

Building capacity and creating knowledge on international issues of population ageing



# Supporting family carers?

## Preoccupations, beliefs and getting unstuck

Norah Keating PhD, FCAHS, FGSA  
Global Social Issues on Ageing (GSIA)  
Swansea University, UK  
University of Alberta, Canada  
North-West University, South Africa

*Presentation to Vision 2030, Edmonton, AB, 13&14 November 2019*



# Our preoccupations shape our priorities

- ✿ Around the world, countries celebrate, worry about and sometimes ignore population aging.
- ✿ Some have national aging strategies; others take a triage approach, dealing with urgent needs as they arise.
- ✿ Regional contexts and preoccupations are powerful drivers of 'solutions'.
- ✿ Beliefs about families, family responsibilities and family care are embedded in national psyches



# Africa

- Preoccupation: A young population with immense challenges
- Values and Beliefs: large, strong African families will care for young and old
- Solutions: Systems of chronic care and support are not needed
- The 'care economy'



# Europe

- ⊕ Preoccupation: Later life productivity
- ⊕ Values and Beliefs: An ageing population requires increased labour force participation
- ⊕ Contested Solutions:
  - ⊕ Higher retirement age reduces pension costs and increases wellbeing (EU) vs Higher retirement age increases inequality (Aine le Leime)
  - ⊕ Encourage immigration to increase labour force (Germany) vs reduce immigration to reduce job competition (UK)
- ⊕ The 'care crisis'



# Latin America

- ⊕ Preoccupation: Economic instability
- ⊕ Values and beliefs: Inequalities are widening and there is great suffering
  - ⊕ *Trouble in Paradise: Chile's Inequality Explodes*
  - ⊕ *The nation of Venezuela is in a state of crisis*
  - ⊕ *Argentina: A deep recession is under way.*
  - ⊕ *The worst economic crisis in Brazilian history*
- ⊕ Solutions: Better governance; ethical north-south relationships
- ⊕ Mexico: Disrupted migration and truncated generational economic stability



# Asia

- ❊ Preoccupation: Large population with millions of older people
- ❊ Values and beliefs: Filial piety remains a value; 'one-child' policy and migration have lead to a care gap.
- ❊ Contested solutions: Increase economic well being vs increase birth rate to ensure future carers
  
- ❊ Family care in rural China



# Canada: Supporting family carers? Preoccupations, beliefs and getting unstuck

- ✿ Preoccupation: Caring for an aging population
- ✿ Values and beliefs:
  - ❑ Aging is important; Aging is costly; Aging is complicated; Ageism
  - ❑ Family care to older persons is essential; Support can erode family obligations
- ✿ (Contested) solutions:
  - ❑ Private vs public problems
  - ❑ Silos of assistance vs a National strategy



# An overview of family carers in Canada

- ❁ 20 years of documenting increasing prevalence of family care: 11%  $\longrightarrow$  28% of Canadians
- ❁ Family care networks are small (1-2 people)
- ❁ Care has social/relationship costs (marriage, friends, children)
- ❁ Care has economic costs (out of pocket, employment)
- ❁ 50% of people age 65+ have provided care; some have cared for more than 35 years
- ❁ Long term carers are at high risk of isolation and loneliness





# Supporting family carers?

## Preoccupations, beliefs and getting unstuck

- Stuck—where beliefs collide with urgency
  - NIMB-Y?
  - FPT
  - Pilot projects vs Sustainable solutions



# Getting unstuck

## A groundswell from the (Alberta) trenches

- ✿ Enhancing care in the community
  - ✿ Working together to support vulnerable older adults
  - ✿ Supports family carers; reduces ED visits
- ✿ Creating a healthcare system that is responsive to needs of family carers
  - ✿ Education of the health workforce to identify carer needs
  - ✿ Homecare interventions to support family carers
- ✿ And a remarkable similarity to the proposed National Seniors Strategy: <http://nationalseniorsstrategy.ca/>
  - ✿ Pillar 3: Care Closer to Home
  - ✿ Pillar 4: Support for Caregivers



# Moving forward

- ⊕ Preoccupation: Creating age-friendly settings
- ⊕ Values and beliefs: Aging is an asset
- ⊕ Sustainable solutions:
  - ⊞ Built on Alberta needs;
  - ⊞ Supported by National structures



### **Norah C Keating**, PhD, FCAHS, FGSA

- Director, Global Social Issues on Ageing (GSIA), International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics
- Professor of Rural Ageing, Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University, UK
- Co-director, Research on Aging, Policies and Practice (RAPP), University of Alberta, Canada
- Extraordinary Professor, Optentia Research Focus Area, North-West University, South Africa