

Regarding the operating funds and sources of the clubs, in practice, raising funds to provide loans to club members is not always easy. In some areas, the local authorities did not understand the benefits of this club model, and, as a result, did not provide any financial support for the clubs. The basic recommendations to improve the club model, therefore, should focus on strengthening the dissemination of the benefits of the clubs and enhancing the relationship between the clubs and the local governments, local agencies and organizations as well as their support to the club activities. Besides, the local authorities should support and supplement funds to the club following the original design which commit an initial fund of VND50 million for each club. Furthermore, the club training and monitoring activities should be maintained and strengthened.

Recommendations

1. It is necessary to survey and assess the needs of local older persons, local resources and the awareness of the local governments. It is clear from the research that when the local government supported the club, it operated more actively and effectively.
2. Coordination involving the Project Management Board, the local governments, related agencies, and associations at all levels, and the ISHCs, is essential for effective activities and sustainability of the clubs.
3. Selection of the club management board members is important as the role of club management board members is critical to maintain and implement the club activities. Effective board members are one of the factors that led to the success of OPAs.
4. Size and gender ratio of clubs are also critical. According to the project design, the number of club members should be limited to 50-70 people, and the ratio between female and male members should be 70:30. If the number of people who want to participate in the club is high, the board should consider separating the club into more than one club per one commune. Diversified strategies to recruit enough male or female members for proper gender ratio are also necessary.
5. Training for club board members and club members is among the important activities in the model. Training and communication should be designed to suit the learning capacities of older people.
6. Close monitoring and evaluation of the clubs' activities should be continued to provide timely and relevant feedback and support, ensuring the sustainability of the clubs after the project ends.



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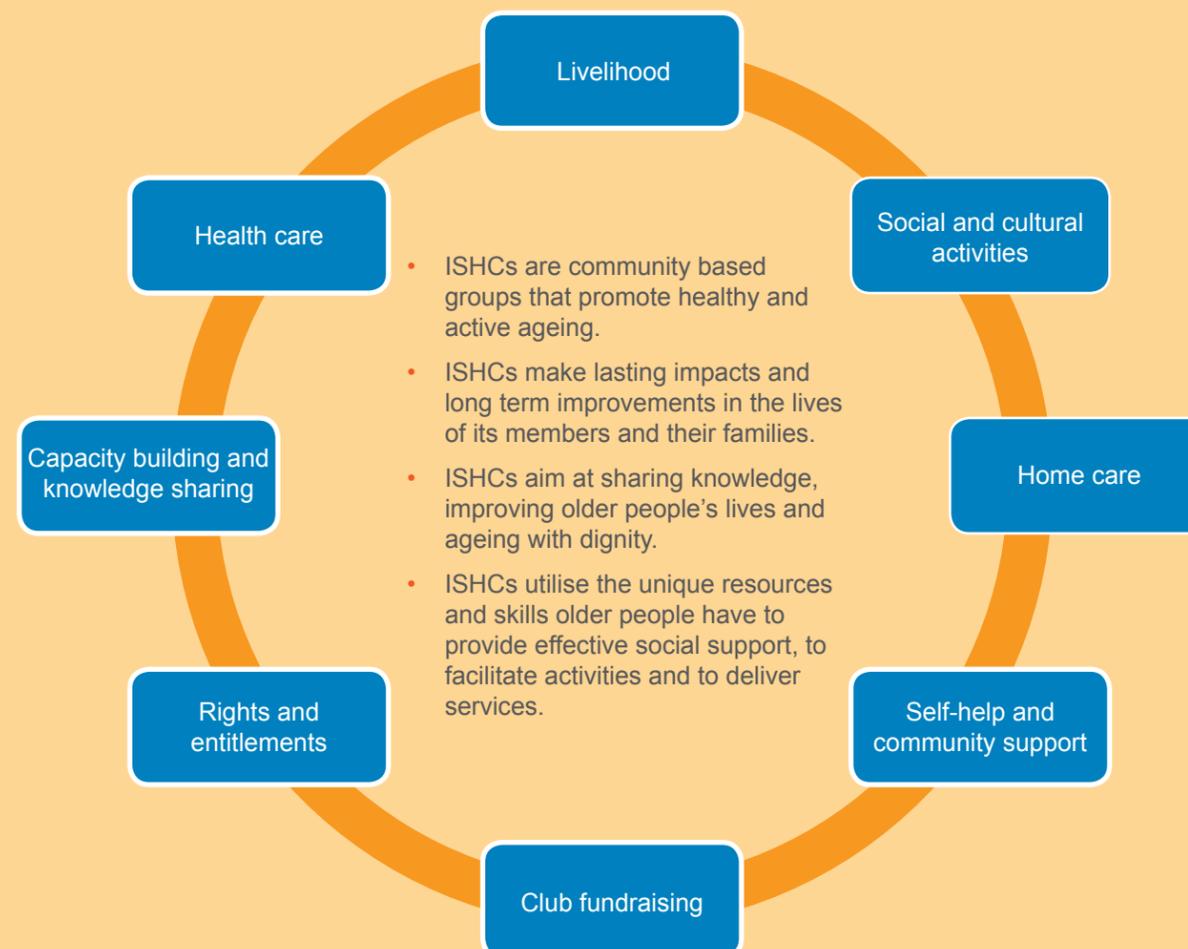


SUMMARY

ASSESSMENT OF UNFPA'S PILOTED COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL ON CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Background

Under the project titled "Prevention of domestic violence, addressing imbalanced sex ratio at birth (SRB), and care for the elderly" funded by UNFPA in Hai Duong Province and Ben Tre Province in Viet Nam, the Inter-generational Self-Help Club (ISHC) model was adopted for piloting from year 2013 to 2015. The ISHC model aims to increase quality of life of older people, their families and communities with special attention given to those from more vulnerable groups including the poor, near poor, and women, through community based inter-generational and self-help approaches. The ISHCs are also financially supported by HelpAge International. After two years of implementation, an assessment of the model's performance was conducted to provide evidence on results and recommendations for further improvement of the model.



Key Findings

Under UNFPA's project, there were 8 groups of activities implemented in the ISHC model. Findings from the assessment show that ISHC model has achieved encouraging results in all groups of activities.

- 1. Health care activities:** As club members, older people were offered health examinations, health counselling and had their health status recorded. A majority of club members did physical exercises at least 3 times per week. A session on self-care was organised at the club every quarter. The clubs organized health check-ups for their members twice a year. The survey results showed that in 2015, 95.4 per cent of the ISHC members had one health check-up and 84.2 per cent had two or more. All of the surveyed members had health records and the proportion of members with health insurance increased significantly.
- 2. Income generation activities:** The clubs formed livelihood groups and achieved the targets set out by the project. There were at least two livelihood groups per club. 7 out of 12 clubs reached the target of conducting at least 4 training sessions per year about new technology and innovation, sharing experience at the club meeting. A study tour was organised for members to learn about income generation models. The club also provided revolving micro credit fund to club members to develop production and contribute to increased income of individuals and families. At the time of the survey, the average revolving fund in Hai Duong is VND 78.38 million (US\$ 3,577) and in Ben Tre VND 110.42million (US\$ 5,065) per club. This shows a significant increase from the HelpAge International's initial support of VND 50 million (US\$2,294) per ISHC.
- 3. Cultural activities:** Each club has a cultural team practicing regularly to perform in the club meetings, celebration and other meetings. All of the surveyed members reported that these activities were organised frequently in the club meetings and most members found that the activities were very useful. The assessment result shows that the cultural activities have significantly improved members' life spirit and helps strengthen the solidarity and create bonds among members. 99.6 per cent of the surveyed club members said that they became more confident since they joined the clubs.
- 4. Home care activities:** After 2 years of implementation, the clubs exceeded the target of having at least 5 home care volunteers. The total number of home care volunteers is 79 (46 in Hai Duong and 33 in Ben Tre) providing home care services at least 2 times per week for 148 people in need. Support with activities of daily living such as chores and washing is provided mainly to older women and men in difficult circumstances or living alone.
- 5. Self-help and community support activities:** Every month the clubs provide help for at least one person and/or support the community. Over two years, the 12 ISHCs provided help, either in cash or in kind, in 6,406 cases. Best practices in providing effective community support can be found in Son Dinh Commune, Vinh Hoa Commune and Phuoc Thanh Commune Clubs (Ben Tre Province).
- 6. Club fundraising:** Various fundraising strategies were carried out in the clubs, for example, the club fees and interest from the revolving funds, etc. The clubs also received some support from the local government. At the time of the survey, the 12 ISHCs have managed to raise VND 858.37 million (US\$39,375) to help people in difficult situations and/or to support the ISHC to help its members.

"This is the best activity for older people in the province. There are many other clubs, but none of them contain all these activities such as health care, livelihood, social and community support. This is a perfect model; it ensures that the needs of the communities are met".

A representative of DoLISA, Hai Duong Province

- 7. Rights and entitlements related activities:** During ISHC club meetings, awareness was raised of relevant legislation and policies through information sharing. The survey showed that the club members, in general, have much better understanding on the rights of older people than they did before.
- 8. Capacity building and knowledge sharing:** Information sessions and training were organised at the monthly meetings of the clubs on various topics, including crop cultivation, animal husbandry, small business, gender equality, domestic violence prevention, health care, healthy diet and prevention of the common diseases for older people.

Impacts of the model

The positive impact of the model can be seen at all levels from club members themselves and community as a whole. The positive changes at individual level include an increase in household income, better health due to frequent exercise and sound knowledge on health related issues. With knowledge exchange on crop cultivation and animal husbandry techniques and understandings of laws and policies, the role of older people had been strengthened. There is a spill-over effect to the community and members' families as well. 93.7 per cent of members said that they regularly or occasionally disseminated their knowledge to others. The average income of club member increased from VND 19.76 million (US\$906) to VND 26.74 million (US\$1,226) annually (30.3 per cent increase). Almost all of the ISHC members said that they have become more confident since they joined the clubs.

Conditions for the model's success

- A high capacity Management Board with good management skills
- Active volunteers
- Initial financial support at about VND 50 million (US\$ 2,293) per club
- Technical support in using ISHC's revolving livelihood fund to increase income for both the club and club members.

"As a new member in the club, I feel more confident than before in joining with other members in advocacy activities and fundraising for the club. Whether the fund reaches VND 100 million or 50 million (US\$ 4,587 and \$2,293) is important, but more important is the sharing of experience and knowledge. The intergenerational approach of the ISHC has created a common voice and solidarity in the community."

FGD in Thanh Tung commune, Thanh Mien district, Hai Duong province

Sustainability and replicability

ISHC model is considered sustainable in terms of its organization, human resources, financial resources and activities. The replication of this model is consistent with the policies of the Party and State, which have been specified by the indicators in the National Action Programme for older people in each province. Most of the opinions in the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions pointed out that this model should be replicated in other areas, and be extended in places where the clubs already existed. The successful replication of the model depends on many different factors, such as the practical needs of older people, the consideration and support of the local governments, the adequacy of human, technical and financial resources. By the time of the study, in addition to six clubs founded by the Project, 11 more clubs were formed in each province; the total number of ISHC clubs was increased to 34 in two provinces.

Challenges

Despite the outstanding achievements, the clubs still face many difficulties, such as finding and selecting the volunteer members of the management boards. The clubs have a lot of activities and the effective management requires a lot of work by the management volunteers. In addition, the management boards need to be refreshed periodically and to recruit new management volunteers as members in the management boards get older.