International Day of Older Persons, 1 October 2012

1 October 2012 | Geneva – On the **International Day of Older Persons**, the World Health Organization (WHO) welcomes
Kolkata
, India as the 105th member of its
Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities
. Kolkata is the first city to join from WHO's South-East Asia Region. Other member cities include New York, La Plata (Argentina), Canberra and Geneva.

"We live in a rapidly ageing world. For communities to thrive, they need to tap into the experiences of older people and ensure that infrastructure meets their needs," says Dr John Beard, Director of the Department of Ageing and the Life-course at WHO.

Population ageing is one of the key issues facing policy-makers, communities and town planners today. By mid-century, two billion men and women will be over 60 years old, with 400 million being over the age of 80 years. At the same time, cities are growing very fast and it is estimated that 70% of the world's population will be living in towns and cities by 2050.
Older people make important contributions as family members, volunteers and as active participants in the workforce. They are a significant social and economic resource for their communities.

The WHO Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities was established in 2010 to foster the exchange of experience and mutual learning between cities and communities worldwide. To join, cities need to make a formal commitment to creating inclusive and accessible urban environments that benefit their ageing populations.

During the coming years, Kolkata - a megacity with more than 15 million inhabitants, many of them very poor - will join other Network members in assessing its age-friendliness and developing a plan to adapt structures and services to be more accessible to and inclusive of older people.

"Every city and community identifies different challenges and different priorities," says Dr Beard. "They also identify different solutions. For example, New York has created an age-friendly business initiative and Qiqihaer in China has created an age-friendly park. Many cities have developed computer training initiatives to help older people become more familiar with the internet. Every new idea and variation is potentially useful to other cities and communities."

1 October was designated the International Day of Older Persons by the United Nations

General Assembly in 1990. The aim is to raise awareness about issues affecting the elderly, such as the ageing process and elder abuse. It is also a day to appreciate the contributions that older people make to society.