

# Ageing and Long-Term Care in the Middle East and North Africa: Opportunities and Challenges to Enhancing the Wellbeing of Older Persons and their Families

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# Disclosure Statement

## Speaker:

### Dr. Shereen Hussein

- Has no relevant financial relationships to disclose
- Will not be discussing unlabeled/unapproved use of drugs or products



# Learning Objectives

- Identify and describe trends and developments related to population ageing in the MENA region.
- Discuss the concepts of wellbeing and healthy ageing in the MENA region.
- Examine the opportunities and challenges to promote the wellbeing of older persons in the region (including current long term care provisions and participatory opportunities).
- Explain some policy and practice interventions to support the wellbeing of older persons that are likely to be suitable to the cultural context of MENA.

# INTRODUCTIONS MENA REGION & AGEING





# Cultural Contexts

'Treasuring' older people

Re-constructing 'real' vs.  
rhetoric values

Healthy and meaningful  
ageing process

Care is a family 'business'

Care ability and burden

- Younger populations dominate the policy agenda
- Obesity and co-morbidity
- Physical (in)activity
- Isolation and loneliness
- Care options
- Support mechanisms
- Regional and socio-economic differences
  - Within and between countries

# Diversity

## High Income

- Bahrain; Kuwait; Oman; Qatar; Saudi Arabia; United Arab Emirates

## Upper Middle Income

- Iraq; Jordan; Lebanon; Libya;

## Lower Middle Income

- Algeria; Djibouti; Egypt; Iran; Morocco; Tunisia; West Bank and Gaza

## Low Income

- Syria; Yemen

## Group 3b: Generalised provision

- Jordan, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia

## Group 3a: Isolated provision

- Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, West Bank & Gaza

## Group 2: Building capacity

- United Arab Emirates

## Group 1: No known activities

- Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Djibouti

## Income level

## Palliative Care

# POPULATION AGEING IN THE MENA REGION

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# What is Population Ageing?

## Changes to the whole structure of a population

### Measurements

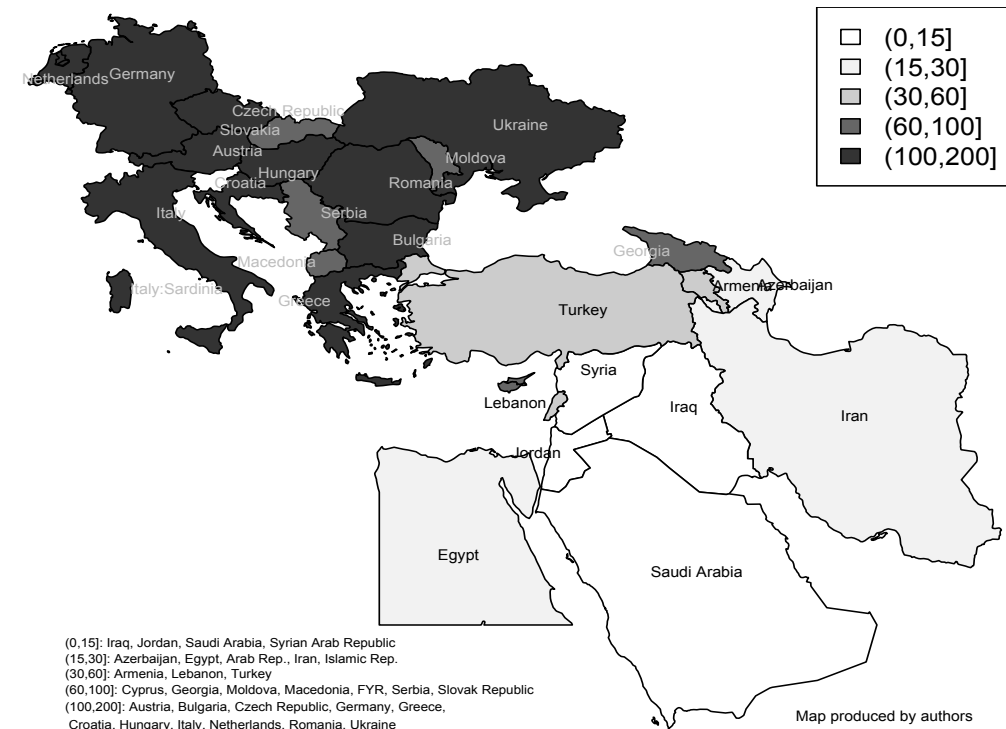
- Static** {
- Age Index
  - Age dependency ratio,
  - Percentage over 65+
  - **Dynamic**: prospective ageing

- Societal/population level
- Linked to economic productivity (retirement)
- Individual's perception of ageing
  - What one can and can not do!
  - Expectations from and opportunities at old age
- Differentials by societal & individual factors
- Variations in health and wellbeing at older age is not random

# Population Ageing the context of MENA Region

- 'Rapid' process of ageing
  - Fast and steep
- High level of unpreparedness
  - Health and care services
  - Infrastructure
- Social & economic opportunities
- Social-determinants of health and wellbeing at old age
- Nested within other demographic dynamics (pop. growth & dividends)
- Socio-political structures
- Perceived age-related roles & duties

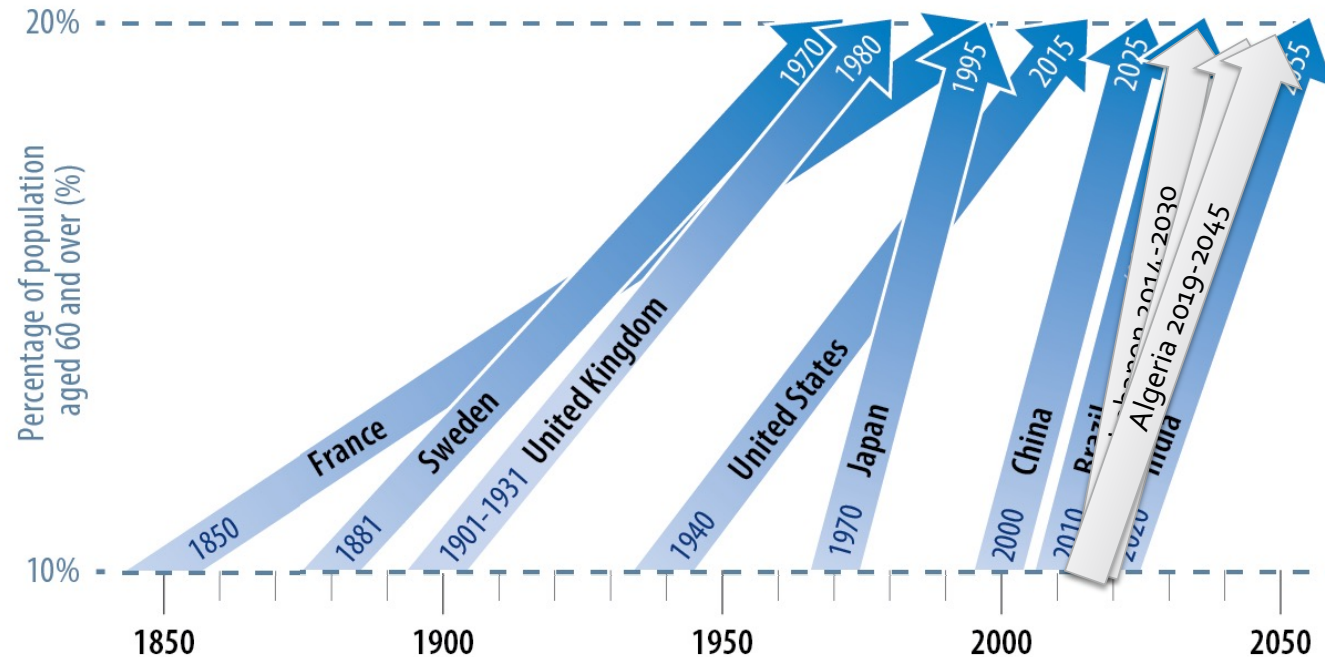
Aging index





# Pace of population Ageing

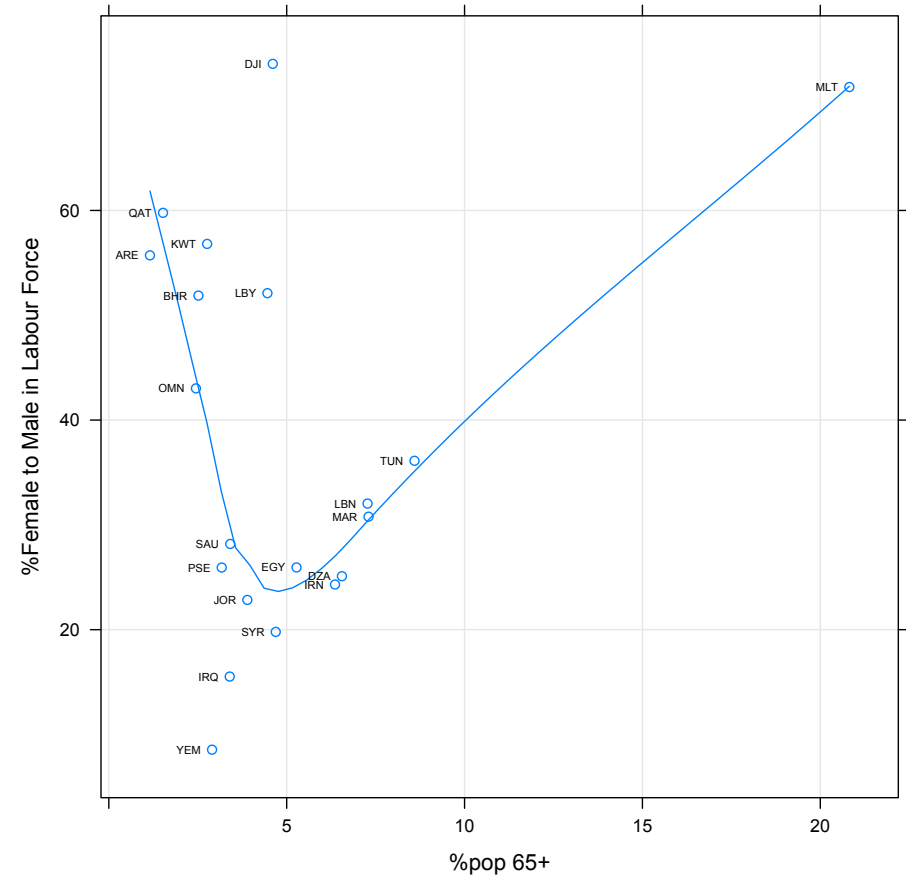
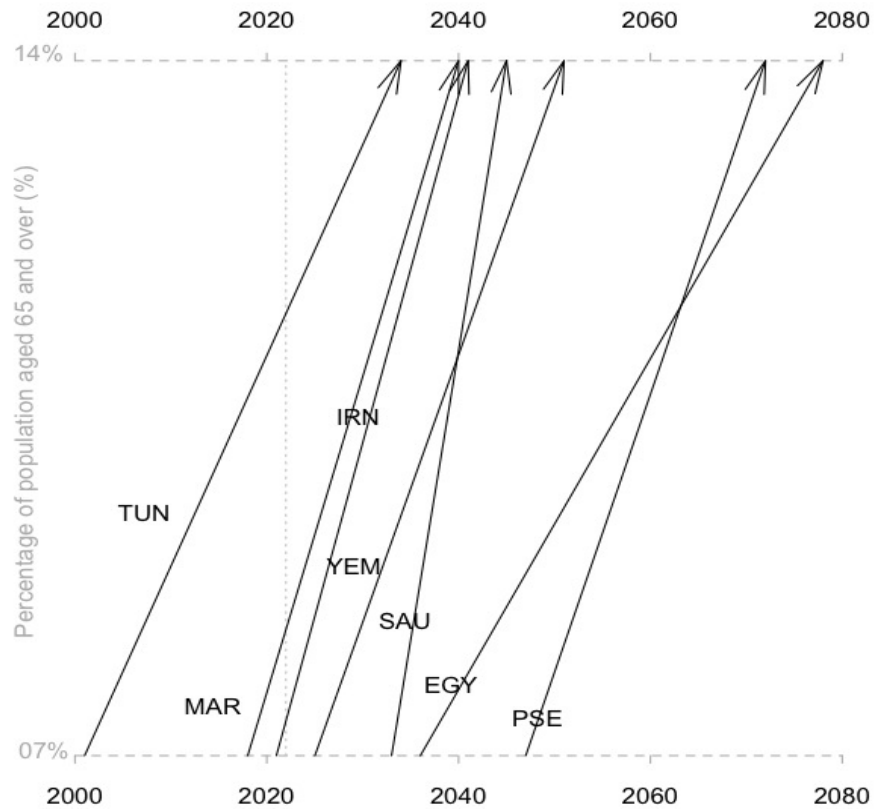
By 2050, 80% of the world older people will be living in LMICs



Source: WHO, additions by author

Weill Cornell Medicine- Qatar @DrShereeHussein

# The pace and stage of population ageing vary across countries



# THE WELLBEING AND HEALTHY AGEING IN THE MENA REGION

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# More than just numbers

## The meaning of ageing

- No typical definition
- Varies within and across individuals, societies and groups
- Desired & unwanted outcomes



Image credit: *unsplash*

- The notion of 'Growing older'
  - Connotations of experience and frailty
  - Maturity and dependency
- Age-conscious societies
- A Growing attention to
  - Life-long learning
  - An increased importance of enhancing wellbeing and quality of life
- Not all years gained are spent in good health
- Huge observed levels of inequalities at old age

# Not all years gained are healthy years

- Both life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are increasing
  - Nature longevity limit?
  - HLE not growing as fast as LE
- High number of years lived with LTC needs
- Significant gender, ethnic & socio-economic differentials
- Differentials within and across countries

	LE- M	LE-F	HLE-M	HLE-F
France	79.8	85.1	71.1	73.1
Germany	78.7	84.8	69.7	72.1
Italy	80.9	84.9	71.2	72.6
Netherlands	80.4	83.2	71.4	71.5
Norway	81.1	84.1	71.1	71.6
UK	79.8	83.0	69.6	70.6
Algeria	76.2	77.5	66.7	66.1
Egypt	69.6	74.1	62.3	63.7
Iran	75.7	79.1	66.0	66.5
Lebanon	74.0	79.2	65.1	67.1
Morocco	71.7	74.3	63.7	63.7
Turkey	76.4	80.7	67.8	69.0

Average LE & HLE at birth in 2019, source: World Health Organization



# Health and epidemiology in the region

High prevalence of chronic disease among older persons

- In GCC countries, the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes and obesity is unusually high relative to the rest of the world

The number of older persons with non-communicable diseases in the region is expected to reach 1.3 million in 2030, nearly 50% higher than in 2015

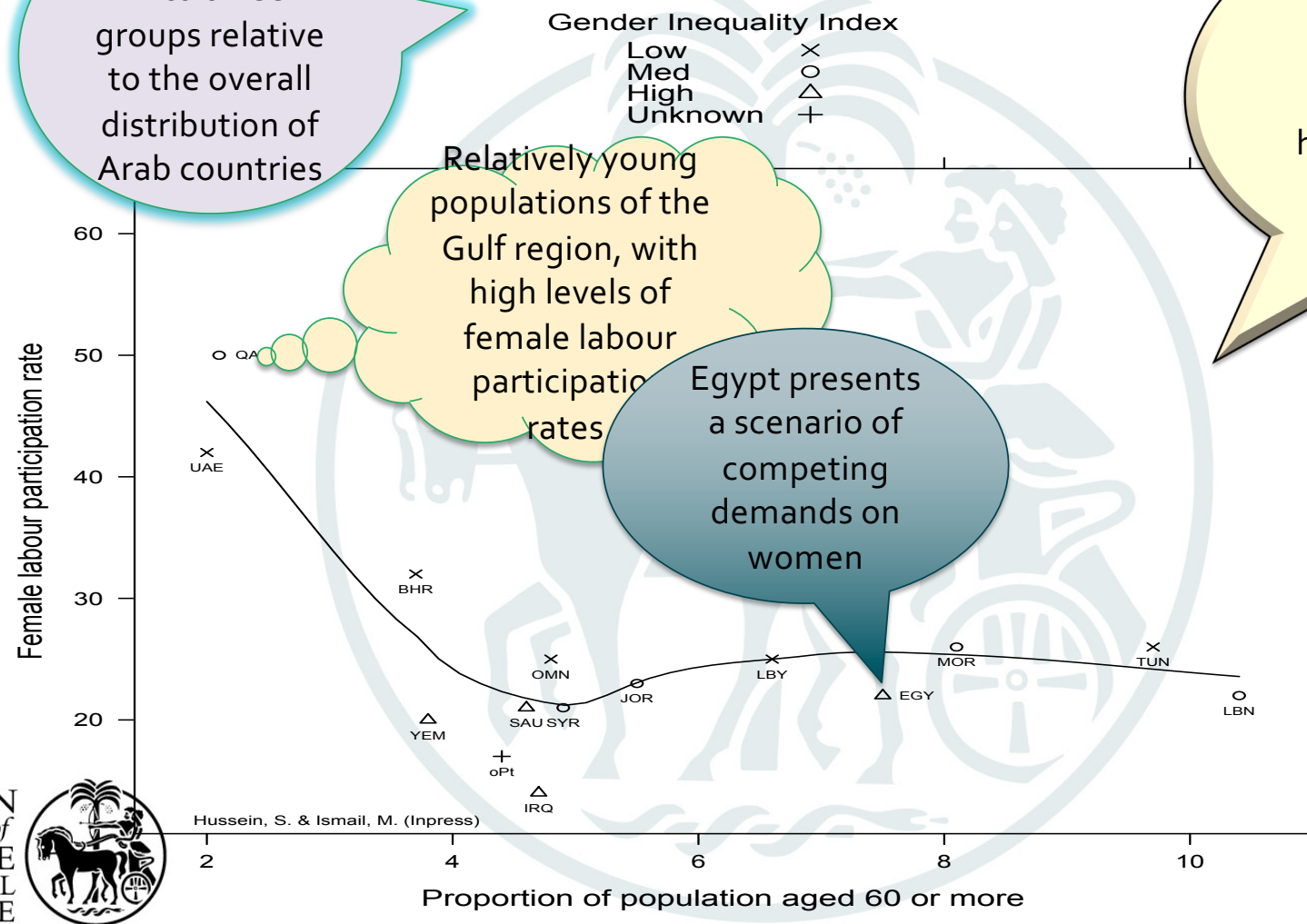
- The percentage of older persons suffering from at least one chronic disease ranges between 13.1% in Djibouti and 63.8% in Lebanon, with the majority of the countries having rates above 45%

Based on limited studies, it is estimated that the prevalence of dementia among older persons (60+) is currently around 6%

- Likely to be an under-estimate, yet, it is expected the number of people to suffer from dementia in the region to reach 4.7 million in 2040

GII distributed into three groups relative to the overall distribution of Arab countries

Gender Inequality Index measures the human development costs of gender inequality, higher the GII the more disparities between females and males



GII range from 2.1% to 73.3% in the region



# Inequalities at Old Age

## RECOGNITION

- Self-recognition
- Cultural visibility & class
- Assumptions - otherness

negative

## (MIS)REPRESENTATION

- Inclusion (exclusion) – the environment
- Participation
- Media representation



OLD AGE INEQUALITIES

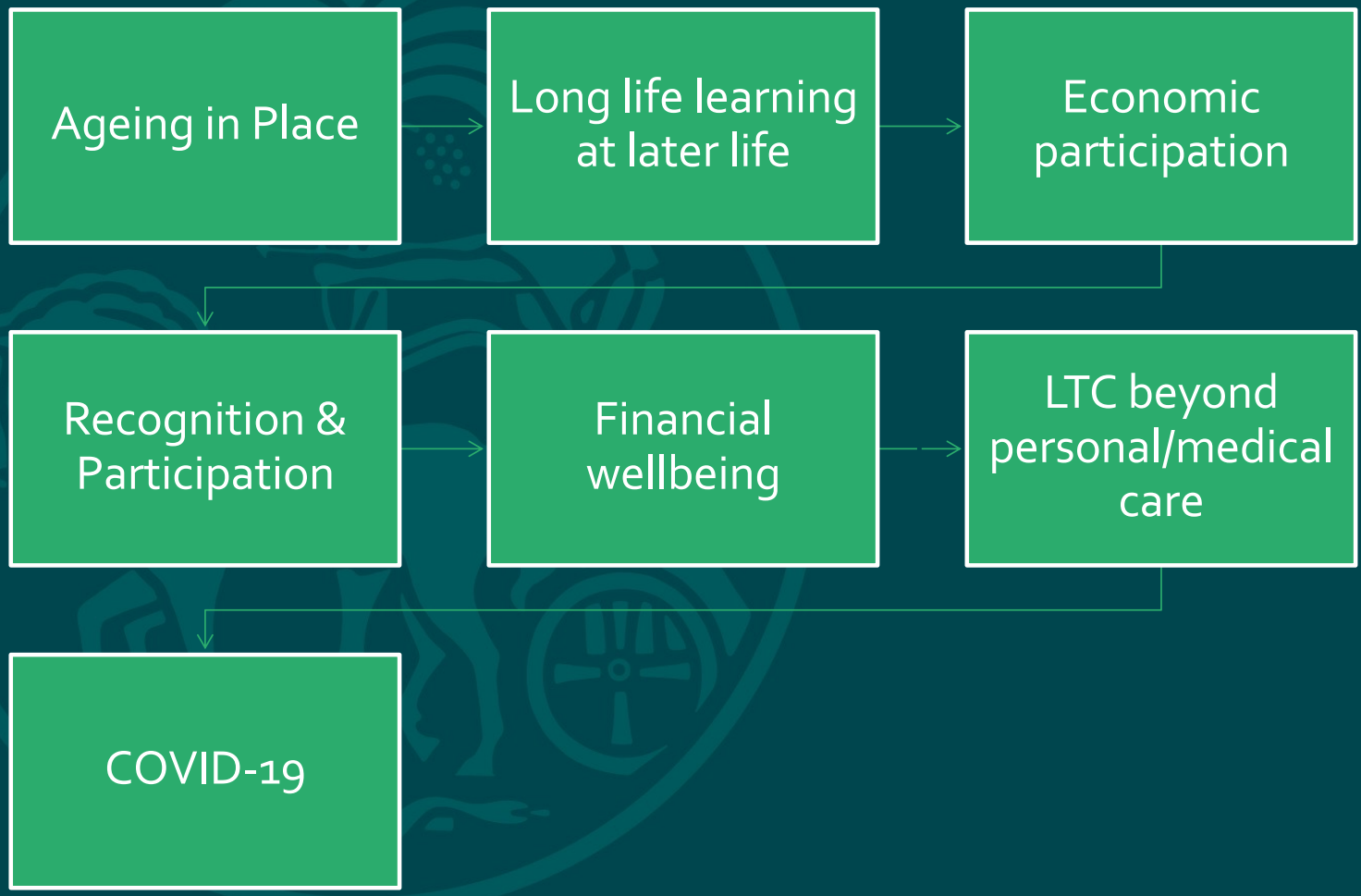


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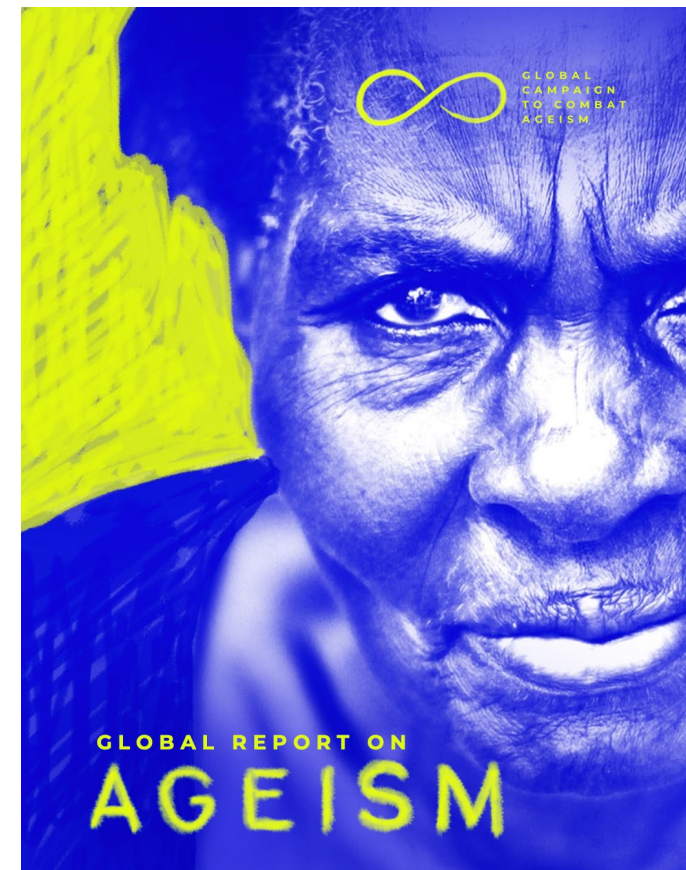
Source: Hussein, S. (2020) *Migration Gender and Social Inclusion*.

# Opportunities and challenges to promote the wellbeing of older persons



# Ageism, Social Norms & Isolation

- Pre-existing & new perceptions
- Definitional challenges: what does 'ageism' mean in different contexts and settings?
  - Benevolent and hostile elements
- Operates at different levels: cognition, emotional & actions
- Different components: stereotyping; prejudice and discrimination
- Intersectionality: age, disability, gender, race etc.

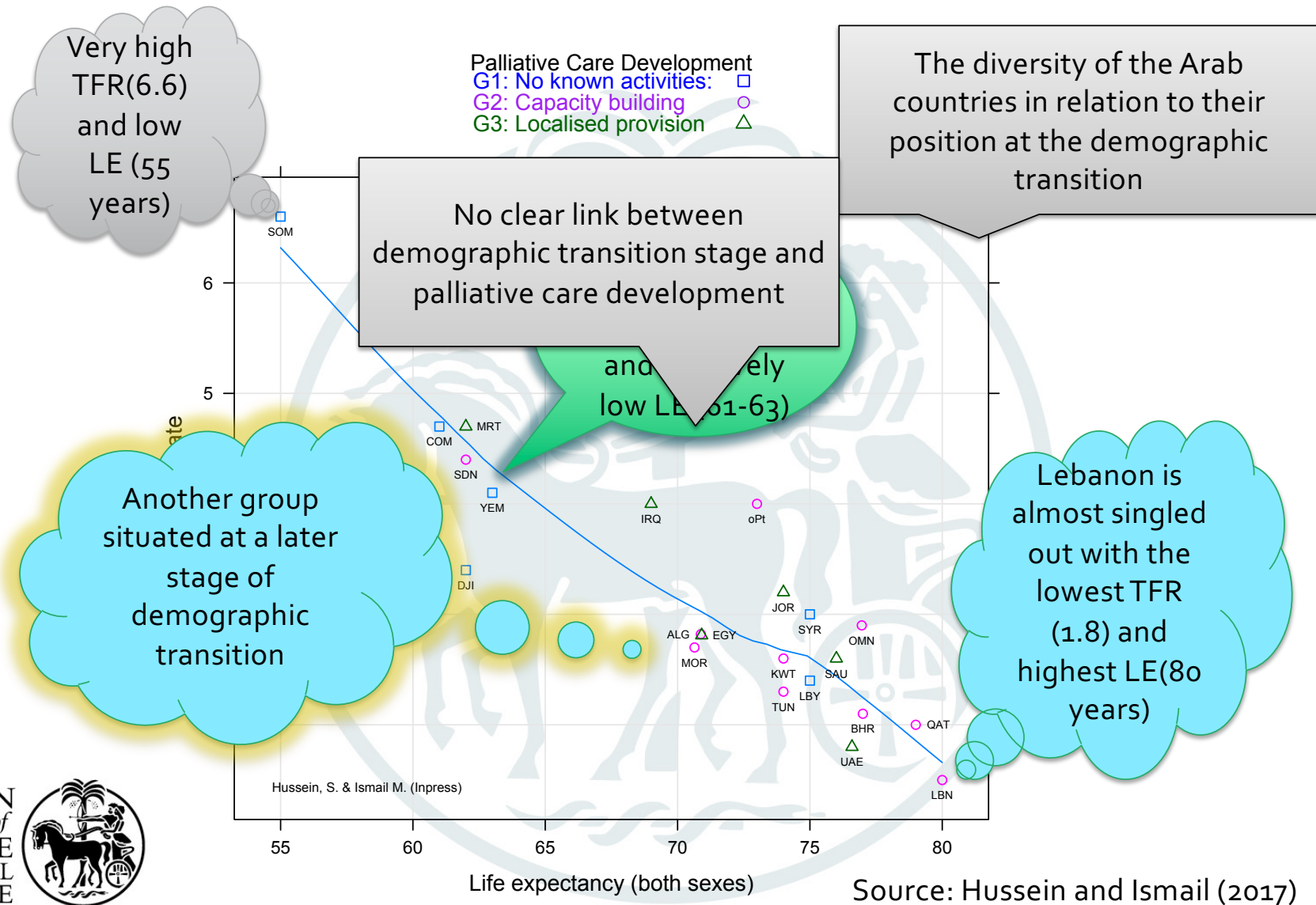




# LTC eco-systems in the MENA region

- Universal health coverage remains an aspiration
- LTC is in a policy blind-spot, for many reasons
- Reliance on families (traditional hubs of care)
  - Within a context of dynamic changes in family structures, living arrangements ...
- Environment & infrastructures
- Some recent national, regional and global policy attention
  - Narratives of intergenerational solidarity, families & ageing in place
- Limited LTC services
  - Primarily community based, NGOs and informal arrangements
- Lack of acknowledgment of caring burdens (provided mainly by women)
- Opportunities: population dividends & labour supply

Quality of life & inequalities



# Opportunity: intergenerational support

With population ageing  
there are more and more  
four generations co-  
existing

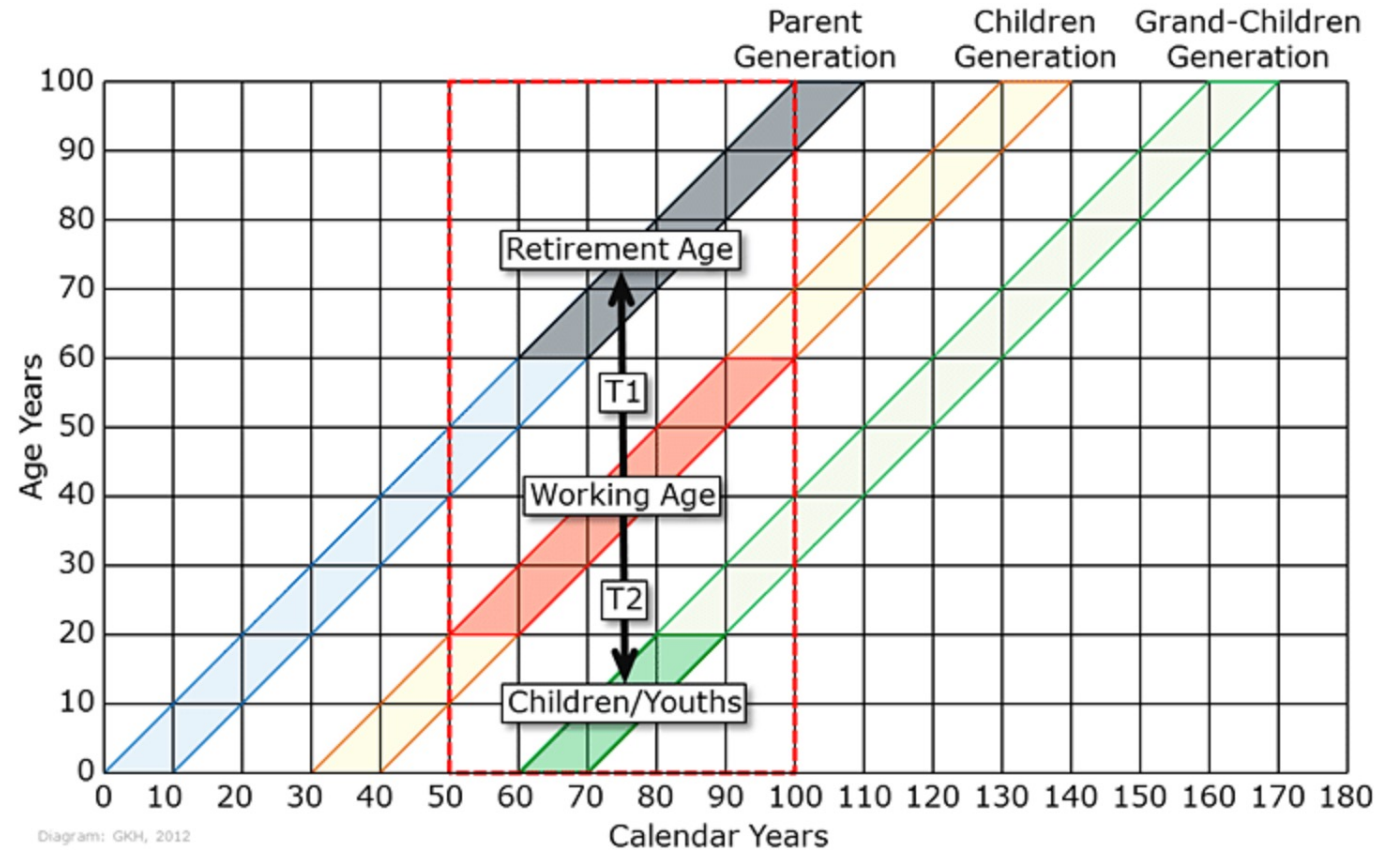


Chart prepared by: Gerhard K. Heilig, 2012

Note: The diagram covers a period of 180 calendar years. Each generation has a maximum life expectancy of 100 years.

# Challenges to intergenerational relations

Changes in the core kin social network

- Marriage; Childless older people; Living alone

Demographic changes

Migration and geographical proximity

- Both internal and international migration

Globalization and technological changes

- ‘virtual’ intergenerational relations- with potential positive impacts

Potential competing priorities

- Fiscal pressures- caring for older people and labour force participation
- Impact on use of space among lower socio-economic groups – older people residence and independence

# Women in the sandwich 'Janus' generations

Those with at least one generation 'above' them and one generation 'below' them to look after

- Being simultaneously a child to an older parent and a parent (or grand parent) to a child or a young person

Women may occupy this position for several decades

Stress and strain over a long period of time

Possible impacts on labour participation, wellbeing and general health

However, it is not proven to be a 'zero-sum' game for the Janus generation

Very debatable issue, the need for more data and research

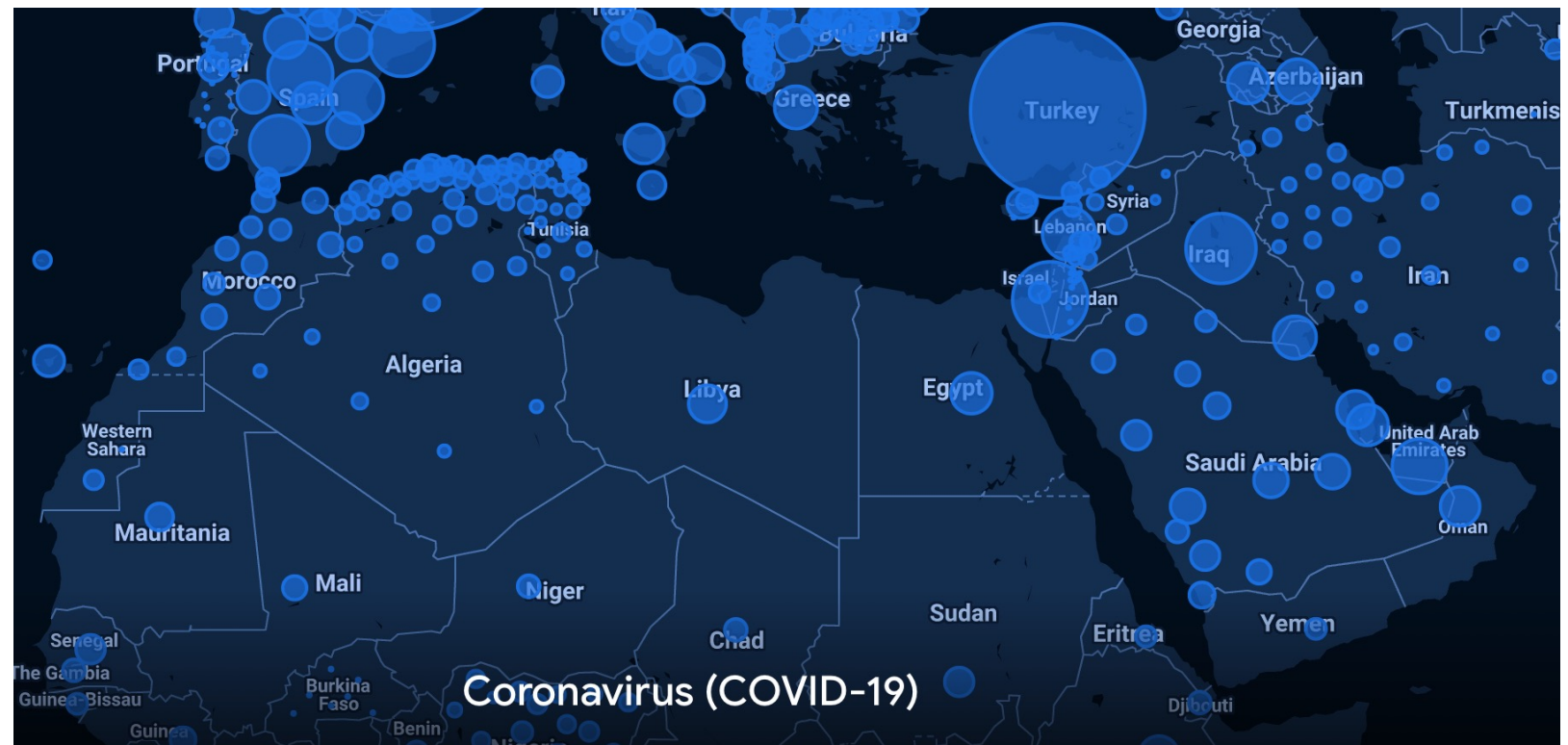


# Challenge: COVID19 and Older people wellbeing

Infections levels  
high in certain  
'hot spots'

Differences  
between actual  
& reported cases

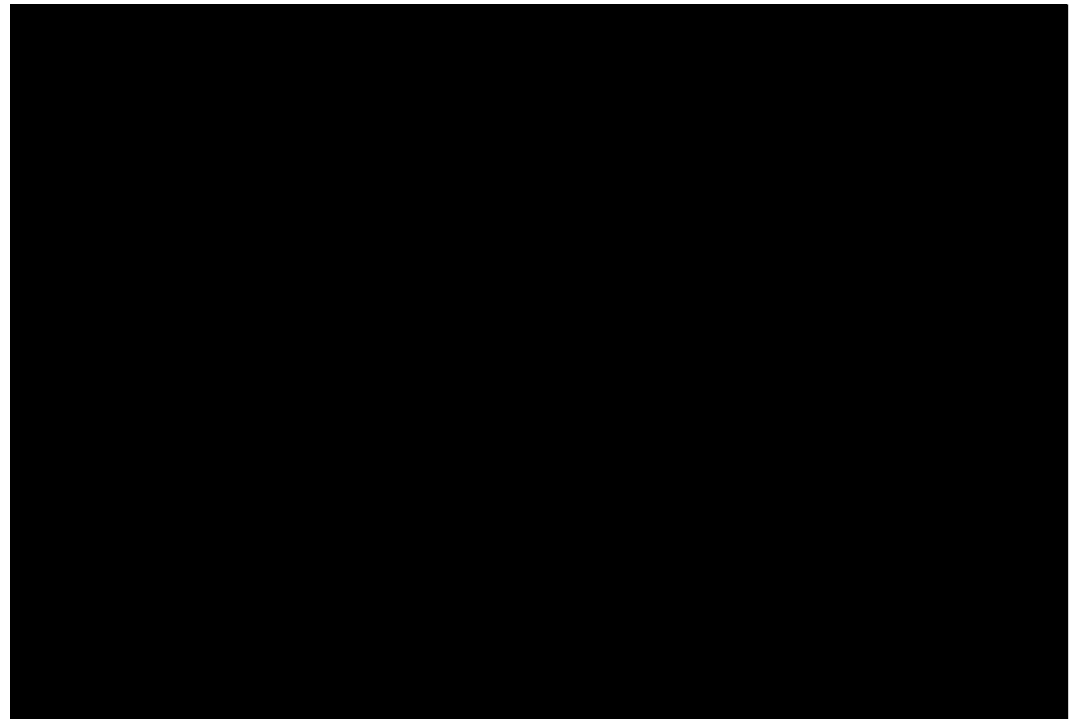
Lack of  
widespread  
testing



Sources: data relates to early 2021- [Wikipedia](#), [The New York Times](#), [JHU CSSE COVID-19 Data](#)

# Implications of COVID19 in the MENA region

- Economic impact:
  - On the individuals & household income
  - Countries
- Employment
- Education
- Mobility
- Remittances
  
- ❖ Older People



# Recent Research on the Wellbeing of Older People during COVID19 in the MENA Region

## Summary of activities

- Group discussions
- Virtual Workshops
- Telephone Interviews (11)

From May-December 2021

## Supportive tools

- Doctori Pilot (survey n=216)
- Facebook page
- Tailored exercise videos
- Blogs & articles

- Key findings from interviews
  - Reduced levels of social and physical activities
    - Risks of deconditioning
    - Social isolation
  - Reduced access to health and care services
    - Disease management and control
  - Significant negative impact on physical and psychological wellbeing
  - The potential role of technology & social media

# Impact of COVID19 on older people- interviews with older people and their carers



Significant reduction in physical/social activities:

Including social visits, going to work or running errands

تقليل الزيارات للاقارب او عدد مرات التنزه او التسوق  
(older person (man); 65)

Reduction in medical checks and visits to health professionals

تقليل الزيارات الدورية للاطباء او المستشفيات والخوف من التعرض للاصابة بالفايروس في مثل هذه الاماكن  
(Family carer (daughter in law), 80 years)

Isolation especially for older people who are living alone

قبل الكرونا كنت باروح رحالات كثير ، بنشوف اماكن جديده ونتمشي ونمارس انشطه كثير. الكرونا خلت الواحد مش عارف يخرج لوحده، محتاج حد يمسكه عشان يمشي لان فيه خوف من كتر القاعده فالبيت وكمان الناس اللي ممكن تقابلهم متعرفيش ممكن يعدوكي. المشي نفسه بقي صعب. فالتاثير سلبي جدا علي صحة الواحد. انا بقالي اكثر من ٦ اشهر مخرجتش من البيت. كنت بأروح النادي مرتين بالاسبوع دلوقتي انا خايغه اخرج لوحدي

(Older person, woman, living alone, 81 years old)

# Deconditioning and Reduced Muscle Strengths

ماما كانت نشيطه جدا وكل يوم كانت بتنزل النادي لغاية سنتين فانت كانت بتنزل لوحدها. السننتين اللي فاتوا بقينا ننزل معاها شغاله. البيت اربع ادوار مفيش اسانسير وكانت تنزل وتطلع مفيش مشاكل. حصل موضوع الكرونا وعدم النزول حصل تدهور غير عادي. مره واحده حركتها محتاجه حد يسندها حتي لو داخله الحمام . مبقتش تقدر تمشي لوحدها. لازم تتسند. مكانتش كده. كانت بتنزل اربع ادوار وتروح النادي وتطلع ثاني لوحدها. الكرونا كان ليها تاثير سلبي جامد علي صحتها.

(Family carer (son); 90 years old)

خطوتها قلت الاول كانت تطلع وتنزل السلم ونخرج ونروح النادي دلوقتي لأ مش عارفين نعمل اي حاجه و هي مبقتش تقدر دلوقتي بسبب طول الوقت قاعده ... دلوقتي بامشيها بالعافيه شويه شويه بالراحه لكن مش بتقدر زي الأول

(Formal carer, 86 years old)



# POLICY AND PRACTICE INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT THE WELLBEING OF OLDER PERSONS

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# Policy opportunities

Fiscal constraints

Competing policy priorities

Challenges to traditional  
social structures

- Extended families, closed-net communities

Environment & infrastructure

Awareness & stigma

- E.g., Dementia

- A growing interest in global ageing, particularly healthy ageing
- The UN decade of health ageing (2021-2030) – building on the 2030 SDGs
- An interest in LMIC and the MENA region in developing ageing policies and supporting the community as a whole
- Realization of the need for data, evidence and dialogue
- A new initiative to bring stakeholders together (MENARAH)

The United Nations (UN) 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- Goal 3: “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”
- Goal 5: “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”;  
and
- Goal 11: “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”

International policies on

- Age-discrimination; active ageing; social protection of older persons and accessibility to public transport, goods and services

# Population Ageing as a Policy Issue in the Region

The region has historically shown a strong commitment to social welfare

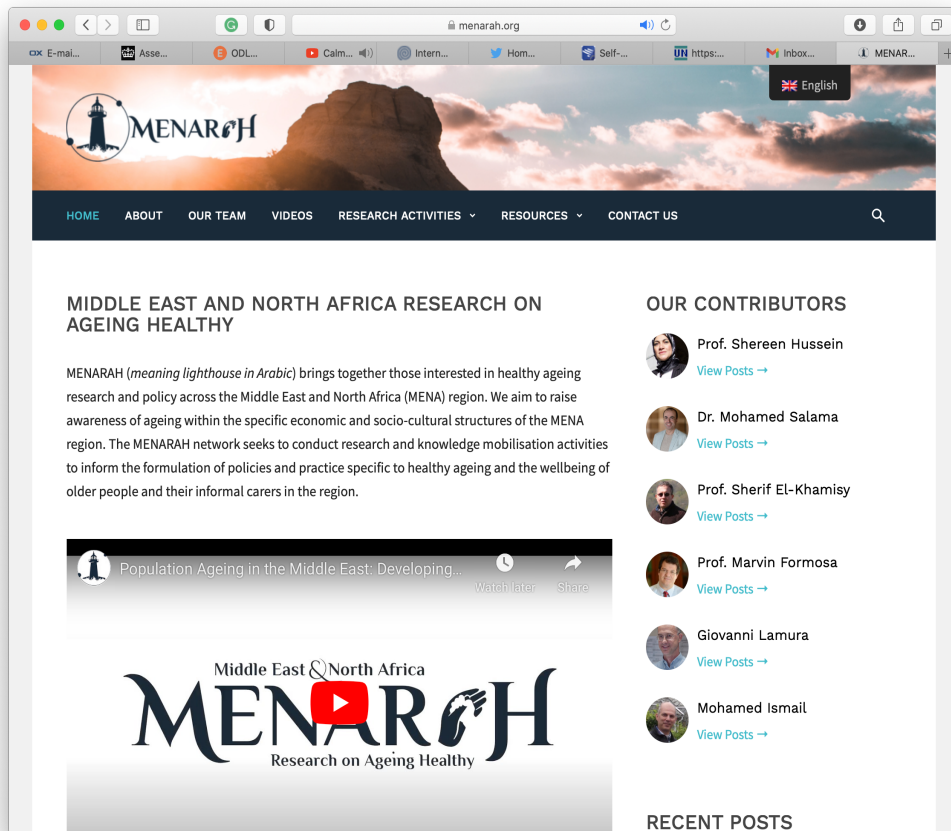
- Post independence
- Majority linked to employment
  - E.g. pensions and retirement schemes, however, favouring public sector and can be regarded as gender biased
- Universal health and education service
  - but actual delivery is relatively poor in most countries

No 'formal' aged policy strategic vision in many countries

- However, some attention to the phenomenon in recent policy discussions

The role of charitable and religious institutions

# The Middle East and North Africa Research on Ageing Healthy (MENARAH) Network



- Focuses on healthy ageing in its broadest meaning
- Aims to
  - Conduct research and knowledge mobilisation activities
  - Raise awareness and connect different actors
  - Inform policy and practice
- A network of researchers, NGOs, policymakers and many more
- Launched Sep. 2020; funded by the GCRF, UK



# Developing Practical Online Tools



Our Elder's Health

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- Posts
- Reviews
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Create a Page



Like Share Suggest Edits

### Posts

**Our Elder's Health** صحة أهلينا  
16 June 2020 · 🌐

أهلاً ومرحباً بكم جميعاً في صفحتنا "صحة أهلينا" 😊👋  
رعاية أهلينا والإهتمام بهم وبصحتهم من أهم وأعظم المهام والتي تعتبر جزء رئيسي من مسؤولياتنا وبنيتنا مهتمين إزاي نحافظ ونعتني بصحتهم وسعادتهم وراحتهم النفسية على أذ ما نقدر بس أحياناً بنواجه صعوبات وبنيتي مش قادرين نحدد إيه الأفضل لهم. يعني عايزين نخلي حياتهم مريحة وسهلة وهما بيكبروا في السن بس في نفس الوقت بيكون مهم جداً لهم النشاط والحركة وإننا نهياهم الفرص إنهم يقضوا وقت مع العائلة وتكون لهم أنشطة وحياة إجتماعية لطيفة

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MENARAH Network






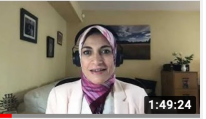
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 <p>3:37</p> <p>Life Stories: Growing old in the Middle East</p> <p>4 views · 4 months ago</p> <p>Subtitles</p>	 <p>16:55</p> <p>Population Ageing in the Middle East: Developing...</p> <p>62 views · 6 months ago</p>	 <p>11:35</p> <p>Life stories: caring for our parents, the Middle East</p> <p>5 views · 6 months ago</p> <p>Subtitles</p>	 <p>8:45</p> <p>Life Stories: Caring for our parents</p> <p>7 views · 6 months ago</p> <p>Subtitles</p>	 <p>5:23</p> <p>Life Stories: Old people's narratives from the Middle...</p> <p>21 views · 6 months ago</p> <p>Subtitles</p>	 <p>3:52</p> <p>Interview with Dr Mohamed Salama, Associate Professor</p> <p>74 views · 6 months ago</p>
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 <p>4:54</p> <p>Interview with Professor Victor Valcour, Global Brain...</p> <p>43 views · 6 months ago</p>	 <p>16:59</p> <p>Interview with Professor Zeinab Khadr, American...</p> <p>19 views · 6 months ago</p>	 <p>13:07</p> <p>Interview with Professor Hoda Rashad, Director, Soci...</p> <p>25 views · 6 months ago</p>	 <p>13:23</p> <p>Interview with Claudia Di Matteo, INCRA-RCCS,...</p> <p>2 views · 6 months ago</p>	 <p>14:49</p> <p>Interview with Giovanni Lamura, INRCA-IRCCS,...</p> <p>6 views · 6 months ago</p>	 <p>33:26</p> <p>Interview with Angelo Rossi Mori, National Research...</p> <p>12 views · 6 months ago</p>
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<https://www.facebook.com/صحة-أهلينا-Our-Elders-Health-104264887980919/>

Weill Cornell Medicine- Qatar @DrShereeHussein

# Feedback on the exercise videos

## Benefits

- Very useful to have these videos as something can be done at home
- All participants had internet and devices to access the videos (tablet, smart phone)
- Suitable to be adapted for the older person and the family carer (most in their 50s)
- They valued the simple instructions and innovative ways to use household items as exercise equipment
- The general advice on measures to reduce infection was felt to be easy to follow

## Challenges

- Some participants wanted their family to help them access the videos
- Some needed encouragement to select most suitable moves for their health conditions

# CONCLUSION

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# Success Factors for Sustainable Ageing Policies

Human rights and equality at old age

Person-centeredness

Ageing in place and enabling environments

The role of social capital within comprehensive social protection systems

Addressing health and income inequalities at old age

Ensuring a sustainable and appropriately trained LTC workforce

A key recommendation for pension reforms by the World Bank is to ensure diversification in pension systems

- a mix of pension systems, such as public/private; contributory and non-contributory

However, there remains many challenges:

- high level of informal employment and migrant workers

# Reflection

- A dynamic context
- Diverse and unequal experiences
- High level policy attention (SDS/ Decade of healthy ageing etc.)
- Definitions and concepts (including the notion of ageing itself)
- Global context and knowledge flow (four-ways)
- Fiscal consequences at the individual, families and state levels
- Policy challenges- reforms and systems' inter-connectedness
- A changing landscape (COVID19 & mobility)



# Questions & Discussion

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