

**Aging in Asian Cities:  
An Exploration  
Using  
AUICK\* ASSOCIATE CITIES**

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## 1. Asian Aging as a local issue

Modernization and aging: the first round relatively slow and small

The speed and magnitude of the process in Asia are daunting and pose special problems

Received Wisdom on the process: from family to societal support

Great variation in aging within Asia

East > Southeast > South Asia

More variance: India and Chennai

More variance: family structures

Major Problems: Can the family continue to provide adequate support?

Will public policies and infrastructure be available soon enough to avert a "lost generation" of aged? Can families and communities fill the gap?

## 2. USING AUICK'S ASSOCIATE CITIES

AUICK: The Asian Urban Information Center of Kobe

Joint UNFPA – Kobe partnership

For research, training and information dissemination on problems of Asian Urbanization

AUICK Associate Cities: sustained work with nine cities

Faisalabad, Pakistan; **Chennai**, India; Chittagong, **Bangladesh**; Kuantan, Malaysia; **Khon Kaen**, Thailand; **Danang**, Vietnam; **Surabaya**, Indonesia, **Olongapo City**, The Philippines; and **Weihai**, China.

For this exploration use 7, excluding Faisalabad and Kuantan

City Liaison Person collected data and conducted interviews

City Information on the Aged and their Socio-Economic Conditions

Item	Chennai	Chittagong	Danang	Khon Kaen	Olongapo	Surabaya	Weihai
Population	4,125,354	3,789,998	779,017	123,822	211,134	2,636,639	2,362,802
Pop >64	225,856 4.4% (Retired age: 350826 60+ 8.5%)	233,988 6.2%	50192 6.4%	9933 (60+) 8%	6334 2.6%	93627 3.6%	255,802 9.8%
No. Living Alone Other Information	-- --	-- --		-- --	104 (1.6%) 645 working (10%)	-- --	(10,000) 441 working (est 5000)
Financial Assistance	Gov Pensions: 93734 Poor Asst. 98,311 Total 192,045 55%	Gov + Tchrs. pensions; no numbers; Poor assistance to 10,000 ( 4%)	Govt. + Tchrs. pensions; no numbers; Poor assistance 3,610 (7.6%)	Govt pension, no numbers Poor: 500 baht/mo no numbers	Govt. and Tchrs. pensions; No numbers	Govt. pensions No numbers Poor assistance 72,	Govt Pensions 56,000 (22%) Poor asst: 11,710 (4.5%) Alone asst: 1,964 (<1%)
Housing for the aged	3 Public 21 Pvt. 1,151 (< 1%)	None	Some assistance, no numbers	None	Only temporary half way houses	5 units for 220 residents (< 1%)	70 Centers 4484 beds, 666 staff, 2161 (<1%) residents
Meals for the aged	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

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Item	Chennai	Chittagong	Danang	Khon Kaen	Olongapo	Surabaya	Weihai
Organizations	Help India Other NGOs	NGOs	Thai Phien Clubs (exercise)	None	Fed. of Sr. Cit., City Sr. Affairs Office	No	
Ed. Recreation Programs	No	Beginning education program	No	Exercise clubs	35 City rec. units	No	56 Ed, 24,000 (9%) 153 Recreation 12,000 (5%)
Physical Facilities	None	None	None	None	New 2 story senior citizens center	None	Center 37,000 ft <sup>2</sup>

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Table 2  
City Leaders Views of the Aging Issue

Question	Chennai	Chittagong	Danang	Khon Kaen	Olongapo	Surabaya	Weihai
Serious Problem?	Not yet a serious problem	Not yet a serious problem	Not Yet	Serious, growing problem		A growing problem	Serious and growing
Cause?	Increasing longevity and reduced fertility	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
Can the family manage to provide service?	No problem at present. Need for emotional support	No problem now, except for the poor	No problem, but families increasingly need help	No problem, problem of isolation, low communication		No problem at present	No problem, increasing wealth has helped
Modernization undermining family capacity?	Yes. Urban migration, increase in female workforce produces problems	Yes, but the pace is slow and not yet a problem	Yes, but also econ. development increases wealth and helps	Yes, but the family can still manage		Not yet a serious problem	Yes, migration also leaves poor aged in rural areas
Are new policies being developed?	Slowly. Govt support to NGOs	Slowly, Govt support to NGOs	Slowly, support for aged poor	City program to link young and old	National and city policies being developed	1998 and 2004 national programs and commissions.	Econ. Dev to increase wealth, new programs coming.

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### 3. Basic Information of the seven cities

All cities have some past information on age structures; limited projections

All have smaller proportions of young than the country as a whole

All but Chittagong and Weihai, have smaller proportions of the aged than the country as a whole.

Chittagong: 0.8 to 2.6 percentage points greater than the national average growing superiority

Weihai: 1.6 to 7.6 percentage points greater than the national average; growing superiority

What are the causes and implications?

Information on conditions of the aged is very limited; little information on living alone

Very little provision of support programs and facilities for the aged.

### 3. Basic Information: Views of Urban leaders

Chennai, Chittagong, Danang: the problem lies more in the future

Khon Kaen, Surabaya and Weihai see the problem as urgent and growing

All see the family as capable of continuing to provide support

But Weihai counts 10,000 abandoned aged!

All see the problem arising from declining fertility and increased longevity

All view modernization as undermining the family's capacity to provide aged care  
(Are they right?)

All see policies and programs being developed, but at a slow pace

Weihai and Danang have faith that economic development will help manage the problem

### 4. Observations

#### China's Paradox

Urban elderly better supported by family than rural elderly

Family transformation greater than in more developed Taiwan

Female and male children provide support

The abandoned elderly: real or imagined problem?

Weihai current project to build elderly homes for 7,000

(China's revolutionary socialist upheavals aimed at breaking the power of the family.)

The future in 2050 China may have 23% 65 and over; Japan's current rate.

China and ROK now have 7% elderly; but ROK is far more wealthy and fully urbanized.

Will China's high growth rate solve the problem

(8% growth = \$48,000 real GDP per capita in 2050;

5% growth = \$13,500 real GDP per capita in 2050; Japan's current aged

## **Thailand and Vietnam**

**Thailand** fertility decline almost as rapid as China, near equal Chinese elderly growth.

**Advantages:** longer steady growth of economy and social services

Thailand remains highly rural

Rural parents well supported by children out migrants

No erosion of filial obligation norms

Family will be able to bridge the gap between traditional and modern support

**Vietnam** political system similar to China's, but without revolutionary drives that undermined traditional family values in China.

Urban leaders confident that growth plus traditional filial norms will manage the care of the aged. City administration displays high administrative capacity (2006 Typhoon).

## **Bangladesh, India, Indonesia**

**Bangladesh and India** slower elderly growth; **Indonesia** faster growth, but not overwhelming.

All urban leaders confident that the traditional family can manage support for the near term.

All have rich organizational structures, especially of NGOs (both indigenous and promoted by the Global NGO network

NGOs especially developed in health, family planning and HIV/AIDS, now turning to the issue of the aged and poverty.

## **The Philippines**

**Slow elderly growth from slow fertility decline**

**Serious consequent problem of reproductive health**

**Urban leaders confident the family can maintain effective aged care.**

**Philippines exports labor: 10% of its population employed overseas;**

**remittances a large part of the Philippines economy**

**channeled through the family**

**Philippines family system notoriously strong and cohesive**

## **5. Conclusions**

**Urban (and local) administrative and governing bodies can help bridge the gap between traditional and modern aged care**

**Need for more and better data on the number and condition of the aged at the local level**

**Consider small scale assistance to families, distributed through local communities to permit families to hire assistance to sustain care of the aged.**

**Consider assistance to community programs that organize the aged for their own support.**

**We are not sure how the size of a city affects its administrative capacity. Need research on this.**

**Thank You!**