World Health Organization

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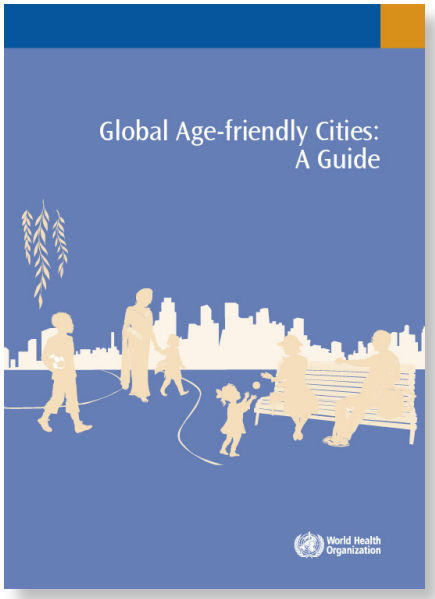
WHO GLOBAL NETWORK OF AGE-FRIENDLY CITIES©



Background

The Age-friendly Cities Programme is an international effort to help cities prepare for two global demographic trends: the rapid ageing of populations and increasing urbanization. The Programme targets the environmental, social and economic factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.

In 2006, WHO brought together 33 cities in 22 countries for a project to help determine the key elements of the urban environment that support active and healthy ageing. The result was *The Global Age-friendly Cities Guide* (http://www.who.int/ageing/publications) which outlines a framework for assessing the "age-friendliness" of a city. A core aspect of this approach was to include older people as active participants in the process.

What is an Age-friendly city?

An Age-friendly city is an inclusive and accessible urban environment that promotes active ageing

The guide identifies eight domains of city life that might influence the health and quality of life of older people:

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.

WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities©

To build on the widespread interest generated by this programme, WHO has established the WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities©. The Network will:

1. Link participating cities to WHO and to each other.
2. Facilitate the exchange of information and best practices.
3. Foster interventions that are appropriate, sustainable and cost-effective for improving the lives of older people.
4. Provide technical support and training.

Advantages of membership

- *Connection to a global network of ageing and civil society experts.*
- *Access to key information about the programme: latest news, best practices, events, results, challenges and new initiatives* through the *Age Friendly CitiesCommunity of Practice (www.who.int/ezcollab/afc_network).*
- *Provision of technical guidance and training throughout the AFC implementation process.*
- *Opportunities for partnerships with other cities.*

Network Membership

Cities participating in the Network commit to a cycle of continually assessing and improving their age-friendliness.

To join the Network, cities must:

- complete an application form available at www.who.int/ageing/age_friendly_cities/en/index.html
- submit a letter from the Mayor and municipal administration to WHO indicating their commitment to the Network cycle of continual improvement.
- commence a cycle of four stages:

1. Planning (Year 1-2): This stage includes four steps:
a. Establishment of mechanisms to involve older people throughout the Age-friendly City cycle.
b. A baseline assessment of the age-friendliness of the city.
c. Development of a 3-year city wide plan of action based on assessment findings.
d. Identification of indicators to monitor progress.

2. Implementation (Year 3-5)

On completion of stage 1, and no later than two years after joining the Network, cities will submit their action plan to WHO for review and endorsement. Upon endorsement by WHO, cities will then have a three-year period of implementation.

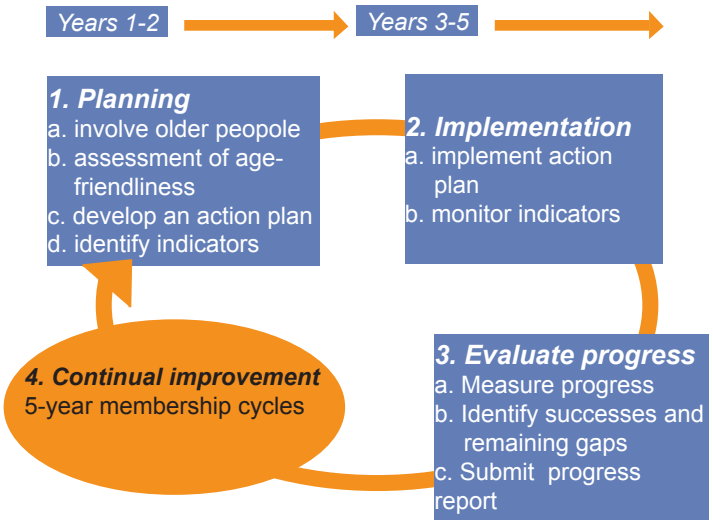
3. Progress evaluation (end of year 5)

At the end of the first period of implementation, cities will be required to submit a progress report to WHO outlining progress against indicators developed in stage 1.

4. Continual improvement

If there is clear evidence of progress against the original action plan, cities will move into a phase of continual improvement. Cities will be invited to develop a new plan of action (duration of up to 5 years) along with associated indicators. Progress against this new plan will be measured at the end of this second implementation period. Cities will be able to continue their membership to the Network by entering into further implementation cycles.

Cycle of WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities©



Questions and Answers

What is the role of WHO in the Network?
The role of WHO headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices includes:
1. Coordination of the Age-friendly Cities programme.
2. Identification and dissemination of best practices.
3. Development of implementation guidelines.
4. Technical support and training.
5. Reviewing progress and plans.

How do national programmes link to the Network?
Some Member States are taking the initiative to establish their own national or state-wide programmes. WHO is happy to work with these Member States to ensure that cities participating in these programmes gain automatic membership to the Network.

How does WHO take into account the differences between cities in determining membership and reviewing action plans?
The Network process is flexible and allows for the diversity of cities across the world. Assessment of action plans and progress will take into account the financial and social circumstances of each city and region.

How long does membership of the Network last?
A city can remain a member of the Network for as long as it demonstrate continual improvement against its developed indicators.

Will the establishment of the Network result in the development of benchmarks or standards for age-friendly cities?
The WHO Network does not yet set standards or benchmarks for performance. However, cities these measures are planned for the future, and cities will be assisted to identify indicators that can be used for comparison purposes.

What are the future plans for the Network?
A further and later step may be to identity standards that would allow cities to receive an award if they reach a particular level. WHO is also interested in exploring similar age-friendly approaches in different settings, for example rural communities, hospitals and workplaces.

What is an Age-friendly Cities community of practice?
It is a social online platform for:
- Sharing approaches
- Enhancing access to knowledge
- Linking experts
- Facilitating collaboration
- Promoting learning
- Strengthening partnerships

The Age-friendly Cities Community of Practice can be accessed at **www.who.int/ezcollab/afc_network**

Involving older people is an essential element of an age-friendly city. Their contributions are important for city assessments, setting priorities, proposing solutions for action, and monitoring progress.

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