

Ageways

Practical issues in ageing and development

Issue 73 / June 2009

Age helps

A way to win more support

Key points for programmes

Stories to stir emotions

Blogging – a way to spread
the message

Telling it in pictures

Campaigning across the
world

Action in Moldova, Tanzania
and Bolivia



**HelpAge
International**

age helps

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Future issues

Ageways is published twice a year. Issue 74, October 2009, will be on how to work with the media. We welcome articles for consideration by the end of July.

Front cover

Muhindo Seforoza with some of her family in Uganda. She cares for six orphaned grandchildren.

Photo: Antonio Olmos/HelpAge International

Comment

A positive force for change

Welcome to *Ageways* 73. You'll notice that this issue looks different. The new design reflects HelpAge International's "age helps" position, which puts older people at the centre of our work and encourages people to re-think their attitudes to ageing.

You have only to read the articles and letters in this issue to see how "age helps" – how older people contribute to society and to their own development. And you can find out how to apply an "age helps" approach to your work, and how to spread the message that older people are a positive force for change.

If you want to share examples of how "age helps" please send them and we will publish them in a future issue.

Celia Till
Editor, *Ageways*

Letters

Beekeeping in retirement

Though I am a young, I have noticed how retired people live here. I want to introduce you to Mr Tadiwos Babiro, 66, a retired bee technician and farmer. He has given practical training on beekeeping to development agencies, farmers and women's groups.

From the start of his retirement, he did not want to remain idle. Now he shares his skills and experience with students at the agricultural college. He also makes a living for his family from more than fifty hives in his backyard. In short, his devotion to beekeeping activities can be an example for other retired people.

Habamu Lemma, Ethiopia (by email).

Good news for senior citizens

My letter in *Ageways* 72 brought me a letter from another reader, Mr T C Meemaduma, Sri Lanka. He is only 71 years old and has enquired about my activities at 92 years. I am thankful to *Ageways* which unites senior citizens around the world. Senior citizens need three things, which are love, understanding and correspondence.

Here is some news that is beneficial to senior citizens. Our capital city, Delhi, has a new organisation named

Burzugon ke Humsafar (Co-travellers of Senior Citizens), which provides a driver with a vehicle (car or van) free of cost to older people, after some formal verification, in case of emergency.

In our fast lives we often fail to spend time with our senior citizens. Taking this into account, about 50 senior citizens from our capital have formed an organisation, Anandadhara, to serve them with a free medical health camp.

Mahindar Singh, Member, Governing Council, Indian Federation on Ageing, S-314 Panch Shila Park, New Delhi 110017, India.

Caring in critical poverty

Joy for Elderly Care – Uganda (JFEC-U) is a non-governmental organisation that was started in 2006. The going was not smooth at first because resources were not always available. However, we persisted because our vision was clear – to help senior citizens and their dependent children live secure and dignified lives.

When we visited Kalorina, aged 65, we found her standing behind the counter of her small shop. The shelves contained almost nothing for sale. She narrated how she had lost five of her children to

AIDS. She therefore had to take on the parenting of her grandchildren. Even though she was in such critical poverty, all her grandchildren had come to her to seek support financially, especially for school fees, food and medical care, and moral support.

She said she was ready to cooperate with Joy for Elderly Care – Uganda so that she could join the millions worldwide who stand to take action against poverty, hunger and inequality.

This is an edited extract from Joy for Elderly Care – Uganda Newsletter issue 1, sent by Victoria Namusoke, Executive Director, JFEC-U, PO Box 33676, Kampala, Uganda.
Email: joyelderlycare_ug@yahoo.com

We welcome letters

Please write to: The Editor, *Ageways*, HelpAge International, PO Box 32832, London N1 9ZN, UK.
Fax +44 (0)20 7713 7993
Email: ctill@helpage.org

Please include your name, organisation (if any) and postal address.

Letters may be edited.

New publications

Voice of older people in Asia

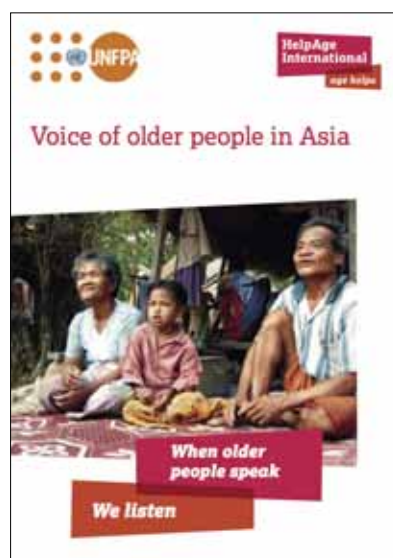
This report gives voice to fifteen older men and women who took part in a forum hosted by HelpAge International's Asia/Pacific regional centre in 2008.

The participants came from different countries in Asia and from different spheres of life, including teachers, farmers, trade unionists, former soldiers, academics and leaders of grassroots organisations. They were asked to give their views on three areas: income security, health services, and dignity and respect in old age.

HelpAge International, 2009

Can be downloaded from:

www.helpage.org/resources/briefings



“Older people may not always need help financially, but they certainly need the social and moral support that comes from feeling valued, especially by youth.”

Dr Myint Myint Khin, academic and writer from Myanmar who participated in “Voice of older people in Asia”



Integrating older people:

A training of trainers manual for successful mainstreaming of age-friendliness in Canadian Red Cross programme in Aceh, Indonesia

This manual contains exercises, checklists, examples and facilitators' notes for training trainers on how to include older people in emergency responses.

It has six units on: Ageing in general; Community mobilisation and older people; Understanding the needs and capacities of older people; Working with older people in disaster response and rehabilitation; Working with older women and older people with disabilities; Monitoring and evaluation to assess age-friendliness.

The manual was developed for the Canadian Red Cross programme in Banda Aceh, Indonesia by HelpAge International. It can be adapted by other humanitarian agencies to help them mainstream older people into their work.

Canadian Red Cross and HelpAge International Asia/Pacific, 2009

Can be downloaded from:

www.helpage.org/resources/manuals

“Once you think you are old, you will restrict yourself. We have to learn something new every day.”

Datuk Lum Kin Tuck, 91-year-old president of NACSOM, Malaysia, who participated in “Voice of older people in Asia”

Bridging the gap

An exploratory study to extend palliative care services to older people in two East African countries

A study by the African Palliative Care Association in Kenya and Uganda highlights an urgent need for palliative care for older people.

Older people experience physical pain (for example, from cancer, joints, sores), psychological pain (from worry, fear, depression), social pain (from poor living conditions, financial hardship, inadequate information, loneliness, abuse) and spiritual pain (from indignity, lack of purpose in life).

The study, funded by Help the Aged, finds that palliative care in sub-Saharan Africa is primarily associated with HIV and AIDS, and that older people's needs are largely neglected. It recommends integrating palliative care into services for older people.

African Palliative Care Association, 2009

Copies available from Richard A Powell, Monitoring and Evaluation and Research Manager, African Palliative Care Association, PO Box 72518, Kampala, Uganda
Email: tony.powell@apca.co.ug

Keep in touch!

Please keep in touch to make sure you receive regular copies of *Ageways*.

If your contact details change, please post the form on page 15 or use the online form at:

www.helpage.org/aboutus/contactus

Age helps – a way to win more support

Jane Scobie explains the thinking behind “age helps” and what it means for the HelpAge network.

At the age of 64, Muhindo Seforoza from Uganda (pictured on the front cover) is “mother” to six orphaned grandchildren. She starts her day early by feeding the children before going to her farm where she grows coffee and bananas. “Any money I make goes towards feeding the kids, buying school material and paying medical bills.”

In Bangladesh, Abdul Rab (pictured on the right) still works as a bicycle rickshaw puller at the age of 82. “I’m still fit enough. I use my wages to pay for family expenses such as rice and clothing. I also pay for one of my grandchildren’s education, as her father is dead.”

Across the world, in every city and village, older people like Muhindo and Abdul are making an invaluable contribution to society. But their contribution goes largely unrecognised and their issues are rarely included in political debates or development plans. For although age brings experience and expertise, it also brings diminishing health, fewer work options and age discrimination, making older people some of the poorest and most neglected in the world. Many are simply reduced to begging.

Our own future

Why is this? We are all ageing and most of us want to live a long life. Wouldn’t it be good if we could all look forward to old age, because we know we will have a guaranteed income, essential healthcare and be treated with respect?

Yet the general view is that older people do not really matter. Just look at the resources allocated to older people. After the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, only 1 per cent of humanitarian aid went directly to older people, although they represented approximately 7 per cent of the affected population. A survey in

South Africa found that although 90 per cent of doctors regularly attended to older people, only 3 per cent had received any specialist training. And the United Nations Programme on Ageing has a staff of just four.

It’s not that there has been no progress. For example, in 1996, the Botswana government introduced a non-contributory pension for everyone over 65 because of the large numbers of older people who were caring for orphans. In 2001, the Mauritius government adopted a national policy on older people in recognition of their unique capabilities and contributions, and their special role in the making of modern Mauritius. And in Latin America, governments are rallying behind the call for a convention on the rights of older people, because they see that existing mechanisms are too weak.

Many individuals and organisations are working hard to improve the lives of older people. You yourself are helping to make a difference. Over the past 25 years, the HelpAge network has achieved a great deal, pioneering new approaches to working with older people and getting their voices heard in national and international policy forums (see *Ageways* 72).

Louder and clearer

But there is so much further to go. The voices of older people need to be stronger and the messages clearer. This need is becoming more urgent as the global population ages. By 2050 the number of older people in developing countries will have tripled – which could mean three times as many older people living without proper food, clothes or housing. The current global financial crisis means that more, not less, needs to go on social spending to stimulate economies and protect those on low incomes – and it is vital that older people are included in these measures.



Older people’s ability

This is where HelpAge International’s new “age helps” position comes in. In 2007, consultations carried out by HelpAge International with affiliates and other partners concluded that the best way of winning more support for older people was to show ageing as a benefit to society, and to highlight older people’s ability to contribute to their own development. This position is summed up as “age helps”, which appears on HelpAge International’s new logo (details on page 7).

**At the age of 82,
Abdul Rab still
earns an income
for his family.**



Antonio Olmos/HelpAge International

Putting it into practice

In practical terms, “age helps” means involving older people in programmes (see page 6) and supporting them to run their own development activities, as shown in the articles from Moldova (page 13) and Peru (page 16).

It means communicating older people’s experiences and abilities in a compelling way to a wide range of people, from government representatives to the general public. If the public start valuing older people and lobbying their governments for more resources, governments are much more likely to act. So this issue of *Ageways* looks at how to record older people’s experiences (pages 8 and 10), and how to share these globally through the web (page 11) and the Age Demands Action campaign (page 12).

Expanding the HelpAge network is a crucial part of all this. Already, three more organisations have joined this year – Dobroe Delo (Russia), GRAVIS (India) and SAWAKA (Tanzania, profiled on page 14). This brings the total to 77 affiliates in 56 countries (see page 15).

Two affiliates – HelpAge Korea and HelpAge USA – are the first to become “sister” affiliates, taking on the same “age helps” core position, values and visual identity as HelpAge International. Two more – HelpAge Kenya and HelpAge Sri Lanka – are set to do so. This all helps to create a clear, consistent message across the globe.

In 2050, the prospects for older people could be very different from how they look now.

What you can do

If you have internet access you can:

- watch our *Age helps* video, now in more than 30 languages, at: www.helpage.org/films/agehelps
- post a comment on our *Age helps* blog at: www.helpage.org
- sign our global petition at: www.helpage.org/petition/ada

If your organisation is not already an affiliate, you can find out how to join by contacting your nearest regional centre (details on page 15) or London office (page 16).

Jane Scobie is Communications and Campaigns Manager, HelpAge International, London (address on page 16). Email: jscobie@helpage.org

Key points for programmes

Michelle Lewis explains how an “age helps” approach to programmes means recognising that older people themselves hold the key to solving the problems that they face.

An “age helps” approach to programmes is not just about increased participation and consultation with older people. It also means understanding that older people are themselves part of the solution to broader development problems, including children’s education and nutrition, social care, natural resource management, disaster preparedness and local democracy.

Overlooking older people’s potential to contribute to their own development and that of their communities means ignoring some of the most significant opportunities for reducing poverty and promoting social cohesion.

“Age helps” programmes involve older people at all stages – in needs assessments, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. They also show the public, media and policy-makers what older people are doing, to help change attitudes and win more support.

An “age helps” lens

Looking at your project through an “age helps” lens helps you see how far it is “age helps” – like putting on a pair of spectacles. Please remember that the needs of older women and men are different, so you need to take this into account at every stage of the project.

To put on an “age helps” lens, ask yourself questions such as:

Planning

- How will the project build on the capacity and potential of older men and women as agents of development? How will this be monitored?
- How will older women and men help make decisions about planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and communicating about the project?

Methodology

- What control will older men and women have over the resources of the project?
- How will you include older women and men who might be excluded from the project because of their low level of education or disability?
- How will you make sure that older men and women have access to appropriate training and technology?
- How will the project strengthen the voice of older women and men at a local, national or international level?
- How will the project link older men and women with formal or informal institutions?
- How will the project improve older women and men’s access to services?

Monitoring, learning and evidence gathering

- How will there be ongoing consultation with individual older men and women and older people’s groups? How will you incorporate this learning into the programme?

- How will older women and men themselves monitor the project and assess its impact?
- How will the project be accountable to older men and women and what mechanisms will there be for feedback and complaints?

Applying such a lens has resulted in projects such as those in Moldova (page 13) and Tanzania (page 14), where the insights, priorities and opportunities of both older men and women are truly at the centre of HelpAge International’s and our partners’ work.

Michelle Lewis is Programme Manager, HelpAge International, London (address on back page)
Email: mlewis@helpage.org

Guidelines on older people’s participation are provided in *Participatory research with older people: a sourcebook*, HelpAge International, 2002

This can be downloaded from: www.helpage.org/resources/manuals



Elijah Osbourne takes the microphone in a project that strengthened older people’s voices in Jamaica.

Age helps – a summary

Mayur Paul answers key questions about “age helps”.

What does “age helps” mean?

“Age helps” sums up HelpAge International’s core position – that older people are a benefit to society and a positive force for change.

This position is described more fully in our manifesto:

Age makes a difference

The experience. The expertise. With age comes a deep understanding of the way things were, the way they are, and the way they could be. The contribution older people make to society is invaluable.

Of course, growing older is not without its problems, which can prevent people from reaching their potential. We’re experts in age and the issues it can bring.

Driven by the desire to find solutions to the problems older people face worldwide, we campaign tirelessly to put these issues on the agenda of governments and the public the world over.

We work with and for older people to help them achieve good healthcare, financial security and inclusion in their communities.

We’re proud of our achievements to date, and the growing strength of our international network is helping us reach out to more people than ever before. We are helping age to make a difference to the world.

Why has HelpAge International adopted this position?

Having a clear, value-based position which underpins all our work, and which can be communicated across the HelpAge network, will give people clearer reasons to work with us. Stronger support for our work will help us realise our vision:

Our vision is a world in which all older people can lead dignified, active, healthy and secure lives.

In 2007, consultations carried out by HelpAge International with affiliates and other partners concluded that the best way of winning more support was to show ageing as a benefit to society, and to highlight older people’s ability to contribute to their own development.

Does “age helps” promote older people’s rights?

Yes. Promoting older people’s rights is part of our mission:

Our mission is to 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.

“Age helps” means demonstrating older people’s capabilities as well as their needs. We will continue to highlight the situation of vulnerable older people (for example, those who are very frail or affected by disasters) and work with them. We will emphasise their need for care and support, not because they have earned it, but because it is their right.

We will also emphasise that older people can identify the solutions to the problems they face, and should be consulted in order to develop the solutions that are most appropriate.

How does “age helps” work in practice?

“Age helps” means putting older people at the centre of our programme, advocacy and communications work. Here are some examples:

- Create opportunities for older people to get their voices heard
- Consult older people in developing projects
- Collect evidence of older people’s contribution to society
- Challenge negative attitudes towards older people
- Make offices accessible and welcoming to older people
- Use communications channels that older people use, such as radio
- Run campaigns to generate public support for older people
- Support a convention on the rights of older people.

“Age helps” also means putting in place age-friendly employment policies. And it means encouraging more organisations to join the HelpAge network and adopt the “age helps” position.

Mayur Paul is Branding and Programmes Communications Officer, HelpAge International, London (address on page 16).
Email: mpaul@helpage.org



Stories to stir emotions

How can we communicate “age helps” in a compelling way?

Personal stories are key to this, explains *Celia Till*.

You can promote positive attitudes to ageing in everything you write – from project proposals and reports to newspaper articles and stories on the web. When you are writing:

Reinforce “age helps” at every opportunity Show that older people are contributing, finding their own solutions, and talking confidently about their achievements.

Highlight results Show how your work has made a difference, giving examples of what older people have been able to do as a result.

Opt for personal, real-life content Use personal stories, quotes and concrete examples of activities by older people to engage your readers.

Choose your language carefully Use “older people”, not “the aged”, “the elderly” or “elderly people”, as these have connotations of frailty and otherness. Alternatively, use the words that older people prefer in your region, such as “elders” or “seniors”. Use terms such as “recipients”, “participants” or simply “older people”, not “beneficiaries”, which implies magnanimity on your part.

Personal stories

We need to make people really feel that older people are a positive force for change. This can best be done by telling stories, because people remember stories and pass them on. Expanding use of the internet and social networking sites gives the potential for stories to reach millions of people.

Personal stories are important for working with the media, who need them to grab the attention of their readers and listeners. For policy makers, personal stories add human interest to rational arguments. For the public, personal stories are essential for stirring emotions and encouraging them to take action.

Stories about older people are particularly powerful because they strike a chord with us all – they remind us of our own ageing and our hopes for the future.

You can encourage older people who personify “age helps” to tell you some of their life story, or to describe a day in their life. Better still, encourage older people themselves to document their stories. The more authentic the story, and the more insights it gives, the more powerful it will be.

Caroline Dobbing/HelpAge International



Angelina (right) with her grandson and another member of the group of older people in Kenya whose story is told opposite.

There are many ways to do this. For example, a video diary of an older person talking about their feelings and experiences as they plan and implement a campaign, join a credit and savings group, or have an eye operation, illustrates “age helps” in a particularly engaging way. The articles on pages 10 and 11 provide tips on recording older people’s experiences.

So what can you do now? Take a notebook, camera, mobile phone or video recorder with you wherever you go. You never know what you might see. Although it generally helps to plan ahead, be spontaneous too. It is often the most spur-of-the-moment footage that most honestly communicates.

If you have a story that stirs you, send it to *Ageways* or post it on our *Age helps* blog (see page 11) so we can share it and inspire more people.

Writing a story

Bring personal stories to life by including information about the person – their name, age, family situation, occupation and where they live. Use direct speech as much as possible – either by quoting the person or telling the whole story in their words.

Place the emphasis on what the older person has done, presenting your organisation’s role as a facilitator.

Follow this four-point structure:

1. Describe the person.
2. Tell what happened. Start with a dramatic description of “before” – the person’s original situation – to draw in the reader.
3. Identify the moment of change – when the person did something as a result of an intervention by your organisation – as this is pivotal.
4. Show what difference this made.

See the story below as an example of this structure.

For more detailed guidelines on collecting personal stories see:

www.helpage.org/brand/basicelements/casestudies

Get permission

Always ask people’s permission to be interviewed, photographed or filmed.

Wherever possible, do this in advance so they have a chance to think about what information they want to share. Explain why you need their story, and how it will be used, making sure they fully understand. If they are reluctant, do not go ahead.

You can offer to change their name if necessary, to protect their identity. If you do this, make this clear – for example, write at the end: “Names have been changed”. Do not include details of the exact location in your writing and take care that the location cannot be identified in photos.

Take particular care to protect children’s identity. Their real names should never be used. Always obtain permission from their carer before interviewing or photographing them.

Remember to thank people afterwards.

Celia Till is Editor, *Ageways*, HelpAge International, London (address on page 16). Email: ctill@helpage.org

“Nurses respect us now”

Angelina, 65, is a former schoolteacher. She lives in rural Kenya with her husband, her son, his wife and their three-year-old son. Her nine-year-old orphaned grandson also lives with the family and Angelina cares for him.

“Older people used to be treated badly at the district hospital. We had to wait for many hours. Sometimes we would leave without even seeing the doctor. The nurses’ attitude was that we were old and didn’t need medicine.

“The situation made us feel very bitter. So we decided to do something about it. I was one of a group of older people who went to see the doctor in charge, as part of a project supported by HelpAge Kenya and HelpAge International.

“The doctor called a group of nurses and other health staff to listen to us. We explained everything. We told them that when we were admitted to hospital we had to share a bed with two others, we were sometimes not washed, and we were physically and verbally abused. At the pharmacy we were given incorrect medicine or told that there was no medicine.

“The doctor told us to go away and wait for while. He said he would make changes to improve the situation.

“Now at the hospital the patients sleep one to a bed. We are treated with respect by the nurses, though the pharmacist still tells us there is no medicine. We are now able to purchase mosquito nets at a reduced rate. This subsidy was previously only available to pregnant women and children.”

Interview by Caroline Dobbing



Telling it in pictures

Photos and videos can provide powerful evidence of older people's contribution. Henry Matthews describes how.

Photos and videos are used more and more on the web, as well as in publications and presentations. They can be a powerful way of demonstrating how older people contribute to their families and communities.

You will get different results depending whether you commission professionals, take photos yourself, or, better still, ask older people to photograph or film each other. All have a place – sometimes it is the quality of the moment that matters more than the technical quality.

Always make sure you have people's permission to photograph or film them (see box on page 9).

Taking photos

Photos reflecting "age helps" show older people looking dignified and confident. Smiling and upbeat is good. Photos should show older people in active roles, such as working, socialising, learning, carrying out daily activities, taking part in family life and so on.

Give yourself enough time to take photos. Take plenty, slightly varying the composition, angle and lighting to provide a choice. Avoid difficult lighting conditions and make sure older people's faces are visible and well lit. Move any distracting objects out of the way, or ask people to move if they are not well positioned.

Make sure you keep a note of who is in each photo and where the photo was taken.

Making a video

There are many new camcorders that are relatively inexpensive, small, sturdy and easy to use, and that have a USB connection so that you can transfer the video straight onto a computer.



Pocket camcorders such as the Flip Ultra cost about US\$120 plus delivery and customs. The camcorder takes AA batteries which keep it powered for about two hours. It holds one hour of video footage.

Here are some tips for making videos:

Keep it short People's attention span for the sort of film you will make is about three minutes – so do not record too much.

Check for sound Try to hold the video recorder close to the person you are filming if you are in a noisy area, so that it picks up their voice.

Involve older people The new camcorders are easy to use. You could ask an older person to make a video diary – perhaps a day in their life, or their life over a period of several weeks.

Tell a story A story with a beginning, middle and end will capture the imagination of your viewers. For example: a grandfather wants to help his grandchildren with their homework but cannot do so because he has poor eyesight. He has a cataract operation and his sight is restored. He can now do more for himself and his family.

Experiment The strength of pocket camcorders is that you can take them wherever you go. So try filming whatever you find interesting, or ask people to film each other.

If you take photos or make any videos, please send them to me so that we can add them to HelpAge International's public collection on the photo website, Flickr, or post them on the video-sharing website, YouTube.

View our photos online

We have made 700 of our best photos and stories of older people available to view online. If you have internet access you can browse the collection at: www.flickr.com/agehelps

Many of the photos are licensed for use by other organisations. If you want to use them, please email Mayur Paul at: mpaul@helpage.org

Henry Matthews is Campaigns Coordinator, HelpAge International (address on page 16).
Email: hmatthews@helpage.org



HelpAge International

A local radio interview being given by this older man in Ethiopia was filmed and photographed. This photo can now be viewed online (see box).

Blogging – a way to spread the message

Blogging enables you to reach a worldwide audience, as *Caroline Dobbing* explains.

"I was inspired and thrilled by the recent Rights of Older Persons Conference in Brasilia," reads an entry on HelpAge International's *Age helps* blog by Alex Kalache, HelpAge International's global ambassador. "...Older people in Brazil are refusing to age silently."

Some blogs (short for "weblog") are simply online diaries – a record of their author's thoughts and feelings at a particular time. Blogs can also be a space to tell a story or share and debate ideas. They can include photos and videos as well as text. More and more development organisations are using blogs to keep in touch with the people they want to influence.

You can see why. Blogging enables you to communicate quickly with people across the world. Readers can comment on your blog, sparking discussion, and they can forward your blog to their friends, so it reaches more people. Blogs often lead the news agenda, as they can report events faster than mainstream news media.

Getting started

So how do you start a blog? You will need a computer and an internet connection. You can set up a blog on your own website if you have one, or if not, you can use a free blogging website, such as blogger.com or wordpress.com

For example, Thembekile Hlubi of HelpAge affiliate Muthande Society for the Aged (MUSA) in South Africa started a blog on Wordpress in the run-up to the 2008 Age Demands Action campaign. "We are busy finalising preparations for ours [Age Demands Action] on the 8th October and we are very excited. We are so threatened by the rainy weather this week." Her blog includes a page from a local newspaper picturing a senior citizens' march against crime.



Resource Integration Centre

Delegates in Bangladesh prepare their Age Demands Action campaign – this could be an interesting topic for a blog.

Tips for success

Here are some tips for successful blogging:

Give your blog an enticing title

This helps people who use an internet search engine, such as Google, decide whether to view it. For example, "How age helps".

Make it easy to read Keep your entries short (no more than 800 words), grab your readers' attention in the first few lines, and use short paragraphs and sentences. Avoid slang and jargon.

Be real Keep your blog chatty and informal, let your personality shine through and show that you are passionate about the issues you are writing about.

Bring your blog to life Use pictures, videos, quotes and real-life stories to illustrate your message. Offer your own thoughts and feelings.

Keep it up to date Try to update your blog at least once a week to keep your readers interested.

Promote your blog Use word of mouth, email or networking sites such as Global Voices at <http://globalvoicesonline.org> Link to other blogs or comment on them. This will attract people to yours. Add a "news feed" so that readers can be notified when you update your blog.

Please tell us if you start a blog. To read and comment on HelpAge International's blogs visit: www.helpage.org

Caroline Dobbing is Online Communications Coordinator, HelpAge International (address on page 16). Email: cdobbing@helpage.org

Campaigning across the world

Henry Matthews explains how older people are raising their voices through the Age Demands Action campaign.

Campaigning is a way of calling out loudly and clearly about older people's contributions, needs and rights. It brings their issues out of the shadows and into the public arena.

Why campaign?

Campaigning helps to bring about lasting change that benefits large numbers of people. The involvement of the public and the media puts pressure on policy makers to act. In fact, many of the rights we take for granted – such as the right to vote, the abolition of the slave trade and the removal of apartheid – have only come about because people have campaigned for them.

What is Age Demands Action?

The Age Demands Action campaign is key to communicating “age helps” because it involves older people campaigning on their own behalf.

Through Age Demands Action, older people across the world call for their rights on or around 1 October, the International Day of Older Persons. Actions may include meetings with government ministers or heads of state, marches, speeches, public petition signings and age awareness workshops with decision-makers. These national-level actions add up to create a global movement calling for change.

In 2007, the first year of Age Demands Action, 27 countries took part. In 2008 this rose to 35 countries. In 2009 we are hoping for even more!

How is it organised?

HelpAge International works with partner organisations in participating countries to organise small delegations of 6-12 older people to meet with decision-makers in their government. The delegations raise issues of concern to older people in their country, and they call for specific action from their governments over the next 12 months.

Our partners involve older people throughout the process, from agreeing what issues to raise, to deciding how to present these issues to government. They also ensure that older people are given the skills necessary to represent themselves to decision-makers.

Does it work?

Yes! In 2008, lobbying by the Age Demands Action delegation in Nepal helped more than double the social pension from 200 rupees (US\$2.5) per month to 500 rupees (US\$6.3) per month, and reduce the age of eligibility from

75 to 70 years. Other outcomes of Age Demands Action include building older people's centres in Bangladesh and Indonesia, piloting a social pension scheme in the Philippines, and developing plans for equal access to water for older people in Ethiopia.

You can support Age Demands Action by signing the global petition at: www.helpage.org/petition/ada

More information: Henry Matthews, Campaigns Coordinator, HelpAge International, London (address on page 16). Email: hmatthews@helpage.org

“An amazing experience”

Edna Mbese, 70, of Muthande Society for the Aged (MUSA), Durban, South Africa, describes what it was like to take part in Age Demands Action 2008:

“We all went and marched into the city. We were demanding things like better roads and houses, and piped water. It was amazing. The roads were blocked off and the officials were there. They listened to our demands and promised to make changes.”

“Older people are now able to make their own demands, like: ‘Don’t rape older people or children. Sleeping with us and the children doesn’t cure AIDS.’ Now they’re brave enough open up and talk about these things, which is wonderful.”



We too have rights

Tatiana Sorocan describes how older people in Moldova are working with local councils to ensure they receive their social protection entitlements.

When 20 older people from ten community organisations across Moldova, south-east Europe, became “older people monitors” in 2007, most local authorities viewed them with suspicion. However, 18 months later, they have gained recognition for their vital role in informing the authorities about older people’s concerns.

The project, coordinated by HelpAge International and Moldovan partner, Second Breath, with funding from Irish Aid, began when the monitors themselves were trained in how to research the situation of older people. With help from over 200 older volunteers, they interviewed more than 2,000 older people across the country.

The survey produced some striking statistics: one in two older people lived alone; only a third of older people were receiving any old-age entitlement; and nearly 90 per cent of pensions were spent purely on survival – food, medicine and utility bills.

Armed with these findings, the monitors lobbied local authorities to grant older people their rights. So far, more than a thousand older people have benefited. They include about 250 older people who now receive financial support (including pensions, utility benefits and transport subsidies). Hundreds more older people have had their pensions or house taxes recalculated, received food aid or had help with healthcare and legal costs.

The monitors receive regular training to update their knowledge on rights and entitlements, planning and managing projects, and how local government works, particularly the budget process.

To enable them to navigate the complex range of social protection available – including pensions, social insurance, medical insurance, legal and employment rights and inheritance law – HelpAge International and Second Breath have published a guide, called *Protection of older people’s rights in Moldova*. A leaflet called *I too have rights* has also been distributed to raise awareness among older people generally.



This woman from Moldova is one of more than a thousand older women and men who have benefited from action by older people.

HelpAge International

Money for house repairs

Monitors and volunteers talk to older people about their problems, write to officials, petition departments and monitor institutions regularly until older people’s cases are resolved. The experience of 66-year-old Olga Popova is an example of their success. Her house in Comrat collapsed as a result of heavy lorries using a nearby motorway, prompting her to have a stroke. With the assistance of monitor Valentina Micotina, she wrote to the local council for compensation. She was delighted to receive 2,000 lei (US\$182) to help repair her house.

Over 1,000 older people have attended meetings with professionals to learn about medical insurance, old-age diseases, taxes and social services. As a result, a number of pensioners have successfully applied to have their house taxes lowered and have received reimbursements of

US\$120-150. Even though the sums may not be great, according to monitor Valentina Carchelan: “Every penny counts, especially for pensioners whose pension is so much less than the minimum subsistence requirement.”

Now, the monitors regularly attend local council meetings at which budgets are set. Local officials welcome them as partners and value their contribution to solving problems. A measure of this success is that four local councils have agreed to allocate a separate budget to address older people’s issues, and another has increased its budget for socially vulnerable groups including older people.

A longer version of this article appears in *Older People’s Voices*, issue 10, published by HelpAge International in Moldova.

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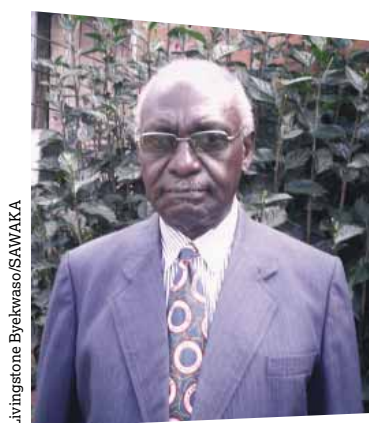
Valued as never before

Livingstone Byekwaso describes how an older people's organisation in Tanzania is changing attitudes towards old age.

Attitudes towards old age in Karagwe district, north-west Tanzania, have improved hugely since Saidia Wazee Karagwe (SAWAKA) was set up by 17 older people in 1994.

Nekemiah Kazimoto, 74, founder member and chairman of SAWAKA, says: "Before, older people were seen as useless and hopeless – as storytellers only. Now, as a result of advocacy work, we older people are valued as never before.

"Never did I imagine that in my later days I would see a good section of older people having their voices heard, their claims worked on and participating in development activities."



Livingstone Byekwaso/SAWAKA

Nekemiah Kazimoto, founder member and chairman of SAWAKA.

The key to SAWAKA's work has been encouraging its 3,700 members to become active in their communities and to mobilise support for older people and other vulnerable groups. With funding from a number of local, national and international organisations, and a strong network of volunteers, SAWAKA supports activities such as income generation, house repairs, emergency relief, HIV and AIDS education, rainwater harvesting and social clubs.

SAWAKA's nationwide schools linking project encourages school students to learn about old age issues and to support local older people. "Before this project, the same children would pass without

greeting us," 76-year-old Maria Ishengoma says. "Now we are friends and they respect our views. Thankfully we are changing this generation."

In particular, SAWAKA aims to empower older people to advocate for their rights. Under SAWAKA's guidance, older people in 25 villages have set up village development committees to find out about older people's concerns, through home visits and regular meetings, and to lobby for change.

Two years' work by older people's committees in one ward, Nyakahanga, has resulted in a spectacular improvement in older people's access to healthcare. The committees learnt about older people's rights and entitlements, including the right to free healthcare for people over 60. This was set out in government policy, but never actioned. With this knowledge, they started lobbying officials, by attending their meetings and calling for this provision.

The campaign culminated in an International Day of Older People's commemoration in October 2008. Older people used speeches, posters, songs and dances to call for free healthcare. As a result, the guest of honour, the district commissioner, promised to discuss the issue with all

heads of departments. A month later, identity cards entitling carriers to free healthcare were issued to 4,200 older people.

In two other wards, older people successfully lobbied local decision-makers to make sure that older people were represented on official bodies such as ward development committees, and that issues of old age were included in local plans and budgets.

SAWAKA took part in the 2008 Age Demands Action campaign, with one of our staff members forming part of a delegation to the government. Our partnership with HelpAge International has been ongoing for 13 years. In 2008, SAWAKA successfully applied to join the HelpAge International network as an affiliate. Being an affiliate gives us a better chance to represent Tanzanian citizens in international forums, link up with other activists around the world and strengthen our capacity to deal with older people's issues.

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Livingstone Byekwaso/SAWAKA

Older people generate their own income through a tree nursery project supported by SAWAKA.

HelpAge International affiliates

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Action Ageing Jamaica
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HelpAge Barbados/Barbados
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HelpAge Belize
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Maseru Senior Women Citizen
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RECEWAPEC, Cameroon
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Asia/Pacific

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Australia
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Resource Integration Centre (RIC),
Bangladesh
Senior Citizens Association of
Thailand
Senior Citizens Council of Thailand
Singapore Action Group of Elders
(SAGE)
Tsao Foundation, Singapore
USIAMAS, Malaysia

Europe and Central Asia

Age Action Ireland
Age Concern England and Help
the Aged (*working as one charity*)
Caritas Malta HelpAge
Centre for Policy on Ageing, UK
Cordaid, Netherlands
DaneAge Association, Denmark
Dobroe Delo, Russia
Elderly Women's Activities Centre,
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HelpAge Deutschland, Germany
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NGO Lastavica, Serbia
Second Breath (Gerontological
Association of Moldova)
Slovene Philanthropy

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WorldGranny, Netherlands
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*These two affiliates are the first to
become "sister" affiliates.



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Steps towards a bigger pension

Older people in Bolivia are enjoying a substantial increase in their social pension, after putting pressure on their government. Pilar Contreras reports.

In November 2007, the Bolivian government passed a law replacing the *Bonosol*, an annual allowance worth US\$220 for everyone over 65 years, with the *Renta Dignidad*, a monthly payment of US\$25 (US\$300 a year) for everyone over 60. How did this come about?

The law that had brought in the *Bonosol* stated that it would end in December 2007. Older people were very concerned that the government was proposing to replace the *Bonosol* with an annual payment of just US\$37.

Older people's organisations, led by the national association of older people, ANAMBO, held discussions with politicians – but they soon realised they needed to do more. ANAMBO approached HelpAge International's partner, Horizontes Foundation, for support. Over the course of three months, Horizontes arranged training for 3,000 older people's leaders in negotiation, lobbying and conflict resolution.

The second stage of negotiation started with stronger arguments to support older people's case for an improved pension. At discussions with government officials at different levels, their leaders referred to their rights as set out in international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Charles Knox/HelpAge International

They also pointed out that older people had contributed much to the country, for example, by building schools and roads in their communities, and fighting for the return of democracy in the 1970s. They presented statistics showing the reality of life for Bolivia's 676,000 older people, with more than half living on less than a dollar a day, and many facing discrimination due to illiteracy or ethnic origin.

Despite intense negotiations, the government made no commitment. So the leaders organised a rally in the capital, La Paz, in November 2007. More than 15,000 older people took part in an

eight-kilometre march around the city, converging on the main square in front of the governmental palace. Their leaders presented a petition to President Evo Morales signed by 50 older people's representatives from all parts of the country.

Less than a month later, the government passed the law announcing the *Renta Dignidad*, ending a year of work between civil society and the government.

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More than 15,000 older people took part in a march in Bolivia's capital city to call for a better social pension.

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

Copies of *Ageways* are available free of charge to people working with older people. Please use the order form on page 15 or at: www.helpage.org/ageways You can also download *Ageways* as a PDF from this address.

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