



# HEALTHY AGEING ACTION GUIDE

## Civil Society

### WHAT WE KNOW

Latin America and the Caribbean is a rapidly ageing region. By 2020, the Americas will have 200 million older adults, almost twice the number in 2006, and more than half of them will be living in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In the Americas, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) - including cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory illness, and diabetes - are responsible for seven out of 10 deaths among people aged 70 and older, while causing suffering and disabilities for many more (PAHO 2008). NCD mortality in the Caribbean is the highest in the Americas.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) can make a vital contribution to public health and health systems. CSOs, especially those with a health-based mandate, are already playing an integral role in tackling NCDs at both national and regional levels:

- Driving the NCD agenda and engaging in effective advocacy for healthy lifestyles
- Holding leaders and policy makers accountable
- Providing health services, outreach and support for those living with NCDs and their families
- Raising awareness of NCD risk factors and the extent of the epidemic
- Engaging in health education and promotion, including media campaigns, health fairs and events such as fun runs
- Providing an information platform for sharing of information and experience
- Spearheading research and contributing to the formulation of NCD policies.

Building civil society alliances and partnerships can broaden the NCD response to healthier ageing by increasing resources, aiding mobilisation and encouraging harmonisation of activities and messaging.

The support of CSOs is needed to acknowledge and embrace the fact that we live in a world with a rapidly growing older population.





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## WHAT WE CAN DO

- Support older people to claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure and healthy lives
- Provide outreach and support for older persons, those living with NCDs and their families
- Include older people in your interventions and programmes
- Share good practices, ideas, information and experiences more effectively across the region and within countries.
- Work to benefit older people on healthcare, emergency response, and income security
- Work to improve physical and social environments to become better places in which to grow old
  - Push for age-friendly communities
- Get involved (or more involved!) with supporting and hosting Caribbean Wellness Day activities and ensuring that these activities become regular events throughout the year.
- Step up your advocacy role in public education on NCDs risk factors and the importance of nutrition and healthy ageing
- Work with communities to help take more responsibility for maintaining green spaces.
- Play a more active role in research and national/regional policy development and implementation.

### More about:

- [Caribbean Wellness Day](#)
- [Noncommunicable Diseases and Healthy Ageing](#)
- [Healthy Ageing and Life Course](#)
- [Port of Spain Evaluation on Noncommunicable Diseases](#)
- [Caribbean Public Health Agency \(CARPHA\)](#)
- [Healthy Caribbean Coalition \(HCC\)](#)
- [Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\)](#)

