

The Challenges and Opportunities in Fostering a Long-term Care System in the Americas



THE DATA

Between 2000 and 2050, the proportion of individuals aged 65+ is expected to increase from 8.7% to 19% in Latin America and the Caribbean, resulting in individuals aged 65+ outnumbering children under the age of 15.

The past several decades have also seen healthy life expectancy not increase at the same rate as life expectancy.

The resulting gap increased from 9.7 years to 10.6 years from 1990 to 2017 in the Region. This means that **while people are living longer, they are not necessarily living healthier** due to the increase in the years lived with disability (a 14% increase from 1990 to 2017)

THE ISSUE

Accelerated aging, particularly the increased survival of the population over 80 years old presents a major challenge in the years to come, as the increased aged is associated with multiple chronic conditions which required adequate management.

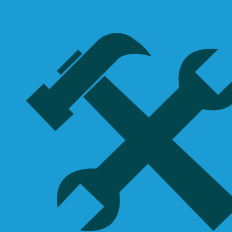
With the current trends in population aging, the number of people who require care from others will continue to grow rapidly.

Long-term care (LTC) needs are currently mostly met through family and unpaid care. Although countries in the Region of the Americas can maintain the increases in the care dependence of individuals in the short-term, the issue demands a long-term solution due to the demographic and epidemiological shift that the Region is facing.

The brief aims to present the situation at hand and to spur the reader to ask exactly how countries of the Region of the Americas are prepared to face the increased demand for care while providing a strategic vision for the LTC in the Americas.

BRIEF SUMMARY

Rationale and key actions in addressing current and future long-term care needs of the Region of the Americas include:



Determine a consensus on definitions, standards, and tools on dependency.



Develop a catalog of strategies and interventions in preventing disability, improving functional capacity, and decreasing dependency.



Build a process for the design for the design and implementation of LTC systems, that are financially sustainable, based on human rights, and that call for a multi-sectoral response by the health sector.

The Challenges for the Americas

THE CHALLENGES

Human resources

- Family and unpaid care currently cover most of care needs. This burden especially tends to fall on women.
- The continued downward trend care from families appears to be driven by social and cultural changes in countries due to the increase female participation in the workforce.
- There are insufficient numbers of trained long-term care workers.

Financial

- Smaller family sizes are resulting in a limited ability of families to continue providing care without government support in the foreseeable future.
- The increased number of individuals who are care dependent will require greater out-of-pocket expenditures, depending on the degree of financial protection and coverage of each health system.
- Increased private expenditure and coverage deficits result in access barriers and inequities.

Monitoring and evaluation

- The lack of definitions and the multiplicity of measurement instruments make it difficult to generate, use, and compare information and statistics to determine the effectiveness of LTC systems in dealing with care dependence.
- LTC should be integrated with the whole health system, including social services and primary care, to be able to provide adequate support and better management of individuals and caregivers' needs. This has been addressed as a key problem to designing and implementing policies that address care dependence and LTC.

KEY FACTS

2x ▲ The dependent population worldwide will nearly double from 329 to 613 million between 2010 and 2050.

3x ▲ The number of dependent older people will nearly triple from 101 to 277 million. This increase will be particularly dramatic in low- and middle- income countries.

WHAT ELSE IS NEEDED?

- Generate a better picture of LTC needs in the Americas - by collecting, systematizing, and generating information on LTC needs and the cost estimates of not having an LTC system.
- Engage countries in a process to build common definitions and classification of LTC needs, as well as methods to measure dependency.
- Build political support to elevate LTC in countries' political agendas and to strengthen advocacy at a national and regional level. Encourage countries to recognize the relevance of LTC and acknowledge the need to implement a coordinated response.
- Strengthen regional coordination and discussion about LTC to create a critical mass and to generate learning opportunities between countries in the Region.

The Opportunities for the Americas

THE SOLUTION

A strong long-term care system is required in each country within the Region to respond to the aging population.

1. Make generating LTC protection a top priority in their policies and agendas.
2. Invest in developing LTC systems.
3. Ensure sustainable and affordable funds for long-term care through:
 - a. Tax-based financing
 - b. Social LTC insurance
 - c. Private LTC insurance
4. Develop evidence for decision-making and monitoring progress: including common definitions and methodologies for measuring LTC systems that consider:
 - a. Characteristics of the population 65+ (care dependence)
 - b. Cost estimates
 - c. Density, availability and training of workforce
 - d. Measurement progress of LTC systems over time
5. Ensure easy access to LTC services: including coordination and addressing shortages by:
 - a. Building infrastructure and workforce
 - b. Increasing skill development and training
 - c. Regional coordination between countries
 - d. Integration with other services within the system and levels of care

Rationale and key actions in addressing current and future long-term care needs of the Region of the Americas include:

There is no doubt that the countries in the Region of the Americas have a key role in making these processes more efficient and clearly articulated.

As a result, the Region will be able to move forward on the challenge of implementing long-term care systems in every country.

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For more information, please visit: <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/healthy-aging>

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