

**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR AFRICA****ORIGINAL: ENGLISH**Seventy-fourth sessionBrazzaville, Republic of Congo, 26–30 August 2024Provisional agenda item 18.4**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING THE  
PRIORITY ACTIONS OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION OF THE DECADE OF  
HEALTHY AGEING 2021-2030 IN THE AFRICAN REGION****Information Document****CONTENTS**

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## BACKGROUND

1. With birth rates dropping and people living longer, global life expectancy has doubled since 1900 and continues to rise. The number of older people is growing fastest in Africa and is expected to triple from 54 million in 2020 to 163 million by 2050.<sup>1</sup>
2. In 2021, Member States adopted a regional framework<sup>2</sup> for implementing the priority actions of the Global plan of action of the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030. The framework fosters healthy ageing and improvement of the lives and well-being of older people, their families, and communities.
3. The regional framework established specific milestones to be achieved by the end of 2023. By that date, a number of Member States (see Annex) were expected to have: (1) developed comprehensive national policies and costed plans for healthy ageing using a primary health care approach; (2) conducted health needs assessments for older people; (3) established or strengthened programmes to ensure care for older persons, thereby creating a supportive social and physical environment for healthy ageing; (4) implemented monitoring mechanisms to track progress on healthy ageing and well-being indicators regularly; and (5) developed a research agenda to support healthy ageing needs.
4. This first progress report summarizes the progress made in implementing the framework towards achieving the 2023 milestones and proposes the next steps for action.

## PROGRESS MADE

5. The outlook for healthy ageing in the WHO African Region is improving, especially through the implementation of age-friendly policies, strategies, and laws to prevent age-based discrimination and the establishment of national programmes for healthy ageing.
6. By the end of 2023, thirty Member States<sup>3</sup> developed policies, frameworks, and strategies to promote healthy ageing. While this target was successfully met, it is crucial to highlight that many countries reported having limited or no resources for implementing these policies. While 20 Member States were expected to conduct health needs assessments of older people by 2023, this target was not achieved. Nonetheless, 15 Member States<sup>4</sup> established national policies for assessing older people's health and social care needs.
7. Twenty Member States had to establish or strengthen programmes to ensure care for older persons, creating a conducive social and physical environment for healthy ageing. Regarding this target, the number of Member States with laws or policies preventing age-based discrimination has

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2023). World Population Ageing 2023: Challenges and opportunities of population ageing in the least developed countries, UN DESA/POP/2023/TR/NO.5

<sup>2</sup> Regional Committee for Africa, 71. (2021). Framework for implementing the priority actions of the global plan of action of the decade of healthy ageing 2021–2030 in the African Region: report of the Secretariat. World Health Organization. Regional Office for Africa. (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/348986>, accessed 30 April 2024)

<sup>3</sup> Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Comoros, Congo, Eritrea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

<sup>4</sup> Botswana, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Namibia, Nigeria, Niger, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, and Zimbabwe

more than doubled from 12 in 2020 to 29 in 2023.<sup>5</sup> However, only 10 Member States reported adequate resources for programme implementation.<sup>6</sup>

8. To strengthen programmes to ensure care for older persons, WHO supported five countries in adapting their guidelines and tools to implement the integrated care for older people (ICOPE) approach.<sup>7</sup> ICOPE training has been instrumental in facilitating the decentralization of clinical services from hospitals to primary health care (PHC) settings. This has enabled health care providers to better comprehend and address the specific requirements of older people in primary health care and engage more with the community.

9. In 2021, the WHO Regional Office for Africa collaborated with HelpAge International to launch a campaign aimed at raising awareness about the extent and impact of age-based discrimination (ageism) on older individuals. This effort involved older individuals advocating against ageism, thereby contributing to the promotion of a more inclusive society where every individual is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of age.

10. While 20 Member States were supposed to establish monitoring mechanisms by 2023, only 12 Member States have established national multistakeholder forums or committees on ageing and health, with no clear monitoring roles.

11. Concerning the milestone of the research agenda, no Member State had developed a research agenda specifically for older people by the end of 2023. In 2021, a systematic review highlighted<sup>8</sup> significant gaps in ageing research in the Region, particularly in mixed-methods studies and randomized clinical trials (RCTs).

## ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

12. While progress has been made, only two of the five regional milestones were achieved by the end of 2023. This was due to insufficient political commitment and limited financial and human resources. Additionally, multistakeholder engagement and optimal reporting mechanisms are critical for successful healthy ageing programmes, but they are underprioritized.

## NEXT STEPS

13. To accelerate the implementation of the regional framework, Member States should:
- (a) develop and implement national healthy ageing plans and strategies with sustainable financing mechanisms to cover the health and social needs of older people and ensure they are not left behind in the achievement of universal health coverage;
  - (b) put policies in place to combat ageism, abuse, and culturally harmful practices by adopting and introducing legislation safeguarding human rights, including those of older people;
  - (c) improve the health workforce or establish/train cadres to deliver integrated and long-term care for older people;
  - (d) enhance health information systems to collect and utilize age-disaggregated data, while improving monitoring, research, and age friendly innovations.

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<sup>5</sup> Benin, Botswana, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Comoros, Congo, Côte d' Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Ghana, Guinea, Lesotho, Namibia, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

<sup>6</sup> Congo, Côte d' Ivoire, Guinea, Lesotho, Malawi, Niger, Togo, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and South Sudan

<sup>7</sup> Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, and Senegal

<sup>8</sup> Kalu ME, Ojembe BU, Akinrolie O, Okoh AC, Adandom II, Nwankwo HC et al on behalf of Emerging Researchers and Professionals in Ageing-African Network. *J Glob Health* 2021;11:15002.

14. WHO, UN agencies and partners are called upon to support Member States in:
  - (a) developing policies and legislation;
  - (b) enhancing capacity and age-friendly infrastructures; and
  - (c) strengthening advocacy and allocating sufficient funding to promote the health, inclusion, and rights of older people.
  
15. The Regional Committee is requested to take note of this progress report.

**ANNEX****Indicators and milestones of the regional framework for implementing the priority actions of the Global plan of action for the Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030**

|   | <b>Milestone</b>  | <b>2020</b> | <b>2023</b> | <b>2026</b> | <b>2030</b> |
|---|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | Countries have assessed the health needs of older persons   | 5           | 20          | 35          | 40          |
| 2 | Countries have developed a comprehensive national policy and costed plan to improve healthy ageing using the PHC approach   | 23          | 30          | 35          | 40          |
| 3 | Countries have established/strengthened programmes to ensure care for older persons, including social and physical environments that foster healthy ageing and functional ability | NA          | 20          | 30          | 40          |
| 4 | Countries have established national mechanisms to regularly monitor and report progress on national, regional, and global progress indicators                                     | NA          | 20          | 30          | 40          |
| 5 | Countries have developed a research agenda to support the needs of the healthy ageing programme.  | NA          | 10          | 20          | 40          |