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Elderly care in humanitarian crisis: Issues and challenges

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# **Elderly care in humanitarian crisis: *Issues and challenges***

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# Outline

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- Demographic ageing
- Demand for elderly care in changing socio-demographic situations
- A historical overview of elder care in family
- Situation of elderly in humanitarian crisis
- Support provision for elderly in humanitarian crisis
- Issues and challenges elderly face during the humanitarian crisis
- Research is needed in the area
- Conclusion

# Demographic ageing

Demographic trend is towards an older population. With Declining fertility rates and improvement in life expectancy. The aged population is currently at its highest level in human history.

Globally, there were 703 million older persons aged 65 or over in 2019, the global number of older persons is projected to more than double, reaching over 1.5 billion persons in 2050 (United Nations - Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019).

The Sub-Saharan region with the smallest proportion of the elderly is projected to see the size of the elderly grow by 2.3 times between 2000 and 2030 (UNDESA, 2015).

# Demand and supply for elderly care in changing socio-demographic situations

- Based on projected figures of the elderly in the society, demand for elderly care is outstripping supply.
- This brings us to the question of formal and informal supply for elderly care in developing societies during humanitarian crisis.

# A historical overview of elderly care in family

Unlike developed nations that operate formally when it comes to elderly care, developing nations overtime rely greatly on the support of family members to care for their loved ones who are aged and need care. Subsequently, this dynamic role has become more intensive, complex, and long lasting than in the past, due to social changes and the diversity and breakdown of the family. As such breaking down the informal support system.

## Increase

- Globalisation
- Migration
- Monetary stresses

## Decrease

- Collective living
- Intergenerational support
- Reliance on off springs

# Situation of elderly in humanitarian crisis

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Elderly suffering from humanitarian crisis across the regions.

- Rohingya elderly in Bangladesh
- Syrian elderly in Turkey
- Palestinian elderly in Lebanon and Jordan
- Somalian elderly in Kenya

No accurate statistics is available on them.

- The recent Covid-19 pandemic is a complex emergency under humanitarian crisis. Such a situation has placed the elderly under health risk and poorer health conditions in isolation.

# Support provision for elderly in humanitarian crisis



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Elderly care has emerged as a critical issue (Spillman and Long, 2009). With the growth of the older population, there have been dramatic increases in the number of people needing care and assistance during humanitarian crisis.

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Unfortunately, elderly care is ignored, with not much attention given to it in many places. Whereas this population is listed as vulnerable in the society.

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The responsibility for care typically falls on families as they continue to be the primary providers of care to older adults. They appear to be the backbone of health care system worldwide (Spillman and Black, 2005).

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Although, NGOs might be seen as having a stake in humanitarian issues, and possibly make efforts to play a role in elderly care, it has not been the case.

# Issues and challenges elderly face during humanitarian crisis

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- Older people are overlooked in humanitarian response (Friedrich, 2018).
- Older people face specific vulnerability in physical, mental and social well-being during crises.
- They are likely to experience socio-economic marginalization, isolation, inaccessible information and lack of relevant post emergency support services during humanitarian crisis.

# Research is needed in the area

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- This presentation discusses the crisis-related health risks of older people in developing countries and present key policy recommendations for better protection of this vulnerable group.
- With older people making up a larger proportion of the world population, coupled with the disproportionate impact of humanitarian crisis on the older people, health needs for elderly should be addressed to ensure their survival. An understanding of older people's health risks and vulnerabilities in emergencies and crisis would be important.

# Conclusion

- There is no specific recognition of the roles and the needs of older people in crisis planning and response in developing countries. Policy actions to mainstream the crisis-related health needs of older people, are recommended.
- Older people issues are of growing importance for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Health, rights and protection are all important dimensions to be considered and included in crisis management.
- Psychological stress and uncertainty may increase cognitive disorder like dementia and Alzheimer diseases.

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