

IV. Strategy on ageing (2010)

Social sector

Sustainable Development Strategy

Sub-Sector for older persons

Note: the paragraph numbering used in this annex begins at 3, since the text reproduced here represents only one section taken from the full Sustainable Development Strategy. The numbering used for the goals and objectives, however, begins at 1 because these are specific to the Action Plan detailed in Annex 5.

[...]

3 Proposed development Strategy for the sub-sector of Ageing

3.1 Rationale and objectives

The universal phenomenon of ageing is affecting all areas of national life including the welfare of all generations and society in general. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an overall Ageing Strategy as a comprehensive framework addressing all relevant areas while highlighting priority areas of action.

The key objective for the sector is to ensure a consolidated and coordinated policy which is based on solid facts and reflects commitments the Republic of Armenia has subscribed to on the national and international levels. This policy shall help the Republic of Armenia (hereafter the country) to address the challenges posed by demographic changes and to create a society for all ages. Providing an overall holistic framework which takes into account all sectors, including health, the social sector, the labour market and the education system, will help in addressing the needs of older persons while benefiting from their unused potential.

3.2 Underlying principles of this Strategy

This Strategy is designed in the spirit of mainstreaming ageing — a holistic approach that considers all fields of policymaking and all generations. This means that policies in all relevant sectors from the economy and labour market to housing, transport, health and social protection systems should take ageing into account. The Government therefore commits to increase exchange and streamlining of policies among different line ministries. When devising laws, rules and regulations or programmes, the consequences for older persons have to be considered and strategies should be sustainable in view of the ageing of the population. Mainstreaming ageing aims at bringing societies and economies into harmony with demographic change and enhances solidarity and mutual support between generations.

To be able to take into account the concerns of older persons, a participatory approach shall be pursued. Representatives of older persons should be included in the decision-making process on new policies. However, it does not follow from mainstreaming ageing that older persons should be favoured over other age groups. Younger generations should also be involved into decision-making in as far as their interests are concerned either now or in the future.

This Strategy on Ageing is based on a life-course approach which underscores the importance of reciprocity and solidarity between generations. A proactive ageing policy also invests in young people, to strengthen the economic base to support an ageing population. Solidarity between the generations means that each generation is required to make a contribution to the costs of an ageing population.

Furthermore, the life-course approach also takes into account the perspective of every individual. The standard course of life in which periods of study, work and pension follow one another successively is becoming less common. Periods of work are intertwined with periods of retraining or caring for family members. Enabling people to combine these elements more flexibly should create new possibilities for attracting the still considerable potential of older persons to the labour market. This shall assist them to cover their own expenses and to decrease dependency on family or State support.

A life-course policy also offers possibilities to place greater personal responsibility in the hands of citizens. It implies that citizens make active decisions regarding their own lifestyles, including healthy living and prevention and building up savings for old age. The way younger generations live today will determine their quality of life when they reach old age.

This Strategy shall help to establish a non-discriminatory framework of equal opportunities and access to services for all age groups. It shall provide each individual with an opportunity to have a fulfilling life-course, ultimately achieving social cohesion and a society for all ages.

Goal 1: To mainstream ageing and to pursue internationally-agreed policy principles.

3.3 Proposed areas and priorities for the sub-sector of ageing

3.3.1 Integration of older persons in the society

A cohesive and stable society is fostered through the process of social integration enabling all persons, regardless of age, to actively participate in social, economic, cultural and political affairs, including decision-making. However, the inclusion and participation of older people are severely restricted by factors such as poverty, poor access to services and age-based discrimination. Addressing these barriers is a fundamental element of this Strategy, since progress on all other goals will be limited without the active participation of older people.

Despite a lifetime of contributing to society, older people are often marginalized in development processes and their roles and potential are unrecognized. Achieving full participation of older people in all spheres of life requires a mainstreaming approach, in which ageing issues are integrated into laws and programmes across all sectors. Furthermore, it requires an active approach towards ensuring participation in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres, in ensuring access to essential services, in protecting the rights of older persons and in promoting volunteering.

In each of these areas, responsibility for meaningful integration must be shared —Government, civil society and the private sector each have a role in ensuring that ageing issues are included in their programmes.

Ensure full integration and participation of older people in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres

The provision of adequate social protection for all older persons is a prerequisite for improving social integration and participation in all spheres of life. Older people are one of the most vulnerable groups in Armenian society, since they are not only at risk from loss of income but may suffer from frailty, or poor health. As a vulnerable group they are disproportionately affected by general economic down-turns. Although the State social pension provides a measure of income security to older people, especially women are often not covered by formal contributory schemes and baseline pensions remain inadequate. While most older people rely on family support, those living alone or in poorer households are further disadvantaged. Efforts shall be made to ensure basic income levels for older citizens. Measures to integrate older persons into formal labour markets can reduce old-age poverty, provide social networks and a vital sense of self-worth. Economic and social integration of older persons includes promoting their right to decent work and providing protection for those who can no longer work.

Older persons are only fully integrated in society when they can exercise their right to political participation and inclusion in decision-making processes as active citizens. Recognition of their enormous contributions and potential is the starting point for promoting more active participation in their own development and in affairs of the wider society. As an increasingly large proportion of the voting population in the Republic of Armenia, older people hold potential influencing power. However, to ensure that the concerns of all older women and men, especially more vulnerable groups, are reflected in mainstream agendas, they must be

supported to voice their concerns and to engage in decision-making processes at the local level. Empowering older people to participate more actively involves building capacity, raising awareness about their rights and facilitating engagement with service providers and decision makers.

It is equally important to ensure opportunities for and access to continuing education, and cultural activities, recreation, sports and tourism for all groups of older people. Lifelong learning promotes self-reliance and more effective participation in social and economic life, as well as enhancing intergenerational solidarity. Access to modern means of communication, including the Internet, also has to become easier for older persons, as a means to enhance participation. The process of meaningful participation and sense of citizenship is deepened when older people continue to realize their potential and their experience and contributions are valued by wider society.

Ensure access of all older persons to essential services

Meaningful inclusion in old age requires continued access to appropriate services and infrastructure including health, domiciliary care, transportation and decent housing. While risks associated with old age such as reduced income and frailty increase the importance of these services, older people face particular barriers to access such as cost, inappropriate delivery, poor attitudes of service providers and discriminatory practices.

A critical element for older people is access to appropriate and affordable health care. Full integration requires improved access to and extension of free primary services to all older people, including prevention and management of common diseases.

The majority of older people live in substandard accommodation, unable to afford essential repairs and heating in the winter months. Such conditions threaten their health and psychological well-being, highlighting further the need for access to affordable and appropriate health prevention, care and treatment.

Reduced mobility and increased isolation in old age can be mitigated by entitlements to adequate and free public transport, and such services should be expanded, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Protect the rights of older persons and combat discrimination

The equal rights of older people in the Republic of Armenia are protected in the Constitution, which confirms that all citizens “shall be given equal protection of the law without discrimination”. Promotion of older people’s rights and combating marginalization is fundamental to achieving full integration of all older persons.

Rights protected by international law and the Constitution apply to older people; these include equal rights of men and women, the right to work, to social security, to an adequate standard of living including adequate housing, to health and the right to education and culture.

Negative stereotyping and unequal treatment based on age and gender are major impediments to the integration and participation of older people, often preventing them from realizing their rights as equal members of society. Ageist attitudes reinforce perceptions of older people as deficient, in need of welfare and a drain on resources. Discriminatory practices including abuse and neglect can take place in the family as well as in service provision and the workplace. Services and programmes that are age neutral can become discriminatory due to lack of attention to the specific needs and capacities of older persons and to poor attitudes of staff. Particular areas of concern to older people are access to health care and decent employment.

Legislation to protect the rights of older persons and measures to ensure equal access to particular services and opportunities must be reinforced through raising public awareness of the contributions of older women and men and promoting positive images of ageing. Civil society organizations and the media will play a major role in challenging discrimination and increasing support for advancing gender and age equality.

Cases of violence and abuse of older persons shall be persecuted vigorously.

It is vital that older people share responsibility for challenging discrimination and claiming their rights. However, many older women and men are unaware of their rights and feel disengaged from active citizenship. Support for older individuals and groups, through provision of accessible information about their rights and entitlements can facilitate their participation in wider efforts to improve services and mainstream ageing. Active participation of older people in protecting their rights and the rights of others promotes a stronger sense of responsible citizenship.

Promote volunteering

Social integration and participation of older citizens in their communities can be encouraged in the framework of non-governmental organizations and by developing the area of volunteering. This could be a useful format to allow older persons to pass on their valuable experience, expertise and skills while also learning new skills for work and leisure, including the use of new technologies and communication systems. Special events, organized by volunteers, such as round tables on issues of ageing, or cultural shows and craft fairs, provide forums for promoting ageing issues and developing networks between different interest groups. The International Day of Older Persons shall be utilized systematically for such events to attract wider attention.

An effective approach to fostering integration of older persons is supporting the development of older people's self-help groups, based on a volunteering approach. Such groups can be organized around a specific need, for example to provide childcare or home care to other more vulnerable older persons, and are an ideal forum for promoting further engagement in educational and advocacy activities. Supporting volunteer groups requires skilled human resources, particularly in the early stages of development, and groups are often led by retired older persons. Local authorities and community-based organizations can play a vital role in supporting older volunteer groups by providing venues and support costs. In addition to providing benefits to the wider community, older volunteers can gain new skills, extended support networks and a renewed sense of worth.

Goal 2: To ensure full participation and integration of older persons in society.

Objective 2.1 : Ensure full integration and participation of older persons in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres

Objective 2.2 : Ensure accessibility and non-discriminatory provision of services in the areas of health care, transport, housing and communication

Objective 2.3 : Ensure the implementation of equal rights of all age groups and combat discriminatory and abusive attitudes and practices

Objective 2.4 : Enhance integration and participation of older persons by way of building activities in the area of volunteering

3.3.2 The image of older persons

Older persons living in Armenia are a great asset to the society. They make important contributions in various areas, including support to children and grandchildren, active participation in the labour market and active involvement in community life. In general, older persons are treated very respectfully in Armenian society. At the same time, United Nations Population Fund Agency data show that they often feel like a burden, “useless”, “old and sick” or that they may suffer from an “inferiority complex” (UNFPA (2009): Report

on Ageing Survey in the Republic of Armenia, Yerevan). Such attitudes may result from a situation where they depend on their children financially and where their non-monetary contributions are not adequately valued.

There is a prevailing opinion that retirement puts an end to an active life, creativity and contribution to one's family and society; this opinion should change. To make productive use of resources and competencies available in society, older persons should be given equal opportunities in contribution to society as a whole.

At the same time, activities shall be taken to improve the overall image of older persons in the society as well as ageing as a natural process. Older persons should be positively valued in the contributions they make. Ageing should be considered as an opportunity and negative stereotypes should be addressed proactively. Rather than portraying older persons as a drain on the economy in terms of escalating health-care and pension costs, the positive contribution of an active, healthy and productive older population should be highlighted — from caregiving, to starting entrepreneurial activities or becoming volunteers in their communities. Indifference and stigma towards mobility limitations and disabilities of older citizens shall be actively addressed. Information campaigns and media work shall be pursued to enhance a positive discourse.

Improving the image of older persons and ageing is also important from an intergenerational perspective. Those who are younger today and see older persons as a burden will see themselves negatively once they grow old themselves. An integrated approach is needed that targets all generations. Therefore, it is useful to include ageing and older persons' issues into school curricula.

Ultimately, the view of older persons will depend on their own actions. The way they are seen by others will also depend on how they see themselves. Ageing stereotypes very often are also self-stereotypes. Therefore, older persons themselves should be empowered to be self-confident and positive about their role. This is one more reason why it is necessary to promote the activity of older persons, furnish them with an opportunity to bring in their experience and knowledge and be valuable in society. Furthermore, enhancing integration into peer networks and countering loneliness — in both urban and rural areas — may help them feel accepted. Being more integrated may help to increase their self-esteem and thus empower them to become more active to improve their own situation, seek help and assist others.

The media play a critical role in reinforcing perceptions about older persons and the role they play within society. If they portray older persons as passive receivers, as frail and dependent and not able to take care of themselves, they cement stigmatizing attitudes which may become self-fulfilling prophecies. Therefore, it is important that the media understand and live up to their responsibility. As they portray veterans or famous older persons when receiving decorations, they should also draw attention to the contributions which all older persons make within their families, their communities and society as a whole. They should not be pictured as passive recipients, but as actively organizing and contributing to the events and processes they are involved in. A positive image of older persons cannot be achieved by praising them but rather by giving them equal opportunities to live fulfilling lives.

The Government of Armenia commits to using media channels more actively to communicate its strategies and activities in the area of ageing. This may help to increase the transparency of Government actions and to create awareness of activities taken and services made available. Communicating about a greater variety of issue areas as they affect older persons (health care, social protection, education, the labour market, housing, culture, etc.) may help getting people from all generations more engaged in the discourse. Addressing problems openly may help older persons feel less isolated, as they understand that the issues affecting them are issues affecting others as well and that it may be worthwhile to partner in finding solutions and strategies.

Apart from an active media strategy, it is vital to create opportunities for actual dialogue between older people and younger generations. Such events encourage mutual understanding and respect between them.

Objective 2.5 : Encourage and promote a positive image of older persons and ageing

3.3.3 Quality of life at all ages, independent living, health and well-being

Ageing is an inevitable process which starts from the moment a person is born. In older age it becomes more and more likely that quality of life may be compromised due to reduced mobility, disability or multi-morbidity (i.e., suffering from several diseases which may be chronic). However, this does not necessarily have to be the case and the aim has to be to achieve the highest attainable standard of health for everyone, as defined by the World Health Organization as “the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”. To achieve this, both prevention and, in case of need, access to health-care and social services have to be ensured. Furthermore, quality of life is also related to independent living. It touches upon the issue of the housing situation, which shall be dealt with in a separate paragraph.

Goal 3 : To achieve high quality of life at all ages, enhance the ability of older persons to live independently, enhance health and well-being

Health promotion and disease prevention

In order to achieve high levels of good health in all age groups, healthy behaviours and prevention strategies have to be promoted. Many chronic diseases and problems of mobility in old age are closely connected with physical inactivity and unhealthy lifestyles. The use of tobacco products, an unbalanced diet, excessive alcohol consumption, drug abuse and physical inactivity are harmful to health at all ages and have cumulative negative effects at older ages. Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes are common in old age and may be causes of death, although they are preventable and can be effectively managed through education. Non-communicable diseases may be expensive in terms of treatment, but they may also lead to loss of income due to care giving. Moreover, continued contribution of older people, for example as carers, depends on their health: the cost of supporting older people (many of whom are carers) is much lower than the consequences of not doing so.

This means that it is imperative to develop preventative systems at the primary health-care level, rather than leaving this to medical expertise at the secondary level. Engaging in appropriate physical activity, healthy eating, not smoking and using alcohol in moderation or not at all can prevent disease and functional decline, extend longevity and enhance quality of life. Such healthy attitudes shall be achieved by promoting policies, including appropriate information campaigns and education starting at an early age, that enable people to make healthy choices throughout their life-course to the benefit of their overall health status in old age. Hence, the Government promotes balanced nutrition habits and also educates people about hygienic preparation and storage of food. Efforts are also directed towards prevention of accidents of older persons at home, with the aim of enabling them to live independently for as long as possible. Risk factors, including environmental ones, associated with major diseases, including chronic and non-communicable diseases, shall be reduced to avoid their negative long-term consequences.

Furthermore, the provision of health and social services have in themselves preventive values as they help avoid a situation in which one malfunction leads to others.

Objective 3.1 : Promote healthy lifestyles and disease prevention, including physical activity and balanced diets, prevention of alcohol and drug abuse and smoking

Health care and social services

Good health is an important individual asset and the overall level of health is vital for the economic growth

and development of societies. Quality of life is directly related to health status and the quality of medical services provided. Therefore, accessibility of health and social services to those in need is a crucial issue. As research indicates, only 20% of older persons are functionally healthy. Hence, the relevance and urgency of the legal and social guarantees of health-care services for older persons. Therefore, the aim is to provide proper scope, types and quality of health-care services which shall be both affordable and accessible. Every person shall have equal access to effective health and social services, irrespective of age and gender, race or income. This also involves transcending urban-rural disparities.

The State guarantees health care and services free of charge for all citizens above 65 years. Furthermore, older persons benefit from preferential rates on medication. Currently, they buy medications at 50% discount, and non-working pensioners at 30% discount. It is envisaged to base eligibility criteria for discounts on income per person or household in the future to better reflect real needs and provide a non-discriminatory framework.

Currently, special provisions apply to members of certain social groups, including disabled people, veterans of the Second World War, victims of political repression, genocide survivors and former recipients of honorary pensions. Members of these groups older than 65 years are eligible for free primary health-care services, while veterans of the Second World War and victims of political repression also receive free hospital care. Preferential treatment is also granted to these groups in relation to medication. While it is envisaged to uphold such levels of services for these groups, it is foreseen to explore ways to make the same level of services available to all older persons.

At the same time, disabled older persons benefit from the rights and entitlements stipulated by the law on the social protection of disabled people including, specifically, rehabilitation assistance (medical, social, psychological, prosthetic and other). It is envisaged to sustain these services.

In addition, the issue of accessibility and affordability of secondary and tertiary services shall be addressed. Older persons may have specific needs such as eye treatment, surgeries or other hospital care and they may not be in a position to afford such treatments because of low levels of income. Specific provisions shall be made to accommodate their needs more effectively in future.

Efforts in terms of health-care reform, such as supported by international partners, including the World Bank and the World Health Organization, shall receive continued attention. Within the period of this Strategy, implementation of agreements made shall be continued, while dedicating some attention to re-evaluating their actual impact and examining whether adjustments have to be made.

Older persons, poverty and independent living

Efforts shall be made towards allowing older persons to live independently and in dignity. In this context, mobile services facilitating independent living have to be expanded and sustained, taking into account the urban-rural divide. Such services may include the possibility of home visits for medical purposes, home-based care, soup kitchens or home delivery of meals. To meet the actual needs within the older population, the urban-rural divide has to be taken into account.

Nursing homes

There is a common perception that sending older persons to nursing homes is a disgrace for the family and should be discouraged. Here, the views of older persons have to be taken into account more closely. They should be given the opportunity to stay in their familiar environments if they wish to do so, and families should be enabled to care for their older family members in their homes, if feasible. However, some people may choose nursing homes as their best option, for example when they need continuous assistance. This choice should not be stigmatized or discredited in any way.

While independent living is desirable in principle, living in residential accommodation for older persons may be an appropriate alternative. Efforts shall be taken to achieve equal access to nursing homes for all

in need. Capacities shall be expanded to meet actual needs and transparent application procedures shall be put in place.

Palliative care, hospice care

The provision of palliative care (care of patients whose diseases are not responsive to curative treatment, including pain management, social and psychological support) and its integration into comprehensive health care shall be supported. Hospice services shall be made available to those in need.

Health-care staff

Quality of health care and social services is closely related to the quality of staff delivering these services. In orientation towards internationally accepted standards, a healthy ratio of health-care staff to patients shall be realized in both urban and rural areas. Efforts shall be made to improve the reputation and acknowledgement of health and social care staff working with older persons. Their career prospects shall be enhanced by introducing a remuneration system that better reflects the worth of their labour. Staff specifically working with older persons shall receive training and build their professional knowledge in terms of age-related health specificities. Expertise in the areas of geriatrics and gerontology shall be built. Training shall include components specifically addressing the issue of relationships between patients and health-care/social service staff, encouraging a sensitive and positive attitude towards older persons with special needs.

Quality

Special efforts shall be made to improve accessibility and overall quality of services. The right to free primary health care to Armenians over 65 years has to be fully implemented. In practice, older people are often requested to pay for treatment and can therefore not afford to seek appropriate care for common diseases associated with old age. Reimbursement for services therefore has to be such that it covers actual costs of the service providers and a concerted effort shall be made to work against unjustified extraction of additional fees from patients, which ultimately reduces access to services. Accessibility and quality of delivery of health and social services shall be regularly monitored, in home-based care, hospitals, nursing homes and hospices. This has to address both access to and delivery of services. Cases of age-related discrimination have to be identified and tackled. This may be achieved by a combination of mechanisms, including standing committees within institutions, monitoring visits by external auditors and complaints mechanisms where clients who feel treated unjustly may bring their grievances to the attention of independent authorities who may take the necessary steps.

Institutional framework

In the health-care sector, there are many stakeholders whose views should be taken into consideration. Therefore, the institutional set-up should be both broad in the sense of allowing participation in decision-making by all concerned and well-structured in the sense of clearly attributing responsibilities. To remain functional, tasks have to be clearly distributed horizontally and vertically and coordination between different entities has to be enhanced. In principle, the national ministries shall be responsible for making strategic plans, providing general guidelines and monitoring progress. The authorities at the decentralized level shall be responsible for assessing needs and implementing the overall strategies. In particular, the local level should be strengthened. Its responsibilities for health-care provision shall be clearly set out and activities in providing social services shall become mandatory. The local level authorities shall be enabled to outsource services which cannot be provided by the public sector.

Non-State stakeholders shall be systematically integrated into an overall coordinated response on the level of policymaking and service provision. The target group of older persons shall be engaged more systematically in making decisions about issues that concern them. They should be involved in the design, implementation, delivery and evaluation of policies and programmes to improve their health and well-

being. They should also be integrated systematically into the planning on health-care related issues at the community level. Additional capacities shall be actively sought among professionally working NGOs and private sector companies at the local level. A framework is set up in which NGOs can play a stronger role in future. Incentives shall be offered and services provided that facilitate their contribution, especially in underserved areas.

Objective 3.2 : Ensure adequate health status and quality of life for older citizens by means of providing adequate scope, types and quality of health care and social services

Housing issues and independent living of older citizens

Many older persons wish to stay in their familiar environments, in their homes, for as long as possible. Therefore, accessible and affordable housing is an important issue. In fact, given low income and wealth levels among older persons, the housing conditions of older citizens are often inferior compared to other population groups. Increased cost of utilities and the cost of living make it impossible to cover all accommodation costs from a small pension.

Older persons often live in apartments that are in poor condition or do not have basic amenities, such as running water, sewers, central heating, household items and appliances. Repairs and renovation are often beyond the financial reach of older citizens.

Even though many older persons may own the apartments they live in, they often find it difficult to cover the rising utility costs. A large portion of older persons do not have sufficient access to heating. Given the potential health consequences it shall be an issue of priority to facilitate access of older persons in need to affordable heating.

A number of older persons may be forced to sell their houses and move to smaller and cheaper apartments. Assessing the housing needs of older persons is extremely difficult due to the large numbers of refugees and those who lost their houses in the earthquake or during the war. Data are lacking on the level of homeless among older persons; however, the figures of those using soup kitchens give some indication. Homelessness and shelter provision shall be a priority to be tackled by local administrations, with the participation of older persons themselves.

Of equal importance is the issue of accessibility of houses. The Decision of the Government of the Republic of Armenia on Establishing a Procedure for Ensuring Access for the Disabled and People with Limited Mobility to the Social, Transport and Business Infrastructure stipulates that new buildings have to conform to requirements of housing accessibility. The implementation of this regulation shall be enforced. Assistance shall be made available to older persons who want to rebuild their homes to make them accessible. Ways will be explored to build age-friendly homes especially designed for older persons to meet the needs anticipated for the future.

Objective 3.3 : Ensure a housing situation for older persons that allows them to live independently, healthily and in dignity

Objective 3.4 : Ensure housing that enables older persons to stay in their own homes as long as they wish to and that permits them to remain integrated in their familiar environments

Objective 3.5 : Enhance the accessibility of existing houses for older persons and make sure newly constructed buildings comply with certain minimum standards of accessibility for older and disabled persons

3.3.4 Social protection

In view of an increasing number of older persons, in order to maintain social cohesion it is required that older persons are provided with minimum levels of quality of life and a life in dignity. Social protection is a means to achieve this by way of financial mechanisms to protect recipients from extreme expenditures, for example in case of illness, and to assist those without access to services. There should be measures aiming at preventing and reducing poverty among older citizens and pensioners. Social security systems have to be adjusted in view of population ageing.

The quality of the social protection and national capacities will have to be quickly improved and developed. More equitable geographic coverage of social services shall ensure better access to and improved targeting of the service. Overall, the social security system has to be brought into conformity with international standards and criteria, thereby making it sustainable.

Pension

Pensions are the main means of subsistence for older persons. The last several years saw a series of measures to facilitate the procedure of acquiring a pension-recipient status and the size of pensions have been rather frequently revised upwards. Nevertheless, in many cases it is not enough to cover the actual financial needs, while at the same time being a significant item in the national budget. To address these issues, the Republic of Armenia has developed and adopted a pension reform programme which has been decreed by Government in December 2008. The main aims of this programme are to increase the pension size to the level of the minimal consumer basket and to link pension amounts to the income levels during the work life of the individual.

A multi-pillar pension system will be implemented as a result of the pension reform, which will consist of four pillars: the baseline pillar ensures a minimum social pension equivalent to the minimal consumption base for older and/or disabled persons who do not qualify for an occupational pension. The first pillar compensates lost income from the State budget to persons who worked in the formal economy for a minimum period and who paid corresponding social contributions. It is a contributory mandatory system based on years of service. The second pillar refers to mandatory individual retirement savings. Lost income is compensated from mandatory funded contributions and their investment. The third pillar secures additional income from voluntary individual retirement saving.

The pension system shall seek to provide opportunities for a large part of people working in the informal sector to build up their own individual pension benefits. Furthermore, the pension system should be just for both men and women and not punish those taking time out to care for children or old and frail family members.

Family

Another important source of subsistence is the family benefits system, the largest social assistance programme implemented in Armenia. It is regulated by the Law on Social Assistance and the Law on State Allowances, respective Government decisions and secondary legislation. The baseline family allowance as of January 1, 2009, is AMD 10,000; this amount is augmented by add-ons for each underage child in the family, and the size of these add-on payments varies according to the place of residence and the number of children in the family. Poor households that do not score enough for the family allowance receive one-off emergency support from local administrations; the size of these payments is equal to the baseline family allowance. The emergency assistance is provided for a period of at least three months. The majority of recipient families are older persons.

The family benefits system shall be adapted to the needs of families taking care of older persons. It shall

help provide special material and moral assistance to families taking care of older persons and vulnerable household members. It shall be assessed to what extent recipients of emergency assistance are in need of more long-term support.

Other social protection elements

The main challenge of the social protection sector will be to introduce a unified, integrated system whereby social services are granted based on a gradual system that differentiates different levels of needs (low, medium, high). Thresholds of income shall be defined entitling single older persons, households of older couples and families taking care of older persons to social assistance allowing them to maintain minimum subsistence levels. Different groups may be identified taking into account different needs levels from very poor to poor and being in need of specific services. A single unified system may eventually replace a differentiated approach with the division in family and non-family benefits.

There is a special group of privileged recipients which includes war veterans and invalids of war. This system shall be sustained financially and eligibility criteria shall be set out in a transparent manner.

There are also provisions in place for a group of poor older persons below a minimum income. The system providing services for this group also has to be made financially viable and transparent criteria for eligibility have to be defined and made easily accessible by the public. A large portion of older persons is just above the threshold of the aforementioned group. Special provisions shall be made which also allow this group to be eligible for social protection — albeit at a lower level — to allow them to secure minimum subsistence levels.

To improve the overall situation, steps shall be taken to introduce social security schemes, in the form of health insurance, long-term care insurance and disability insurance.

Ensure access and quality of services

The provision of social protection is based on eligibility criteria, which have to be made transparent so that every potential recipient is enabled to find out about his or her entitlements. The distribution of benefits has to be supervised by independent mechanisms and the availability of complaints procedures have to be ensured which may assist recipients in getting their rights and entitlements and pursuing mishandling and arbitrariness.

Information, awareness of services

People of younger age groups shall be empowered to develop saving strategies throughout their lives to decrease dependence on public services. For those in need and their family members, information about available services and eligibility criteria for entitlements have to be made easily accessible.

Goal 4 : To ensure a minimum social protection level at poverty threshold to all in need, including those who can no longer earn their own income due to old age and related disability.

Objective 4.1 : Implement the pension reform programme as decreed by the Government, closely monitor its consequences and effectiveness and make adjustments as the need arises

Objective 4.2 : Provide social assistance to families taking care of older persons without sufficient income of their own

Objective 4.3 : Provide social protection more effectively to groups with special needs, including war veterans and invalids. More effectively provide social protection

services to older persons not falling into these categories but nevertheless having a need for support

Objective 4.4 : Provide information for individuals on how to prevent dependence in old age and how to access services if needed

3.3.5 Sustainable economic growth and development

Sustainable economic growth and development are prerequisites for a successful strategy in response to population ageing. As older persons are particularly vulnerable to poverty, economic development and growth have to be promoted as a means to overcome poverty on a broader basis. A standard of living that allows all age groups to maintain dignity and self-respect should be promoted. To that end, activities to enhance poverty reduction should be promoted. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper in its revised version should be implemented and at the same time closely monitored and adjusted as needed.

As the number of senior citizens in relation to the working age population is increasing, social protection systems are seriously under pressure, especially in view of the financial viability of the pension system. Introducing an integrated system of health care and social services for older citizens, as well as the budgeting thereof, will require sustainable economic growth. The equitable distribution of resources between the working and non-working population is an important element of intergenerational justice. Economic growth shall therefore be promoted with an emphasis on job creation for working age and older persons. This also involves developing of a business environment that encourages entrepreneurship. A business system shall be in place that encourages entrepreneurs who have built their businesses abroad to come back and transfer their assets and expertise to the benefit of the country. Generating additional opportunities for gainful economic activity may help the middle generation to build up wealth for their own old age and to be able to support their younger and older dependents, while also allowing older persons to be self-sufficient rather than having to depend on the social protection system.

Economic growth prospects cannot, by themselves, solve the issue of equitable distribution of wealth. Neither can they guarantee that the economic growth will have acceptable outcomes for the social sector. Therefore, all stakeholders (at the local and the national levels) should be well aware of the need to ensure the broadest and most equitable distribution of economic growth dividends. Growth should not adversely affect individuals or population groups and should not be at the expense of the social sphere, such as health care or education. At the same time, long-term sustainability and opportunities should not be jeopardized by investment in the social sector.

The transition period has been marked by efforts to implement an economic framework geared towards economic growth and development. The global economic crisis has added new challenges to this project. When designing economic policies for the future, these have to be taken into account. Action has to be taken to counter the negative effects of the economic crisis and to seek to use its opportunities.

While ageing in itself may pose an economic challenge, older persons as consumers are also net contributors to economic development. Pensions, even if low, do have an impact on poverty reduction and enhancing the economic role of older persons including increasing employment opportunities.

Goal 5 : To develop and implement economic strategies with the aim of sustainable economic growth and development, while controlling negative social consequences of the transition and the global economic crisis with due regard to the implications of demographic ageing.

3.3.6 Labour market adjustment in view of the social and economic changes caused by ageing

In Armenia, employment rates are already low among those approaching retirement age and become virtually non-existent once retirement age has been passed. Reasons for this are manifold and have to be addressed in a concerted effort.

There is a bias in the labour market towards younger and middle-aged employees based on the assumption that they would be fitter and better able to keep up with the required pace of . In reality, however, ability to work is not related to age and related prejudice should be corrected. Outreach has to be done to inform employers about the positive sides of a heterogeneous labour force in which all age groups are represented. The knowledge and experience of older workers are important assets to a company or organization. They can also have important roles in retaining tacit company and organizational knowledge. Actively increasing integration of older persons into the workplace is vital to achieve a balance of age groups in the labour force. In some branches facing a shortage of qualified staff, older workers may help to fill vacant posts, to overcome bottlenecks or to come in during peak periods.

There is a common prejudice that continuing work beyond retirement age is impossible. As the Constitutional Court ruled in April 2009, it is legally possible to continue work after official retirement and steps have to be taken to increase awareness about this possibility among employers and the wider public. People of all ages should have equal opportunities to work according to their needs and potentials, and all efforts will be made to increase awareness of such available options. Research has shown that continued activity in old age postpones physical and mental decline. Furthermore, it can be especially beneficial to the public when older persons continue to pay into the pension system and draw their own pensions later.

Given the financial needs of older persons, working beyond retirement age is not an option but a necessity for many. Across sectors, from construction work to universities, older persons need additional income beyond retirement age because their pension income is far from being sufficient to sustain themselves. In fact, the risk of poverty is extremely high for older citizens after retirement. Therefore, they desire to work as long as they are able to do so physically and mentally, and if they are not allowed to do so in the formal sector, they will be driven into informal work which more is likely to be unsafe, physically demanding and low paid.

A comprehensive strategy therefore has to promote the activity of older persons and emphasize the importance and benefits of their occupational activity after they retire. It has to attempt to create employment opportunities for all age groups. Appropriate measures will be taken to remove obstacles and prevent all forms of age-related discrimination to enable both men and women to stay in the workplace longer if they wish to do so. This can be facilitated by introducing more flexible arrangements and gradual retirement schemes to meet older persons' needs and capacities. Options for older persons to find or remain in employment have to be created and their economic activities shall be supported even if they take place in the informal sector. This has to be complemented by activities to build an incentive framework and support older persons in setting up their own businesses, for example in the small and medium enterprise sector.

However, creating employment opportunities for older persons should not be at the expense of younger generations. Economic activity among other age groups also has to be facilitated. The issue of youth unemployment has to be addressed and the middle generations have to be supported in their attempts to earn a sufficient income. They have a responsibility to support their older parents and grandparents and are only able to fulfil this role if they are themselves financially in a position to do so. Furthermore, labour market strategies shall attempt to integrate and take into account the needs of returning migrants who may become assets to the Armenian economy given the experiences they have gained abroad.

While the public and private sectors have important roles in collaboratively removing the obstacles preventing some groups in society from participating in economic activities, these groups also have to take

responsibility for their own careers. In fact, people in their fifties with a potential to work may not try to find employment because of a perceived lack of opportunities. They are simply not considering this option. A more integrative labour market strategy therefore should involve efforts to empower older persons to realize their rights and potentials more actively. This may include awareness-raising campaigns, the provision of information and counselling.

Goal 6 : To reduce obstacles and increase options for older persons to be economically active both when approaching retirement and beyond retirement age should they wish to do so.

Objective 6.1 : Reduce levels of undesired unemployment among older persons approaching or beyond pension age

Objective 6.2 : Facilitate more flexible employment arrangements for persons approaching or beyond pension age

Objective 6.3 : Increase awareness among employers and the wider public about benefits and available options for older persons in the labour market

3.3.7 Education and lifelong learning

Nowadays the idea of continuing education is broadly accepted in Armenia, but the emphasis is mainly on the middle-aged professionals and specific training programmes for certain occupations. The concept of lifelong education engaging representatives of all generations from the youngest to the most senior is not yet implemented.

The Ministry of Education and Science has initiated the development of a draft law on adult education and a working group has been established in the Ministry.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Science has undertaken the following measures:

- Procedures for distance learning were developed. Their introduction will enable persons of different age groups to receive education without having to leave their workplaces or homes.
- Procedures for professional training, retraining and qualifications upgrade were developed. Application of these procedures will enable both employees and older persons not employed to improve their professional qualifications and to acquire new professional skills (e.g, a foreign language, various crafts, computer science, etc.).

The actions and measures taken in the field of adult education may be divided into three categories:

- Projects implemented within the public sector, in institutions providing adult education services, in health care and social institutions;
- Projects implemented by NGOs;
- Commercial trainings provided by private companies.

However, the main group involved in lifelong learning is the working-age population, in particular those who

- lost their qualification after long-term unemployment and need to be (re)trained,
- have to be retrained because new technologies were introduced in their workplace,
- are not satisfied with their current workplace and want to improve their competencies or acquire new skills to be able to find better employment.

Another major target group for training are younger people who, following graduation from training colleges or universities, were not able to find employment and therefore seek (re)training. A significant number of people are involved in non-vocational training programmes to improve their cultural, social, civic and other skills and knowledge. Here levels of involvement decrease with age.

Lifelong education has to cover older persons. However, in Armenia they are de facto not involved in any learning activities due to a number of reasons:

- Their social and economical conditions do not allow them to participate in any training course most of which have to be paid for (except for a small number of those provided by NGOs or those being donor funded).
- In Armenia, there is no developed tradition and culture of older persons' participation even in non-formal learning. This is only partially compensated by informal learning through social gatherings or meetings in the neighbourhood or between relatives. It is largely men who profit from such informal learning occasions.
- Older persons have almost no motivation to be involved in learning activities since they do not see where they can apply the newly acquired skills or what other benefits there may be.
- There is almost no infrastructure, especially in terms of institutions organizing learning activities tailored for the older population.
- The world is undergoing rapid changes, in terms of information and communications technology and other technology. This has an impact on everyday life and may lead to a disconnect of older persons, also with respect to access to learning facilities.

The main objectives of lifelong learning activities for older persons should be to:

- Help older people adapt to modern living conditions;
- Encourage and support their return to an active work-life, taking into account their needs and abilities;
- Integrate them in the social life, thus benefiting from their life experience and social authority, e.g., promoting their membership in professional or social associations;
- Encourage and support their free-time activities;
- Develop and promote principles of healthy lifestyles in older age.

These activities should aim to restore their self-confidence and to reassure them of their importance for the society as well as for the family. The outcomes of the state programmes in this field should be to:

- Improve the socio-economic situation of older persons by providing them with new professional competences allowing them to earn an income in accordance with their physical, mental, and psychological abilities;
- Enhance social integration and participation, thus building their self-confidence and allowing them to have a share in shaping the society, for example by teaching younger generations;
- Improve older persons' non-vocational competences, including those related to housekeeping and hobbies, e.g., culture and art, creativity and other forms of self-expression and self-realization. Encourage them to discover talents and develop new abilities to increase self-esteem, thus improving psychological well-being.
- Improve older persons' health through sport education and other similar learning activities;
- Increase access to information by developing computer literacy and promote learning in the field of communication technologies.

All public efforts in this field should be directed not only to the older population but also at middle-aged or younger generations, thus preparing them for their own old age.

Receiving training and seeking further education may constitute a challenge for many adults. To motivate them, it is necessary to highlight the advantages of further education, such as potentially higher incomes, better career prospects or enhanced social participation.

Didactic methods should be adapted to the needs of older persons — in line with commitment 6 of MIPAA/RIS, paragraph 50, which reiterates that “onsite learning methods by trainers should be developed, where appropriate, to teach older persons the skills to handle technological tools for daily life, to use the new communication technologies, and to train their cognitive, physical and sensory skills”.

Curricula should also be developed in a gender-sensitive manner. Women and men may want to develop different skills to pursue gainful employment or spend their free time. Resources should be distributed in a way that considers the needs and preferences of men and women to the same extent. In this context, gender budgeting is a well-proven method to reach equality in the distribution of funds.

An integrated system of lifelong learning for older citizens in Armenia has to be based on the following principles:

- Creation of an accessible and socially equitable lifelong learning system.
- Ensure preservation and development of human capital irrespective of age. Create an enabling environment for lifelong learning, education and acquisition of additional skills. To these ends, use regular awareness campaigns.
- Continued ongoing learning shall be an integral part of everybody’s life-course.
- Training strategies shall strategically target areas in which an educated and trained workforce is missing.
- Steps shall be taken to keep older persons attractive for the labour market through training.
- Provide non-vocational training to facilitate orientation in general life and promote self-fulfilment. Educate older citizens about healthy food, physical activity and encourage involvement in volunteer work as well as other social activities.
- Available offers shall be transparent and of reliable quality.
- All relevant stakeholders shall be integrated into the development and implementation of a lifelong learning strategy, including donors, educational institutions, local employment offices, employers, trade unions and NGOs.

Goal 7 : To increase overall capacities and training levels among the population in all age groups.

Objective 7.1 : Promote and encourage lifelong education through awareness-raising and development of necessary infrastructure

Objective 7.2 : Create conditions for acquiring knowledge which offers broader employment opportunities

Objective 7.3 : Stimulate engagement of elderly people in non-vocational learning activities targeted to improvement of their physical and psychological conditions

3.3.8 Gender equality

Ensuring equality between men and women and improving lives of older women in particular is crucial in terms of developing harmonious relations within society, using its full potential. The level of gender equality in all aspects of life, together with the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms, is seen as

indicative of the level of democratic development of a society.

Political transformation in Armenian society has informed significant changes in upholding the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities. Gender disparity has become manifest in surveys of women's participation in public, political and private life. The objective is to stress the importance of ensuring gender equality among all age groups and to stress the special needs of older persons in particular and to implement appropriate measures accordingly.

Inequalities between women and men throughout the life-course have a significant impact in old age. Older women, especially those in rural areas, are likely to have had less years of education, and less access to decent and well paid employment and appropriate health care than men. The specific vulnerabilities of men and women in old age need to be taken into account in programmes on ageing and especially in measures designed to improve integration and participation of older women and men in all spheres of life. Issues of ageing shall become an integral part of regular monitoring and reporting on gender equality, for example in State reports to the United Nations Committee on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

A comprehensive approach to this issue requires mainstreaming gender into all elements of ageing-related policymaking. This requires prevention of gender discrimination in all aspects of national life. Obstacles have to be removed in the areas of economic and social independence, access to and equal treatment in education, health care, social protection, employment, vocational training and justice.

This also requires encouraging participation of both sexes in politics as both voters and candidates. It shall be considered whether setting quotas may help to increase female participation on the political level.

Differences in the health situation and mortality between men and women shall be taken into account. The special situation of women — who have a longer life expectancy, lower incomes, and may remain alone after their husband dies — has to be taken into account. Causes of such differences shall be better understood and strategies shall be developed in order to reach international standards in the region.

The overall aspiration is to provide both men and women with equal opportunities in the labour market in terms of access to work, working conditions and equal pay for equal work. Those underrepresented in the labour market, including older women, shall be supported to enter the labour market. Mothers shall be encouraged to participate in the labour market and build careers in the same way as men do. A more equal sharing of caring responsibilities between men and women shall be promoted through public policies. In general, the State aims to set a framework in which it becomes easier to reconcile work and family responsibilities (including care). Facilitating participation of women in the labour market will help them accumulate social security and pension entitlements for old age. Those interrupting their career for child-rearing and care should not be punished with losses in pension.

Goal 8 : To ensure gender equality in all aspects of national life, increase public awareness.

Objective 8.1 : Provide equal opportunities to achieve financial independence, participate in the labour market and reconcile work and family duties

3.3.9 Intergenerational solidarity

Traditionally, the family is the primary provider of care and support to older persons. Providing care and support in a familiar environment can often help avoid unnecessary institutionalization and help older people remain integrated into their communities and families. At the same time, older persons are themselves sources of support within the family, for example, by taking care of their grandchildren.

Fundamental transformations in the society expose representatives of different generations to different

life experiences. These experiences inform different values, and such differences may result in conflicts. Efforts shall be made to enhance understanding and sympathy between generations with different historic experiences, to facilitate mutual understanding.

At the same time there is a danger that younger family members may be objectively overburdened with the responsibilities they hold for their parents as they are struggling for their own day-to-day survival. Furthermore, changes in traditional behaviour patterns and erosion of subjectively felt moral obligations vis-à-vis elderly family members cause an increasing concern, and so do the new values of individualism, prestige and material wealth aspirations. There may be increasing attempts by the middle generations to transfer responsibilities to the public sector and the community. Efforts shall be made so that intergenerational solidarity is perceived positively and that younger generations understand the benefits for themselves of care services provided to older generations.

Economic migration puts an additional strain on public services and communities because the middle generation is no longer available to support older persons in performing day-to-day errands. Such challenges need to be addressed separately.

Intergenerational support may take different forms. Many families still choose the classical co-residential set-up of the multigenerational family. However, family structures are changing and the middle generation does not necessarily want to live in three-generation households anymore. Therefore, strategies have to take into account that care for ageing parents may take place in a way not based on co-residence. Every family should be enabled to choose the format of intergenerational solidarity most suitable for them.

Families shall be able to receive financial assistance on the basis of their needs. Families who care for their older family members shall be able to receive support to alleviate their burden. Assistance programmes shall include financial remuneration for carers, including older carers. Home-based care, day-care centres or respite care shall be made available. Community-based initiatives based in schools, social centres, crèches, etc. may also be useful. Older persons who do not have family or other networks to provide care for them and are no longer in a position to live by themselves shall be given the possibility to be taken care of in a nursing home.

Intergenerational solidarity can take place by way of volunteer organizations organizing benevolent services both for older persons and by older persons. Such volunteering may help to transfer experiences from older citizens to the youth. Volunteer organizations may also serve as a platform for older persons to organize themselves and develop solidarity networks between themselves, as well as self-help groups.

To enhance intergenerational solidarity within society, positive reporting by the media, communicating good practice examples, may have a positive effect.

Goal 9 : To promote and support cohesion and solidarity within and between generations.

Objective 9.1 : Support families that provide care for older persons and promote intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity among their members

Objective 9.2 : Identify and address the needs of older persons who cannot receive support from younger generations inside or outside of their families

3.3.10 Social partnership for development

Ageing is a complex issue and responses to its challenges require resources and input from all stakeholders on all levels.

The line department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Issues aspires to provide a conducive framework

for the activities of different non-State actors in the area of ageing. The overall approach is to encourage participation of stakeholders in policy design as well as service provision. NGOs are important Government partners because they can provide additional local expertise and capacities, and give a voice to the target group of older persons. Relevant NGOs shall be consulted during the development of draft legislation or strategies. In terms of service provision, the Ministry will make a general attempt to exchange information with relevant stakeholders, and to be aware of their activities to coordinate between them and to avoid both gaps and duplication.

Since 2007, the NGO Mission Armenia has become an important Government partner in providing social services to older persons in need. The Government has allocated budget resources to Mission Armenia to enable them to provide care and social services to older persons living alone. However, Government support is not exclusive to just one NGO and the activity of other NGOs with projects in different areas or geographical regions (currently not covered by Mission Armenia) is encouraged. A legal framework shall be established that provides the formal background for NGO activities in the social field. On the level of municipalities, in particular, the role of NGOs shall be more formalized, allowing local government the option of outsourcing services to non-governmental service providers.

NGOs shall be empowered to raise funds not only from Government but also from other sources. Trainings shall be made available to help them understand international donor policies, to increase their capacities to draft successful proposals and to enhance overall fund-raising capacities.

Private sector companies are equally important partners of Government. They shall be consulted when drafting laws and regulations in areas affecting their work. Private companies shall be eligible to become Government contractors in the social field. More broadly, options for more public-private partnerships shall be explored. In this context, employers have to play a stronger role in creating conditions in the workplace that are conducive to all age groups. They should also play a more active role in providing opportunities for lifelong learning and adult education and training.

Trade unions shall be strengthened in their role of advocating for the interests of older workers. They shall be assisted in taking up their role in support of individual older union members.

The role of media shall be actively strengthened. They shall be alerted to the importance of providing information about ageing related topics in a non-discriminatory and non-stereotyping way.

The Government of Armenia commits to work with international organizations, including the United Nations and its agencies, to proactively include ageing as a cross-cutting issue into negotiations regarding their joint programmes of work.

Overall, the cooperation between Government and other stakeholder organizations shall be based on openness, transparency and confidence.

Goal 10 : To encourage partnerships between all stakeholders on all levels to address the challenges of the ageing society.

3.4 Monitoring and evaluation

The Strategy is accompanied by an Action Plan that details the policy measures and actions to reach the goals laid out in this Strategy. To make sure that inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts are duly observed and acted upon, the Government commits to monitor and evaluate the agreed and targeted outcomes in cooperation with its partners from Armenian civil society. This part describes the objectives and rationale, as well as the underlying principles and respective implementation implications for this.

3.4.1 Objectives and rationale

The objective of monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy is that problems encountered in its implementation

are identified and resolved in a timely, participatory and sustainable manner.

Monitoring and evaluation will contribute to creating a situation in which implementation of the relevant social policy measures satisfy all the main stakeholders in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness. This means that outcomes and impacts are either achieved as planned or inputs are amended to match intended outcomes. This result can only be achieved in an inclusive way, as has been the case with the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Social Development Programme in Armenia.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy will support stakeholders to learn and adapt by tracking implementation and related processes systematically over time and space and by assessing how their situation changes as a consequence of the related activities and outcomes.

The expected results of monitoring and evaluation are the following:

- Well-founded and timely annual progress reports or respective sections in such monitoring reports for the Social Development Programme, presented by the Working Group on the Ageing Strategy to the Minister of Economy (head of Social Development Programme steering committee);
- Standardized internal progress reports presented on a quarterly basis;
- Competent advisory and capacity-building services provided to the main concerned public and non-public bodies;
- Effective communication of relevant information to stakeholders and to the general public.”

3.4.2 Underlying principles

Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy are based on principles of evidence-based and inclusive (participatory) policy design, implementation and follow-up, as pointed out above (3.1. and 3.2). The Strategy strives to be a fully comprehensive framework covering and coordinating policies related to the elderly across all sectors of the economy and society. The Strategy is an integral part of social sustainability efforts within the Armenian Social Development Programme. Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy shall therefore be integrated into the wider context of the monitoring and evaluation of the Social Development Programme.

In line with recommendations from the international discussion, a two-tiered approach of information processing shall be put in place. This will include (1) use of statistical data from official sources, and (2) recipient or user-level surveys that collect and convey qualitative information about outcomes to the mandated bodies for coordination at the sectoral and government levels. Thus decision-making on a Government level will become evidence-based and follow-up of outcomes can be monitored inclusively, that is, by both the responsible Government officials and organized stakeholder participants. Dissemination of the results will include innovative information and discussion forms already present in the Armenian context.

3.4.3 Implications for implementation and institutionalization

Intermediary indicators will be monitored to measure the achievement of the overall and specific objectives of the Strategy:

- At least two thirds of annually surveyed stakeholder representatives are satisfied with implementation of the Strategy,
- At least two thirds of recommended corrective measures are implemented within 12 months.

The commitment to monitor implementation of the Strategy and the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system itself have implications for the authorities in charge. Apart from reporting on progress, the authorities commit to monitor the quality of communication outcomes, which shall be judged from the point of view of a user. Inclusive policy redesign within the respective interval will be at the centre of

attention through the monitoring and evaluation effort and products.

Depending on the policy goal and objective, outcomes shall be measured in differentiated time intervals. There are long-term developments only assessable from long-term data collected through household surveys and reported accordingly. Mid- and short-term outputs and outcomes, however, can be observed in shorter intervals and should be reported on in the respective reporting systems. For each policy goal, targets shall be established that will be oriented at benchmarks comparable to the system under construction for Social Development Programme.

Monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy will necessarily take place within the wider context of the Social Development Programme impact discussion. Due care will be taken that no duplication will take place on the level of the responsible sector officials reporting on all the strategic initiatives therein. Where possible, regular administrative reporting systems will be complemented, or else extra reports will be produced, to include indicator information related to ageing policies. Special consideration shall be placed on age-relevant topics to be included in the National Household Survey.

Implementing and monitoring the Strategy requires not only political support and attention, but also resources at the institutional and personnel levels. To be able to lead this impact discussion including the monitoring system, the Government undertakes to fund the monitoring and communication efforts through sector budget allocations for these tasks. Cooperation with stakeholder representatives shall take place within the social partnership arrangement established for Social Development Programme; and communication with and for the wider public shall be conducted through established channels, like the Open Forum. International support for building both institutional and personnel capacities and instituting the relevant data systems shall be sought.

Goal 11 : Monitoring and Communication System: to enable stakeholders to follow up on results and provide feedback on policy decisions.

Objective 11.1 : Ensure that problems encountered during the implementation of the Ageing Strategy are identified and resolved in a timely, participatory and sustainable manner

Objective 11.2 : Implementation of the relevant social policy measures proves satisfactory to all main stakeholders in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness

Objective 11.3 : Build monitoring and evaluation capacities for public officials and involved stakeholders

Objective 11.4 : Integrate reporting formats on the Government and sectoral levels

Objective 11.5 : Communicate targets and outcomes to stakeholders

4 Timeframe of this Strategy

This Strategy is adopted for the period 2010–2012. This period of implementation shall be used actively to build a knowledge base to better understand ageing-related developments, to see progress and identify gaps to be tackled in the next plan. Towards the end of this period, the implementation of this plan shall be evaluated and based on these insights a new Strategy will be developed.

Synthesis: goals and objectives

- Goal 1 : To mainstream ageing and to pursue internationally-agreed policy principles.
- Goal 2 : To ensure full participation and integration of older persons in society.
- Objective 2.1 : Ensure full integration and participation of older persons in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres
- Objective 2.2 : Ensure accessibility and non-discriminatory provision of services in the areas of health care, transport, housing and communication.
- Objective 2.3 : Ensure the implementation of equal rights of all age groups and combat discriminatory and abusive practices
- Objective 2.4 : Enhance integration and participation of older persons by building activities in the area of volunteering
- Objective 2.5 : Encourage and promote a positive image of older persons and ageing
- Goal 3 : To achieve high quality of life at all ages, enhance the ability of older persons to live independently, enhance health and well-being.
- Objective 3.1 : Promote healthy lifestyles and disease prevention, including physical activity and balanced diets, prevention of alcohol and drug abuse and smoking
- Objective 3.2 : Ensure adequate health status and quality of life for older citizens by means of providing adequate scope, types and quality of health care and social services
- Objective 3.3 : Ensure a housing situation for older persons that allows them to live independently, healthily and in dignity
- Objective 3.4 : Ensure housing that enables older persons to stay in their own homes as long as they wish to and that permits them to remain integrated in their familiar environments
- Objective 3.5 : Enhance the accessibility of existing houses for older persons and make sure newly constructed buildings comply with certain minimum standards of accessibility for older and disabled persons.
- Goal 4 : To ensure a minimum social protection level at poverty threshold to all in need, including those who can no longer earn their own income due to old age and related disability.
- Objective 4.1 : Implement the pension reform programme as decreed by the Government, closely monitor its consequences and effectiveness and make adjustments as the need arises
- Objective 4.2 : Provide social assistance to families taking care of older persons without sufficient income of their own.
- Objective 4.3 : Provide social protection more effectively to groups with special needs, including war veterans and invalids. More effectively provide social protection services to older persons not falling into these categories but nevertheless having a need for support
- Objective 4.4 : Provide information for individuals on how to prevent dependence in old age and how to access services if needed
- Goal 5 : To develop and implement economic strategies with the aim of sustainable economic growth and development, while controlling negative social consequences of the transition and the global economic crisis with due regard to the implications of demographic ageing.

- Goal 6 : To reduce obstacles and increase options for older persons to be economically active both when approaching retirement and beyond retirement age should they wish to do so.
- Objective 6.1 : Reduce levels of undesired unemployment among older persons approaching or beyond pension age
- Objective 6.2 : Facilitate more flexible employment arrangements for persons approaching or beyond pension age
- Objective 6.3 : Increase awareness among employers and the wider public about benefits and available options for older persons in the labour market
- Goal 7 : To increase overall capacities and training levels among the population in all age groups.
- Objective 7.1 : Promote and encourage lifelong education
- Objective 7.2 : Create conditions for acquiring knowledge which offers broader employment opportunities
- Objective 7.3 : Stimulate engagement of elderly people in non-vocational learning activities targeted to improvement of their physical and psychological conditions
- Goal 8 : To ensure gender equality in all aspects of national life, increase public awareness.
- Objective 8.1 : Provide equal opportunities to achieve financial independence, participate in the labour market and reconcile work and family duties
- Goal 9 : To promote and support cohesion and solidarity within and between generations.
- Objective 9.1 : Support families that provide care for older persons and promote intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity among their members
- Objective 9.2 : Identify and address the needs of older persons who cannot receive support from younger generations inside or outside of their families
- Goal 10 : To encourage partnerships between all stakeholders on all levels to address the challenges of the ageing society.
- Goal 11 : Monitoring and Communication System: to enable stakeholders to follow up on results and provide feedback on policy decisions.
- Objective 11.1 : Ensure that problems encountered during the implementation of the Ageing Strategy are identified and resolved in a timely, participatory and sustainable manner
- Objective 11.2 : Implementation of the relevant social policy measures proves satisfactory to all main stakeholders in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness
- Objective 11.3 : Build monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities for public officials and involved stakeholders
- Objective 11.4 : Integrate reporting formats on the Government and sectoral levels
- Objective 11.5 : Communicate targets and outcomes to stakeholders
- Goal 12 : Cross-cutting issues.

