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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

REPORT

REGIONAL SEMINAR ON THE REVIEW AND APPRAISAL OF THE MADRID INTERNATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING AMMAN, 20-21 NOVEMBER 2007

Summary

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) convened in Amman on 20 and 21 November 2007 a Regional Seminar on the Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA).

The main objective of the seminar was to review the progress made in implementing the 2002 MIPAA, to share experiences and successful approaches and to assist member countries and relevant regional partners in their programmes for the older people. A further objective was to review action taken in the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012.

At the seminar, ESCWA urged member countries to continue their development efforts in respect of implementing the two plans at the regional level through (a) discussing priorities, needs and gaps pertaining to the efforts of Governments, civil society and other relevant parties regarding implementing, developing and monitoring the plans; and (b) proposing recommendations for follow-up and implementation.

This document is the brief final report of the seminar. It presents the most important outcomes and the principal points that were discussed. This report will be sent to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for inclusion in the report of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Social Development, which will be held from 6 to 15 February 2008.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) convened in Amman, Jordan, on 20 and 21 November 2007 a Regional Seminar on the Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). This was done pursuant to United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/142 of 19 December 2006 concerning Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing, during which member countries were invited to identify the measures that they had taken since the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 and policy recommendations for the further implementation of the Madrid Plan. The resolution also encourages Regional Commissions to identify modalities for conducting the regional review and appraisal, including best practices, with the aim of presenting this information to the Commission on Social Development.
2. The seminar was held pursuant to resolution 45/1, adopted by the forty-fifth session of the Commission on Social Development and submitted to the Economic and Social Council, concerning modalities for the first review and appraisal of MIPAA (2002). The Commission on Social Development requested all Regional Commissions to convey the outcomes of the first MIPAA review and appraisal to the Commission during its forty-sixth session in February 2008, and take measures to identify future outcomes, which are priority in the plan.
3. As part of the follow-up on the review of progress achieved in implementing MIPAA and the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012 at the regional level, ESCWA had requested member countries to prepare national reports on their most important achievements in the field. ESCWA had also gathered relevant information through a special form completed by member countries.

I. OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4. Considering the number of constructive recommendations contained in MIPAA and the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012, the participants focused on the implementation mechanisms and the elaboration of a vision to deal with ageing issues in the future. During the discussions, participants proposed that the following recommendations should be addressed to regional Governments and, in particular, ESCWA member countries, for adoption:
 - (a) Addressing ageing as part of an integrated social policy;
 - (b) Focusing on the principles of equality, equal opportunity and respect for the cultural specificities of the countries of the region, as standards for ageing-related issues;
 - (c) Urging Arab countries to include ageing issues in national agendas;
 - (d) Identifying a coordinating party for follow-up with the United Nations and other international organizations and member countries, and adopting a methodology consistent and shared among them;
 - (e) Establishing an international organization or institution specialized in ageing, along the lines of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and creating a clearing house on ageing;
 - (f) Involving older people in all activities of concern to them, in line with a "bottom-up" approach;
 - (g) Moving ageing issues and recommendations from theory to practice;
 - (h) Building the capacity of employees and institutions to enable them implement and follow up development programmes for older people;

(i) Enhancing collaboration among relevant partners and Arab and international organizations taking advantage of success stories;

(j) Convening a brainstorming meeting and bringing together the relevant United Nations and international organizations, to coordinate and devise a common vision towards a joint framework for action for the next five years.

II. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION AND DEBATE

5. The two-day seminar comprised three sessions, during which participants discussed various situations related to ageing, including the current status of the older people and the results of relevant global studies, with a focus on the progress made in countries in the ESCWA region, the challenges encountered in designing policies, the implementation of programmes and the mainstreaming of ageing issues. Participants also discussed the availability of data and analysis, underlying the importance of individual and institutional capacities in various countries for responding to the growing needs of the older people, in preparation for proposing a set of recommendations to Governments in the region.

6. The seminar also included a field visit organized by the Jordanian Ministry of Social Development to two old people's homes in the suburbs of Amman. Set forth below is a brief review of the topics of discussion.

A. REVIEW OF AGEING ISSUES

7. Participants addressed the theme at both the global and regional levels:

1. *Ageing issues worldwide*

8. Mr. Francois Farah, Chief of the ESCWA Social Development Division, presented a review of ageing issues worldwide, specifically dealing with ageing as a matter of human rights and development. Mr. Farah focused on the importance of addressing ageing as part of an integrated social policy. Considering the importance of creating mechanisms for incorporating ageing into all sectors, he put forward a framework for optimizing social policy as a tool for approaching the change in the age structure, the result of which will be an increase in the proportion of the older people in the population. He also alluded to the concept of investment in the older people through a social policy framework for action that provides protection to individuals before they reach old age, while strengthening social solidarity and cohesion once individuals enter the old age stage. Such a policy would ensure justice in resource distribution and impartiality in upholding human rights and achieving the development of a just society that treats the older people with respect.

9. Considering the importance of the demographic dynamics and its influence on population structure in the long term, Mr. Farah presented a review of two different models projecting the growth of the population pyramid in Brazil and Ethiopia to 2050. The models provided a case study of demographic changes that could take place in developing Arab countries, which are characterized by population growth that varies between fast and slow, represented by the cases of Brazil and Ethiopia respectively.

2. *Ageing issues at the regional level*

10. Ms. Abla Sibai addressed the regional aspects of ageing in Arab countries. The presentation comprised the following five main points:

(a) The global ageing phenomenon, characterized by a significant increase in life-expectancy rates since the beginning of the twentieth century, especially for those aged over 60 years;

(b) The demographic changes in the Arab world, where ageing trends are similar to the global ones, with a slightly slower pace, since they are still at the initial stage;

(c) The Governmental measures in Arab countries to implement the resolutions made in Madrid, including drafting a national policy or plan of action, establishing national committees, updating legislation, developing programmes and services and beginning preparations for specific needs-assessment studies;

(d) The social, economic and health challenges that older people face in Arab countries;

(e) A preliminary framework for action from the perspective of the Madrid recommendations, which addresses (a) the goal, (b) underpinning issues in Arab countries and (c) recommendations and proposals for priority directions that conform to the basic principles set out in the Madrid International Plan. These directions are:

- (i) Economic security and development;
- (ii) Promoting, maintaining and advancing health and well-being in old age;
- (iii) Ensuring an enabling and supportive environment;
- (iv) Active participation of older people in the development process;
- (v) Mainstreaming ageing in public policy;
- (vi) Data generation and research.

11. Since integrated social policy is one of the pillars of economic security for older people, discussions addressed the formulation of a framework for action aimed at mainstreaming ageing into an integrated social policy that is based on justice, equality, solidarity and human rights. Such a policy would be based on the importance of changing and advancing ageing-related concepts from a human rights approach, and the creation of mechanisms for mainstreaming ageing issues in all sectors and levels of State and society.

12. There are shortcomings in the social security system, and a deterioration in the capabilities of contemporary families to cater for the needs of older people. Furthermore, legislation is not comprehensive. Participants therefore emphasized the need to include in the proposed framework for action the following fields: protecting and supporting the role of the family; updating the relevant laws and legislation to universally ensure a secure old age; establishing a national machinery that ensures stakeholder participation; enhancing the capabilities of institutions that cater for the needs of older people; carrying out specialized studies and research to guide the action involving the older people; developing age-specific statistical indicators to show the conditions of the older people; providing services while moving from the concept of service to that of responsibility; defining the type of such services; and coordinating the conditions necessary for the provision of such services and standardizing terminology. All such endeavours will be subject to subsequent follow-up and assessment.

13. Participants alluded to the need to optimize social policy or update plans on the basis of a clear vision that reflects the concept of investing in the older people demographically and socially. This is done, among others, through focusing on youth, with the aim of preparing them for a safe and healthy old age. Arab countries currently have a favourable opportunity for planning and implementing a suitable policy since the percentage of older people in the total population is still small; yet that percentage is gradually increasing. Thus, it is expected that the increasing ratio will propel ageing to the forefront of social challenges by 2050.

B. PROGRESS MADE IN IMPLEMENTING MIPAA AND THE ARAB PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING TO THE YEAR 2012

14. At the beginning of the session, Mr. Raafat Ghonaim, Chief, Department of Disability and Rehabilitation, Technical Secretariat, Council of Arab Ministers of Social Affairs, League of Arab States (LAS), referred to the great importance that LAS attributes to social issues, including ageing. He also briefed the meeting on the regular activities that LAS has organized and undertaken in that field.

15. Ms. Amal al Dajani, of the ESCWA Social Development Division Population and Social Policy Team, reported the progress made by ESCWA member countries in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The review was based on the national reports that had been provided to ESCWA, which indicated that the achievements remained limited, as ageing issues are not given priority in the development agendas of member countries. Notwithstanding the paucity of these achievements, some of them were worth mentioning, including: preparing a policy, strategy or national plan of action on ageing, which five member countries had already completed; and forming national committees on ageing, which most member countries had done. The review alluded to the challenges and difficulties that member countries faced in the course of implementation, the most important of which were securing funding, providing the necessary health care and social security for older people, developing stakeholder capacities and enabling older people to continue their activities and lead an independent life in their local community.

16. Member countries then presented their national reports on the status of older people and the relevant achievements in implementing the two plans in their own countries. Speakers reported the many Government measures that had been implemented in the field, including updated programmes, plans, strategies, legislation and services, with the focus on the role of the family in caring for and protecting older people. It was indicated that Government intervention, for the most part, focused on the most marginalized groups of older people, including the poor and older women who either were the sole providers for their families or were without any support themselves.

C. PRIORITIES IN FUTURE REGIONAL WORK

17. During the session, the following ideas were raised and discussed, and participants stressed the necessity of translating them into practical programmes:

(a) Adopting national policies and plans on ageing as part of an integrated social policy that takes into consideration special country contexts and national specificities. Such policies and actions would aim at: an approach based on the basic human rights of older people; a legislation sensitive to old age; relevant training of departments and services aimed at older people; local and regional coordination among the different parties involved in delivering services for older people, including the private sector; carrying out analytical studies and research to better form policies for this particular age group; ensuring availability, accessibility and quality of services for the old age; promoting old age issues in the media; and identifying a national machinery to coordinate inputs by all relevant parties, in addition to enhancing a participatory approach aimed to involve older people in the issues that concern them. The meeting also stressed the importance of establishing a standardized terminology in matters of old age to facilitate comparison, monitoring and evaluation;

(b) Considering that both the international and regional plans contained important recommendations on all themes, participants decided that it was not necessary to repeat them, but that it was preferable to focus on mechanisms for implementing the plans at the national and regional levels.

18. With the aim of following up on the priorities for future work in the region, speakers referred to the need to make use of the United Nations document entitled “Guidelines for review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing: bottom-up participatory approach”.

III. ORGANIZATION OF THE SEMINAR

A. DATE AND VENUE

19. The Regional Seminar on the Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) was held in the Radisson SAS Hotel in Amman, Jordan, on 20 and 21 November 2007.

B. OPENING

20. The seminar was held under the auspices of H.E. The Minister of Social Development of Jordan, who was represented by Mr. Hussain Abu al-Ruz, the Secretary General of the Ministry. Mr. Abu al-Ruz delivered a speech during the opening session. In his speech, he emphasized the importance of ageing, especially in light of the decreasing role of the family, which is considered the essential support of older people, and in light of the demographic, economic and social changes in a world that he described as “a small village”. He alluded to the importance of encouraging regional committees to follow up on their work, and expressed the hope that the seminar would result in an outcome and recommendations that would assist decision makers in making progress in realizing the desired achievements.

21. Mr. Francois Farah, Chief of the ESCWA Social Development Division, made a statement which shed light on the importance of mainstreaming ageing into the integrated social policy of countries and the need to link demographic changes and quantitative and qualitative population issues to the overall social and economic development process. Such changes should also be met with appropriate plans and policies based on studies that seek to find solutions. He also referred to the keen interest and commitment of ESCWA in following up on MIPAA and the Arab Plan of Action on Ageing to the Year 2012.

C. PARTICIPANTS

22. Participants from ESCWA member countries and other Arab countries attended the seminar, as well as representatives from United Nations organizations and specialized agencies concerned with ageing issues, experts from civil society and international and non-governmental organizations working in the field. A detailed list of participants is contained in annex I of this report.

D. DOCUMENTS

23. Annex II of this report lists the documents that were presented during the seminar.

Annex I*

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Annex II

SEMINAR DOCUMENTS

Symbol	Title
No symbol	" " : :
No symbol	Ageing as Development: A Matter of Human Rights – Power point presentation by Francois Farah, Chief, UN-ESCWA Social Development Division
No symbol	: - - 2007 /
No symbol	- 2007 / -
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