

## **Adapting the WHO Age-Friendly Cities Framework to Address Challenges in Kenya's Urban Informal Settlements**

Fidella Ngugi Kinoti<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Debrecen, Hungary

---

---

**Keywords:** World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities, WHO AFC, Kenya, urbanization

Kenya's rapidly growing and ageing population, and the urbanization presents urgent challenges and opportunities for creating urban environments that truly support older adults. The World Health Organization's Age-Friendly Cities (AFC) framework outlines eight essential domains — such as transportation, housing, social participation, respect, and health services — that aim to promote well-being, dignity, and inclusion of older people worldwide. However, while this global framework has been influential, it often overlooks the realities of informal settlements, where many older adults in Kenya's urban areas reside and face complex challenges like inadequate infrastructure, limited access to healthcare, poverty, and social exclusion.

With Kenya's elderly population projected to more than double by 2050, the country faces the critical task of adapting policies and urban planning approaches to meet the needs of this demographic trend. Although Kenya has enacted progressive policies, including the 2014 National Policy on Older Persons and Ageing that recognizes the rights and dignity of older adults, the implementation of these policies remains inconsistent, particularly in the slums and informal neighborhoods of cities like Nairobi and Mombasa. These informal settlements, characterized by insecure housing, limited basic services, and high population density, present unique barriers that are not fully addressed by existing frameworks.

This literature review focuses on these urban centers and their informal settlements to identify key barriers and opportunities in applying age-friendly strategies within Kenya's unique socio-economic and cultural context. It proposes a modified, context-sensitive framework that integrates the challenges of informality, the importance of intergenerational support networks, and the need for realistic, community-driven policy implementation. This tailored approach seeks to bridge the gap between global age-friendly ideals and the on-the-ground realities of Kenyan cities, ensuring that older adults are not only visible but actively supported to participate fully in urban life.

By aligning international frameworks with local contexts and highlighting the specific conditions of informal settlements, this review aims to foster more effective, culturally grounded, and practical strategies that enhance the quality of life, social inclusion, and economic participation of Kenya's older urban residents. Ultimately, the goal is to help Kenyan cities become truly age-friendly and sustainable in the face of rapid demographic and urban transformation.