World Health Day 2012 - Ageing and Health

"Good health adds life to years"

Background Note
I. Introduction

World Health Day (WHD) is celebrated every year on 7 April, to mark the anniversary of World Health Organization (WHO's) founding. In 1948, WHO held the First World Health Assembly. WHD is seen as an opportunity by the organization to draw worldwide attention to a subject of major importance to global health. World Health Day is a global campaign, inviting everyone – from global leaders to the public in all countries – to focus on a single health challenge with global impact. The topic of World Health Day in 2012 is “Ageing and Health” with the theme "Good health adds life to years". The focus is on how good health throughout life can help older men and women lead full and productive lives and be an invaluable resource for their families and communities. Ageing is a universal phenomenon, common to all communities, nations and sexes.

II. Are you ready? What you need to know about ageing

A. Our world is changing

In the 21st century, health is determined by and contributes to broad social trends. Economies are globalizing, more and more people live and work in cities, family patterns are changing and technology is evolving rapidly. One of the biggest social transformations is population ageing. Soon, the world will have more older people than children and more people of very old age than ever before.

1. The world will have more people who live to see their 80s or 90s than ever before. The number of people aged 80 years or older, for example, will have almost quadrupled to 395 million between 2000 and 2050. There is no historical precedent for a majority of middle-aged and older adults having living parents, as is already the case today. More children will know their grandparents and even their great-grandparents, especially their great-grandmothers. On average, women live six to eight years longer than men.

2. The past century has seen remarkable improvements in life expectancy. In 1910, the life expectancy for a Chilean female was 33 years; today, a mere century later, it is 82 years. This represents a remarkable gain of almost 50 years of life in one century, and is largely due to improvements in public health.
3. **Soon, the world will have more older people than children.** Within the next five years, for the first time in human history, the number of adults aged 65 and over will outnumber children under the age of 5. By 2050, these older adults will outnumber children under the age of 14.

4. **The world population is rapidly ageing.** Between 2000 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will double from about 11% to 22%. The absolute number of people aged 60 years and over is expected to increase from 605 million to 2 billion over the same period.

5. **Low and middle-income countries will experience the most rapid and dramatic demographic change.** For example, it took more than 100 years for the share of France's population aged 65 or older to double from 7 to 14%. In contrast, it will take countries like Brazil and China less than 25 years to reach the same growth.

**B. Determinants of healthy ageing**

1. **Healthy ageing is linked to health in earlier stages of life.** Undernutrition in the womb, for example, may increase the risk of disease in adult life, such as circulatory diseases and diabetes. Respiratory infections in childhood may increase the risk of chronic bronchitis in adult life. Obese or overweight, adolescents run the risk of developing chronic diseases, such as diabetes, circulatory disease, cancer, respiratory and musculo-skeletal disorders, in adult life.

2. **Yet, how well we age depends on many factors.** The functional capacity of an individual's biological system increases during the first years of life, reaches its peak in early adulthood and naturally declines thereafter. The rate of decline is determined, at least in part, by our behaviours and exposures across the whole life course. These include what we eat, the extent of our physical activity and our exposure to health risks such as those caused by smoking, harmful consumption of alcohol, or exposure to toxic substances.

**C. Demographic changes are accompanied by new challenges**

1. **Even in poor countries, most older people die of noncommunicable diseases** such as heart disease, cancer and diabetes, rather than from infectious and parasitic diseases. In addition, older people often have several health problems at the same time, such as diabetes and heart disease.

2. **The number of people living with disability is increasing due to population ageing and because of the greater risk of chronic health problems in older age.** For example, about 65% of all people who are visually impaired are aged 50 and older, with this age group comprising about 20% of the world's population. With an increasing share of elderly population in many countries, more people will be at risk of age-related visual impairment.
3. **Globally, many older people are at risk of maltreatment.** Around 4-6% of older people in developed countries have experienced some form of maltreatment at home. Abusive acts in institutions include physically restraining patients, depriving them of dignity (by for instance leaving them in soiled clothes) and intentionally providing insufficient care (such as allowing them to develop pressure sores). The maltreatment of older people can lead to serious physical injuries and long-term psychological consequences.

4. **The need for long-term care is rising.** The number of older people who are no longer able to look after themselves in developing countries is forecast to quadruple by 2050. Many of the very old lose their ability to live independently because of limited mobility, frailty or other physical or mental health problems. Many require some form of long-term care, which can include home nursing, community care and assisted living, residential care and long stays in hospitals.

5. **Worldwide, there will be a dramatic increase in the number of people with dementias such as Alzheimer's disease, as people live longer.** The risk of dementia rises sharply with age with an estimated 25-30% of people aged 85 or older having some degree of cognitive decline. Older people with dementia in low- and middle-income countries generally do not have access to the affordable long-term care their condition may warrant. Often their families do not often have publicly funded support to help with care at home.

6. **In emergency situations, older people can be especially vulnerable.** When communities are displaced by natural disasters or armed conflict, older people may be unable to flee or travel long distances and may be left behind. Yet, in many situations they can also be a valuable resource for their communities as well as for the humanitarian aid process when they are involved as community leaders.

### III. Ageing in India

The 2001 census counts the proportion of Indian population above the age of sixty years as 77 million, which constitutes about 7.4% of the entire population. It is estimated that by 2051 the population of 60 plus is expected to reach to over 300 million, translating to 17% of the total population, of which a large proportion would live in rural areas. This increases the burden of chronic illnesses and ailments specific to these twilight years tending to bring down the quality of life. A large proportion of the population is adversely impacted as they are not productive and are dependent on others. Economic independence is less in elderly women than their male counterparts, thus they are more vulnerable and deprived.

### IV. Ageing and health: Good health adds life to years

During this year's World Health Day campaign, WHO intends to go beyond awareness-raising and elicit concrete action and positive change. The objectives of this year’s campaign are to:

- Take action to create societies which appreciate and acknowledge older people as valued resources and enable them to participate fully
Help protect and improve health as we age

The World Health Day campaign aims to engage all key stakeholders of society. The target audience includes policy-makers in governments and international organizations, local leaders, health-care providers, civil society groups, researchers, private sector entities, older people, their caregivers, service providers and families, community leaders, youth and youth groups, general public etc.

The key messages for highlighting the issue of the elderly include:
- Older people are a valuable resource for their societies and should feel valued.
- Good health throughout life helps us make the most of the positive aspects of ageing.
- Societies who take care of their older populations and support their active participation in daily life, will be better prepared to cope with the changing world.

Good health in older age can be achieved by:
- Promoting health across the life-course.
- Creating age-friendly environments that foster the health and participation of older people.
- Providing access to basic primary health care, long-term care and palliative care.
- Acknowledging the value of older people and helping them to participate fully in family and community life.

Expected outcomes of World Health Day 2012 campaign:
- Greater appreciation that good health across the life-course contributes to a happy and productive older age.
- People become aware of ageist stereotypes and support older people in being active, resourceful and respected members of society.
- Governments implement innovative strategies to ensure good health for the elderly.
- Governments take action now to anticipate and address public health challenges related to population ageing. This is particularly important in low- and middle-income countries, which are experiencing the fastest ageing.

V. World Health Day 2012 activities
The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MOHFW) in collaboration with WHO-Country Office for India shall commemorate World Health Day (WHD) 2012 by supporting a National Meeting on Ageing and Health at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi on 7th April, 2012. A Walkathon with elderly participants has been planned on this occasion, signifying ‘ageing and good health’. Health screening for elderly by All India Institute of Medical Sciences and interactive session are other activities planned to mark this occasion. There will be 19 regional advocacy meetings supported by WHO. IEC activities shall be undertaken by MOHFW in 100 districts throughout the country covered under the National Programme for Health Care of the Elderly (NPHCE). These events shall sensitize the key stakeholders on active ageing and good health. There shall be extensive media campaign around WHD. Creation of promotional materials in print and electronic media (short audio-visual film) are being supported by WHO-Country Office for
India. These shall further be disseminated. They are meant to reach out to the general population highlighting beneficial effects of a healthy and balanced life-style so that they can lead a healthy and active productive life.

Population ageing will hamper the achievement of socioeconomic and human development goals if action is not taken today. The take-home message for World Health Day 2012 is ‘aging can be healthy and fun-filled at the same time being productive to the society.’

VI. Policies/schemes/programmes for the elderly in India

- **Relevant Constitutional provisions**
  - *Article 41* – Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases. The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want. (Source: [http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1975922/](http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1975922/))
  - *Article 47* - Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health. The State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties and, in particular, the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption except for medicinal purposes of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health. (Source: [http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1551554/](http://indiankanoon.org/doc/1551554/))

- **Policies**
  - *National Policy on Older Persons (1999)* - The National Policy seeks to assure older persons that their concerns are national concerns and they will not live unprotected, ignored or marginalized. The goal of the National Policy is the well-being of older persons. It aims to strengthen their legitimate place in society and help older persons to live the last phase of their life with purpose, dignity and peace. (Source: [http://socialjustice.nic.in/npopcomplete.php?pageid=4](http://socialjustice.nic.in/npopcomplete.php?pageid=4))

  - *National Policy on Senior Citizens (2011) under draft*

- **National Council for Older Persons**
  - An autonomous National Council for Older Persons headed by the Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment will be set up to promote and coordinate the concerns of older persons. The Council will include representatives of relevant Central Ministries and the Planning Commission. (Source: [http://socialjustice.nic.in/npopcomplete.php?pageid=13](http://socialjustice.nic.in/npopcomplete.php?pageid=13))

- **Legislation**
  - *Maintenance & Welfare of Parents & Senior Citizens Act, 2007*  
    This Act provides effective provisions for the maintenance and welfare of parents and senior citizens guaranteed and recognized under the Constitution and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. (Source: [http://socialjustice.nic.in/oldageact.php?format=print](http://socialjustice.nic.in/oldageact.php?format=print))
• Central sector Scheme (Integrated Programme for Older Persons)
  ➢ Being implemented since 1992 (Revised 2008). Under the Scheme of Integrated Programme for Older Persons, various aspects are been taken care of, namely Maintenance of Old Age Homes (OAH), Maintenance of Respite Care, Homes Continuous Care Homes, Multi Service Center - Mobile Medicare Unit, Day care Centers for Care of Older Persons with Dementia, Physiotherapy Clinic, Disability and Hearing Aids for Elderly, Mental Health Care and Specialized Care for Vulnerable Elderly, Helplines and Counselling for Older Persons, Programme for sensitization of School and College students, Regional Resource and Training Center, Training of Caregivers to Older Persons, Awareness Projects for Older Persons, Multi Facility Care Centers for Older Widowed Women, Volunteers Bureau for Older Persons, Formation of Vridha Sanghas, Senior Citizen Associations - Self help Groups
  (Source- http://ngo.india.gov.in/schemes_view_ngo.php?sch_id=MOSJE6&scheme_type=NO DAL)

• National Programme for Health Care of Elderly (NPHCE)
  ➢ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) has taken appropriate steps in this regard by launching the National Program for Health Care of Elderly (NPHCE) as a centrally sponsored scheme under the new initiatives in the XI Five Year Plan. Presently it is being rolled out in 100 districts. It shall be later upscaled to the entire country. The goals of the NPHCE is to provide an easy access to preventive, promotive, curative and rehabilitative services to the elderly; to make optimum use of the community based primary health care approach and strengthen capacity of the medical and paramedical professionals; to provide referral services to the elderly patients through district hospitals, medical colleges, and strengthen health manpower development in the field of geriatric medicine.

For more information

World Health Organization
WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities

Ageing and Life Course
http://www.who.int/ageing/en/

WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia
http://www.searo.who.int/EN/Section260/Section2705.htm

Nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO
HelpAge International
http://www.helpage.org/

International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics
http://www.iagg.info/

International Federation on Ageing
http://www.ifa-fiv.org/
Other nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO

**United Nations links**
Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
http://live.unece.org/pau/age/welcome.html

United Nations Population Division

United Nations Social Policy and Development Division
http://social.un.org/index/Ageing.aspx

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More information on World Health Day 2012 is available at following link: