployment rates in many European states. As a result of the epidemic, many European countries are now facing an increase in public spending but a reduction in tax, which makes it much more difficult for governments to solve the ageing problem.

Furthermore, as the ageing problem is deepening, many European states are planning on raising the retirement age. France intends to raise the retirement age from 66 years and seven months to 67-year-old. Germany intends to raise the retirement age to 67 in 2031.⁹³ Not only will it be able to save the social pension for those who need it, but also it can relieve the ageing pressure and contribute more to society. There is no doubt that it is a beneficial way for people to build an age-friendly society in the long run.

Apart from that, the arrival of the ageing society also brings in many opportunities. A typical example is the constant expansion of the silver economy in Europe. With the number of elderly people continually growing, the consumer market in silver keeps expanding. More and more companies and corporations focus on satisfying the elderly people's demands and catering to their needs. It is estimated that with all entities working together on developing the silver economy, its full potential will be discovered.

African Countries

Comparing with other continents, Africa now has the youngest population, and the ratio of ageing is the lowest. However, the age structure in Africa is changing dramatically. While in 1950 the number of people aged 60 and above was approximately 12 million, this number has increased to 60 million by 2012 and will be estimated to reach 215 million in 2050.⁹⁴ Therefore, African countries also need to plan for an older society.

In the MIPAA+15 Africa review (2012-2017), 31 Member States of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) reviewed the domestic implementation of MIPAA, the situation varied in different states.⁹⁵ For example, 17 out of 31 nations stated that comprehensive national policies and plans on older persons had been developed, while two countries

91 Penghui Zhang, "European States Cope with Ageing Positively," Exponent(People's Daily), Dec. 18, 2020. available at: <http://health.people.com.cn/n1/2020/1218/c14739-31971354.html> [accessed at: Feb.20 2021].

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "The Third Review and Appraisal Cycle of the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Africa for the Period 2012 – 2017", July, 2017, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2018/03/eca-report-mipaa2017.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021]

95 Ibid.

did not even have national programs on older persons.⁹⁶ Some countries that are said to develop national programs and policies early, such as Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Egypt, have the programs that have been indicated by the last review (2007-2012) to be available concerning policy frameworks and legislation. For some other countries, however, their programs are still in an early stage.

About three-quarters of reporting countries had challenges with implementing programs, among which financial resources was the greatest one. Although the financial situation of a country must be taken into consideration when making policies on older persons, it should be noticed that it was not the only cause. For some countries, the major issue might be insufficient political will, insufficient cooperation between ministries, or insufficient information. Some governments complained about limited support from international agencies, which might be helpful in solving the problems, but a great many efforts should also be taken domestically.

Among the ageing-relating issues, poverty reduction, social coverage, health coverage, and elderly neglect/abuse were the most reported ones. Contrarily, tax exemption, humanitarian/conflict situations, on-job training, and literacy/education were the least reported issues.⁹⁷ However, it only reflected how countries value these issues, not how actually these issues were.

Latin American and the Caribbean

In 2019, the age dependency ratio of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) was 13 percent, about the medium level in the world.⁹⁸ However, it is estimated that the region will have the highest ageing ratio. In 2050 the number is estimated to double to reach 26 percent.⁹⁹ It means that the region is facing the pressing problem of projected population ageing.¹⁰⁰

The ageing process appears with a specific form in LAC: it occurs in very different ways in different countries, how fast it occurs, the difference in economic development, which may bring deep inequalities to older persons, and the different political frameworks built to protect elderly people's rights. Therefore, since 2003 MIPAA was adopted, successive regional meetings on the issue of ageing and the situation of older persons have been organized, and progress has been made through the years. For example, LAC countries made a significant advance in the San José Charter of 2012, going beyond the initial priority areas of MIPAA concerning human rights by promoting the adoption of specific laws and policies that would provide preferential treatment for older persons. Bolivia and Peru passed Older Persons Acts in 2013 and 2016, action plans on the matter have been drawn in Barbados, Colombia, Uruguay, and many other countries.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ The World Bank, "Age dependency ratio, old(% of working-age population) - Latin America & Caribbean", <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.DPND.OL?locations=ZJ> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Journal of Health & Population in Developing Countries, "Older persons and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean", Research Gate, September, 2018, available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327860676_Older_persons_and_human_rights_in_Latin_America_and_the_Caribbean [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

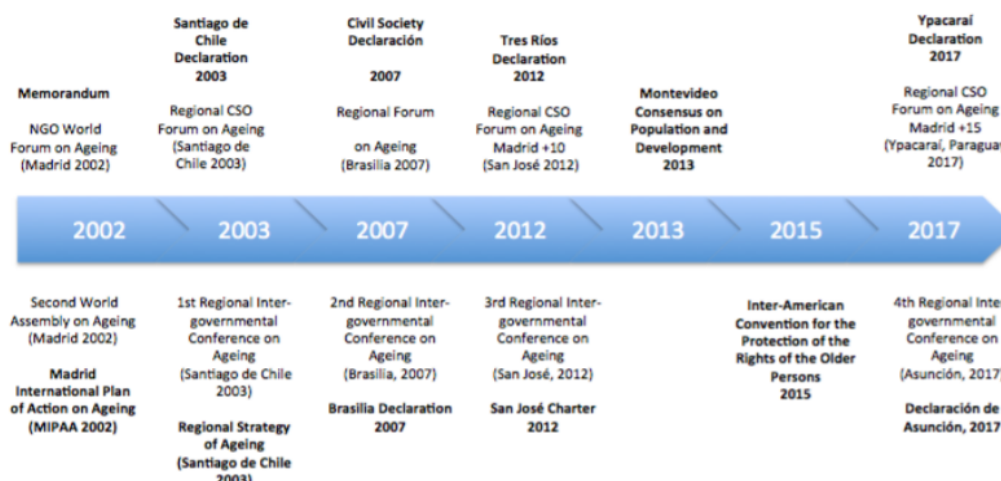


Figure 3 International or Regional Meetings Relevant to Ageing in LAC Region¹⁰²

However, as we could find above, Caribbean countries are facing worse situations comparing with South American countries. It is mainly due to poverty, social inequality, incomplete social security coverage, and a low level of institutional development. As a result, more than half of Caribbean countries do not have a proper legal framework on issues of older persons.¹⁰³

¹⁰² Verónica Montes-de-Oca, Mariana Paredes, Vicente Rodríguez, Sagrario Garay, “Older persons and human rights in Latin America and the Caribbean”, International Journal on Ageing in Developing Countries, February, 2018, available at: <https://www.inia.org.mt/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/2.2-8-Montes-de-Oca-edited.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

¹⁰³ ECLAC, “Caribbean Synthesis Report on the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and the San José Charter on the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean”, Caribbean preparatory meeting for the Fourth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons, June, 2017, available at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2017/02/eclac-mipaa-report2017-1.pdf> [accessed at: Jan.27 2021].

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