



**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC  
ZHONGSHAN COLLEGE**

**Regional Expert Forum on Integrated Care for Older Persons  
17 - 19 March 2017  
Nanjing, China**

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## Concept Note

### **Date and venue**

The Regional Expert Forum on Integrated Care for Older Persons will be held from 17 - 19 March 2017 in Nanjing, China.

### **Participation**

Participants will be drawn from governments in the ESCAP region, think tanks, academic institutions, civil society, older persons organizations, UN organizations, specialized agencies, sustainable development practitioners, and independent experts.

### **Objectives**

The Forum takes place within the context of the forthcoming Third Regional Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and within the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The objectives of the Forum are as follows:

1. To review and exchange good practices and experiences that focus on three priority areas, namely:
  - a. Human resource requirements for meeting the needs of an ageing society;
  - b. Availability and use of appropriate technology to enhance the access of older persons to services, including health and long-term care services;
  - c. Gender dimensions of ageing in the Asia-Pacific region.
2. To increase awareness on the key challenges and opportunities for effectively addressing population ageing and promoting the rights of older persons in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **Structure and format of the Forum**

The Forum will focus on discussing key challenges and opportunities for effectively addressing population ageing and promoting the rights of older persons in Asia and the Pacific. In particular, the key outcomes of analytical studies conducted on the three priority areas of focus will be discussed, namely (a) Human resource requirements for meeting the needs of an ageing society; (b) Availability and use of appropriate technology to enhance the access of older persons to services, including health and long-term care services; (c) Gender dimensions of ageing in the Asia-Pacific region.

The meeting will highlight good practices and guidelines that policy makers may consider while formulating a comprehensive framework on long-term care of older persons which is financially sustainable and safeguards the rights of older persons. Presentations and panel discussions will be used to introduce critical issues and stimulate discussions.

## **Outcome**

It is expected that participants at the meeting will have enhanced knowledge of the key challenges and opportunities for effectively addressing population ageing and promoting the rights of older persons in Asia and the Pacific.

## **Documentation**

Background documentation for the Forum will include studies on (a) Human resource requirements for meeting the needs of an ageing society; (b) Availability and use of appropriate technology to enhance the access of older persons to services, including health and long-term care services; and (c) Gender dimensions of ageing in the Asia-Pacific region.

## **Partners**

The meeting is being organized in partnership between UN-ESCAP and Zhongshan College, Nanjing.

## **Background**

The Asia-Pacific region is experiencing population ageing at an unprecedented pace, with the number of older persons – defined as the population of 60 years and older – expected to almost triple from 514 million in 2015 to more than 1.31 billion by 2050. By then, one in four people in the region will be over 60 years old, while the “oldest-old”, those above 80 years of age, will constitute about one fifth of all older persons. Due to the longer life expectancy for women, the majority of older persons are women, with the sex ratio decreasing the older the age group. This demographic transition towards an ageing society in the Asia-Pacific region has deep social, economic and political implications.

As the population grows older, the need for long-term care services is expected to increase considerably. With changing family structures, rural-urban migration and women increasingly taking part in the labour market, the family can no longer be relied on as the primary source of care and support for older persons. The limited capacity to meet the rising demands for elderly care services was consequently identified as one of the critical challenges for the region, during the Asia-Pacific consultations held in preparation for the second review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA in 2012).

Adopted in 2002 in Madrid, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) is a comprehensive action plan to address population ageing, based on three priority directions, namely: Older persons and development, advancing health and well-being into old age, and ensuring enabling and supportive environments. Each priority direction has a number of objectives. The MIPAA monitoring framework foresees regular reviews at regional and global level. To date, two regional and global reviews have taken place. The third regional and global review is envisaged in 2017. Through ECOSOC resolution 2015/5, regional commissions received a strong mandate to conduct the third regional review process in 2017. ESCAP has already started preparations for the third review process.

The recently adopted 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a comprehensive development agenda with a focus on reducing inequality and reaching all population groups, including the furthest behind. With its reiteration of the phrase "... for all" in almost all the goals, the 2030 Agenda puts inclusion at the centre of the agenda. Population ageing and older persons are directly or indirectly addressed in several of the goals, and particularly in Goal 3 "Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages" and Goal 10 "Reduce inequality within and among all countries". Priority directions as specified in the Madrid of International Plan of Action on Ageing are in line with the 2030 Agenda and will facilitate implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

To respond to the needs of member States in addressing population ageing, ESCAP, with support from the Government of China, is implementing a project on "Strengthening national capacity for promoting and protecting the rights of older persons" with a particular focus on the financing and provision of long-term care for older persons. A total of seven detailed analytical studies were undertaken under the project on coverage, provision and financing of long-term care in the region. These studies covered a representative range of countries from developed, middle income and low-income categories.

The studies provided the background and informed discussions in two Expert Group Meetings and one Regional Forum held under the project to enhance the capacity of member States on addressing the needs of older persons in the context of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and the forthcoming third regional review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2017.

During the discussions at the regional forum, several key issues were identified as being central to the achievement of the SDGs as they relate to the well-being of older persons. These included the development of adequate and quality human resources to provide health and long-term care of older persons; and the enabling role played by technology in enhancing the delivery of services to older persons. The gender dimensions of ageing were also highlighted as the majority of older persons were women and older women had special needs and were more vulnerable. The care component also had a strong gender dimension which required deeper analysis.

It is of the utmost importance that the human resources needs required now and in the future to adequately address the challenges of a rapidly ageing population are well understood and appropriately planned for. It is however an area in which little mapping and studies have been carried out in a comparative scale across countries in the Asia - Pacific region. This paper wishes to harness the potential to replicate good practices related to the identification of carers, training syllabus, on the job learning, etc. The paper therefore will demonstrate the importance of this issue, as well as the challenges and opportunities in this regard, including identifying sound options for policy makers who are managing the implications of a rapidly ageing population.

One of the main challenges associated with the phenomenon of population ageing is how to respond to the healthcare needs of older persons. In Asia and the Pacific, challenges persist in the context of health care, where older people, particularly older women, cannot access necessary medical treatment because of high costs, a lack of healthcare providers, poor transportation or difficulties in accessing health care. There is a large and growing gap between urban and rural areas in terms of access to appropriate health care facilities. To bridge these gaps, it is important to adopt innovative methods to support older persons. In this respect, enhanced and more effective usage of ICT can help expand access to healthcare service and promote the rights of older persons. The extensive regional coverage of ICT can help people overcome geographical distances and social obstacles. ICT may provide access to specialized health care, which may otherwise be unavailable for people living in rural or remote areas. This is of particular consequence for the marginalized, excluded, and disadvantaged older persons with limited access to the formal health system. At the same time, it is also important to better understand the ways in which ICTS can act as a lever for the increased inclusion of older persons in society. Training and awareness raising amongst older persons may be one way to ensure that ICTS does not act as a potential barrier to the meaningful participation of older persons in society.

The gender dimensions of ageing highlights the inequalities faced by older women as a result of their gender-based roles in society, as well as the important role older women play at the family and community levels. The policy implications for women in an ageing world requires further rigorous and multi-dimensional analysis, including - but not limited to - the exploration of changing family structures, widowhood, care giving, social protection and health, women's work, and retirement, among other issues.

Against this backdrop, an analysis of good practices to address the challenges and opportunities of the transition towards an ageing society in Asia and the Pacific, in the areas of human resources, technology and gender dimensions of population ageing would be key and result in the publication of three analytical project papers in early 2017. The outcomes of these studies will strengthen the national capacity for promoting and protecting the rights of older persons. The outcomes will further equip concerned policy makers with enhanced skills to design/improve policies and programmes to promote and protect the rights of older persons in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all of which will serve as valuable inputs into the third regional review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in 2017.

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