



# ACTIVE AGING CONSORTIUM ASIA PACIFIC



## Focus on ELDER ABUSE

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**September 21, 2024**

**The Depopulation of Japan:  
Strategies to Moderate this Trend**



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**The Issue and Strategies**  
**Dr. Cullen Hayashida**  
University of Hawai'i



**Japan Perspective**  
**Dr. Masateru Higo**  
Kyushu University



**Korea Perspective**  
**Dr. Sang-Hyop Lee**  
University of Hawai'i

**8:30am** India  
**10am** Thailand & Indonesia  
**11am** Hong Kong & Singapore  
**12 noon** Japan & Korea  
**2pm** Australia (NSW & Victoria)  
**4pm** New Zealand

**September 17, 2024**

**5pm** Hawaii  
**7pm** US (West Coast)

September 21, 2024 – 12 noon Tokyo time

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



**Kathryn L. Braun, DrPH**  
Professor of Public Health & Social Work  
Barbara Cox Anthony Endowed Chair on Aging  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa  
President, Active Aging Consortium Asia Pacific



Starting with this issue, we are changing the format of the ACAP Bulletin. Instead of 6 issues a year, we will produce 3 or 4. Each issue will be compiled by a Guest Editor around a specific topic.

This issue focuses on ELDER ABUSE. It is guest edited by Mala Kapur Shankardass, one of our ACAP representatives in India. Many thanks, Mala!!

And don't miss our Webinar series!.



**Dr Mala Kapur Shankardass, GUEST EDITOR**  
**Sociologist, Gerontologist and Health Social Scientist**  
**ACAP Executive Member**  
**Founder of Development, Welfare & Development (DWRF);**  
**Asia Representative: International Network for Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA).**

ELDER ELDER ABUSE is a menace and needs to be stopped. As the numbers of older persons increase in societies, the vulnerabilities of population in older age groups makes the risk of abuse a cause of concern. The month of June in particular, when the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) is observed globally, makes us even more conscious of how elder abuse is a growing problem.

WEAAD was first initiated by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) in 2006. In 2011, the United Nations recognized June 15 as the day to observe WEAAD. This has brought global attention to the need of understand and address this evil. There also is recognition that solutions must be found at the legal, societal, and family level.





**I have been raising my voice against elder abuse since 2002** when I was part of the World Assembly on Ageing held in Madrid and invited to become member of INPEA because of my research and academic work on the topic.

Since then, I have organized meetings in my country, India, and elsewhere to promote research on the issue, advocate for rights of older people, bring various stakeholders together to share our experiences on policies and programs, and allow the voices of those being abused to be heard.

Over the past few years, ACAP has organized webinars on elder abuse. For example, in June 2024, I organized a webinar titled: **Addressing Elder Abuse by Legislative Measures: Critical Analysis**, featuring speakers from Japan, Malaysia, and New Zealand.

In this issue, I summarize the speakers' messages, share my analysis, and add some voices from India, Indonesia, Nepal, and Singapore. We hope readers find this newsletter illuminating and join efforts to stop elder abuse.  
<malakapurshankardass@gmail.com>

## Addressing Elder Abuse through Legislative Measures: Critical Analysis

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The Development,  
Welfare, & Research  
Foundation (DWRP)

International Network for  
the Prevention of Elder  
Abuse (INPEA)



Moderator

Dr. Mala Kapur Shankardass



Welcome by

Dr. Kathryn Braun



Prof Noriko Tsukada  
Nihon University  
Japan



Prof Tan Maw Pin  
Universiti Malaya  
Malaysia



Ms Hanny Haus  
Age Concern  
New Zealand

June 8, 2024 – 8:30-10am India time

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**Professor Noriko Tsukada**  
**Nihon University**  
**Tokyo, Japan**

**The Japanese Act for Prevention of Elder Abuse**

Dr Noriko Tsukada, [tsukada.noriko@nihon-u.ac.jp](mailto:tsukada.noriko@nihon-u.ac.jp) talked about the current status and future challenges of the Japanese Act on the Prevention of Elder Abuse. She introduced major features of the Act, including definitions of elder abuse and abusers and reporting systems. She also shared trends in the number of elder abuse cases that have been substantiated as elder abuse in both institutional and domestic settings, using data collected by the Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare. Although the Act has not been amended since its enactment, amendments of operational standards have been made by ministerial ordinance. One amendment included a requirement to develop a committee to prevent occurrence and recurrence of elder abuse and to appoint a person in charge of establishing guidelines and implementing training. The presentation concluded by introducing amendments that Japan Academy for Prevention of Elder Abuse proposed to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare on 10 November, 2022.



**Ms Hanny Haus**  
**Professional Educator on Elder Abuse & Neglect Prevention**  
**Age Concern, New Zealand**

**Addressing Elder Abuse through Legislative Measures in New Zealand**

Ms. Hanny Haus [Hanny.Naus@ageconcern.org.nz](mailto:Hanny.Naus@ageconcern.org.nz) highlighted that older people's rights have not been separately named, but all adults are included in our country's foundation treaty (Te Tiriti o Waitangi), which addresses human rights, citizenship, and 'health and disability consumer rights' legislation. More recent additions to legislation include issues such as widening the definition of family violence to including "carer – care relationships" in the Family Violence Act and including a category of "vulnerable adult" in the Crimes Act. But New Zealand legislation does not include the WHO (2002) elder abuse definition, even though this is used in day-to-day practice throughout the country. Although we acknowledge the UN Principles for Older Persons, a UN Convention has not yet been adopted despite years of advocacy by older people's groups. However, the effects of New Zealand ratifying UN Conventions such as the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Rights of People with Disabilities does impact processes in this country. As Age Concern, our 30+ years of elder abuse and neglect intervention services operate from our NGO community-based approach, working alongside older people and their families. Questions will continue about resolving elder abuse and neglect partially through legal means, as well though other societal channels aimed at enhancing older people's wellbeing.



**Professor Tan Maw Pin**  
**Universiti Malaya**  
**Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**

**Protecting Vulnerable Malaysians- Considerations for our Law for Senior Citizens**

Professor Tan Maw Pin [mptan@ummc.edu.my](mailto:mptan@ummc.edu.my) stated that 1 in 10 older Malaysians have experienced abuse. Abusers are often close family members, and the risk increases with increased dependency and dementia. The knee-jerk response may be to remove the older adult from their homes for their protection and to lock up the abuser.

However, when it comes to elder abuse, the situation is far more complex. Punishing the perpetrator is likely to increase the burden on the system with limited impact on those being abandoned or abused, and it may have the undesired effect of alienating older adults' close relations.

Legal frameworks in Malaysia have yet to be established, giving us an opportunity to carefully devise laws that will best protect adults who are vulnerable, rather than just older adults. To determine what the law should do, we should examine available evidence. However, the current system focuses on victims of childhood trauma and domestic abuse. Thus, legal frameworks should safeguard against ageism and mandate age-friendly environments. Abuse can be prevented if older adults and their care partners are enabled through education, rehabilitation, and financial support.

The system needs to allow for protection of those who report to at-risk registers and be geared towards rehabilitation and safe return of victims to their home environments.



Empowering older Malaysians by increasing health awareness and measuring cognitive, mobility, vitality and psychological capacity in Malaysia



**Mala Shankardass**



**Anupama Datta**

Dr. Mala Kapur Shankardass concluded the webinar by observing that, while some countries have legislation that can be applied to elder abuse, there should be other programs in place to address elder abuse. Some experts recommend care giver interventions, such as reducing the burden of care. Management programs also can minimize risk of financial exploitation. It is important to have coordinated response that involves various systems such healthcare, adult protective services, criminal justice mechanisms, and family-based interventions. We also need to increase the political priority of the prevention of elder abuse.

**An additional report from India by Dr. Mala Kapur Shankardass and Ms. Anupama Datta, Head, Policy & Development, HelpAge India**

In 1999, the Indian government passed its National Policy for Older Persons, which recognized that family frictions can mar the position, status, and dignity of older persons.

In 2007, the Indian Parliament passed the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, which made it obligatory for adult children to care for their parents. Broadly, the law simplified and improved the process by allowing older parents to approach Tribunals set up at the district level. The Tribunal is obliged to decide the case in stipulated time. The biggest challenge in a diverse, large, and federal country has been to raise awareness among the older persons to take advantage of this enabling legislation and encourage the district administration to be proactive and sensitive.

The other ways in which the government has tried to approach this challenge was by setting up a tollfree helpline, designating special cells in the local police office, and mandating district legal service authorities to play a role. HelpAge India partnered with the government of India program, 'Elderline' in 4 states and 3 Union Territories. In this service approximately 20% of the calls were related to elder abuse and outright abandonment. More than 3,000 training workshops were conducted by the Elderline staff. But still, not many cases are brought to the Tribunal for justice to the older victims of this form of family violence.



**An older woman being assisted with her concerns in India.**



**Dinni Agustin**  
**Centre for Family and Ageing Studies**  
**Universitas Respati, Indonesia**

### **Elder Abuse in Indonesia: A Silent Crisis**

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, reported cases of elder abuse have been increasing, reflecting a growing recognition of the issue. However, the true prevalence is likely much higher due to underreporting, which is influenced by shame, fear, and dependence on caregivers.

Underreporting is likely linked to Indonesian cultural norms, which emphasize respect for elders. Thus, physical abuse, such as hitting or confinement, may not be reported due to cultural reluctance to report on family matters. Psychological abuse, including verbal threats or isolation, also plagues many elderly individuals, leaving lasting emotional scars. Financial exploitation, where elders are coerced into giving money or property, further exacerbates their vulnerability. Elder abuse intersects with broader socioeconomic factors, such as poverty and inadequate healthcare, amplifying risks for vulnerable older adults.

Government initiatives and NGOs play crucial roles in raising awareness and providing support services. Efforts include helplines, shelters, and legal aid for victims. However, challenges persist in implementing and enforcing protective measures effectively across diverse regions. Addressing elder abuse demands a multifaceted approach involving education, policy reform, and community engagement. Enhanced data collection and research are essential to inform targeted interventions and allocate resources effectively.

In conclusion, elder abuse in Indonesia represents a complex social issue requiring concerted efforts from government, civil society, and the public to protect the rights and wellbeing of older adults.

By fostering a culture of respect and accountability, Indonesia can strive towards a future where all elders live free from harm and exploitation.





**Dr Ng Wai Chong & Moana Jagasia**  
NWC Longevity Practice, Singapore

### The Role of Legislation in Addressing Elder Abuse

Legislation can and must play an important role to protect the rights and well-being of older persons who are on the receiving end of abuse and neglect. But there are several considerations in determining the right course of action.

In a situation where there is evidence of abuse or neglect, assessment is crucial. Questions that need to be answered include:

1. What is the decision-making capacity of the older person?
2. What is the risk for mortality, morbidity, and likelihood of the situation perpetuating?
3. What are the protective and risk factors for this situation of elder abuse or neglect?

Following an assessment, expert case management and integration of health and social resources are the best ways to improve the safety and quality of life for victims.

For the high-risk situations, laws are needed. Before legislation, community case workers would lose sleep over such cases. At least, that was our experience in Singapore with The Mental Capacity Act (2010) and the Vulnerable Adult Act (2018) which empowers government social service officers to step in to support and protect older persons at risk of abuse, neglect, or self-neglect.



Homes of an elders at risk of self-neglect in Telok Blangah, Singapore.  
Photo credit: Dr Ng Wai Chong



**Sanju Thapa Magar, CEO, <ageingnep@gmail.com>  
Ageing Nepal**

### **Elder Abuse Reflections from Nepal**

Nepal's traditional culture of caring for older parents has been declining in recent years due to advanced technologies, expanding urbanization, and migration of youth. This has changed family structure from joint to nuclear.

Consequently, older people are compelled to suffer from violence, abuse, and neglect. In Nepal, each day around 2 unattended dead bodies of older people are found according to the compiled data of Ageing Nepal. The World Health Organisation estimated that approximately one out of every six individuals aged 60 and above encountered some type of abuse in community settings within the last year. Globally, it is projected that the cases of elder abuse will increase as the population continues to age.

Concerned with this emerging challenge, the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) and the World Health Organization at the United Nations launched World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEEAD) on June 15, 2006, and this was formally adopted by United Nations resolution in 2011. Since then, the day has been celebrating as an opportunity to raise awareness on elder abuse with different advocacy and campaign activities to promote and protect the rights of older people at different levels.



In 2024, Ageing Nepal observed the day by inviting guests to talk on elder abuse in its weekly television programme, publishing articles, and actively participating in an event organized by Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens.

But celebration a day is not adequate to fight against elder abuse. There must be a strong legislation and strict implementation mechanism.



**Prof. Dr Lochana Shrestha**  
**Nepalese Army Institute of Health Sciences**

### **Addressing Elder Abuse: Insights from an Elder Care Clinic in Nepal**

Elder abuse is a prevalent and deeply concerning issue that affects millions of older adults worldwide. Elder abuse manifests in various forms, including physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, financial exploitation, and neglect or abandonment. Despite its widespread occurrence, elder abuse remains a sensitive and often underreported issue.

In the clinic, I mostly deal with dementia patients. Whenever I discuss the elder's care with their families, it becomes apparent that these patients face some sort of neglect or verbal abuse. This is evident through their behaviors and expressions during discussions about the patient.

Dementia patients usually do not admit to receiving abuse, however, I can see the negative impact it has on the patient as consequences. As family caretakers do not understand dementia, they are are unaware that dementia patients are unable to control their behavior or the situations that trigger difficult behaviors. Hence, their patience and tolerance can quickly run out, leading to abuse.

Based on this, I counsel family caretakers about dementia, about the factors that trigger negative behaviors in dementia patients, and ways that family members can maintain a positive environment at home. I remind them that dementia patients are unable to control their environments--only the family members can manage these trigger points.

After counseling, I've received positive feedback from the family members and witnessed the positive impact on the patients themselves.

Family members have mentioned that the social environment is much more positive, and it has become much easier to care for the patients.

Therefore, I strongly recommend spreading awareness of these trigger factors, not just for the wellbeing of the patients, but also for the family members taking care of them.





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### **ACAP's Mission Statement**

ACAP is dedicated to empowering older adults and advocating for communities to maintain the physical, social, psychological, civic, economic, and environmental well-being of all people so that, in old age, we can continue contributing to our families, our communities, and to society at large. Achieving an active aging society requires a partnership of individuals, families, and social policy leaders. Specifically, individuals and families must prepare for old age and adopt positive practices for long life. Social policy must offer protections, encourage participation, promote lifelong learning, and build age-friendly environments. As individual behaviors and social policies change, so will societal norms about the value of aging and older adults.

For more information on ACAP, contact:



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