Global Ageing
Long-Standing and Emerging Realities

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The notion of ageing
  • From a demographic perspective
  • At the individual level (briefly)

Migration, mobility & global connectedness
  • Ageing in and out of place

Life-journeys
  • Diversity of experience & inequalities

• Old and new-comers
• Similarities & differences
• Two-directional learning
• Honing down on the MENA region
• Healthy-ageing agenda and opportunities
Demographic Transitions

Determined jointly by three demographic processes: fertility, mortality and migration.

The tempo, or speed, has been different across the world

Historical and recent changes
What is Population Ageing?

Demographically speaking

- Age Index
- Age dependency ratio
- Percentage over 65+
- Prospective ageing

Changes to the whole structure of a population

- Societal/population level
- Individual’s perception
- Perceptions of ageing
  - What one can and can not do!
- Expectations from and opportunities at old age
- Differentials by societal & individual factors
- Variations in health and wellbeing at older age is not random
By 2050, 80% of the world older people will be living in LMICs

Source: WHO, additions by author
The meaning of ageing

• No typical definition
• Varies within and across individuals, societies and groups
• Desired & unwanted outcomes

• The notion of ‘Growing older’
  – Connotations of experience and frailty
  – Maturity and dependency

• Age-conscious societies

• A Growing attention to
  – Life-long learning
  – An increased importance of enhancing wellbeing and quality of life

• Not all years gained are spent in good health
• Huge observed levels of inequalities at old age
Global Connectedness

- Mobility of people & ideas
- Diversity within age groups
- Global care chains
- Virtual & actual connectedness
- (Un)planned retirement ‘place’
Life trajectories and journeys shape identity and expectations at old age

Alignment and divergence between envisaged and actual ageing process

Earlier migrants growing older in ‘host’ societies

• ‘*Neither here nor there, but rather somewhere in between*’

• Strong but limited social-bonds

• (dis)connection to home and host countries

• Collective and solidarity living

• Older people identity

• Caring across-borders; at a distance

• Otherness (us and them)
Inequalities at Old Age

RECOGNITION
• Self-recognition
• Cultural visibility & class
• Assumptions - otherness

(MIS)REPRESENTATION
• Inclusion (exclusion) – the environment
• Participation
• Media representation

Global Ageing: Opportunities for Cross-Learning

Paradigm shift from a notion of ‘crisis’ to realising opportunities

The flow of knowledge and ideas is two-directional

Increasing role of social capital and community

Perception of self and others

Unequal experience but common goals

• Sustainability
• Equality
• Rethinking the life-course
  – Particularly around learning, training and work
• 50 is the new 30?
  – Demographically speaking could be accurate
• Inclusivity of the built and socially-constructed environment
The Middle East and North Africa Region

- **Geographically wide**
- Spans a mix of cultures, socio and political dimensions
- Historically characterized by younger populations and related policies
- Dynamic socio-political

- **Some Similarities:**
  - Common languages, religious code, heritage
  - Norms around family, ageing and women (filial obligations etc.)
  - More coherence between sub-regions

- **Huge variabilities:**
  - Poverty and per capita income
  - Population size
  - Literacy and unemployment rates
  - Migration, geographical mobility, co-residency arrangements and other socio-economic and socio-demographic characteristics
‘Rapid’ process of ageing (fast and steep)
High level of unpreparedness
Health and care services
Infrastructure
Social & economic opportunities
Social-determinants of health and wellbeing at old age
Nested within other demographic dynamics (pop. growth & dividends)
Socio-political structures
Perceived age-related roles & duties
Cultural Contexts

‘Treasuring’ older people
Re-constructing ‘real’ vs. rhetoric values
Healthy and meaningful ageing process
Care is a family ‘business’
Care ability and burden

- Younger populations dominate the policy agenda
- Obesity and co-morbidity
- Physical (in)activity
- Isolation and loneliness
- Care options
- Support mechanisms
- Regional and socio-economic differences
  — Within and between countries
Gender, Family and Communities

Gender roles, expectations and aspirations
  Both as older people and informal carers
Unequal, and qualitatively different, gender share of caring burden
Family and marriage norms
Intergenerational two-ways flows of exchange
Ageing as ‘women’s’ issues – at both ends of the spectrum
Wellbeing & quality of life
Opportunities – learning, training & the workforce
Informal support networks, communities and ‘care-share’
Opportunities & Challenges

Fiscal constraints
Competing policy priorities
Challenges to traditional social structures
  • Extended families, closed-net communities
Environment & infrastructure
Awareness & stigma
  • E.g., Dementia

• A growing interest in global ageing, particularly healthy ageing
• The UN decade of health ageing (2021-2030) – building on the 2030 SDGs
• An interest in LMIC and the MENA region in developing ageing policies and supporting the community as a whole
• Realization of the need for data, evidence and dialogue
• A new initiative to bring stakeholders together (MENARAH)
The Middle East and North Africa Research on Ageing Healthy (MENARAH) Network

- Focuses on healthy ageing in its broadest meaning
- Aims to
  - Conduct research and knowledge mobilisation activities
  - Raise awareness and connect different actors
  - Inform policy and practice
- A network of researchers, NGOs, policymakers and many more
- Launched Sep. 2020; funded by the GCRF, UK
Conclusion

• Ageing is everyone’s business
• It is a normal part of our life-journeys
  • Yet perceived differently by various individuals, groups and societies
• Diversity of experiences across and between countries, groups and communities
• Many countries have experienced ageing for decades, yet are still working on capitalising on and benefiting from longevity
• Rethinking opportunities across the life-course
• The pace of population-ageing is incredibly faster in LMIC including the MENA region than has been previously observed in the global north
• Opportunities for global cross-learning, knowledge transfer and capacity building
Thank you for Listening

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