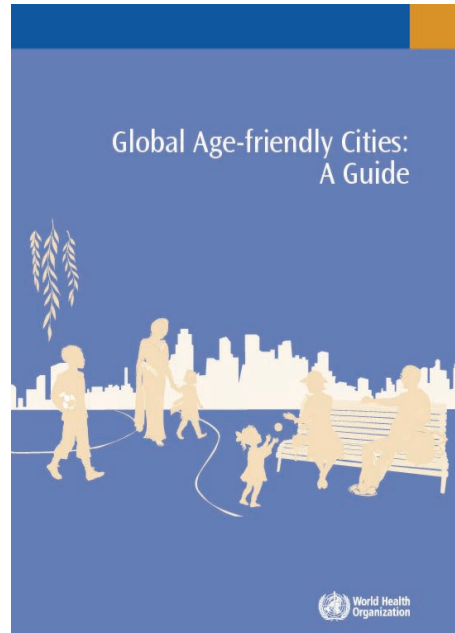


Towards more age-friendly cities: The WHO Guide

Everywhere cities are growing and greying



As of 2007, over half of the world's people live in cities and by 2030, about three out of every five people will be urban dwellers. At the same time as cities are fast growing, the proportion of older people worldwide is rising rapidly: from about 600 million today, the number of people aged 60 and older will double to reach 1.2 billion by 2025. Both these trends are occurring at a

much faster rate in developing countries.

In supportive and enabling urban settings, older people are a resource for their families, communities and economies. To help cities make the most of a growing older population as they expand, WHO is releasing the *Global Age-friendly Cities Guide* on the occasion of the **International Day of Older Persons - 1 October 2007**.

An age-friendly city adapts its structures and services to be accessible to, and inclusive of, older people with varying needs and capacities.

Older persons define “age-friendly”

The age-friendly cities project was launched by WHO at the IAGG XVIII World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2005. With initial funding from the Government of Canada and Help the Aged UK, WHO and its partners in 33 cities from 22 countries asked about 1500 older people to describe the advantages and barriers they experience in eight areas of city living:

1. outdoor spaces and buildings,
2. transportation,
3. housing,
4. social participation,
5. respect and social inclusion,
6. civic participation and employment,
7. communication and information; and
8. community support and health services.

The issues, concerns and ideas for improvement voiced by older people were complemented by views of about 750 people who act as their caregivers or service providers. From these worldwide consultations, WHO identified the key features of an age-friendly city and developed checklists for each of the eight identified areas.

“An Age-friendly city encourages active ageing by optimizing opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.”

Dr Alexandre Kalache, Director
Ageing and Life Course Programme, WHO

The *Global Age-friendly Cities Guide* is available free of charge in English and French at <http://www.who.int/ageing/en>. Print copies can be ordered from WHO Press at bookorders@who.int. Translations into other languages will be available shortly.

Using the Guide

The Guide will help cities at all stages of development see themselves from the perspective of older people, in order to identify where and how they can become more age-friendly.

It is intended for groups and individuals interested in making their cities more age-friendly. This includes government bodies, voluntary and academic organizations, the private sector and citizens' groups.

The heart of the Guide is the checklist of age-friendly features. The checklist is not an instrument for ranking one city against another. Rather, it is a tool for a city's self-assessment and a map to chart progress. No city is too far behind to make some significant improvements based on the checklist. Going beyond the checklist is possible, and indeed some cities already have features that exceed the core. These good practices provide ideas that other cities can adopt.



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The same principle followed in creating the Guide applies to using it: involve older people as full partners at all stages. In assessing a city's strengths and gaps, older people will describe how the Guide's checklist of age-friendly features matches their own experiences and expectations. They will provide suggestions for change and they can participate in implementing improvement projects. In the follow-up stages of age-friendly local action, older people should be involved in



monitoring progress and to act as age-friendly city advocates and advisers.

A global network of age-friendly cities

The Guide is currently being used in several locations to initiate age-friendly city development. Networks are being developed in Canada, Japan, Spain, the UK, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East. By networking, city groups can support one another and share good practices to overcome similar problems.

*An age-friendly city benefits everyone:
children, the young and the old*

Age-friendly cities best practices

An inventory of age-friendly best practices identified in the WHO research will be available online in November 2007. Sharing them among cities has already begun. In June 2007, the State of North Rhine Westphalia in Germany hosted a conference involving other cities in the WHO project to explore best practices in age-friendly city housing, health and other services. Another such meeting is expected to take place in Istanbul, Turkey early in 2008.

Age-friendly rural and remote communities

Non-urban communities must also become more age-friendly. In many countries, older people constitute a high percentage of the population in rural and remote areas as a consequence of the emigration of younger people. Work is under way in Canada to identify the age-friendly community features in small towns and villages. These results will be shared worldwide in due time.

Advancing research on age-friendly settings

The research leading to the Guide has yielded many rich findings worldwide, as well as connections among the researchers associated with the project. Additional funding from the Government of Canada is facilitating validation of the checklist of age-friendly city features. With the support of the Institute of Aging of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), researchers are working together to learn more about ageing in urban settings. In preparation are scientific papers describing the concept and methodology of the WHO-led research and examining age-friendly settings in relation to active and healthy ageing. Further collaborative research involving cities in different regions of the world will be conducted, beginning with an initiative led by the New York Academy of Medicine on the theme of "ageing in a foreign land".

WHO as the focal point

Working with multiple partners worldwide, WHO's Department of Ageing and Life Course (ALC) will continue to advise and support age-friendly city initiatives globally.

***Welcome to the global
age-friendly cities network!***

Acknowledgements

This brochure was produced by the Programme of Ageing and Life Course (ALC), WHO with financial support from the Geneva International Network on Ageing (GINA).



Cross lights are made for Olympic runners. Older person, Halifax, Canada

The doorman is really nice, he looks after four older people in my building... Older person, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

They [older people with disabilities] find it difficult to adjust as there are no proper arrangements for their sitting, toilet, etc... Caregiver, New Delhi, India

You walk down the street and people smile at you; you go into a shop and you're served, the kids even say hello to you even if they don't know you. Older person, Melbourne, Australia

Write simple, short with big letters. Service provider, Mexico City, Mexico

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