

Supporting informal caregivers: Lessons for LMICs

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Rationale

- a) Long-term care (LTC) has received little attention in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs)
- b) However, **population ageing is placing pressures on LMICs** where most older people will live 2050
- c) Many people in LMICs will experience the **onset of age-related health** problems before the age of 65 years
- d) Without formal LTC, the costs of providing care **shift to the family and the health system**
- e) **Unlikely that informal caregivers can meet demand.** While LTC is traditionally considered the responsibility of the family, the **number of informal caregivers has declined** with decreases in fertility and family sizes, and more opportunities for women in the formal workforce.
- f) **Negative economic impact of population ageing is compounded if there is no support to formal LTC – that places pressure on informal caregivers to reduce workforce participation.**



WHO Research brief series: LTC financing: lessons for LMICs (jointly with WHO Health Governance & Financing, Ageing Depts)

Brief 1. Drivers of the demand for LTC

Brief 2. Population coverage

Brief 3. How countries pay for LTC

Brief 4. Deciding what services will be covered by public funds

Brief 5. Aligning the financing and delivery of LTC services

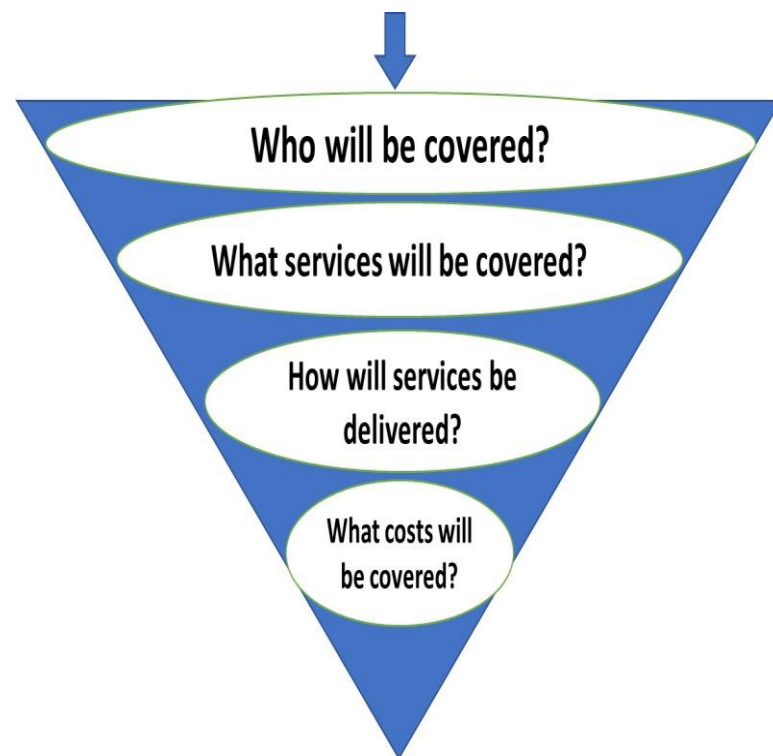
Brief 6. Ensuring financial protection

Brief 7. Promoting quality and value

Brief 8. Ensuring financial sustainability

Brief 9. Investing in the LTC workforce

Brief 10. Supporting informal caregivers



Long-term care access, quality and financial protection

Framework adapted from WHO EURO



Identifying policies and programs to support long-term caregivers

- Review of regional and global policy documents identifying the major policies and programs to support the informal long-term caregivers
- Rapid review of empirical literature evaluating interventions for informal caregivers:
 - Investing in formal LTC services to substitute informal caregiving
 - Labor force policies: paid and unpaid leave and flexible work arrangements
 - Cash benefits: caregivers or care recipients
 - Training opportunities particularly for informal caregivers that provide intensive caregiving



Brief 10. Supporting informal caregivers

- Informal caregivers: present in all countries and **substitute for formal LTC in LMICs** and where there are few or no publicly funded LTC services.
- Relying on informal caregivers is sometimes viewed as a **simple and inexpensive means** to reduce the pressure on public LTC services and address the needs of a growing older population.
- **LMICs may fear** that they cannot afford to invest in LTC because economic growth with slow with population ageing
- However, **without formal LTC, the negative impact on the economy is compounded** as informal caregivers leave the labor force to provide informal care for older persons
- Estimates of caregivers' time and effort: **value of informal caregiving to the economy ranges from 0.8% to 4.9% of GDP annually**



Brief 10. Supporting informal caregivers (2)

- Investing in formal LTC services can enable **working age informal caregivers to combine informal caregiving with paid work**: day care services, home health care, meal services
- **Paid and unpaid leave and flexible work arrangements** may enable people to provide informal care while remaining formally employed.
- **Cash benefits provided directly to caregivers** may serve to recognize the valuable contributions of informal caregivers and also be more easily regulated.
- **Cash benefits provided directly to older persons** with fewer stipulations for their use may not reach informal caregivers or support them in their caregiving responsibilities. Such subsidies pressure women to remain in traditional, informal caregiving roles.
- **Many training programmes** have been undertaken to support informal caregivers in managing the mental health demands of caregiving. However, there is **little evidence that such training done in isolation has an impact on caregivers' mental and emotional health.**



Access all 10 briefs and 5 background papers at

<https://wkc.who.int/resources/projects/item/long-term-care-financing>



Public provision and financing of long-term care: case studies in middle- and high-income countries

Terence C Cheng, Winnie Yip and Zhanlian Feng



Financing long-term care for older people: intergenerational transfers and financial stability in Japan

Yuichi Imanaka, Noriko Sasaki and Etsu Goto