

# Ageing concerns us all: who can do what?



The rapid ageing of populations and changes in disease patterns are global phenomena that demand action at all levels and from various sectors: policy-makers at international, regional, national and community levels, civil society, private sector, individuals.

More so, joint action bringing sectors and several generations together, and making policies with older persons rather than about “them”, will greatly improve opportunities for older persons’ participation and contribution. Encouraging older persons to remain physically, socially and economically active for as long as possible will benefit not only the individual, but also society as a whole.



### **Policy-makers**

- » Ensure that decisions being made concerning care in older age are based on the rights of older people and guided by the United Nations Principles for Older Persons.
- » Develop or update national strategies for older people care guided by the regional strategy for active, healthy ageing and old age care 2006–2015.
- » Support the provision of a social safety net for older people who are poor and alone, as well as social security initiatives that provide a steady and adequate stream of income during old age.
- » Ensure that a national legislative framework exists to support, protect and integrate older people equitably with other age groups
- » Strive to ensure gender equality in social protection.
- » Ensure that older people have the same access to development grants, income-generation projects and credit as younger people do.
- » Implement and reinforce national and international safety standards that aim at preventing injuries at all ages.
- » Support pension reforms that encourage productivity, a diverse system of pension schemes and more flexible retirement options (e.g. gradual or partial retirement).
- » Enact policies and programmes that recognize and support the contribution that older women and men make in unpaid work in the informal sector and in caregiving in the home.
- » Study different living arrangements for older persons, including familial co-residence and independent living in different cultures and settings.
- » Ensure that all providers, public and private, operate appropriately and attend to older persons' specific needs cost effectively and efficiently.
- » Introduce prepayment and risk-pooling mechanisms to assure a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, including medical care and social services.

### **Urban and rural development planners**

- » Become a member of the WHO global network of age-friendly cities.
- » Establish a focal point and task force on ageing and health: define a vision for the future at the municipal level or in rural areas; identify successful initiatives at the departmental and sectoral level; share achievements on World Health Day; make your city, municipality or rural

area age-friendlier thereafter.

- » Improve the quality of life and engagement of older persons in your city, municipality or rural area in the following areas: outdoor spaces and buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; respect and social inclusion; civic participation and employment; communication and information; and community support and health services.
- » Maintain a database on older people in your city, municipality or rural area, and follow up multidisciplinary service provision to them through measurable indicators.

### **Civil society groups**

- » Ensure that older persons are fully engaged in shaping the policies and programmes that affect their lives and encourage their involvement in trans-generational activities.
- » Provide advice and counselling services for older persons regarding all areas of social protection.
- » Promote public awareness of palliative and end-of-life care so that these issues can be more openly discussed and there is greater awareness of what good care can achieve.
- » Begin educating about ageing early and extend to all groups in society.
- » Pay careful attention to upholding the rights of older people to reduce and eliminate discrimination and abuse.
- » Facilitate comparative research into care systems in different cultures and settings.

### **Private sector**

- » Invest in research aimed at finding remedies that can be provided at affordable prices for diseases that particularly afflict older persons in developing countries.
- » Develop new low-cost diagnostics, biomonitoring devices, medicines, other devices and interventions, in age-friendly formats and designs (e.g. colour-coded telephone buttons).
- » Develop and make accessible new information and communication technology (ICT) to foster the connectivity of older persons to their families, communities and carers and facilitate distance learning.
- » Develop products in age-friendly formats and designs: electronic equipment, such as mobile telephones, radios, televisions and bank and ticket machines should have large buttons and big lettering; the display panel of bank, postal and other service machines should be well-illuminated and reached by people of different heights.



#### **Academics and researchers**

- » Generate knowledge to address the many existing gaps, including the impact of population ageing in low-income and middle-income countries, in terms of the needs of the older people living there and the broader socioeconomic impacts, and involving older men and women in clinical studies.
- » Disaggregate data by sex and age and identify ageing sensitive indicators in surveillance systems to allow for the development of evidence-based health interventions that address the whole life-course.
- » Encourage and advance comprehensive, diversified and specialized research on ageing in all countries, particularly in developing countries.

#### **International agencies**

- » Measure progress and gaps in the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (2002).
- » Develop evidence-based policy options, guidelines and tools in a variety of sectors in addition to health and social services, including education, employment and labor, finance, social security, housing, transportation, justice and rural and urban development.
- » Ensure that the right to the highest attainable standard of health shapes, and is integrated into, relevant national and international policies concerning ageing and older persons. This includes developing international guidelines and national systems to regulate the practices of rights infringement and abuse of older persons.

#### **Media professionals**

- » Take the lead in forging a new, more positive image of ageing and clarify and popularize the concept of “active and dignified ageing”.
- » Provide more information targeted to older people through dedicated newspapers or regular columns in the general press, as well as through specialized radio and television programmes.

- » Communicate with older people and get their feedback on what they want and expect from the media.
- » Broaden communication channels’ programming and coverage of issues to include the interests of an older audience, e.g. health, legal rights, benefit entitlements, services and community events and elder maltreatment.

#### **Schools and educational institutes**

- » Include topics on ageing and the rights of older persons in educational curricula.
- » Initiate intergenerational and diverse age-friendly activities in schools and universities and encourage the participation of older people.
- » Present role models of older people to promote positive images of ageing and health.
- » Educate the young on healthy lifestyles and the life-course approach to health, recognizing that the ageing process is a lifetime process that starts even before birth, and that healthy older age starts from earlier life stages.

#### **Spiritual leaders**

- » Promote the rights of older people.
- » Encourage religious institutes and places of worship to serve as models for age-friendly settings.
- » Promote the importance of family and community as the nucleus of society and encourage the community to play the role of extended family in support of older people.

#### **Individuals**

- » Promote and follow an active lifestyle and healthy behaviours at all ages.
- » Older people, take the lead in forging a new, more positive image of ageing, and participate and communicate with younger age groups in building the community.
- » Young adults, prepare for old age in your health, social and financial practices, and communicate and participate with older generations in building the community.





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