

TOWARDS A COMPREHENSIVE NATIONAL POLICY FOR AN AGEING VIET NAM



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FOREWORD

Population ageing in Viet Nam has reached a level where it is having a great impact on all sectors of the economy. This calls for the Government to direct and facilitate ensuring that people in Viet Nam can live healthy, active and fulfilling lives throughout their lives. While the major concern is the older persons defined as those aged 60 years and more, population ageing has started to affect everyone. In order to cope with the ageing of the population, it is therefore no longer sufficient to meet the expectations and needs of the older population only but it requires a more comprehensive approach to address its effects on all population groups. However, while Viet Nam's current policies are mainly to support and address the problems of older persons, there is need for a more comprehensive policy on population ageing. It is therefore necessary to address current ageing-related issues which affect both older and young people and develop national programmes and policies that are consistent with the government's action plans on socio-economic development to achieve positive and successful results.

In pursuance of the Government's Resolution No. 137/NQ-CP of December 31, 2017 promulgating the Government's Program of Action for the implementation of Resolution No. 21-NQ/TW of October 25, 2017, 6th Central Committee of Party XII on population work in the new situation, there is need to undertake specific tasks such as drafting the Law on Population; promulgating the amendments and supplements to the Law on the Elderly; and developing the national program on older people to 2030 and the project on health care for older people to 2030 to submit to the National Assembly and the Government in 2019-2020.

With the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) under the VNM9P03 project, "Supporting Viet Nameese agencies in the provision and use of data on population and development and evidence to develop and monitor plans, strategies and policies for economic and social development, and sustainable development goals 2017-2021", the Viet Nam National Committee on Ageing (VNCA) has developed this policy report to provide an overall situation analysis on ageing in Viet Nam and recommendations to the Government of Viet Nam on the need for developing a comprehensive national policy to respond to population ageing issues and prepare for a well adaptation of the country in the aged population context.

This policy report has been prepared with great effort from our consultants, Mr. Ghazy Mujahid, Mr. Nguyen Van Tien and Mr. Dang Huy Hoang. The Viet Nam National Committee on Ageing would like to thank UNFPA and VNCA colleagues who have provided valuable technical inputs and effortless assistance in the development of this report, especially, Ms. Nguyen Ngoc Quynh (UNFPA Program Officer) and members of UNFPA's Research Board, Ms. Tran Thi Thanh Nga (UNFPA Program Associate), Ms. Le Minh Giang (Chief of VNCA Office) and Mr. Duong Viet Anh (VNCA Office). We would also like to express our gratitude to related ministries, especially MOLISA, MOH, Ministry of Civil Engineering, VAE and participants at our consultative workshops who provided significant inputs and comments for us to complete this report.

ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|---|
| ADL | Activity of Daily Living |
| ASEAN | Association of South East Asian Nations |
| CEDAW | Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women |
| CHS | Community Health System |
| COPD | Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases |
| CPVCC | Communist Party of Viet Nam Central Committee |
| DALY | Disability-Adjusted Life Years |
| FD | Department of Family Affairs of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism |
| GNAFCC | Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities |
| GSO | General Statistical Office |
| HAI | HelpAge International |
| HALE | Healthy Age Life Expectancy |
| IADL | Instrumental Activity of Daily Living |
| ISHC | Inter-generational Self-Help Club |
| MIPAA | Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002) |
| MOLISA | Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs |
| NCD | Non-Communicable Disease |
| OPA | Old People's Association |
| TFR | Total Fertility Rate |
| TTF | Technical Task Force |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| VAE | Viet Nam Association of Elderly |
| VASS | Viet Nam Academy of Social Sciences |
| VHLSS | Viet Nam Household Living Standards Survey |
| VNAS | Viet Nam Ageing Survey (2011) |
| VNCA | Viet Nam National Committee on Ageing |
| VND | Viet Nam Dong |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| WPP | World Population Prospects |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the turn of the century, the proportion of older persons (aged 60 years and over) in Viet Nam's population has been increasing at an accelerated pace. According to the 1999 Census, older persons constituted 8.1% of the population. The 2009 Census showed that the proportion had increased to 8.6%. The 2014 Inter-Census Population Survey estimated that older persons constituted 10.2 per cent of the country's population, a much greater than during the preceding years. In addition to this acceleration in the pace of ageing, the trend is projected to continue and the older persons are projected to constitute almost 20% of the population by 2035.

This paper analyzes population ageing in Viet Nam and its impacts and provides policy suggestions necessary for responding to this demographic trend.

Section 1 discusses trends in fertility and mortality. The total fertility which remained between 6 and 7 until the early 1960s declined to 4.8 in 1979. As a result of increasing education among women and the successful implementation of an elaborate population and family planning programme and campaigns for community health, especially reproductive health, the TFR had come down to 2.3 by the turn of the century. It has continued to decline and is projected to stabilize at the near replacement level over the next few decades.

As a result of significant improvements in increasing access to quality health services, mortality has been declining and life expectancy at birth, that is, the average number of years a new born is expected to live has continued to increase and is projected to rise further.

Continuous declines in fertility and improvements in life expectancy explain the shift in Viet Nam's age structure towards older cohorts. As such the progress of population ageing in Viet Nam can be seen as a testimony to the successful implementation of Government policies in the areas of health and education.

Section 2 describes how population ageing has assumed increased significance in Viet Nam and with the current trends continuing, policy makers will need to pay increasing attention to it. The proportion of children (0-14 years) has been declining since 1989 while the proportion of working age population started to decline from 2009. Older persons are hence the only cohort whose proportion will continue to increase. Older persons will account for an increasing proportion of the increase in total population and it is projected that during 2029-2034, the older population will increase by 2.8 million while the population aged less than 60 years will decline by about 380 thousand.

As a result, the potential support ratio, defined as the number of persons of working ages (15-64 years) per person aged 65 years and over will decline continuously from the current 9.5 to 5.2 by 2035. This ratio

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