

Ageways

Practical issues in ageing and development

Issue 74 / January 2010



Working with the media

[How to get the media interested](#)

[Change in the air with new technologies](#)

[Getting coverage in a crisis](#)

[How to write a press release](#)

[Managing the broadcast interview](#)

[Stealing the show in Kenya](#)

[Exposing elder abuse in India](#)

**HelpAge
International**

age helps

Contents

- 4 [Creating an age-friendly media](#)
- 6 [Stealing the show in Kenya](#)
- 7 [Exposing elder abuse in India](#)
- 8 [How to get the media interested](#)
- 10 [Change is in the air](#)
- 11 [Coverage in a crisis](#)
- 12 [How to write a press release](#)
- 13 [Managing the broadcast interview](#)
- 14 [Writing an opinion piece](#)
- 16 [Age Demands Action](#)

Future issues

Issue 75 (April 2010) Women and ageing

Issue 76 (Oct 2010) Food and nutrition

Issue 77 (April 2011) HIV and AIDS

We welcome articles for consideration. Please send them three months before the month of publication.

Front cover

Teso and her family with a digital camera in Ethiopia. New technology is transforming the way the media works (see page 10).

Photo: Jeff Williams/HelpAge International

Comment

Making a mark in the media

Welcome to *Ageways* 74. What would we do without the media? Newspapers and magazines, radio, TV and websites are the main way we know what is happening in our communities and they have a strong influence on public opinion.

Older people's issues are not a popular topic for the media, however. This is something that older people's organisations can help to change, particularly in view of our ageing population. This issue of *Ageways* shows how organisations have worked successfully with the media. It explains how new technologies are changing the way the media works and it provides practical guidelines on working with the media.

We hope you find it useful – and we look forward to hearing about some more success stories for publication in a future issue.

Celia Till and Rosaleen Cunningham
Editors, *Ageways*

Letters



Celebrating older people's day

International Day of Older Persons was celebrated across the world on 1 October. For example, in Accra, Ghana, Bubiashie Old People's Centre organised a march (above) to mark its 15th anniversary, writes executive chairman, Nat Botchway. In Tanzania, SAWATA Dodoma held a workshop supported by HelpAge International to discuss the integration of older people's issues into district plans and budgets, writes programme officer, George D T Lusinde. In 40 countries, HelpAge International's partners took part in the Age Demands Action campaign (see page 16).

In Ageways 72 we published proverbs from around the world that celebrate older people's experience. Here are two responses:

Proverbs despising older people

In Karagwe District, Tanzania, there is a saying, "Obukulu bunuza echitoke". It means that old age is beneficial only in edible banana fruit. It implies that while a banana is more useful when it is old, because it is more palatable, an older person is useless.

There are other similar proverbs that despise old age. We, the older people, need to discourage the use of these proverbs. We should also try to improve our image in society through our conduct and activities. Our participation in development projects is crucial to improving our economic status.

Once we are able to command respect, we shall prove that we are not reject material. In addition, we should impress that old age is a gracious reward from God.

Mzee Joel Kachecheba, Nkwenda Station, PO Box 125, Karagwe, Kagera, Tanzania.

Booklet of quotations

I am enclosing a copy of my booklet, *Ageing and the aged (in good humour)*. The booklet has various types of quotations on ageing – meaningful, motivating, positive and humorous.

Nothing is more beautiful than cheerfulness in an older face

Jean Paul Richter

To grow old is a new venture in itself

Goethe

He who laughs, lasts

K L Khandpur, Immediate Past President, Association for Senior Citizens, Mumbai, India.

Why we work with older people

Movement towards Peace and Development Agency Sierra Leone (MOPADA-SL) is a community-based organisation operating in Kailahun District, eastern Sierra Leone. We recently added caring for older people to our work. Kailahun District was badly affected by the ten-year civil war. Many older people are living in very poor conditions in terms of health, housing and even food.

In a visit to one community, we came across an older woman walking a long distance with firewood on her head and her walking stick in her hand. She said: "Unless I do this for myself, nobody will, because I have nobody to work for me." She told us that her two children were ambushed during the war and she lost her husband three years ago.

This and other stories signalled to us that we should team up with organisations that are working in the interest of older people.

Patrick Momoh, Executive Director, Movement towards Peace and Development Agency (MOPADA-SL), Sierra Leone.
Email: mopadasl@yahoo.com

A month of support

We recently organised "A month of support for older people". As part of this, volunteers visited older people living in forest villages to tell them about changes in legislation that would affect them, for example, on hunting, fishing and tree-felling. They answered questions about land privatisation, wills, pensions and payment for public services. The district deputy chief of staff promised to solve problems connected with water supply and public transport.

Another event was a chess competition for retired and disabled people. The tournament lasted four days. People were very grateful for this competition. Many said that it was the first chess tournament they had taken part in because nobody had invited them to one, even though they had played chess since childhood.

Eduard Karyukhin, Dobroe Delo, 105120, N Siromyatnicheskaya str., 5/7 Moscow, Russia.

Care homes in Pakistan

Taking care of elders is an Islamic obligation and a cultural norm in Pakistan. In 2003, I surveyed different areas of Peshawar city to find out whether the idea of an older people's home was acceptable.

Most of the elders liked the idea. They thought it would be a good facility for those who were facing problems with their children and other relatives. This was contrary to my expectations, as our society is conservative and I thought people would not endorse the concept of separate homes for elders when their blood relatives were alive and should take care of them. Putting them in a home could be taken as a stigma both for the family and the older people.

A few years ago I was fortunate to win a fellowship in social sciences and had the chance to visit care homes in the UK. This gave me useful ideas about how to establish a care facility. Fortunately, in the last year I inherited a house in Peshawar city. I intend to convert it to a care facility for older people.

In this regard, I shall appreciate any suggestions from readers on how to run this facility, how to ensure older people's participation, how to generate funding and so on.

Fariha Abdullah, Manager, Sustainable Systems Initiatives (SSI) Elderly Care Project, 143, G-3, Street 13, Phase 2, Hayatabad, Peshawar, Pakistan.
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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

Older people in community development

This briefing shows how older people's associations enhance local development in five key areas, based on experience in Asia/Pacific: building livelihood security, improving healthcare, promoting participation in community life, promoting participatory governance and supporting disaster response.

HelpAge International East Asia and Pacific, 2009. Can be downloaded from:
www.helpage.org/resources



Why it's time for a convention on the rights of older people

This paper shows how older people's rights are being violated. It explains why existing rights mechanisms are failing older people and why a convention and special rapporteur are necessary.

HelpAge International London, 2009
Can be downloaded from:
www.helpage.org/resources



Creating an age-friendly media

Rosaleen Cunningham explains how an age-friendly media can help spread our messages to millions.

The media is invaluable for raising awareness of older people's issues and generating public support. Local newspapers, radio and websites are the main way that people know what is happening in their community, while national TV, radio and newspapers provide a forum for the country's leaders and thinkers and help shape public opinion.

The media has the potential to reach millions of people. Even stories in local media may be picked up by national or international networks such as the BBC and Al Jazeera. The BBC's international TV and radio news services reach 238 million people each week. More than 900,000 people visited Reuters AlertNet, the web-based humanitarian news network, in August 2009. AllAfrica.com receives more than 100 million visits each month. The BBC Online photogalleries receive an average of 100,000 visitors.

Reflecting the reality

Yet all too often, the media emphasises a youth culture. In an ageing world, this is not an accurate depiction of reality. Older people are under-represented in news, current affairs programmes and even drama. Older women appear even less often than older men.

Nor does the media cater well for older people themselves. In a survey carried out by HelpAge International in nine countries in Asia in 2002, older people said there should be more articles and programmes geared towards older people in all the media, and that older people should be more involved in media production.

Research in the UK by Help the Aged in 2002 showed that older people were the heaviest consumers of television. Yet all age groups surveyed identified that there were not enough older people on TV.

So, an important role for organisations campaigning for change for older people

is to work with the media to address these biases; to create a global "age-friendly" media that depicts the reality of our ageing world, that emphasises the contributions older people make and the challenges they face.

How do we do this? Global population ageing and older people's issues are not "sexy" and are difficult to promote to the media. Journalists become interested when someone reaches 100 but are usually less enthusiastic about discussing the issues affecting older people.

On the other hand, the fact that older people are missing from so many debates means that theirs is often the untold story, and they can provide a unique perspective on topical issues such as elections, economic migration or climate change.

And as the time approaches when the number of people over 60 will exceed the number of children under 15, the media is beginning to take more interest in the implications of an ageing society. For example, in 2009 the latest US Bureau of the Census global ageing report provoked an unprecedented flurry of media interest.

To work successfully with the media we need to be clear about our objectives. Do we want to win public support for a campaign? Do we want to influence policy or change attitudes towards older people? Do we want to raise the profile of our organisation? Do we need media attention to help us fundraise? Or do we want to use the media to reach older people themselves?

We may, in fact, want to do all of these things at different times. They will require different approaches – for example, a slot on a popular radio station or a feature in a women's magazine to win public support, or an article in a national newspaper or specialist publication to influence policy.



Kate Holt/HelpAge International

Population ageing means more media consumers will be older people. The most effective form of communicating with older people is often radio. In a study by HelpAge Kenya, 84 per cent of older people interviewed said that local-language radio was their main source of HIV-related information.

We also need to use techniques such as nurturing relationships with journalists, running media training workshops, launching new research, briefing older people as spokespeople and using "hooks" such as the International Day of Older Persons to get the media interested (see pages 8-9).

Success stories

There are many success stories showing how these approaches and techniques have worked. For example, in September 2009, a new report in the UK stated that half the babies born today will live to be 100. The BBC World Service wanted to hear what older people around the world thought of the report.



Radio is often the best way to reach older people themselves.

“We’re very excited about being able to broadcast these voices from El Geneina. We don’t often hear from old people in conflict zones, especially from old people in Sudan, so we think it’s really important to get these voices to air.”

Chloë Hadjimatheou, Producer, BBC World Service

HelpAge International in **Jamaica** identified a member of an older people’s association who not only commented on the report but also used the interview to speak about issues affecting older people in Jamaica today.

In **Peru**, HelpAge International teamed up with the Consultative Council of Radio and Television (CONCORTV) to organise a two-day workshop for more than 40 journalists from 15 cities to promote positive attitudes to older people.

They realised that a supportive media was essential if they were to achieve their aim of improving older people’s access to state benefits. It was important that the public should recognise that older people deserved respect and the media had the power to influence public opinion.

They also encouraged university students to think about older people by running a poster competition. After the workshop, *El Comercio*, a national daily newspaper with a circulation of 80,000, ran a large

feature on the issues raised and announced the winner of the poster competition. Media representatives at the workshop formed a national network of journalists on ageing, undertaking to present positive images of older people in the media and provide information about state benefits.

In **Haiti**, HelpAge International has prepared simple radio messages to remind the public to think of older people in emergencies: “If you are evacuating, don’t forget older people. If you are distributing assistance, make a special line for older people.” The media NGO, Panos Caribbean, has recorded the messages and the Direction of Civil Protection Public Education and Sensitisation will distribute them to their network of local radio stations in time for next year’s hurricane season.

Earlier this year, stories, photos and videos recording older people’s experience of dealing with the cold winter months in **Kyrgyzstan** appeared in at least ten different media including national radio and newspapers, regional papers such as *The Times of Central Asia* and internet news services. An older man and woman living in a displaced people’s camp in Darfur, **Sudan** were interviewed for a BBC World Service radio series on population ageing and their stories can still be heard online.

In **Thailand**, FOPDEV has trained older people to report from their communities and send tapes to national and online TV. This way, FOPDEV has become a key contact on age-related issues for the Thai Public Broadcasting Service.

In **India**, HelpAge India recently researched abuse of older people and launched a report that was covered by newspapers and television programmes reaching more than 13 million people.

In **Kenya**, HelpAge Kenya used this year’s International Day of Older Persons as a “hook” for a 30-minute interview with its chief executive on national TV.

On the following pages you can read more about how HelpAge India and HelpAge Kenya worked with the media. You can find out how new technologies are creating huge opportunities for citizen journalism. And you can learn about the practicalities of working with the media.

Rosaleen Cunningham is Media Relations Coordinator, HelpAge International, London (address on back page). Email: rcunningham@helpage.org

Stealing the show in Kenya

Marion Ouma describes how HelpAge Kenya arranged a half-hour television interview with their chief executive as part of their Age Demands Action campaign.

We planned to get media coverage as part of our Age Demands Action campaign (see box on this page and page 16). We wanted to raise public awareness of the campaign, more specifically the “asks” that older people were presenting to government representatives.

Members of staff who were leading on the campaign contacted the media through emails and follow-up phone calls. We approached different media houses, including some that we had worked with before. Most of them responded positively, although not all covered the campaign.

Nation TV agreed to an interview with our chief executive, Gerald Mwangi. The person who organised the interview was a contact of Mr Mwangi. She was not offered anything for doing this. However, we recommend having a budget for media initiatives, to fund media training and awards for the best coverage of older people's issues as a token of appreciation.

Anticipating questions

We prepared written notes for Mr Mwangi and ran a rehearsal using the notes and our Age Demands Action statement. Through the rehearsal we anticipated any questions that might be asked and went through the possible responses.

A week before the interview, we sent the interviewer an email about the campaign and provided background information about HelpAge Kenya.

The programme was a live breakfast-time call-in show on 29 September. The interview with Mr Mwangi lasted 30 minutes. The discussion centred mainly on three issues: the rights of older people (in view of killings associated with allegations of witchcraft), Kenya's draft National Policy on Older Persons and Ageing, and social protection for older people.



HelpAge Kenya

Barack Obama's grandmother supports Age Demands Action

HelpAge Kenya's Age Demands Action campaign included an older people's demonstration in Kisumu, organised with the Kenya Society for People with AIDS (KESPA), on 1 October.

Older people presented an appeal to the provincial director of medical services to improve health services for older people.

One of the supporters was Sarah Obama, grandmother of US president Barack Obama. She is pictured in the centre.

The interview raised public awareness of these issues. We received many phone calls from individuals and organisations wanting more information. People asked about older people's homes, resources for older people and how to fight for the rights of pensioners. Some wanted to know what the Government of Kenya was doing for people over 60 years old and what policies there were for the protection of older people. Other NGOs showed interest in our work and wanted to know how we could work together.

Our experience has shown that it is important to build relationships with media personalities, not just before an event such as Age Demands Action, but by keeping the relationship going and providing constant updates on issues affecting older people.

**Marion Ouma is Programme Officer, HelpAge Kenya, PO Box 34339, Nairobi 00100, Kenya.
Email: marion@helpagekenya.org**

Exposing elder abuse in cities in India

Sonali Sharma describes how HelpAge India used the media in their campaign to tackle the mistreatment of older people.

For centuries, respectful family relationships have been the cornerstone of India's culture. But now more older people are finding the courage to speak up about crime and abuse against them by their own families.

Nandwani, a 65-year-old widower, called HelpAge India's helpline to report a painful legal battle over property. He had been living with his son until mistreatment made staying there unbearable, and he moved into a flat. "All my life I did everything for my children," he told the helpline. "I don't blame my son. He is under the influence of his in-laws. They are powerful people and have political connections. What do I do?"

Spurred on by such examples, HelpAge India launched an innovative campaign with high-profile media coverage to challenge the abuse of older people.

The campaign began with some research. The organisation dug out data from crime records to find out the extent of elder abuse in three major cities. A disturbing picture emerged, particularly in the capital, Delhi.

They found that 13 per cent of Delhi's older people felt trapped in their own homes. Over half of older people in Delhi said they faced harassment at home or knew someone who did, mostly inflicted by their adult children.

The HelpAge India helpline provided further insights into older people's experiences. Some older people who had rung the helpline were willing to speak out about their mistreatment. With the research findings and individual case studies, HelpAge India took the story to the media.

An awareness-raising event was held on 15 June, World Elder Abuse Day, with a panel of speakers including a police officer, lawyer and senior citizen representatives. The story was quickly taken up in newspapers and television, reaching an audience of more than 13 million people.

Media coverage was complemented by awareness-raising and "silent advocacy". Older people were encouraged to network locally and keep a check on each other and their families in order to detect crimes against them.

Car stickers and badges with "Say No to Elder Abuse" were distributed to raise public awareness of the issue.

Within a few weeks, the Delhi police commissioner announced a first-ever security drive for older people in the capital. He guaranteed home visits to every older person to undertake security

audits and advise on protection measures such as door chains. He promised that the police would liaise with contractors installing security measures, to prevent older people from being targeted for fraud.

All in all this was one of HelpAge India's most successful campaigns. The joint voice of civil society, decision-makers and older people themselves resulted in immediate action.

Sonali Sharma is Deputy Director, Communications, HelpAge India, C-14 Qutab Institutional Area, New Delhi – 110016, India. Email: sonali@helpageindia.org



An older woman signs her support for "Say No to Elder Abuse" in Vishrantwadi, Pune.

How to get the media interested

How do you get the media to cover your stories in the way you want? This article suggests some approaches and techniques.

Media coverage is invaluable for publicising your organisation, the issues you are passionate about and the services you offer. It helps influence policy and raise funds – no one gives to an organisation they have never heard of. The challenge is not only how to get into the media, but how to get your message across in the way you want. Here are some guidelines:

Find out what the media wants

Journalists look for new stories and fresh angles on old ones. What can you offer them? What is new, interesting or unusual? What unique insights can you provide?

Develop a strategy

Work out why you want to have a profile in the media and what you will gain from it. Then work out how that is best achieved.

Be clear of your aim

First of all, know the difference between news and campaigning. Sometimes the media will support a particular campaign, especially if it is considered in the public's best interest, or if it exposes extreme injustice. Generally, however, journalists take their role as objective, impartial reporters seriously and are wary of campaigning.

Mentioning your organisation

Try to make sure that your organisation is named in any article or broadcast. People are more interested in supporting organisations they have heard of.

Journalists are not always willing to do this. You can spend a lot of time providing information to a journalist and setting up interviews, and in the end, very little mention of your organisation is made. Journalists will argue that this is their editorial policy, and they cannot be seen to be the "tool" of the NGO.

Where possible, make sure that interviewees mention your organisation's name at least once. After all, without your organisation, the issues being reported would rarely be raised.

Get to know the media

Which magazines, radio or TV programmes, or newspaper columns cover the work you do? Which are most used by the people you want to influence? These are the most important to you. Know who to contact, such as the news editor, features editor, online editor or producer.

Get to know journalists

Some journalists may seem intimidating at first but they are only people! Find out who is responsible for writing about what you do. Arrange an informal meeting. Ask them what kinds of stories they are interested in. Offer a potential story, such as a new report due out soon containing ground-breaking research. This is called a verbal pitch.

If the journalist is interested, follow up by sending them a written pitch within two days, setting out what stories you can offer, what background information you can provide and whether there are photos or case studies. You may not be able to offer them anything immediately but stay in touch. You both may be useful to each other in the future.

Know what is a good story

Ask yourself: Is this news? What is different? Why might anyone be interested?



HelpAge International

Decide what kind of piece

Consider different types of stories. For example, you could offer a news story, a feature (such as a profile, day-in-the-life or analysis) or an opinion piece (see page 14).

Work fast

Respond to calls from journalists promptly. Journalists need to work fast to meet deadlines. If you make their lives easier, they will want to work with you again.

Develop key messages

Work out the essence of what you want to say on a particular issue. Provide some key messages. For example, in a story calling for allowances for older carers, there might be four key messages on: the number of older carers; the problems they face; what you are calling for; and how you want that to happen.

Do not provide too much information. Do not present many statistics or complex data – it will overwhelm the reader or listener or they will lose interest. Present statistics imaginatively. For example: "The floods displaced [number of people] – that's equivalent to the population of [name of city]."



A march by older people, organised with Noble Cause Elder Care and Support, attracted local radio coverage in Amhara region, Ethiopia.

Identify a spokesperson

Identify someone who can speak to the media. This person should be articulate, well-informed and easy to reach. It will not necessarily be the chief executive or president – older people themselves are often most convincing.

Use media “hooks”

Use UN days, anniversaries of events, political events such as elections, or the launch of a new research report (see box).

Use the phone

If you have received no response from a journalist to an email or letter, try phoning them. Journalists receive so many pitches that you will need to bring yours to their attention.

Get feedback

After arranging an interview or providing information, find out how it was used, or if it was not used, why not. This will help you plan future media work.

“Hooks” to attract the media

- Take journalists to visit a project and interview older people
- Arrange for people to speak about older people's issues at special events organised by the local government, which the media will attend, such as religious ceremonies and provincial festivals
- Host a media breakfast to launch a new project or report
- Run a workshop for journalists, for example, with a panel discussion, high-profile speaker or film
- Run media awards for the best coverage of older people's issues
- Run competitions for students, such as drawing, poster or writing competitions
- Organise an eye-catching event with older people, such as a drama or demonstration
- Offer new angles on everyday stories, such as a child being cared for by a grandparent, who has excelled in their school exams
- Launch new research containing startling statistics
- Use anniversaries of events, such as one year since the government was elected – what has it done for older people? 50 years since independence – how are people who were young then doing now?
- Offer a fresh perspective on a topical issue such as an emergency, such as how “forgotten” older people are affected and how they are contributing to relief efforts
- Offer unusual or touching stories about amazing individuals, such as an older man who is caring for his sick son, or an older woman who has set up an older people's club
- Use international days such as:
 - International Women's Day (8 March)
 - World Water Day (22 March)
 - World Health Day (7 April)
 - International Day of Families (15 May)
 - World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (15 June)
 - International Day of Older Persons (1 October)
 - World AIDS Day (1 December)
 - Human Rights Day (10 December)

Change is in the air

What is social media?

Social media services such as blogs, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr enable people to interact with each other through the internet. People can send each other messages, photos or videos, either one-to-one, one-to-many, or, increasingly, many-to-many.

Globally, hundreds of millions of people use social media and the number is rising every day. These are some of the most popular services:

A **blog** (web log) is a website on which an individual or organisation posts regular updates. These can include news, comments, photos or videos. Readers can post their own comments, creating a discussion.

You can create a blog at:
www.blogger.com

You can read and comment on HelpAge International's blogs at:
www.helpage.org/blogs

Twitter is a micro-blogging service that enables people to exchange very short messages of up to 140 characters. Users send messages (known as tweets) to the Twitter website from their computer or mobile phone. They can restrict access to their friends or allow anyone to read them.
<http://twitter.com>

You can follow HelpAge tweets at:
<http://twitter.com/helpage>

Facebook is a social networking service. Members can send messages to their friends, join networks, form groups or become fans.
www.facebook.com

You can become a fan of HelpAge International at: www.helpage.org

YouTube is a video-sharing website and the world's most visited website. You can view HelpAge videos at:
www.youtube.com/helpage

Flickr is a photo-sharing website.
www.flickr.com

You can view hundreds of photos and stories about older people on flickr at:
www.flickr.com/agehelps

Technology is changing rapidly, so keep looking out for new services.

Sarah Marzouk looks at how citizen journalism is taking off, thanks to new technologies.

New technologies are transforming the way the media works. Social media such as blogs, Facebook and Twitter (see box) mean that people can reach mass audiences without having to go through traditional media such as newspapers, radio or TV.

Research reported in *New Scientist* in 2008 found that blogs, online maps and Twitter were better at getting information out during some emergencies than either the traditional news media or government emergency services.

New technologies also provide a way into the mainstream media. Most newspapers and broadcasting companies have online editions that include blogs and forums where viewers can post their own comments. For example, the BBC News website has a "Have your say" button on every page.

Stories that originate in social media can create a "buzz" and get picked up by the mainstream media. They sometimes play an important political role. In June 2009, foreign journalists were essentially barred from reporting the disputed Iran presidential election. Twitter allowed opposition supporters to communicate and organise protests, as well as to pass on information about what was happening to one another and the outside world.

New technologies have in fact given rise to a new form of journalism – citizen journalism. More and more people who are not professional journalists can now create and distribute their own media and contribute to the mainstream media.

Citizen journalism provides great opportunities for development organisations. If you are an older person or work for an older people's organisation, you could write about a local council meeting on your blog and spread your message that way.

You could read a newspaper article and point out any errors or omissions on an online forum to generate a debate. You could take a photo or make a video of an event such as a demonstration or the opening of a day centre, post it on Flickr or YouTube and publicise it to your contacts through Facebook or Twitter.

Twitter, in particular, can help to get the voices of older people in remote areas heard, because you do not need a computer to use it – just a mobile phone with internet connection.

Everyone has a story to tell. New technologies make it easier to get these stories heard.

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How can older people's voices reach further?

By using new technologies

Coverage in crisis

Why do we need media coverage of emergencies and how can we get it? This article provides some guidelines.

Media coverage of both new and ongoing emergencies is vital to show both the public and institutional donors what is happening, and to generate support. The media may not think of older people at all. We need them to highlight older people's needs – such as medication for chronic conditions and distribution of appropriate food and clothing – as well as their contribution to relief efforts.

Here are tips on getting media coverage for emergencies:

Invest in media relations If you want coverage of emergencies, you have to invest in training staff or employing freelancers, so include these costs in your funding applications.

Anticipate the need Identify journalists from key media outlets in your area. Establish a relationship with them and a reputation as a reliable source of information. Then it will be much easier to “activate” journalists’ attention if something unexpected happens. The first 24 hours after a crisis are crucial.

Keep up a dialogue Most journalists are not specialists in humanitarian issues. You can help by keeping them informed, particularly in longer-term emergencies. You could provide information about the emergency and statistics about older people on your website if you have one, together with contact details of experts for interviews.

Use numbers The long-running conflict in Darfur hit the headlines in 2005 when the UN put the number of people affected at one million. Landmark numbers give journalists “hooks” to hang their stories on. They answer the question that so often haunts long-term emergencies: “Why write about this today?”

Use quotes and stories A well-crafted quote can do the same as numbers. UN relief coordinator Jan Egeland gave reporters something to write about in March 2005 when he said that the death toll in DR Congo over the past six years amounted to “one tsunami every six



Vietnam Women's Union

Photos of emergencies show their devastating effect and older people's response.

months”. Quotes and stories by older people about what has happened to them are equally important for capturing the public's imagination.

Use photos Nothing sells a story like a good picture. Photographs show the devastating effect of an emergency and the desperate need people are in.

Ask for funding Include information about the cost of relief – for example, US\$12 will buy two mosquito nets – and explain how people can donate.

Be creative Follow the news agenda closely and find ways to fit what you are doing into it. If your budget allows, consider organising trips for reporters and photographers.

This article is adapted with permission from an article published by Alertnet.

More information:
[HelpAge International website](http://www.helpage.org/emergencies)
www.helpage.org/emergencies

Ageways 66: Ageing and emergencies
www.helpage.org/resources/regularpublications

Getting photos and case studies

In the immediate aftermath of an emergency, photos from aid agencies may be the only ones available.

How do you get good quality photos and stories while rushing to people's aid? The best way is to allocate someone specifically to this task, who has the necessary skills.

You could try using a local freelance photojournalist. Explain your needs – that you want to show the plight of older people affected by the emergency, while respecting their dignity, and that you need high-resolution photographs for print publications and websites.

Agree a daily rate in advance. If financial resources are scarce, you could ask the photojournalist if they would work for free in the first instance, when everyone is rallying round to help. The important thing is to get photos at the earliest phase. Waiting for funding to come may mean missed opportunities.

How to write a press release

A press release is a useful way of announcing a new report or political statement, as it helps to make sure it is reported accurately. This article describes how to write one.

A press release is effectively a news story written from your point of view. A journalist will use the information in it and may add other points of view.

The rule is: keep your press release simple, short, lively and clear. Think about what you want to say – what does it boil down to? Your story has to stand out from the crowd. Make sure that it is one or more of the following:

- new
- urgent
- unusual or unexpected
- timely
- of human interest
- a local perspective on a national news story
- supported by a famous person.

Put the date at the beginning of your press release and write an inviting headline. For example: “New study shows health services discriminate against older people” is more inviting than “New study on older people and health services”.

Start with the news. This is usually covered by the five Ws and one H: who, what, when, where, why and how. Do not begin with past history, background, complicated statistics, names of official organisations or general philosophical discourses about human nature. These turn people off.

For example: “Older people are discriminated against by health services, a new study shows”. This is more direct than: “[Name of organisation] recently carried out a study to find out how older people were treated by health facilities.”

Provide the rest of the information in an easy-to-follow way, putting the most important facts first. Make sure you include the name of your organisation. For example, the next sentence could read: “The study, carried out by [name of your organisation], asked 1,000 older people about their experiences of receiving healthcare.”

Humanise the story with quotes from older people or others. Show older people as active citizens able to change their own situation.

At the end of the news story, write “End”.

Then include your name and contact details, and the name and contact details of any people who may be available for interviews. Include any notes for editors, such as a brief description of your organisation and any useful background information.

Think about pictures too. Good photos, drawings or diagrams with useful captions make people more likely to start reading an article. Offer photos if possible (showing older people in active roles) and try to make sure your organisation is credited.

Before you send the press release, check it for accuracy. Ask a colleague to proofread it. Another pair of eyes will spot errors you never thought could exist. In particular, make sure names are spelt properly and titles are correct. Check your facts. Do not rely on internet sites such as Wikipedia, as anyone can put information on these. Official organisations’ sites are usually reliable.

If you are sending the press release by email, include it as part of the email so that it can be read straightaway. Make clear what it is in the subject line. For example: “Press release: New study shows health services discriminate against older people”.

Tips for good news writing

Keep it brief Try to say the most you can with the fewest words.

Use everyday language Use short, plain words, not long, fancy ones. For example, “bring about” not “engender”; “enough” not “an adequate number of”. Avoid jargon, bureaucratic language and too many abbreviations.

Use active verbs For example: “Older people will receive better healthcare”, not “Healthcare of older people will be improved”.

Prefer verbs to nouns Verbs help maintain the pace, while nouns can weigh prose down. For example: “The free bus service will enable older people to participate in social activities”, not “The free bus service will enable the participation of older people in social activities.”

Use positive examples A reader will be more motivated to support your organisation if they can help an older person “make new friends”, rather than helping them “become less lonely”.

Edit When you have written everything you think you need to say, go back and cut it. Then take a break, read it again and cut it again.

Adapted with thanks from the Media Trust.

Managing the broadcast interview

Many people are nervous at the idea of being interviewed by radio or television media but there is no need to be if you are well prepared.

Radio or television interviews can be either pre-recorded or broadcast live. The vast majority are straightforward, fact-finding discussions which offer a great opportunity for you to put forward your views and highlight the work of your organisation. Here are some suggestions to help you prepare:

Do a little research Find out about its audience and the journalist who will interview you. Adjust your answers and style accordingly.

Know the “hook” and the “angle”

The “hook” is the reason the journalist is doing the story. The “angle” is the side of the story that is to be covered.

For example, a story on the possible links between climate change and drought in Ethiopia could have been the hook for a news report for the Copenhagen summit. The angle could have been how the continuing quest for water for livestock is affecting older pastoralists and young children.

Prepare the interview Have ready a strong key message, two or three startling statistics, a unique viewpoint, a human angle – and some new information that will interest the listener or viewer. But keep it simple. More in-depth analysis is for print media. You could write down your main points and take your notes with you.

Identify tricky questions Prepare a response to any difficult questions. Saying “no comment” sounds as if you are covering something up. Try the ABC technique: Address the question; Bridge to something more comfortable; Communicate the answer you want to give.

For example, if asked why it has taken your organisation a long time to re-build houses after an emergency, you could say:

“Yes it has; however, thousands of children are back in school, thousands more people have had their livelihoods restored, wide-scale disease was averted, and health facilities are better than before. Thanks to overwhelming support from the public and donors we will be able to build better houses so that in future people will be better prepared to withstand natural disasters.”

Use the “so what?” test If what you plan to say does not sound exciting to you, it will not interest your audience either. Can you make your responses sound brighter?

Rehearse Ask a colleague or friend to throw likely questions at you. Practise your responses a few times. Aim to sound relaxed and friendly, as if you were making an important point to a friend. Speak a little more slowly and clearly than you would in normal conversation.

Most radio or television interviews are straightforward, fact-finding discussions.

Mention your organisation Where possible, start answers with “[Name of your organisation] believes/ has discovered/ demands...” Obviously this has to sound natural and may not always be appropriate. Try to name your organisation three times in the interview. The listener can then be in no doubt who spoke so eloquently on older people’s rights by the end!

Do not go “off the record” Play safe – do not tell the journalist anything you would not want published or broadcast.

Know when to say “no” Understand what the implications are of talking to the media. If you think it is not a good time, or you do not have enough facts, or the story may cast your organisation in a negative light, then tell the reporter that you do not have anything to say at this stage. Try to follow up and offer something else.



Charles Knox/HelpAge International

Writing an opinion piece

An opinion piece, or op-ed, is a good way to get media coverage, as this article explains.



Simon de Trey-White/HelpAge International

As well as news and features, opinion pieces are a way into the media.

An opinion piece, often known as an op-ed, is a newspaper or magazine article that expresses the opinions of someone, usually a guest writer.

Opinion pieces are a great way to promote your advocacy and campaigning messages. They do not need to contain news (though this can be helpful), because the main purpose is to express your opinion. You need to provide a thoughtful, balanced piece with a clear point.

For example, T Ngugi, HelpAge's Africa Regional Communications Officer, wrote an op-ed for the Daily Nation in Kenya last year on the global food crisis. He provided a new angle on this topical issue, arguing for social pensions and other cash grants to guarantee poor people a minimum standard of living.

Before you begin to send anything, contact the editor. Find out what the chances are of having your piece published. It may help to offer a "hook" (see page 9). For example: "Next week is International Day of Older Persons – have you anything planned? I can provide a piece about older people's pensions that you may be interested in."

You should know within a few weeks if your piece will be published. The editor may contact you to let you know if it has been approved or rejected. They may keep your piece for a while and publish it on a "quiet news day". Call the editor to ask for feedback but do not harass them.

If your piece is published, try to find out what impact it has had. Readers may respond by writing letters to the editor that are published in following editions. Some readers may contact you directly. This is all excellent news. Even if people disagree with you, you have put the issue in the public arena and created a debate.

Tips to help you get started

Follow the rules Every newspaper has specific requirements for op-eds. Contact the editor to find out what the guidelines are and stick to them.

Write clearly Write in the style of the newspaper. Generally, short, to-the-point sentences are the most appropriate. Do not write in an academic style unless you are writing for an academic publication.

Be persuasive

Humanise your point. A good structure is to start with a story about an individual older person. Point out that many more older people are similarly affected and explain the nature and extent of the problem. Then describe what your organisation is doing, what the solutions are, including what older people themselves are doing, and how the reader (or others, such as the government) can help. If you are discussing a problem, it is important also to offer a solution.

Keep to the point As with any submitted writing, the editor may remove entire paragraphs. Try to prevent this from happening by keeping your piece short and to-the-point.

Describe yourself Write a short, biographical piece. Just one line will do, such as: [Your name] is [position] of [name of organisation].

Provide contact details If you want readers to contact you or find out more about your work, include your full contact details – name, job title, organisation name, office phone number, email address, and website address, if you have one.

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(SAGE)
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Europe and Central Asia

Age Action Ireland
Age Concern England and Help
the Aged (*working as one charity*)
Caritas Malta HelpAge
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Age Demands Action

Older people in 40 countries took part in this year's Age Demands Action campaign, supported by the HelpAge network.

Older people met with decision-makers on 1 October 2009, International Day of Older Persons, to call for support to improve their lives.

They held meetings with presidents, prime ministers, local councillors and refugee camp officials, in places ranging from the Thar Desert in India to the Ethiopian Highlands.

They won pledges for an increase in the old-age allowance in Bangladesh, a national policy on ageing in Fiji, a law of the elderly in Vietnam, and approval of a national policy on ageing in Ghana.

These national actions were unified by a global call for older people's human right to be recognised as equal members of society.

This call was signified by people raising their index finger to invoke Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights".

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



FOPDEV/HelpAge International



HelpAge Korea/HelpAge International



YEL/HelpAge International

Older people around the world raised their index fingers at one o'clock on 1 October to show their support for Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Here they are in Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia.

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.

Ageways exchanges practical information on ageing and development, particularly good practice developed in the HelpAge network. It is published twice a year.

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Helping to create a world in which older people flourish