



# Harnessing Urbanization as a Positive Force for Present and Future Generations (The Bamenda Experience)



**National Development Partners (NADEP)**

Presented by

Louissette Fomba

[nadep2012@yahoo.com](mailto:nadep2012@yahoo.com)

# ***Urbanization***

- Urbanization, a population shift from rural to urban areas is a consequence of urban cities being viewed as providers of greater access to education, health and employment.
- Inability to achieved these better options, leads to extreme poverty, exclusion, vulnerability and marginalization.
- A majority of these migrants often older people, women, especially girls and children, end up living in urban slums.

# ***Sad Realities***

Other sad consequences include

- malnutrition,
- disease
- prostitution,
- Crime and drugs,
- HIV,
- increased poverty,
- loss of status,
- loss of meaningful life,
- frustration,
- loss of respect and dignity,
- increased dependence on others,
- and isolation.
- Often increased death rate, reduced life expectancy.

# ***City of Bamenda and Demographics***

- Bamenda is located at a cross route linking cities in neighboring Nigeria such as Enugu and Calabar to the Economic and political capital cities of Douala and Yaounde respectively.
- Bamenda has a favorable climate and a lower cost of living compared to Douala and Yaounde. It has some of the best schools.
- The population is estimated above 500.000 inhabitants.
  - Younger persons  
Below 15 Years = 44.7%  
15-59 Years = 49.9%
- Senior citizens  
60 Years and over, 5 .4% of total population higher than national average of 5%
  - People with disabilities make up 6.1% of total population

*Source: projections from 2005 population census*

# ***Age Friendly City-Consultation Report Bamenda by NADEP***

## ***Rationale***

- Aging is a global phenomenon, Cameroon is not an exception.
- According to WHO ageing and urbanization are two global trends that together comprise major forces shaping the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Older persons are a resource in supportive and enabling environment
- The city of Bamenda will benefit from the potentials of its older population if the environment is enabling and supportive.

# *Objectives*

- To enhance understanding of the experience of ageing for older men and women in Bamenda, what having a good quality of life means to them and what they perceive to be the key opportunities and barriers to attaining good health and well-being in their communities.
- To determine the extent to which the age-friendly city assessment methodology developed by WHO is relevant to the lived experience of urban life and ageing in Bamenda.
- To Identify gender-based barriers to a good quality of life in older age, particularly for women

# ***Methodology***

- Focus group discussions were held with older men and women, as well as care givers.
- Interviews Were carried out with services providers, using the WHO Age-friendly Cities methodology.
- methodology covers both physical and social aspects of the urban environment with an explicit focus on gender differences.

# ***Overall Findings***

Research findings revealed that;

- Good health is a major concern and priority as it contributes to a good quality of life
- The absence of livelihood activities and employment options were reasons attributed to poverty
- Older people lack respect from younger generations.
- The Bamenda urban environment provides an age and disability unfriendly outdoor spaces, transportation and housing.

# ***Bamenda is far from aged/ disabled friendly***

- Imagine a city where:
  - There are no side walks
  - No traffic lights
  - No elevators in major buildings
  - No marked handicapped parking spots,
  - Limited wheel chair accessible buildings.
  - Limited rest areas and public toilets etc.
  - Absence of public signs featuring positive messages on age / disabled friendly environment.
  - No care services in hospitals for Alzheimer's disease and dementia
  - Alzheimer's disease and dementia are attributed to witchcraft
  - No budget allocations at city councils for seniors
  - Very limited funding opportunity for older people
  - Construction plans approved at the city council do not consider needs of seniors and disabled
  - City facilities more adapted to an active population than to vulnerable seniors
  - The city of Bamenda is constructed for the young



# *Struggles cont...*

- Taxis and buses are often overcrowded
  - young and abled persons show no consideration for older and disabled persons by securing seating for them.
- Motorcycles, are a less costly transport system often used by seniors even though
  - Mounting and staying on them is a physical challenge encountered by older and disabled persons.
  - They do not have crash helmets
  - They have a higher risk of getting involved in accidents.
  - Disrespectful and abusive behaviors from the riders make matters worse.
  - Majority of riders not trained on bike riding
- Imagine major waiting areas without benches.



# struggles cont...

- limited employment options for older people and disabled due to 30% unemployment rate and 75% underemployment rate in Cameroon (ILO 2013).
- Limited opportunities for bank credit facilities for Older persons.
- Leisure is not a language Seniors understand in Bamenda.
  - Social Participation of seniors is limited to church meetings, social meetings, funerals, conflict resolutions and settlement of land disputes in their communities.
- Respect and Social inclusion for seniors are fading away.
  - The urbanization of Bamenda is causing the Cultural values of the city to diminish.
  - Seniors are now expressing a sense of powerlessness and disappointments with their communities as a result.

# struggles Cont...

- Bamenda lacks affordable low cost housing adapted to meet the needs of older persons and persons with disabilities.
- Access to healthcare is a big challenge especially to seniors.
  - Payment for health care services is out-of-pocket due to absence of health insurance systems.

# ***Looking ahead***

## ***(recommendations)***

Bamenda can be made more friendly for people of all ages despite the city's unplanned urban environment.

- It is recommended that Bamenda should be encouraged and supported to be a more aged/disability friendly city.
- Policy makers and senior government officials as well as civil society organizations are encouraged to engage advocacy and innovative service delivery to improve on the lives of seniors and disabled people living in urban cities.
- Intergenerational linkages should be encouraged for collaboration in order to enable a society for all ages
- Adequate funding support should be made available to support these initiatives.

# *Main Areas Needing Assistance*

- Older persons in Bamenda have three priority areas in the age friendly city domains:
  - Employment/livelihood
  - Healthcare and social protection
  - Housing, recreation and leisure.
  - A functional social policy to be enshrined into law to provide access to basic services by the elderly
- Our recent study on active ageing in Bamenda shows that only 14.97% of seniors can find employment, 22.56 % can access healthcare and only 37.58% of them can afford housing.
- Older women are more vulnerable because most of them are less educated, with more exposure to violence especially widows etc.



# ***Conclusion***

- The research carried out by NADEP provides evidence for human right groups, age care development actors, government services and funders as well as other stake holders, to see that the mobilization of support and innovative service delivery for older people and the disabled is necessary to enable them realize their rights and improve their livelihood and well being.
- Proposals on the way forward have been made by NADEP.
- Advocacy will be the leading tool which can cause the validation of the ageing policy in Cameroon, influence more studies, more funding and more support to older people not only in Cameroon but else where.

*THANK YOU*