

Reflection on the MIPAA, and its Adaptation to the Emerging Ageing Context in Bangladesh: A 'Medium Human Development' Country's Initiatives

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Abstract. Bangladesh - the 8th most populous and a 'Medium Human Development' country - is gradually adapting to the emerging ageing context in accordance with the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). The promulgation of ageing care related acts, national policy and integration of ageing issues in some major related policies and programmes raise valid concern. The objective of this paper is to explore the different initiatives and activities taken with regards to older persons, in the context of the three priority directions of the MIPAA, in Bangladesh. Different related policies, plans, and acts will be explored in this regard. MIPAA has brought about enthusiasm towards addressing the welfare issues of the huge number of emerging older population. The 'National Policy on Older Persons 2013', the 'Parents Maintenance Act 2013', and the declaration of older persons as 'Senior Citizens' in 2014, are some of the obvious responses to MIPAA's principles. Ageing welfare issues are also addressed in some other major related policies, plans and acts. Research and academic activities related to ageing; expanding different social safety net programmes; and celebrating days dedicated to ageing are some examples of ongoing activities focusing on older persons. All these activities aim to ameliorate the sufferings of this very large and vulnerable population. But we are still a long way off from properly implementing different policies and plans. An attempt to understand these legislative, policy, and planning changes is proposed here for the understanding of these adaptations to the emerging ageing society in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Bangladesh, 'National Policy on Older Persons 2013', aged care, MIPAA

Introduction

Bangladesh - the 8th most populous and a 'Medium Human Development' country - ranked 136th among 189 countries according to the United Nations Development Programme's 'Human Development Index' in the world in 2018 (Population Reference Bureau [PRB], 2018; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2018). As a country, it has started to feel

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the emergence of a vulnerable ageing population. The remarkable fertility (TFR) decline from 6.3 in 1975 to 3.3 in 1996; and increasing life expectancy trends from 46.2 years in 1974 to 60.1 years in 1997 have resulted in a population ageing regime in the 1990s (United Nations [UN], 1981; M. Kabir and A.A.M. Chowdhury, 2004; National Institute on Population Research and Training [NIPORT], Mitra and Associates, and Macro International, 2009; Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics [BBS], 2011). Although the percentage of older people has increased slightly from 5.7 per cent in 1974 to 7.5 per cent in 2011, the count has increased from 4.35 million in 1974 to 11.20 million in 2011 which is almost a 2.6 fold increase (BBS, 1984; BBS, 2015). TFR has further declined to 2.05 and life expectancy has increased to 72 years in 2017 (BBS, 2018). All these emerging determining demographic situations have resulted in a further increase of the older population to 8 per cent and the number of older population was estimated at 13 million in 2017 (BBS, 2018). One projection has found TFR to be that of 1.6 considering low variant and life expectancy at 78.9 years in 2051 (BBS, 2015). Present as well as future trends of declining fertility and mortality have made Bangladesh's older population one of the fastest growing globally (Khondker, 2013). The older population will constitute 23 per cent of the total population by 2050 and is estimated to become 30 million by 2051 (General Economic Division [GED], 2012; Khondker, 2013).

Following the Madrid International Plan on Action on Ageing 2002(MIPAA), several initiatives were set up to promulgate policies, programmes, actions and laws for the welfare of older people but the very beginning can be traced as far back as the 1960s. The 'Bangladesh Association for the Aged and Institute of Geriatric Medicine (BAAIGM)' was established in 1960 with a vision to 'Promote the rights-based welfare of older persons so that they may remain physically healthy, mentally alert, cheerful, and free from worries and anxieties and continue to contribute to the welfare of society and country by experience' (BAAIGM, 2014). The rights of older people and the provision of their basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter, education and medical care for all citizens have been safeguarded by the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh since the very early days of independent Bangladesh in 1972 (Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs [MoLJPA],1972). Following the 'Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing' in 1982, some initiatives and policy moves such as the formation of the 'National Committee on Ageing' and inclusion of ageing welfare issues in the National Five Year Plan were seen (Rahman, 2001). The 'Old Age Allowance' programme for low-income older people was launched in 1998 (Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh [GOB], 2014).

The main objective of this paper is to explore and discuss different government initiatives and activities set up for the welfare of older people in the context of the three priority directions of MIPAA: 1. Older persons and development; 2. Advancing health and well-being in older age; 3. Ensuring an enabling and supportive environment in Bangladesh. The three priority areas of MIPAA also have some 'Issue's, 'Objective's and 'Actions' (UN, 2003). Some initiatives in Bangladesh are directly related to the welfare of older people, whilst others are indirect references by way of approach. Policies, planning, laws and activities of different government organisations aimed at improving the quality of life of older people will be

explored in this paper in the context of the MIPAA's three-priority direction, its issues and related objectives.

Major Policy Initiatives in Bangladesh after MIPAA

The MIPAA has brought population ageing and related development issues to the forefront. Being one of the signatory countries of the MIPAA at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid on 10 April 2002, Bangladesh vouched to extend its efforts towards adopting culture-friendly strategies for the welfare of older people (UN, 2002). The MIPAA has aroused enthusiasm in dealing with the ever-increasing number of the vulnerable ageing population brought about by urbanisation, industrialisation, and modernisation; this has brought about changes in traditional society, particularly in older people's statuses, roles and traditional care options (GOB, 2014). Within the current trend of initiatives and activities, the 'National Policy on Older Persons 2013' (NPOP 2013) is the most remarkable and visible initiative taken from a holistic perspective for the welfare of older people after the MIPAA. Bangladesh launched the NPOP2013 on 11 February 2014 after decade-long efforts and communication between government and non-government stakeholders. The goal of this policy is to ensure a dignified, poverty-free, active, healthy and secure social life for older persons. It consists of 11 objectives which reflect the priority directions, priority issues, objectives and recommendations of the MIPAA (GOB, 2014). This comprehensive policy has recognised the contribution of older people to the nation and to society, and with that, it recognised their rights to security in life, property, finance, health, nutrition, and education. As per the UN principle, older persons are those aged 60 and over (GOB, 2014). The 'Parents Maintenance Act 2013' was passed by the Bangladesh National Parliament on 27 October 2013. This law is enacted to ensure food, clothes, medical care, housing, social company and other related maintenance provisions are given to parents by their children of both sexes (MoLJPA, 2013). On the 27th November 2014, the President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh declared nationals aged 60 years and over as 'Senior Citizens' in line with the UN policy (Bangabhaban, 2014). The 'Sixth Five Year Plan, FY2011-FY2015: Accelerating Growth and Reducing Poverty' (SFYP 2011-15); the 'Perspective Plan of Bangladesh 2010-2021: Making Vision 2021 a Reality' (Vision 2021); and the 'Seventh Five Year Plan FY2016-FY2020: Accelerating Growth, Empowering Citizens' (SFYP 2016-20) are some of the major national development plans which were prepared in 2011, 2012 and 2015 respectively by the Ministry of Planning, all addressed issues pertaining to senior citizens (GED, 2011; GED, 2012; GED, 2015). Vision 2021 has forecasted the ageing population and challenges related to it in Bangladesh. The 'National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh' (NSSS2015) was approved by the government in 2015 (GED, 2015). The 'National Social Welfare Policy 2005', 'National Education Policy 2010', 'National Health Policy 2011', 'Bangladesh Population Policy 2012', 'Bangladesh Women Development Policy 2011', and the 'National Youth Policy 2017' are some related policies where older person's issues are addressed. The three priority areas of the MIPAA will be explored in these major plans and policy documents along with other different initiatives.

Older Persons and Development

Active participation in society and development

The National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP 2013) highlights opportunities for older persons' continuing participation in the ongoing social, economic, political, cultural and livelihood skills-learning activities. The necessity of the involvement of older persons, and especially older women in the decision making processes for their social and national development was emphasised. Improved access to, participation in and empowerment of older persons in different educational, religious, ethical, recreational activities were emphasised, in order to offset their social isolation. This is one of the objectives of the NPOP 2013 (GOB, 2014).

Work and the ageing labour force

The NPOP 2013 ensures equal access to employment and income-generating activities for older persons, both male and female, Emphasis is placed on creating age-based suitable employment opportunities for older persons in government and non-government sectors in both urban and rural areas. Government has provisioned grants towards the programmes creating employment and bringing economic solvency of older persons. The arrangement of credits with free/minimum interest and easy conditions for creating employment/self-employment for the able and interested older persons was put forward (GOB, 2014).

Rural development, migration and urbanisation

Rural development, migration and urbanisation are some of the major issues of contemporary Bangladesh development (GED, 2011; GED, 2012; GED, 2015). Although not issues directly related to older persons, the nature of, trends, and dynamic relationships within them influence the quality of life of older persons. Migration contributes significantly to rapid urbanisation in Bangladesh, affecting family composition, gender dynamics, and societal structure which altogether affect care options of older people (GED, 2012; BBS, 2014). Both SFYP2011-15 and SFYP2016-20 promote rural development through poverty reduction, productive employment generation and opportunities for self-employment (GED, 2011; GED, 2015). The plans discuss balanced urbanisation through decentralisation with economic bases, allied infrastructure and services, in order to develop small town, cities and other growth centres and discourage major city-centric migration and urbanisation (GOB, 2014; BBS, 2015). Most of the migrants in the urban areas are young, making them potential care givers for older people (GOB, 2014; BBS, 2015). The 'Bangladesh Population Policy 2012' also discourages urban migration and introduces planned urbanisation by reducing urban-rural disparity, creating employment opportunities in rural areas, and increasing coordination among respective departments (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare [MoHFW], 2012). All these initiatives and their successful implementation would discourage mass rural-urban migration, thereby creating better care options for the older people in rural areas where most of them live (BBS, 2015).

Access to knowledge, education and training

The NPOP 2013 proposes the recognition of older person's rights to education, training and information at government level. The knowledge, culture, efficiency, and experience that older persons can offer are to be utilised. Their entries to libraries, universities, research and cultural centres are to be ensured. The NPOP 2013 proposes creating employment opportunities through providing appropriate training to interested and capable older persons. It states that opportunities must be created for older labourers to be retrained so that their achieved knowledge and efficiency can be used after retirement. The 'National Education Policy 2010' proposed adult education such as in literacy, development of human qualities, and social awareness (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010). On the 29th of May 2014, the government launched the 'National Skill Development Policy 2011' in order to enhance individuals' employability (in wage/self-employment) and ability to adapt to changing technologies and labour markets (GOB, 2014, p.13883). Older workers are among the key target groups in this policy. A more coordinated education and training system within the concept of lifelong learning is also proposed (MoE, 2011).

Intergenerational solidarity

The NPOP 2013 devotes a full section to Intergenerational Communication and Solidarity (GOB, 2014). Recognising the importance of intergenerational solidarity for national and international development, the NPOP 2013 proposes the following initiatives to build a society for all ages by bridging the gaps among the generations (GOB, 2014):

- raising awareness with new generations by incorporating ageing issues in their education and training curricula;
- strengthening solidarity among the new generations;
- straightening out differences between new and old generations through discussions, meetings, media exposure, and textbook orientation among all ages to develop and engender mutual relationship;
- ensuring family and social systems to transmit older generational knowledge and wisdom to new generations;
- encouraging and inspiring each generation to serve their parents and older relatives.

The 'National Youth Policy 2017' encourages the young generation to become more responsible of their role to create a more safe and respectful environment for older persons (Ministry of Youth and Sports [MoYS], 2017).

Eradication of poverty

As a 'Medium Human Development' country, poverty reduction is one of the major challenges of all development plans and strategies in Bangladesh. Poverty Reduction is a

separate section of the NPOP 2013 and the following measures are mentioned to eradicate poverty among older persons (GOB, 2014):

- including older persons in all types of social protection, security and development policies and programmes to reduce the number of older persons living in absolute poverty;
- taking and implementing special programmes targeting older persons who are financially struggling by conducting a national level research and survey;
- ensuring equal access to both older males and females to income-generating activities, micro-credit, resources and other economic activities;
- taking national level initiatives and ensuring their implementation for the sustainable social and economic development of older people.

Vision 2021 proposes 'Addressing Poverty through Social Protection' for older people who are found to be in dire financial statuses (GED, 2012, p.91). The SFYP2011-15 found older people to be a new type of vulnerable group among other categories. These vulnerable groups are the outcome of 'newer risks emerging from rapid processes of urbanisation and global economic integration' (GED, 2011, p.165). This plan proposes to review and reform the existing social safety net programmes to make it more accessible to older persons of low financial status (GED, 2011). The SFYP2016-20 endorses 'the notions of citizens' empowerment' through which 'inclusive development' can reach all citizens including older persons (GED, 2015).

In 2010, the Government restructured a programme entitled 'Allowance for the Widow and Husband Deserted Destitute Women'; the programme was launched in 1998 under the Department of Social Services, within the Ministry of Social Welfare. Although there are different categories of recipients, senior widow and husband deserted destitute women have highest priority as they are identified as the most vulnerable and financially-struggling segment of population (Ministry of Social Welfare [MoSW], 2017). Furthermore the government introduced a 'Disabled Allowance' in 2005, under the same organisation. Older persons with disabilities have the highest priority to receive this allowance. The amount of allowance and number of its recipients have increased significantly over the years (MoSW, 2017). The 'Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013' was enacted in 2013 (MoLJPA, 2013). Bangladesh ratified the 'United Nations Convention on Rights of the Persons with Disability' in 2007 and this act was amended to be in line with the principles of this ratification (Oishee, 2014). This law makes government and other related organisations legally responsible for including older persons with disabilities in the existing social safety net and other poverty alleviation programmes (MoLJPA, 2013).

Income security, social protection/social security and poverty prevention

The 'National Social Welfare Policy 2005' is implemented by the Department of Social Services, under the Ministry of Social Welfare, whose vision is that of a 'Better life and caring society' and whose mission is 'Creating a better life by providing social protection,

empowerment and development for the poor, vulnerable groups of people, and persons with disabilities' (MoSW, 2005). Older persons, widow and husband-deserted financially-burdened women are among those who receive financial, medical, shelter, training, and rehabilitation as part of a strategy of this department's Social Security principle (MoSW, 2017). This department implements the 'Old Age Allowance' programme which is a non-contributory government pension for poor older persons of both sexes. Eligibility and priority is given to the oldest citizens, males aged above 65 and females aged over 62, together, among other socio-economic criteria. Ensuring socio-economic development and social security for older persons; increasing the dignity of older people within the family and community; straightening mental health through grants to older people; and allowing for Medicare and the increase of nutritional support, are the four major objectives of this programme (MoSW, 2018). Although it was started in 1998, the MIPAA seems to have significant impacts on this programme. Amount grants and coverage both increased significantly after the MIPAA. The number of beneficiaries has increased from 0.4 million in 1998 to 40 million in 2018 which is a tenfold increase and the amount has increased from BDT100 in 1998 to BDT500 in 2018, resulting in a fivefold increase (MoSW, 2018).

The 'National Women Development Policy 2011' proposes safety net programmes for widows, older women, and women abandoned by their spouses (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs [MoWCA], 2011). Vision 2021 promotes different 'safety net programmes to address the risk and vulnerability' of older persons among other stakeholders. Holistic rethinking and reshaping of safety net programmes is also mentioned, as a way of coping with new emerging situations (GED, 2012). A number of 'Social Protection Programmes' such as Food for Works, Vulnerable Group Development, Vulnerable Group Feeding, Open Market Sales, Cash for Work, Gratuitous Relief, 100 Days Employment Guarantee Scheme, Old-Age Allowance, and Allowances for people with mental health problems, were implemented. Allowance for Widow and Distressed Women, Grants for Children's homes, Micro-credit Programmes, Allowances for Freedom Fighters, and Programmes for the Physically Challenged, are among those mentioned in the SFYP 2011-15. Although not all these programmes directly benefit older persons, they are indirectly benefitting them through maintaining income security, social protection, and poverty prevention of poor people (GED, 2011).

The NPOP 2013 proposes the following Special Welfare Activities (GOB, 2014):

- the poorest, most disadvantaged, disabled, physically morbid and family-detached older persons would be identified as top priority for welfare programmes and institutional services;
- the activities of voluntary organisations, government relief and integration of government and voluntary organisations engaged in aged welfare should be facilitated;
- special Welfare Funds for older persons should be constituted by government, non-government and voluntary organisations' initiatives;
- An 'Aged-welfare Savings Certificate' should be initiated on the likes of the 'National Savings Certificate';

- fund raising for grants with national and international organisations, wealthier citizens, industrialists, philanthropists, and organisations for older persons;
- allocation in national budget for the welfare of older persons, related activities and projects.

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The National Social Security Strategy (NSSS) of Bangladesh, (2015) is based on the life cycle risks of human life and the government's broader 'Social Development Framework'. Older persons, widows, and disabled people, are among different types of beneficiaries in this strategy. The long-term vision of NSSS 2015 is to 'build an inclusive Social Security System for all deserving Bangladeshis, that effectively tackles and prevents poverty and inequality and contributes to broader human development, employment and economic growth' (GED, 2015, p. XXI). Considering the impending ageing regime, the following three-tiered 'Comprehensive Pension System for the Elderly' is proposed (GED, 2015):

Tier 1: A public expenditure-financed benefit that provides senior people who need it, with a minimum income guarantee;

Tier 2: A contributory pension scheme for formal sector workers;

Tier 3: Voluntary pension schemes-managed by the private sector (often employment-based schemes) into which people can opt if they desire an additional income in old age.

Some reformations like including all people aged 60 and over who meet the required socio-economic criteria into old age allowance programmes; increasing the present allowance to equate that of similar programmes in other developing countries; and increasing the allowance to the highest level at 90 years of age were also proposed by the NSSS 2015 (GED, 2015). The National Social Insurance Scheme would constitute of both employers' and employees' contributions, to provide pensions in old age and to mitigate other socio-economic distresses (GED, 2015). A Pension Regulatory Authority could be established to facilitate private pension systems for those who require more facilities in old age (GED, 2015). The NSSS 2015 proposes social security for disabled persons through allowances aligning to a person's life course. Bangladesh also ratified the 'Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' in 2007 (GED, 2015). Those over 60 with severe disabilities will be included into the Old Age Allowance programme (GED, 2015).

The SFYP2016-20 has a full section on 'Social Protection, Social Welfare and Social Inclusion'. The main objective is to implement the components of the NSSS 2015. The plan proposes to expand the coverage of core schemes for older persons and people with disabilities, among other groups. It proposes to initiate a social insurance system where people can invest for their own social security during old age, disability and social exclusion (GED, 2015).

Emergency situations

The SFYP2011-15 mentions the operation of social safety net programmes to ensure the protection and reduce vulnerability of older persons among others, during disaster-related emergency periods (GED, 2011). The NPOP 2013 discussed older persons in emergency

situations in a section entitled 'Climate Change and Older Persons in Emergency'. Several initiatives and actions are proposed to cater for older persons' unique helpless situation during different types of natural and socio-economic disasters. The government would determine citizens' positions with regards to helplessness and demands during emergency situations, and provide all types of basic needs like food, shelter, treatment, and clothes. People engaged in rehabilitation programmes for older persons would be made aware of their specific physical and health issues and their post-disaster rehabilitation. Older women's vulnerable conditions during emergencies would be specifically addressed. Inclusion of older persons' issues and their participation in all types of disaster management activities is mentioned. Access to relief, selection of age-friendly relief materials, and inclusion of older persons in relief distribution activities are emphasized (GOB, 2014).

The Disaster Management Act (2012) empowered government to provide necessary assistance for rehabilitation, or in the case of disasters, to reduce the risk of affected or vulnerable communities such as older persons (MoLJPA, 2012). The 'Disaster Management Policy 2015' which echoed the NPOP 2013 'Climate Change and Older Persons in Emergency' section, with a complete section on 'Disaster and Older Persons', addressing their specific problems during disasters, such as increasing awareness among all stakeholders about their specific needs; addressing older persons' participation, and experience-sharing in different decision-making activities; discussing appropriate access of older persons to age-friendly shelter housing; and older persons' priority to receive relief, and other forms of rehabilitation (GOB, 2015).

Advancing Health and Well-being into Old Age

Health promotion and well-being throughout life

'Promoting and sustaining health and nutrition' is one of the three broad processes in the Vision 2021, in order to achieve human resource development in Bangladesh. This plan has envisioned to increase the average longevity to 70 years by 2021, which by 2016 was already achieved (GED, 2011; GED, 2012; BBS, 2017). The National Health Policy (2011) presents health awareness and disease prevention among one of its strategies. A school-based health programme to impart knowledge of healthy living for future generations is proposed in this policy. Creating awareness and bringing changes in lifestyle is emphasised, recognising the increasing trends of non-communicable diseases (MoHFW, 2012).

The 'Strategic Plan for Health, Population, Nutrition Sector Development Programme (HPNSDP) (2011-2016)' (HPNSDP2011-16) promotes behaviour change communication to impart health education to the patient, their relatives and attendants, to cope rationally with existing and emerging health-related challenges (MoHFW, 2011). The SFYP2011-15 proposes 'better public health through better public awareness of health hazards' from different sources. Sustainable improvement in health and nutrition of older people with other vulnerable groups is mentioned. The plan emphasises on reducing severe malnutrition, 'promoting healthy life style, and reducing risk factors to human health from environmental, economic, social and behavioural causes with a sharp focus on improving the health of the poor'. The necessity of health education to prevent different communicable and non-communicable diseases is highlighted, and will be imparted en masse through the mass media

and educational institutions. Creating awareness for geriatric care management is mentioned (GED, 2011).

The NPOP 2013 addresses health promotion and well-being related issues in its 'Health care and nutrition for older persons' section. The NPOP 2013 adopts a 'life course/cycle approach' by promoting health-awareness from childhood. The involvement of mass media, cultural activities and other suitable mediums to strengthen health education among young and middle aged people is also mentioned. Health problems and the appropriate treatment of older women are particularly focused-on (GOB, 2014). The SFYP2016-20 proposes introducing a health education campaign from elementary level, promoting mass media involvement to raise health awareness to introduce good practices among the masses from an early age. Preventive and promotional health education services would be ensured, to deter against smoking, excess calorie consumption, and to promote physical activities for general wellbeing (GED, 2015).

The 'Health, Nutrition and Population Strategic Investment Plan (HNPSIP, 2016-21)' proposes 'Promoting the importance of public health and increased investment in prevention, primary care and strengthening community engagement' and 'Tackling the rising burden of non-communicable diseases through cross-sectoral work to establish healthy lifestyles and healthy environments' as two of its major driving forces (MoHFW, 2016).

Universal and equal access to health-care services

The 'National Health Policy 2011' adapts the World Health Organization's definition of 'Health' which is a constitutional basic right for every citizen of Bangladesh (GOB, 2012). With a motto like 'Health for all', this policy places special attention on health problems encountered by older persons and other vulnerable groups, by proposing special health services and ensuring full access, and proper utilisation of existing resources (GOB, 2012). Vision 2021 proposes to increase coverage of all types of health care services (GED, 2012).

The SFYP2011-15 proposes to increase geriatric care services at all levels to promote health, wellbeing and independence of older people. This plan mentions to review and scale up the Hospital Social Service Programme of the Ministry of Social Welfare at both public and private hospitals where the specific needs of older persons are emphasised (GED, 2011).

The NPOP 2013 proposes public-private partnership and expansion of health services and treatment facilities for older persons. Age- appropriate primary health care and medicine at public-private institutions should be introduced and strengthened. They should get priority in all types of health care facilities. Separate counters, wards and at least five per cent of beds should be reserved in all hospitals for older people. Government grants to private health care facilities should be encouraged to provide low cost or free healthcare to vulnerable older persons. The 'Health Access Voucher', and the 'Health Service Card' should be introduced for the benefits of getting treatment at both public/private institutions. Public-private initiatives to set up temporary and mobile health camps to provide eye, ear-nose-throat, and teeth-related treatment for older persons in remote areas are mentioned. The introduction of

voluntary home care services for older bedridden citizens and 'health insurance' en masse for greater health benefits are proposed (GOB, 2014).

The HPNSDP2011-2016 proposes 'health for all' within the shortest time possible. Its goal is to ensure 'quality and equitable health care' services 'by improving access to and utilisation of health, population and nutrition services' for all Bangladeshi citizens. Improving access to those who are financially in need, is the development objective of this strategy (MoHFW, 2011). The SFYP2016-20 has a special section on 'Geriatric Care'. This plan emphasises older persons' access and utilisation of health, nutrition and population services with other vulnerable groups. Life expectancy is targeted at 72 years by 2020. The wellbeing of the increasing number of older persons is identified as one of the major challenges which are to be tackled by reorienting the existing institutional arrangements for the delivery of the health service and increasing investment, both financial and human resources, in this sub-speciality. A 'National Institute for Physical and Geriatric Medicine and Rehabilitation' is proposed to be established by 2020. The concerned ministry will collaborate with other ministries, and NGOs for improving geriatric health care. The SFYP2016-20 proposes to construct a 'Senior Citizen Hospitality Complex' for older persons to provide 'general health and medical care, palliative care for ailing patients and hospice for terminally ill patients' (GED, 2015, p.616). The number of complexes is set to scale up (GED, 2015). The HNPSIP2016-2021 proposes the development of new approaches and public-private-community partnership to provide basic health services to older persons among other vulnerable groups (MoHFW, 2016).

Older persons and HIV/AIDS

The NPOP 2013 suggests the following precautions to prevent HIV/AIDS in older persons (GOB, 2014):

- creating societal awareness on the risk and consequences of HIV/AIDS using mass media;
- creating awareness and inspiring positive messages and religious restriction through educational and religious institutions;
- inspiring younger generations through older generations to live ethically and healthily;
- paying heed to the proper treatment and rehabilitation of older persons already affected by HIV/AIDS.

Training of care providers and health professionals

Vision 2021 proposes to improve medical education and teach medical graduates to pay extra attention to 'pro-poor delivery of health services' (GED, 2012). The SFYP2011-15 and HPNSDP2011-16 specifically mention training the 'geriatric caregiver' (GED, 2011; MoHFW, 2011). The 'National Health Policy 2011' proposes the modernisation of training of different personnel involved in providing health care services. The training curriculum for health care service providers should include educational materials that increase awareness on the importance of quality of service, compassion towards patients and other related ethical issues (MoHFW, 2012).

The NPOP 2013 proposes to add 'Geriatric Care and Medicine' to the existing medicine curriculum and to open 'Geriatric Departments' in all medical colleges and district level

hospitals. Special education and training should be introduced for medical or other service providers who are engaged in providing services to older persons. Family members of older persons should be made aware of available health services, and given information on correct food habits, nutrition, exercise, and life style in old age, by health workers and nurses who would also have been trained in gerontology and geriatrics. Courses like 'Geriatric Medicine', 'Gerontology', and 'Ageing and Development' should be introduced in the country's higher education curricula (GOB, 2014).

Mental health needs of older persons

The SFYP2011-15, the 'National Health Policy 2011', and the HPNSDP2011-2016 address mental health problems among the non-communicable diseases; mental health problems seem to be an emerging challenge (GED, 2011; MoHFW, 2011; MoHFW, 2012). The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare formulated a 'Strategic Plan for Surveillance and Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases in Bangladesh 2007-2010' and a 'Strategic Plan for Surveillance and Prevention of Non Communicable Diseases in Bangladesh 2011-2015' in 2007 and 2011 respectively (DGHS, 2007; DGHS, 2011).

The NPOP 2013 proposes to expand and strengthen age-specific mental health services. Family and community awareness on the provision of mental health services and nurturing of older persons should also be explored. All forms of discrimination and negligence towards mentally impaired older persons should be eliminated and 'Special Welfare Activities' services should be introduced for them (GOB, 2014). The SFYP2016-20 and the HNPSIP2016-2021 mention depression, dementia, psychosis, and bipolar disorder, among others, as the causes of mental health problems. 'A comprehensive mental health service delivery plan' with sensitivity towards these issues is proposed, to expand the service (GED, 2015; MoHFW, 2016). Incorporation of these issues into all medical, nursing and other educational curricula is proposed (MoHFW, 2016).

Older persons and disabilities

The Department of Social Services, within the Ministry of Social Welfare introduced an 'Allowances Programme of Insolvent Persons with Disabilities' in 2005. Women with disabilities and older citizens are among those who have priority for this allowance, which has increased from BDT200 in 2005 to BDT700 in 2017 (MoSW, 2013). One of the objectives of the NPOP 2013 is to eliminate all forms of discrimination and negligence towards disabled older citizens. It proposes to provide them with the extra care that they require (GOB, 2014).

Bangladesh has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and enacted the 'Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act 2013'. This act ensures constitutional rights and equality for disabled citizens (MoLJPA, 2013). The SFYP2016-20 observed an increase in the number of disabled citizens, due to an increase in the number of older people suffering arthritis or cataracts. This plan proposes to provide disabled citizens with equal access to health care facilities (GED, 2015).

Ensuring Enabling and Supportive Environment

Housing and the living environment

The NPOP 2013 ensures age-appropriate housing for older persons of all classes and transforms all infrastructure to be age-friendly. The NPOP 2013's 'Social Facilities for Older Persons' section proposes the installation of ramps in all terminals and stands, hospitals, and different service-providing institutions and buildings. It proposes that footpaths and high roads have slopes at their end to facilitate easy movement of people who are not able to climb steps. Reserved seats on all types of transportation and discounted tickets, sold from counters designed for them, should be arranged. The establishment of day care centres and nursing homes is also mentioned (GOB, 2014). The 'National Women Development Policy 2011' proposes support services like housing for old, infirm and disabled women and nursing homes specifically for women (MoWCA, 2011).

The SFYP2016-21 proposes to create a 'Senior Citizen Hospitality Complex' to provide accommodation, social interaction and palliative care for older citizens. This complex will have modern facilities and modern communication technology so that older persons can communicate with their family and friends. (GED, 2015).

Care and support for caregivers

The NPOP 2013 proposes to encourage and support different 'Voluntary Agencies' such as the trust foundation, philanthropic organisations, and religious institutions who are engaged in providing support to older citizens. Initiatives to launch voluntary organisations for older citizens will be encouraged. Mutual discussions between government and voluntary organisations to facilitate new programmes for older citizens, should take place. One of the objectives of the NPOP 2013 is to form policy on intergenerational communication and solidarity; and as mentioned earlier, the NPOP 2013 presents an entire section dedicated to these issues, to encourage an increase in communication among generations and to build a 'society for all ages' (GOB, 2014).

Neglect, abuse and violence

The NPOP 2013's objectives include enacting laws to ensure the overall protection of older citizens in the context of collapsing joint families and increasing urbanisation. Considering women's more vulnerable position in society, another objective of the NPOP 2013 is to remove all forms of discrimination and negligence towards women. The NPOP 2013 emphasises the dangers of negligence, discrimination, abuse and violence to older citizens, as well as emphasises the importance of 'Security in Life and Property of Older Persons'. Law enforcement agencies are to ensure the safety and security of older persons if these are threatened (GOB, 2014).

The government enacts the 'Parents Maintenance Act 2013' to legally enforce that citizens with older parents, provide the latter with their basic needs, such as food, clothes, treatment, shelter and company. Citizens should not be allowed to force their parents to live in care homes, live separately or anywhere else against their will. They are always to be in contact with their older parents and provide 'rational' amount of maintenance cost to parents if they live separately.

Children will behave in the same manner with paternal grandparents in the absence of a father and maternal grandparents in the absence of a mother. Failure for citizens to meet these requirements in terms of their parents, will result in criminal charges (MoLJPA, 2013).

Images of ageing

As mentioned earlier, older persons were declared 'Senior Citizens' by the President of the country in 2014. This declaration was done in order to honour the contribution of all respected older people to society and the state (Bangabhaban, 2014). In its 'Recognition of the Contribution of Older Persons' section the NPOP 2013 sites older citizens as the architects of present society and civilisation. It states that their contribution to society, the economy and the general population must be recognised and they should be encouraged to continue their contribution (GOB, 2014). It highlights the necessity of the involvement of older citizens in the decision making process for national and social development (GOB, 2014). Initiatives should also be taken for older women's full and equal participation in the decision making process. As mentioned earlier, special facilities, reservations, and discounts in different service provisions are to be arranged. Members of family and society should be aware of, and encouraged to pay more respect and attention to, older relatives from a religious point of view, as different religions put older citizens in a privileged position of receiving more respect and services. Educational and training institutes, national broadcasting authorities, and the mass media are to include the welfare of ageing citizens in their activities designed to create mass awareness (GOB, 2014). The 'National Youth Policy 2017' encourages youths to be more respectful to older persons (MoYS, 2017).

Discussion and Conclusions

The emerging ageing population, as well as the increasing presence and inclusion of older citizens' welfare-related issues in different government policies, planning, and legal processes is proof of increasing awareness of the ageing and development context in current Bangladesh. These emerging trends are the consequences of a speedy socio-demographic transition. Firstly, present as well as future population ageing trends are clearly showing emerging challenges in the broader population and developmental context of the country. Secondly, different national and international events and initiatives on ageing-related activities affect these emerging policy initiatives. Although the 1960s saw the emergence of small-scale private-level local initiatives to address the special needs of the elderly, the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing in 1982 influenced the government to take measures towards the welfare of its older citizens. There were some significant movements by non-government organisations in ageing welfare-related activities and they continued their long efforts to formulate a national ageing policy before the MIPAA. The commencement of government's 'Old Age Allowance' for older people in poor financial health also happened before the MIPAA. But the MIPAA's emergence brought to effect some significant changes in these ongoing initiatives and activities. This influence is very much evident, firstly by the increasing number of activities catering to the elderly and secondly, by the increase in sensitivity towards ageing issues in other development planning and activities.

The 'National Policy on Older Persons 2013', the 'Parents Maintenance Act 2013', and the proclamation of people aged 60 years and above as 'Senior Citizens' by the President of the country in 2014, are some of the obvious policy and legal interventions designed to safeguard the welfare of older persons. As mentioned earlier, although the 'National Policy on Older Persons' was first seen in 2013, it was the outcome of long discussions among government, and various non-government and international organisations which lead to a draft of the policy being approved at ministerial level in 2007 (GOB, 2014). This policy is the immediate consequence of the MIPAA and its priorities, objectives, and issues are directly reflected in it. It is worth noting that ageing awareness is reflected in different government policies and acts related to the population, its health, its women, its education, disaster, poverty-alleviation and safety net programmes, the environment, and labour and employment, among others.

Activities of various non-government and international organisations targeting elder citizens increased after the MIPAA. An organisation named 'Forum for the Rights of the Elderly, Bangladesh (FRE-B)' was founded in 2004; this constituted of 14 non-government organisations engaged in different activities geared towards the elderly, in line with the MIPAA (FRE-B, 2012). HelpAge International opened a country office in Bangladesh in 2010, aimed at working on several different areas including emergency responses, disaster risk reduction, older citizens' monitoring, improving older people's access to their rights and entitlements, and empowering older people's associations to campaign and influencing social pensions policy (HelpAge International, 2017). The Sir William Beveridge Foundation - an international non-government organisation based in the United Kingdom - is an organisation which has been in operation in Bangladesh since 2008. This organisation in particular provides a service entitled 'Home Care Services for Vulnerable Elderly Citizens in their own Home'. Different types of homecare services like personal care, health care, domestic care, specialised care, and social care are provided (SWBF, 2017). The Alzheimer Society of Bangladesh (ASB) was established in 2006 with a view to improve the quality of life of people with dementia. This local NGO is involved in creating awareness, education, training and research related to serving people with dementia (ASB, 2017).

Different types of academic and research activities on population ageing, gerontology and geriatric care are on the increase. The government is organising different types of policy dialogues, seminars and workshops on the subject. Different international days dedicated to older citizens, such as 'International Day of Older Persons', and 'World Elder Abuse Awareness Day' are now celebrated with much enthusiasm and the media seem to have increased their coverage of these events.

As a 'Medium Human Development' country, Bangladesh is now going through a socio-economic, cultural and demographic transitory stage. It is clear that the MIPAA has influenced population ageing discourse in Bangladesh. A number of appropriate initiatives for the welfare of older persons have emerged as a response to the MIPAA. A significant amount of sensitivity on ageing issues has also been felt in different sectors. The implementation of any plan or policy is challenging as the count of elderly Bangladeshi citizens is high. This means that a certain level of coordination among different government and non-government organisations is required; this is mostly done by means of sharing

resources, and planning the necessary adaptations in order to implement ageing-related policies and plans. Coordination of traditional values with emerging modernisation trends is also crucial. Amidst all these challenges, Bangladesh seems to be addressing its ageing population with positive intention, already successfully meeting its emerging ageing-related challenges.

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