



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Social Policy and Development



Permanent Mission of Japan
to the United Nations



WASEDA University



CSocD56 Side Event on



Why are digital skills critical for older persons?

2 February 2018

1.15 - 2:30pm, Conference Room 12
United Nations Headquarters, New York



Background

All countries are experiencing growth in the number and proportion of older persons in their populations. According to the latest World Population Ageing Report by UNDESA, the global population aged 60 years or over numbered 962 million in 2017, which has increased more than two-fold since 1980 when there were 382 million older persons worldwide. The number of older persons is expected to double again by 2050, when it is projected to reach nearly 2.1 billion. Innovation and technology could be transformative for the economic and social engagement and health of older persons, who remain the most vulnerable to digital exclusion.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), which promotes the foundation of a **“Society for all Ages”**, recognized that technological capacity has presented extraordinary opportunities to empower older persons and to seek the full inclusion and participation of older persons in their societies. Technology can be used to bring persons together and thereby contribute to the reduction of marginalization, loneliness and segregation between the ages. Measures that enable older persons to have access to, take part in and adjust to technological changes should therefore be taken.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at a historic UN Summit, seek to eradicate poverty and achieve shared prosperity for all, leaving no one behind. The 2030 Agenda recognized that the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness has

enormous potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies, as does scientific and technological innovation across areas as diverse as medicine and energy.

The Buenos Aires Declaration adopted during the World Telecommunication Development Conference, which took place from 9 to 20 October 2017 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the theme of "ICT for Sustainable Development Goals" (ICT4SDGs), recognized that digital literacy and ICT skills, applications and services should be enhanced to promote inclusive, egalitarian and quality education that would enable all people, in particular women and girls, persons with disabilities and other persons with specific needs, to contribute to knowledge and human development.

Today, we live in the era of digital technologies such as smartphones and artificial intelligence, a world in which our work, quality of life, health, and environment are all being transformed by these technologies. Despite this progress, many older persons lag behind and still face barriers which prevent them from fully participating in social, cultural, economic and political life. Governments, in partnership with all stakeholders, need to work together to invest in digital education for older persons and ensure that everyone in every society has the chance to acquire digital skills.

Older persons in fact remain vulnerable to digital exclusion and the least likely to tap the potential of innovative technologies. A recent report by AARP International entitled "The Aging Readiness & Competitiveness Report" revealed some striking numbers: in Turkey and Mexico about 90 per cent of people 65-plus have never used the Internet; in China, it's more than 85 percent and in Brazil it's more than 75 per cent. In the United States, more than 30 per cent of people 65-plus are not online. This clearly points to the need to promote digital literacy and to develop technology-driven products and services for older persons.

The Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in partnership with the Japan Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication, the Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations, Waseda University in Japan, and the NGO Committee on Ageing is organizing a side event on digital skills for older persons. The event will explore why digital skills are vital for older persons to participate in their societies and to better access public and private services. The lack of access to technology can marginalize older persons from the mainstream of development, undermining their economic and social roles and weakening their traditional sources of support.

Guiding Questions:

1. How can we invest in life-long learning and continuing education to ensure that older persons have the chance to acquire digital skills?
2. In what ways can we make innovation and technology accessible to older persons so that they don't miss out on their benefits?

3. How can older persons use innovative technologies to contribute to poverty eradication and the well-being and prosperity of their societies?
4. How can we develop and disseminate user-friendly information to assist older persons to respond to the technological demands of everyday life?

Opening Remarks:

Ms. Rosemary Lane, Senior Social Affairs Officer, UNDESA DSPD

H.E. Ambassador Toshiya Hoshino, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the UN

Keynote Speaker:

Ms. Masako Wakamiya, Retired banker and an application developer

Moderator:

Mr. Bradley Schurman, Director for Global Partnerships and Strategic Engagements, AARP

Speakers:

Mr. Obi Toshio, Director, Institute of e-Government, Waseda University, Japan

Ms. Rosalie Wang, Assistant Professor, Intelligent Assistive Technology and Systems Lab, University of Toronto

Ms. Marisa Giorgi, Director of Curriculum Development, Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)

