

What's Working: Taking Action Together to Address Global Health and Economic Challenges

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During CGI 2024, the Clinton Global Initiative announced new investments to address the humanitarian crisis in Sudan

By 2030, more than 1.4 billion people around the world will be 60 or older. That's one in six people globally. And by 2050, that number is expected to double. The reality of humans, on average, living longer will have dramatic effects on economic, social, and health systems, presenting both challenges and opportunities.

According to the UN, as of 2023, only one in three countries have the financial resources, not to mention political will, to implement adequate long-term care for an aging population, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO). We know traditional best practices around retirement planning are unlikely to provide adequate income for people with increasing lifespans, and

that all countries will need to adapt to ensure that their health and social systems are ready to meet the needs of their changing populations.

This is an issue that requires both a global response and action from individual countries themselves. Fortunately, international organizations and others are working to determine the types of systems and investments needed to ensure that people everywhere can age with dignity and security. One example, the United Nation's "Decade of Healthy Ageing," is a global collaboration to improve the lives of older people, their families, and the communities in which they live by the end of this decade, when older persons are projected to outnumber the youth globally.



Dr. Chelsea Clinton tells the CGI community that we all have a choice: focus on what's broken and get nowhere — or choose to focus on what's working and use that to make tomorrow better.

Our model and ethos bring together leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to drive progress around our shared challenges through Commitments to Action — measurable, replicable projects that effect change on a local, national, or global scale.

Additionally, the WHO has called on countries to make a “radical shift” in the ways they provide care and support for aging populations. The WHO’s recommendations include taking a person-centered approach to health care; integrating health and social services across disciplines and specialties so that people don’t fall through the cracks; ensuring that every person has seamless access to short- and long-term care across clinical settings, care facilities, their local communities, and their homes; and providing adequate, equitable support for caregivers.

So, what does that look like? One critical aspect of the WHO’s recommendations is that national governments work to provide care in

partnership with local governments, nonprofits, and the private sector.

At the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), we have seen firsthand the power of multisector partnerships in addressing the most urgent challenges facing the world today. Our model and ethos bring together leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to drive progress around our shared challenges through Commitments to Action — measurable, replicable projects that effect change on a local, national, or global scale.

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Here are five solutions championed by members of our CGI community to address the health and economic challenges related to our world's aging population:

- 1. Designing communities and systems to promote self-sufficiency, connection and ongoing engagement.** In 2023, the WHO published a toolkit on how to make cities and communities "age-friendly." This includes enacting policies that make social services more accessible; promoting continuing education and socioeconomic stability; and, critically, providing opportunities for community engagement for people of all ages. Giving people over the age of 60 opportunities to engage with their neighbors and become involved in their community promotes health, encourages autonomy, and combats isolation and loneliness — which U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has declared an epidemic unto itself. In Uganda, Nyaka Global is pioneering an innovative model to support aging women who often face extreme poverty while caring for others. To date, Nyaka has reached 20,000 women, providing them with home-based care, from shelter to washbasins to improve hygiene and decrease illness; microfinancing loans to start a new business, pay for medical care, or address other household needs; community connection, and more.
- 2. Closing technology gaps.** We need to thoughtfully consider how technology can best be used to support an aging population. Many older adults lack access to the internet and/or the skills needed to utilize essential online services, so building technology to meet older adults where they are reduces the burden on caregivers, cuts costs, and empowers community organizations to provide essential services. Across the United States, Blooming Health (of which I am an investor) is an example of one organization that is using technology to meet older adults' unique needs, by connecting them with resources through phone calls, texts, and emails in multiple languages. In Spain, the Porta mobile app is using virtual reality and artificial intelligence solutions to support people living with cancer and dementia, as well as their caregivers.
- 3. Investing in specifically designed, patient-centric models of geriatric care.** This includes creating accessible, affordable, and people-centric health centers that are exclusively focused on caring for older patients. One innovative approach discussed at this year's CGI Annual Meeting is the concept of "dementia villages" — specialized residential care communities that resemble a small town or neighborhood with shops, gardens, restaurants, and other amenities and seek

to provide familiarity, comfort, and a degree of independence to patients living with dementia. For individuals who are unable or unwilling to go to an external facility, it's critical to bolster hospital-at-home programs that enable patients to receive hospital-level care in their own homes.

4. Encouraging later-in-life retirements. Many retirement plan models are based on an average lifespan that is quickly becoming (or already is) outdated. AARP has launched a campaign to educate "pretirement" individuals on how to save for retirement at a time of longer average lifespans, while the cost of living continues to increase globally. We should also focus on creating job opportunities for older adults and incentivizing employers to hire them. Alongside the economic security that good jobs can bring, employment can also make a positive difference for older adults in terms of feeling a sense of purpose and building social connections. In 2023, Jivan launched a CGI Commitment to Action to place 100,000 older adults into employment over a five-year period.

5. Bolstering the care economy. As we consider ways to better support caregivers — both at-home and in facilities — we also need to reimagine how we define the care economy and engage with those who participate in it. In 2003, Noora Health made a CGI Commitment to Action to develop and launch caregiving training programs in India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Nepal that are designed to support family caregivers who are typically under-equipped when it comes to disease management and home-based recovery care. As part of this Commitment, Noora Health will implement training programs across hospitals, clinics, community health systems, and medical colleges, with the goal of reaching 70 million family caregivers by 2028. This is a replicable model that can easily be scaled to other countries around the world.

While it's true that the world's aging population is going to demand more of our global health and economic systems, we need to stop thinking about this issue as a burden and rather as an accomplishment and privilege that is to be celebrated. We have made incredible progress extending lifespans over generations; now we must ensure that the longest-surviving members of our global community can age with dignity. It is imperative that we develop innovative models to advance better economic and health outcomes on a global scale. This is an issue that transcends cultures and geographical borders and can only be addressed through collaboration among countries and across sectors.

I'm very proud of all that our CGI community has accomplished to date — it's estimated that 1 in 16 people worldwide are feeling the impact of a CGI commitment. But there is more to be done, and we are committed to building on what's working to address the unique needs of our aging population. •



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