

Editorial

Welcome to this issue of *Ageing in Africa*.

In this issue, we revisit the non-inclusion of older people in strategies to combat and manage HIV/AIDS. HelpAge International continues to emphasise the need to include older persons in relevant programmes due to their important role in managing the pandemic as carers of the sick and of AIDS orphans. We also look at the gender dimension of care in the era of HIV/AIDS as revealed by a UNIFEM-funded study in Eritrea, Somali, Ethiopia and Kenya.

In the continuing effort to advocate older people's rights, HelpAge International brought together law associations from around the continent to advocate and sensitise this important group of professionals about older people's rights. We highlight some pertinent issues that came up during the two-day workshop. A workshop to develop good practice guidelines for rights-based work with older people also took place from 10th to 12th of June.

We highlight some of the work with older people and activities that are taking place around the continent, including a fashion show held by our new member from Lesotho.

The UN Day for Older People comes up on 1st October. Let us all start planning to mark this day with pomp and colour to celebrate our older citizens on their special day.

INSIDE:

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- The Gender Dimension of Care and HIV/AIDS
- Fundraising Dinner

Mainstreaming Rights Issues of Older People into Legal Work



There is a need to promote the protection of older people's rights to prevent various abuses meted out against them

Rapid social change has greatly undermined the respect and support of older people by society. In addition, due to HIV/AIDS, globalisation, recessions and other factors, new burdens have been placed on older people making them even more impoverished and vulnerable to increased abuse of their rights. Many African countries lack relevant policies to protect older people or address their issues. Where these exist, government commitment to their implementation remains gravely inadequate. It therefore remains the responsibility of legal aid institutions, human rights lawyers, bar associations and older people's organisations to push for the establishment of such policies and to ensure government commitment to them.

During a workshop organised by Helpage International Africa Regional Development Centre, it emerged that even within the current legal and constitutional frameworks, there are bases upon which legal aid institutions, human rights lawyers, bar associations and older people's organisations can protect and further the rights of older people. The challenge then remains the mainstreaming of older people's issues into the agendas and activities of these organisations.

The workshop set out to explore ways of creating functional linkages and coalitions between the organisations present and to promote the protection of older people's rights through international human rights advocacy and to *Continued on page 5*

HIV/AIDS: Strategies Exclude Older People

The effects of HIV/AIDS on all sections of the society are immense. Despite the critical role older people play in the care of the sick and orphans, very little has been done to explore and address the pandemic's effects on them.

According to UNAIDS, 6,000 children around the world lose one or both their parents to AIDS daily. More than 90% of these children are in Africa. In 2002, 34 million children in sub-Saharan Africa were orphaned, one-third of them due to AIDS. It is estimated that by 2010, their number will reach 42 million (USAID, 2002). It is also estimated that more than five million grandparents are taking care of orphaned grandchildren.

Statistics such as these are commonly quoted and used to inform the HIV/AIDS work of governments, international agencies, NGOs and the media. However, despite the enormous amount of information collected and the resources directed towards understanding and dealing with the pandemic, the impact of HIV/AIDS on older people and the roles they play in its management almost always go unrecognised.

Attention is often paid to those 49 years and below in efforts to educate the public, primarily because of the assumption that older people are not sexually active and hence do not get infected. This exclusion has a huge impact on efforts to mitigate the pandemic. For example, lack of knowledge means that older people who are the main carers of the sick misunderstand the causes of HIV/AIDS, leading them to undertake an expensive but vain search for a cure. An older woman in Kenya shared her experience: "I sold all my land trying to buy medicine for my daughter.... She died in 1996 and now I am without my child and without land."

In many cases, older people shoulder the responsibility of caring for their children when they become ill, providing physical, economic and social support. The greater the care needs, the less the time available for older people to participate in income generating or social activities. Mr Tavengwa Nhongo, the HelpAge International Regional Representative says, "older people, because of their

ignorance about the disease, will run from one traditional healer to another trying to find a cure. They will sell all their wealth, possessions and strip themselves economically naked. At the end of all this, their reward is the burden they face in caring for the orphans - feeding for them, providing food, clothing and school fees". An older woman from Botswana caring for her adult son suffering from AIDS shared her experience, "... I cannot go to funerals or weddings, not even to church because I have to be with him all the time, or most of the time... I can't even go to the fields to plough...".

To assess the extent of older people's inclusion in HIV/AIDS prevention and control campaigns, newspaper articles in the Kenyan East African Standard and the Daily Nation newspapers for April and May 2003 were reviewed. 18 feature and news items appeared in both papers. Whilst most of them focused on the launch of strategies and showed the Kenya Government's policy and priority focus in the fight against HIV/AIDS, some of the articles mentioned some special groups as having been affected by the scourge. There was mention of the army, teachers, the blind, the youth and the fact that more women are affected than men. One of the articles mentioned that there was 90% awareness of the disease among men and women between the ages of 15 and 49. No mention was made of older persons in any of the articles or news items, signifying their exclusion in attempts to deal with the pandemic. This is an indication of the very limited recognition of the extent to which HIV/AIDS is impacting on older people.

Similarly a recent exercise carried out in Zimbabwe to assess the relevance, appropriateness and accessibility of HIV/AIDS information to older people, revealed very significant gaps that need to be addressed if all efforts to contain and manage the pandemic are to be achieved.

Several posters and leaflets produced by the Ministry of Health and Child Welfare, National AIDS Council and other NGOs in Zimbabwe were analysed to assess the extent to which they address the need for information among older people. The key issues that

emerged were:

- Most of the posters depict urban set-ups, hence they tend to imply that HIV/AIDS only affects those in urban areas.
- Most of the publications were written in English, hence do not consider those who are not familiar with or fluent in the language.
- The publications portray the images of younger people. Older people are not given consideration as an at-risk group or as a group that plays a major role in the management of the pandemic.
- The design of the publications assumes that all audiences are literate, and do not consider those who cannot read or write. For example, the images used are too complicated.
- Older people said they look at the visual images alongside the writings and make assumptions of what the message is when they do not understand the writing. In some cases however, the visual images do not reflect the written message causing the message to be misunderstood.
- Most of the publications are not culturally sensitive and hence do not attract the attention of older people.
- None of the publications analysed recognised the caring role of older people, an evidence of the lack of awareness about the impact of HIV/AIDS on older people and the role they play.

Overall, there are major gaps in the way current HIV/AIDS policies, strategies and programmes are targeting older people. Several countries, having declared HIV/AIDS national disasters, have set up bodies to formulate national policies and strategies and spearhead the implementation of relevant programmes. Most of these strategies have excluded the vital role older people play in this era of HIV/AIDS.

There is clearly a need to do more work with the media, policy formulators and programme implementers to raise awareness on the need to include older people in strategies to combat the disease. ■

The Gender Dimension of Care and HIV/AIDS

In 2002, UNIFEM funded a study on the gender dimension of care and HIV/AIDS in the horn of Africa and East Africa (Eritrea, Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya). The study has confirmed that as a young girl or a middle aged or older woman in Africa, one cannot escape the caring role in this age of HIV/AIDS. This role involves nutrition, health and social support as a social obligation.

In all the four countries where the study was conducted, men owned and controlled major resources such as food, land, finances, livestock, labor, family income and education and were key decision-makers in the use of these resources. Women had limited access and control over household goods, food and small livestock such as poultry. They were found to be vulnerable to abuse, and in some cases they had to use sex as a tool to stay in some form of business. In Kenya for example, they had to trade sex for fish from the fishermen.

In all the four countries, 70 to 91% of the women were the predominant care providers for people living with AIDS (PLWAs), with the burden increasingly falling on the girl child and the older women. Girls drop out of school to raise their younger siblings and care for their sickly parents. In Busia, Kenya, girls are married off young to help care for the siblings of the teenage boys who marry them. The community condones this practice causing girls to get locked in a poverty trap.

The route to care seeking in Eritrea entails initial care by sisters, brothers and parents. PLWAs are highly stigmatised when the symptoms they exhibit are associated with HIV/AIDS. Family care is therefore reduced and the patient isolated within the household. If the sick person is a woman, her mother (an older woman) is either brought in to give care or she is taken home and put under her mother's care. When a man is sick, all

the women and the girl child take the responsibility of caring for him in addition to his mother since he is the breadwinner.

In Ethiopia, able family members provide the care needed for a sick person. However, over time the older woman is brought in to take up the care role when the rest of the family experience 'burn out' and family resources have been depleted. She is subjected to extreme poverty as she is forced to use her meagre resources to provide the necessary care.

Older people are exposed to infection during the time of caring for PLWAs. The study found that the main care aspects identified by more than 50% of the people include nutrition, love, treatment of opportunistic infections, and psychological and financial support.

Health and nutrition were found to be of primary concern at household level and so affect older people who are the

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Refugees International Japan in Sierra Leone



Dolline Busolo and Jane Cooke chat with Madame Mojamah Amara

HelpAge International Regional Nutritionist, Dolline Busolo, and the Refugees International Japan Representative, Jane Cooke, confer with one of the emergency programme beneficiaries, Madam Mojamah Amara. The older woman had sold cotton fabric to raise capital to enable her to buy and sell traditional medicines

at the Kenema Market. Slowly she has rebuilt the business she had lost during the war. Traditional medicine is very popular in Kenema as it is cheaper than modern medicine. Madam Amara now makes enough money to meet her own needs and is able to care for her grandchild who is still in school. ■

Gender Dimension

main carers. The quality of care offered is determined by availability of resources, the attitude of the care givers and access to food and other commodities.

Given this scenario, HIV/AIDS care intervention programmes must be gender responsive as women play an important role in the management of the pandemic. Of immediate concern is how to address the issue of women who are over 70 years and who give care to PLWAs when they themselves need it. Also needing attention is the girl child who must start her care role at a tender age at the risk of dropping out of school and being married off to a teenage boy to help raise his siblings.

The report makes the following recommendations about older people:

- Older people and young girls need to be targeted in the provision of gloves, cotton wool, and disinfectant.
- The poverty of older people caring for PLWAs and AIDS orphans needs to be addressed.
- The accessibility of food and health care to carers should be ensured through mobile clinics.

These findings confirm another study undertaken by James Ntozi in 1997* in the Kabale Mbale, Masaka, Iganga, Mbarara and Hoima districts of Uganda where those caring for AIDS patients were reported to be parents of the sick. Most of the primary carers were found to be mothers of the sick. The reason given for this was that women were usually at home while the men were out working. In the case of AIDS and related diseases, the role of a parent as a carer is more prominent than it is for patients with other diseases because they are more sympathetic to their children than anybody else.

The study therefore observed that care roles are predominantly for the women, and progressively move from the adult woman to the girl child and finally to the older women. The full report is available as "Assessment of the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS care, perceptions, policies, and practices in East and the Horn of Africa."

* The article is entitled *AIDS Morbidity and the Role of the Family in Patient Care in Uganda* and was published in the *Health Transition Reviews*, in the supplement to Volume 7 of 1997, 1-22.

Fundraising Dinner to Support an Older People's Programme



Mrs Makara, 82-years old, puts her best foot forward at the dinner dance

Maseru Women's Senior Citizens Association (MWSCA), one of HelpAge International's newest members from Lesotho, held a unique fundraising dinner, dance and fashion show on February 28th.

Older persons modelled clothes provided by Rhulani Africa Personality, a Johannesburg-based fashion house. Other entertainment included a senior citizens' parade, music, and dances. The event was graced by the Honourable Minister for Gender, Youth and Sports, the Government Secretary and his wife, members and friends of the Association, members of the diplomatic corps, and representatives from international organisations.

Funds granted by HelpAge International were used to organise the event, including undertaking extensive advertising through posters, radio, television, and a street banner.

Donations were received from:

- The Minister for Gender, Youth and Sports gave a cash donation of 200 Maluti

- University of Lesotho, which advised on the printing of the posters.
- Epic Printers, who printed the tickets for free
- Rhulani Africa Personality, which not only organised the fashion show, but also donated prizes for the raffle
- Lesotho National Development Corporation who donated their table to 10 older people who were not able to purchase tickets for the event
- The Chinese Embassy, Lesotho TZU CHI Relief Association, WHO, Nedbank and Dr. M. Molotsi also supported the event by buying 10 tickets each.

The money raised will be used to enable the Association to meet some of the anticipated costs of renovating an office bestowed on it by the Government through the Prime Minister. The funds will also go towards purchasing office equipment, meeting running costs, maintenance of the Association vehicle and paying the driver's salary. Some of the money will be used to organise the next fundraising event.

Mainstreaming Rights Issues of Older People

raise awareness of ageing issues among human rights institutions. It also provided an opportunity to share HelpAge International's experiences and perspectives on ageing.

It is necessary to mainstream older people's issues into the programmes and policies of legal aid and human rights organisations. The media is also an important partner in raising awareness on key issues. During the workshop, older people's organisations were challenged to scale up community paralegal training with a view to equipping community members, not only as, paralegal advisors on older people's rights, but also as trainers who in turn train more older people on their rights. Participants observed that justice is an expensive commodity in Africa because of lack of a legal framework and delays within the judicial system. The execution of the judicial processes takes time too. Consequently, the issue of specifically targeting legal aid towards older people whose rights are being violated was also raised. It was also observed that laws alone are not sufficient in remedying rights violations of older persons; they must work together with the civil society and the media to ensure awareness of and accessibility to those laws for older people. Unless older people are aware of those laws and can access them, these will not have an impact on their lives.

Participants admitted that within their own organisations, they had not considered older people's rights as a priority issue. They however, pledged to change that.

Several recommendations were made:

Select papers available

- Challenges Facing Older Women in South Africa by Thembi Mapetla, Programme Manager, HelpAge International
- Meeting the Challenges: Where do we go from here? – Overview of the Situation of Older People in Africa by Tavengwa Nhongo, Regional Representative, HelpAge International Africa Regional Development Centre
- Research Agenda on Ageing: Africa's Priorities in the 21st Century by Tavengwa Nhongo, Regional Representative, HelpAge International Africa Regional Development Centre
- Children's Rights and the Rights of Older Persons: Inter-linkages in the Era of HIV/AIDS by Karen Peachey, Regional Programme Manager, HelpAge International, Africa Regional Development Centre

- Training of healthcare workers should include geriatric training and healthcare services should include home-based care for bed-ridden older people. It was also felt that trainee healthcare workers can go out to the older people's houses and attend to them as part of their training.
- Creation of older people friendly courts would assist them to get better access to legal services. However, while the idea of having older people's courts similar to the children's courts currently in existence is an attractive one, it has enormous challenges. Thus improving the current court systems would be more practical. This would include availing interpreters, cultivating an informal and non-intimidating court environment, setting up local courts to minimise physical distances that older people would have to walk to access them (transport is a major problem in the rural areas), etc.
- The judiciary should be sensitised on the issues and situation of older people.
- Legal services may be currently available but they are not accessible for older people. Human rights organisations and legal aid organisations should mainstream the issues of older people into their activities. Rather than focusing on urban areas, civil society should refocus services to the grassroots rural areas where the majority of population resides. This would in turn ensure greater access to their services by older people most of whom dwell in the rural areas.

- Information on entitlements, rights and services should be made available to older people. For example, in Zambia, older people over 60 years of age are entitled to free medical services in public institutions but older people are not aware of this right.

- Older people's organisations, bar associations, legal aid organisations and human rights organisations should network for the purpose of information exchange and mutual support and encouragement. Networking is critical for impact and efficiency of efforts.

- Older people and human rights organisations should take advantage of existing instruments to raise the profile of older people's issues.

- As voters, older people and community members should be encouraged to lobby their members of parliament and representatives to pass policies and legislation that will further the rights of older people.

- The civil society should strengthen and support coping mechanisms of older people.

The workshop brought together representatives from legal aid institutions, human rights lawyers, bar associations and older people's organizations from Ghana, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Kenya, Swaziland, Uganda, Tanzania, Lesotho and South Africa.

The full workshop report is available from *HelpAge International, Africa Regional Development Centre*

Organisational Profile

Current Evangelism Ministries Outreach Sierra Leone (CEM)



CEM runs various programmes that benefit older men and women in Sierra Leone

Background

Current Evangelism Ministries (CEM) Outreach Sierra Leone was established in 1992 by Rev Augustine Lansana and his wife. This was at the height of the armed conflict in Sierra Leone. CEM is a consortium of about 56 indigenous churches, grassroots agencies and Christian-based groups dedicated to fighting absolute poverty. The membership is therefore both faith- and non-faith based. Today, the organisation continues to attract organisations to its membership to undertake development work and provide assistance to the socially and economically disadvantaged through implementation of projects, networking and capacity building.

CEM presently has widened its focus to include peace building, care for older persons, health, and strengthening of justice in a country that is just recovering from one of the most devastating civil conflicts in Africa.

A training centre has been built in Pendembu in the Upper Bambara chiefdom in the Kailahun District to train children affected by the war. Training includes tailoring and carpentry. CEM has also undertaken HIV/AIDS prevention and control work in Upper Bambara, Mandu and

DIA chiefdoms. Efforts are underway to advocate for the respect of human rights, peace building and conflict resolution and management. CEM has ensured that older persons are targeted in this process.

CEM gets support from various international donors. In addition, CEM recently held a concert and organised a car wash day to raise funds for its programmes. These events also provided an opportunity to raise its profile and to highlight issues of older people. Several organisations made financial pledges to support the organisation.

Organisational Structure

The General Assembly is the supreme organ of the organisation and its decision in any matter is final. It is headed by a Chairman who is elected every three years. A board of trustees is in place to handle financial matters and administer funds, and is headed by a chairman, who must be an accredited financial expert. The membership of the Board of Trustees consists of not more than 15 persons. The Executive Committee/Board of Management is appointed by the Board of Trustees to implement organisational policies. The National Secretariat and the regional offices run the organisation on a day-to-day basis.

Mission Statement

"To denounce evil in our society and work for justice for all, to foster good relationships among communities by engaging in development activities of diverse nature, to listen to the hurt and work and heal".

Objectives

CEM was established to fulfill the following objectives:

- Evangelism, leadership training and establishing churches
- Re-integration into society of vulnerable groups
- To offer support in agricultural activities
- Rehabilitation of community infrastructure
- Restoration of essential services
- Job creation through public works
- Small enterprise promotion and vocational training schemes
- Promotion of reconciliation of community members
- Capacity building of other organisations and individuals in the above areas

Work with Older People

CEM has been working with almost 200 vulnerable older persons in the Ngogowa Chiefdom, Kenema District. The organisation is also working with

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300 vulnerable older people on a project to support the rehabilitation of disadvantaged older people in post-war Sierra Leone in Upper Bambara Chiefdom in the Kailahun District.

CEM also provides emergency support to vulnerable older people in Kenema by distributing food and other basic necessities to vulnerable older people. Regular visits are made and food distributed regularly. Issues of older people have been raised at meetings with other agencies in Kenema and Freetown.

The organisation is now embarking on rehabilitation work with disadvantaged older people who are returning to their home areas in post-war Sierra Leone. A regional sub-office has been established in Pendembu to co-ordinate this project effectively. Five hundred older people in the Upper Bambara Chiefdom, Kailahun District have been registered. Community and individual farms have been cleared and are ready for planting. Seeds and tools are now being distributed. ■

Farewell...

To Mr. John Kyakulaga, the immediate former Chief Executive of Uganda Reach the Aged Association, a member organisation of HelpAge International.

Welcome...

HelpAge International would like to welcome into associate membership two organisations Maseru Women Senior Citizens Association from Lesotho (see page 4), and Current Evangelism Ministries (CEM) from Sierra Leone (see page 6).

Welcome also to Esther Zana who has joined HelpAge Zimbabwe as the new Senior Project Officer; to Johnson Awuor and Eric Boakye Peasah who have joined HelpAge Kenya and HelpAge Ghana respectively as project officers - to Mr. Asare Danquah and Ms. Rose Amele Saka who have joined HelpAge Ghana as Accounts Officer and Officer-In-charge of the Day Centre respectively.

Happy Birthday...

To Muthande Society for the Aged (MUSA), a HelpAge International member organisation in South Africa, on celebrating its 21st anniversary since its inception.

Training Course on Ageing in Africa Gains Popularity

The *Ageing in Africa* course held in March was the fourth run so far by HelpAge International, Africa Regional Development Centre. It was by far the most popular and well attended, attracting friends and colleagues from a cross section of NGOs from all over the world. Demand for it continues to grow. Almost 100% of the attendants were paying participants. To keep the numbers at a manageable level, we were forced to advise some applicants to consider the next course in August.

Among the participants were two older women and an older man who were able to share their experiences on ageing with other participants. In appreciation to HelpAge International for sponsoring her attendance in part, 73-year old Athalia Ngele from Ratamane Service Centre in South Africa wrote the following poem.

Appreciation by Athalia Ngele

HelpAge International rang a bell and blew a trumpet which sounded far and

wide, inviting representatives of organisations of older persons, a target for making happy in their golden years. The course has been a great success. 21 countries heard the sound and wasted no time.

Here we are.

HelpAge International is like a willow tree growing on the banks of a river; Its branches hanging in the water when blown by a refreshing cool and mild wind; The green grass protecting the roots. When the sun sets the white beautiful birds fly from all angles, To come for rest after a long busy day. You hear the birds singing with different sounds and melodies expressing satisfaction and joy. The tree will remain evergreen; Birds will ever enjoy rest and peace of soul. These are older persons. With HelpAge International, deep roots in the soil remain green, Your branches must not dry, The stream must go on flowing. Thank you for this course. We enjoyed it. Going back home is a blessing.

We are proud of you, Keep it up.

2003 Schools' Drawing Competition Reminder!

Please remember that the six winning drawings from each participating country should be forwarded to the ARDC by 31st August 2003.

Letters: Ageing in Africa Receives Accolades

Comment from HelpAge Ghana: We distribute the newsletter mainly to our day centres, some zones, Government ministries and partners. HelpAge Ghana operates in 20 zones in Accra and works with over 15 other organisations outside Accra. Ageing in Africa therefore goes a long way in achieving our objective of raising awareness on ageing issues in Africa.

Comment from HelpAge Kenya: We borrow ideas from the newsletter in our daily work, and we are also able to compare notes on what goes on in other countries. We utilise the newsletter as a tool for raising awareness about issues affecting older persons during workshops and meetings with people who have an interest on older people's issues. We also share the information with our staff, Board Members, our grassroot implementors and other partners that we collaborate with. HelpAge Kenya also distributes it to the Ministry of Gender, Sports, Culture and Social Services, the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, and other government offices.

Comment from Uganda Reach the Aged Association: We distribute the Ageing in Africa newsletter to the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, URAA member organisations, Board members and other organisations and individuals upon request.

New Publications



- Manuel de formation sur le vieillissement en Afrique (Cost: US\$ 10 excluding postage)



- Envelhecimento em Africa: Sumário



- Revised publications list



- African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing (book and summary leaflet)

Forthcoming Events



Training Course on Ageing in Africa

A training course on ageing in Africa is slated for 4th to 8th August in Nairobi, Kenya. The course is targeted at social and project workers,

volunteers, and government employees. It also provides practical information about older people's needs to academicians and researchers on ageing issues. All are welcome to register. A fee of US\$ 400 is chargeable. This covers accommodation and course materials. Those not requiring accommodation will pay US\$150. Participants are expected to meet their own costs of travel, medical and travel insurance, and any other incidental expenses.

Regional HIV/AIDS Workshop

The workshop will take place from 17th to 19th September 2003 in Nairobi, Kenya. It will review existing evidence regarding the role of older women and men as carers of orphans and vulnerable children affected by AIDS. The workshop will also map out strategies to offer effective support mechanisms for older people, orphans and vulnerable children. It will involve organisations concerned with issues of these three groups, AIDS control councils, government representatives, and donor agencies. Older people and AIDS orphans will be invited to give their testimonies.

The National Council for Persons with Physical Disabilities in South Africa (NCPDSA), in partnership with the National Departments of Health and Social Development, will host The Renaissance in African Disability conference. This will be held from 30th September to 3rd October 2003 at the Durban International Conference Centre. For more information please contact;

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UN Day for Older People

The UN Day for Older People comes up on 1st October. This year's theme is Older People: New Power for Development. Let's all work towards marking this day with pomp and colour to celebrate older men and women.

Quotable Quotes

"You are never too old to learn. For me, it was like stepping from darkness into the light,"

Mrs Mchunu, 82 years, a literacy programme participant from Durban, South Africa.

HelpAge International

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The next edition of Ageing in Africa will be published in September 2003.

Please send articles by 1st August 2003