

**Summary of  
Asian Gerontology Experience (AGE)  
A Multidisciplinary Symposium on the Gerontology Landscape in Asia**

**1-2 October 2009  
Orchard Hotel**

The Asian Gerontology Experience (AGE) Symposium was co-organised by the Council for Third Age (C3A, an independent body that promotes active ageing) and the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). It was attended by more than 100 invited participants from East and Southeast Asia and local observers. Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, Singapore, delivered the keynote address that emphasised the importance of gerontology as a discipline and the importance of public education to prepare society for an ageing population. A networking dinner for participants to meet informally and exchange ideas was graced by Mr Heng Chee How, Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore.

The aim of the two-day symposium was to exchange knowledge on gerontological training and research in the region. 12 speakers from nine countries spoke about the challenges posed by a greying population. The symposium identified (a) the current state of the art in gerontological training and research; (b) gaps in knowledge and training for future development; and (c) best practices and recommendations, in four areas, namely, academia, the social service sector, the public sector, and business. A list of best practices and recommendations was compiled and will be distributed to participants and stakeholders in due course.

Several key points were highlighted from the sessions. In the session on gerontological training and research in academia, participants advocated for a regional research network and adopting a multi-disciplinary approach with regard research. Participants also urged the professionalization of gerontology as a discipline to spur enrolment and recruitment in the sector.

During the session on the social service sector, it was observed that social services for the elderly and gerontological research and training needed to match the levels of economic and social development in any given country. Participants also called for more initiatives to empower elderly to be self-reliant. Non-governmental organisations were highlighted as an important avenue to lead in-service learning to empower the elderly.

For the public sector session, participants suggested a study on existing systems and practices of countries in ASEAN and East Asia, which could serve as instructional material in training programmes for civil servants and policy makers. Further, training programmes should encourage civil servants to think inter-sectorally with regard to ageing issues.

During the business sector session, the business opportunities present in the "silver" market were highlighted. Market research on the elderly and development of age-friendly products for all age groups was encouraged. The need to train personnel to be mindful and sensitive to the needs and demands of an ageing market was also raised.

The symposium concluded with a dialogue involving Mr Lim Boon Heng, Minister in charge of ageing issues, Prime Minister's Office, Singapore and three invited panellists sharing on the experiences of governments preparing for an ageing population in Hong Kong, Korea and Singapore. During the dialogue, Mr Lim spoke about Singapore's strategy to manage healthcare, financial security and the employment and employability of the elderly in the coming years.

## AGE Highlights



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*Summary written by IPS Research Assistant Chua Chun Ser and Intern Serena Chan.*