

# *Nugroho Abikusno*

## **Investing in intergenerational solidarity and social inclusion: Ways and means to develop national capacities, monitoring and evaluation**

### *The young people of today were the children of yesterday and the elderly of the future.*

Ageing is a worldwide phenomenon. Developed countries have reached an age-structured population in the last century while having achieved the welfare of the majority of its population. In contrast, most developed countries will have reached an age-structured population within decades of this millennium while still struggling to achieve welfare of the majority of its population.

In South-East Asia, the SEARO member countries of India, Indonesia, Myanmar and Thailand all have populations 60 years and above 7% (range from 7.1 in India to 10.1 in Thailand). Life expectancy in Indonesia, Maldives, Bangladesh, DPR Korea, Thailand and Sri Lanka all are above 66.6 years (range from 65.6 in Indonesia to 70.8 in Sri Lanka). The median age of Bangladesh, DPR Korea and Thailand are above 30 years (on average 30.1 years). Total Fertility Rate of Bhutan, Thailand, Bangladesh and DPR Korea are below 2.0 (range from 1.25 in Bhutan to 1.92 in DPR Korea). Sex ratio in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, DPR Korea and Thailand are below 1.00 (range from .97 in Thailand to .99 in Myanmar). All these indicators show the degree of ageing in the SEARO member countries.

With the increase in the proportion and absolute numbers of the total population or ageing of the population, there are many challenges faced by government and communities (civil societies) in the developing world. With increase in an individuals' age it is usually followed by increased prevalence of chronic diseases and disability so that the elderly population is assumed to be a burden to the family, community and the entire nation. Many young people consider older people to be an obstacle to the advancement of their careers as well as a burden to their family life as the older parent becomes frail due to increased disease and disability, eventually becoming bedridden in the family and later forced to stay in nursing homes during the last years or terminal stages of their life. This scenario causes young people to have a negative image on older people and early in their life they adopt a ageistic outlook towards older people (Ageism).

In the end of the last century, there has been a shift in this paradigm towards active ageing of a society for all ages. In the last ageing world summit held in Madrid in 2002, the ageing programs were focused on developing national plans of action that focused on older people and development, advancing health and well-being in old age, and providing an enabling and supportive environment. This paradigm was further reinforced with the promotion of active ageing that consists of three pillars namely older persons' health, participation and security.

This session will discuss about the issue of intergenerational solidarity as it relates to its integration into family policy universally and within the context of national policy on the family as a driving force to support national development of all countries especially in the developing world. In this session social protection will not be the focus of discussion because it has been dealt with extensively in the other sessions. In this session the focus will be on intergenerational solidarity and how it relates to issues that enable it to be incorporated into family policy, the development of acceptable indicators to measure, monitor and evaluate intergenerational solidarity.

The overall premise in this case is that active ageing will enable older persons to participate in the community provided that they are given support from members of the community including the younger generation.

In the case of SEARO countries, the following examples relates to active ageing in developing countries based on reports of SEARO countries attending the recent Review of MIPAA held in Macao in 2007. Some indicators of intergenerational solidarity can be observed in the following examples as it relates to active ageing in developing countries.

In Bangladesh participation of the elderly in the community is facilitated by Social Welfare, NGOs dealing with issues of the elderly and the Elderly Citizen Welfare Association. In the case of intergenerational solidarity more young people should be mobilized to support and be directly involved in the existing initiatives for enabling the elderly to actively participate in the community.

In DPR Korea participation of the elderly in the community is promoted in the traditional virtue of revering the elderly through specific days for service as well as designating places for delivering services to the elderly. Modal deeds performed by the elderly are showcased and published through the mass media. Senior citizens who are still able to work are in fields such as science and research as well as literature and the arts in the capacity of consultants, researchers or translators in their former work stations.

In Indonesia participation of the elderly in the community was reported based on a survey by the NCOP. Ninety percent of the elderly surveyed in elderly groups were active and performed activities outside their homes. The majority of older people were able to contribute to national development mainly in the informal economic sector. The most common occupation of older people are traders, laborer, agricultural worker and pensioner. Nearly twenty percent of older peoples' income was around USD 100; the highest income per month or equal to the national standard for minimum labor wages.

In Myanmar participation of the elderly in the community is facilitated by the Ageing Pilot Project Phase II (2006-2009) organized by Social Welfare in collaboration with national NGOs. Previously, in each township thirty older persons were cared by 30 trained volunteers that are

usually younger people. This program will be extended to 52 townships throughout ten states of Myanmar.

In Nepal participation of the elderly in the community is sanctioned by the Senior Citizen Act 2063 that enables senior citizens to be represented in the national and district senior citizen welfare committee (4 out of 17 members at national and 2 out of 7 members at district levels are older persons). However, the report stated that there was no awareness and training on ageing given to the general public. Furthermore, disaster management has not incorporated the needs of the elderly in emergency situations.

In Sri Lanka participation of the elderly in the community is promoted by the national secretariat for elders that conduct education programs for members of elder committees from district to the village level. Active ageing target groups are directed to public sector officials, school children and teachers, formal and informal leaders, as well as the elderly and their families.

In Thailand participation of the elderly in the community is facilitated by the establishment of Multipurpose Senior Citizens Centers in the community for varieties of activities such as caregiving, as well as to support elderly development that focuses on well-being, physical, mental or social conditions of all ages in the community. The pilot areas of the Project are located in four parts of the country; where 1-2 provinces were targeted in each part of the country.

## **Lessons learned**

The lessons learned from the reports of several countries in the Macao review was that initiatives in active ageing or other related activities were usually facilitated by social welfare in cooperation with NGOs concerned with older person affairs (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Myanmar). Government initiatives could facilitate the continuation of work by older workers in their respective work environments in specialized diverse fields such as research and the arts (DPR Korea). For older persons to remain active as long as possible the informal sector in the general community has great potential for possible intergenerational activities such as older workers serving as mentors to their younger co-workers in the workplace (Indonesia). There is great demand for caregiving both informal as well as formal in institutions and especially in the home-setting (Myanmar). There is potential for young workers to be involved in intergenerational relations vis. a vis intergenerational solidarity through this profession and there is great demand for this expertise/service in more aged countries especially in East Asia such as Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan. The establishment of centers of active ageing where young and old people can meet, interact and work together is very important to promote older person quality of life, promote intergenerational relation/ solidarity and help prevent social exclusion in the community. In this case age-friendly initiatives of major cities as well as rural agro-centers should be promoted. Lastly, but most importantly, the promotion of active ageing that includes intergenerational solidarity to prevent social exclusion of older persons

and people with special needs should start early in an individual's life both informally at the home and formally at school as early as pre- and primary school. These are some of the highlights that can be taken from the recent meeting in Macao based on several examples shown previously in the examples of reports by SEARO country members.

### **Recommendations**

In refinement of future national plans of action on ageing in countries facing or contemplating an aged society it must be clearly stated on the importance of intergenerational relations/ solidarity to prevent social exclusion in the community of older persons especially for those with special needs. Initiatives to promote intergenerational solidarity should begin or facilitated through building alliances between young and older people organizations.

In order to facilitate activities to promote intergenerational activities the establishment of active ageing centers in the community especially with a large proportion and number of older persons should be planned and funded by the community and facilitated by older persons alliances' between government and civil society elements in the community concerned with older person affairs.

Dissemination of active ageing principles of healthy lifestyles, continued participation of people of all ages especially older persons to remain active as long as possible, and older person security in its various forms based on the social-cultural and social-economic conditions of each country should begin as early as possible both informally and formally in the home and school.

Based on these three main themes or others related to intergenerational solidarity, a minimal set of data for measuring active ageing including its intergenerational component can be developed that reflects both process as well as outcome indicators. In the case of social exclusion indicators are presently being develop by experts in the field of social quality and there is great possibility to work with these experts in measuring, monitoring and evaluating intergenerational solidarity and social exclusion in the communities of SEARO as well as the rest of the world in general.

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