

# Aging in the latin america and caribbean: two positions as we are in Paraguay

## Abstract

The aging process is a known challenge and a reality that is gaining more weight, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean by the unprecedented demographic transformation and perhaps irreversible produced. The increase in the elderly is a global trend that influences the economy, development planning, social policy, families, local communities and big cities. Regarding its implications, it is probably the most important ongoing transformation. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund believes that the demographic evolution of the population was underestimated and that increased longevity can create a serious risk, pose a threat to the sustainability of public finances in the future. The problems affecting the older population today, will impact on the rest of society, especially in a scenario of scarce resources. Agencies dealing with the issue as well as organized civil society, believe that without sufficient provisions, when issues related to aging become visible, it is essential that the needs and interests of this social group and its solutions, leading to the building a society for all.

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## Development

A brief literature review regarding the regional and national situation on aging is carried out, taking into account two conflicting views and the result of that analysis is discussed below.

During the twentieth century there was an increase in life expectancy of Latin American and Caribbean population, a result of improvements, among others, nutrition, health and sanitation and technological changes. Worldwide, Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is the region where the fastest growth of the elderly population, an increase of 71 percentage points over the next 15 years is projected. Almost 900 million people aged 70 and older are living at present and will add 1,400 million in 2030. The prolongation of life by the decline in mortality led to an increase in the proportion of older people (60 and over) to 11, 8% in 2017.<sup>1</sup>

A good indicator of aging is the average age of the population in LAC will nearly double between 1950 and 2050. The United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) estimates that the largest increases in the average age will be given between 2000 and 2050, from 28 to 40 years. It is projected that in 2052 people aged 60 and over will become the predominant population, tripling, what will reach 147 million people and 264 million in 2075.<sup>2</sup>

This would start a period of aging society, that would come at different times in each country, depending on the heterogeneous trajectories of demographic transition. Aging occur in parallel to numerical population stabilization, which will stop growing around 2060, when the aging population will spread to almost all countries in the region. It would be about 234 million older people, which represent 30% of this population.<sup>2</sup>

While the region as a whole is entering this stage, in half of the countries, some of which correspond to the poorest, the process is still in its infancy. This group is Paraguay, where the aging process has been visible for a couple of years due to volume growth of this

population<sup>3</sup> does According to the latest data from the Permanent Household Survey (EPH) of the Directorate General of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses (DGEEC), the elderly population reached in Paraguay, in 2016, some 408,889 people representing 6% of the total population. Life expectancy is 70.8 years for men and 76.5 years for women, with a projection to 2024, which increases to 72.5 years for men and 78.6 years for women.<sup>4</sup>

Among the highlights for this social group they may cite:

- i. The 1st World Assembly on Aging (Vienna, 1982);
- ii. That the “Latin American and Caribbean on Older Persons” performed by ECLAC (International Year of Older Persons, 1999);
- iii. The Intergovernmental Regional Conference on Aging and Rights of the Elderly (ECLAC), established in 2002 by resolution 590 (XXIX), five-year regional body main issues of population aging and the rights of the elderly, and
- iv. 2nd World Assembly on Aging (Madrid, 2002) and the Regional Strategy for the Implementation of the Action Plan adopted in 2003 for LAC.<sup>5</sup>

Other important instruments are the Declaration of Brasilia (2007) and the Charter of San Jose on the Rights of Older Persons (2012), a product of the 3rd Regional Conference. ALC was the 1st region of the world to conduct an evaluation meeting of the International Plan of Action on Aging. In the Human Rights Council (HR) of the UN was established in 2013 and reaffirmed in 2016, the mandate of the special agent in charge of the subject procedure. The American continent took a historic step with the approval of the Inter-American Convention on the Protection of Human Rights of Older Persons (2015) and ratified so far by 4 countries: Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica and Uruguay.<sup>5</sup>

The 4th Regional Conference was held in Asunción (2017). The document “Rights of older persons. Challenges for interdependence and autonomy, “served as the basis for discussions that were held

during the meeting. Participating countries adopted the Declaration of Asuncion "Building Inclusive Societies: Aging with Dignity and Rights".<sup>6</sup>

It is essential that the needs and interests of this social group and its solutions, leading to the construction of a society for all, for all ages, which dates back to the Program of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995. This implies that each person, with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play in their community, equality and social justice.<sup>6</sup>

The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) had a large role; under the theme "Here and Now", they made their statements and had read the Declaration of Ypacarai "Since the Civil Society LAC on the Human Rights of Older Persons", which was the result of the "Regional Meeting of Civil Society, Madrid+15". They emphasized the need to strengthen respect for and protection of human rights of older persons, especially in relation to social protection (coverage and quality of social security and health). They called attention to the situation of specific groups of older people: older women and indigenous elderly population.<sup>7</sup>

The rapid aging of the population in the region brings many challenges and demands actions to ensure the fair distribution of resources to respond adequately to the needs. It requires changes in attitudes, policies and practices to improve the quality of life of older people, a socially negative image of aging, which is related to situations of dependence, backwardness or other socially "dysfunctional" categories since persists, leading the risk of reinforcing negative perceptions of older people.<sup>3</sup>

In the region and the world, families are still the main source of security and protection, especially in the context of the absence of formal mechanisms. Among the emerging issues, they are the long-term palliative care, which contribute to the quality of life and independence of older people, until the end of existence. Among other achievements in different countries of the region, in terms of access to justice work that Paraguay has undertaken to eliminate barriers to access for older persons to justice for criminal and civil cases stands out, dictating, in August 2016, a specific instruction of the Attorney General.<sup>1</sup>

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), particularly aggression and crudeness (one of the positions referred) emphasizes, "The elderly live too and is a risk to the global economy." Palliation this "longevity risk", it argues that the benefits are cut and the retirement age is delayed, linking it to life expectancy, so that the number of years that retirees paid the pension does not increase, since this poses a threat to the sustainability of public finances and the solvency of private entities.<sup>8</sup>

Other measures include increasing contributions and the possibility for States to enter into contracts with private insurance coverage that "risk" and those individuals themselves increase their savings through pension plans, facilitating or even forced to hire annuities and supporting the use of reverse mortgages. Also it calls for more transparency to countries when reporting on the trend of aging and how they are preparing to finance retirement.<sup>8</sup>

In return, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) recognizes healthy aging as aimed at promoting the functional capacity of the attributes related to health that enable people to be and do what you have reason to value process and It allows well-being in old age.

The Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Aging and Health 2016-2020, approved by the World Health Organization (WHO), propose to declare 2020-2030 the "Decade of Healthy Aging" to promote the development of environments tailored to the elderly and the adequacy of health systems to the needs of this population.<sup>9</sup>

Regionally, the benefits are part of the pension systems are covered in instruments such as the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights "Protocol of San Salvador" and the Inter-American Convention on the Protection of Human Rights of Older Persons.<sup>9</sup>

Among the socio-demographic characteristics of the elderly, highlight the female predominance, increasing older population (75 and over), the lower educational level of women and the relatively widespread labor participation of the elderly. The most serious and important problems remain the long-term care, poor adaptation and low level of access to health programs, the low level of pensions, discrimination and abuse. In Paraguay (EPH households surveyed in 2016), 23.4% have at least 1 elderly at home. That percentage of families, almost 90% of older adults living in households reported 2 or more people. Only 10.3% reported living alone.<sup>10</sup>

Only 33% of revenue comes from economic activities (still active). In the other cases receive retirement or pension, state aid or family support. Men always have higher incomes than women. In the temporal analysis (2006-2016), the protective effect with families for much of the elderly was evident. Without public support and in the absence of protective environments of families, the elderly would be in a very vulnerable situation. As one ages and working life is finished, the social security system is not enough to cover the entire population, so one must resort (voluntarily or not) to the family.<sup>10</sup>

The evolution of the aging process in LAC has been much faster than in the developed world. This means that the governments of the region have less time and fewer margin for error, to make the necessary adjustments to meet the demands of an aging population and promote equitable and inclusive society for all ages.<sup>11</sup>

Economic and social resources have an important influence on the enjoyment of old age with higher levels of autonomy. Those who pass through these stages of life in a context of economic vulnerability and less access to social protection mechanisms, have a high risk that any health problem becomes a disability as a result of the lack of resources to pay support services and technical assistance they need to lessen the impact of the limitations acquired with age.<sup>11</sup>

## Conclusion

The rapid aging of the population in the LAC region brings with it many challenges and required actions to ensure the fair distribution of resources to adequately respond to their needs, as well as a change in attitudes, policies and practices to improve the quality of life of the elderly.

The human rights approach is the most conducive to address the situation of older people, because it helps to overcome the classic simplification associated old age with losses and emphasizes equality without discrimination of any kind.

It is required to find suitable and effective mechanisms to establish and strengthen an adequate institutional infrastructure for the protection and exercise of human rights; likewise, consider the situation and the interests of older people in the implementation

and monitoring of Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose motto is precisely not to leave anyone behind.

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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