

Using ICT to Promote and Enhance Accessibility and Quality of Health Care for Older Persons

Strengthening Asia-Pacific countries' capacities to develop policies and strategies to promote health and long-term care to older persons through ICT

CHALLENGE

Countries with rapidly ageing populations in the Asia-Pacific region face diverse economic and social challenges, including how to respond to the health care needs of older persons. Challenges persist in the context where older persons, particularly older women, cannot access necessary medical treatment, given high costs, a lack of health-care providers, poor transportation, or difficulties in accessing health care in general.

Some countries in the region are already addressing limited access to health care for older persons, while in others this issue will be a growing challenge, with population ageing directly affecting the implementation of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Countries, especially least developed countries, with limited financial resources need to adopt innovative methods to support older people in accessing health care. In this respect, the enhanced and more effective usage of information and communication technology (ICT) can help expand access to health care services and promote the rights of older people.

TOWARDS A SOLUTION

To address the challenge of limited access to health care for older persons, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), supported by the Ministry of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea and in collaboration with the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT), IDD, UNFPA and HelgAge International, conducted or contributed to analytical studies to identify the specific needs of older persons, particularly women, in accessing health care, and identified good practices in using ICT to access health care services. In particular, studies were conducted in Cambodia, the Republic of Korea and Viet Nam. Through sharing the findings with Member States at a series of regional workshops and consultations



NOMINATED BY

Korea Health Industry Development Institute (KHIDI), Republic of Korea

COUNTRIES/REGIONS/TERRITORIES

Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam

CONTRIBUTING PRIORITY AREAS OF THE ISTANBUL PROGRAMME OF ACTION (IPoA)

1, 5, 7, 8

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS TARGET(S)

1.1, 3.4, 3.6, 3.8, 5.b, 5.c, 8.2, 8.5, 9.5, 9.c, 10.2

SUPPORTED BY

Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW) of the Republic of Korea, APCICT, IDD

IMPLEMENTING ENTITIES

ESCAP, IDD, Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development (APCICT), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), HelgAge International

PROJECT STATUS

Completed

PROJECT PERIOD

December 2016 – December 2020

URL OF THE PRACTICE

– <https://bit.ly/32A2nUe>
– <https://bit.ly/33RtwTa>

with the engagement of UNCTs and RCOs, participants from LDCs, for example Cambodia and Lao PDR in particular, were able to learn about good practices and experiences from other countries.

This project aimed to strengthen the capacity of selected developing countries in Asia and the Pacific to develop policies and strategies for promoting the delivery of health and long-term care services to older persons using ICTs. The project contributed to SDGs 1, 3, 5, 8, 9 and 10, with the greatest emphasis on SDGs 3 and 10. It also contributed to Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) priority areas 1 and 5.

The project's main knowledge product entitled "Using Information and Communication Technologies to Address the Health-care Needs of Older Persons Managing Chronic Disease: A Guidebook and Good Practices from Asia and the Pacific" (ST/ESCAP/2972) ¹ was published and disseminated as an e-guidebook to provide Member States with a resource for formulating innovative solutions to address these demographic shifts and related health care challenges. It is a useful reference tool for LDCs to learn how ICTs can enable equitable access to high-quality health care services for older persons facing chronic diseases.

The guidebook has been translated into different national languages, aiming to enhance its wider use by national government officials for addressing health-care challenges in their countries. So far, a Vietnamese version has been released. The Thai and Khmer versions will be available by January 2022.

In addition, findings from this project have been shared at a workshop and webinar held in Cambodia and Thailand. Private sector representatives were invited to share the use of ICT in health care, contributing to the success of these meetings. Many of the good practices in the guidebook have enhanced the competitive advantage of countries, including those of the South. The guidebook was further shared in a workshop organized by the China Academy for Information and Communications Technology (CAICT) and the World Health Organization (WHO) on how to harness digital technologies to promote healthy ageing in West Asia. These events, by leveraging South-South and triangular cooperation, increased the knowledge of government officials in identifying the health care needs of older persons and how to use ICT to promote the accessibility and quality of health and long-term care; and in applying the good practices and experience in using ICT to increase access to health care among older persons.

Inspired by this project, ESCAP APCICT is currently developing training material on ICTs and the education/digital literacy of older persons based on the guidebook. Recognizing the potential of ICTs to promote the healthy ageing and well-being of older persons, the results from this project will also inform the Fourth Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), to be held in 2022. Once the guidebook is further publicized at the upcoming regional review of MIPAA, more replication of good practices by developing countries is expected.

¹ <https://bit.ly/3quZBsY>



To ensure meaningful and successful project design and implementation, regional cooperation and the engagement of all stakeholders from the national government, local communities, academia, health practitioners, private sector representatives and elderly groups were important. Moreover, the evaluation of workshops, meetings and events organized by ESCAP proved useful in drawing on lessons learned and enhancing the effectiveness of these events, as well as reporting on project progress.

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