



World Health
Organization



Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health



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ISBN 978-92-4-151350-0

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Suggested citation. Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2017. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

Cataloguing-in-Publication (CIP) data. CIP data are available at <http://apps.who.int/iris>.

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Cover art: Rose Wiley

Design and layout: L'IV Com Sàrl

Printed in Switzerland

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Foreword

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development makes it clear that a healthy life and the right to health do not start or end at a specific age. They are applicable to all ages, including the later years of life. If we are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, we will therefore need to take account of the rapid population ageing that is occurring in almost every country. This demographic transition is unprecedented and will impact almost all aspects of society. By 2050, one in five people will be 60 years or older, totalling 2 billion people worldwide.

Longer lives bring great opportunities, including the possibility of rethinking how our entire life course might unfold. But these opportunities are very dependent on people maintaining good health into older age. Unfortunately, evidence suggests that many older people today experience much poorer health trajectories than we know is possible. Yet, the health issues that confront older people are often associated with chronic conditions that can be prevented or delayed by engaging in healthy behaviours across the life course. Other health conditions can be effectively managed, especially if they are detected and treated early. And for older adults with significant declines in capacity, supportive environments and integrated care systems can ensure that they live lives of dignity and continued personal growth.

The *Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health* was adopted by the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in May 2016¹ and provides a political mandate for the action that is required to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to experience both a long and healthy life. Extensive consultations across countries and regions, civil society and other non-state actors, contributed to this first ever strategy on ageing and health. It is grounded in WHO's fresh conceptualization of *Healthy Ageing* as being much more than the absence of disease and offers comprehensive guidance to countries and development partners on how to foster the functional ability of older people to be and to do what they value. The strategy sets forth five objectives to achieve this. These include a call for countries to commit to action; to develop age-friendly environments; to align health systems to the needs of the older populations they will increasingly serve; and to develop sustainable and equitable systems of long-term care. Finally, it emphasizes the importance of improved data, measurement, and research, and involving older people in all decisions that concern them.

By acting on this strategy, countries will make a major contribution to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which pledges that no one will be left behind and that every human being, regardless of their age, will have the opportunity to fulfil their potential in dignity and equality. I am convinced that the commitments outlined by the strategy will

¹ See Annex 1.

help countries ensure that universal health coverage is inclusive of older adults, and it will also contribute to poverty reduction, improve health equity across the life course and other development goals.

As well as outlining the action that needs to take place immediately, the strategy calls for us to work with partners to prepare for a Decade of Healthy Ageing that will span from 2020 to 2030. This will require us to support countries to implement their political commitments and evidence-based actions; gather evidence where there are gaps; and establish the partnerships that are needed to mobilize action and improve health across the life course.

By implementing the Global strategy we can deliver a historic transformation that will ensure that we live both longer and healthier lives. Let us work together and invest in a future where all older people have this precious freedom.



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization

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