

**KEY POINTS**

- Asia and the Pacific is the fastest-aging region in the world. Demand to develop long-term care policies and programs which integrate internationally recognized concepts such as “aging in place” and “active and healthy aging” is growing rapidly.
- The future of long-term care demands better planning, more financing, more and better-qualified human resources, and above all, higher expectations that the final years of life must have as much meaning, purpose, and well-being as possible.
- The regional capacity development technical assistance (TA) for Strengthening Developing Member Countries’ Capacity in Elderly Care aims to increase the capacity of developing member countries (DMCs) to develop policies and plan long-term care services. It will conduct country diagnostics on long-term care, implement nationwide capacity building activities, and develop a network to disseminate good practices and expertise.

**SOCIAL PROTECTION BRIEF****Strengthening Elderly Care Capacity in Asia and the Pacific****BACKGROUND**

As a result of both increased longevity and decreased fertility rates, rapid aging in Asia and the Pacific has put the region at the forefront of one of the most important global demographic trends. In 2012, 11% of the population in Asia was aged 60 years or above, and by 2050 this is expected to increase to 24% or roughly 1.26 billion people. This transition is happening at an unprecedented pace.

At the same time, traditional family support systems are weakening, due in part to increased migration and expanded female labor market participation. There is a growing need to establish and finance alternatives to the traditional practice of family members caring for their elderly loved ones.

Several countries are aging at a rapid pace (e.g., the People’s Republic of China, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam). Their demographic transitions are happening before the growth of per capita income, and development of social protection systems can provide sufficient support for elderly and their families and help avoid major inequities and increasing vulnerability. Other countries such as the Philippines are not aging as rapidly but still must develop long-term care systems to support their elderly. Many countries in Asia will benefit from improved labor mobility policies in the region, which can provide new job opportunities for skilled caregivers in this rapidly expanding sector.

**LONG-TERM CARE AS MULTISECTORAL ISSUE**

Long-term care is not just an individual or family issue, but one that must also be addressed by communities, private sector, nongovernment organizations, and governments. It requires a wide range of responses and innovation in physical and sector planning, development of systems, programs, services, and human resources. In many countries, long-term care policies and services are being developed in a piecemeal manner, in response to immediate political or financial constraints rather than by building sustainable systems that integrate social and health care services. The future of long-term care demands better planning, more financing, more and better qualified human resources, and above all, higher expectations that the final years of life must have as much meaning, purpose, and well-being as possible.

## EXPERIENCE ACROSS ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Internationally recognized concepts such as “aging in place” which stress aging at home safely and independently regardless of age, income or ability; “active and healthy aging” to maintain active participation in social, economic, and cultural affairs; physical and mental autonomy and independence; and mainstreaming aging into a “society for all” are principles that can be adapted to the needs and resources of each country.

DMCs can benefit from the experience on long-term care policy, planning, and investment strategies from Hong Kong, China; Japan; the Republic of Korea; and Singapore, which are at the forefront in the region. Countries such as India, Indonesia, Thailand, Tonga, and Viet Nam also have accumulated experience with specific country characteristics.

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has a growing portfolio in long-term care and is engaging in the sector to help mitigate the risk of substantial fiscal constraints and negative social consequences of aging.<sup>1</sup> On 13 May 2016, ADB approved the regional capacity development TA for Strengthening Developing Member Countries’ Capacity in Elderly Care to help increase the capacity of DMCs to develop policies and plan for long-term care services development.<sup>2</sup>

ADB can support DMCs to invest in policies and programs which promote healthy aging that will allow the elderly to fully participate in society, including in the labor market until an advanced age. This can also help reduce the burden and costs for societies and governments.<sup>3</sup>

## THE NEXT STEPS AND WAY FORWARD

In collaboration with the participating DMCs and centers of excellence, the TA will (i) build a knowledge base in the region on development of long-term care systems and services and identify potential investments in selected countries; (ii) develop capacity of DMC officials and other stakeholders on strategic planning for implementation of long-term care across multiple sectors (e.g., health, social protection, urban development, transport); and (iii) create a knowledge network to disseminate good practices and expertise.

**Country Diagnostics.** Six countries were chosen to conduct in-depth diagnostic studies on long-term care (Indonesia, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tonga, and Viet Nam). These studies will assess gaps in key areas including policies, programs, services, financing, and systems development, and identify future policy development and investment options.

**Capacity Building.** In partnership with centers of excellence, the capacity building will share international and regional best practices by focusing on (i) developing policy and planning capacity; (ii) supporting south–south cooperation and exchange on good long-term care practices and experiences; (iii) conducting research on emerging topics such as developing financial and information technology services and products to support long-term care; (iv) identifying and designing innovative investments supporting development of home, community, and institutional care options in long-term care; and (v) enhancing policy implementation monitoring and evaluation.

**Knowledge Sharing.** The TA will support networking, dissemination of findings, and publications across professionals and specialists in government, the private sector, and civil society across Asia and the Pacific.

The TA will be implemented from May 2016 to May 2019.

<sup>1</sup> Examples in the People’s Republic of China include Strategic Research on Elderly Care Services Development in Yichang (2014–2016), Public–Private Partnerships Demonstration Program to Transform Local Government Delivery of Elderly Care Services (2016) and Hebei Elderly Care Development Project (2017). ADB. 2011. *Improving Employment Outcomes*. Manila (TA 7951-REG). The Sri Lanka employment diagnostics study under this TA includes a chapter on aging and labor market impacts.

<sup>2</sup> ADB. 2016. *Technical Assistance for Strengthening Developing Member Countries’ Capacity in Elderly Care*. Manila (TA 9111-REG). <https://www.adb.org/projects/49277-001/main#project-overview>

<sup>3</sup> Examples include planning and development of the market and human resources, expansion of social care services, investment in age-friendly infrastructure, development of information technology and management systems, and expansion of health services in areas such as rehabilitation and prevention, and control of noncommunicable diseases.

### About the Asian Development Bank

ADB's vision is an Asia and Pacific region free of poverty. Its mission is to help its developing member countries reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of their people. Despite the region's many successes, it remains home to half of the world's extreme poor. ADB is committed to reducing poverty through inclusive economic growth, environmentally sustainable growth, and regional integration.

Based in Manila, ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance.

**ADB Briefs** are based on papers or notes prepared by ADB staff and their resource persons. The series is designed to provide concise, nontechnical accounts of policy issues of topical interest, with a view to facilitating informed debate. The Department of External Relations administers the series.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of ADB or its Board of Governors or the governments they represent.

Asian Development Bank  
6 ADB Avenue, Mandaluyong City  
1550 Metro Manila, Philippines  
Tel +63 2 632 4444  
Fax +63 2 636 2444

[www.adb.org/publications/series/adb-briefs](http://www.adb.org/publications/series/adb-briefs)

Corrigenda to ADB publications may be found at <http://www.adb.org/publications/corrigenda>

**ADB Social Protection Briefs** aim to highlight achievements of ADB projects that support social protection initiatives in developing member countries.

Brief prepared by Yukiko Ito, social development specialist, SDCC and Wendy Walker, principal social development specialist, EARD.



Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 IGO license (CC BY 3.0 IGO)

© 2016 ADB. The CC license does not apply to non-ADB copyright materials in this publication.