

Age-Friendly Communities in Brunei Darussalam: Pilot Project



Health Promotion Centre
Ministry of Health

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Acknowledgement

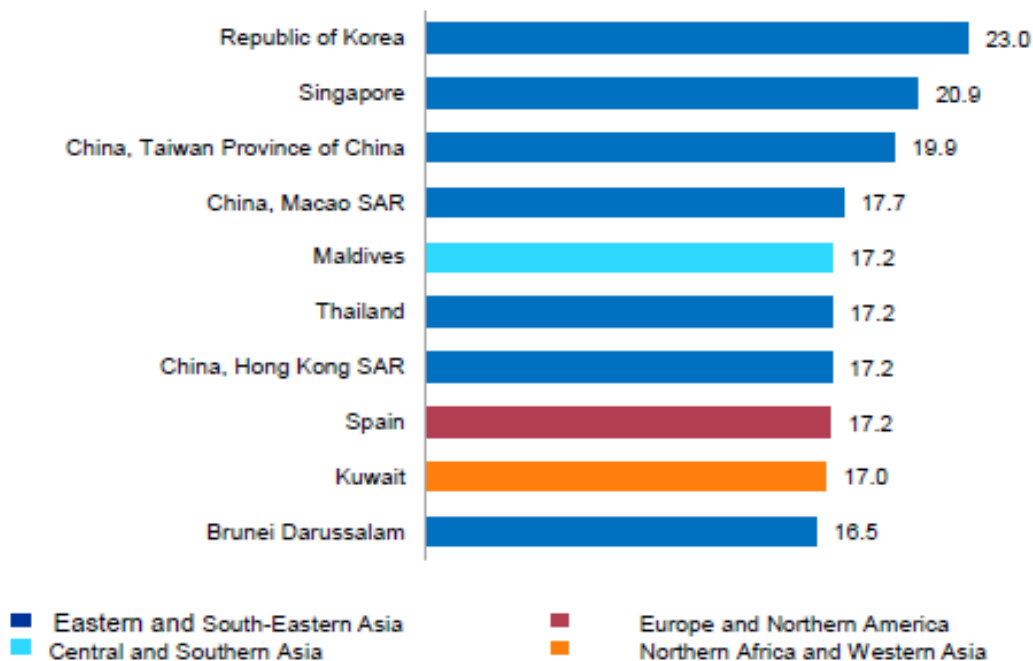
We would like to acknowledge the following organisations for their contribution and commitment to the development and implementation Age-Friendly Communities in Brunei Darussalam: pilot project

1. WHO Regional Office for the Western (WPRO) through the WHO Country Representative
for Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore
2. Tutong District Office, Ministry of Home Affairs
3. Tutong Municipal Office, Ministry of Home Affairs
4. Community Development Department, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
5. Penghulu and village heads of Mukim Pekan Tutong
6. Senior Citizen Centre of Tutong district
7. Senior Citizen Centre of Brunei-Muara district
8. Pengiran Muda Mahkota Pengiran Muda Haji Al-Muhtadee Billah Hospital
9. Berakas Health Centre, Tutong Health Centre, Lamunin Health Centre, Sungai Kelugos Health Centre, Telisai Health Centre
10. Pantai Jerudong Specialist Centre (PJSC)
11. University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD)
12. Geriatric and Palliative Care Unit, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha Hospital
13. Health Promotion Centre, Ministry of Health

In addition, we would like to thank all participants in the in-country consultation on age-friendly communities in Brunei Darussalam.

Introduction

Figure I.4. Countries or areas with the largest projected increase in the share of persons aged 65 years or over, 2019-2050 (percentage points)¹



United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). World Population Prospects 2019

One of the ways to tackle the issue of ageing in Brunei Darussalam is through the development and implementation of a multisectoral National Action Plan on Older People which is spearheaded by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports which is currently under review. Furthermore, under the Ministry of Health's Strategic Plan 2019-2023, promoting healthy ageing is one of the initiatives under Strategic Goal 2: Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases. Both policies are intended to be aligned with Brunei Darussalam's National Vision 2035, in support of the 2nd goal which is to ensure high quality of life among Bruneians.

Introduction

The main aims of the project were to:

1. Conduct a qualitative survey using the Age-Friendly Environment Assessment Tool among local older people; and
2. Assess a specific community on the level of age-friendliness and the feasibility of piloting an age-friendly community in Tutong District.

There were 3 main components of the project which include:

1. Translating the Age-Friendly Environment Assessment tool to local language (Malay);
2. Conducting Focus Group Discussions using the translated Age-Friendly Environment Assessment Tool; and
3. Virtual consultation by WHO Technical expert to assess the feasibility of age-friendly community project in Tutong District, including stakeholders engagement.

Findings

Phase 1: Qualitative survey using the Age-Friendly Environment Assessment Tool among local older people

Generally, older people felt comfortable, happy and safe living in their community. This is due to the good and socially-bonded neighbourhood. Furthermore, Bruneian's family system emphasizes the importance of familial relationships and inter-generational family structure, whereby grandchildren are able to take care of their grandparents or children caring for their parents. However, this may not apply to all as one of the respondents felt unsafe living within her own community



Sociodemographic

The response rate for the project is 84.8% and most of the respondents were older people aged 60-74 years old (89.3%), male (60.7%) and reported their highest education level was college or university (64.3%). The selection of participants were chosen based on their membership at the Older People Activity Centre which may be a basis of selection bias. Since majority of older people who are members of the Older People Activity Centre are considered as highly educated, active and health-conscious. Hence, responses from the participants were skewed towards their own needs rather than a representation of the whole older people in their communities.

Majority of the respondents had good perception on their current health (53.6%) and all of them stated that they do not have health problem that limits their ability to do normal daily activities nor do they have hearing problem (100% respectively).

In terms of working status, majority of the respondents were retired (96.4%) and were previously working in the government sectors (75%).

All of the respondents stated that they lived in their own houses (100%) with majority of them staying with their spouse (71.4%) and either living in Brunei-Muara District or Belait District (35.7% respectively).

Findings: Phase 1

Phase 1: Qualitative survey using the Age-Friendly Environment Assessment Tool among local older people

Age-Friendly Communities Domains

The overall assessment found that there were seven major themes / issues that were raised by the respondents in ensuring that the age-friendly communities can be implemented in Brunei Darussalam, which are:



Infrastructure

Majority of the respondents stated that infrastructure plays an important role in the development of age-friendly environment. This might be because the respondents felt that the current infrastructure did not support their needs within the community such as building specific space for older people and public transportation. However, we need to consider the level of knowledge and understanding of the respondents on the definition and interpretation of infrastructure from the older people's perspectives. The issues related with lack of infrastructure will be discussed further with relevant departments and ministries such as the Ministry of Development or Ministry of Transport and Infocommunication.



Community

Majority of the respondents agreed that community is one of the important factors that determine the success of age-friendly environment. This might be due to the strong community relationship within the community in which the respondents lived. As mentioned earlier, Bruneian's culture emphasizes the importance of familial relationship.

The response from the participants supported the study by De Donder et al (2013) and Buffel et al (2014) in which 'neighbourhood with good facilities, accessible public spaces and places to rest, as well as measures that promote pedestrian walkability, have been shown to play important role in promoting older people's social participation as well as a sense of safety and well-being'.

Findings: Phase 1



Types of activity

Majority of the respondents agreed that various types of activity are crucial in determining the participation of older adults in the community. Older people prefer to have religious activities compared to recreational activities due to their physical limitation.

Additionally, although useful information on programmes and services for older people is shared within communities in Brunei Darussalam. However, many respondents were unaware of such activities within their neighbourhood. Furthermore, dissemination of information to older people is quite challenging, as different platforms of communication are used as modes of communication. However, the older people prefer to use WhatsApp and via village head or through mosques.



Leadership

Majority of the participants stated that local leaders such as village headmen should play an important role in the social and welfare aspects of the older people. It is suggested that grassroots leaders to collaborate with relevant stakeholders such as the public, private and civil society organisations in planning and developing the physical and social environments to support the age-friendly communities framework. Moreover, many WHO age-friendly communities have adopted a multisectoral approach to designing communities that value the contributions of older adults and facilitate their access to all aspects of community life.

Findings: Phase 1



Safety and Security

Most of the respondents were concerned with safety and security within their community. Even though majority of them felt safe living in their neighbourhood, however there were environmental and animal issues that caused older people to feel insecure. The issues related to safety and security will be discussed with relevant authorities such as Police, Fire and Rescue Department and more.



Accessibility

Majority of the participants were able to access welfare, social and health facilities easily. However, there were concerns about older people who live faraway from the facilities and could not access the services provided.

Technology



All of the participants have their own mobile phones and were able to use it easily. Hence, mobile phones and social media especially WhatsApp is one of the platforms in information sharing. Furthermore, the responds supported the studies conducted by Lopez-de-Ipina et al (2013) and Righi et al (2015) that stated information and communication technologies may also support the involvement of older residents in navigating and designing their environment.[1],[2] However, for those not so digitally literate the participants preferred to have information to be disseminated through Village Head, social platform such as WhatsApp, via announcement at the mosques or verbally amongst the community.

Findings: Phase 2

Phase 2: Physical assessment of Tutong District by WHO Consultant

*adapted from WHO Report

The assessment findings are structured through the principles and steps for creating age-friendly communities, and the clustered age-friendly domains.

1. Principles

The assessment found the principles that guide age-friendly initiatives are evident in Brunei Darussalam.

- There is a strong, respectful involvement of older people in civic and social life
- There is a clear awareness of the diversity of older people living in Tutong District
- Intersectoral collaboration was evident during meetings and site visits
- We witnessed evidence of the life-course approach in action
- However, evidence of an appropriate multi-level governance structure was not clear

2. Steps to creating age-friendly communities



The first of the four-step process has commenced:

- An audit of the age-friendliness of Brunei using the Vancouver Protocol was completed
- Currently, the shape and structure of a steering committee is under discussion
- Reasonably, no implementation plan has been developed given the early stage of this work
- The inclusion of older people on the steering committee or in local work is to be developed

3. Clustered age-friendly domains

Age-friendly environments require policy and projects cover the physical or built environment, the social environment and person-centred services. The activities undertaken during this feasibility assessment provided an opportunity for a brief examination of the age-friendly domains.

Findings: Phase 2



4. Built environment

Brunei Darussalam is heavily car-dependent as there are limited options for public transportation. Older people often drive themselves or rely on family members and friends to drive them. There is also a lack of sidewalks for older people to safely walk from one point to another. Older people using wheelchairs or mobility scooters would have a difficult time as well. This gives rise to a number of areas that will require policy and community action to ensure the rapid growth in older people is also matched by healthy ageing initiatives

- There appears to be a lack of connectivity between housing and outdoor spaces
- Government housing is isolated from community infrastructure
- There is limited public transport between Tutong District and major services in Bandar Seri Begawan, and no public transport within Tutong District
- Overall, there is a lack of walkable areas within housing estates, and shopping and community areas.



5. Social environment

Brunei Darussalam has a strong culture of social connection and cohesion.

- There is a strong cultural norm of respect and care for older people
- Familial support and care of elders is clearly evident
- There is a growing need for intergenerational opportunities as rapid changes to community life have occurred within the current generations
- There are positive role models of healthy ageing in Brunei Darussalam. This can be built upon particularly through peer-to-peer activities, to develop a new narrative of ageing in Brunei Darussalam.

Findings: Phase 2

6. Services



Communication, information and community and health services relevant to older people are available and affordable.

- WhatsApp is frequently used for communication and information by older people and their health services.
- Multiple media sources are available and well used for and by older people.
- There is however, a digital divide with some older people without access to smart phone technology
- Health services are provided specifically to meet the needs of older people, however there can be long waits in the morning to secure access.
- Geriatric health assessment using Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) is required in primary health care to detect early changes in functional ability.
- Home-based care will require investment for informal and formal caregiving

Recommendations

*adapted from WHO Report

Based on both of the phases in the assessment on the feasibility of developing age-friendly communities in Brunei Darussalam with pilot project in Tutong District, the following recommendations are organized through actions that have short, medium and long-term outcomes and need to be undertaken concurrently. The MoH may consider these following actions and goals.

Key Indicator

Activity / Project

Short term

- Commit to building an Age-Friendly Brunei commencing with a pilot project in Tutong District
- Identify the geographical area in Tutong for the pilot in consultation with Tutong District leaders
- Undertake a collaborative audit of the selected geographical area - including stakeholder discussions with older people and Tutong District local government to identify the challenges, opportunities and build on existing programs in Tutong.
- Governance - Establish, or nominate an existing committee to act as, an inter-sectorial steering committee with an identified lead agency
- Resources - Build the capacity to implement age-friendly initiatives with information and training sessions on the need for and the approach to age-friendly environments
- Identify and commit financial, human, and support resources to undertake the work
- Monitoring and evaluation - Collaborate with the university sector to monitor and evaluate the pilot project

Medium term

- Develop Brunei-specific age-friendly indicators / checklist to assess actions in the pilot and actions in other ministries
- Incorporate Integrated Care of Older People (ICOPE) in regular primary care health assessments

Recommendations

Key Indicator**Activity / Project**

Long term

- Establish housing and community areas that are sustainable, connected, and engage the whole community
- Develop an integrated transport system

Way Forward

Follow-up discussion with Mukim Pekan Tutong

Several project proposals have been suggested by Penghulu and Ketua Kampong of Mukim Pekan Tutong on way forward for the pilot project. The proposals are as follows:

Project	Remarks / Feedback
Priority parking for older people in public areas	Specific parking allocated for older people in government and commercial buildings, include hospital, health centres, Petani Mall, Tutong Market etc
Tour guide	Older people can be tourism spokespersons
Provision of bus for older people to Tutong Market, every Thursday	A specific bus to transport older people going to Tutong Market on every Thursday morning
Provision of transportation for older male for Jumaat prayer, weekly	Volunteer with proper transport to accommodate and assist older male going for Jumaat prayer
Elderly-friendly bus	A better elderly-friendly shuttle bus provided
Pilot provision of day-care for older people	A pilot project to offer day-care for older people through Pusat Kegiatan Warga Emas
Special loyalty card for older people	Every older people are eligible for a special loyalty card e.g discount card while eating out or shopping for groceries

Conclusion

This mission has found that Brunei Darussalam is well-placed to undertake an age-friendly initiative. Brunei has a clear policy direction to work collaboratively to address its rapid demographic change. It has the commitment of MoH staff, the interest of broader stakeholders, and involvement of Tutong District leaders and older people.

Establishing the committee structure and processes to support an age-friendly initiative is essential. These can be integrated into existing committees or trialled in the Tutong District pilot to test the structure most applicability for Brunei. The activities to be undertaken within the age-friendly domains must be undertaken in consultation with leaders and older people in Tutong District.

As a way forward, Brunei Darussalam needs to recognize the importance of developing an age-friendly communities' framework. It is recommended to consider conducting pilot age-friendly communities by:

1. Establishing an age-friendly multisectoral committee;
2. Developing a comprehensive action plan on age-friendly communities, phase-by-phase particularly looking at improving the infrastructure, building up the communities and ensuring safety and security; and
3. Continuing engagement with various stakeholders on the concept of age-friendly communities.

As Brunei Darussalam is considering to conduct a pilot project on the age-friendly communities in the country, it is hoped that the project will be able to support actions in the National Action Plan on Older People in Brunei Darussalam and directly achieving Brunei Darussalam's Vision 2035: High quality of life.

Together towards healthy ageing nation

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