



**Workshop on the Social Integration
and Rights of Older Persons
in the Asia-Pacific region**
30 September – 2 October 2014,
Bangkok



Concept Note

I. Background

Asia and the Pacific is the fastest ageing region in the world. It is expected that by 2050, one fourth of the total population in Asia and the Pacific will be 60 years old or older. Due to increased life expectancy and continuing fertility decline, all subregions in Asia and the Pacific are ageing. In East and North-East Asia, the fastest ageing subregion, one third of the population will be above 60 and even in South Asia, persons above 60 will make up almost one fifth of the population by 2050. But in spite of the increasing importance of older persons in the demographics of the region, older persons are often inadequately considered in policies and rights. For example in East Asia, only 18.5 per cent of the working-age population is covered by pension systems, and in South Asia the population is only 7.5 per cent. Therefore, many older persons have to continue working or are dependent on family support.

The regional review of the Madrid International Plan of Action (MIPAA) in 2011/2012 led to the adoption of the Bangkok Statement on the Asia-Pacific Review of the Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. Member states identified the following prevailing and emerging issues related to older persons: the need to expand social protection and health-care coverage; address the gender dimensions of ageing; enact and enforce specific legislation to protect the rights of older persons; and promote employment opportunities for older persons. The social integration of older persons is a key element in combating social isolation and ageism that can lead to discrimination. This includes, *inter alia*, access to work and employment, community and social participation, civil and political participation, access to goods and services, age-appropriate health care, housing and transportation and long-term care.

These challenges have also been at the forefront of global discussions at the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) on Ageing. The OEWG was established by the General Assembly (A/RES/65/182) on 21 December 2010, and is considering the existing international framework of the human rights of older persons and identifying possible gaps and how best to address them. In the deliberations within the OEWG, there is consensus amongst member States on the serious gaps that exist in protecting the rights of older persons, while consensus on the means to do so remains elusive. Therefore, in 2012, the OEWG was requested by the General Assembly to consider proposals for an international legal instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of older persons. In the same resolution, the regional commissions, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and other relevant parts of the United Nations were mandated to contribute to the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (A/RES/67/139, paragraph 3).

Against this backdrop, DESA, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Asia-Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (APF), with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), HelpAge International and the International Federation of Ageing, are jointly organizing a Workshop on the Social Integration and Rights of Older Persons in the Asia-Pacific region, to

foster a regional dialogue towards building consensus around promoting social integration and the rights of older persons.

II. Objectives

The overall objective of the Workshop is to enhance awareness of different stakeholders in the region on how national legislation could better contribute to the social integration of older persons and the promotion and protection of their rights.

The Workshop specifically aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. Facilitate an exchange of information and good practices on existing national legislation aimed at the promotion and protection of older persons' rights in the region;
2. Promote a greater understanding among participants of implementation of existing legislation, normative gaps and ways to address these gaps;
3. Initiate a dialogue among stakeholders in the region on how to best contribute to the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

III. Strategy and Workshop Structure

The Workshop will be structured along plenary sessions, with key issues introduced by resource persons, followed by interactive moderated discussions. Group work will also be organized to facilitate specific outcomes, where appropriate.

The thematic sessions will focus on key topics, including the following:

1. Key elements required for national frameworks on the protection and promotion of the rights of older persons and sharing of national experiences in developing and implementing comprehensive national frameworks to protect and promote the rights of older persons.
2. The roles of governments, civil society, older persons associations, and national human rights institutions in implementing such frameworks.
3. Addressing discrimination and social exclusion of older persons, including through tackling abuse, violence and neglect of older persons.
4. Protecting the economic and social rights of older persons, with a focus on income security, health and long-term care as well as considering the rights of older women.
5. The way forward to strengthen the rights of older persons in Asia and the Pacific region, including the feasibility of an international instrument on the protection of the rights of older persons.

IV. Suggested Background Documentation

Background documents and guidance notes for each thematic session will be prepared highlighting key issues to be considered during the Workshop.

V. Organization of the Workshop

A) Date and venue

The Workshop will be held in Bangkok, Thailand from 30 September to 2 October 2014.

B) Participation

Participants will include representatives from governments in expert capacities, civil society organizations, organizations of older persons, as well as representatives from national human rights institutions from select countries in the region, with a focus on South-East Asia.

Representatives from UN entities and specialized agencies, including OHCHR and WHO are expected to attend, as well as the human rights focal point in the ASEAN Secretariat. UN officials from DESA and ESCAP will provide substantive and logistical support for the Workshop.

C) Languages

The working language of the Workshop is English.

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