



Summit of the Future Action Days Side Event

Life Course Approach and Intergenerational Health

Date: 21st September 2024 **Time:** 10:00-11:30 am ET

Organized by: World Health Organization (WHO), Department of Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health and Ageing

Partners: UNDESA, UNFPA, WHO SEARO, WHO WPRO, WHO AFRO, WHO PAHO, Member states – Japan, Dominican Republic, Sierra Leone, NGO - HelpAge International, GRAVIS

1. Background on the event

The event served as the pre-launch of the **Life Course Framework**, which highlights the interconnectedness of health outcomes across life stages, the influence of social, economic, and environmental factors, and entry points for action to improve health and well-being. As life expectancy rises, future generations are likely to live longer but may face increasingly complex and chronic health needs. The life course approach addresses these challenges by emphasizing early interventions and continuous support throughout life, improving health trajectories for current and future generations. It recognizes intergenerational health effects, where the health of one generation influences the well-being of the next and underscores the importance of fostering intergenerational practices that promote physical and mental health.

This includes examples on what can be done in countries around the world, contributing to the achievement of **SDG 3** and other global goals. Although most strategies evoke a life course approach, a clear operational framework is crucial to guide policies and actions that foster optimal development (infants, children, adolescents, youth), adult well-being, and healthy ageing and identifying the added value of integrated action across sectors. This event, aligned with the **Declaration on Future Generations**, offered a platform for Member States, NGOs, and other key stakeholders to discuss the framework, share best practices, and explore opportunities for collaboration to ensure the health and well-being of populations at all stages of life.

2. Key Issues discussed

- The life course framework and how to operationalize it, was introduced, emphasizing population-level policies and programs, including universal, individual, and household-level interventions.
- Member States, including those from Ministries of Health, presented their experience on interventions and new opportunities. The **Dominican Republic** discussed the demographic shift toward an aging population and steps to implement a life course approach, including the creation of a Life Course Department, collaboration with

PAHO, and the publication of normative documents, along with workshops for local implementation. **Japan** highlighted the importance of a life course approach in health promotion, from fetal stages to older ages, particularly relevant for a super aging society, and also showcased health check-up programs and the national "Health Japan 21" initiative. **Sierra Leone** shared Person-Centered Life Stages Approach to Health Service Delivery framework, focusing on health promotion, disease prevention, and expanded healthcare coverage, including free healthcare for pregnant women, lactating mothers, and children under 5 (delivered and financed within their universal health coverage scheme). Ghana's National Statistical Office identified the lack of disaggregated and longitudinal data by age, gender, and socioeconomic status as a significant barrier to effectively implementing the life course approach.

- Civil society including youth and older person representatives, emphasized the economic and health equity benefits of investing in life course interventions, such as self-care, and primary education in rural areas, Challenges facing young people include the destruction of fertile land, natural resources, and safe spaces due to wars, natural disasters, and climate change, which also impact the health of refugee populations. The discussion recognized the need to address millions of older people who lack access to essential services and supports, with their families often being pushed into poverty to pay for such services.

3. Key recommendations for action

- Adopt a people-centered, rights-based approach that fully includes all generations, each life stage, including older persons, to shape our collective future and ensure optimal development and healthy ageing.
- Consider how health systems can move beyond disease-specific silos and use a life course approach to support Universal Health Coverage.
- Invest in data collection and analysis tools for national statistical offices, policymakers, and other stakeholders, enabling the use of representative data from all ages, to guide interventions that improve population health and ensure equitable access by all individuals, engaging multiple sectors, ministries and departments.
- Strengthen community and facility-based primary health care for health promotion, disease prevention, and early referral, while improving referral pathways and harmonizing policies to support integrated service delivery for each life stage and critical period, including those such as ages 5-9 years.
- Promote intergenerational solidarity and practice through national policies and community-based programs, such as those in Sri Lanka and Thailand, which foster family and community support systems to enhance health and well-being for all ages, recognizing that older people contribute to the well-being of younger generations.

Webpage to find more information: <https://www.who.int/teams/maternal-newborn-child-adolescent-health-and-ageing/ageing-and-health>