

Editorial

Welcome to this issue of Ageing in Africa.

In times of disasters and emergencies, older people are usually the last to receive any form of assistance. Humanitarian organisations mainly focus their attention on younger age groups such as pregnant and lactating mothers and children. The negative attitude towards ageing sees older people sidelined as resources are channelled towards "more needy cases".

In its own way, Ubaa, a group in a refugee camp in Kenya, shows that older people in emergency situations can turn around their disadvantaged status. Read how 4000 empty bags benefited families whose only hope of survival was a few widowed older women.

We feature a project in Tanzania that set out to empower older women and widows to challenge violations of their rights – these include disinheritance and physical abuse upon being accused of practising witchcraft. The project has also benefited younger widows who can now assert their right not to be inherited when their husbands pass away. As part of the Regional Rights programme, seven paralegals graduated from a training course offered by Muthande Society for the Aged in South Africa. The graduates will use their new skills to take up cases of violations of the rights of older people.

As the 2004/2005 schools drawing competition gets underway, the Schools Programme in Zimbabwe has so far had a successful year. It has now spread to the Mutare area in an on-going expansion plan.

These and other stories feature in this issue. Happy reading!

INSIDE:

- Changes in HAI Governance
- Paralegal Training: A way of Securing Older People's Rights
- Older People in Emergencies

Widowhood and Inheritance in Tanzania



The project is assisting young and older widows to stand up for their rights

Older women face double discrimination by virtue of their age and their sex. The disadvantaged position of older women in Tanzania is further exacerbated by traditional practices that dictate issues to do with widowhood and inheritance.

The older woman whose husband is still alive enjoys relative safety from harassment suffered at the hands of society. Widowhood often brings about profound changes in her status, stability and security. Older widows are particularly susceptible to attacks, recrimination and various forms of abuses. They are denied their right to own the property left by their deceased husbands. This is more marked in the rural areas where women are generally regarded as the property of their husbands' clans and remain voiceless even when the homes and property they shared with their deceased spouses are taken away from them.

A Voice for Older Widows

The issue of widowhood and inheritance is often only looked at from a gender and not from an age perspective, despite the existence of evidence that older women suffer severely as they are more vulnerable due to their age. Younger widows may be more educated and can stand up for their rights. Not so for the older woman who is usually illiterate and neither knows her rights, nor the channels to follow to seek redress when these are trampled upon. It was on this premise that the Tanzania Widowhood and Inheritance project in Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, Iringa and Dodoma districts was designed.

Under the Sawata Karagwe Older People's Programme, a civic education component was introduced within a community-based project from 1996 to 2000. Paralegal training was offered to older people to

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Background to the Network

HelpAge International (HAI) is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in the quality of their lives.

The Secretariat consists of a Head Office in London, five Regional Development Centres (RDCs), four Country Development Programmes (CDPs) and two smaller 'single project' country programmes. HAI was founded in 1983 and has been a membership organisation with over 63 organisations in its network. Four categories of members were recognised under the previous structure: Full, Associate, Institutional and Individual.

A Need for Change

Over the years, HAI has begun working with organisations who are not members of its network and in a much broader range of ways which includes but is not limited to the support of the network. Currently, only a minority of organisations in the network (the Full members) participate in HAI's

governance, an arrangement that has needed addressing in the light of the many other organisations now involved in HAI's work. The need to bring on board these other partners in HAI's planning has necessitated the new changes in its governance.

Specific Changes to HAI's Governance

- HAI's Memorandum and Articles of Association will be amended to enable organisations affiliated to HAI to be involved in its governance while recognising the global scope of the network.
- HAI will no longer be constituted as a membership organisation. All Full and Associate member organisations will be eligible to become Affiliates under rules established by the Board.
- All Affiliates can participate in HAI's governance process to address the 'exclusion' felt by Associate members who, under the current structure, could not be involved.

- Affiliates will hold six seats on the Board in line with the current structure.
- All Affiliates will be allowed to nominate candidates to serve on the Board, although Affiliates will no longer have the right to select these candidates by election.
- Representatives of Affiliates would be eligible to serve for three terms each of three years versus the current limit of two terms each of three years.

Affiliation is open to any bona fide organisation at international, regional, national or local level involved in issues of individual or population ageing and has evident capacity in advocacy, research, policy, developmental, capacity building, programmatic or other work with and for older people.

Under this new arrangement, it is expected that the number of organisations that HAI will work with will increase, translating into greater benefits for more older persons in developing countries. ■

Paralegal Training: A Way of Ensuring Older People's Rights

The Regional Rights Programme at HelpAge International Africa Regional Development Centre has provided support to member and partner organisations to take up cases of violations of older people's rights. Both customary and statutory laws that perpetuate these violations are challenged in court.

Under this programme, Muthande Society for the Aged (MUSA), a HelpAge International affiliate organisation, has taken up several cases. One of the beneficiaries of the programme has been Mr D. Silva, an older Mozambican who migrated to South Africa over 30 years ago. He had worked without acquiring the necessary documents that would have enabled him to claim his state pension. Having lost track of his family in Mozambique, going back to his home country was not an option. An attempt had therefore to be made to acquire a certificate of citizenship. A grant by HelpAge International under the Rights Programme and lobbying by MUSA staff quickened the process of acquiring a

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The graduates will undertake advocacy for people's rights.

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Paralegal Training: A Way of Ensuring Older People's Rights

South African ID for Mr Silva, which allowed him to start receiving his state pension of 700 rand per month. The money goes towards paying his boarding and lodging fees at a home for older people.

Mrs Vuma's case is an example of community members taking advantage of aged persons who are both vulnerable and illiterate. The older woman was dispossessed of a house she had lived in for years by an unscrupulous neighbour who made her sign papers she could not read. The papers transferred ownership of

the house to the neighbour without Mrs Vuma's knowledge. With the help of MUSA paralegals and the University of Natal's Law clinic, the older woman is now fighting for ownership to be reverted to her. So far, the case has been successful in stopping her eviction by the neighbour.

To further strengthen the Society's work in advocating older people's rights, MUSA trained seven paralegals through Community Law and Rural Development, an affiliate of the University of Natal's Faculty of Law. The trainees were caregivers who tend to the needs of older

people in their homes, taking them to pension pay points to assist them to access their money and making any follow-ups of their claims. MUSA recently conferred diplomas in paralegal studies to the seven, three of whom are MUSA staff members. They are already providing assistance to members of the community. HelpAge International congratulates the seven graduates. Viva Muthande!!!

For more information on the legal challenges work, please write to HelpAge International Africa Regional Development Centre ■

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Widowhood and Inheritance in Tanzania

enable them to offer advice and support to their peers about their rights. The model was used again in the Sukumaland Older People's Programme in Magu District from 2000 to 2003. The pressing issues for which advice was mostly sought were related to inheritance, access to land and family disputes.

Initial assessments before the project began indicated that older people were unable to access locally available information and advice on possible courses of action when abuse occurred. They were also fearful of voicing their problems at an official level in case of retaliation and could not afford legal representation although they desired to access it. Older women were unable to raise their issues in the largely male-dominated local court system and therefore lacked a forum for their problems to be heard.

Benefits of the Project

Paralegal support avails someone to listen, clarify, draw out options, and to advise on possible alternatives for the affected person to follow. These options may include taking the issue to village elders or taking the matter to court. Such interventions have resulted in some widows reclaiming property that had hitherto been taken away forcefully by other community members.

A recent project evaluation exercise was undertaken and revealed a number of impacts from the project:

- An increased awareness among older people about their rights and sources of relevant legal support and information. It demonstrated to the community

problems related to widowhood and inheritance and exhibited quite clearly that older people can be a force of change if provided with the opportunity and resources. The profile and standing of older people in the community, particularly older women, has been raised, earning them greater respect from other members.

- Community ownership of the project, as cases are now being solved with or without HelpAge's intervention since older people now have the skills and knowledge of where they can get support. Older people from adjacent communities have requested that similar projects be implemented in their areas, providing further impetus to an expansion of the project outside the areas currently covered, thus giving it a longer lease of life.

- Support by local leaders has helped to rally the community behind the project, resulting in greater appreciation of the role and potential of older people. Their involvement has also ensured that nobody is victimised after reporting abuse cases.

- Organisations that hitherto did not consider older people are now mainstreaming ageing into their work. This translates into greater benefits for older people as there are now more organisations looking into their issues.

- Other groups in addition to older people themselves are benefiting from the project. Young widows are seeking paralegal advice from older people who have undergone training under this

programme. Whole communities in areas where the project is running have also benefited as older paralegals are using skills acquired to solve other cases such as matrimonial disputes and land boundary issues between neighbours, among others.

- There are now fewer cases going to local courts as most of these are being solved at the local level under the guidance of older people. In this way, older men and women are reclaiming their traditional positions as advisors of other community members.

The project, implemented as part of the Africa Rights Programme in partnership with Sawata and Women Legal Aid Centre, aimed at building an enabling society that acknowledges the rights of older women in regard to widowhood and inheritance. The project also sought to increase knowledge and understanding of the implications of widowhood and inheritance issues on older women in Tanzania.

The evaluation exercise recommended that future stages of the programme incorporate an income generation component, to provide older people with a means of livelihood. Periodic and more frequent support visits by an expert legal practitioner are also recommended to help promote more access to justice by aggrieved older people and also build the capacity of trained paralegals.

For more information contact HelpAge International Tanzania, PO Box 9846 Dar es Salaam Tanzania; Tel 255-2-2700169; Fax 255-2-2775894; Email: haitz@africaonline.co.tz ■

Older People in Emergencies: A Forgotten Group



An older woman is assisted to get health care at the mobile clinic in Ahero

While older people are commonly accepted as being a vulnerable or potentially vulnerable group, very little is done by humanitarian organisations to meet their particular needs during crises. Interventions often discriminate against them and, on occasion, undermine their capacity to support themselves.

Humanitarian organisations should ensure that older people have equal access to vital services. Ensuring equal access for them relies on making service providers more aware of the particular problems and obstacles they face.

The stated aim of most humanitarian organisations is to provide emergency relief to whole communities in crisis, while targeting the most vulnerable. Research by HelpAge International shows that older people are often not considered. Many of them report that during crises, they had problems accessing relief aid and were excluded from support with economic and social recovery. This is despite the crucial role they play in emergencies and the contributions they make. For example, they deny themselves to ensure children under their care do not lack food and other basic necessities.

The invisibility of older people and their consequent marginalisation and exclusion from interventions in crises, results from

the negative attitudes people have towards ageing. This results from lack of public awareness and information about their contributions, circumstances, issues or needs.

HelpAge International has therefore found it crucial to engage in emergency work to meet the specific needs of older people. This is in light of their vulnerability in times of calamities, and also because they may have children and other younger family members under their care whose needs they may not be able to meet without assistance.

Case Study: The Ahero Floods

Ahero, in the Nyanza Province of Kenya, is a flat area prone to floods during the heavy rains between March and June. In 2003, excessive flooding was experienced. A number of relief organisations turned out to assist the flood victims. However, as is usually the case, these organisations did not target the specific needs of the aged. Older people were severely affected, many of whom were frail due to their advanced age and therefore highly vulnerable to the vagaries of weather.

HelpAge Kenya in collaboration with a local NGO (Joot Social Services) undertook a needs assessment to establish the vulnerability of older people during the rainy season. The following was established:

- i. A number of older people had an average of five grandchildren under their care, most of them AIDS orphans, whose needs were overwhelming under the circumstances.
- ii. The floodwaters destroyed their homes, pushing them and their dependants to higher grounds to camps or makeshift shelters in schools and churches.
- iii. There was a need for health care (due to an outbreak of malaria and other water-borne illnesses such as diarrhoea, stomach upsets, typhoid and cholera) and sanitation.
- iv. Food and clean water were also lacking.

The Jersey Overseas Aid Committee provided funding to support agricultural rehabilitation and purchase of non-food relief items. Shortly after, the community moved back to rebuild their lives.

Certified seeds of beans, maize, vegetables and sorghum were distributed to 600 older people. They also received fertiliser to boost yields of the seeds that were planted. In addition, each person received two chickens, which have since multiplied and are laying eggs.

As household goods were swept away by water, two blankets, two mosquito nets to

prevent malaria and two cans for storing clean water were issued. The blankets and nets were for sharing between the older people and their grandchildren.

Drugs were purchased to meet the health needs of affected older people for six months. A nurse was available three days a week to attend to the sick and monitor their progress in a mobile clinic. A total of 960 older people were treated and given medicine. Severe illnesses were directed to a referral centre.

Impact of the Emergency Work

The project had tremendous impact on older people. For instance, some seeds were planted to produce food for future consumption, while the surplus agricultural produce, eggs and chicks from the initial two chickens can also be sold for some income. Both the seeds and the chicken have a high nutritional content to ensure better health for older people.

Health centres generally tend to give preferential treatment to children and pregnant women, while sidelining older people, whom they view as a waste of medicine and their time. The mobile clinic therefore continues to benefit older people as it focuses on them. The clinic is also extending its reach to other members of the community in which the older people live.

The older beneficiaries have expressed their appreciation for the HelpAge emergency programme, since, for the first time, they were the main targets of a humanitarian operation.

"...We could not afford fertiliser due to poverty and our harvest was so little. We now hope to harvest like the rich people. We are now able to till bigger land, two farms for maize and beans and one for sorghum. In the past we used to mix all in one getting a little bit of each crop," says Roseline Obera, an 81 year old woman.

A group of older men and women had this to say: "With the water can we are able to fetch and store water for at least three days, now we do not have to go to the river every day".

Regina Omenda, who takes care of a 13 year-old granddaughter, said, "What I valued most was the blanket. I sleep with my grandchild Rose on the same bed and we shared an old blanket for so long. Thank you. We now use the new ones to cover ourselves and spread the old one to lie on".

**For more information on the Ahero Floods Project, contact HelpAge Kenya
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HelpAge Zimbabwe Expands its Schools Programme



Selection of winners' pictures in a past regional schools competition.

The Schools Programme run by HelpAge Zimbabwe (HAZ) is an annual activity and targets 1000 pupils to raise awareness on ageing. Seventeen schools participated this year.

HAZ officers meet with pupils at the schools at assembly time during which they highlight issues of older people.

The programme reached Mutare for the first time this year as part of the expansion programme to reach other towns. Four schools were visited - Chancellor Primary, Mutare Junior, Baring Primary and Hillcrest School.

The Zimbabwe programme is an extension of the Africa-wide awareness-raising programme run in schools in countries where HelpAge International has affiliate organisations. The aim of the programme is to raise awareness on the needs and situation of older people among children with the aim of bringing about a better understanding between these two generations.

Pupils are also given forms to fundraise through their parents and friends. The money goes towards meeting the various needs of older people. Mutare Junior raised the largest amount of money from the exercise. HelpAge Zimbabwe t-shirts were distributed to pupils at each school visited.

To appreciate and give back to the community, HAZ will assist 10 children in the province, who are under the care of less privileged older people. They will receive school uniforms and fees for a year. This will enhance HAZ presence in Manicaland and support the opening of the Mutare Chapter, which is now at an advanced stage.

**For more information contact
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Organisational Profile

The Mauritius Family Planning Association (MFPA)



A past HelpAge International regional meeting hosted by MFPA

The Association was established in 1957 to offer family planning information and services. Its founders were committed to the cause of social and economic advancement and aimed at reducing the negative impact the growing population was having on the country's development.

The Association is a member of the HelpAge International network and also an Associate Member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (Africa Region). It opened its first clinic in 1958 in Piton, a small village in the north of Mauritius. A second clinic was opened in Bell Village in 1963.

MFPA complements the efforts of the government's Family Planning Division and has recently reoriented its programmes and activities to offer comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and care.

Vision

The Association's vision is to promote access and rights to sexual and reproductive health for the improvement of the quality of life for all people in the Republic of Mauritius.

Mission

MFPA is at the forefront in the field of family planning, sexual and reproductive health and youth empowerment in Mauritius. It is committed to promote effective sexual and reproductive health care, defend the rights of the individual on all matters related to sexuality and strive to adopt and demonstrate innovative approaches and practices to cater for the unmet needs of all with an emphasis on adolescents, young adults and disadvantaged women and men (including older persons).

To achieve these aims MFPA adopts a life cycle approach and promotes effective advocacy, IEC, research, quality care and training strategies and maximises networking and partnerships with Government and other stakeholders for good governance, management practices and sustainability in all its operations.

Organisation Structure

The Association, headed by an Executive Director, has a strong volunteer base managed by a committee of 19 volunteers from different sectors (social, economic, medical, educational and legal) and includes a representative from the Ministry of Health. A small team of full time staff works in close collaboration with the volunteers to implement work in the three departments – Programmes, Finance & Administration and Research & Evaluation. There are also various sub-committees and other activities, among them a volunteer club for older persons (Senior Volunteers' Club).

Major Programmes and Activities

- Reproductive health of women and men, including the older ones
- Male involvement in sexual and reproductive health
- Women empowerment
- Offering quality service
- AIDS/STDs prevention campaigns
- Sexual and reproductive health for adolescents, the unmarried and other groups, including older people
- Campaigns against unsafe abortion
- Family planning

Work with Older People

The Association provides education among older people and other groups, para-legal training (which empowers older people to assert their rights) and organises relevant workshops and seminars. They are also equipped with peer counselling skills.

Medical services that benefit older persons are offered in MFPA's Family Health Clinic, Well-Women Clinic and Well-Men Clinic. These include lab tests, glucose and blood pressure checks, prostate checks, mammography services, among others. The Family Health Clinic also caters for menopausal women and older men with urinary tract infections. It provides hormone replacement therapy and care for those suffering from osteoporosis. A special clinic is operational for older persons and caters for sexual dysfunctional problems. It also provides Viagra and other drugs to older men.

MFPA was heavily involved in the development of policy recommendations for older people in Mauritius. The Mauritius draft policy is mapped closely to the Africa Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing, which MFPA used as a guide while it was still in draft form. Several other countries have taken Mauritius' example and are working on policies to look into the needs of their senior citizens.

The Association has initiated several income generating activities for older people such as offering training in flower arrangement and handicraft making. These items are then put on sale during exhibitions to enable the senior citizens to make some money from their work.

As part of its efforts to raise awareness about issues of older people, the

Association in 1999 undertook a survey to assess the situation of older people within the family in Mauritius. Such studies guide stakeholders in providing requisite services to meet the needs of older men and women. The findings of the study were utilized by the Government to develop a Policy Paper on the Old Aged in Mauritius.

Workshops are organised on various themes concerning older people such as the reproductive health of older women, security of older persons, etc. Other organisations of senior citizens, the government and parliamentarians are invited to these fora to sensitise them on older people's issues. Debates on ageing have been organised and have brought together student councils and the University of Mauritius.

Programmes to prepare men and women for retirement have also been run to enable them to make good use of their pensions and engage in productive activities that will ensure them of a livelihood after employment.

The Association also takes part in organising activities for the International Day of Older Persons marked worldwide on 1st October each year.

MFPA is a partner of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions and provides expertise in the development of specific policies and programmes for the promotion of the welfare of older persons.

Future Plans

- To reinforce networking with government ministries and other NGOs for the promotion of welfare of older people.
- To organise innovative programmes to sensitise the population on the need to support senior citizens.
- To advocate within Government circles for the formulation of a policy to address the problems faced by the older population in Mauritius.
- To advocate the integration of specialised geriatric care in primary health care services of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life.

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Tribute to SSCOP Founder



General Yousif Ahmed Yousif, founder member and Chairman of the Sudanese Society in Care of Older People (SSCOP) for nine years, passed away in December 2003; he was 69 years old. Gen. Yousif had a passion for older people and will be remembered for laying the foundation upon which SSCOP has continued to develop and work tirelessly for older people in Sudan.

By the time of his death, Gen. Yousif had co-founded the Sustainable Peace Forum Society with the M.O.B. Centre at Ahlia University. He participated in the Peace Building Program conferences under the auspices of African Renaissance and International Relationship Societies. He was also a board Member of Elmileik University College, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Khartoum International Primary School and Director of the National Rescue Authority of the Khatmia Sect and the Islamic Bank.

He leaves behind a widow, Awatif (aged 60) and six children – Ahmed (36), Safwan (34), Osama (32), Omayma (28), Yazeed (22) and Amira (13).

Welcome

Welcome to new staff in HelpAge International Sudan: Manal Abdel Aziem, the new Project Development Officer and Salah W. Tamba, the new Administrative Assistant

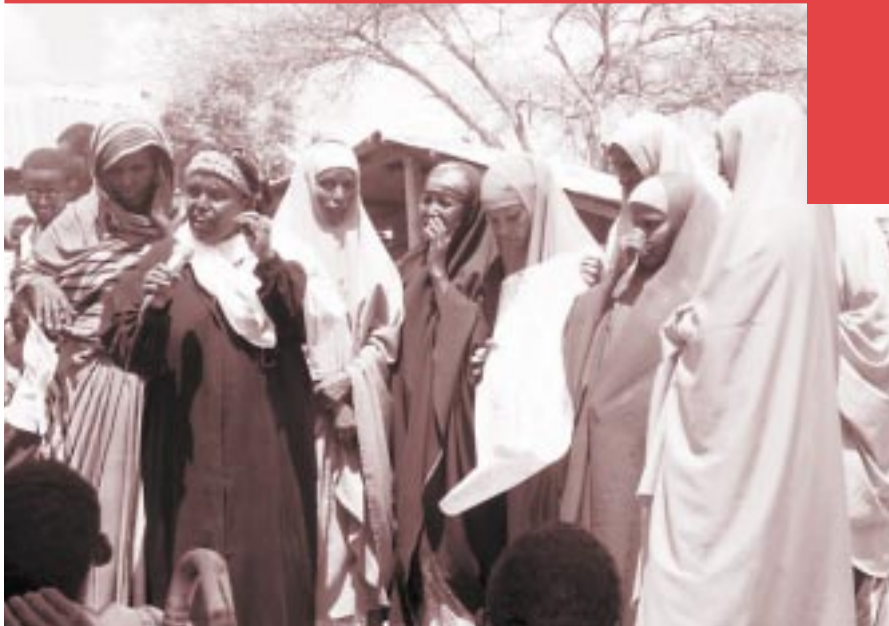
Welcome to Abdallah Mashausi, the new Finance Manager at HelpAge International Tanzania.

Announcement

Senior Citizens Council Change of Address

The office of the Senior Citizens Council, Mauritius has moved to a new address: 13th Floor, Sterling House, Lislet Geoffroy Street, Port Louis, Mauritius. The telephone number (230) 2113246 and the fax number (230) 2080907 remain the same.

4000 Bags of Hope



A group of women get together in a refugee camp

fate. They approached a development agency for support of a business idea and training.

Armed with their new entrepreneurial skills and 4000 empty bags donated by a food aid agency, Kusei and her group members constructed their first shop. *Ubaa* was born. They sold some of the bags to buy stock to sell. From the profits from this shop, scrupulously saved under Kusei's watchful eye, *Ubaa* was able to open a second shop. This growth has continued under the nurturing partnership of Kusei's inspiring leadership and unwavering support from agencies.

Kusei explains how the initiative has changed her life as an older disabled refugee woman: "I am now respected in the community. They look at me, not as an older useless person, not as a divorcee.... I am able to take care of my family with my own income. Also, my community is traditionally a trading community. Therefore, I am respected as a trader".

Ubaa started out as the dream of an older woman under extremely harsh circumstances with 4000 empty bags in her hands. Today it provides a livelihood for what were once 10 of the most vulnerable families in the Dadaab refugee camp.

*** Thanks to Job Ogonda for this article. He was formerly a Project Officer under the Rights Programme at ARDC and is now with the World Food Programme. ■**

On 3rd of December 2003, the Somali refugee community in Dadaab, a refugee camp in Kenya, celebrated the international day of persons with disabilities. The dances, hilarious skits and catchy tunes belied the arduous life that people with disabilities have to bear in refugee situations. During the festivities, a small business at the camp was hailed for its success.

It is at the camp that *Ubaa* (flower) is run by a group of older women with disabilities. This is a small business enterprise located at the fringes of the dusty Hagadera market. At a glance, the business premises are not anything to write home about. They comprise four shops built of tin, empty sacks and twigs. Three of the shops are filled with items typical of the vibrant Somali culture, among them brightly coloured sandals, perfumes, spices, cereals, candy, garments and home products. The

fourth is a restaurant that is yet to open.

Tending one of the counters is Kusei Mohamed, a 65-year-old divorced mother of 10. She looks a lot older than her age. Her movements are strained as she favours her clubbed foot. Her eagerness to talk to a stranger is atypical of her culture, her toothless smile is infectious and the sparkle in her eyes betrays an appetite for life that her triple tragedy (displacement, gender and age discrimination) has not dimmed. She recounts her vulnerable days as an older refugee, invisible to the community and with no other source of livelihood other than handouts courtesy of her ration card. According to Kusei, "life was bleak" for her and her 10 children. She was socially ostracised for being old and divorced.

In 1999, out of desperation Kusei mobilised a handful of other women suffering similar

Forthcoming Events



Training Course on Ageing in Africa

The 7th training course on Ageing in Africa is slated for 2 – 6 August 2004 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.

For an application form and course details, write to: helpage@helpage.co.ke

Quotable Quote

"We know that a generation of grandparents is having to look after a generation of grandchildren because the generation in between is being wiped out"

(by HIV / AIDS), UK Secretary of State for International Development, Hilary Benn, 2003

HelpAge International

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