

11th, OEWG – Call for inputs to NGOs with ECOSOC Status and Previously Accredited Organizations to the Working Group

I. “Social Protection and Social Security (including social protection floors)”

Will the benefits of the investments in health and well-being of older people be outweighed by the health-care costs of a longer life? What overall impact will population ageing have on healthcare expenditure?

Healthy Ageing: A Call for Global Action

Current public-health approaches to population ageing have clearly been ineffective. The health of older people is not keeping up with increasing longevity; marked health inequities are apparent in the health status of older people; current health systems are poorly aligned to the care that older populations require even in high-income countries; long-term care models are both inadequate and unsustainable; and physical and social environment present multiple barriers and disincentive to both health and participation. Societies that adapt to the changing demographic and invest in *Healthy Ageing* can enable individuals to live both longer and healthier lives and for societies to reap the dividends.

A new framework for global action is required.

It is time to realize that ageing and health is a global issue; it should be considered as an essential component of the continuing of the continuing globalization process that is reshaping our world. It should be included in the growing interaction between countries that currently exists in terms of world trade, services, foreign investment and capital markets. Investing in health across the life-span and their environment is a prerequisite for sustainable development. As women live longer than men, the quality of their longer life becomes of central importance. Primary prevention strategies will be most effective when initiated as early as possible.

The process of *Healthy Ageing* argues that all sectors share a common goal: to build and maintain functional ability. The Women’s Health and Education Center’s (WHEC’s) initiatives are structured around five key domains of functional ability that are essential for older people to:

1. Ability to meet basic needs;
2. Abilities to learn, grow and make decisions;
3. Ability to be mobile;
4. Abilities to build and maintain relationships;
5. Ability to contribute.

Ensuring functional ability in older people is important in addressing population ageing. Relevant to all countries is the consideration of older people’s abilities, which emphasizes personal and environmental resources as well as intrinsic capacity. Placing emphasis on maximizing functional ability supports governments, civil society and other partners in increasing their focus on results and impacts. WHEC focuses on these three key areas and cross cutting issues in its initiatives:

1. Combating ageism;
2. Enabling autonomy;
3. Supporting *Healthy Ageing* in all policies and at all levels of government.

As people age, their healthcare needs tend to become more chronic and complex. Many existing services in many countries were designed to cure acute conditions or symptoms; health issues are often managed in a disconnected and fragmented manner; and coordination is frequently lacking across care providers, settings and time. Transforming health systems from these outdated approaches requires action on several fronts. These approaches are crucial if alignment is to be achieved.

Our action plan is designed to enhance different domains of abilities and encourages different sectors to encourage functional ability. In times of heightened concerns over the implications of population ageing, increased national austerity and scarce aid dollars, the focus on abilities provides a way for all sectors at all level of government to decide together how to most efficiently add health to years.

Our recommendations are:

1. Develop and ensure access to services that provide older-person-centered care;
2. Orient systems around intrinsic capacity;
3. Ensure a sustainable and appropriately trained workforce;
4. Recognizing long-term care as an important public good;
5. Assigning clear responsibility for development of a system of long-term care and planning how this will be achieved;
6. Creating equitable and sustainable mechanisms for financing care;
7. Defining the roles of government and developing the services that will be necessary to fulfill them;
8. Enacting legislation supporting flexible working arrangements or leaves-of-absence for family caregivers;
9. Supporting community initiatives that bring older people together to act as a resource for caregiving and other community-development activities.
10. Creating age-friendly environments.

Although these actions will inevitably require resources, they are likely to be a sound investment in society's future: a future that gives older people the freedom to live lives that previous generations could never have imagined.

Thank you for your interest in our work.

We look forward to a meaningful collaboration.



WHEC
Helping Women World-Wide

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