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Research - Ageing in Asia and the Pacific : What's next?

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Ageing in Asia and the Pacific: What's next?

Regional Analysis on Ageing Policies and its Implementations

MIPAA revisited

In 2011, Asia-Pacific Institute of Ageing Studies, in collaboration with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), has carried out a regional analysis to the ageing survey in review of institutional arrangements, legislations, policies and programmes by countries in the Asia-Pacific region, to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the signatory of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, while reassessing the implementation of the actions as agreed by the pact.

"10 years have passed after the ageing population was finally being reckoned internationally as a critical issue to all countries, albeit developed or developing countries, that immediate actions should be taken promptly and swiftly in order to deal with the coming challenges faced by the governments," said Ms. Phoebe Tang Pui-ye, Senior Project Officer (Research) of APIAS.

"Now is the time to review what we have done to fulfill our promises so far."

The year 2012 will be a milestone marking the tenth year after the agreement of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, commonly known as MIPAA signed by 159 governments in Madrid, Spain during the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002.



MIPAA accentuated 3 priority directions namely (1) older persons and development, (2) advancing health and well-being into old age and (3) ensuring enabling and supporting environments. It is comprehensive and far-reaching with its 18 priority issues, 35 objectives and 239 actions underlying the main orientations, which seeks to give guidance to policy formulation and implementation towards the specific goal of successful adjustment to an ageing world.

The previous regional survey was carried out in 2005 and 2002. A third evaluation on the progress and closeness to the guidelines of MIPAA will be conducted in 5 continents simultaneously.

Measuring effectiveness of MIPAA

UNESCAP distributed self-administered questionnaires to the heads of government of its 62 countries or associate members in query of the institutional arrangement and holistic policy solutions, as well as the implementation of the MIPAA's notions and contexts.

The four areas being investigated include MIPAA policy implementation and the 3 main directions as illustrated in the Plan of Action as adopted in the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002.

24 out of 62 countries have responded to the survey, and APIAS is commissioned to make a second review and analysis to the data collected after our first review in 2005. APIAS, serving as an expert consultant, will share the information analyzed to all governmental authorities and make references to the strategies and tactics taken by their neighbouring countries in the region.

Phoebe Tang added, "Asia-Pacific region demonstrates a different ageing situation from the West, that most of us experience ageing before getting rich. Countries of dissimilar level of development varied greatly demographically."

"Not only is there a wide rich-poor gap, but there is also a vast cultural diversity which complicates the matter

further when dealing with ageing issues. It is essential for APIAS to address the regional characteristics when analyzing the data."

Mercurial ageing situation

In most countries in Asia and the Pacific region, their ageing populations are brought by the increased longevity coupled with low fertility rate.

By the millennium, persons aged 60 years and older in the Asia-Pacific had accounted for over 50 percent of the world population. This proportion will surge to nearly 60 percent by 2025.

Developed countries like Japan is facing challenges of a slow or negative population growth, and the rapid ageing in the country has impacted significantly on its social structure and social allowances. Hong Kong, Singapore and South Korea, which have a sixty-plus population of over 15 percent, will see the figures soar to around 40 percent near to that of Japan by 2050.

Many young Asian countries such as Cambodia and Laos focus on family planning and reproductive health in population policies, who have a 15 to 20-year window of opportunity to get themselves into a better position to face the challenges of population ageing.

However, for China, Thailand and Sri Lanka, which have a much faster pace of ageing that the proportion of older persons aged 60 or above will double from around 11 percent to over 20 percent within 20 years, will have to cope with a grimmer situation.

By 2050, most countries in the region are expected to have at least a quarter of the population aged 60 or above.

APIAS is invited to participate in the Preparatory Meeting for the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to be held from 22 to 24 November 2011 in Beijing, China, as organized by the UNESCAP in cooperation with the China National Committee on Ageing, so as to identify key priorities related to population ageing in the region and determine the agenda for the Regional Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to be held in July 2012.

