Review of Good Practice in National Policies and Laws on Ageing

Authors:

Silvia Stefanoni and Camilla Williamson

Written by:
Silvia Stefanoni, Principal Consultant, Development Action
Camilla Williamson, Consultant: Ageing and Older Policy, Practice and Advocacy

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides a critical review of good practice in national policies, laws and plans of action on ageing in the Asia and Pacific region.

The report analyses first the **process of developing policy** and the role and sequencing of different policy instruments. The key stages of an effective policy development process include: (1) data collection and analysis, (2) conducting a situation analysis, (3) identifying policy objectives, (4) drafting policy, (5) reviewing policy and (6) finalising and approving policy. Older people and stakeholder engagement is vital throughout the policy process. Good practices in policy development processes are found in Thailand, Fiji and Ghana.

This is followed by an outline of the functions of various **policy instruments**, including national policies on ageing, laws and action plans. The section highlights the unique benefits of each instrument and suggests that a combination of these should be introduced. The report argues that **a national policy on ageing should be developed first**. This policy document should outline the situation of older people in the country, identifying the key challenges that need addressing, the government's broad vision for older people and ageing, and the objectives and goals that it intends to meet.

An accompanying **action plan** should then be developed to provide details for implementation, including how each goal and objective will be achieved and monitored. The action plan should also include technical information, such as lines of responsibility, detailed outcome measures and review frameworks, and clear timeframes for achieving objectives and reviewing policy.

Finally, **legislation** should be developed to legally underpin policy where necessary. This is particularly important for securing older people's rights, their entitlements to benefits and services, and funding related to policies; outlining the responsibilities and accountability of different government departments or ministries for policy implementation; and providing details on the establishment and running of any institutions related to ageing and older people. Good practice examples are found in Thailand, the Philippines, China, Nepal and Viet Nam.

The report then addresses how **analysis of the policy context and demographics** should inform policy. A comprehensive approach is advocated, highlighting the importance of considering the definition of older people in the country and the age-disaggregation of data; the socio-economic situation of older people; gender and the gender-disaggregation of data; intersecting vulnerabilities that impact upon older men and women; and the perceptions of ageing in society. Good practice is found in Sri Lanka, the Cook Islands, India and Thailand.

The key national, regional and international **policy frameworks** that should be considered in the development of national ageing policies are then addressed. This section highlights the importance of embedding international obligations within policy, and in ensuring accountability and transparency to all stakeholders. The benefits of ensuring national ageing policy is streamlined with national policy and regional and international frameworks are also highlighted here. The Philippines provides an example of good practice. Key **principles** should underpin national policy on ageing, informed by the national, regional and international instruments. Such principles might include recognising and protecting the rights of older men and women; promoting older people as a valuable resource; establishing how responsibility should be shared between the state, the individual and the family; and ensuring intergenerational equity. National ageing policy from Thailand, Viet Nam, Sri Lanka, Mongolia and Bangladesh are examples to review.

The report explores the **content of national ageing policy by thematic issue** following the most commonly used structure, that of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). Its three pillars are older people and development; advancing health and well-being into old age; and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. Good practice examples under each thematic area are described.

Under the MIPAA pillar of **older people and development**, the report highlights the importance of addressing income security and livelihoods in national policies on ageing. This means putting in place instruments that assist older men and women to achieve financial security; help protect them against disasters and shocks; recognise and support the active contribution that older people make and offer them lifelong learning opportunities; and encourage a flexible transition from an economically active to an economically non-active life.

In assessing how national ageing policies should promote the **health and well-being** of older people, the report highlights the need to develop policies that recognise the full impact of non-communicable diseases (including dementia) and related lifestyle risks; and the importance of prevention and care services throughout the life course to support older men and women to function independently and remain actively involved in society.

In creating **enabling and supportive environments**, the report emphasises that different sectors should work together in an integrated way to establish an environment in which older people can flourish. It also stresses the importance of clarifying how responsibility for care and support is shared between the individual, the family and the state to ensure people can maintain dignity, respect and security.

The report then addresses how national ageing policies, laws and plans should approach the establishment of **focal points and institutions related to ageing and older people**. This includes a consideration of the role and function of these bodies; their membership and engagement with older people and stakeholders; their role in research on ageing, human resource development, and in the national ageing policy process; and how their power and accountability are ensured. The report recommends that focal points and institutions on ageing engage meaningfully with older people themselves and that a clear and high-level representative with political power has responsibility for the work of the body. Inter-ministerial committees can encourage cross-government engagement on ageing issues. Ensuring adequate financial and human resources for focal points and institutions on ageing is critical.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of rapid demographic changes, governments in the Asia and Pacific region are addressing the challenges and capturing the opportunities related to population ageing. To protect the rights of older people and to respond to their needs, as well as to take advantage of what older men and women can offer society, future policy and programme direction for ageing would benefit from global and regional experience.

HelpAge International and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are often asked to support governments in Asia in developing policies on ageing. This report, emerging from collaboration between HelpAge International and UNFPA, aims to provide governments with guidance in developing and improving national policies on ageing. It presents a critical review of existing national policies, laws and action plans on ageing and related instruments. The analysis outlines the choices governments must make in developing national ageing policies. Good practice is drawn from multiple low and middle income countries to illustrate how countries are producing effective policy instruments. This report is intended for use by governments and advocacy groups in countries developing or reviewing national policies, laws and plans on ageing.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study has been carried out through a desk-based review and analysis. It has drawn on data from national policies, laws and action plans on ageing and associated implementation instruments, as well as secondary data reviewing and analysing national ageing policies. These have included national, regional and international instruments, many of which have been produced as part of the review of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), as well as academic research. The study builds upon data and analysis from *Policy Mapping on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific* (2015), a study carried out as part of the UNFPA–HelpAge collaboration.

The study concentrates on low and middle income countries in the Asia and Pacific region, and strong examples of national ageing policies, laws and action plans are drawn primarily from within this group. The study has not reviewed other national policy documents that might include provisions related to older people—for example, national health plans, national social protection strategies or pension legislation. However, where these documents are referenced within national policies, laws and/or action plans on ageing, some are discussed.

The study is based on a critical review of the content of national policies, laws and action plans on ageing in the region. Secondary literature is used to draw out and support assertions of the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and to identify issues for consideration. The study does not assess the implementation and outcomes of these policies, which is beyond its scope. Additional analysis of policy implementation and impact at national and local levels should be conducted and shared. This will help build a more complete picture of what works, where and why.

Throughout this report, 'national ageing policy' is used as an umbrella term to refer to all policies, laws and action plans specifically focused on ageing and older people, unless there is a need to refer specifically to one or other of these instruments.

3. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Overview

Policy is made within specific social, economic, political and cultural contexts that partly determine which decisions are made and that influence the processes by which plans are implemented. It is therefore vital to consider closely these elements in the policy development process. In addition, there are a range of international frameworks on ageing as well as other guidelines and resolutions that relate to older people that should be considered. Section 6 on policy frameworks and principles discusses these issues, and details some of the theoretical approaches on ageing that should be reviewed when designing policy.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing identifies a helpful list of factors that should underpin good policy. These include:

- programme innovation;
- mobilisation of financial resources;
- development of necessary human resources;
- effective partnership between governments, all parts of civil society and the private sector;
- an enabling environment based on democracy, the rule of law, respect for all human rights, fundamental freedoms and good governance at all levels, including national and international levels;
- effective organisations of older persons;
- educational, training and research activities on ageing;
- national data collection and analysis, such as the compilation of gender and age specific information for policy planning, monitoring and evaluation; and,
- independent, impartial monitoring of progress in implementation.[1]

The importance of all these factors in the policy development process has also been referenced in a number of other documents which provide guidance on how these issues should be addressed.[2]

An outline of the policy development process is presented below followed by a review of essential components. Good practice examples from low and middle income countries are provided to illustrate these.

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[1] UN General Assembly (2002). *The Madrid Political Declaration and International Plan of Action on Ageing.* United National General Assembly. New York.
[2] See, for example, UNESCAP (2012). *Shanghai Implementation Strategy.* United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Fifty-ninth session, 24-30 April 2003, Bangkok. United Nations Economic and Social Commission (2013). *Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002.* Commission for Social Development. Fifty-first session, 6-15 February 2013, New York.

3.1 Policy design process
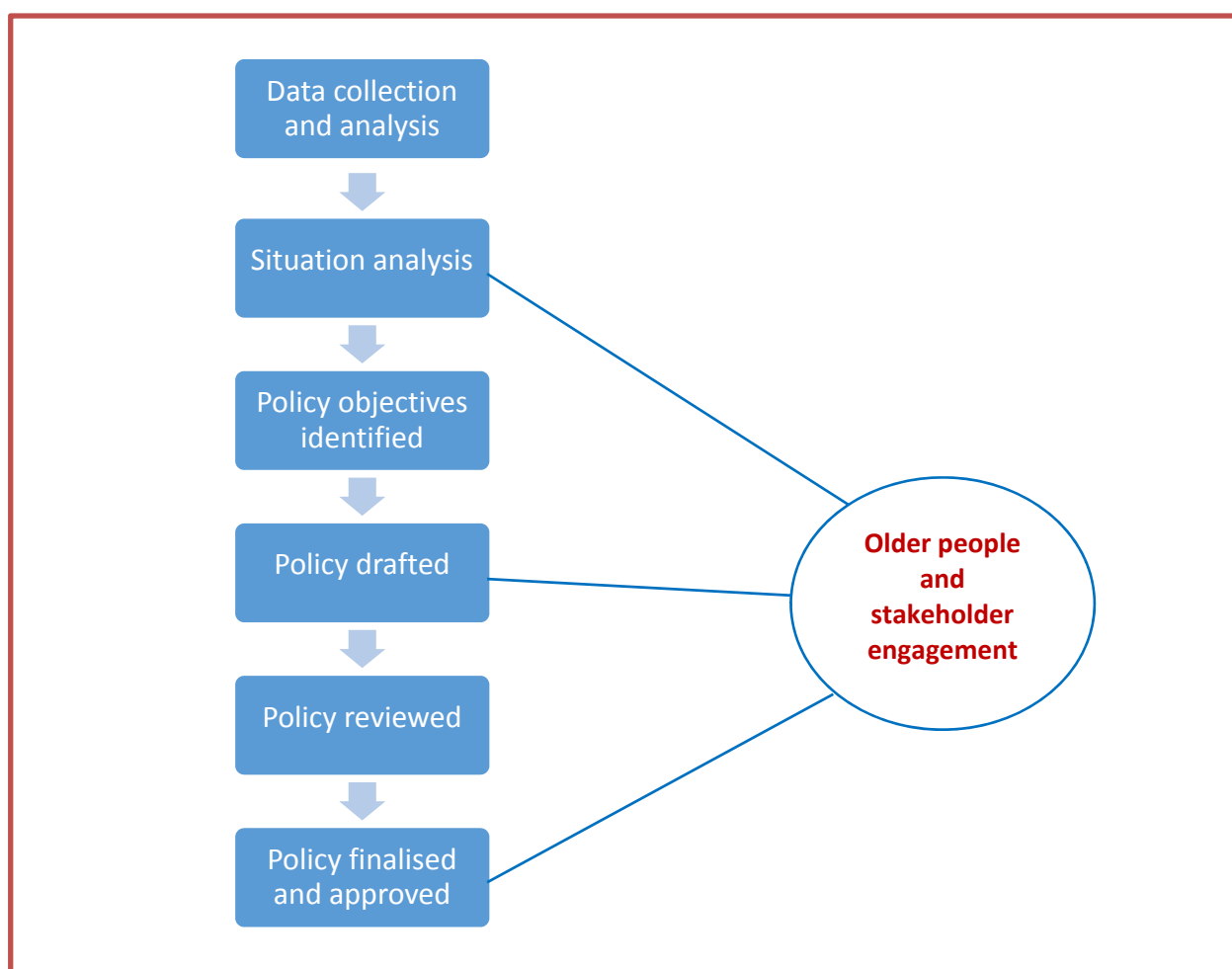
3.2 Key considerations

Data collection and analysis

Policy must be based on a sound understanding of the situation of older people and ageing within a country. A wide range of data, disaggregated particularly by age and gender, should be collected and analysed to support the situation analysis. Data collection should be both qualitative and quantitative to provide a richer understanding of the issues affecting older men and women and trends within a country. Information on the use of research and data in the policy process is provided in *The Research Agenda on Ageing for the Twenty-First Century* (2007) and in the *Guidelines for Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* (2006).[3] Data and analysis for understanding the situation of older people in a country are discussed in more detail in Section 5 on Policy Analysis: Older People and Population Ageing.

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[3] United Nations Programme on Ageing and the International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics (2007). *The Research Agenda on Ageing for the Twenty-First Century*. New York.

Situation analysis

Data should be used to inform a comprehensive situation analysis to ensure policy is designed in response to the needs of older men and women and the challenges and opportunities they have. This should include a review of past implementation of the different areas of policy, in order to build upon and learn from experience. This should consider what has been done before; what the results were; how successful it was at meeting objectives and, if it did not, why it did not; what could be improved about the policy; and where policy was a success, reasons for this success and how to build on it.

Older people and stakeholder engagement

It is vital to engage with older men and women and wider stakeholder groups throughout the policy development process. Some of the benefits of including stakeholder groups and, especially, older people within the policy development process are to ensure that policy is tailored to the needs of older people, improving its chance of success; to ensure that multiple experts are engaged in the development process and that a wide range of perspectives is captured; and to legitimise the policy and build political support from key stakeholder groups at national and local levels. There are a number of ways of engaging stakeholders in the process of policy development, some of which are explored in the good practice examples below. Whichever approach is adopted, engagement should be meaningful and a wide range of stakeholders should be included, especially older people.

Good practice examples:

In Thailand the process used for revising the Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021) in 2009 illustrates good practice in policy development. This was informed by findings of the National Committee on the Elderly's monitoring and evaluation of the progress in implementing the Plan, including a complete review of outcome measurements and extensive stakeholder engagement with parties at the national, provincial and local levels including delegates from older people's organisations, private entities and the social sector. In addition to this, a wide range of data was used from sources including the national survey on older people conducted the previous year; the Ministry of Public Health; the National Economic and Social Development Board; the Ministry of Interior and academic institutions. Together, this information aided the identification of priority areas for the modification of the Second National Plan on the Elderly. This is a successful model for policy design as it is based on an in-depth analysis of the situation of older people to identify priority areas for policy, thus ensuring policy is evidence based. The stakeholder engagement, meanwhile, ensured that a diverse range of opinions and expertise on ageing was drawn upon to strengthen the policy and ensure that it was a collaborative effort.[4]

The Fiji National Policy on Ageing 2011–15 illustrates how the multi-sectoral Inter-agency Working Committee on the Elderly (IAWCE) contributed to the formulation of the policy framework together with stakeholders, including, non-government organisations, faith based organisations, community based organisations, UNFPA, and government ministries and departments. The IAWCE was assigned to deliver specific tasks building up to the policy framework, including collection and analysis of baseline data to ascertain the realities of ageing in the context and, through the technical assistance from UNFPA, three consultants were hired to support drafting of the policy. National and divisional consultations were then held on the draft policy and the inputs from the consultation process were captured and incorporated in the policy. If designed well and with a clear remit and lines of responsibility, a

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[4] UNESCAP (2012). *Report of the Capacity-Building Workshop to Support National Policy Responses to Issues of Ageing in Asia and the Pacific.*

Good practice examples (cont.):

working committee is a useful way of bringing stakeholders together to engage in policy development. As in Thailand, Fiji's use of baseline data in the policy design helps to ensure that policy is evidence based and responsive to the needs of older people in the country.

In Ghana in 2014, a knowledge translation framework on ageing and health of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Age UK was used in revising the existing policy and implementation plan. Though these documents specifically focused on health policy on ageing, it is an example of a successful process of policy development that is equally applicable to national ageing policies. Priority health problems were initially identified by assessing the needs of older people and the national health system and policy context. Epidemiologic evidence, review of policy documents, site visits and interviews with key informants informed the first draft of a country assessment report. Secondly, evidence on effective health system interventions in low-resource settings for each identified problem was researched. Next, the Ghana Health Service, with WHO support, organised a three-day policy dialogue to discuss the identified problems. This meeting involved representatives from key ministries, the Ghana Health Service, teaching hospitals, professional bodies, HelpAge Ghana and WHO. The dialogue was structured around clarifying the problems and framing policy options. Finally, together with a small group of experts and policy-makers for Ghana, policy briefs were developed for each problem, with recommended actions for the Ministry of Health and the Ghana Health Service.[5] This process was successful as it was based on a wide range of problem identification measures including an assessment of the needs of older people, an analysis of the policy context and the systems already in place, and a wide range of data and stakeholder engagement. Once problems were identified, evidence of 'what works' in the context to address these issues was analysed to ensure recommendations were based on good practice.

Good practice in the **inclusion of older people in policy design** is found in a number of countries. In Ghana and South Africa, a participatory research methodology of HelpAge International was used to involve poor older persons in an analysis of their situation and in the formulation of policy.[6] Older people were included in the design, data collection and analysis and in the dissemination of findings from the research. Following this a dialogue between older people and other stakeholders, including policy makers, was facilitated, and actions for policy were identified. In Brazil, the national conference on the rights of older persons brings together over 1,000 participants, on a biennial basis, to define policy guidelines.[7]

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[5] Araujo de Carvalho, Islene; Byles, Julie; Aquah, Charles; Biritwum, Richard; Panisset, Ulyssses; Goodwin, James; and Beard, John (2015). 'Informing evidence-based policies for ageing and health in Ghana' in World Health Organization, 2015; 93:47–51. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.2471/BLT.14.136242 on 21.05.2015.

[6] HelpAge International (2006). *Ageing and Development.* Vol. 19, pp. 6–7; referenced in, UNDESA (2008), *Regional Perspectives on an Ageing Situation.* Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York.

[7] UNESC (2013). *Second Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002.* Commission for Social Development. Fifty-first session, 6-15 February 2013, New York.

4. POLICY INSTRUMENTS: POLICY, LAW AND ACTION PLAN

Overview

Across the Asia and Pacific region and globally, governments have used a range of instruments to address the needs of older people. These include national policies, legislation and action plans on ageing; often, a country will adopt a combination of these instruments. It is important to note that in the Asia and Pacific region, the use of the terms, 'policy' and 'action plan' are often used interchangeably, though many are similar in content. In some cases, an action plan is built into a policy document. While merging instruments in this way is not necessarily a problem, here each instrument is considered individually in order to outline how their functions differ and to draw out their unique benefits. A suggestion is then given for how these instruments can best be used in combination and how they might best be sequenced, alongside examples of good practice for each document type. While this section gives an idea of the structure and purpose of each instrument, the actual thematic or sectoral policy content (i.e. health or social protection) is discussed in Section 7 below.

4.1 Description and function of each instrument

- **A policy document:** outlines a course or principle of action adopted or proposed by a government. **Good for:** outlining a government's broad vision for older people and ageing; identifying the key challenges that older people face, and presenting the policy objectives and goals to address these.

- **An action plan/strategy:** an organised programme of measures to be taken in order to achieve a long-term goal or overall aim. **Good for:** developing alongside policy and/or legislation to provide detail of how each goal, objective and/or article of law will be achieved/implemented and monitored. An action plan should cover a specific timeframe, defined in the title of the document. While the timescale that is covered by action plans can vary, it should reflect realistic timeframes for achieving the objectives. It is also useful to consider any wider national, regional or international review processes with which it may be helpful to coordinate.

- **Legislation:** an individual rule or a series of rules which have a binding force or effect within a system of law. **Good for:** establishing a legal framework to underpin policy, especially in regard to older people's rights, entitlements to services or benefits; budget allocations; lines of responsibility and accountability for policy; and detailing the establishment, functions and operations of funds, bodies or agencies.

4.2 Suggested combination and sequencing of instruments

Below a suggested sequencing of instruments is given. Here it is recommended that a national ageing policy is developed first, followed by an action plan and then legislation.

National ageing policy

It is good practice to frame the government's vision within a discussion of the country's demographic and socio-economic situation in relation to ageing, highlighting key challenges for older people and society, and to explain the key objectives of the policy within this context, including why and how these have been identified. The policy should include these sections:

- An overview of the government's **vision** for older people and ageing should be provided. Key principles that underpin the policy are helpful to articulate here.

- Each **objective** should be outlined in detail consecutively, giving an explanation of the problem the policy seeks to address and how it aims to do so, including specific goals to be achieved.

Good practice examples:

The Fiji National Policy on Ageing 2011–15 is a good example of a policy document. It provides a thorough review of the country's demographic and socio-economic situation in relation to ageing and explains the government's vision for older people and ageing within this context, in the 'Rationale for the Policy'. It also sets the policy within the context of international and regional frameworks on ageing which it references in relation to the key principles for older people that underpin the policy. This is followed by a detailed outline of the policy's goals and objectives.

The Philippines National Plan of Action for Senior Citizens 2006–2010 merges the key elements of a policy document and a plan of action. It illustrates good practice as a policy document, outlining the demographic trends that provide the context for the policy, as well as the international and national frameworks and laws that relate to it. It then identifies emerging challenges facing older people in the Philippines, before detailing the government's vision and mission for older people and the specific goals of the policy across different areas of later life. (The implementation strategy in the Philippines document is discussed below.)

Action plan / Implementation strategy

This should include a detailed plan for how each policy objective will be achieved, including:

- The **responsibilities** of different actors/agencies for implementation, including the local, regional and national infrastructure that will support it.

- Any **additional instruments** that are necessary for the implementation of each objective/goal (i.e. legislation needed to provide the legal framework for policies; regulation to enable the delegation of power to bodies/agencies/individuals, further guidance on individual policy areas etc. – see below on legislation).

- **Financial and human resource requirements** for implementation – ideally with detail on how funding will be allocated. It is good practice for budgets to be underpinned with legislation.

- Detailed **monitoring and evaluation frameworks** to be used for reviewing implementation, including the outcome measures that will be used to assess the progress made on each objective/goal, and time-specific targets for implementation (with reference to the outcome measures).

- The **timeframe** and **process for conducting reviews**, and how the intelligence gathered from the reviews will be used to improve the policy. It is good practice for this process to be outlined with reference to responsibilities of different agencies and how accountability for policy will be ensured, ideally through legislation.

Good practice example:

Thailand's Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, includes an implementation strategy for each policy objective, a section of which is included below. Here, each policy measure within a strategy is outlined alongside the responsibilities of specific ministries, departments, committees and other organisations for implementation; indices for measuring outcomes of the policy measure; and clear targets with dates. This information is presented in a table format so that the implementation of strategies can easily be reviewed. The Second National Plan on the Elderly also outlines the process for regular review of the plan, including the establishment of a responsible committee, and how the findings from the reviews will be used to modify the plan to better meet older people's needs as the situation changes.

Strategy 1 - Strategy on readiness preparation of the people for their quality ageing

No.	Measures	Focal Points	Indices	Targets			
				Year 2006 (5 years)	2011 (10 years)	Year 2016 (15 years)	2021 (20 years)
1	Measures on the income security for old age						
1.1	Extend the old age security to cover all target groups*	1. Ministry of Finance 2. Ministry of Labor 3. Ministry of Interior (Local Administration Department/Local Administration Organizations) 4. Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, Pattaya City Administration	**Index 1** coverage rate of the official old age security**in the populations aged 30-59	30%	50%	80%	95%
1.2	Encourage and establish saving disciplines in all ages	1. Ministry of Finance 2. Ministry of Education	**Index 2** rate of family savings *** **Index 3** numbers of members of the Mutual Fund and total sum in the Mutual Fund per one member (excluding the village funds) including the defined contribution funds	← ←	continually Increasing	continually increasing	→ →

Definitions:
* **All target groups** refer to all groups of population regardless of whether they are in the formal or self-employment or unemployment group.
** **Official old age security** refers to the social security fund, the pension system for public servants of both central and local authority, the pension system of state enterprises, other pension systems and any other systems rendered by the government such as a national fund contributed by the government.
*** **Rate of family savings** refers to personal savings of each individual X 100
personal income of each individual

Remarks: The focal points are put in sequence of their importance: the 1st – the 2nd ones are the main agencies in charge, while the next ones are the joint agencies.

Good practice example:

The Philippines National Action Plan for Senior Citizens 2006–2010 includes detailed implementation arrangements and frameworks alongside policy. It includes details of:

- leading institutions with responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the plan;

- all cooperating agencies with a role in the implementation of the plan;

- planning and monitoring submission requirements and timetable, including:
  - template for action plans for implementing the policy by different agencies/bodies and how these are to be revised regularly based on emerging trends;
  - details and timetables for regular accomplishment reports;
  - details for yearly evaluation reports, considering success and failures, lessons learned, recommendations and challenges to be used for updating the plan;
  - details for monitoring visits and regular reviews;
  - details and template for a senior citizens survey to be conducted every year;
  - detailed funding arrangements for the plan and related policies, referencing budget allocations in the General Appropriations Act; and
  - an outcomes matrix, an excerpt of which is included below.

GOALS	STRATEGIES	PROGRAMS/PROJECTS/ ACTIVITIES (PAPs)	EXPECTED OUTPUT	IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE	RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES
I. To develop a holistic and multi-generational care program for Senior Citizens within the Filipino family network.	Senior Citizens and development	Promote/institutionalize intergenerational learning projects.	No. of intergenerational trainings/activities conducted.	2006-2010	DSWD - (Lead agency) LGUs, PRAMA, POPCOM
II. To ensure the priority of community-based approaches which are gender-responsive, with effective leadership and meaningful participation of senior citizens in decision-making processes, both in the contexts of family and community	Senior Citizens and development	Ensure organization and functionality of OSCA in 100% of LGUs (municipalities and cities).	100% of LGUs have organized and functional OSCA.	2006	DILG - (Lead agency) DSWD, LGus
	Senior Citizens and development	Establish and operationalize a Volunteer Program for Senior Citizens concerns.	At least 30% of FSCAP organizations mobilized in all regions to provide volunteer services.	2006-2010	PNVSCA (FSCAP-lead organization)
	Senior Citizens and development	Develop appropriate Anti-Poverty Program for Senior Citizens or include them as a focused target group in poverty alleviation programs.	Anti-poverty program for senior citizens or basic sector agenda of the senior citizens sector fully responded to or acted upon	2006-2010	NAPC - (Lead agency) DSWD, NGOs, POs

Legislation

Legislation should correspond to the policy on ageing and its objectives, providing the legal underpinning. It is good practice for the following areas, in particular, to be underpinned with legislation: older people's rights including their entitlement to benefits and services; funding related to policies; the responsibilities and lines of accountability for policy implementation of various government bodies; and details on the establishment and/or operations of any institutions related to ageing and older people. Legal experts who have a deep understanding of the country's law should develop the legislation.

It is also important to produce additional documents providing more detailed implementation arrangements related to legislation, such as regulations and guidance.

These can include, for example, measures for delegating powers to those responsible for policy, guidance to specific bodies on how measures should be implemented or, potentially, independent action plans or strategies for the implementation of the legislation or parts of it.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> China's National Law on Protecting the Rights of Older Persons (1996, revised in 2012) is a good example of how legislation can be used to support policy, providing a legal framework for the family's responsibilities for maintenance and support of older people; older people's social security rights; their rights to social and medical services; and elements of policy to create a supporting social environment and older people's participation in social development.
>
> The Nepal Senior Citizens Act 2006 is a good example of how legislation can be used to provide a legal framework for the establishment of committees and funds, in this case a Senior Citizens Welfare Committee and Senior Citizens Welfare Fund. It stipulates who should be members of the Committee; how tenure of membership is to operate; the procedures related to the meeting of the Central Senior Citizens Welfare Committee; the allowances for members; and the functions and powers of the Committee. The same details are outlined for the formation and operation of district level committees. The Act also provides for the establishment of the Senior Citizens Welfare Fund, outlining where funds will come from and how they will be credited to the Fund, how the Fund's accounts and audits will be managed, and how records on the Fund are to be prepared. Such specifications are helpful in ensuring effective operation of committees and funds.
>
> Good practice examples in producing regulation and guidance on legislation are found in Viet Nam, where multiple decrees and circulars including regulation and guidance are attached to the Viet Nam Law on the Elderly 2009. These include, for example, 'Decree No 06, 2011/NĐ-CP enabling the implementation of some articles of the Law on the Elderly'; 'Regulations on Management and use of funds for the elderly health care at residence'; and 'Regulation of the fees on visiting cultural, historical relics, museums, sightseeing spots applied for older people'.

5. POLICY ANALYSIS: OLDER PEOPLE AND POPULATION AGEING

Overview

This section focuses on the analysis of the situation of older people that should inform the development of national ageing policy. It explores the key concepts that should be considered in conducting a demographic analysis and addresses the importance of understanding the impact of population ageing on society within the broader context of population dynamics. Good practice examples are provided from countries in the Asia and Pacific region.

Older people are not a homogeneous group as the experience of ageing can be significantly different for people and influenced by life course experiences. It is positive that most ageing policies and plans in the region go beyond the chronological definition and embrace the heterogeneous nature of ageing. An understanding of how ageing is impacted by other intersecting vulnerabilities and gender; the ability to function and live autonomously; and socio-economic status and literacy levels is also critical for designing policies which respond to the specific needs and rights of different groups of older people. These dimensions and good practice examples of how they have been reflected in national ageing policies are outlined below.

5.1 Age

One dimension of the definition of older people is chronological age. This is useful to clarify the scope of the policy and to inform the demographic analysis. Starting with the chronological age, but not being limited to this, most governments in the region define older people as men and women who are aged 60 years and older. In the case of Mongolia and Iran, older age starts at age 65. In setting the chronological age of older people, it is good practice to be guided by the **average life expectancy** within a country and, in particular, **healthy life expectancy** and **disability-free life expectancy**.

These indicators should also be used to define the different phases that characterise older age. The World Health Organization recommends identifying three different groups: **the young old, the old and the very old**. This is significant as, in most countries, the very old is the fastest growing group. As older people are not a homogeneous group, the separation of different age groups within old age is important as it helps to reflect the social, functional and health determinants of ageing.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The Sri Lanka National Policy for Senior Citizens (2006) adopts the WHO recommendation and identifies three age groups: 'oldest old' (10% of the older population) at 80 years and older; 'old old' (30%) age 70–79; and the 'young old' (60%) aged 60–69. This level of disaggregation allows for a more accurate analysis of the situation of older people and helps inform appropriate policy responses. Indeed the Sri Lanka policy recognises that 'About six tenths of the population, "the Young Old", can be expected to be in reasonably good health, and capable of leading an active life. About one third of the population, 70–79, can also be expected to be fit and have a reasonably active life, if health policies are in place. Thus a large reserve of human resources among the elderly can be mobilised for development as well as for their own self-fulfilment'.

5.2 Socio-economic status of older people

In addition to different age groups within the older population it is important to consider the **socio-economic status,** and the often-related **geographical location**, of older people in order to understand the specific vulnerabilities of different groups. In particular, it is important to differentiate older men and women that live in rural areas from those living in urban areas and fully explore the potential vulnerabilities and specific needs of the two groups. Older people's access to income through formal or informal work, pensions and/or other benefits, their assets and savings, as well as family support are other important areas to consider in determining the socio-economic status of older men and women. This analysis should be used to help identify specific issues that need to be addressed and to ensure policy recommendations are better targeted.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Cook Islands National Policy on Ageing (2012–2017) effectively recognised the differentiation between age groups within the older population, as well as their differing socio-economic status. It highlights that, 'The group of citizens aged 60 and over is not a homogenous group. There are widely varying socio-economic circumstances; living conditions; levels of health and mobility as well as different levels of family support. Many aged between 60 and 70 are still independent and active. The 2006 Census found that 27% of those aged 60 years and over was still in the labour force: 34% and 21% for males and females respectively, indicating that many older people keep providing economically for their households and families. Most of those economically active are in the 60–70 years age-group and this declines rapidly after 70 years of age when dependency increases. At 80 years of age, there is increased vulnerability and greater likelihood of health problems'. This analysis is useful in determining the policy priorities for the Cook Islands, which include both financial security and the promotion of work opportunities for older people as well as investment in health and social care. For example, the policy promotes educational opportunities particularly, but not exclusively, targeted to the younger older adult group, those who are more than 50 years old.

5.3 The gender dimension

The **gender disaggregation of data** is essential to reflect the different ways in which women and men experience older age and to recognise the impact of different life course experiences. For example, gender inequalities in access to work across the life course mean older women are disproportionately affected by poverty in old age. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to die at younger ages than women. These differences are vital to recognise when developing policy – particularly given the feminisation of older age, which is occurring at a significant pace in many Asia and Pacific countries. National ageing policies in the region tend to address issues related to older women but lack the analysis of how ageing affects women and men differently and how the policy should respond to such differences.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The India National Policy for Senior Citizens (2011) addresses gender. For example, it recognises that older women who have suffered a lifetime of discrimination tend live longer often in ill health and have lower social and educational status than men, especially those who have been widowed. In response to this, the India policy prioritised older women in a number of ways, including supporting the development of older women's associations and establishing regular health check-ups for older women. It also highlights the importance of providing housing facilities responding to the specific needs of older single men and women.
>
> The Islamic Republic of Iran's draft National Strategic Plan for the Elderly (2013) goes into great depth to analyse evidence of the impact of gender on ageing. It identifies, for example, that older women's raised blood pressure is twice that of men, and that women's average age at the time of diagnosis is also higher than men's and it promotes regular check-ups for older women and men. The Philippine Plan for Action for Senior Citizens (2006–2010) also analyses the impact of gender on ageing and identifies issues such as literacy rates, which are higher for older men than for older women. The Cambodia Policy for the Elderly (2003) stipulates including a gender analysis in all research and evaluations on older people.

5.4 Intersecting vulnerabilities

Gender, age, health, disability, ethnicity, location, varying levels of education and socio-economic status are all characteristics that shape how men and women experience old age, often creating significant differences between groups of older people. These characteristics and how they intersect to create multiple disadvantages for some groups are important to consider comprehensively in the policy development process so that policy can be better targeted to meet diverse needs. When developing national ageing policy it is therefore good practice to disaggregate data to identify vulnerabilities within the aged population, guide targeting and monitor impact.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Second Bangladesh National Policy for Older Persons (2013) is a good example of a policy that takes into consideration potential intersecting vulnerabilities, including the specific needs of older people in indigenous communities, and those impacted by HIV/AIDS or climate change. In response, the Policy includes specific objectives to address and mitigate these vulnerabilities. The Thailand Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, tracks intersecting vulnerabilities to monitor the impact of the policy on specific groups of older people as it measures, for example, access to community based care for older people with disabilities.

5.5 The perception of ageing

The ways in which people experience old age are defined also by the socio-cultural perceptions of ageing; the status of older men and women in families, communities and society; and the ways these are changing. Positive perceptions of old age have a beneficial effect on how people grow old. It is therefore important to recognise the effects of societal views of ageing and to consider how policy can help to combat negative stereotypes. Addressing those stereotypes through effective public awareness and campaigning is an important component of national ageing policies and plans as it promotes the inclusion of older people in communities, the recognition of their contributions and their empowerment and, at same time, reduces the risks of isolation and challenges age discrimination.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Mongolia, Thailand, India and Myanmar national ageing plans recognise the importance of fostering positive views of old age and improving attitudes towards older people by raising public awareness about ageing, the contributions of older men and women, and the importance of treating older people with dignity and respect.
>
> The Sri Lanka National Policy for Senior Citizens (2006) recognises the importance of raising awareness of ageing and nurturing attitudinal change based upon positive values. It develops a specific strategy for this that includes promoting positive images of ageing through mass media and formal and informal education and mobilising community leaders as change agents. It also promotes projects that highlight the abilities of active, creative and productive older people and that foster intergenerational learning.

5.6 Future generations of older people

The analysis of the characteristics of today's older men and women is not sufficient to inform the development of national ageing policies, which should be looking into the future. Policies should not assume that the challenges and opportunities older people face today will be the same as the ones that future cohorts of older people will face. Therefore it is important to analyse the characteristics of younger cohorts to consider the needs of future generations of older people.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The Islamic Republic of Iran draft National Strategic Plan for the Elderly (2013) highlights some of the difference expected with future generations of older people, especially because of the increase in the level of literacy and education.

5.7 Population dynamics

Although the primary focus of national ageing policy is to address the challenges and opportunities facing older people, it is important that this is understood within a context of an ageing population and how this impacts more widely on society. An understanding of the wide-ranging impact of this demographic shift upon society more broadly should underpin national ageing policies, as well as informing population-wide policy, such as national development plans, national social protection strategies, or health policy. This requires a thorough analysis of population dynamics including trends in population growth, fertility, longevity, epidemiology, gender, urbanisation and migration, and how these and other population trends interact and impact upon society. Such analysis can help avoid assumptions based on popular perception and stereotypes.

For example, a common assumption made in this context is the so-called 'dependency ratio' that represents the number of people under the age of 15 plus the number of people over 65 years old per 100 persons aged 15–64. There is significant **debate on the dependency ratio** and its relevance to economic sustainability, particularly as it does not take into consideration the contributions made by people over the age of 65 or the lack of contributions of some people of working age.[8] Caution should therefore be taken in basing policy approaches on this measurement. A possible alternative is the real dependency ratio, which calculates the ratio between the actual number of people in the workforce (rather than all people between the age of 15 and 64) and the number of people not in employment (rather than everyone over the age of 65).[9] This analysis points to the importance of increasing workforce participation at all ages to finance the support required for people of all ages not in employment, rather than focusing on population ageing as the problem to address.

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[8] Spijker, J. & MacInnes, J. (2013). Population Ageing: The Time Bomb That Isn't? British Medical Journal, November 2013.

[9] Lutz, W., Sanderson, W., Scherbov, S. (2008). The Coming Acceleration of Global Population Ageing. Nature, Vol. 451: 716-719.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> Although most national ageing policies do not consider in depth the impact of population ageing on society, the Mongolia National Strategy for Population Ageing (2009) and the Sri Lanka National Policy for Senior Citizens (2006) analyse and address some aspects of population ageing and more broadly population dynamics. The Mongolia Strategy focuses on two aspects: preparing for population ageing and improving the livelihood of older people. It recognises that these two dimensions of ageing are interrelated but require separate analysis, policies and strategic responses. It identifies two urgent policy responses: firstly, promoting an increase in the number of births to reduce the rate of population ageing (which might prove difficult to achieve); and secondly to expand employment for the current male and female population of all ages to improve the dependency ratio.
>
> The Sri Lanka Policy is a good example of a policy that analyses the social, economic and political consequences of population ageing and the impact of international migration on poor and disadvantaged families and on older people. This in-depth analysis of the consequences of ageing leads to policy objectives on the fuller integration of older people into society. The first policy objective is to create an environment that facilitates older people's participation in society and the second is to strengthen the bonds between the young and the old.

6. POLICY FRAMEWORKS AND PRINCIPLES

Overview

This section explores how and why national, regional and international instruments should be used to inform national ageing policies and considers the principles that underpin them. In addition to an analysis of the situation of older people and population ageing, the formulation of national ageing policies should be based on a thorough review of such instruments relevant to older people, and especially of those that had been signed and ratified by the state. This helps to ensure a comprehensive consideration of all key issues and to inform the development of the key principles that should underpin policy. Linking to such instruments is not only important for accountability and transparency, but also ensures that best practice and international obligations are embedded in policy design. Aligning policy with these instruments also aids in monitoring and evaluating progress and facilitating the sharing of lessons learned.

6.1 National, regional and international instruments

Below is a list of some of the key documents that countries have consulted when considering the scope, focus and framework of national policies on ageing:

- National constitution and legislation, policies and plans relevant to older people
- United Nations (UN) Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing (1982)
- UN Principles for Older Persons General Assembly resolution 46/91 (1991)
- Macau Declaration and Plan of Action on Ageing (1999)
- UN Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002)
- Shanghai Implementation Strategy (2002)
- Macau Outcome Document of the High-Level Meeting on the Regional Review of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing (2007)
- All regional reviews of MIPAA

- Relevant international human rights instruments agreed by the government and, in particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)

In addition to these instruments, a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People is currently under discussion. If approved, it could help facilitate and strengthen the frameworks for national ageing policy and further streamline reporting.

Good practice example:

The Philippines National Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2006–2010) is a good example of a national policy on ageing that takes into account the national constitution and all relevant regional and international agreements adopted and ratified by the state as the legal framework on which to develop its policy. In particular, it recalls the commitments made by the state in signing the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing and the Macau Plan which draws on this; MIPAA and the subsequent Shanghai Implementation Strategy; and, the UN Principles for Older Persons. It sets its goals in line with MIPAA and the Macau Plan and its strategic priorities with the Shanghai Implementation Strategy. It also ensures the Plan is based on the relevant articles of the 1987 Constitution and all the relevant Laws and Presidential Proclamations. Finally, it refers to all the relevant Administrative Orders related to social welfare, health, and education, housing, transport, agriculture, trade and industry services. This ensures the national ageing policy content is aligned with the sectorial policies and its implementation plan is coordinated with the administration of the different ministries.

How specific national, regional and international instruments can be used to develop good national ageing policy is discussed further in the thematic sections below.

6.2 Underlining principles to consider

National, regional and international instruments also reflect a number of key principles that should underpin national ageing policies. It is important to consult these documents in the policy development process to ensure all of these issues have been considered. Some of the key principles to inform policy, and good practice examples of where they have been reflected in national ageing policies, are provided below. These principles should also provide the framework for mainstreaming ageing into national or sectorial policies. In many cases they capture the national governments' overall orientation, vision or philosophy on ageing and older people. India, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam, for example, all have legislation to help ensure these are translated into practice.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Thailand Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, is a good example of a policy built upon clear principles. It states, 'The elderly are not a vulnerable group nor social burden…they shall be entitled to recognition and support by the family, community and the state to lead a valuable life with dignity and sustain their healthiness and living standards as long as possible. On the other hand, the elderly who encounter difficulties shall access the full and justified care from the family, community, society and the state. The elderly are valuable assets to the society.'
>
> The Fiji National Policy on Ageing 2011–2015 encapsulates the key principles underpinning its policy in the following vision statement: 'An inclusive society that instils dignity, respect for human rights and meets basic needs through empowerment of older persons'. The Philippines Plan of Action for Senior Citizens 2006–2010 does so in its overall mandate which reads 'Building a Society for All Ages'.

Some of the most important principles to consider in the development of the national ageing policy include: promoting older people as a valuable resource; recognising and protecting older men and women's rights; establishing how responsibility should be shared among the state, the individual and the family; and ensuring intergenerational equity.

Recognising and protecting the rights of older men and women

Although the Convention on the Rights of Older People has not yet been developed and approved by the UN, the existing human rights conventions and ageing specific instruments listed above recognise many of the key rights of people as they age. These rights should be reflected and promoted in the national ageing policies and across all specific policy areas. The benefit of taking a rights-based approach in the development of the policy and legislation on ageing is to clearly identify specific rights, empower older men and women (as rights and obligations holders), and identify the actors (the duty bearers) and the actions necessary to fulfil these rights.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Viet Nam Law for the Elderly (2009) is a good example of legislation that clearly recognises the rights and obligations of older people and the responsibilities of different agencies including the family, the community and the state toward ensuring older people's rights are met. The first Bangladesh National Policy for Older Persons (2006) promotes the full realisation of all human rights and the fundamental freedoms of all older persons and recommends these are respected and promoted in all their sector specific policies. The Plan for Development of Elderly Programmes in China during the Twelfth Five-Year Plan Period (hereafter Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly, 2011–2015) articulates the need to improve the mechanisms for protecting these rights and providing legal services to older people.

The right to food, shelter, income, health, learning, cultural and political participation and freedom from violence and abuse are rights most typically promoted by the national ageing policies in the region. In addition to these rights, governments should consider also ensuring the **right to independence and autonomy**. This requires the development of specific legislation on the rights and responsibilities of the individual, the family, the communities, the services providers and the state in ensuring men and women can continue to make decisions about their life as they age, even when their abilities might be reduced. These specific rights are important not only because they are particularly

relevant to old age but because they are not comprehensively covered by current human rights instruments.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The Sri Lanka National Charter and Policy for Senior Citizens (2006) is comprehensive in recognising and protecting the right to independence for older people. It begins with reinforcing the values of independence and dignity in the Charter's mission. It then recognises the right to independence and includes related rights that protect independence. These are the rights to food, shelter, clothing, social security, work, non-discrimination, educational opportunities, living in safety, residing at home for as long as possible and being able to make informed life decisions.

Governments should also consider how to promote the **right to non-discrimination** in old age. Although evidence of age discrimination might not have been comprehensively collected or analysed, direct and indirect discrimination on the basis of age especially in accessing services and employment opportunities is recognised by a number of national policies on ageing in the region.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The National Strategy for Population Ageing in Mongolia (2009) identifies the potential for age discrimination in employment and promotes the creation of a favourable atmosphere for older people in the workforce and their legal protection against age discrimination. The Sri Lanka National Charter and Policy for Senior Citizens (2006) points to age discrimination and aims to ensure that older females do not become victims of triple neglect and discrimination on account of gender, widowhood and age. Although barriers to accessing services might not be directly related to age discrimination, the exclusion of older persons from services as a result of them not being age-friendly (for example, physically inaccessible to persons with disabilities) is an indirect form of age discrimination.

Promoting older people as a valuable resource

It is important to recognise that older men and women are a valuable resource to society and to consider actively promoting this as a principle across all the areas of policy. This principle implies enabling all older men and women to make a contribution to society and raising awareness of older people's contributions across all age groups.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Thailand Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, and the Sri Lanka National Charter and Policy for Senior Citizens (2006) are particularly strong in promoting this perspective across all aspects of their national ageing policies. Thailand describes older people as an asset to society and Sri Lanka as a resource, for the family and the community, as consumers but also as producers. Both policies mention the importance of investing in older people to maximise their well-being and their ability to contribute to society, including by investing in lifelong education and training, providing work opportunities in later life, expanding preventive health and maintaining independence.

Establishing how responsibilities should be shared between the individual, family and the state

How the responsibilities for the well-being of older people are shared between individuals, families, communities, the state, non-government and private sectors should be central to national ageing policies. As mentioned above, this division of responsibilities should be supported by a clear rights framework which spells out the obligations and rights of different actors. In line with promoting older people's independence, **individuals** have some responsibility for their own well-being, including preparing for older age, for example, by building savings and maintaining as healthy a lifestyle as possible.

Families play a special role as they often receive the first call for support and care from older people. However, not all older people have families or choose to be supported by them. In addition, legally expecting families and especially children to provide for their parents, as promoted for example by the China and India national ageing policies, is complex to implement. This is because of the reduced capacity of the family to provide for older members as a result of migration, a long-term decline in fertility and increasing longevity. How much support is provided and who delivers the support should be determined by each country based on a national discussion and evidence-based analysis of the situation of older men and women and their families. The roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and the mechanisms for accountability should be clearly articulated in national ageing policies.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The majority of national ageing policies in the region emphasise the importance of the family and the responsibilities of children to respect their parents and also to provide for their socio-economic security and their care in later life. Thailand's Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, for example, encourages older people to stay with their families by raising awareness of the benefits of mutual caring. The challenges to family support arising from migration, fertility declines and increased longevity are identified in the Sri Lanka and Philippines national ageing policies. Viet Nam's Law on the Elderly (2009) states that it is the right of older people to choose not to live with their family if they want to live separately. This is a recognition that the rights of older men and women to independence and autonomy need to be considered within the context of family responsibility to them.

Communities, including civil society organisations and the private sector, also play a significant role, but clear frameworks need to be put in place to enable them to fulfil these responsibilities. Older people's associations in the region play a significant role in facilitating and promoting the well-being of older people, and policies should encourage their organisational development. An older people's association is a group of older people working to help the members of the group, organise social activities, support livelihoods, monitor the delivery of services, promote the participation of older people and empower them. Organisations of this kind also enable information sharing and peer support.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> Some national ageing policies, including those of Myanmar, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Bangladesh, India and the Philippines, promote the involvement of communities in supporting older men and women, including the development of older people's organisations. These organisations are seen as a good vehicle for improving the well-being and participation of older people, facilitating their socio economic contribution and helping them to be directly involved in decisions that affect their lives.

The **role of the state should be clear** in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of all its older citizens and ensuring that their fundamental rights to income, health, participation and freedom from fear and discrimination are met. Support needs to be provided to older people with specific vulnerabilities including, especially, older people who are not able to care for themselves and those that have no family support. However, as raised above, national ageing policies should, and many do, consider the state's role well beyond this basic level of responsibility.

Ensuring intergenerational equity

Many countries in the region, including India for example, are experiencing ageing of their population at the same time as the number of young people is expanding (the so-called 'youth bulge'). A perception of increased competition between young and old generations should be countered by promoting societal harmony and mutual support and minimising the risks of intergenerational conflict. It is important to consider the impact ageing policies have on different generations and to ensure that they are beneficial to all generations and unite them rather than divide them. Policies can promote the exchange of knowledge and experience within the education, social, legal and work contexts as well as social and economic reciprocity and equity for current and future generations.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> A good example of a national ageing policy that focuses on intergenerational solidarity is the Second Bangladesh National Policy for Older Persons (2013). Building on the recognition of the crucial importance of intergenerational interdependence, solidarity and reciprocity for social development highlighted in MIPAA, the Bangladesh policy identifies intergenerational linkages, communication and solidarity as principles and policy objectives. It does this by encouraging a discussion of ageing issues in educational and training curriculums, addressing intergenerational issues in the media and in wider public debate, and promoting intergenerational knowledge exchanges. The Philippines National Plan for Senior Citizens (2006–2010) recommends the integration of learning opportunities for older people in all relevant educational institutions, particularly teaching the use of new technology.

7. THEMATIC POLICY CONTENT

Overview

In the Asia and Pacific region, MIPAA and the Shanghai Implementation Strategy have both influenced governments to take action on ageing. A number of countries have adopted their structures and thematic content in national documents, or framed their policies and laws, with reference to these documents.

The MIPAA framework is fairly comprehensive in terms of the policy and issue areas it covers within its three pillars:

- older persons and development;
- advancing health and well-being into old age; and
- ensuring enabling and supportive environments.

In addition to these, it addresses the need for institutional arrangements, including building expertise on ageing, developing research and data on ageing, and mainstreaming issues of ageing into national policy. As Section 6 highlights, however, there are a number of other documents and frameworks to consider when developing policy and legislation.

The HelpAge commissioned study *Policy Mapping on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific*[10], funded by UNFPA, notes that where ageing policy, legislation or action plans exist in countries, these generally cover a wide range of issues. Social protection, healthy ageing, equal and universal access to health care, housing and the living environment, care and support for care givers, and images of ageing in society are addressed in all of the national policy, legislation and plans which were reviewed. In addition, nearly all these documents mention training for health care workers; neglect, abuse, violence, rights and age discrimination; work and labour; and knowledge, education and training.

National ageing policies should be comprehensive, considering all areas related to later life. A broad document promotes joined-up policy and helps to streamline a country's approach to ageing and older people. Examples of policies and laws in the region that cover a wide range of issues include Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

The following sub-sections address some of the key thematic issues that must be considered when developing the content of national policies, laws and action plans on ageing and older people. These are structured by the broad MIPAA areas for convenience and consistency.

While each country's policy development process will identify unique priorities for ageing, there are a number of critical issues and questions that should be considered in each area. These are identified within each broad policy area together with good practice examples from different countries.

7.1 Older people and development

Under MIPAA, older people and development includes policy themes that are related to older people's participation in development and their livelihoods. This section concentrates specifically on work; education and learning; social protection; and humanitarian response and resilience.

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[10] Williamson, Camilla (2015). *Policy Mapping on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific.* HelpAge and UNFPA. Chiang Mai. July 2015.

Work

National ageing policies should consider how older men and women can be enabled and supported to remain economically active for as long as they desire. Support should be provided for self-employed, paid and un-paid/voluntary work. In considering how employment can be promoted, national ageing policy should address the specific needs of older men and women at work and how their rights are protected. This is important to ensure equal opportunities for older workers and to address discrimination and exploitation in both the formal and informal economies.

These issues should also be addressed in greater depth in national employment policies and development plans. Important specific measures in this context include access to income generation activities and financial services supporting these; facilitation of voluntary work opportunities; private sector support for the extension of working life for older men and women who want to continue or return to work; and public campaigns recognising older people as an economic asset to society.

As the vast majority of older people in Asia and Pacific live in rural areas and depend on agriculture or other informal sector activities, it is important to address work in agriculture and related activities.

Key considerations:

- **Financial services and business advice:** As the majority of older people in the region work in the informal sector, often self-employed, it is important to consider how they can access appropriate financial services and business advice to improve their financial security.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Myanmar Plan of Action on Ageing (2014) encourages the development of micro-finance services for older people at the community level. The Second Bangladesh National Policy for Older Person (2013) commits to providing credit facilities with simple terms and interest-free loans to older persons who are capable of, and interested in, employment/self-employment. The Philippines National Plan for Senior Citizens (2006–2010) highlights comprehensive assistance programmes for self-employed older people, which include access to capital. The Viet Nam and Myanmar national policies encourage the development of older people's associations at the local level.

- **Employment opportunities for older men and women:** National ageing policies should consider how employment opportunities for older people can be increased. Measures include engaging the support of the private sector in the development of employment strategies for older people and the provision of incentives, including tax incentives, for employers to hire older people.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The majority of national policies on ageing in the region recognise the importance of supporting older people who want to engage in economically productive activities. For example, Thailand's Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, promotes full-time and part-time employment and self-employment of older people. The Islamic Republic of Iran's draft National Strategic Plan for the Elderly (2013) calls for equal opportunities for older workers. The India National Policy for Senior Citizens (2013) includes special assistance to older men and women who want to be re-employed.
>
> The Bangladesh Second National Policy for Older Persons (2013) includes measures for the allocation of government grants which aim to create new employment opportunities for older men and women, specifically those promoting jobs in urban and rural areas in the public and private sectors. It also encourages the involvement of voluntary and development organisations in reducing unemployment for older people. It highlights the importance of empowering older people to fully and effectively participate in economic activities, including income generation and voluntary work, with special attention to older women.
>
> The Fiji National Policy on Ageing (2011) is a good example of a policy that promotes the formation of stakeholder groups comprising small business advisory centres, national employment centres, and chambers of commerce to work together to develop strategies for the employment and self-employment of older people locally. In the Myanmar, Bangladesh and India national ageing policies, the private sector is encouraged to provide employment opportunities for older people including through tax incentives.

- **Retirement:** This includes policies that promote flexible retirement, including the legal removal of mandatory retirement ages and support for retirement planning with the provision of financial literacy training and advice. Older workers could be offered gradual withdrawal from the workforce and flexible phasing of pension benefits. As the majority of older people in low and middle income countries in the region work in the informal economy, these measures could have only limited impact today but they should be considered for the future. Advanced economies that have a fixed retirement age in the region, for example Australia and New Zealand, have put in place programmes and legislation to either extend the retirement age or remove it altogether.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Islamic Republic of Iran's draft National Strategic Plan for the Elderly (2013) is a good example of a policy that explicitly promotes comprehensive training for men and women in preparation for retirement which includes planning, insurance, investments, income generation and access to pension benefits.

- **Un-paid/voluntary work:** National ageing policies should consider recognising and promoting older people's engagement with un-paid/voluntary work at all levels and in a variety of fields. This can promote the active participation of older people and their well-being as well as offering society the benefits of their knowledge and experience.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The Sri Lanka National Policy for Senior Citizens (2006) promotes the development of a directory of voluntary opportunities for older people and a matching inventory of older people's skills and expertise. It also recognises the important role older people play as carers in the family and communities and provides tax incentives for all carers, including older people. These and other measures to support carers are important as many older men and women in the region are engaged in providing unpaid care for the young and the very old.

Education and learning

National ageing policies should highlight the right to education for people of all ages including older people and recommend that educational establishments provide formal and informal learning opportunities for them. The nature of these opportunities should be not only related to functional and work skills but also to promoting well-being including self-care and physical exercise.

Key consideration:

- **Appropriate and relevant education and training:** Vocational training opportunities should be developed with an understanding of the current and potential occupations of older people in the location. In addition to literacy and training in the use of new technologies especially IT, it is important to consider relevant business training, as many older people are self-employed. Training in new agricultural techniques and, more generally, access to agricultural extension services should be promoted as many older men and women in the region are involved in agriculture.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The national ageing policies of the Cook Islands and Mongolia prioritise training of retired people in new technology and business management, while the Philippines focuses more on disadvantaged groups and promotes functional literacy programmes and age-friendly non-formal education. China's Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011-2015) anticipates an increase in culture, education and sports activities for older people, and an expansion in colleges for senior citizens of various levels and types is one of its main targets. This involves a commitment to increase government spending.

Social protection

To ensure the financial security of men and women as they age, the national ageing policies need to consider the provision of social protection measures, including social pensions and other forms of financial supports and insurance. A social pension is a regular, non-contributory cash transfer to eligible older persons. The majority of countries in the region have some form of social protection for the most disadvantaged older people, although, as highlighted by the Asia and Pacific Regional Overview of MIPAA implementation 2012, the systems are still weak or in the process of being developed. The review recommends that a social protection floor, a nationally defined set of basic social security guarantees, is extended to everyone. The social protection floor should include a

pension for older people, regardless of whether they have been able to contribute or not during their working life.

Social security benefits for older people including pensions currently fall under separate national social security policies in most countries of the region. Countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Thailand and Myanmar have developed separate national social protection strategies, which include the specific modalities of the pension system and other financial benefits. Other countries, such as Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), are in the process of developing new social protection strategies. In some cases, pensions are covered in other strategies, for example, in poverty reduction plans. The national ageing policies, laws or plans are therefore insufficient and in some cases out of date with regards to the social protection system of the country, including pensions. National ageing policies should include social protection as one of the important policy options for ensuring older men and women are financially secure. A national ageing policy can provide a broad framework and the underlining principles to guide the development of specific social protection policies. In this context the national ageing policies should take into account the following considerations and good practices.

Key considerations:

- **Poverty in older age:** Although the national ageing policy will not include a full assessment of poverty in older age, it needs to be informed by this analysis in setting the options and policy objectives for financial security. This analysis needs to include a review of the existing social protection schemes and their impact, especially on the most vulnerable. It should also assess the impact of lower fertility on the ability of children to support their parents in the future.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The Second Bangladesh National Policy for Older Persons (2013) recognises the high risk of poverty in old age, especially for women, as a result of a lifetime of living on low income, limited accumulation of assets, exclusion from decent work opportunities, lack of financing and health provision, and decreasing ability to work. In response to this analysis it commits to provide special social protection to older women and people with disabilities.

- **Facilitate gradual withdrawal from the labour force:** National ageing policies should consider promoting social protection systems and, more specifically, social pensions that are designed to facilitate a gradual transition from an economically more active to an economically less active life.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Thailand and the Philippines national ageing policies set a good balance between enabling older people to work and protecting them from loss of income by promoting the involvement of older people in economic activities while also putting in place comprehensive social protection measures. Thailand's Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, for example, recognises the importance of ensuring older people who want to continue to remain economically active have the opportunities to do so, but recognises also that older people might need safeguarding at some point of their lives and that social protection support has to be in place. The analysis of how the design of social protection systems can support this balanced approach is beyond the scope of national ageing policies and therefore this study. However, it is interesting to note for example how the China

> **Good practice examples (cont.):**
>
> New Rural Pension Plan allows recipients to continue to work because the pension is seen as a transfer that supports the reduction in work and the resulting loss of income, rather than simply for older people who are not in work.[11] There are many other examples of pension designs in the region that facilitate a flexible transition from an economically active to a less economically active life, including for example an increase in the amount of the pension for the oldest old as promoted by China and India. The national ageing policies and laws can also assist with setting a flexible retirement policy. A good example of this is the Sri Lanka Charter for Senior Citizens (2006), which states that older people have the right to determine when they retire and withdraw from the labour force.

- **Pension coverage and pension adequacy:** In order to safeguard the financial security of older people, the state should consider ensuring that all older men and women have access to a pension and/or other financial benefits which provide them with a reliable secure income. Although many national ageing policies in the region clearly state the responsibility of national government to ensure that all older people have sufficient income, most fall short of committing to universal pension coverage and of setting clear principles guiding their adequacy.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The Philippines Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2006) recognises that the coverage and value of the old age allowances are too low and commits to adapt current social security/protection programmes to reach all older people.

- **Other welfare measures:** National ageing policies could also consider other forms of welfare benefits targeted to specific groups of older people or to address specific vulnerabilities. These should be considered in addition to, rather than instead of, a social pension. Although national ageing policies do not cover these specific benefits in detail, a number of them outline the framework, scope and principles of these specific social protection schemes.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Thailand Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, encourages the establishment of community based funds for older people. The China Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011–2015) includes promoting social assistance programmes for specific vulnerable groups and providing subsidies, for example food subsidies. It also recommends the gradual introduction of preferential access to services for older people.

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[11] National Research Council. (2012). *Aging in Asia: Findings from New and Emerging Data Initiatives.* Smith, J.P. & Majmundar, M. (eds.), p 143.

Humanitarian response and resilience

Many older men and women in the Asia and Pacific Region have suffered the dramatic impact of conflict and displacement and the increasing number of natural disasters, often because they are not fully included in the efforts of humanitarian actors.

Key considerations:

- **Systematically include older people in humanitarian response:** National policies on ageing should consider strengthening the inclusion of older people in humanitarian response, adopting the UN Principles on Older People, the MIPAA recommendations and the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming.[12]

> **Good practice example:**
>
> The Second Bangladesh National Policy for Older Persons (2013) offers an example of a comprehensive approach to humanitarian and climate change policy response for older people. It ensures the inclusion, prioritisation and protection of older men and women affected by humanitarian crises by promoting specific measures including age friendly rescue, shelter and relief efforts. It also promotes a specific focus on protecting older women from physical, mental, sexual and financial exploitation in emergencies, considers the potential risks, and commits to raising public awareness.

- **Disaster risk reduction and resilience programmes:** With the growing recognition of the importance of strengthening capacity to monitor, anticipate and manage risks and shocks, national ageing policies should consider how to promote the resilience of older people and the systems that support them. This should be based on a review of the impact of current measures in place to strengthen resilience, including disaster preparedness measures, and the adoption of the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) Charter 14 for Older People in Disaster Risk Reduction.[13]

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The Second Bangladesh National Policy for older persons promotes efforts to identify and respond to adverse effects of climate change on older people and the use of older persons' knowledge and experience in addressing climate change.
>
> The Philippines Expanded Senior Citizens Act (2010) includes making assistance available for senior citizens to cushion the effects of economics shocks, disasters and calamities. This should include food, medicines and financial assistance for domicile repair, and should be sourced from the disaster/calamity funds of the local government where the senior citizens reside.

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[12] UNHCR (2011). *Age, Gender and Diversity Policy,* www.globalprotectioncluster.org UNHCR-AGD-Policy-2011.

[13] UNISDR (2014). Charter 14 for Older People in Disaster Risk Reduction 2014. Accessed from www.unisdr.org/2014/iddr/documents/Charter14.pdf

7.2 Advancing health and well-being into old age

The health of older men and women and the promotion of healthy ageing are referred to in national ageing policies but should be developed in greater depth in separate health policies for older people and included in national health policies. Pakistan and Iran, for example, have developed separate health policies for older people, and Bangladesh and Mongolia have included older people's health in national health policies. Key considerations for the national ageing policies should include health promotion, self-care and access to appropriate and adequate health care services. In addition, given the significant rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health issues, including dementia, the national ageing policies should address how older men and women suffering from these diseases should be supported to manage these conditions and maintain as much as possible their ability to function independently.

Margaret Chan, the current Director General of WHO, clarifies that health for an older person is much more than the provision of health care and includes the physical, psychological and social environment in which people live – transport, accessible buildings and infrastructure, supportive communities and opportunities for older people to remain active.[14] This is a perspective on health that embraces the concept of well-being. Although many national ageing policies address improvements of the environment in which people live, as reviewed in the next section, they often fail to link these to health outcomes to ensure that they set the right priorities and investments.

Key considerations:

- **Epidemiological analysis and the rise in NCDs including dementia:** The increase of NCDs in the region, typically cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, diabetes, cancer and mental health conditions, including dementia, is extremely rapid. In the Asia and Pacific region, for example, NCDs affect 84% of the over-60 population and this is predicted to rise to 89% by 2030.[15] The increase in NCDs is having a significant impact on the lives of older women and men living with often multiple chronic conditions and requires significant changes to both the preventative and curative health services. National ageing policies should consider promoting stronger surveillance of NCDs and their risk factors to gain deeper understanding of their causes and impact and to inform the development of interventions. For example, there is limited analysis of the links between nutrition and availability of nutritious food and, as highlighted in the Philippines Plan of Action for Senior Citizens (2006–2010), the need to better target consumer information at older people and strengthen their rights in this critical area.

  In particular, there seems to be limited recognition that disadvantaged populations are the hardest hit[16]. This is partly because families shoulder the financial burden of caring for their older relatives. A recent national survey in China found that 37% of patients and their families fell below a £0.60 a day poverty line within three months of experiencing a stroke.[17] More work is also needed to examine the relationship between the prevalence of NCDs and such factors as level of education and access to clean water and nutritious food to better inform the public

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[14]Chan, M. (2014). Healthy Ageing Is Vital to Socio-economic Development. In Age International, *Facing the Facts: The Truth about Ageing and Development.* London.

[15] World Health Organisation (2008). *The Global Burden of Disease: 2004 Update.* Geneva, Switzerland.

[16] Dans, A. et al. (2011). *The Rise of Chronic Non-communicable Diseases in Southeast Asia: Time of Action.* In The Lancet, 2011, 337:680-689.

[17] Lloyd-Sherlock, P. (2014). 'Investing in Health: The Case of Hypertension.' In Age International, *Facing the Facts: The Truth about Ageing and Development,* London.

health focus of national policies on ageing. The use of existing studies, including for example the WHO Study on Global Ageing (SAGE), could be expanded. The overall impact of NCDs on society should be assessed, including older people's ability to remain functional and the financial burden of chronic conditions, often borne by families. This would help clarify the returns on investment in health promotion and prevention and make the case for investment in this area.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The China, Mongolia and India national ageing policies are good examples of policies that address how the health system needs to respond at all levels to changing demographics and most importantly to the epidemiological shift from acute to chronic diseases. The Fiji National Policy on Ageing (2011–2015) promotes better understanding of the health status and needs of people with dementia in order to improve training of health professionals, carers and volunteers.

- **Health promotion:** As many NCDs are affected by lifestyle, it is critical that national ageing policies include a focus on health promotion and prevention to reduce the rise and impact of NCDs. The targets of health promotion should be determined by an analysis of the most common behaviours that have a negative impact on the health of people as they age. These often include insufficient access to nutritious food, lack of physical exercise, alcohol and tobacco abuse, and harmful sexual behaviours. Promoting the inclusion of older people in health prevention programmes like vaccination campaigns should also be considered on the basis of strong evidence of their positive impacts.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> Most national ageing policies commit to strengthening health promotion. For example, the China Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011–2015) and the Cook Islands Policy on Ageing (2012–2017) promote healthy ageing and, more specifically, self-care, active lifestyles, physical exercise and the prevention of injuries. The national ageing policies of India and Lao PDR promote behavioural changes in nutrition and in alcohol and tobacco use. The national ageing policies of India and Cambodia include specific attention on mental health. The national ageing policies of Philippines and Thailand promote vaccination for older people and Bangladesh and Thailand the inclusion of older people in HIV/AIDS prevention. The national ageing policies of Cambodia and Bangladesh promote regular check-ups to enable early diagnosis and treatment.

- **Health systems responsive to older people:** National ageing policies should recognise the central role played by primary health care services in responding to older people's health needs and outline how these services will be equipped with the human and financial resources to address them. In order to improve the quality of health services provided to older people, national ageing policies should highlight the importance of training primary health workers in the health care needs of older men and women. They should also recognise the importance of the accessibility and quality of primary health care services. The WHO age friendly model for primary health care could be adopted in this context. At the secondary level, national ageing policies should consider promoting the development of

training and the availability of geriatric care and the establishment of geriatric wards in public hospitals.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> China's Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011–2015) promotes the systematic education of primary health care workers. The Fiji National Policy on Ageing (2011–2015) promotes a better understanding of the health status and needs of people with dementia and seeks to review the adequacy of the training of health professionals, carers and volunteers.
>
> Recognising the difficulties older men and women have in reaching health services, especially in rural areas, the national ageing policies of India and Cambodia are committed to increasing their outreach health programmes in the community through health camps, mobile clinics and home visits.
>
> The Cook Islands Policy on Ageing (2012–2017) promotes the adoption of the comprehensive WHO-tested age friendly service models, which recommend that barriers to health services are systematically removed. The national ageing policies of Iran and India encourage the integration of geriatric care at all levels of health services.

- **Access to health services for all older people:** The impact of ill health in older age can have significant financial consequences on older people and their families. National ageing policies should promote free access to health services to all older men and women including considering providing health insurance as part of the social protection benefits. Similarly to pensions, the health insurance schemes promoted across the region are multilayer and complex and often not covered in the national ageing policies, laws and plans analysed in this study. For example, India has a graded system of user charges. Health care, far from helping people rise out of poverty, has become an important cause of household impoverishment and debt with wide regional variations in health outcomes for older people.[18] As for social assistance, it is important that the national ageing policy reflect the principles that govern access to health care and health insurance. For example, the laws on older people should include the right to health access for all older people. Consideration should be given to addressing the health needs of older women and men, with specific policies tailored to meet their varying needs. The Viet Nam Law on the Elderly (2009), for example, provides that health services should respond to older women's specific health needs.

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[18] Dey, S. et al. (2012). *Health of the Elderly in India: Challenges of Access and Affordability.* In National Research Council (2012). *Aging in Asia: Findings from New and Emerging Data Initiatives.* Smith, J.P. and Majmundar, M. (eds), pp 371-414.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> Some countries contemplate universal health insurance. For example the principle of universal health insurance is included in the national ageing policies of Sri Lanka and Iran. Health insurance has the advantage of risk pooling but there are many issues related to the design and implementation that need to be addressed to ensure it benefits all. As identified by Bloom (2011) universal health coverage should be the goal; short of that, there should be a commitment to provide free health care for the older segment of the population.[19] The China Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011–2015) states that all older people will have access to basic medical insurance both in rural and urban areas. The national ageing policies of Lao PDR and the Philippines encourage the provision of special discounts for health services and medicines for people over the age of 60. The national ageing policies of India and Bangladesh also include the provision of subsidies for NGOs and social enterprises, which can reach the poorer segments of the population with specific health interventions, as for example eye care interventions.

7.3 Enabling and supportive environments

An enabling and supportive environment includes policy areas concerning housing, care and support, elder abuse and neglect, and positive societal and intergenerational relations. A recent report mapping ageing policies in the Asia and Pacific region found that most national ageing policies address enabling and supportive environments. However, the report notes significant differences between countries in terms of both the breadth and depth of policy. Countries with the scarcest amount of policy to ensure enabling and supportive environments tend to have only a scheme providing some sort of care to vulnerable older people, for example, or plans regarding accessibility to public transport and/or age-friendly communities. Where the most expansive policies exist, governments illustrate a comprehensive consideration of issues affecting older people within housing and the living environment; care and support for care givers; neglect, abuse and violence; and images of ageing in the society.[20]

The 2012 regional review of the implementation of MIPAA highlights a range of innovative practices in accessible housing, affordable and accessible transportation, care service provision, training of formal and informal caregivers, and the delivery of a continuum of care and services for older persons. However, the report notes a lack of clear policies and programmes addressing neglect, abuse and violence against older people.[21]

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[19] Bloom, D. et al. (2011). Design and Operation of Health System in Developing Countries. In Beard, J and Bloom, D (eds) (2011). *Global Population Ageing: Peril or Promise?* World Economic Forum.

[20] Williamson, Camilla (2015). *Policy Mapping on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific*. HelpAge and UNFPA. Chiang Mai.

[21] United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) (2012). *Overview of Regional Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific*. UNESCAP. Bangkok. 10-12 September 2012.

Good practice examples:

Overall for this pillar, some countries have a wide range of related policy areas, and three are notable. In China, the National Law on Protecting the Rights of Older Persons (1996, revised in 2012) covers the maintenance and support of older people by families, social service provision, and supportive social environments. China's Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011–2015), meanwhile, includes policies to address housing and the living environment; care and support for care givers; neglect, abuse and violence; and images of ageing. Alongside these documents, other policies, laws and regulations relate to enabling and supportive environments, including the Plan of Constructing Social Service System for the Elderly (2011–2015).

The extent of policy within this area represents China's comprehensive approach to ageing in place. Multiple aspects of housing and the living environment have been considered, with privileges in accessing public services; comprehensive activity centres; the promotion of construction of senior citizens' lodging houses, elderly homes and nursing homes; design codes for roads, buildings, other public places, and barrier-free facilities. The approach recognises the importance of creating an environment that enhances healthy ageing and resilience for all, alongside measures to support older people who have higher levels of need.

As in China, the Philippines has legislation and policy documents to address enabling and supportive environments. These include the Senior Citizens Act 2003 (expanded in 2010), the First Philippine Plan of Action on Ageing (1999–2004), and the National Action Plan on Senior Citizens (2006–2010). Various pieces of legislation also exist to address more specific issues within this area, as noted below.

Within a continuum of care, the Philippines also considers in detail how different sectors will work together to provide services. The Senior Citizens Act, for example, states that there will be joint development between public, private and civil society on a range of social services. The National Action Plan on Senior Citizens (2006–2010) includes the aim to improve coordination and cooperation among agencies providing such service. To support this, all cities and municipalities have an Office for Senior Citizens Affairs (OSCA), headed by a senior citizen, to serve as a general information and liaison centre. The Republic Act No. 7876 (1994) provides for the establishment of a senior citizens centre in all municipalities. The law further states that the Department for Social Welfare and Development shall provide a range of services in coordination with the local government units, the Department of Health, and other government and non-government agencies. This helps to promote a more integrated approach to care and support. Needs-based assessments are mentioned in the National Action Plan on Senior Citizens (2006–2010), which aim to ensure people are matched to appropriate services. These policies give the Philippines the potential to deliver a person-centred approach to ensuring enabling and supportive environments.

As with the Philippines and China, Thailand has both policy and legislation to address enabling and supportive environments. However, rather than mandating family care of older people, the Act on Older Persons (2003) entitles older people to a range of services and support, including access to self-development and participation in social activities; provision of facilities and maintenance of safety for older persons in buildings, places, vehicles or other public services; and subsidies for public transport exemption of entry fees for state places.

Key considerations:

- **Improving care services for older persons:** Particularly with changing family structures and the demographic transition, traditional means of providing care for older people are under threat. Most national policies on ageing address the rising issue of social care particularly at home and in the community.

Good practice examples:

China's Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011–2015) includes a provision to combine family care and social services for the elderly, creating an 'old-age service system that is based on families, reliant on communities and supported by government agencies'. This Plan includes multiple actions to develop and expand home care services for the elderly; to coordinate the development of elderly care institutions and rehabilitate nursing services; and to improve the care industry. These measures are to meet older people's changing levels of need across later life.

To support China's aim to create 'a new old-age services model with Chinese characteristics', the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (1996) mandated the provision of maintenance and support of the elderly by their families. Updated in 2013, the legislation establishes the legal framework for a system in which care is provided by the family and community, but is supported by institutions. In doing so, the law outlines regulations on improving urban and rural community facilities, enriching community services, enhancing service suppliers' skills and knowledge, and setting standards for service charges. A strength of China's approach is its recognition of the need to create a system which both supports family and community care for older people while also delivering state services to provide higher levels of assistance where necessary.

As in many countries of Asia, legislation in the Philippines places a duty of care for elderly members on the family, noting that the state also has a role to support this. The government's vision is a community approach to care delivered primarily by the family and enhanced by the state. The Philippines also outlines an explicit continuum of care including: after care and follow-up services for citizens who are discharged from homes or institutions; neighbourhood support services wherein the community or family members provide care giving services to their frail, sick, or bedridden senior citizens; the implementation of Neighbourhood Support Services for Older Persons, delivering a wide range of services; and the establishment of government-owned centres and institutions. An advantage of this approach is that, together with policies that address housing and the living environment, it supports different levels of need to keep older people independent for longer.

Thailand encourages community and home-based approaches to ensure an enabling and supportive environment, with less of a focus on formal and institutional care arrangements. Thailand's Second National Plan on the Elderly (2002–2021), revised in 2009, encourages the participation of all age groups in the care of the elderly within both the family and wider communities. The Thai approach illustrates how policy and legislation aim to enhance community and family approaches to care without mandating their caring role in legislation. This has the potential to control costs, as it avoids extensive measures to incentivise care (through such policies as tax breaks) or measures to operate and enforce legislation. Equally, policies which do not mandate care may be more popular and avoid the perception of older people as a burden, while the encouragement of more informal systems of care may reduce the need for institutional arrangements that can result in high costs for the state. However, as population ageing continues, increasing both the demand for care and the need for more specialist services, the strain on families is likely to rise. This may create pressure for additional state support and a reconsideration of the role of the public, private and voluntary sectors in caring for older people.

> **Good practice examples (cont.):**
>
> Many countries also have measures included within national ageing policies to deliver more specific support for care givers. Examples of good practice include the provision of tax incentives as outlined in national ageing policy in India, Malaysia and the Philippines; counselling services, as provided in Iran, India and Sri Lanka; carer's allowances and carer support groups, as in the Cook Islands; and education and training for informal carers and care professionals, as in Fiji, Myanmar, Viet Nam, China, India, Iran and Sri Lanka. Fiji also explicitly addresses support for older women carers, recognising the disproportionate impact that caring can have on older women. Palau and Malaysia, meanwhile, are among the few countries that address end-of-life and palliative care provision which is essential for the dignity of older people.

- **Measures against abuse, violence and discrimination:** The national ageing policies of most countries address neglect, abuse, violence, rights and age discrimination. However, discrimination on the basis of age is seldom discussed explicitly within sectoral policy, such as health, social protection, work and labour or the housing and living environment. This issue will become more prominent in ageing policies as populations age. A number of countries with policies in this area address the protection of older people's rights to family support, as well as legal provisions for those who experience neglect, abuse and violence.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> China's law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (1996) reinforces and clarifies the rights of older people and provides legal protection for those who are victims of neglect, abuse and violence. Pakistan has a developed vision of policy addressing neglect, abuse and violence, outlining how services will prevent abuse and help those who are victims of it. This includes sensitisation of police personnel regarding security of older persons and the establishment of senior citizen helplines, security cells and verification of domestic helpers within the 2007 Senior Citizens Act. Sri Lanka mentions legal awareness programmes for the elderly at community level and the provision of facilities for senior citizens to obtain legal services and advice for preventing discrimination along with abuse, neglect and violence.

- **Positive images of ageing:** Images of ageing is the term used in the MIPAA document to describe the enhancement of public recognition of the authority, wisdom, productivity and other important contributions of older persons. Images of ageing can also include intergenerational relationships. Policies under the category of images of ageing most frequently include celebrating older people's day, promoting respect towards and a culture of caring for older people, enhancing and celebrating their contribution to society, and promoting intergenerational relationships. A number of countries specify the role of mass media and education and training curriculums.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> The China Twelfth Five-Year Plan for the Elderly (2011–2015) includes policy to promote positive images of ageing, the virtue of respecting the elderly and family values, and the ethical tradition of respect and esteem for seniors.
>
> Thailand provides detailed policy promoting positive images of ageing, having conducted research specifically looking at attitudes to older people within the country in 2007 as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework of the Second National Long-term Plan for Older Persons (2002–2021), revised in 2009. This document also includes details of the Thai Brain Bank, a volunteer project that aims to harness older people's skills, together with a campaign for social conscience on the respect for and recognition of the elderly. Mongolia has a similar scheme detailed in their National Strategy for Population Ageing (2009–2030), to share former workers' experience with younger colleagues. Mongolia, like a number of other counties, also focuses on celebrating and encouraging the practice of traditional customs to highlight older people's contribution to families and society. Schemes such as these are excellent ways of promoting positive images of older people as well as encouraging stronger intergenerational ties, all of which help to deliver an enabling and supportive environment for older people.

- **Accessible housing and living environments:** In regard to housing and the living environment, policy approaches include promoting the development of housing for older people, creating age-friendly environments, providing discounts to services, and developing care home industries.

> **Good practice examples:**
>
> In India, the National Policy for Older People (1999) includes the aim to increase housing for certain income segments, with 10% of this earmarked for older persons. The Cook Islands Policy on Ageing (2012–2017) includes the commitment to fund alterations to bathrooms and toilets. In Sri Lanka, the Senior Citizens Charter and Policy 2006 includes the commitment to engage the building industry in creating awareness of housing options for senior citizens, to provide loans and incentives for home adaptations, and to encourage construction of parental annexes.
>
> The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPR Korea) Law on the Elderly includes provisions for creating barrier-free environments and the undertaking of city planning, design and building of dwelling houses and other projects that deliver good living environments for older people. Both India and Thailand include loan scheme development and/or tax incentives to encourage the construction or modification of housing and public facilities accessible to and usable by the elderly. Nepal illustrates innovative practice in supporting older people through discounts on key services. The Senior Citizen Act (2006) mandates that organisations providing public services, including drinking water, electricity and telephones, shall give priority to senior citizens while providing such services.

- **Organisations of older people:** Some national ageing policies promote organising efforts of older people into local or national level associations. Some specifically promote the establishment of older people's associations to enable older people to address their own concerns.

> **Good practice example:**
>
> In India, the National Policy on Older People (1999) includes measures to encourage older people to organise themselves to provide services to fellow senior citizens, thereby making use of their professional knowledge, expertise and contacts. Initiatives taken by older people in advocacy, mobilisation of public opinion, raising of resources and community work are also supported. In addition, the Policy includes measures for the establishment of the National Association of Older Persons (NAOPS), which has the objectives of mobilising senior citizens, articulating their interests, and promoting and undertaking programmes and activities for their well-being.

8. FOCAL POINTS AND INSTITUTIONS ON AGEING IN POLICY

Overview

Focal points and institutions on ageing refer to government members or departments and/or independent agencies or bodies which are responsible for ageing and older people within a country and for carrying out ageing related activities. Most countries in the Asia and Pacific region already have a named focal point on ageing and/or independent agencies. It is common for the role and function of these bodies to be established within national ageing policies. This section reviews the key elements to consider in regard to focal points and institutions on ageing when developing or reviewing national ageing policies. It details different approaches taken by countries, providing examples of good practice.

UNFPA and HelpAge International's *Overview of Available Policies and Legislation, Data and Research, and Institutional Arrangements Relating to Older Persons* (2012) examined which countries have official bodies and institutions established to ensure that governments respond appropriately and coherently to the challenges of ageing. Such bodies and institutions were found in 64 of the 133 countries for which information was obtained. In the remaining countries, the study found that a government ministry was named as a focal point on ageing. In UNESCAP's *Overview of Regional Implementation of MIPAA* (2012), meanwhile, 80% of survey respondents in this region stated that they had established either a focal agency or a coordinating body for ageing and older people's issues. In addition, more than half of all survey respondents were found to have established interdepartmental or inter-ministerial mechanisms, such as commissions or committees. More recently, the report *Policy Mapping on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific* (2015) noted that a focal point and/or institution on ageing was found in 23 of the 26 countries reviewed in the region.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) report on *Regional Dimensions on an Ageing Situation* (2008) identifies the four main **approaches to national focal agencies and coordinating bodies** on ageing which countries have taken. These are (1) a minister for ageing or an office for senior citizens; (2) a national committee on the ageing or an elderly commission; (3) an inter-agency body or inter-ministerial committee on ageing; or (4) a ministry or department of social welfare/social justice/labour. Some examples of these are given in the table on the following page.

Across the world, these focal points and institutions have varying **responsibilities** and **functions**, including advising on policy; designing and/or coordinating policies; conducting research and managing data; engaging with stakeholders and older people; advocating on older people's issues; and implementing, monitoring and evaluating

national policies, laws and plans on ageing. A number of national focal points and institutions on ageing and their respective functions have been established as part of national policies, laws or action plans on ageing and have a role directly related to it. The *Guide to National Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing* (*MIPAA*) (2008) also emphasises the essential role of academic institutions and research centres and their capacity to support evidence-based design, monitoring and evaluation of policies on ageing.

While there is no definitive model to adopt for focal points and institutional arrangements on ageing, there are a number of elements that should be addressed in relation to the operation and role of focal points or institutions on ageing. These are outlined below and are followed by examples of good practice from different countries.

Table: Institutional Arrangements

Region	Country	Institutional Arrangements
AFRICA	**Cameroon**	Specialised body within the Ministry of Social Affairs, Directorate for Social Protection of Handicapped People and Older People
	Malawi	Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly
	South Africa	Specialised body within the Department of Social Development, Directorate of Care and Services to Older Persons
	Uganda	Specialised body within the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Department for Persons with Disabilities and Older People
ASIA/ PACIFIC	**Bangladesh**	Ministry of Social Welfare. A National Committee for Older Persons exists which includes district, sub-district and ward level elderly welfare committees. A National Council for Older Persons and an Inter-Ministerial Committee also exist.
	Cook Islands	Ministry of Health and Ministry of Internal Affairs are the lead agencies for ageing. The Committee for Action on Ageing and the National Council for Older Persons also exist.
	India	Department of Senior Citizens under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. An inter-ministerial committee, a National Council for Older Persons and a National Association of Older Persons also exist.
	Philippines	The National Coordinating and Monitoring Board on the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 chaired Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. An Office for Senior Citizens Affairs exists in all cities and municipalities.
LAC*	**Argentina**	Specialised department within Ministry: National Directorate of Policies for Older Persons, the National Secretariat for Adolescence, Childhood and Family, Ministry of Social Development provides secretariat for the department
	Barbados	Specialised unit within Ministry: Ministry of Social Transformation, National Assistance Board
	Belize	Specialised unit within Ministry: National Council on Ageing of the Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation

*LAC = Latin America and the Caribbean

8.1 Institutional options

A number of countries name **a specific ministry or department** as the focal point for ageing and related matters. One benefit of this is that it ensures clarity of responsibility for developing and implementing policy within a country. Where this is the case, it may be easier for monitoring and evaluating policy development. In addition, having one ministry responsible for ageing and older people could be argued to improve coordination of policy and streamline activities.

However, a single minister is unlikely to have power over and knowledge of the full range of policy issues that are related to ageing and older people. A minister of welfare, for example, is unlikely to possess authority over health and care services or housing and the living environment. This could make designing and implementing policies that address all areas of life related to ageing difficult to achieve and harder still to implement. Equally, it may be more difficult to convince ministries who are not responsible for ageing issues to take action, particularly if financial and human resources for the development and implementation of ageing policies do not sit within their department.

Conversely, one benefit of **splitting responsibility between ministries** is that it ensures all ministries have responsibility for taking action on ageing, and that technical expertise in each area of policy can be drawn upon. By involving multiple ministries, more resources might also be available for implementation, and it may be easier to engage with key stakeholders in each area as relationships are likely to already exist. With the right institutional mechanisms, it can still be possible to ensure effective processes of accountability for action on ageing. The benefit of an inter-ministerial group or committee could play an important role here, ensuring both that there is a system of monitoring and evaluating action taken and in making sure that policy is joined up. This is important as a lack of coordinated action can be a threat to successful policy development and implementation and result in duplication or oversight, as well as wasted human and financial resources. The structure of an inter-ministerial group or committee should therefore be well established with clear lines of responsibility and accountability.

Some countries also have an **independent national committee** on ageing or an **elderly commission**. One function of this is to provide for the representation of non-government voices in the policy and decision-making processes or to create a structure that is slightly distanced from government and includes independent expertise. The UNESCAP *Report of the Capacity-Building Workshop to Support National Policy Responses to Issues of Ageing in Asia and the Pacific* (2012) notes that 'National committees or councils can be useful'. However it warns that they 'can also add a further layer of bureaucracy' but that this can be mitigated 'if the committee falls under the auspices of a prominent person such as the Prime Minister' (p. 8).

Below, examples of approaches taken by different countries illustrate additional issues. These include the roles and responsibilities of the different focal points and institutions.

Good practice examples:

In **China**, the China National Working Commission on Ageing (CNWCA), established in 1999, is the organisation which formulates major ageing policies, coordinates the relevant government departments, and leads and supervises implementation of policies related to older men and women. The China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA) is an executive office under supervision of the CNWCA, with responsibilities including: conducting research on ageing for policy making purposes, exchanging information and participating in international events, and conducting routine work concerning ageing and the elderly entrusted by the state council. This is a good approach to ensure that a body considers ageing issues holistically, with internal expertise focused solely on issues related to older men and women. Having a research remit as well as responsibility for information exchange both nationally and internationally, can also help to ensure that policy is based on evidence of demographic trends and the situation of older people within a country, as well as good practice from regional and international work on ageing.

In **Cambodia**, a similar approach is taken in the National Policy for the Elderly (NPE) 2003 which details the establishment of a National Committee to carry out surveys, studies, and academic discussions; to assist relevant departments to develop and implement measures for older people's human rights; to promote employment opportunities; to coordinate older people's issues between ministries and departments; and to strengthen international cooperation. Here, an inter-ministerial working group on the International Day of Older Persons is also outlined and which provides managerial and technical support for the development of policy for older people. This is a useful way of formalising the cross-departmental working that can ensure all issues of relevance to older men and women are considered and that cooperation between different ministries is promoted. Here, the Prime Minister sits as the head of the Committee which is, as discussed above, helpful for adding political support and coordination for the issues of ageing.

In the **Cook Islands** Policy on Ageing (2012–2017), a similar role is played by the National Council for Older Persons which the policy states will be established to act as an advisory body and to oversee the implementation of the policy. It stipulates that the National Council will be accountable to the relevant Minister and includes the terms of reference for the Council and its role and responsibilities. While the Prime Minister is not stated as being the head of the Council, the inclusion of specific terms of reference and its accountability to relevant ministers helps to give it legitimacy. The document further states that the composition of the Council will need to be developed following endorsement of the policy and that eventually the existence of the Council may be included in legislation.

In **India**, an autonomous, registered National Association of Older Persons (NAOPS) has national, state and district level offices to mobilise senior citizens, articulate their interests, promote and undertake programmes and activities for their well-being and advise the government on all matters relating to older persons. In the National Policy on Senior Citizens 2011 (yet to be approved or implemented), the establishment of national and state Commissions for Senior Citizens and National Council for Senior Citizens is detailed, including responsibilities. The consideration of national, state and district level offices is helpful for ensuring that stakeholders at all levels are included in the design of policy. This can become particularly important at implementation stage as local and regional bodies will play a significant role in turning policy into practice. Other countries that provide for corresponding regional or local bodies alongside national institutional arrangements include Bangladesh, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Thailand.

Interestingly, the NAOPS in India is also given a remit to advocate for older people and advise government. It is thus established as a voice external to government, which may help it to represent older people and to champion the issues that matter to them more successfully. However, this depends on its status and political power, and how it is viewed by the government and the public.

Good practice examples (cont.):

In the **Philippines**, the National Coordinating and Monitoring Board (NCMB) for the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010 is responsible for formulating a National Plan of Action for Senior Citizens and for monitoring its implementation. It is chaired by the Secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development but also includes representatives from other ministries and from five accredited NGOs for senior citizens. Stakeholder engagement is vital for ensuring that experts and those with interest in older people and ageing issues are included in the policy process and that their advice and knowledge can be drawn upon. Engaging key stakeholders also helps to legitimise policy and promote support for it from different groups.

The most important group of stakeholders to engage in the work and operation of focal points and/or institutions on ageing is **older men and women** themselves. In Pakistan, the Senior Citizens Act (2014) establishes the Senior Citizen Welfare Council, which includes representatives from multiple ministries, the Provincial Assembly, older people's organisations, and NGOs working for senior citizens. The Council has powers to co-opt experts for advice on specific areas. In Bangladesh, the National Policy for Older People 2014 establishes a designated department or section under the Ministry of Social Welfare for initiating, implementing, assessment, and monitoring of different activities for older people's rights, development, welfare and labour. It states that older persons and civil society will be associated in the monitoring process. In selecting older participants for such committees, attention needs to be given to gender balance. In Sri Lanka, the National Council for Elderly's principal responsibilities include engaging with stakeholders more generally.

In addition to the different functions, structures, terms of reference, and mechanisms for establishing power and accountability, some national policy instruments provide detail on the **resources** to be made available to these bodies. This is an essential element to include within instruments. Indeed, a lack of financial and human resources, and in particular a lack of people with knowledge of ageing and of statistical information-gathering, is often identified as a critical barrier to policy success in the region[22][23]. Good practice is found in Thailand, where the Act on Older Persons (2003) details all powers, responsibilities and regulation for the National Commission on the Elderly. It includes the introduction of the Elderly Fund to provide budget for all activities related to the promotion, protection and support of older people as outlined within the Act, and instructions for the Elderly Fund's operation. A similar fund exists in Sri Lanka and in Pakistan. Including these details in legislation is best practice as it helps to strengthen the accountability and effectiveness of the Commission's work.

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[22] UNESCAP (2012). *Workshop on Evaluation on Ageing Plans.* Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA). 28 February-1 March 2012. Bangkok.
[23] UNDESA (2008). *Regional Perspectives on an Ageing Situation.* Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York.

9. CONCLUSION

Over the last two decades, governments in the Asia and Pacific region have developed national ageing policies, laws and action plans which have been informed by MIPAA and its reviews. The study has reviewed these documents with an emphasis on low and middle income countries and has identified good practices for their development. It has also reviewed the different models for the structure, content and development of the national policies, laws and plans, and for the institutional architecture.

The analysis illustrates good practice emerging from the national ageing policies, action plans and legislation in the Asia and Pacific region. It identifies that most consider both the opportunity an ageing population presents to society and the challenges that need to be urgently addressed. However, it also highlights the lack of consistency between various national ageing policies, action plans and legislation across the region. These documents could be strengthened and better used together to set a more coherent and holistic rights framework which identifies responsibilities and accountabilities of key actors and stakeholders, including communities, in all the relevant areas; improves coordination across the different sectors; tackles protection needs and inequality in old age; and promotes equal access and opportunities as well as independence, autonomy and self-reliance for all older persons. This should be supported by the emerging interest in the region and at the United Nations in the development of a framework for the rights of older people.

Organisations in the region including UNESCAP, UNFPA and HelpAge International have been active in sharing experience across countries. However, there is a lack of easily accessible information on good practice in the region and of the evidence base that supports them. Closer coordination is needed between academics and practitioners to produce and share evidence-based policies and to invest in the development of accessible online platforms. Such platforms could support blended training (including online and offline interactions and webinars) and knowledge sharing of policy and practice across the region.

The focus on people of all ages in the health goal of the forthcoming UN Sustainable Development Goals and the inclusion of older people in the indicators to measure the implementation of various goals might offer an opportunity to work with governments in the region to develop strong national ageing policies and integrate ageing in future national plans. The forthcoming review in 2017 of MIPAA implementation already initiated by UNDESA represents another important opportunity for supporting national governments to review and strengthen their ageing policies, strategies and implementation plans. It is hoped that the good practices and key considerations identified by this study will constitute a strong base for this more in-depth national follow-up processes over the next few years.

HelpAge International helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.