



Facts:

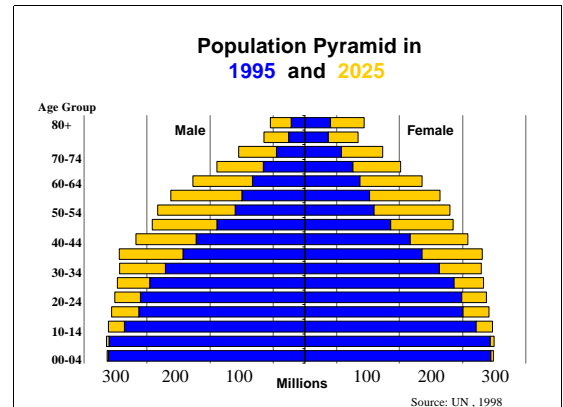
- people aged 60 and over: about 600 millions in 2000; 1.2 billion in 2025 and 2 billion in 2050
- about two-thirds of all older persons are living in the developing world, by 2025: 75%
- in the developed world, the very old (age 80+) is the fastest growing population group
- women outlive men in virtually all societies; consequently in very old age the ratio of women/men is 2:1.

The challenge for health care systems

Rapid population ageing will lead to changing demands to health care systems in developing countries. Health care systems will be expected to accommodate care for older adults together with care for other groups. In already aged societies health care systems will have to adapt to increasing proportions of the oldest old. While ageing is not in itself a disease and old age should not be seen as equal to frailty and sickness, increasing demands on the health sector are inevitable.

Some good news

In developed countries e.g. the USA, disability rates in older age have declined in recent years. But the most likely future scenario will depend on policies to be implemented now. Healthier life-styles will lead to future cohorts of older people ageing in better health – the “healthy-ageing” scenario. Advances in bio-technology are increas-



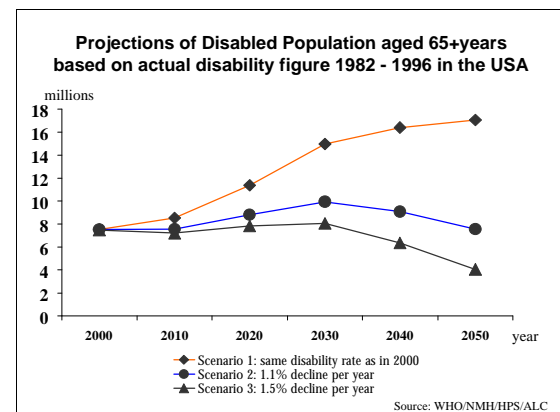
ingly benefiting individuals that in the past would have become disabled. The challenge for the developing world is two-fold: investing in “healthy ageing” from a public health perspective and making medical interventions more cost-effective and more widely available

Key areas of work

The Ageing and Life Course Programme focuses on four areas: information dissemination, capacity building (research and training), advocacy and policy development. Examples of activities:

- promoting active and healthy ageing through the “Global Movement for Active Ageing” (special focus on physical activity and nutrition);
- training of primary health care workers in old age care;
- assessing the effects of HIV/AIDS on older people in Africa and their ability to be care providers;
- an initiative on prevention of elder abuse world-wide;
- implementing ageing friendly standards e.g. “ageing friendly” health care centres
- development of policy recommendations for healthy and active ageing in time for the **2002 UN Second World Assembly on Ageing.**

Ageing is a privilege and a societal achievement. It is also a challenge, which will impact on all aspects of 21st century society. It is a challenge that cannot be addressed by the public or private sectors in isolation: it requires joint approaches and strategies.



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