Regional Meeting on Enhancing digital literacy among older persons in Asia and the Pacific: Developing tools to increase digital literacy of older persons

1 and 2 August 2024
In-person (Lakeview Hotel, Beijing, China) and online
(All times China Standard time: UTC +8)

CONCEPT NOTE

Organizers

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

Co-organizer

China Population and Development Research Center, China

Venue

The event will be held at Lakeview Hotel, Beijing, China

Registration

In-person participation: All in-person participants must confirm their participation via this form no later than Wednesday, 26 June 2024.

Background

Two megatrends are occurring simultaneously in the Asia-Pacific region: population ageing and digitalization. The number and share of older persons are increasing rapidly in almost every country in the region. Digital tools are used widely, ranging from applying for a passport, using banking services, accessing health services, communicating with family and friends, etc. Not being able to use digital tools can lead to social exclusion and exclusion from services that would fulfill older persons’ basic needs and rights. Data show that older persons have generally less access to ICTs than younger people, and, among older persons, older women have even less access. To ensure the participation of older persons in economic and social life and to improve their access to basic services, there is a need to bridge the “age-related” (or “grey”) digital divide as well as the gender-digital divide that appears to worsen with age.

ESCAP has carried out several projects supporting member States in implementing the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), the global guiding document on population ageing. It also worked on a project on ICTs, older persons and health and published a manual of good practices in this field. Stakeholder consultations in the lead-up to the Fourth Asia-Pacific Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in July 2022 identified bridging the digital divide and increasing digital literacy of older persons, particularly that of women, as one of the key priorities. This is further reflected in the outcome document of the

In 2023, ESCAP started implementing a project, supported by the Government of China via the China-ESCAP Cooperation Programme (CECP), to address the growing challenge of digital literacy among older persons in Asia and the Pacific. The project aims to contribute to greater social inclusion of older persons, particularly older women, by increasing their digital literacy. This will enable their active participation in society, reduce social isolation, and ensure their access to essential digital services.

A people-centred approach is being adopted, involving older people’s associations (OPAs) in identifying specific learning needs and developing suitable learning methodologies, taking a gender-sensitive approach, to teach older persons digital skills for the betterment of their livelihood. With support from OPAs, the project seeks to identify the digital needs of older persons in target countries: Cambodia, India, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. Together with a collection of good practices from China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea, and others, these findings will be used for the development of sample learning and outreach material on enhancing digital literacy. After consultation with OPAs and pilot training, OPAs and policymakers will actively promote the enhancement of digital literacy of older persons. There will also be outreach to youth groups to foster intergenerational learning.

Moreover, the meeting will provide an opportunity to review a dashboard of policies and up-to-date data on population ageing for countries in Asia and the Pacific, developed by ESCAP.

The China Population and Development Research Centre (CPDRC) is a national research institute affiliated with the National Health Commission of China, focusing on issues such as population ageing, fertility, health and migration. Recognising the opportunities and challenges posed by the lower digital literacy among older persons, especially in accessing healthcare, CPDRC has engaged in addressing these challenges. By incorporating a dedicated survey on digital literacy within a nationally representative study of older persons, CPDRC has gathered first-hand and insightful data. This effort is part of its broader commitment as a think-tank providing technical support for ageing-related policy development in China. Recently, CPDRC has been involved in a smart ageing programme aimed at leveraging digital technology to bridge the digital divide for older persons. This initiative seeks to ensure that older persons can fully benefit from the conveniences offered by digital advancements. Through its involvement, CPDRC has built a solid foundation of research and practical experience in enhancing digital literacy among older persons.

CPDRC has long-standing collaborations with international bodies such as the United Nations Population Division, the United Nations Population Fund, and ESCAP, which underline its expertise in implementing international projects and convening international conferences. An example includes the Asia-Pacific Regional Expert Meeting on long-term care for older persons, co-hosted with ESCAP in Shanghai, China, on 18-19 December 2013. These endeavours highlight CPDRC’s role and contributions to advancing digital literacy for older populations, both nationally and regionally.
Expected outcomes
This regional meeting/workshop aims to achieve the following expected outcomes:

1. Increased awareness and understanding of the digital literacy needs of older persons through the exchange of good practices in developing tools to increase digital literacy of older persons.
2. Development of effective, gender-sensitive training materials and methodologies.
3. Enhanced capacity of older people’s associations and other stakeholders to address these digital literacy needs.
4. Strengthened policy frameworks supporting digital literacy for older persons.
5. Feedback for the redesign of ESCAP policy dashboard on ageing.

Bringing together approximately 40 participants, this regional meeting/workshop will identify the digital literacy and skill needs of older persons based on the ESCAP survey findings in targeted countries and facilitate the exchange of experiences, good practices, and lessons learned in developing tools to enhance digital literacy of older persons from different stakeholders. The potential participants are representatives of Governments, older people’s associations (OPAs), academia, international organizations, and civil society organisations working in target and good practice countries.

A report of the meeting will be issued afterwards, summarising the deliberations and recommendations of the meeting.

For information, please contact:
Ms. Sabine Henning, Chief, Sustainable Demographic Transition Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP (hennings@un.org)

Ms. Mengjun Tang, Research Fellow, China Population and Development Research Center, China (mengjuntang@vip.sina.com)

Mr. Napaphat Satchanawakul, Social Affairs Officer, Sustainable Demographic Transition Section, Social Development Division, ESCAP (napaphat.satchanawakul@un.org)

Relevant Documents