Chapter 3
Sustainable Development Plan for Aging World Population: Challenges and Way Forward

Pradeep Kumar Panda
IGNOU, India

ABSTRACT
The number of older persons has increased substantially in recent years in most countries and regions, and that growth is projected to accelerate in the coming decades. This is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labor and financial markets, the demand for goods and services, such as housing, transportation, and social protection, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties. Preparing for the economic and social shifts associated with an aging population is thus essential to ensure progress in development, including towards the achievement of the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There is urgent need to consider older persons in development planning, emphasizing that older persons should be able to participate in and benefit equitably from the fruits of development to advance their health and wellbeing, and that societies should provide enabling environments for them to do so.

INTRODUCTION
The world’s population is ageing: virtually every country in the world is experiencing growth in the number and proportion of older persons in their population. Population ageing—the increasing share of older persons in the population—is poised to become one of the most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century, with implications for nearly all sectors of society, including labor and financial markets, the demand for goods and services, such as housing, transportation and social protection, as well as family structures and intergenerational ties.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-4772-3.ch003
Preparing for the economic and social shifts associated with an ageing population is thus essential to ensure progress in development, including towards the achievement of the goals outlined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Population ageing is particularly relevant for the goals on poverty eradication, ensuring healthy lives and well-being at all ages, promoting gender equality and full and productive employment and decent work for all, reducing inequalities between and within countries, and making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted during the Second World Assembly on Ageing, highlighted the need to consider older persons in development planning, emphasizing that older persons should be able to participate in and benefit equitably from the fruits of development to advance their health and well-being, and that societies should provide enabling environments for them to do so. As populations become increasingly aged, it is more important than ever that governments design innovative policies and public services specifically targeted to older persons, including those addressing, inter alia, housing, employment, health care, infrastructure and social protection.

According to data from World Population Prospects: the 2015 Revision (United Nations, 2013), the number of older persons—those aged 60 years or over—has increased substantially in recent years in most countries and regions, and that growth is projected to accelerate in the coming decades. Between 2015 and 2030, the number of people in the world aged 60 years or over is projected to grow by 56 per cent, from 901 million to 1.4 billion, and by 2050, the global population of older persons is projected to more than double its size in 2015, reaching nearly 2.1 billion.

Globally, the number of people aged 80 years or over, the “oldest-old” persons, is growing even faster than the number of older persons overall. Projections indicate that in 2050 the oldest-old will number 434 million, having more than tripled in number since 2015, when there were 125 million people over age 80. Over the next 15 years, the number of older persons is expected to grow fastest in Latin America and the Caribbean with a projected 71 per cent increase in the population aged 60 years or over, followed by Asia (66 per cent), Africa (64 per cent), Oceania (47 per cent), Northern America (41 per cent) and Europe (23 per cent). Globally, during 2010-2015, women outlived men by an average of 4.5 years. As a result, women accounted for 54 per cent of the global population aged 60 years or over and 61 per cent of those aged 80 years or over in 2015.

In the coming years, average survival of males is projected to improve and begin to catch up to that of females so that the sex balance among the oldest-old persons becomes more even. The proportion of women at age 80 years or over is projected to decline to 58 per cent in 2050. Both improved longevity and the ageing of larger cohorts, including those born during the post-World War II baby boom, mean that the older population is itself ageing. The proportion of the world’s older persons who are aged 80 years or over is projected to rise from 14 per cent in 2015 to more than 20 per cent in 2050. The older population is growing faster in urban areas than in rural areas (United Nations, 2015).

At the global level between 2000 and 2015, the number of people aged 60 years or over increased by 68 per cent in urban areas, compared to a 25 per cent increase in rural areas. As a result, older persons are increasingly concentrated in urban areas. In 2015, 58 per cent of the world’s people aged 60 years or over resided in urban areas, up from 51 per cent in 2000. The oldest-old are even more likely to reside in urban areas: the proportion of people aged 80 years or over residing in urban areas increased from 56 per cent in 2000 to 63 per cent in 2015 (United Nations, 2015).

Globally, the number of older persons is growing faster than the numbers of people in any other age group. As a result, the share of older persons in the total population is increasing virtually everywhere. While population ageing is a global phenomenon, the ageing process is more advanced in some regions