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Facts and figures

- 497 million older men and women live in poor countries – nearly two-thirds of the world's total older population.
- More than 180 million older people live in poverty.
- By 2045, people aged 60 and over worldwide will outnumber children under 14.
- In low and middle income countries more than 50 per cent of men and women continue to work past the age of 60, the overwhelming majority in the informal sector.
- Three-quarters of the world's older population live in areas affected by natural disasters and conflict.
- Two-thirds of the world's older people who have chronic illnesses (such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes and Alzheimer's disease) live in low and middle income countries.
- In many African countries, older people are the main carers of more than 40 per cent of people living with HIV and AIDS and children who have been orphaned by AIDS.



The world for older people

The ageing of the global population is one of the triumphs of development over the last century. In the new millennium it presents great challenges but also great opportunities. The fact that currently there are nearly 750 million people aged over 60 worldwide is a cause for celebration. However, the fact that nearly two-thirds of these older men and women live in low and middle income countries also calls for urgent action.

Millions of older men and women in low and middle income countries face the immediate problems of poverty and poor health. They name health and income security as their key priorities; their health status not only determines their physical, mental and social wellbeing but, in many cases, is also crucial to their ability to earn a living in the absence of pensions or other income.

International development policy and practice ignores older people. The Millennium Development Goals make no direct reference to them. While MDG 1 commits to halving the proportion of those living in extreme poverty by 2015, the deep poverty of millions of older men and women makes it likely that they will remain in the "other half", not reached by programmes to achieve the MDG target.

When it comes to healthcare, older men and women's care-giving and care-receiving roles are closely intertwined. Often older people who need care themselves are caring for others. The increasing care needs of rising numbers of "older old" people will be a challenge, particularly for their families and communities. At the same time, a vast number of older people are carers of grandchildren whose parents have migrated in search of work, or who are ill or have died of HIV-related illnesses.

In low and middle income countries, millions of older people live below even minimum poverty lines. The majority of older people in these countries do not retire. They lack even a basic pension, working to make a living well into old age, often in insecure, poorly paid jobs, until they are too ill or frail to continue. Those who are unable to support themselves face an old age of destitution and hunger. The global financial crisis, resulting in increasing and sometimes unaffordable prices of food, transport and housing, has only worsened their situation.

Family and household poverty has a particularly severe impact on the youngest and oldest family members. Older people whose children have migrated in search of work, many of whom are looking after grandchildren, have seen remittances fall or disappear. For poor older people in low and middle income countries there is little prospect of improvement. The key role that older men and women often play in supporting households and communities remains largely unrecognised and unrecorded.

Older men and women living in weak and failing states and those exposed to the hazards of environmental degradation and climate change are especially at risk. Conflict and other causes of political and environmental instability are also undermining the security of increasing numbers of older men and women in low and middle income countries.

At the same time, global population ageing presents opportunities to draw on the resourcefulness, experience and wisdom of older people. A secure income and good health in old age are attainable goals, even in the poorest countries, enabling older men and women to continue to participate in society. The challenge is to ensure that these goals are also in the programmes of the wider development community and governments.



Azuma Nakahira/HelpAge International

Our work with older people

Our vision and mission

Our vision is a world in which all older people fulfil their potential to lead dignified, active, healthy and secure lives.

We work with our partners to ensure that people everywhere understand how much older people contribute to society and that they must enjoy their right to healthcare, social services and economic and physical security.

HelpAge International can look back on significant achievements since our inception in 1983.

The HelpAge International network is uniquely committed to challenging the prevailing negative images of old age and enabling older men and women in low and middle income countries to fulfil their potential. It has grown from the five original members to 80 affiliates. Our work with affiliates and other partners has directly improved the lives of millions of older people in many of the world's poorest countries. Our outreach beyond our affiliates is substantial. We work with more than 180 other partners and many more contacts in over 70 countries across the world. The strength and diversity of the HelpAge network are essential to our identity and values, enabling us to serve and empower older people living in poverty.

Direct service provision, practical support and training are central to our work. With our partners, we provide assistance to more than a million older people and their families and we draw on this experience to influence other service providers, indirectly reaching millions more. Responding to the needs of older men and women in emergencies is a particular priority. We also highlight the right of older men and women to a secure income and appropriate healthcare, and we show how this benefits not only older people themselves, but also wider society, especially their grandchildren. And we continue to stress how older people's human rights are violated, simply because of their age.

Recognising that the contributions of older people can be enhanced when they act together, we support community-level initiatives to enable older men and women to take leadership roles.

Our geographical priorities are defined by our wish to maximise the impact of our work across a broad cross-section of countries, where the abuse of older people's rights is especially prevalent, in both stable and failing states, and in influential and emergent countries.



We have contributed substantially to raising the profile of ageing in low and middle income countries with the international community, donors and governments around the world. We continue to influence politicians, officials and a wide range of others working in development to include the challenges facing older people in their strategies to reduce poverty.

We have formal relations with some of the most influential agencies in the sector, including consultancy status with the UN and World Health Organization, and agreements with UNICEF and UNFPA. We are a signatory of the Code of Conduct for The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in Disaster Relief, and of the People in Aid protocols. We are committed to following the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response. We are recognised as key partners by national governments in all the regions where we work.

We recognise that as populations age, new organisations are appearing in the field of ageing. This provides an opportunity to forge new partnerships and strengthen our distinctive contribution to promoting ageing and development.



Our targets to 2015 – measuring our progress

We will increase by two-thirds the number of services directly supporting older men and women, their families and communities and other service providers from 1.2 million in 2010 to 2 million in 2015. Our work to promote pension provision, better health services and more appropriate emergency responses will continue, potentially benefiting millions more older people. We will substantially expand our policy and advocacy work, as well as our emergencies response.

We recognise that by working in partnership with other organisations we can multiply our impact many times over. We will therefore continue to strengthen our existing network and we will build alliances with new partners in development, both within and outside the field of ageing.

We have established the following targets to help us measure our scope and impact. By 2015:

We will enable older men and women to have secure incomes:

- 20 per cent more older men and women in 30 low and middle income countries are receiving state non-contributory pensions or benefits.
- Households containing older men and women experience sustained improvements in their income and food security in 25 countries.

We will enable older men and women and those they support to receive quality health, HIV and care services:

- Older men and women in 15 countries can prevent and manage chronic illness.
- Older men and women in 20 countries receive guaranteed free access to age-friendly health services.
- Older men and women in 12 countries receive appropriate HIV services.
- Older men and women receive a range of appropriate primary healthcare services in 25 countries.

Our global actions to 2015

In the face of the global economic crisis, rapid population ageing, climate change, the HIV pandemic, age discrimination and violence against older people, we will respond directly to the expressed needs and capabilities of older men and women, as well as raise awareness of these among the world's major development institutions and the general public.

To end the poverty and discrimination faced by millions of older men and women:

- 1. We will enable older men and women to have secure incomes.**
- 2. We will enable older men and women and those they support to receive quality health, HIV and care services.**
- 3. We will enable older men and women to actively participate in and be better supported during emergency and recovery situations.**
- 4. We will build global and local movements that enable older men and women to challenge age discrimination and claim their rights.**
- 5. We will support a growing global network of organisations to work effectively with and for older men and women.**

We will enable older people to actively participate in and be better supported during emergency and recovery situations:

- Older men and women receive direct assistance from ourselves and our partners to prepare for, withstand and recover from emergencies.
- Ten major humanitarian agencies recognise and respond to the needs and capacities of older men and women in emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

We will build global and local movements that enable older people to challenge age discrimination and claim their rights:

- Older men and women lead community action to realise their rights to services and practical support in 25 countries.
- Older men and women are helped by work that prohibits or reduces discrimination against them in 15 countries.
- A global group of one million committed supporters is developed by key HelpAge affiliates.

We will support a growing global network of organisations to improve their work with and for older men and women:

- 120 affiliates, adopting the HelpAge values and visual identity, form a global network shaping and supporting a common agenda and leading national, regional and international initiatives.
- Global and national campaigns take place in 50 countries to demand changes in laws and policies to respect the rights of older men and women.
- Awareness in the UK and five OECD countries of the international ageing agenda is raised through campaigns and development education.
- Training, information-sharing and networking opportunities are key services for the HelpAge network provided by the global secretariat.

Our approach and ways of working

In the delivery of our work, we emphasise:

Social justice and empowerment

- We put older men and women at the heart of our work by involving them in programme design, implementation and review.
- We ensure that "age helps" is central to our mission by building on the strengths and contributions of older men and women.
- We seek to work with the most disadvantaged, frail, disabled and vulnerable older men and women, speaking out on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves.
- We recognise that people experience ageing differently, depending, for example, on their sex, age or disability, and we recognise these differences in our work.

Partnerships

- We seek to work in partnership with like-minded organisations in fields outside ageing to ensure that ageing issues are understood and given a high priority.
- We seek especially to work with children and family organisations to highlight the impact that issues affecting older people also have on children and other family members, and identify solutions that benefit all generations.

Service delivery

- We deliver essential services with non-governmental and private providers, where governments are failing to reach older men and women.
- We respond to emergencies urgently and effectively.
- We work to understand, protect and secure the natural environment, ensuring the environmental sustainability of our activities.
- We help older men and women build their resilience to the impact of natural and political crises, including the effects of climate change.

Evidence and policy change

- We develop tested ways of improving older men and women's lives by monitoring and recording the effectiveness of our programmes.
- We use robust evidence to persuade intergovernmental bodies, governments and the private sector to address ageing issues.

Increasing our capacity to deliver

To enable us to deliver our global actions to 2015, we have established the following targets:

- We will build our annual income to £27 million from diverse sources – including income that we can use flexibly – with 20 per cent of our income coming from affiliates outside the UK.
- We will be more transparent about our governance, involving affiliates in proposing appropriately skilled members of our board.
- All our offices will demonstrate high levels of management practice and accountability.
- We will invest in our staff to build the skills we need to achieve our strategy.
- We will develop systems to ensure that we can continue operating at all times.

Ensuring we are accountable

We are accountable to our donors, our partners and the public worldwide. Above all, we are accountable to the older men and women with and for whom we work. In our programmes we will continue to enable older men and women to make informed choices and know what to expect from us. We will also arrange external evaluations of our work to show whether we are fulfilling our stated objectives. We are refining an accountability framework for use in emergency programmes. We will extend this to our development work.

We will develop processes for reviewing and learning from our work, to enable us to identify key achievements and gaps and inform our annual planning and budgeting. We will also assess our work against one specific global action or set of targets each year, to ensure our work is accountable and continues to improve.

We see this strategy as reflecting a continuous process of improved programming, advocacy and learning. We recognise that the world is changing rapidly and we will be ready to adjust our strategy to respond to new realities.



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HelpAge Korea

HelpAge International helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.

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