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Regional Conference
on Population Ageing

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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS



“Reframing Ageing”

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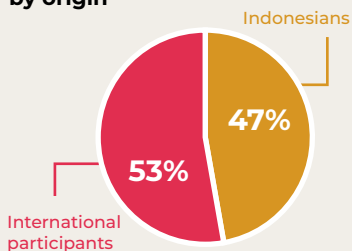
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UNFPA and BAPPENAS.

Percentage of participants by origin



Gender breakdown

Of 252 International participants



Of 227 Indonesian participants



Of total 479 participants



Number of participants by category

Civil society	131
Government	158
International organisations	74
Academics/research institutions	70
Private sector	21
Others	25



About the conference

Rapid population ageing is transforming societies and economies, presenting both challenges and opportunities that demand a comprehensive rethink of ageing.

The 2024 Asia-Pacific Regional Conference took place in Bali, Indonesia, from 11–13 September 2024, at the Bali Nusa Dua Convention Center (BNDCC). This multi-stakeholder event provided a dynamic platform for sharing experiences, learning from innovations, and establishing connections among stakeholders from across the region and beyond.

The conference convened 479 Indonesian and international participants and presenters to examine ageing from diverse viewpoints, emphasising the importance of fostering dialogue on strategies that prioritise fairness and equity for present and future older generations. In addition to addressing the complexities of ageing, the event explored intersections with significant processes such as climate change and technological development, underscoring the importance of integrated approaches to global challenges.

Welcome remarks

Dante Saksono Harbuwono, Vice Minister of Health, Indonesia, brought attention to a positive perspective on ageing. He urged the conference to focus on the wealth of experience older individuals offer and stressed the importance of creating an environment that enables older persons to remain active and engaged in society.

Dewa Putu Sunarta, representing Bali's Acting Governor, highlighted urgent challenges from the ageing population, emphasising the need for adaptive policies and integrated services to support their health, wellbeing, and social engagement. He called for stakeholder collaboration to keep older people active, healthy, and productive.

Maliki, Deputy Minister of Population and Manpower at BAPPENAS, stressed the significance of addressing the diverse needs of older persons. He underscored the recent legislative advancements in Indonesia aimed at supporting mothers and children, which are foundational for fostering a secure environment for older adults. He positioned ageing as a chance for individuals to contribute productively to society.



479 participants from 38 countries

Key Lecture



Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana, Under-Secretary General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), framed ageing as a significant human success story, yet acknowledged the accompanying challenges, particularly in relation to economic growth and health outcomes for older individuals. To effectively address these challenges, Dr. Alisjahbana advocated for a multidimensional and holistic policy framework based on a life cycle approach. She identified several priorities: promoting active and healthy ageing; enhancing the sustainability and coverage of pension systems; harnessing the transformative role of digital technology; restructuring healthcare systems to meet the specific needs of the ageing population, emphasising home and community care; creating supportive environments and fostering intergenerational societies; and collecting, analysing, and disseminating age-disaggregated data to inform policy decisions.



Reframing ageing

In his introduction of the conference objectives and international delegations, Eduardo Klien, Asia-Pacific Regional Representative of HelpAge International, highlighted that an experts preparatory meeting had concluded that ageing is not solely a concern for older individuals; rather, it is an issue that affects all of society. In this perspective, 'Reframing Ageing' shifts how both, older people and ageing societies, are perceived, moving the focus from merely adapting ageing strategies for older people to considering how entire societies need to be transformed. Reframing ageing in each of the six sub-themes of the conference, will challenge prevailing perceptions and offer new ways to think about ageing.

He then introduced participants from 38 countries, along with representatives from various international organisations.

High-level panel discussion

The high-level panel on population ageing highlighted the urgent need for integrated strategies that include ageing in national development plans, as highlighted in China. Demographic shifts, particularly the rise in median age, pose both challenges and opportunities, as seen in such diverse contexts as the Maldives and Indonesia, which are adapting their social and economic systems accordingly.

Panellists:

- H.E. Dr Aishath Shiham, Minister, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Maldives
- H.E. Ms Shakiba Mohebbi-Tabar, Secretary of the National Population Headquarters, I.R. Iran
- Ukik Kusuma Kurniawan, Deputy Head for Training, Research, and Development, National Population and Family Planning Board (BKKBN), Indonesia
- LV Xiaoli, Vice President, China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA)
- Pio Smith, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, UNFPA
- Cherian Mathews, Chief Executive Officer, HelpAge International

Moderator: Maliki, Deputy Minister, Population and Manpower, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia



Low fertility rates were discussed as a key factor to consider in population strategies; I.R. Iran highlighted that it is implementing policies to boost fertility while improving the lives of older adults, despite the negative impact of illegal economic sanctions. UNFPA emphasised the importance of considering in population policies the overarching priority of reproductive rights, ensuring women can choose how many children to have, when, and with whom.

The panel also advocated for policies that support active ageing, including flexible work arrangements and lifelong learning. Civil society was seen as vital in promoting intergenerational solidarity and social inclusion. In conclusion, the panel called for strategic, rights-based, collaborative approaches to ageing departing from empowering older adults as active contributors in the scope of sustainable development.

Parallel sessions



Subtheme 1: Active and productive ageing

The common view sees older people as burden, frail, passive and costly segment of society. Reframing ageing recognises their untapped potential, promoting their active and productive role in society and as contributors to the economy.

Speakers:

- Ruttiya Bhula-or, Associate Professor, College of Population Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- Aiko Kikkawa, Senior Economist, Asian Development Bank
- Hiroko Akiyama, Professor of Emeritus, Institute of Gerontology, University of Tokyo, Japan
- Nugroho Abikusno, Associate Professor, Universitas Trisakti, Indonesia
- Ernica Silaban, Human Capital Director, Boga Group, Indonesia

Moderator: Michael Herrmann, Senior Adviser, Economics and Demography, UNFPA

Session: Harnessing the productive capacity of an ageing workforce

Key points

- **Demographic shift:** Asia and the Pacific are experiencing rapid ageing, so understanding barriers to active and productive engagement in the labour market is essential.
- **Ageism and employment:** Ageism remains a significant barrier, impacting the employment opportunities available to older individuals. Both societal perceptions and workplace practices need to evolve.
- **Economic contribution:** Older workers represent an untapped economic resource. For instance, investing in the productive capacities of older individuals could lead to GDP increases of 1.5 per cent in India and the Republic of Korea.

Best practices

- **Flexible work arrangements:** Companies like Boga Group in Indonesia have implemented programmes to hire and train older workers, emphasising the importance of flexible working hours, and finds that “Older employees are hardworking, dependable, and friendly, contributing positively to the workplace.”
- **Community engagement:** Japan’s initiatives to create age-friendly workplaces encourage older individuals to remain active. Programmes like “workplaces for second life” allow older adults to engage in community service while earning income.
- **Digital reskilling initiatives:** Addressing technological barriers through training programmes helps older adults adapt to the evolving job market through digital reskilling.

Policy recommendations

- **Combat ageism:** Governments should implement awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes towards older workers, highlighting their value and capabilities.
- **Support flexible retirement policies:** Policies should promote flexible

retirement options that allow older individuals to gradually transition out of the workforce while remaining engaged.

- **Enhance access to lifelong learning:** Provide funding and resources for lifelong learning initiatives aimed at older workers to ensure they can acquire new skills relevant to a changing economy.



Session: Socio-economic policies for productive ageing and sustainable development

Key points

- **National Transfer Accounts (NTA):** The NTA framework provides valuable insights into the economic dynamics of an ageing population, helping policymakers understand the economic sustainability challenges posed by demographic changes.
- **Intergenerational economic dynamics:** The NTA approach highlights the economic dependency patterns between different age groups, emphasizing the need for balanced resource allocation to support both the young and the elderly.
- **Silver dividend potential:** Countries can benefit economically from their older populations if their productive potential is harnessed effectively. Countries like China and Indonesia are exploring this through policy reforms and investments.

Best practices

- **Data-driven policy making:** Countries like the Republic of Korea have successfully used NTA data to inform social protection policies and improve economic planning, and the NTA network is growing rapidly.
- **Cross-generational support:** Indonesia has utilised NTA to address the economic burdens faced by the sandwich generation, balancing the needs of both elderly and younger family members.
- **Public engagement with NTA findings:** Thailand's advocacy using NTA analysis in policy briefs has increased public awareness and engagement related to the economic implications of an ageing population.

Policy recommendations

- **Institutionalise NTA usage:** Governments should integrate NTA analyses into economic planning processes, ensuring that demographic changes and intergenerational economic flows are accounted for in policy development.
- **Enhance social protection systems:** Develop comprehensive social protection mechanisms that address the needs of older adults, particularly in the informal sector where many older workers are employed.

Speakers:

- Maliki, Deputy Minister, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia
- Sang-Hyop Lee, Professor in the Department of Economics and Director of Center for Korean Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa, and Senior Fellow at the East-West Center (online)
- Fisca Aulia, Policy Planner, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia
- Shen Ke, Associate Professor of Demography, Fudan University, China
- Pataraporn Laowong, Plan and Policy Analyst, Expert Level, Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, the Prime Minister's Office of Thailand
- Gretchen Donehower, Center for the Economics and Demography of Ageing (CEDA), University of California, Berkeley (online)
- Turro Selrits Wongkaren, Professor, University of Indonesia
- Tengku Aizan Abdul Hamid, Director, Professor in Gerontology and Social Policy and Research Associate, Malaysian Research Institute on Ageing (MyAgeing), Universiti Putra Malaysia

(Cont.)

- Michael Herrmann, Senior Adviser, Economics and Demography, UNFPA
- Giang Thanh Long, Associate Professor, National Economic University, Vietnam

Moderator: Wassana Im-em, Regional Specialist on Population and Development, UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office



- **Foster stakeholder collaboration:** Encourage collaboration between researchers, policymakers, and community organisations to ensure that NTA findings translate into effective policy interventions.

By focusing on these themes, stakeholders can create a more inclusive and productive environment for older individuals, allowing them to contribute meaningfully to society while ensuring their wellbeing and economic stability.



Subtheme 2: Climate change and population ageing

The intersection of climate change and population ageing is still not well understood, but it is clear that these two mega processes are shaping the 21st century. Reframing ageing not only considers how older people are affected by extreme weather events but also how they can be active and engaged in climate adaptation and mitigation.

Session: Climate change and heat stress: Strengthening older people's resilience

Key points

- **Increased vulnerability:** Extreme heat events have become more frequent, posing significant health risks to older populations. Data indicates that older adults face higher mortality rates from heat waves compared to other climate-related disasters, such as hurricanes and floods.
- **Health impacts:** Older individuals are more susceptible to heat-related illnesses due to physiological changes associated with ageing, such as impaired thermoregulation. By 2050, tens of millions in Asia could be at risk of heat stress, impacting physical and mental health.
- **Need for age-sensitive strategies:** Integrating age-sensitive interventions into resilience-building initiatives across all interventions, including heat action plans, health and social services and social protection, is critical.

Best practices

- **Community-led Initiatives:** Programmes like the Cool Cities Network in Western Europe have successfully engaged communities to develop heat action plans that prioritise vulnerable populations, including older adults.
- **Public awareness campaigns:** Barcelona has implemented campaigns aimed at educating the public about the risks of heat stress, prioritising vulnerable groups through building retrofits and nighttime healthcare services.

Speakers:

- Annabelle Workman, Senior Research Fellow, Melbourne Climate Futures, University of Melbourne, Australia
- Sachin Bhoite, Director of Climate Resilience, C40, United Kingdom (online)
- Lilis Heri Mis Cicih, Senior Researcher and Lecturer, Demographic Institute of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Indonesia
- Sylvia Szabo, Global Income Security adviser, HelpAge International
- Ciptaningrat Larastiti, Qualitative Researcher, SurveyMETER, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Moderator: Cherian Mathews, Chief Executive Officer, HelpAge International



- **Adaptive social protection:** Indonesia's approach to enhancing social protection for older adults includes community-based solutions that address climate impacts.

Policy recommendations

- **Integrate age-sensitivity into climate policies and plans:** Governments must ensure that climate change adaptation strategies explicitly consider the unique needs of older adults and include them as key stakeholders in climate adaptation.
- **Enhance social protection systems:** Governments should redesign social protection frameworks to incorporate climate resilience, expanding health and social care access and financial support for older adults.
- **Promote intergenerational initiatives:** Encouraging collaboration between older and younger generations can foster community resilience in reducing heat stress.

Session: Are older people a necessary part of the solution to climate change?

Key points

- **Active participation:** Older adults possess valuable knowledge and experience that can significantly contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.
- **Engaging in adaptation:** Case studies show that older individuals can play pivotal roles in climate initiatives, adapting to extreme weather events through community disaster preparedness programmes.
- **Engaging in mitigation:** Older people in the region can be part of the mitigation, not only reducing emissions but also removing CO₂ from the atmosphere. This requires innovation such as in community production of biochar.
- **Barriers to inclusion:** Despite their potential, older populations often face barriers to participation in climate action, including ageism and lack of access to resources.

Best practices

- **Empowerment through knowledge:** Initiatives in the Philippines (Agusan del Sur) and India (the Thar Desert) have demonstrated how older individuals can enhance community disaster preparedness by leveraging their local knowledge and leadership.
- **Sustainable livelihoods as a resilience builder:** The projects underscore the importance of integrating livelihood support in climate and disaster resilience initiatives.

Part 1: Older people in adaptation

Speakers:

- Rajendra Kumar, Senior Project Manager, Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS), India
- Emily Beridico, Executive Director at Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc. (COSE), Philippines

Panellists:

- Bondan Sikoki, Commissioner, SurveyMETER, Indonesia
- Sari Mutia Timur, Deputy Director, YAKKUM Emergency Unit, Indonesia

Moderator: Hari Krishna Nibanupudi, Global Climate Change and Ageing Adviser, HelpAge International

Part 2: Older people in mitigation

Speakers:

- Quyen Tran, Older People's Association Development Adviser, HelpAge International
- Sawang Kaewkantha, Executive Director, Foundation for Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV), Thailand
- Werner Kossmann, Co-founder, KORA Climate and Biochar expert

Moderator: Eduardo Klien, Asia Pacific Regional Representative, HelpAge International





- **Biochar production initiatives:** A pilot project carried out in four countries demonstrated the viability of engaging Older People's Associations in climate change mitigation through the production of biochar, sequestering and removing CO₂ from the atmosphere and thus accessing the carbon credit markets.
- **Legislative advocacy:** Older adults can be effective advocates for climate action, as shown by various organisations that have mobilised older populations to engage in policy discussions and climate-related legislative processes.

Policy recommendations

- **Recognise older adults as change agents:** Policies should be reframed to view older adults not merely as victims of climate change but as active contributors to solutions.
- **Enhance access to resources:** Governments must ensure that older populations have access to the necessary tools and resources to engage in climate action, including funding for community-led initiatives and training programmes.
- **Support audacious innovation:** Initiatives connecting population ageing and older populations with climate action, both in adaptation and mitigation, should be promoted.
- **Expand knowledge:** More analysis is needed on the intersection between climate change and population dynamics, pointing at options to ameliorate the impact of changed demographic configurations on climate.
- **Facilitate intergenerational collaboration:** Promoting initiatives that encourage collaboration between younger and older generations can enhance community resilience to climate impacts.

Both sessions underscored the critical role older adults can play in addressing climate change. By focusing on resilience-building strategies that are age-sensitive and inclusive, stakeholders can leverage the experience and knowledge of older populations to create more sustainable and adaptive communities. Prioritising their involvement not only enhances climate action but also promotes the protection and wellbeing of older individuals in an increasingly challenging environment.





Subtheme 3: Communities and ageing societies

Communities are frequently undervalued due to nuclearisation of families and migration. Reframing ageing highlights their essential role providing the social infrastructure needed for older adults to be active and engaged in different spheres of life. By placing communities at the centre, ageing societies can build inclusive, supportive, and sustainable environments for current and future generations.

Session: Scaling up community-based organisations in ageing societies

Key points

- **Role of OPAs:** Older People's Associations (OPAs) play a crucial role in enhancing social cohesion and providing space for engagement by older adults in their communities.
- **Evolved OPAs:** Through the last decade, OPAs have evolved from being a space for voice of older people to becoming key players in local and national development. This evolution has translated to rapid growth of OPAs.
- **Legal recognition:** For OPAs to be effective and sustained through time, they need to connect with government programmes and policies, as well as to have legal recognition, connection and support from government bodies.

Best practices

- **China:** According to the China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA), China has 554,000 OPAs throughout the country. Ninety five per cent of urban communities and 80 per cent of rural communities have OPAs.
- **Thailand:** Senior Citizen Council of Thailand (SCCT) has recently received government approval to establish 1,500 new Older People Clubs (OPCs). Close to 50 per cent of the rural villages and urban communities in the country now have OPCs.
- **Sri Lanka:** The government of Sri Lanka with support from HelpAge Sri Lanka has established 11,935 Senior Citizens Committees (SCC) throughout the country, covering 85 per cent of Grama Niladari Divisions (lowest government level).
- **Vietnam:** Vietnam Association for the Elderly (VAE) with support from HelpAge in Vietnam has increased the number of Intergenerational Self-Help Clubs (ISHC) to 7,382. ISHCs are now present in all 63 provinces in the country.
- **Cambodia:** The government with support from HelpAge Cambodia has developed national OPA/ISHC guidelines and policies, which will support the nationwide scale-up.

Policy recommendations

- **Strengthening legal frameworks:** Governments should enact policies that provide legal recognition and support for OPAs. Older people need “collective bargaining power,” reaching a critical mass of OPAs.
- **Investment in capacity building:** It is essential to invest in training and capacity building for OPA leaders, sharing best practices and innovative models, including national OPA guidelines and policies.
- **Encouraging collaboration:** Collaborative efforts between government, NGOs, and community organisations are vital for national OPA scale-up.

Speakers:

- Quyen Tran, Older People's Association Development Adviser, HelpAge International
- Vira Tum, Director, HelpAge Cambodia
- Vichai Chokevivat, Executive Director, Senior Citizen Council of Thailand (SCCT)
- Tran Bich Thuy, Country Director, HelpAge International, Vietnam
- Samantha Liyanawaduge, Executive Director, HelpAge Sri Lanka
- Emiko Masaki, Senior Health Economist, East Asia and the Pacific Region, World Bank
- Rita Erawati, Director of Family, Women, Children, Youth, and Sport, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia
- Wang Longxuan, Division Chief of International Exchange, Department of Program Development (International Affairs), China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA)
- Imtiaz Ahmed, Mission Head, HelpAge India

Moderator: Susana Harding, Senior Director, International Longevity Centre Singapore (ILC-S), Tsao Foundation, Singapore

Moderator for group discussion: Rhea Tariq, Director of Global Impact, HelpAge International

Speakers:

- Amrita Kansal, Technical Officer, Healthy Ageing, the World Health Organization Regional Office for South-East Asia
- Hiroko Akiyama, Professor of Emeritus, Institute of Gerontology, University of Tokyo, Japan
- Annie Wright, Inclusion Adviser, HelpAge International (online)
- Quyen Tran, Older People's Association Development Adviser, HelpAge International
- Praveen G Pai, Focal point Age-friendly Kochi city, India
- Attie Andjar Rachman, Secretary for the Regional Commission of Older People City of Bandung (Komda Lansia Kota Bandung), Indonesia

Moderator: Alison Marshall, Chief Executive Officer, Age International, UK

Session: Advancing age-friendly cities and communities (AFCC)

Key points

- **Importance of age-friendly environments:** Age-friendly cities and communities (AFCC) initiatives are critical for promoting healthy ageing by enabling older adults to thrive and access necessary services and support.
- **Cross-sector collaboration:** Effective AFCC initiatives require collaboration across government, civil society, and the private sector. Engaging older adults and their CBOs in planning and implementation is essential.
- **Continuous improvement:** Development of age-friendly environments requires regular monitoring and evaluation to adapt to the evolving needs of older populations.

Best practices

- **WHO guidelines:** WHO has recently published a guide on forming or sustaining national programmes for AFCC, based on experiences from 33 cities in 23 countries. These guidelines focus on eight domains crucial for healthy ageing.
- **Intergenerational programmes:** OPAs in Vietnam promote community-led AFCC engagement. This approach fosters social inclusion but also enhances the visibility and credibility of older adults and AFCC initiatives in society.
- **Kochi's age-friendly initiatives:** Kochi's ambition to create an age-friendly environment addresses both physical infrastructure and social engagement. This includes creating safe green spaces and providing nutritional support and health services tailored for older adults.

Policy recommendations

- **Enhancing stakeholder engagement:** Policymakers should facilitate multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure that age-friendly initiatives are inclusive. Community awareness and engagement are pivotal for increasing support for AFCC.
- **Data-driven approaches:** There is a significant need for improved data collection and analysis regarding older populations. Data is often the "weakest link in action plans."
- **Holistic approach to AFCC:** AFCC initiatives should not focus solely on physical infrastructure but also encompass social and cultural aspects. The voices of older adults are integral to the development of age-friendly environments.

In conclusion, both sessions illustrate the necessity of adapting societal structures to meet the needs of ageing populations. Through the effective scaling of community-based organisations and the development of age-friendly cities and communities, stakeholder collaboration can foster environments where older adults can thrive.





Subtheme 4: Technology and ageing

Older people are often seen as marginal in technological advancements. Reframing ageing involves empowering them as participants in the design, use and benefit of technology in all spheres of life, in particular health and care.

Speakers:

- Srinivas Tata, Director of the Social Development Division, ESCAP
- Myo Nyein Aung, Associate Professor, Department of Global Health Research, Juntendo University, Japan
- Peter Chan, Consultant, Asian Development Bank; Professor (Hon) and Deputy Director of Research Centre for Ageing, Beijing Normal University, China
- Rahul Mishra, Senior Programme Coordinator, GRAVIS, India

Moderator: Sabine Henning, Chief, Sustainable Demographic Transition Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP

Technology showcase:

- Thuy Anh Ngo, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, HASU, Vietnam
- Soraya Salim, Co-founder, Pulih @The Peak, Indonesia
- Charkhris Phomyoth, Co-founder and Chief Executive Officer, YoungHappy, Thailand

Moderator: Prateep Chakraborty, Chief Technology Officer, HelpAge India

Session: Harnessing technology for enhanced quality of life in ageing societies

Key points

- **Technological advancements:** The rapid evolution of technology offers transformative opportunities to improve quality of life for older persons, enhancing healthcare, promoting independent living, and fostering social connectivity.
- **Digital divide:** Despite the potential benefits, a significant digital divide persists, particularly by age and gender, and it is most pronounced in low- and middle-income countries. Limited access to digital devices and inadequate digital literacy hinder older persons, especially older women, from fully engaging with technology.
- **Intergenerational engagement:** Technology can strengthen intergenerational relationships by facilitating knowledge exchange between younger and older generations.

Best practices

- **Digital literacy programmes:** Japan's Shibuya City (Tokyo) programme has successfully trained over 2,000 older persons in digital skills, improving their smartphone usage and online safety awareness.
- **Intergenerational initiatives:** In Canada, AgeWell promotes age-tech research, emphasising community-driven projects where younger individuals mentor older persons in navigating technology.
- **Innovative health solutions:** In Thailand, the CarePro app from Health at Home has supported health screenings for over 1 million people, showcasing the effectiveness of technology in healthcare initiatives.

Policy recommendations

- **Promote digital inclusion:** Governments should prioritise policies ensuring equitable access to technology for older persons.
- **Foster co-creation:** Involving older persons in the design and development of technology solutions is crucial, including co-creation and using nudge principles from behavioural economics.
- **Establish community-based solutions:** Collaborations between governments, NGOs, and technology firms should extend digital literacy initiatives to rural and underserved areas.



Speakers:

- Tirta Sutedjo, Director of Poverty Alleviation and Community Empowerment, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia
- Pattaraporn Yenbutra, Team Leader of Quality of Life and Security Development and Promotion Department, Digital Economy Promotion Agency, Thailand
- Nong Thu Trang, Senior Health and Care Program Officer, HelpAge International, Vietnam
- Sabine Henning, Chief, Sustainable Demographic Transition Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP
- Somchai Jitsuchon, Research Director, Inclusive Development, Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI)

Moderator:

- Srinivas Tata, Director of the Social Development Division, ESCAP
- Rohit Prasad, Chief Executive Officer, HelpAge India

Session: Bridging the digital divide and strengthening intergenerational relations

Key points

- **Challenges of the digital divide:** As technology becomes integral to everyday life, older persons often face barriers such as lack of access to devices, limited digital skills, and age-related biases, preventing effective engagement with technology.
- **Opportunities for intergenerational learning:** Intergenerational programmes can enhance digital literacy and foster positive relationships between younger and older generations.
- **Inclusive technology development:** To motivate older persons to adopt digital devices and acquire digital skills, technology must meet their unique needs and be user-friendly.

Best practices

- **Community training initiatives:** In Vietnam, Older People's Associations teach digital skills, such as video production and online communication, empowering older persons to participate in the digital landscape.
- **Engagement through content creation:** Older persons should be encouraged to become content creators, allowing them to share their knowledge online. This not only builds confidence but also helps combat ageism by showcasing the contributions of older persons.
- **Holistic support systems:** In Indonesia, the NARAZI initiative led by Alzheimer's Indonesia uses digital platforms to provide consultations for families dealing with dementia, illustrating how technology can enhance healthcare support and connect families with essential resources.

Policy recommendations

- **Implement digital literacy programmes:** Governments should prioritise digital literacy initiatives tailored to older persons, focusing on training in cybersecurity and online safety.
- **Encourage intergenerational collaboration:** Policies should promote intergenerational learning opportunities where younger individuals mentor older persons in technology use.
- **Address economic barriers:** Reducing the cost of digital devices through subsidies or policies that recognise smartphones as essential tools can enhance accessibility for older persons. In some cases, older people are not using smartphones because of the cost.
- **Tailor digital skills programmes and mainstream cybersecurity:** Programmes should be tailored to the needs of older persons, based on their current digital skill levels and preferences. Cybersecurity should be mainstreamed to safeguard against online scams and crimes directed at older persons and ensure that their privacy is protected.
- **Strengthen partnerships:** Partnerships between governments, the private sector, international organisations and CSOs should be strengthened to broaden and sustain digital literacy initiatives across generations and over time.

Both sessions highlighted the critical role of technology in improving the lives of older persons and the importance of bridging the digital divide. By emphasising digital inclusion, co-creation, and intergenerational collaboration, stakeholders can ensure that technology becomes a tool for empowerment, rather than a barrier.





Subtheme 5: Social protection and ageing societies

Asia Pacific has one of the lowest levels of investment in social protection, and frequently this is seen as a luxury. Reframing ageing means redesigning and investing in social protection systems to ensure sustainable, equitable societies, with income security for all generations.

Session: How can social pensions enhance old age financial security in emerging Asia Pacific?

Key points

- **Importance of social pensions:** Social pensions provide crucial financial support for older adults, especially in emerging economies where traditional support systems may be lacking.
- **Main sources of income:** Family transfers remain the primary income source for older Asians, particularly transfers from working-age children.
- **Gender disparities:** Older women often face greater financial insecurity compared to men. In Bangladesh, for example, older women are generally poorer and therefore more likely to rely on means-tested social pension benefits than men, reflecting disparities in labour market participation and earnings.

Best practices

- **Universal coverage models:** Thailand's experience with its old age allowance programme, which transitioned to a universal model in 2009, demonstrates the benefits of broad coverage.
- **Direct cash transfers:** Southwest Papua's PIATUA programme, which provides direct cash transfers to older people starting at age 65, has shown potential for reducing poverty and improving wellbeing.
- **Grassroots mobilisation:** In China, the World Bank promoted a hybrid social pension system utilising grassroots organisations to mobilise participants, demonstrating effective community engagement in expanding pension systems.

Speakers:

- Donghyun Park, Economic Advisor, Asian Development Bank
- John Piggott, Director, ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research, University of New South Wales, Australia

Panel debate on social pensions:

- Phitawat Poonpolkul, Principal Researcher, Bank of Thailand
- Mohammad Musa'ad, M.Si., Governor of Southwest Papua, Indonesia
- Hein Thet Ssoe, Chief Executive, AGE Myanmar
- Veremo Muria, Director of social protection, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Protection, Fiji

Moderator: Iene Muliati, Member, National Social Security Council (DJSN), Indonesia



Policy recommendations

- **Design inclusive social pension systems:** Governments should prioritise inclusive social pension systems that ensure coverage for all older adults, especially the most vulnerable populations.
- **Address gender disparities:** Specific measures should be taken to address the financial challenges faced by older women, ensuring equitable access to pension benefits.
- **Increase financial literacy:** Initiatives to improve financial literacy among older adults and their families can encourage utilisation of social pensions.

Session: Can contributory pensions enhance income replacement for all in emerging Asia Pacific?

Key points

- **Challenges of informality:** A significant barrier to effective contributory pension systems in the region is the high level of informality in labour markets, which remains stubborn.
- **Low coverage and adequacy:** Many contributory pension schemes struggle with low coverage and inadequate benefits, often failing to provide sufficient income replacement.
- **Diverse contexts:** The region exhibits a wide variety of pension schemes influenced by historical, demographic, and economic factors, creating a need for tailored solutions.

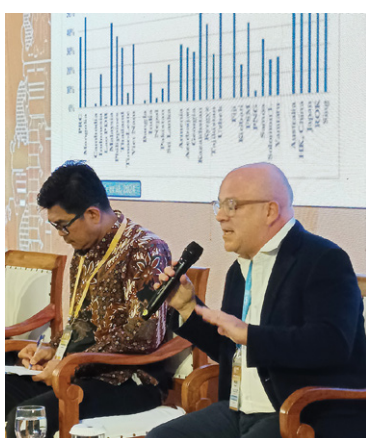
Best practices

- **Voluntary matching schemes:** Innovative approaches such as voluntary matching schemes for informal workers can incentivise participation in pension systems. This model encourages contributions by bundling short-term benefits with retirement benefits.
- **Integrated approaches:** Countries like China and South Korea have successfully combined contributory and social pensions to enhance coverage and adequacy through a hybrid model.
- **Community awareness campaigns:** Education and awareness campaigns targeting informal sector workers can improve participation in pension systems. Engaging communities through trusted local organisations can enhance outreach.

Policy recommendations

- **Develop multi-pillar pension systems:** Countries should develop multi-pillar pension systems that combine both social and contributory elements to ensure broad coverage and sustainability.
- **Enhance governance and oversight:** Robust governance frameworks are essential for the sustainability of contributory pensions. Policymakers must ensure transparent management and accountability within pension systems.
- **Leverage technology:** Governments should explore technology-driven solutions to streamline pension contributions and enhance accessibility, especially for informal workers.

In summary, enhancing financial security for older adults in emerging Asia Pacific requires a dual focus on both social pensions and contributory systems. By implementing inclusive designs, addressing gender disparities, and leveraging community engagement and technology, countries can create robust social protection frameworks for ageing populations.



Speakers:

- Philip O'Keefe, Professor of Practice and Director of the Ageing Asia Research Hub, ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research, University of New South Wales, Australia
- Dewen Wang, Senior Social Protection Economist, World Bank, China (online)
- S.B. Muniraju, Deputy Adviser, National Institution for Transforming India
- Muhammad Cholifihani, Director of Population and Social Security, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia

Moderator: Reiko Hayashi, Director-General, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research (IPSS), Japan



Subtheme 6: Caring societies

Care is frequently seen as either a family or institutional responsibility. Reframing ageing involves developing integrated Long Term Care strategies and systems that have a strong community-based care foundation.

Speakers:

- Sri Puneet Kumar, Additional Chief Secretary, Kerala State, India
- Ng Wai Chong, Founder, NWC Longevity Practice, Singapore
- Czeresna Heriawan Soejono, Head of Medical Commission, Universitas Indonesia
- Tirta Sutedjo, Director of Poverty Alleviation and Community Empowerment, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia
- Andi Maulana, Operations Manager, Community Care Hub, Wirogunan, City of Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- Ni Luh Gede Sukardiasih, M. For., MARS, Director of Development of Vulnerable and Elderly Families at the National Population and Family Planning Agency (BKKBN), Indonesia
- Akenasi Polotu Paunga, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Tonga
- Nicole Sutton, Associate Professor of Accounting, University of Technology Sydney, Australia

Moderator: Meredith Wyse, Senior Social Development Specialist (Aging and Care), Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Session: Regional innovations in home and community care to support successful ageing in place

Key points

- **Integrate services:** For integrated home and community-based care (HCBC) services, a person-centred approach is critical for promoting functionality and independence, and reducing strain on healthcare systems.
- **Identify challenges and gaps:** Significant challenges include gaps in HCBC services, particularly in providing comprehensive care across the continuum, including palliative care.
- **Learn from successful models:** Several regions, particularly Kerala, India, and Australia, have implemented successful HCBC models that prioritise accessibility and quality of care.

Best practices

- **Kerala's comprehensive elder care initiatives:** An old age policy and legal framework protect the rights of senior citizens. Caregiver training programmes supported by local and state funding have been established. Kerala has pioneered a palliative care policy and mainstreamed Ayurveda into its healthcare approach.
- **Singapore's integrated care model:** This emphasises a singular care plan for older adults and their caregivers, informed by comprehensive needs assessments using the InteRAI system. The model creates accessible and high-quality health and social services in home and community settings.
- **Community engagement:** Programmes like the Sahaja Dharma Sejahtera in Bali highlight the importance of tailored interventions based on individual assessments and community needs.
- **Continuous improvement:** Australia has been adding and expanding services to fill gaps which currently cover home care packages, basic home support and restorative and flexible care. In July 2025, Australia will integrate all of the services and use a single assessment, specified service list with set pricing, and more opportunities for client self-management.





Policy recommendations

- **Strengthen workforce capacity:** Address the lack of skilled workforce through resource and training centres to build capacity.
- **Enhance accountability:** Implement regulatory frameworks to ensure consistent service quality across HCBC programmes.
- **Engage people in design of programmes:** Conduct studies and establish user feedback opportunities to strengthen the design of programmes and services.
- **Foster public-private partnerships:** Establish guidelines to enhance collaboration between public and private sectors to improve service delivery.
- **Address affordability issues:** Develop funding mechanisms that consider the socio-economic diversity of older populations, particularly low-income families.

Session: Effective strategies for building long-term care systems in Asia-Pacific

Key points

- **Comprehensive long-term care (LTC) systems:** There is a critical need for comprehensive LTC systems to meet the growing demands of ageing populations in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Governance and financing:** Effective governance structures and innovative financing models are essential for sustainable LTC systems.
- **Regional trends:** Countries like China and Indonesia are making strides in developing community-based elderly care services that integrate health and social care.

Best practices

- **Community-based elderly care services in China:** The government has implemented pilot programmes in 103 regions, promoting home and community-based care alongside institutional support. There is a strong emphasis on volunteerism in community service models, ensuring accessibility for older adults.
- **Indonesia's integrated health and long-term care:** Law No. 8 of 2016 on persons with disabilities emphasises the role of families and communities in supporting older adults. Indonesia's focus on integrated primary health care services aims to expand coverage for older people.

Panellists:

- Shintaro Nakamura, Senior Advisor on Social Security at Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)
- Wang Pin, Deputy Director, Department of Program Development (International Affairs), China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA)
- Caitlin Littleton, Portfolio Lead, Healthy Ageing, HelpAge International
- Janice Chia, Founder and Managing Director, Ageing Asia, Singapore
- Vensya Sitohang, Director of Productive Age and Elderly Health, Ministry of Health, Indonesia

Moderator: Wendy Walker, Director, Human and Social Development Sector Office, Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- **Japan's LTC insurance scheme:** The introduction of a social insurance-based LTC model in Japan highlights the importance of partnership with the private sector, reflecting a commitment to sustainable and responsive care systems.

Policy recommendations

- **Promote multi-stakeholder engagement:** include people and communities, community-based organisations, civil society, academia and government ministries in the design of systems, building from what exists and systematically filling gaps.
- **Recognise and support caregivers:** Foster national dialogues involving diverse stakeholders to enhance the visibility and recognition of caregivers, reframing LTC as a social issue.
- **Develop sustainable financing models:** Develop LTC insurance plans and innovative funding mechanisms to ensure equitable access to care services.
- **Conduct monitoring and assessment:** Implement regular situational assessments to inform the review and updating of LTC plans, ensuring responsiveness to changing demographics and needs.
- **Promote equity and equality:** Address the disparities in care provision and access, particularly for vulnerable populations.

The sessions underscored the necessity for integrated, person-centred strategies on care. The emphasis on comprehensive strategies with strong community engagement was crucial in shaping sustainable long-term care systems in the region.





Panellists:

- Nong Thu Trang, Senior Health and Care Program Officer, HelpAge International, Vietnam
- Khylla Maria Meneses, Project Director, Youth Resist, Philippines
- Shanta Laxmi Shrestha, Board, National Senior Citizens Federation, Nepal
- Sanju Thapa Magar, CEO, Ageing Nepal
- Poppy Walton, Community health and care advisor, HelpAge International
- Leena Chauhan, Programme Coordinator, GRAVIS, India
- Chanyuth Tapa, Programme Manager, Foundation for Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV), Thailand

Moderator: Susana Harding, Senior Director, International Longevity Centre Singapore (ILC-S), Tsao Foundation, Singapore

Strengthening intergenerational solidarity: Dialogue across generations

On 10 September 2024, 40 participants aged 22 to 79 from 9 countries gathered in a facilitated workshop designed to foster meaningful intergenerational conversations. Organised by the Tsao Foundation, the workshop explored personal views on ageing, cultural perspectives, and the potential of longevity. Participants engaged in interactive exercises to develop practical skills for dialogue and leadership, while envisioning future cooperation across age groups. The event aimed to strengthen social connectivity, encourage knowledge sharing, and support lifelong learning for all generations, underscoring the critical role of intergenerational solidarity in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The workshop outcomes were shared during a panel discussion on highlighting the importance of community-driven initiatives that promote mental and physical wellbeing, and foster collaboration between generations. Participants emphasised the need for equitable partnerships and intergenerational policy reform to build stronger, more inclusive communities. As societies age, it becomes crucial to harness the potential of every generation to create sustainable development, ensuring no one is left behind. This workshop reinforced the long-term significance of cultivating intergenerational equity and cooperation as essential to a fair and sustainable future.

Reflections on the conference

The sum-up address delivered by Stuart Gietel-Basten presented a transformative perspective on the challenges and opportunities associated with ageing populations. The address spanned several themes, emphasising the need for a paradigm shift in how societies conceptualise and address the complexities of ageing.

Gietel-Basten mentioned several recurring challenges and barriers highlighted during the conference: Inequalities, informal work, knowledge and capacity, and age discrimination (ageism). Reframing ageing means challenging these barriers to fair ageing societies.

Reframing ageing, as a fundamental paradigm shift, implies moving from a perspective of dependency and vulnerability to one of opportunity and empowerment. This involves viewing older people as active agents in policymaking, not just policy recipients, allowing them to co-create solutions, and ensuring their voices are heard and their roles as contributors to society are acknowledged. This also calls for adaptable systems to take the place of rigid, one-size-fits-all approaches. A paradigm shift also indicates holistic, integrated strategies and policies that



Presenter: Stuart Gietel-Basten, Professor, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Commentators:

- Tri Budi Rahardjo, Professor, CEFAS, Universitas Respati Indonesia
- Philip O'Keefe, Professor of Practice and Director of the Ageing Asia Research Hub, ARC Centre of Excellence in Population Ageing Research, University of New South Wales, Australia
- Rohit Prasad, Chief Executive Officer, HelpAge India
- Srinivas Tata, Director of the Social Development Division, ESCAP

Moderator: Eduardo Klien, Asia Pacific Regional Representative, HelpAge International

recognise the interconnectedness of various sectors, including health, social care, and economic development. This necessitates collaboration across disciplines and sectors to create comprehensive solutions.

A point that came out strongly in most sessions was the relevance of grassroots organisations and Older People's Associations (OPAs), in different contexts and in diverse circumstances. It is hard to envision future aged societies without strong community organisation channelling the strength and crystallised abilities of older people.

The wrap-up concluded with a call to action: By fostering inclusive, caring societies that recognise the value of every individual, societies can build a future where ageing is framed as an opportunity for growth, connection, and contribution.

Further reflections on the theme of the conference were offered by a closing panel that synthesised insights from government representatives, civil society, international organisations and academia, focusing on reframing ageing within contemporary global challenges. Srinivas Tata praised the multi-stakeholder approach of the conference, highlighting the integration of grassroots initiatives with high-level policy discussions from participants across 38 countries. A key theme was the necessity of linking ageing to broader global issues, such as climate change and the digital economy, with Tri Budi Rahardjo advocating for a paradigm shift to view ageing as an opportunity. Emphasising intergenerational solidarity, speakers underscored the importance of fostering connections between generations in light of changing family structures. Rohit Prasad called for decentralised implementation of national policies to address the unique needs of older populations, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Philip O'Keefe highlighted the resilience of informality in the region, mentioning the contribution of the informal workers to the economy. He also differentiated between "ageing" and "longevity" to promote a more positive narrative, concluding that collaboration, as highlighted throughout this conference, is essential for creating inclusive environments that support all generations.



Call to action:

By fostering inclusive, caring societies that recognise the value of every individual, societies can build a future where ageing is framed as an opportunity for growth, connection, and contribution.

Closing remarks

From reflection to action: Advancing the future of ageing

The closing remarks underscored that the conference represented a unique opportunity for joint thinking, raising big questions, and sharing relevant experiences. Its true success, however, will only be measured over time by the broader actions taken in response to population ageing, increasing longevity, and the wellbeing of current and future older generations.

Key points included the Indonesian government's commitment to addressing population ageing across all stages of the life cycle, and a heartfelt appeal was made to policymakers to transform policies into concrete action, supporting older people throughout the region. HelpAge also recognised the strong commitment of BAPPENAS, UNFPA, and other sponsors and supporters. Special appreciation was extended to the 121 individuals whose hard work made this conference possible.



Top, from left to right: Eva Sabdono, Yayasan Emong Lansia (YEL), Indonesia, HelpAge global network member; Soepomo, Director General, Ministry of Social Affairs, Indonesia; Woro Srihastuti S., Deputy Minister for Children, Women, and Youth Quality Improvement, Coordinating Minister for Human Development and Culture, Indonesia.

Bottom, from left to right: Srinivas Tata, Director of the Social Development Division, ESCAP; Eduardo Klien, Asia Pacific Regional Representative, HelpAge International; and Maliki, Deputy Minister for Population and Manpower, Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), Indonesia.

**Visit the conference website at
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