

# Responding to an ageing and urbanising world

The global population is both urbanising and ageing at historically unprecedented rates, particularly in low and middle income countries. These century defining mega-trends will change the way we live, work, play, socialise and experience our urban environments throughout our lives and into our older age. In an increasingly urban world, ensuring the fulfilment of our rights without discrimination based on our older age is key to building inclusive, sustainable, secure and prosperous communities for all.

**518**million

**57%**

**1**billion

Over 518 million older people live in towns and cities today, representing 57% of all older people, projected to increase to over 1 billion by 2050<sup>1</sup>

## Our rights to the city throughout our lives

### social

Negative ageist stereotypes and a lack of understanding of the diversity of old age marginalises our participation in city life, decision making and community life and activities.

### economic

Urban life is expensive and discriminates against older people, those living in income poverty or working in the informal economy, restricting and marginalising our ability to live with a secure income.

### spatial

Inaccessible spaces and services, inappropriate housing, hostile streets, poor public transportation and increasing insecurity and humanitarian disasters restrict our enjoyment of rights in older age.

## What are some of the consequences of ageing urban populations?

### diabetes

75% of people who live with a non-communicable disease are aged over 60 whilst 2/3 live in urban environments that discourage physical activity, lack green spaces and encourage bad diets.

### dementia

The number of urban residents living with dementia is predicted to double every 20 years, with 58% already living in cities in low and middle income countries.

### pollution

Over 7 million deaths are linked to indoor and outdoor pollution which disproportionately impacts older people who consequently suffer chronic respiratory conditions, heart disease and stroke.

## What do urban residents in older age think?

Opinions from a focus group of older women held in Iztapalapa, Mexico, April 2016.

**“There are more people with diabetes because in the city we have poor diets, we don’t do exercise, we are sedentary.”**

**“Walking up and down steps is difficult, tiring and there are no benches for us to rest”**

**“[During an earthquake], If you can get out, you get out, if not, you stay and die - nobody is going to come and help”**



For more information follow @AgeingCities or contact sjones@helpage.org

1. Data from UNDESA, World Populations Prospects: 2015 Revision, UNDESA World Urbanization Prospects: 2014 Revision, UN Population Division URPAS (Urban and Rural Population by Age and Sex).

# How can Habitat III and the New Urban Agenda protect and promote our rights in older age?



**Cities for all:** Ensuring cities are places where everyone can enjoy the fulfilment of their rights, regardless of their age, is key to creating communities that are inclusive, sustainable, secure and prosperous. Cities must combat discrimination based on older age in all its forms - socially, economically and spatially - to ensure our rights are protected and promoted throughout our lives.



**Investing in sustainable transportation:** Affordable, accessible and appropriate public transportation becomes increasingly relevant in older age for maintaining social connectedness with family and friends and providing access to services and livelihood opportunities. Investment in public transportation also reduces air pollution and congestion, creating pleasant, walkable and person-centred urban environments.



**Green and public spaces:** Secure and accessible green and public spaces facilitate intergenerational community interaction, support livelihood opportunities, encourage physical activity and provide spaces for contemplation and rest from city life.



**Intergenerational communities:** Cities are home to diverse and varied people of all ages. Our communities must encourage social and intergenerational interaction and develop neighbour and community relationships to expand our social support networks, strengthen our resilience to humanitarian emergencies and combat social isolation.



**Housing throughout life:** Affordable and tenure secure housing must be provided for all, with flexible housing design taking into consideration our changing needs throughout our lives. Housing policies must support tenure rights, particularly for older women, and recognise the inherent value of informal settlements and the social networks that people rely on. We must enjoy the right to age in place and be provided with different options as to how and where we wish to live our lives.



**Informal street-based livelihoods:** The role of streets and public spaces in facilitating individual and small scale informal economic activity, vital to the livelihoods of millions in low and middle income countries and particularly in older age, should be recognised. Changes to public spaces must avoid disrupting vital livelihood activities and provide improved, safer income generating opportunities for all.



**Healthy urban environments:** Urban environments must promote healthy eating and active lifestyles to combat high rates of non communicable diseases including diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Access to affordable healthy food options, environments that encourage walking and cycling and safe green and public spaces are vital.



**Clean air:** Significant reductions in vehicle, industrial and indoor air pollution are required to reduce the estimated 7 million deaths globally per year due to heart disease, stroke and acute respiratory infections linked to poor air pollution.



**Living with dementia:** Services, streets and public spaces should be designed to support the increasing number of people living with dementia in cities through dementia awareness training for service providers, the provision of calm and safe spaces that reduce anxiety and the presence of identifiable community features and landmarks that aid in the legibility of streets and communities.



**Disaster resilience and response:** Cities must strengthen the resilience of whole communities, including older people, who face insecurity from climate change, conflict and humanitarian disasters. Building community resilience and responding appropriately to disasters requires building on older people's knowledge, experience and social networks to ensure safety and security for all.