

Workshop in support of the establishment of the  
Titchfield City Group on Ageing and Age-disaggregated Data  
22-24 August 2017, Winchester University, United Kingdom

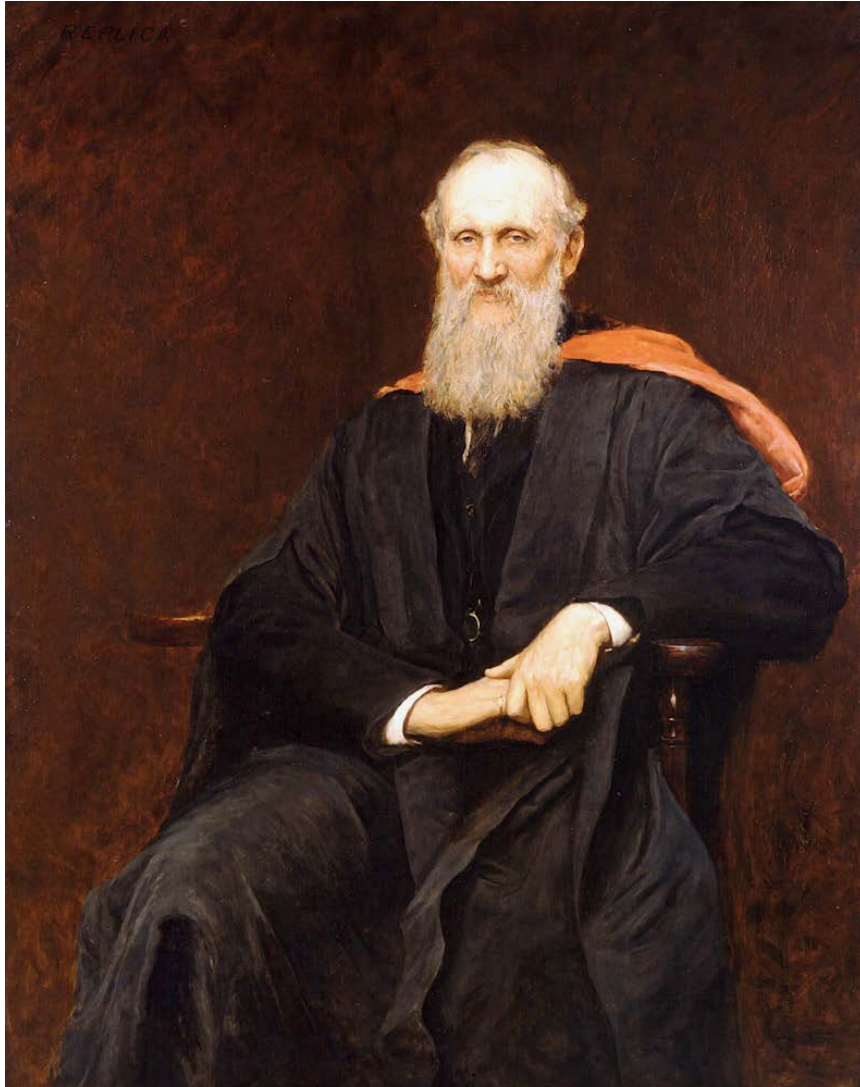
Understanding the data gaps and  
measurement issues in ageing statistics

Asgar Zaidi

University of Southampton and  
London School of Economics and Political Science

UNIVERSITY OF  
Southampton

# The grand logic is to monitor progress using data



“When you cannot  
express it in numbers,  
your knowledge is of a  
meagre and  
unsatisfactory kind”

**Lord Kelvin in 1883**

Mathematician, physicist and  
engineer, 1824-1907

# Key messages

1. The monitoring and implementation of the 2030 agenda will be a major challenge for statistical communities in many countries – timely investments in the capacity development are necessary for additional disaggregated data by age, sex and disability.
2. Extension of the existing surveys may be the only pragmatic way forward for many countries, but a longer term priority of specialised surveys for older people is fundamentally important.

# Overview

## 1. The context

- 1.1 Relevance of age disaggregation of data
- 1.2 Older people in international policy frameworks

## 2. Challenges, learnings and recommendations

### 2.1 Identifying data gaps and challenges

- In-depth study on India, China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (ESRC/ HelpAge)
- Age-Friendly environments, for WHO Europe and Kobe Centre
- MIPAA 15+ review for the EECA countries, for UNFPA
- Survey on human rights of older people in Pakistan (for British Council)
- UNECE's Task Force recommendations on ageing-related statistics

### 2.2 Learnings

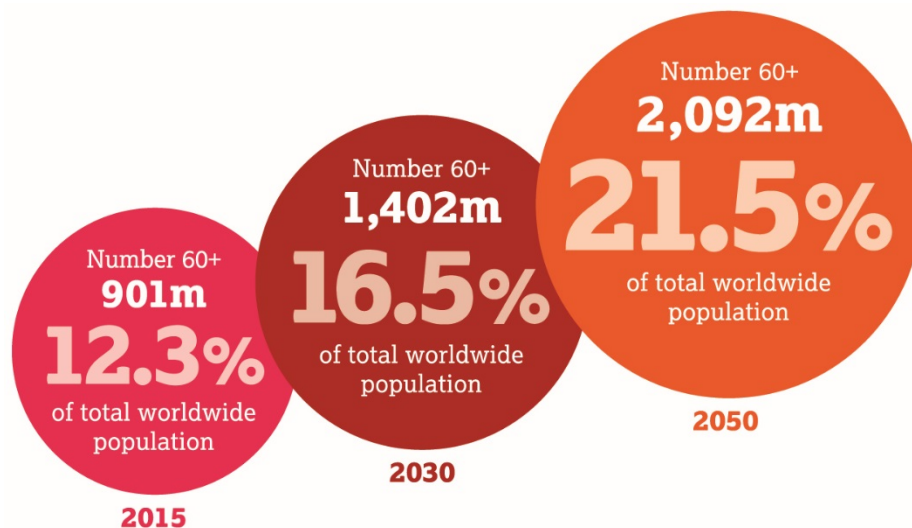
### 2.3 Recommendations

## 3. Take away messages and key questions for CSOs

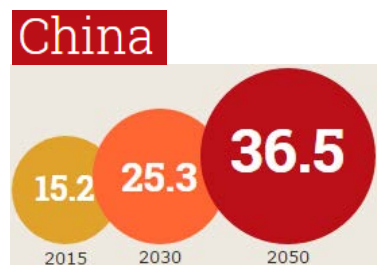
# Part 1

## Relevance of age disaggregation of data

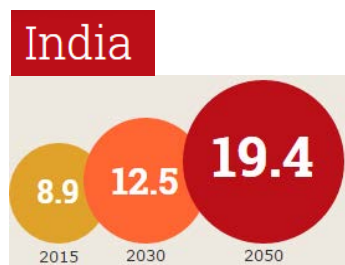
# 1.1 The context: Rising importance of older people in our societies



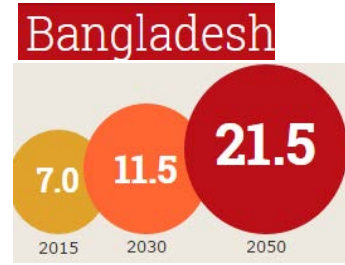
Population ageing speed is profound (some examples from Asia)



209.2 million



116.6 million



11.2 million



12.5 million

# 1.1 The rationale: Ageing linked to development

- I. Sustainable development strategies must aim to empower older people by improving their health and wellbeing

Two bold pledges made in this respect in the SDGs

*'no one will be left behind'* and

*'we endeavour to reach the furthest behind first'*

- II. The flip side: empowered older people in turn contribute to their own health and wellbeing and become agents for development of the society in which they live.

# 1.2 Monitoring older people in international policy frameworks

**The SDG's LNOB pledge has given us an unparalleled opportunity to promote inclusion of older people and ageing in the international and national development agenda**

## **The MIPAA/ ICPD as important predecessors**

- Sustainable development as their end goals
- People centred and human rights-based
- Interlinked and interdependent global challenges
- Have universal mandates

Great opportunity in 2017 during the MIPAA 15+ review and at the ICPD in NY to seek genuine commitments from governments



# 1.2 Other international policy frameworks

## Synergy required!

- **Open Ended Working Group on Ageing:** Inter-governmental Working Group established by General Assembly in 2010, to examine existing international frameworks of human rights of older persons, and to consider the feasibility of a new legal instrument on the rights of older persons.
- **WHO's Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health:** In 2014, the World Health Assembly asked for a comprehensive Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health, adopted in the 2016 World Health Assembly "Multisectoral action for a life course approach to healthy ageing: global strategy and plan of action on ageing and health".

# A critical element

## Older people are the most heterogeneous group

- Not to be reduced to a single group, such as 50+ or 60+, in fact clear and appropriate distinctions need to be made (e.g. there is a call for 5-year age groups).
- Unequal experiences of ageing must be captured through other attributes (such as education, rural/urban, regions)
- Mental health issues to be accounted for in the QOL considerations of older people (for example, dementia is increasingly becoming an issue, not just in advanced countries but also in low and middle income countries)

## Part 2

# Challenges, learnings and recommendations

(Using insights drawn from a case study of China,  
India, Bangladesh and Pakistan)

# 2.1 Identifying data gaps and challenges

## India and China richer in datasets on older people

- The WHO's Study on global AGEing and Adult Health (SAGE) have provided rich datasets on health and functioning of older people (data for the 2<sup>nd</sup> wave offering even greater possibilities)
- The harmonised method of the SAGE surveys facilitate comparative analysis, and the HRS type surveys are a 'data revolution' in this respect
- **Sample size restrictions for smaller subgroups** (the new Chinese national survey for rural and urban households offer a greater improvement in this respect)
- **Only available in six countries** – there is a need to extend it globally.

## 2.1 Identifying data gaps and challenges

### Bangladesh and Pakistan requiring special surveys

- The existing sources are mainly surveys for persons of all ages, with little or no special effort made in the enumeration of older persons
- Limited information on pension income components and health and functionings; no information on age friendly environments, lifelong learning, violence and abuse (among others)
- Serious doubts about the representativeness and precisions of certain small subgroups in the existing survey data
- Individual-level data access remains an issue, prohibiting a timely availability of the surveys
- **Bottom line:** Current surveys not adequate to capture the baseline position in the SDG monitoring of progress for older subgroups (especially for vulnerable groups of older men/women with disabilities).
- **Many other low and middle income countries are in a similar situation.**

## 2.2 Learnings

### **1. Group-specific evidence most insightful**

- The disaggregated information on older persons with respect to age, sex, educational attainment and rural/urban status is required for greater insights on unequal experiences of ageing

### **2. Distinctions between individual attributes and those of their communities necessary**

- In particular, the data should allow us to make the distinctions between people's intrinsic capacities and their functional abilities enhanced by the enabling environment (ref. WHO's 2015 report)

## 2.2 Learnings

### 3. Access to individual-level data essential

- e.g. The subgroup analysis (say between rural and urban residents) requires controlling for other factors, through multivariate analysis using micro data.

### 4. Insights for analytical tools

(such as the Global AgeWatch Index)

- The disaggregation between men and women vital, and in 5-year age categories
- Many additional indicators required from the national surveys, e.g. (1) access to and utilisation of healthcare service; (2) lifelong learning; (3) physical as well as mental health status; (4) violence and elder abuse; (5) social engagements (6) Housing conditions

## 2.3 Recommendations

### 1. Specialised surveys on older persons required

- The survey questionnaire and the enumeration procedures should be designed to capture the special needs and aspirations of older people;
- Greater information on health and functionings required (e.g. for those countries for which SAGE surveys are not available)
- The new UNDESA/ UNPD initiative of Multiple Indicator Survey on Ageing (MISA), on MIPAA, will offer promising additional ageing data.

### 2. Greater information vital on age-friendly enabling environments

- In particular, rights to affordable and decent healthcare, housing and social engagement is essential in the evidence on QOL of older people

### 3. Data required on early life course experiences and their impact on the quality of life of older people (to include the full life cycle)

- In particular, to generate evidence how to break the accumulation of deprivations from early life to old age
- Can the existing longitudinal surveys be expanded for this purpose? A good example is the Indonesian Family Life Survey, and also other surveys developed along the lines of the HRS



## 2.3 Recommendations

### 4. Greater work required from CSOs and national-level experts

- Utilize existing internationally comparable surveys to disaggregate data so that older persons, women, and persons with disabilities are included
- In particular, in raising our understanding with the help of supplementary data, e.g. admin data; qualitative focus groups /individual interviewing
- The 'City Group' on ageing is a step in the right direction to facilitate mutual learnings for the CSOs, in particular in reaching an agreed and comparable system of age disaggregation.

### 5. Collection of data on multidimensional human rights of older persons essential

- In particular, the information about the awareness of rights holders and their capacities to claim those rights are missing from most datasets.  
The British Council/ HelpAge survey on human rights of older persons in Pakistan offer a good example.
- Violence and abuse data can be collected by extending the age ranges used in the DHS and the MICS

## Part 3

**Take away messages and key  
questions for CSOs**

# Take away messages

- Take a good stock of what ageing-related data is available in your country, from the population and housing censuses, household surveys and administrative registers.
- Assess what longer term investments are required in the survey, census and use of admin data instruments to monitor the SDG's LNOB agenda (e.g. invest in Vital Statistics systems).
- Start making a good use of existing data sources to provide population structure by age/sex; identify gaps
- Communicate, coordinate, and collaborate, internationally and with civil society to improve knowledge and policy practice.

# Key questions for CSOs

- What experiences do you have with expanding household surveys to cover all age ranges? What pros and cons?
- What experience do you have of surveys which have deliberately boosted samples for older age groups?
- What experience do you have of specialised surveys designed to target older age groups?
- Other than providing funds— what can international community be encouraged to do to help in generating and analysing age-disaggregated data in your country?

# Thank you

email: [Asghar.Zaidi@soton.ac.uk](mailto:Asghar.Zaidi@soton.ac.uk)

Skype: asghar.zaidi

Twitter: zaidia