



### **DAY 3: PLENARY PANEL (9:15 – 10:30) – POST SENDAI: ENGAGING AND ENLISTING OLDER PEOPLE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

#### **ABSTRACT**

Disasters including epidemics impact communities across all age cohorts with devastating consequences. Older people are a vulnerable group and their vulnerabilities are generally associated with advanced age, physical and sensory frailty, pre-existing health conditions, and social and economic constraints. On the other hand active and healthy older people are an invaluable asset in reducing risk in disasters and make significant social and economic contributions to community and society with their years of knowledge, skills and wisdom.

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 arising from the 2015 UN World Conference *on Disaster Risk Reduction* discussed the importance of adopting a broader, person-centered preventative approach to disaster risk. This included engaging relevant stakeholders in the design and implementation of policies, plans and standards.

*Older people should be considered a critical stakeholder groups in the discussion of risk reduction; however, they were not a priority at the UN Conference and were only mentioned twice in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.*

Epidemics and pandemics can be disasters in their own right, with increased risks in disaster and post disaster situations. The importance of immunization to minimize major preventable health issues must be a priority across all sectors of society and recognized as a significant preventative strategy. Current advocacy efforts to promote the importance of immunization have largely focused on children (and appropriately so), yet research suggests that older people have an increased risk of contracting vaccine-preventable diseases. Adult immunization rates will not be increased until the fundamental lack of awareness about the benefits of vaccinations and failure of individuals and health practitioners to adhere to research based recommendations about vaccines are addressed. It is unacceptable that these diseases continue to adversely affect the quality of life of older people when solutions are known, easily accessible and cost-effective.

Older people are almost absent in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction but also in the promotion of a life course approach to immunization. Therefore, the IFA 13<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Ageing is a platform to highlight the importance of including older people in the discussion and implementation of policies surrounding disaster management and vaccinations.

This Plenary Panel will explore frameworks in disaster risk reduction and ageing communities and explore new conversations that will benefit both. Speakers will help delegates rethink the role and approaches in engaging older people in disaster risk reduction and response. Working to achieve disaster readiness is an excellent opportunity to identify the needs of older people and highlight their ability to contribute to resilient communities in line with age-friendly cities and communities principles.

The Plenary Panel will also demonstrate that promoting a life course approach to vaccinations while being a 'thoughtful approach' is without substance if there is no consensus of the actions required to firmly position the evidence in a policy framework. Awareness can be generated in a well-positioned policy framework about the importance of immunization and having that awareness translate into increased immunization coverage globally.

Interested in submitting an abstract and/or registering for the conference, go to the IFA 13<sup>th</sup> Global Conference on Ageing website at <http://www.ifa2016.org.au>.