Expert Group Meeting on
"Global ageing and the data revolution
 - the way forward in the post-2015 environment"
United Nations Secretariat, Room S-2724
New York, 7-9 July 2015

"Global ageing and the data revolution - the way forward in the post-2015 environment"

Concept note

Introduction

A critical element of the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), adopted in 2002, is national data collection and analysis on ageing related issues. It concerns the compilation of gender and age specific information for policy planning, monitoring and evaluation. In order to support the effective implementation of MIPAA, General Assembly resolutions have repeatedly called upon Member States to improve ageing related data collection. However, considerable gaps in reliable data continue to form a barrier to obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the impacts and consequences of ageing.

The Focal Point on Ageing is organizing an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) on "Global ageing and the data revolution - the way forward in the post-2015 environment" in New York on 7-9 July 2015. The Meeting will contribute to identifying the possible use of alternative sources of data on ageing to better inform policy development and monitoring. Discussions, presentations and recommendations can also contribute to the ongoing discussion and development of new data needs in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and beyond.

Background

So far, the development agenda has fallen short of achieving effective responses to the situation of older persons. At the national level, effective legislation and policies responding to the situation of older persons have often not been adopted, or remain dispersed, underfunded or insufficiently implemented.

Data needs on ageing issues

Population ageing has profound implications for many facets of human life. An ageing population will affect everything from economies, labor markets to health and social care. This prospect requires a better understanding of the implications and possibilities posed by population ageing as well as the situation of older persons themselves. While the older population is growing at an accelerated speed, many gaps in ageing related statistics and data exist, affecting the ability to develop targeted policies and programmes that address ageing related challenges.

Ongoing efforts in the implementation of MIPAA as well as in the context of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing have demonstrated that further in-depth analysis and evidence is crucial to enhance ageing related policy and programme formulation and implementation. The need for a clear understanding of the impact of global ageing, as well as to measure, monitor and report on progress, therefore calls for a demand for expanding data on ageing issues. Data and statistics demonstrate the changes needed that can address questions, from healthcare and social pensions to age-inclusive policies and programmes. However some of

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these critical ageing related priority areas are not easily quantifiable using mainstream statistics. Proactive and new initiatives on sex and age-disaggregated data should therefore be applauded as they demonstrate what is possible currently, and highlight where to build and systematize the collection of age related disaggregated data.

The data-revolution

Demand for evidence based data and statistics on older persons has been generated by the negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Addressing the statistical capacity of countries was one element highlighted by the Secretary-General's High Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It concluded that; a data revolution was necessary to improve the quality of statistics and information available to citizens. Moreover, data should be instrumental in providing the information basis for evidence-based decision making, analyzing trends, measuring and reporting that includes the widest possible range of the world's population, including older persons

In support of implementing a comprehensive Post-2015 Development Agenda, several efforts to define a strategic framework for statistics - 'The transformative agenda for statistics' - are currently ongoing. A Global Conference held in January 2015[1] encouraged the global community i) to engage in the debate on the data revolution, and reiterate the critical need for adequate statistical capacity, both at a technical and institutional level as well as to facilitate efforts that fill the data gaps and satisfy new data requirements; and ii) to address the need for the development of new data sources, method and methodologies resulting from the requirements of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, taking into account the possibilities of new technologies and non-traditional data sources.

The establishment of the so-called 'transformative agenda for statistics' provides an opportunity for integrating and broadening the scope of statistics and data collection that addresses the gaps and needs posed by ageing. The new integrated approach will introduce innovations to incorporate non-traditional sources of data including "big data" that so far have not been utilized in official statistics. These new, non-traditional data sources need to be leveraged to enrich sources of official statistics so that the data needs can be addressed. It should also ensure that spatially disaggregated data can be produced and made available to decision makers to provide them with the necessary statistical information.

Citizens-generated data collection in a post-2015 development environment

The integrated approach to broadening the scope of statistics and incorporating new- and non-traditional data opens up opportunities for citizens to engage and report directly on progress of a new set of development goals post-2015. The opportunity for direct interaction between citizens and governments through new and non-traditional data sources holds the potential to generate greater accountability and can facilitate a better understanding of development and performance of specific processes and challenges.

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[1] The Conference - "A Transformative Agenda for Official Statistics: Towards a Strategic Framework for Statistics in Support of the Post-2015 Development Agenda" - was organized as a follow up of Decision 45/103 taken by the Statistical Commission, March 2014

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In the context of the global ageing population, citizens-generated data through new and non-traditional data sources can be instrumental in enhancing a better understanding of the impacts of ageing. By engaging older persons directly in data collection efforts and governance processes, new and non-traditional data sources present new opportunities for measuring, monitoring and reporting on progress. These sources can at the same time enhance older persons' access to essential public information, strengthen the voice of older persons and enable the participation of older persons in policy-making processes.

As such, citizens-generated data collection, such as crowdsourcing mechanisms can serve as an important source of knowledge to aggregate older persons' views and thereby be instrumental in addressing the current gaps in ageing related data needs. The application of new- and non-traditional data sources therefore hold significant potential to enhance the understanding of critical ageing related priority areas that are not easily quantifiable using mainstream statistics. This can further support the effective implementation of MIPAA and strengthen the formulation and implementation of ageing related policies and programmes in a post-2015 environment.

Purpose

In view of better understanding the effects, needs and possibilities related to the growing ageing population, there is a strategic necessity to adapt data collection efforts. The EGM on "Global ageing and the data revolution - the way forward in the post-2015 environment" responds to the need for sound ageing related statistics and data as well as to the needs that will arise from the targets contained in the Sustainable Development Goals and the Post-2015 environment. The EGM is convened to explore how and which new and non-traditional data sources can support the policy discussions and decision-making on ageing issues at both the national and international levels.

Time and venue

The Expert Group Meeting on "Global ageing and the data revolution - the way forward in the post-2015 environment" will take place in New York at the United Nations Headquarters from 7-9 July 2015. The meeting will be organized by the Focal Point on Ageing in the Social Integration Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Secretariat.

Objectives

The EGM aims at informing the overall debate on developing a compendium of non-traditional sources of data on ageing in the context of the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the enhanced implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, by assessing the possibilities for strengthening the statistics and data collection related to ageing issues as well as considering new measures to support the way forward.

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Specific objectives of meeting are:

- To map non-traditional data sources to help define evidence based policy and programme formulation and enhance measuring, monitoring and reporting of progress related to ageing issues;

- To compile a compendium of the use of non-traditional data sources and statistics that could further support the implementation of MIPAA and be included in the discussions surrounding the data revolution;

- To contribute to the ongoing debate on improving the statistics for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals as relevant to older persons and improving data sources on the situation of the lives of older persons.

- To identify and document selected citizens-generated data collection approaches that can strengthen an older persons perspective in a post-2015 environment.

Participants

Experts, academia, and representatives of United Nations entities, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society will discuss the ways in which statistics, data collection and the application of non-traditional data sources can enable evidence based policy and programme formulation and define priority areas for action in addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by the ageing population.

Outcome

The EGM provides an occasion for the exchange of views and ideas. The presentations and discussions that will take place during the meeting will directly contribute to the further implementation of MIPAA, the wider strategic framework for implementing the post-2015 development agenda as well as the ongoing efforts in defining the SDG indicator framework. An analytical outcome report reflecting the discussion and all viewpoints will be prepared. This outcome document will be a contribution to the implementation of MIPAA as well as the work of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing. The report will be available to Member States and other stakeholders.

Main themes of the Expert Group Meeting

The following main themes will be discussed during the Expert Group Meeting under its various agenda items[2]

1. **New and non-traditional data sources and new technological solutions**

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[2] The themes are subject to finalization of the organization of the sessions of the EGM.

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To generate the necessary flow of reliable and timely data that ensures evidence based policy and programme formulation, traditional statistical processes will need to be redesigned to become more integrated and efficient and to yield different disaggregated data. Efforts to collect disaggregated data at the lowest possible level, by sex and age, should be made.

During the EGM, non-traditional data sources will be presented. It will demonstrate what information these sources can prove and contribute with as well as identify ways and means of how to benefit from the data revolution regarding data and statistics on older persons.

2. **Assessing data and information gaps – what are the needs for enhancing evidence based policy and programme formulation on ageing?**

Understanding the opportunities of ageing related non-traditional data sources and statistics requires an overview of the policy and programming needs. The EGM will reflect on which gaps need to be addressed in view of the inclusion of ageing issues in the discussions around SDG indicators and statistical measurements. It will address questions as to; what are the key challenges as well as the data requirements and limitations in different sectors such as health, employment, social security, human rights, discrimination as well as abuse, violence and neglect of older persons. The meeting will also explore how, and which new data sources and technologies can contribute to filling current gaps and consequently enhance evidence based policy and programme formulation in the ageing field.

3. **The potential of new and non-traditional data sources and new technological solutions at the national level, regional and global level**

Under-representation of older persons in national statistical sources is a significant barrier to developing active responses to various ageing related aspects. At the same time, the urgency of addressing national statistical capacities to better measure and report on progress in sustainable development has been highlighted in the report of the Secretary General's High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Enabling a comprehensive national approach to ageing issues through obtaining reliable and valid data can enable making international comparisons. However, comparison of data from varying practices and conditions can be difficult and non-comparable data can lead to the dissemination of incorrect information and consequently to misinterpretation of matters. It is therefore essential to discuss common comparability issues as well as assessing the linkages of age related data collection at the national, regional and global levels.

The EGM will explore how national efforts in applying new and non-traditional data can drive improvements in addressing the growing ageing population by e.g. facilitating comparable cross-national data. It aims at discussing how new and non-traditional data could be made more widely available - at the national, regional and global level - to monitor and analyze effects on the sustainability of public finances, welfare provisions, or the economic and social impact of demographic change. The meeting will also address questions related to how to strengthen national capacities by e.g. applying national guidelines, data coordination and reporting of information that support the design of appropriate policies at the regional and global level.

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4. **Recommendations related to older persons in a Post-2015 Development Agenda environment – defining the way forward**

This EGM will conclude with elaborating a number of concrete recommendations which contribute to the ongoing debate on improving the statistics for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals of relevance to older persons. The recommendations aim at compiling a compendium of the use of non-traditional data source and statistics that could be included in the discussions surrounding a "Transformative Agenda for Statistics" and further support the implementation of MIPAA.