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Book Review

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The author describes the Palgrave pilot project based on a post-doctoral India-France Collaborative Exchange Fellowship of the India Council of Social Science conducted in 2013.

“Mapping global population trends indicate a dominant increase in longevity and life expectancy in the 21st century”. Contributing factors include better nutrition, sanitation, access to medical care, education and economical changes. Nair identifies additional concerns regarding the shrinking of the younger generation due to late marriages, infertility, and emergence of double-income families and distance in living conditions that can result in unavailable family members to care for the elderly who need physical and financial assistance. Nair mentions the findings of the Madrid International plan by the United Nations organization regarding the world-wide impact of modernization and urbanization that has resulted in a decrease in large families and inter-generational support; while there is a decrease in government support and an increased need for additional care for the elderly. “This is an emerging field of topical importance in general human development throughout the world”.

The purpose of the study was to explore the similarities and differences related to longevity and the potential impact on individuals, families, and societies of France, a developed nation, and of India, a developing nation. College and University teachers were selected as the study participants that are regarded as valuable resources for their role in educating the nation’s future generations. Separate chapters of the text are devoted to each country describing the specific factors related to longevity and the impact on the society at large.

Although a variety of retirement plans and pension systems were created in developed countries several years ago, little attention has been given to retirement assistance in India, Africa, and other developing nations. However, many of the retirement benefits are not sufficient to meet the needs of the older individuals, and efforts to revise them is ongoing. Projected estimates indicate one-third, or 16 billion, persons will meet the stated retirement age of 67 in France. The number of older citizens in the developing countries is, also, expected to rise.

World-wide, many older adults are not actively involved in their retirement planning and express they prefer to age with security and dignity and to continue to participate in their societies as citizens with full rites. However, the nation’s designated retirement age is needed to provide job opportunities for younger workers. These global issues, certainly, pose many challenges.

These study findings can be a resource for further research and understanding of the critical issues related to longevity at the local, national, and global areas. Global monitoring organizations including the World Health Organization are prime areas for ongoing research, and recommendations for change. The continuing debate about what age is old requires serious consideration. The average age may be extended in the future, then “perhaps the mean age will be 75 by 2050”. No single retirement package can fit all situations, nor be effective over time; there is a need to create a society to meet the needs for all ages.