



**IMPROVING
THE QUALITY OF LIFE
OF THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED
PEOPLE IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS**



IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF ELDERLY AND DISABLED PEOPLE IN HUMAN SETTLEMENTS

VOLUME I

A Resource Book of Policy and Programmes from around the World

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

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FOREWORD

The world's population is ageing dramatically. The total number of people aged 60 and older grew from 200 million in 1950 to 400 million in 1982. Their number is expected to increase to 600 million in the year 2001 when 70 per cent of them will live in developing countries. This demographic revolution has major consequences on the way human settlements are designed, managed and used.

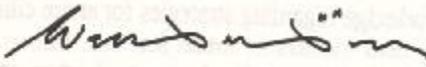
The United Nations and its agencies have undertaken many activities that recognize this reality. The General Assembly adopted the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and proclaimed 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons. In 1982, 124 Member States adopted the International Plan of Action on Aging at the World Assembly on Aging. These two landmark events launched a variety of activities and studies during the United Nations Decade of Elderly and Disabled Persons.

The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) launched the decade with two important documents. *Designing with Care - a Guide to Adaptation of the Built Environment for Disabled Persons* was published as the result of cooperation between the United Nations, UNCHS (Habitat) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). This guide pointed out that implementation of suggested design guidelines and related policies and programmes would have to be undertaken by authorities, taking into consideration the economic, social and climatic conditions of the human settlement concerned. Human Settlements and Aging (HS/OP/82-14), was published by (UNCHS) Habitat in 1982, considered issues in developed and developing countries involved in incorporating the needs of the ageing in human settlements development.

To continue the momentum of work of the Decade, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) undertook a study to examine policies and programmes that can be implemented in human settlements by local governments to improve the living conditions of those who are elderly and disabled. The contents of this report will also be supportive of efforts to implement the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1988. The objective of the Global Strategy is to facilitate the provision of shelter for all groups in all types of settlements, meeting the basic requirements of tenurial security, structural stability, infrastructural support and convenient access to employment, community services and urban facilities. This report sustains that effort by providing global guidance and specific examples of policies and programmes to meet the needs of those who are elderly or disabled.

The study is comprised of two volumes. In the first, information gathered through a literature search, the policy experience of cities (largely unpublished) and case studies is consolidated and distilled into guidelines to provide practical and specific ideas for local authorities. In the second, in order to provide more detailed information for the users of this research project, two case studies, prepared for the cities of Ottawa, Canada, and Madras, India, are presented.

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Dr. Wally N'Dow
Assistant-Secretary-General

OBJECTIVES, SCOPE AND KEY TERMS

Objectives

This resource book identifies effective solutions that can be undertaken by local governments for improving the quality of life for elderly and disabled people in human settlements.

Its aim is to assist decision-makers in national and local government to develop effective and affordable strategies to address the common problems facing elderly and disabled people and to improve their daily lives. The work of officials, researchers, planners and architects working in areas related to the planning, management and development of human settlements will be facilitated by the information contained in this report.

The report consolidates research as well as policy experience. Successful policy experiences have been drawn from a large number of cities in many countries. However, the major proportion of the ideas has been drawn from two case studies. The first case study describes the policies and programmes for elderly and disabled people in Ottawa, Canada. The capital city of Canada has a population of about 300,000 and a northern climate. The second case study depicts the experience of the city of Madras, India, in dealing with the challenges of improving the living conditions for the elderly and the disabled in a tropical city of about 4 million inhabitants. The city has a wide spectrum of neighbourhoods with housing ranging from upper-income residential areas to slums.

The survey of policy and programme approaches has shown that creative and effective solutions are possible despite economic, social or climatic constraints. It has also shown that there is a high potential for international exchange of ideas and concepts which may then be adapted for local application. This resource book is a mechanism for the sharing of such information.

The scope of the study

A human settlement that is a good place in which to age serves its residents throughout the life cycle. The intent of this resource book is not only to provide suggestions for easing existing difficulties confronting elderly and disabled persons but also to improve living conditions in the future for all residents who live out their lives in an urban environment.

The increasing need to address the problems of the elderly and the disabled population, in their living environment has stimulated many research activities. The preponderance of these research studies has focused on the improved design of the built environment to accommodate the needs of these two population groups. The need now has shifted to policy research, identifying ways in which changes to human settlements can be accomplished. These policy solutions compete for administrative attention and public resources, therefore, they must be cost-effective as well as acceptable to the electorate. The study aims to consolidate effective policy strategies that have been successfully applied.

Much of the literature deals with the housing of the elderly and of disabled people. There is a dearth of practical knowledge regarding strategies for entire cities, with their mosaic of neighbourhoods, networks of infrastructure and clusters of urban services. Information on macro-level policies, which concentrate on planning, management and development of urban environments, including infrastructure and services is lacking. This resource book examines how municipal government can respond to the needs of elderly and disabled people through normal policy and programme activities.

The vast majority of the elderly and of disabled individuals will live in developing countries. It is essential that successful strategies are available to the developing countries where rapid urbanization is in progress. These developing countries can learn from the errors of developed countries as well as from their successful ventures.

There are opportunities for mutual exchange. In present conditions of economic restraint, developed countries are open to simple and inexpensive strategies which are often created by developing countries. It is also recognized that developing countries may have a trajectory of development that skips or speeds through phases of development. For example, technologies are purchased from developed countries rather than pursuing the slow process of product innovation. With the forces of globalization, development patterns are expected to change. Therefore, developing countries can prepare themselves by following policy development based on the experiences of developed countries. For example, in developed countries where telephones are found in almost every home, a variety of services such as telephone assurance, emergency service and telephone-based consumer and social services become possible. Though telephones are not yet widely available in developing countries, such programmes can be planned for in advance in the expectation that telephones will be commonplace in homes in the future.

Key terms used in this study

Definitions of terms vary greatly. The terms used and the background for their use are explained below.

Elderly people: Elderly people are often defined as citizens over the age of retirement but the age of retirement varies from country to country. Many low-income people and tradespeople work beyond the age of retirement for various reasons. The International Plan of Action on Ageing adopted by the World Assembly on Aging applied the term to persons over the age of sixty. However, in many countries people continue to work and function well beyond that age. Indeed, some countries have abandoned a mandatory age of retirement. Moreover, it is recognized that the functional capabilities rather than chronological age are more important for policy purposes.

In this study, where data are presented, the applicable definition of "elderly " is provided. Otherwise, the term is used to identify those adults who may or may not be working, but as a group require special policy consideration because of needs associated with their age.

Disabled people: The response to disabilities has changed over the last decade as human rights issues have come to the fore. The World Health Organization defined disabilities as "any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for any human being". A disability may be visible or invisible; temporary or permanent; single or multiple; progressive, stable or regressive. There are several disabling conditions, arising from loss or impairment of mobility, agility, vision, hearing, cognition and size. Conditions due to allergies or disease may also be included. Changes in attitude are reflected in the terms used. When referring to people with disabilities, it is suggested that the disability be used as an adjective rather than a noun (thus, blind persons and not the blind). In some countries, stress is placed on abilities rather than disabilities. Terms such as the "differently abled" and "mentally challenged" are frequently used in some countries; however, in this report the term "disabled people" was chosen for clarity. Specific disabilities are also used as adjectives such as deaf people.

Barrier free or accessible environments: The term "handicap" is not a synonym for "disability" in many countries.

"A handicap is not looked upon as a characteristic of a person with a disability caused by injury or illness but as a relationship between the person and the environment... This is important because it places a responsibility on all organizers, both public and private, to see that the activities they run are accessible to all - also to disabled people, thus preventing a disability from becoming a handicap." (*Support for the Disabled in Sweden, Fact Sheets on Sweden, May 1986*). This has led to the recognition that handicapping physical and social environments must be abandoned in favour of "barrier-free" or "accessible" environments. Such environments are defined as accessible or barrier-free when elderly or disabled people are, without assistance, able to approach, enter, pass to and from and make use of an area and its facilities. This reflects the current philosophy of individual rights, mainstreaming and integration rather than exclusion or special or

segregating design of the environment. Though special environments such as sheltered workshops and special homes for disabled people are still provided, the preference is to structure normal environments so that they are usable by everyone including those with disabilities. Universal design integrates the needs of disabled people into normal environments, encouraging self-reliance, independence and freedom to every citizen regardless of varying abilities.

Ageing-in-place: When elderly people are able to age in their own homes in the community relying on support services and their own social network, it is called ageing-in-place. Elderly people in developed countries prefer to age-in-place, living independently in homes of their choice. In developing countries, elderly people are often dependent on their families for shelter and other household services, but they continue to live in the community. The alternative in both developed and developing countries is to live in segregated environments built specially for elderly or disabled people, mainly institutions, relying on public, private or volunteer services.

Local authorities, city governments and municipalities: Because of the great variation in definitions, these terms are used synonymously to refer to governing bodies with responsibilities for human settlements that can take action on behalf of elderly and disabled people as well as the urban environment and urban services.

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE BOOK

Municipal governments recognize that elderly and disabled people have problems that are exclusive to them which cannot be handled well by general policies. It is also accepted that as productive citizens they can contribute to as well as benefit from society and, therefore, the needs of each group must be addressed. This resource book presents the needs of elderly and disabled people from a policy perspective. When their needs are understood, measures can be taken that do not necessarily cost more because they reduce other costs to government.

To facilitate this process, this resource book suggests that city governments establish their own statement of responsibilities for the improvement of the quality of life for urban residents, including elderly and disabled people. To accomplish these responsibilities, each local government can develop its own set of principles for action. These principles are valuable when choices have to be made between alternate policy strategies and when decisions have to be made regarding the resources to be invested between competing demands.

This resource book is a compendium of practical solutions that have been tried successfully by several local governments around the world. These solutions have been gathered from published literature, two case studies, and unpublished policy information provided by cities. These are often highlighted in boxes. Where published sources are available, they are given. When a city where a solution is practiced is known, its name is given, so that further information may be gained by contacting the city. Where the solution has been implemented in several cities a more generic description is given.

Readers are invited to evaluate the living conditions of elderly and disabled residents in their own human settlements. Since many of the problems experienced by these groups are interrelated, clusters of problems can be identified. From this resource book, programmes and policy ideas that have potential to address these clusters of problems may be selected and then adapted for the specific political, economic and climatic needs of the human settlement.

The policies and programmes presented in this resource book may have three applications: first, current problems can be addressed; secondly, a strategy may not be immediately applicable but may be used eventually when resources and conditions permit, and, thirdly, strategies may prevent problems that may arise in the future.

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