

# Leaving No One Behind: the WHO Strategy for Healthy Ageing



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Ageing is increasing worldwide, as life expectancy is increasing, and fertility rate is decreasing. Ageing nowadays is not simply “more years added to retirement” but rather a new perspective of more years for continued productivity and activity.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a paradigm shift is observed and policies need to be framed accordingly. Nowadays, there is no “typical” older person; some 80-year-olds have levels of physical and mental capacity comparable to those of many 20-year-olds. Older age does not imply dependence; in many settings, older people continue contributing to the country’s economy, and significantly contribute to family emotional and mentorship support in challenging situations. Expenditures on older people are an investment, not a cost; better health systems lead to better health which allows greater participation and well-being. However, making use of ageing entails also remaining healthy. **Healthy Ageing** as defined by WHO is **the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age.**

In a constantly evolving globalization, a comprehensive public-health action on ageing is urgently needed with a main goal: to maximize functional ability. Four priority areas for action can help achieve this:

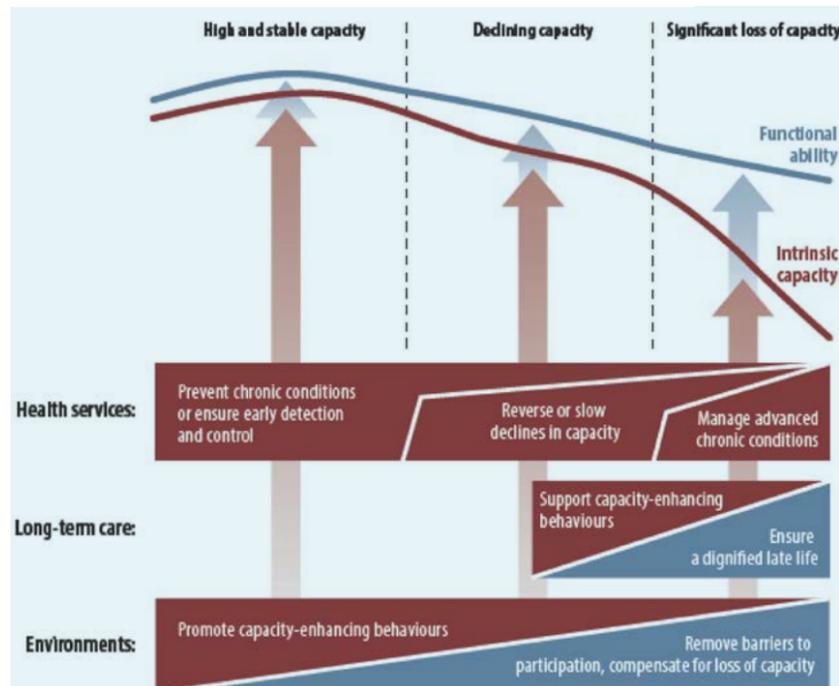
1. Aligning health systems to the older populations they now serve.

2. Developing systems of long-term care.
3. Creating age-friendly environments.
4. Improving measurement, monitoring and understanding.

WHO has proposed a Public Health Framework for Active and Healthy Ageing. It is in fact a societal response to population ageing that requires a transformation of health systems in order to provide older-person-centered and integrated care. It calls for the development of comprehensive systems of long term care. It also calls for a coordinated response from many other sectors and multiple levels of government, to create an enabling environment such as the age friendly cities.

Age friendly cities recognize the great diversity among older persons, promote their inclusion and contribution in all areas of community life, respect their decisions and lifestyle choices, and anticipate and respond flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences.

fig 1- WHO Public Health Framework for Active and Healthy Ageing



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