

For Immediate Release**Contact:** Dr. Abdi Aden Mohammed
mohameda@nbo.emro.who.int**Ageing and health. Theme: Good health adds life to years**

JUBA, April 04 2012 (WHO South Sudan): It gives me great pleasure to commemorate with the people of this new nation- South Sudan the World Health Day on the 7th of April, which is the anniversary of the founding of the World Health Organization in 1948. The topic this year is **Ageing and Health** and the theme is **“Good health adds life to years”**.

On this day, WHO is calling for urgent action to ensure that, at a time when the world's population is ageing rapidly, people reach old age in the best possible health.

Over the past few years, the population of the world has continued its remarkable demographic transition characterised by increased life expectancy. The number of older people is increasing worldwide, and will continue to rise rapidly in the next decade. By 2050, 80% of the world's older people will be living in low- and middle-income countries for including South Sudan. This has major implications for health and socioeconomic development.

Moreover, the growing number of older people means that more and more people are at risk of chronic non-communicable diseases, like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and dementia. Therefore, population ageing and delivery of health care services to the elderly will present new and serious challenges for national health care systems in South Sudan.

What is required is a comprehensive, collaborative response to population ageing. We need to provide integrated health and social care, to enhance family and social support, and to reduce the burden of disease and disability.

The theme of World Health Day this year is how good health throughout life can help older men and women to lead full and productive lives, and continue to be a source of support and wisdom to their families and communities.

Most of us can expect to live longer than ever before. Many middle-aged and older adults will have living parents and will live to see their great-grandchildren. While we may stay young at heart, our bodies are inevitably ageing. The rate of decline is determined, at least in part, by our behaviours and exposures across the whole life-course. This includes what we eat, how physically active we are and the extent to which we are exposed to health risks, such as those caused by smoking. It is also determined by the measures being taken to prevent and control health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer.

WHO promotes a healthy lifestyle throughout the life-course, in order to save lives, protect health and alleviate disability and suffering in old age. Age-friendly environments foster the health and participation of older people. Access to basic age-friendly primary health care, long-term care and supportive care is essential. Early detection of disease, as well as prevention and care, improves the well-being of older people.

Population ageing could slow down progress in human development unless serious action is initiated now to plan for an environment and services that are conducive to healthy ageing. With this year's World

Health Day campaign, I hope the country will go beyond awareness-raising, to take concrete action and produce positive change.

Let's work together to create societies which appreciate and acknowledge older people as valued resources; societies which enable them to participate fully in the community, and which help protect and improve health as we age.

May God bless our older people and enable them to add life to years.

For additional Information, please contact;

Dr. Abdi Aden Mohammed
Head of WHO South Sudan Office
Email: mohameda@nbo.emro.who.int

Pauline Ajello
Communication Officer
WHO Juba Office
Email: ajellop@nbo.emro.who.int