

Regional Action Plan on Healthy Ageing in the Western Pacific



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ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
ICOPE	Integrated Care for Older People
ISHC	intergenerational self-help club
NCD	noncommunicable disease
SAGE	Study on Global AGEing and Adult Health
TB	tuberculosis
WHO	World Health Organization

FOREWORD

People throughout the World Health Organization Western Pacific Region are enjoying longer lives, reflecting decades of health improvements. Longer life expectancies, in combination with declining fertility rates, mean that the proportion of older people is growing faster than any other age group in the Region. In fact, the Western Pacific Region has one of the largest and fastest-growing older populations in the world.

With the *Regional Framework for Action on Ageing and Health in the Western Pacific (2014–2019)* coming to an end, a high-level panel discussion was held at the Regional Committee in October 2019. Following the meeting, Member States acknowledged that preparing for population ageing is a priority and unanimously called for the World Health Organization to develop a regional action plan on healthy ageing. In developing the plan, the Organization consulted with experts and partners in the Region and globally, and also worked with countries to better understand population ageing within different contexts. The development of this regional action plan also coincides with the launch of the Decade of Ageing 2020–2030, which the World Health Assembly endorsed in August 2020.

The *Regional Action Plan on Healthy Ageing in the Western Pacific* aims to support older people who are healthy, thriving and contributing in society. It advocates a whole-of-society transformation, beyond health systems. Adding years to life can offer individuals and society new opportunities, but only if society encourages and enables older people to remain healthy and to continue participating and thriving.

The Plan proposes a multisectoral, lifelong approach for preparing for population ageing. It recognizes that health at an older age is a result of a lifetime accumulation of healthy behaviours and environmental exposures. Healthy behaviours need to be instilled in individuals at a young age and promoted throughout people's lives. Further, adopting healthy behaviours is often influenced by many social factors for which differential access can lead to disparate ageing trajectories. Therefore, all sectors need to work together to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to age in good health. Improvements in technological innovations can also enable a more personalized approach that responds to each individual's unique health conditions, behaviours and environments.

Experiences from already aged countries indicate that investments made towards healthy ageing can turn challenges into opportunities. Older people are healthier and more knowledgeable than ever before. It is time to shift the narrative on ageing to one that recognizes the many valuable contributions older people can make to their families, communities and society when they are encouraged and supported to do so.

Societal transformation for healthy ageing requires a long-term vision and commitment, but investing early can yield significant returns for individuals and society as a whole. Indeed, the COVID-19 outbreak, which began in 2019, has generated a heightened awareness around the needs of ageing populations and has shed light on existing gaps in care. The increased interest in the health of ageing populations serves as an enabler to begin transforming societies today.

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