

Expert Group Meeting: “Measuring population ageing: Bridging Research and Policy”, Bangkok, Thailand, 25–26 February 2019

Session 5: Case studies: SDG3 – Good health and well-being

Chair: *Sorapop Kiatpongsan, Chula University*

1. Presentation: Rural-urban health disparities among older adults in South Africa (10-15 minutes)
Karl Peltzer, Ton Duc Thang University & North-West University
2. Presentation: Ageing and health in Russia (10-15 minutes)
Sergey Vasin, Russian Academy of Sciences
3. Presentation: Health and dependency (10-15 minutes)
Carol Jagger, Newcastle University
4. Presentation: Middle East (10-15 minutes)
Shereen Hussein, Kent

Discussion (30 minutes)

Population ageing is a well-established global demographic trend, with major socio-economic consequences. The long-term shift of the share of the population from the younger to the older ages is driven mainly by the declining levels of fertility, and also by the increases of life expectancy that are taking place almost everywhere. There is considerable international diversity in the onset and speed of population ageing, which, according to United Nations data, is most advanced in Japan and countries in Europe, followed by Northern America. Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean and Oceania are projected to follow similar trends over the next few decades. Even in most of African countries, whose populations are still relatively young, the absolute number of older persons is growing rapidly, and is leading to long-term shifts in the age-structure.

Traditionally, the United Nations and most researchers have used measures and indicators that are mostly or entirely based on people’s chronological age, which provides a simple, clear and easily replicable way to measure and track various indicators of ageing. At the same time, there has been increasing recognition that the health status, type and level of activity, productivity, and other socio-economic characteristics of older persons have changed significantly over the last century, and even over the last several decades. This has led to the development of alternative concepts and measures of ageing, which provide different outlooks on the levels and trends of ageing, and a more nuanced appreciation of what ageing means in different contexts. At the frontline is the Characteristics Approach to the measurement of population ageing developed at IIASA.

These changes and the various approaches to understanding and measuring ageing, have important implications for the design and implementation of national development policies and programs, and for the follow-up and review of internationally agreed development goals that are related to or are affected by population ageing. Specifically, the different ways of measuring ageing affect the assessments of the evolution of the number of older persons, their living conditions, their contributions to the societies where they live and their needs for social protection. They have

significant implications for labour markets, life-long education and health, and the interactions and mutual support of older persons with the younger generations.

Recognizing the diverse stages and characteristics of ageing in various regions of the world, as well as the recent developments and innovations in measurement, the Population Division the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the International Institute for Applied System Analysis (IIASA), and Chulalongkorn University, in collaboration with the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), are organizing an international expert group meeting on ***“Measuring Population Ageing: Bridging Research and Policy”***, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 25 to 26 February 2019.

This expert meeting will seek to take stock of different concepts and methodologies, and their applicability to and usefulness for various policy analyses and purposes. It will bring together experts to discuss key questions related to the measurement of population ageing, including discussion of traditional and new concepts and methods, and to assess their scope and limitations to support national policy design and implementation, as well as the regional and global review of progress in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, as noted above. Experts from governmental and international organizations, from research institutions as well as civil society organizations will be invited to discuss the applicability of various measures of ageing in different contexts.

Session 5 investigates the increasingly important issue of the level of health, disability, and cognition for older people. The ever-growing number of elderly raises questions and worry about care-taking, increasing costs for health-related care and medical services.

Goal 3 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” reflects and responds to the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of health and development, including widening economic and social inequalities. Universal health coverage, based on the principles of equity, access and quality, will be integral to achieving SDG 3, ending poverty and reducing inequalities.

But the world is off-track to achieve the health-related SDGs. Progress has been uneven, both between and within countries. There remains a 31-year discrepancy between the countries with the shortest and longest life expectancies. While some countries have made impressive gains, national averages hide the fact that some populations, groups and communities are being left behind. Multisectoral, rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches are essential to address health-related inequalities, strengthening inclusive governance and building resilient systems for health.

The characteristics of people change over time and differ from place to place. Health and well-being differ across subgroups of populations. This session discusses the importance of incorporating health and well-being into discussions of sustainable development goals. It discusses the relationship between health and well-being and our understanding of population ageing.

This session is expected to set the stage and possibly address the following points:

- What is the relationship between wellbeing and health? Can you have health without well-being? Does one always include the other?
- What is the relationship between health and aging?
- Is ageing always accompanied by the deterioration of health?
- What does healthy ageing imply?
- How to measure gender gap in health?

- Is there any gender related difference in dependency?
- What are the challenges and goals on a regional/national level?
- What are regional/national approaches dealing with health issues at older ages?
- What can countries benefit from the experience of others?
- What are health related characteristics that can be useful in measuring populations ageing?

Please note that all speakers are requested to adhere to the 15-minute time limit to allow for discussion after the session.

Should you have additional questions, please contact either Ms. Stefanie Andruchowitz (andrucho@iiasa.ac.it) or Ms. Karoline Schmid (schmidk@un.org)