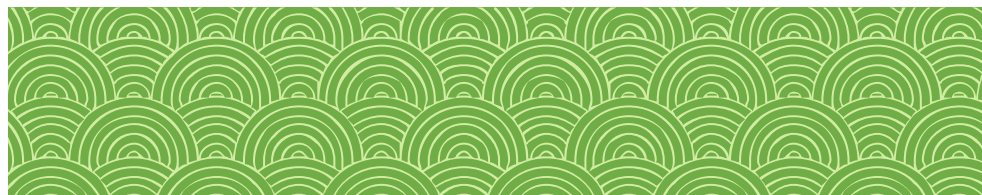
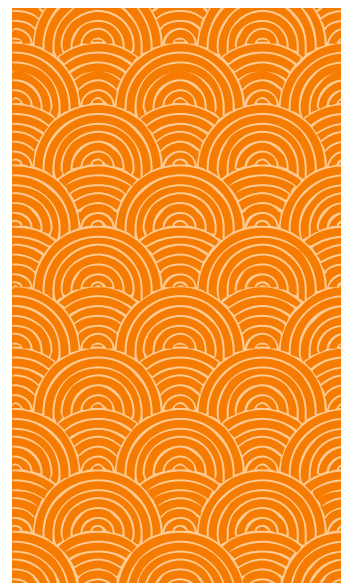


Report of the First SEAR Expert Panel Meeting on Healthy Ageing

10–11 August 2021



Decade of Healthy Ageing is to strengthen bridges across sectors and disciplines, governments, international organizations, civil societies, professionals, academics, the media and private sector, to work together towards achieving a common goal and to help build capacity and capabilities of different stakeholders through sharing and collaboration

First South-East Asia Regional meeting was started with welcoming and extending gratitude for all the expert panel members for their participation. Special condolence note was made for those who lost their lives due to COVID-19 disease.

General Objectives of the expert panel meeting was to deliberate on strategies for rolling out the Decade of Healthy Ageing and discuss impact of COVID-19 pandemic on essential health services and mitigation measures in the region.

Specific objectives were identified as:

- Sharing regional and global updates on Healthy Ageing including Decade of Healthy Ageing
- Review progress in implementation of person centered care (ICOPE) and long-term care (ICARE) in the South-East Asia Region
- Review the regional situation of delivery of services to older population during COVID-19 pandemic and provide recommendations for continuing essential health services for older people.
- Expert panel meeting was structured on four sessions over two days.

In the inaugural session, opening remarks were made by the Regional Director of the SEA Region, highlighting that the global population is ageing and in many countries the number of people aged 60 years and older will overtake the number of children. South-East Asia region aged 60 years and older was estimated to be 186 million against a global estimate of 962 million. Regional Director of the SEA Region emphasised, three key areas for attention namely strengthening of health workforce including training, generating and applying data and evidence effectively in managing innovative solutions and long-term care for older persons in all member countries of the region. Further stated that expert panel will establish the multi-sectoral dialogue which required for all countries in the region to advance towards the Decade of Healthy Ageing.

In the inaugural session many experts expressed their views on importance of initiating new approach to address ageing challenges, application of research for the wellbeing older persons and their communities, pledging on partnership in

achieving UN Decade of Healthy Ageing. Expert views on agenda for sustainable development, UN decade of healthy ageing about upholding human rights and eradicating deprivations across multiple dimensions were highlighted. Expert attention was drawn on building resilience to combat ageism and developing age friendly cities and communities. Importance was expressed on climate change in the context of ICOPE, long term care and age friendly cities.

Issues related to non-availability of age and sex desegregated data of older persons and need of arriving at a concrete action-oriented agenda in the future by addressing the problem were discussed in the inaugural session. Discussions were made not to leave older people behind today, tomorrow and the next day. With the actions to bring them forward towards a common agenda. Experts emphasised the importance of share a common mission to promote and strengthen of wellbeing of older persons. Expert views were on multiple areas of importance including access to long term care services such as personnel care, assistive devices, rehabilitation and inclusive environments.

Summarizing concerns raised by the experts and the points discussed during the inaugural session, key action areas were identified for conclusions and recommendations. Among them make availability of mechanisms to collect age and gender disaggregated data and research were identified as one of the key priorities and to urge member countries to leverage the Integrated Care for Older Persons implementation framework which provides actionable guidance to policy makers and service providers.

In the session two under global progress in Healthy Ageing, details of baseline Report on Decade of Healthy Ageing and what is Decade of Healthy Ageing and its relevance to the COVID-19 Pandemic were discussed with very informative presentations. It was highlighted that health systems need to be function including leadership and financing. It is mentioned that baseline report focuses on optimizing functional ability as the key to healthy ageing. Discussions were made on four enablers, stated in the baseline report and emphasis that strong collaboration is needed for transformative change over the next ten years. It is important all to understand that data are commonly cross-sectional, and the most important point is to understand trajectory of healthy ageing. Expert views were directed towards the interventions and priorities of interventions aiming to optimize capabilities and delay in declining capabilities among older people. It was mentioned that globally, 142 million older persons or 14% of all older persons globally, are unable to meet some of their basic needs. Further 25% of countries have limited comparable data. Governments need to invest in longitudinal data. All expert views were gathered in developing conclusions and recommendations of the session 2.

Further, experts paid their attention on importance of clarifying, identifying pathways to optimise functional ability, acceleration of measurable impact,

research and applicability of Sustainable Development Goal indicators to measure Decade of Healthy Ageing. Further information was exposed on developing a monitoring and evaluation framework for Decade of Healthy Ageing and setting up a technical advisory group for advancing measurement monitoring and evaluation by the WHO headquarters. Highlights were made on bottom-up approach in collecting information and importance in each country to understand and prioritize which indicators are useful for their respective countries.

South-East Asia Regional completed activities under Decade of Healthy ageing were presented as a very comprehensive summary highlighting ongoing and planned activities at the regional level.

Implementation progress on regional framework on Healthy Ageing 2018-2022, developing an evidence based integrated policy and plan of action for healthy ageing and developing age friendly environment were discussed with a special focus on way forward activities at the discussion of the regional activities under Decade of Healthy Ageing.

Further highlights were made on regional level way forward activities on having advocacy and policy dialogue, influencing health, social, economic policies to support older people, support national strategies/plans to implement Decade of Healthy ageing, strengthening partnerships, sensitization and orientation to address issues of ageism, embedded health care of older people within the health system, strengthening capacity of health care providers, adaptation of appropriate technology and strengthen recording, reporting to generate data in action. Discussion points and expert views were summarized by the session chairperson and the co-chairperson for further discussion in developing recommendations. Prioritization of action to enhance services for senior citizens in Indonesia, strengthening of identified priority areas of actions and enablers, Identification of political commitment and multisectoral involvement as an essential part in successful implementation, identification of ICOPE and ICARE as two important action programmes of the Decade of Healthy ageing, addressing covid-19 pandemic situation among older people and application of technology, innovation and monitoring and provision of supporting data for policy formulation were summarized at the conclusion of the session two.

Integrated care implementation framework, civil society contribution, community service development was discussed in detail along with global update of integrated care of older people and global update on long term care in the session three of the First South-East Asia Regional Expert Panel Meeting on Healthy Ageing. In this session it was summarized that achieving integrated health and social care services for older persons needs transformation at the system's level and need and the status of long-term care to be discussed in a broader manner. Further concerns were raised on under prioritization of long-term care in this session and in relation to

its social components long term care seems to be considered secondary or complimentary. Experts were made views on fixing of priorities of resources for wellbeing of older persons over economic utility, strengthening of civil societies including informal caregivers in the society for long-term care and strengthening of local government networks. Emphasized the importance of having systems framework to address action points in enhancing long-term care.

South-East Asia Regional progress in integrated care of older persons and long-term care were discussed highlighting the availability of adapted training packages such as training package for primary care physicians, nurses, frontline health workers and long-term care providers. During the presentation of the ICOPE status in SEA Region, following points were highlighted in the SEA Region, all member countries have principally agreed to adopt ICOPE in health system and clinical demonstration of ICOPE in primary care simulated setting, validation of physician manual in India and Bhutan, translation of local language, identification of member states for pilot testing. Way forward actions in the SEA Region added a high value in developing conclusions and recommendation points to the expert pane meeting such as opportunity to advocate for integrating ICOPE and LTC within the universal health care, preparatory work for ICOPE implementation, use of digital technology in training to scale up health workforce capacity, maintain ICOPE during COVID-19 pandemic, NCD and mental health care and long-term care progress.

Day 2 of the meeting was initiated with a recap of the day one proceedings by the chairperson of the expert panel meeting expressing a special highlight of moving from health approach to more towards holistic approach and monitoring programmes with indicators.

COVID-19 pandemic, WHO COVID-19 responses on Care of Older People and COVID-19 pandemic activities in South-East Asia region was the main theme of fourth session, day two of the expert committee meeting.

Vulnerability and impact of COVID-19 disease and essential services for older people were emphasised by the panel members. Transform and strengthening care for older people including allocation of adequate resources, prevention of social isolation, providing support, training of caregivers and disaggregated data and research were further highlighted during the session four. Special interest was extended on discussions of the measures to reduce COVID-19 burden on elderly, vaccination against COVID-19 and surveillance, contact tracing and public health response to COVID-19. South-East Asia regional survey for maintenance of services for older population during the pandemic was presented with the way forward recommendations.

Discussion of the session was extended widely on health system issues with a special focus towards continuum long-term care, palliative care, operational aspects of

the integrated care during COVID-19, life course approach, technology accessibility, maintaining social security, issues in partnerships. Special emphasis was made on issues with voices of older persons and care giver empowerment during COVID-19. Further discussions were conducted on information recording, sharing good practises to maintain prevention, equity and access for older persons during COVID-19 pandemic.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Regional Expert Panel members noted and appreciated the progress made in the programme area of Healthy Ageing and care of older population in South-East Asia Region with putting in place strategic framework and resources for skill upgradation of health care providers.

The Regional Expert Panel members considered that the Region can initiate programmes and initiatives to achieve the goals of Decade of Healthy Ageing which coincides with SDG of 2030. The Regional Expert Panel members recommended the Regional Office to:

- Create a holistic narrative of ageing, health and wellbeing with a multi-sectoral perspective beyond the narrow confines of medical model and medical care;
- Reiterate political commitment for multisectoral involvement for successful and accelerated implementation of policies and programmes related to the Decade of Healthy Ageing in each Member State supported by regional and global alignment;
- Support Member States in updating and aligning existing national ageing policies/ strategies/ programmes to the Decade of Healthy Ageing;
- Strengthen partnership with UN Agencies, Health and allied Ministries in Member States, international and national non-profit organizations and civil society in promoting healthy ageing as a part of all development policies and programmes;
- Support Member States in implementing priority areas of action of the decade and in identifying enablers for the Decade of Healthy Ageing;
- Facilitate sharing of best practices including strategy of mobilizing sustainable resources and utilization of community services;
- Establish parameters for measuring and monitoring of healthy ageing and wellbeing in old age aligned to global parameters;
- Support Member States in conducting research on healthy ageing and longitudinal ageing surveys by providing technical assistance;

- Support Member States in raising awareness among pre-ageing population shifting towards life course approach including prevention and promotion, to optimize healthy ageing trajectories;
- Create awareness about vulnerabilities of older people in emergencies and health crisis such as COVID-19 pandemic and similar future epidemics and advocate suitable intervention programmes.

The Regional Expert Panel members recognized that Integrated Care of Older People (ICOPE) and Long-Term Care (LTC) as two important action programmes of the Decade of Healthy Ageing. The Experts stressed the need advocating ICOPE as an important public health and clinical tools. The Regional Expert Panel took cognizance of SEARO initiatives on person centered care for the ageing population by promoting, Integrated Care of Older People (ICOPE) and establishing foundations for providing long-term care and recommended the Regional Office to:

- Make ICOPE tool available to the Member States for adoption, translation, and utilization at all levels, particularly in community health services;
- Support Member States in strengthening infrastructure for ICOPE, particularly human resource development, data collection and monitoring on Intrinsic Capacity, and the use of technology for dissemination in view of the current pandemic situation;
- Support member states in monitoring the progress towards implementation of ICOPE and LTC programmes at national and sub-national levels;
- Provide technical support and encourage Member States in developing long-term care suitable to the local context, culturally appropriate and affordable and sustainable in collaboration with partners;
- Support Member States in strengthening infrastructure for LTC, particularly human resource development and the use of technology for dissemination in view of the current pandemic situation;
- Support Member States in strengthening capacity of community including financing and other resources that can help to support the progress and sustainability of LTC;
- Document and share best practices, including strategy for mobilizing resources and development of ICOPE and LTC services among Member States.

The Regional Expert Panel recognized the magnitude of COVID 19 pandemic in devastating the lives older people with high rates infection and complications; and poor outcome. Reviewing the preventive measures for the pandemic and

measures for mitigating the health service disruption due restrictive measures by Member States, the Regional Expert Panel recommended the Regional Office to;

- Advocate continuous focus on healthy ageing and evidence-based person-centered care of older population, which has attained visibility in health system as a result of COVID 19 pandemic;
- Support Member States to establish credible age and gender disaggregated data collection mechanism for COVID 19 cases and case fatality, so that there are no hidden deaths and the care is provided for all
- Support Member States to assess and document the impact of the pandemic on medium and long-term on the compromised health status and functional ability of the older population;
- Support Member States to adopt person centered care in addressing the multiple challenges of the pandemic such as assessment and diagnosis; referral for clinical management, support for social and psychological stress; and support for caregivers;
- Support Member States to ensure access to vaccination for the older population who may be at a disadvantage due to multiple factors in gaining easy access;
- Develop, adapt, translate protocols for home-based care of suspected or proven cases of COVID-19 for formal and informal care givers;
- Prevent COVID-19 infection and cluster in long-term care setting such as nursing homes;
- Support innovations and technology for incorporation in the health system to ensure uninterrupted healthy ageing services; during the present and future health crisis.

The Regional Expert Panel recognized that Member States in South-East Asia Region have established policies and programmes for healthy ageing for their citizens over last two decades; some of these need to be aligned with the Decade of Healthy Ageing and SDG. Reviewing the initiatives of the Members States in achieving health and wellbeing in old age; and putting in place measures for addressing the COVID-19 pandemic; the Expert Panel Members recommended the Member States to:

- Update and align national policies and programmes for healthy ageing with principles endorsed by member states in the global plan of action on healthy ageing and Decade of Healthy Ageing;
- Support Member States to develop and establish a national monitoring system to monitor progress on healthy ageing of older adults, including

evaluating the progress and impact of the four priority actions areas endorsed in the Decade plan of action;

- Strengthen approaches to use data and information, to inform decision making on healthy ageing, involving older adults;
- Strengthen the system of monitoring and information collection in health and welfare system with appropriate age and gender disaggregation of data; Adopt the principles of Decade of Healthy Ageing in the developmental process;
- Raise awareness of preparations for healthy ageing among pre-ageing population;
- Adopt ICOPE as the instrument of old age care in all levels of health care delivery;
- Strengthen human resource in old care with regular training with SEARO training resources adapted needs, language and health system functioning of each member state;
- Develop a framework for long term care in health and welfare system with appropriate financing system;
- Strengthen capacity of community based on multisectoral cooperation including community participation to help support the progress and sustainability of long-term care;
- Enhance expenditure on research in healthy ageing through, cross-sectional and longitudinal ageing studies; and focused health system research covering all health system building blocks/functions;
- Establish credible data collection mechanism with age and gender disaggregation for cases, complication and fatality related COVID-19 pandemic;
- Assess and document disruption and mitigations measures for the healthy ageing services in the health system during restrictive public health action during COVID-19 pandemic;
- Assess COVID-19 vaccination programme for older population regarding accessibility and acceptance and initiate steps to address vaccine hesitancy.

The Regional Expert Panel recognized the important role of non-governmental organizations and civil society in achieving healthy ageing for the population and establishing a society for all ages in an age-friendly environment. The Regional Panel recommended the Regional Office to engage with the civil society to:

- Establish a holistic narrative of healthy ageing as a developmental process and to support and empower older persons;
- Create multi- sectoral network of stakeholders to ensure health and wellbeing in old age for the population;
- Create awareness of the launch of Decade of Health Ageing in the society and ensure implementation of the priority action under the decade by governments at all levels;
- Strengthen community participation provide relief in disaster situation like COVID-19 pandemic;
- Strengthen community participation in provide care and support to older people with no care giving support system;
- Create of awareness on health promotion and disease prevention in general and the COVID-19 pandemic in particular;
- Ensure access of older population to vaccination for COVID-19;
- Supporting the Member States to develop a multi-layered engagement strategy connecting with communities represented by older people, local and global CSOs working on older people's health issues, Government entities (policy and programmes aspects), with academia (research and training), and the private sector (digital support, assistive devices);
- To address Ageism in health care settings to conduct awareness campaign amongst health care professionals;
- Support Member States to conduct studies of the impact of school-based interventions on community acceptance of healthy ageing intervention, strengthening intergenerational bonding. (As envisaged in the regional framework);
- Support the Member States in research on need assessment of LTC, innovative ways of LTC delivery, caregiver burden and support.