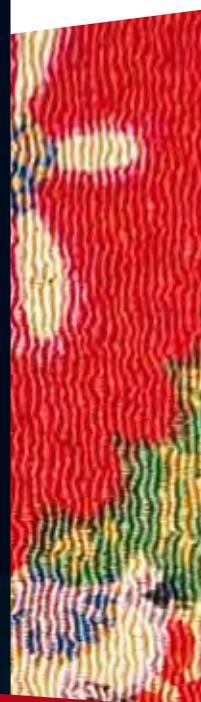


# Ageways

Practical issues in ageing and development  
Issue 75 / July 2010



## Focus on older women

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[Tackling violent threats](#)

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**HelpAge  
International**

*age helps*

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### Future issues

Issue 76 (Dec 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

Gregoria Zevallos Quispe, 85, makes  
a living by growing and selling flowers  
in a village near Ayacucho, Peru.

Photo: Antonio Olmos/HelpAge International

# Comment

## Steps to ending discrimination

Welcome to *Ageways* 75. Just before this issue went to press, the UN adopted a new resolution on eliminating violence against women. It expresses deep concern about violence against older women and urges governments and UN agencies to collect data broken down by sex and age.

This recognition of older women's situation is important. For while older women are often the backbone of their families, they are also some of the most vulnerable and invisible in society because of the combined effects of age and gender-based discrimination.

This issue of *Ageways* discusses the impact of discrimination on older women and highlights their abilities and contributions. Like the UN, it calls for better data as a starting point for developing more effective programmes. We hope you find it inspiring and welcome your response.

Celia Till and Bridget Sleap  
Editors, *Ageways*

# Letters

## Action in the Philippines

May I share the information that if associations of older persons are undertaking community development activities and providing social welfare services, they could subscribe to the newsletter of FundsforNGOs.org ([www.fundsforngos.org](http://www.fundsforngos.org))

I am president of the Central Visayas Association for Volunteer Effort (CVAVE) in the Philippines. We have an active membership of 129 retirees. We started our "Age Demands Action" campaign when the retirees passed an appeal to congress requesting an old-age pension for life for 70-year-olds. The bill reached its third reading but was not approved, as the government does not have enough funds.

We will lobby with legislators and local executives for an increase in the budget allocated to older persons. The law says that government agencies must appropriate 1 per cent of their budget for differently-abled persons and older persons.

We have also recommended the establishment of a geriatric ward in every government hospital to cater for indigent older patients. This has not been approved yet so we will follow up.

During quarterly assemblies, we invite medical practitioners to talk on health issues. We also invite officials from the government insurance offices and Phil Health (the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation) to discuss new policies and benefits.

I am 72 years old and a retiree from the Department of Social Welfare and Development where I was the regional director in Central Visayas.

*Martiniana Mercado (by email)*

## Cleaning to care for grandchildren

Maqbool is a widow in her seventies. She had ten children but has lost four of them. She works for others doing household chores such as dishwashing, washing clothes and cleaning. From *Fajar* (morning prayer) at 6.00am until 5.00-6.00pm she works hard for her orphaned grandchildren.

She was living a happy life while her husband was alive and did not need to work. About seven years ago her husband died. Last year, her daughter died, leaving three children. She now has responsibility for two families – her son's and her daughter's children.

She told me: "I thank the people who give me work because the majority of people don't want an old person to do their housework."

"SSI works for older people and advises me at difficult times. I was so depressed when I lost my daughter last year. SSI supported me like a family member. I have no other source of income except working and I am thankful that God has given me strength to support my grandchildren."

*Fariha Abdullah, Manager,  
Sustainable Systems Initiatives (SSI),  
Elderly Care Project, 143, G-3, Street 13,  
Phase 2, Hayatabad, Peshawar, Pakistan.  
Email: farihaabdullah@hotmail.com*

## What the media can do

In the last ten years, the older population in India has increased at more than double the rate of the general population. It is the media that can highlight the situation that will be created by increasing numbers of elders and help change the present indifferent attitude of society and government towards elders.

Older people have done a lot for society during their prime time. However, even after government orders, younger generations sometimes occupy the seats reserved for elders on buses or the separate queues for elders in post offices, hospitals, dispensaries and so on. The media has to create an atmosphere of respect for older people.

Again, after having a regular routine for 30-40 years, there is a vacuum in elders' lives. Some are able to do useful work of their choice but others are just killing time. The media can create avenues for elders to express themselves and feel useful. Each newspaper and TV channel can give space exclusively for elders, for example, on healthcare, safety, mobility or second careers.

The media may also appoint some elders as correspondents to provide material about their associations and pay them an honorarium. This will give them not only financial support but also a feeling of usefulness.

*M V Ruparelia, India (by email)*

## How to sponsor a radio programme?

We are looking for sponsorship to allow us to spread information on the radio about the situation of older people in the Copperbelt Province here in Zambia.

*Francis Mulubwa, Chairman,  
Ndeke Community Caregivers Group,  
PO Box 240264, Ndola, Zambia.*

**Editor's reply:** Have any *Ageways* readers got any suggestions for finding sponsorship or persuading radio stations to broadcast their material without payment? One idea might be to ask the radio station to find a commercial sponsor to fund a programme specifically for older people.

If any readers have ideas, please write to the editor and we will publish them in the next issue.

*"I wasn't sent to school because they used to say: 'She is a girl. There is no reason to send her to school. She must help do the house-work.' I learnt to read and write by my own will."*

*Catalina Choque Condori, 73, member of the Nuevo Amanecer (New Dawn) older people's organisation in La Paz, Bolivia. She has now started her own business.*

See also the article on page 7 about literacy training in Cambodia.

## 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](mailto:ctill@helpage.org)

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

Letters may be edited.

## 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](http://www.helpage.org/aboutus/contactus)

# New publications

## Cash transfers in emergencies: a practical field guide

This publication provides a step-by-step guide to planning and managing cash grants to people affected by natural disasters, based on the experience of HelpAge International and other humanitarian organisations.

*HelpAge International East Asia and Pacific, 2010*

Can be downloaded from:  
[www.helpage.org/resources](http://www.helpage.org/resources)



## Forgotten workforce: older people and their right to decent work

This report shows that most people in low- and middle-income countries work in old age, often in appalling conditions. It calls for their right to decent work to be protected.

*HelpAge International London, 2009*

Can be downloaded from:  
[www.helpage.org/resources](http://www.helpage.org/resources)





# Seeing the difference

***Bridget Sleap explains how age discrimination and gender-based discrimination affect older women and suggests how programmes can respond to their different experiences.***

Shiduki is a 71-year-old widow who lives in northern Tanzania. After her husband died, his family turned her out of her house. For seven years she lived alone in a house that let in the rain. "People despised me," she says, "because I had nothing. I even received death threats."

Shiduki's situation is not exceptional. She is just one of millions of women around the world who experience the combined impact of ageism and sexism as they get older.

Ageism (the stereotyping of older people and prejudice against them) and age discrimination (when someone is treated differently because of their age) continue to be tolerated across the world, although they may manifest themselves differently in different societies and cultures contexts. When ageism is combined with sexism, older women face a double layer of discrimination. After a lifetime of being discriminated against because they are female, they then have to cope with also being discriminated against because they are old.

This is, of course, not to ignore the fact that older men also have to cope with age discrimination and the sometimes negative consequences of masculine roles dictated by society and culture. However, older women are affected disproportionately.

## **Enormous contribution**

There are a number of ways in which older women experience age and gender-based discrimination. First, older women make an enormous contribution to their families and communities as carers, income-earners, educators and mediators, but their vital role in society is widely overlooked.

In this issue there are examples of older women using conflict resolution skills to ease ethnic tensions, learning to read and write so that they can run businesses and working to prevent drug abuse among younger people.



***Respecting older women's rights***

***protects others too***

Yet older women remain invisible in major development processes such as the Millennium Development Goals and are rarely included in interventions to address gender inequality, such as those to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. In fact, as women become older, they are often considered no longer economically or reproductively useful and seen as a burden on their families.

Women live longer than men: for every 100 women over 80 years old there are only 59 men. As a result, older women are likely to live more years in ill-health than older men. They are also more likely to live on their own, less likely to be married and more likely to be widowed than older men. While some older women may choose to live alone, others do not, and become more vulnerable and isolated as a result.

In many societies, being widowed or single, either because of divorce or never having married, profoundly changes older women's status in society. This can result in discrimination in both law and practice, particularly in terms of property and inheritance rights. Inheritance laws often deny women the right to own or inherit property. Family members and others often force widows off their land or seize their property.

The impact of gender-based discrimination against girls and younger women is carried into old age. In many countries, older women have lower literacy rates than older men because, as girls, they were not allowed to go to school. Being unable to read, write or do calculations can seriously limit older women's ability to obtain information, access services or take part in social, economic or political activities.



Kate Holt/HelpAge International

**Caring for children is a responsibility often taken on by older women, as with this grandmother in Uganda.**



Similarly, because many older women have spent their lives doing unpaid caring or domestic work or working in the informal sector, they have had less opportunity than men to contribute to pension schemes and are less likely to have any social security in old age. In Latin America, for example, only half as many women as men receive pensions.

Gender-based discrimination in employment means that women who have been employed are likely to have earned less than men. Statutory retirement ages that are lower for women can discriminate against those who wish to continue working but are forced to retire at an earlier age than men.

The combination of ageism and sexism can result in violence and abuse. Many older women experience violence in their homes or in institutional settings such as care homes. A study in Kenya showed that 60 per cent of older women were being abused by their daughters-in-law who were preventing them from getting regular food, warm clothes, medical attention and adequate shelter.

### **Diverse experiences**

While gender-based and age discrimination are universal it is important to remember that all older women are different and they experience these issues in different ways. Older women in rural communities may have very different day-to-day concerns to those living in cities. Life for a woman in her 60s can be dramatically different to life for a woman in her 80s or 90s.

The health status of older women varies enormously. Older indigenous women, older widows, older women caring for children, women facing retirement – the differences between these women can be as great as the differences between women and men.

If NGOs and governments are to respond effectively to the varied lives of older women and men, this diversity needs to be understood and taken into account. Development programmes, policies and laws across all sectors need to be specifically designed to counter this mix of age and gender-based discrimination so that older women can enjoy their rights alongside everyone else.

### **What can we do?**

One of the main barriers to improving programmes and designing laws and policies that effectively respond to the lives of older women and men is the lack of data and information. It is not enough to know, for example, that 70 per cent of older people do not have access to clean water. If we can break this down into how many older women and how many older men have no access, we can start to think about what the underlying problems are, and how to design our programme in a way that does not reinforce any existing gender inequalities.

A good example is in Northern Uganda where assessments in 2010 of extremely vulnerable individuals displaced by conflict show the high proportion of extremely vulnerable older women: 56 per cent of extremely vulnerable individuals were women over 60 compared with 19 per cent who were older men.

This is an extremely high proportion relative to the total population both in terms of gender and age. Given these statistics, any resettlement programme to enable people to return to their villages of origin must specifically address the barriers that are preventing older women from returning.

Another good strategy is to team up with local women's organisations in the areas where we work. They may not have programmes dedicated to older women but they will understand the dynamics and issues facing women. Working together will help women's organisations understand more about ageing and help ageing organisations understand more about women.

References are available on request.

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# Tackling violent threats

**Older women in Tanzania who have been at risk of violence are now being treated with more respect, writes Nyasigo Emmanuel.**

Belief in witchcraft is strong in Sukumaland, north-eastern Tanzania. Disturbingly, this belief often leads to the persecution of people believed to be witches. Most of those accused of witchcraft are older women.

Witchcraft allegations are often linked to disputes over property. Tanzania's complicated inheritance laws mean that women can lose ownership of their houses and land when they become widowed, making them extremely vulnerable. Unexplained events such as crop failures or HIV-related illnesses are often attributed to witchcraft. Certain physical characteristics such as red eyes, a common legacy for women who have spent a lifetime cooking over smoky stoves, are also associated with witchcraft.

But attitudes have been changing, thanks to a long-running project coordinated by HelpAge International, with funding from Comic Relief. Between November 2004 and December 2007, in nine districts of Sukumaland, the number of witchcraft-related killings fell from 372 to two, the number of threatening letters from 564 to none, and the number of rights abuses related to inheritance, marriage and civil rights from 464 to 41.

## Working with communities

How has this come about? The key has been to work with local communities to raise awareness of women's rights, as well as providing practical support to vulnerable older women.

HelpAge's local partners have helped to set up older people's committees in 90 villages. The partners have trained committee members in women's rights and raised awareness of the harmful consequences of witchcraft allegations, misconceptions about HIV and witchcraft, and traditional practices such as widows being inherited like any other family property, having no right to inheritance and being physically humiliated.

With the older people's committees they have educated local communities about these issues, using drama, dance and songs. They have held awareness-raising meetings with influential groups,

including traditional healers and militias who have fuelled the killings, and with local government officials, religious leaders, civil society organisations and the media.

In each village, about 15-20 older people have been trained as paralegal advisers to provide advice and support on legal matters. Between 2004 and 2008, paralegal advisers dealt with 19,800 cases, nearly half of them disputes over inheritance and land rights, mostly brought by older women.

On a practical level, HelpAge's partners have mobilised local communities to build houses for women who have been threatened, attacked or evicted. They have made fuel-efficient stoves to demonstrate that red eyes, health problems and early deaths often associated with witchcraft have more human explanations and practical solutions. They have also supported income-generating activities to make older women less dependent.

This combination of approaches has gone a long way towards improving older women's security. As Dotto Masabuli, 67, from Kituli village says: "I can speak up in front of other people now because I have my own house. My grandchildren respect me because I have something to leave them."

Pasikazia Makelema, 57, from Shinyanga district, says: "The programme has at last moved people away from this belief. Now people are talking about the issue openly. I can go to village meetings without feeling afraid."

While continuing to work with local communities, HelpAge is strengthening coalitions with national organisations such as the National Organization for Legal Assistance, Tanzania Media Women's Association and the Women's Legal Aid Centre to encourage more government interventions to protect older women.

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**Nyasigo Emmanuel is Communications Officer, HelpAge International, Tanzania (address on page 15).**

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**With thanks to Leonard Ndamgoba and Flavian Bifandimu for information for this article.**

### More information:

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**Building houses for women who have been dispossessed of property has helped to improve their security.**



Emma Judge/HelpAge International

# Changing lives through literacy

**Jamie Pugh describes how adult literacy classes are opening up new opportunities for older women in Cambodia.**

Meur Sang, a 58-year-old woman from Cambodia, is looking forward to the future. "I'm going to set up a small grocery shop in front of the house and help my daughter with the accounts," she says. "And I'll help my grandchildren with their schoolwork."

These are things that Meur Sang has not been able to do, because she could not read or write. But that is changing. Each week she attends a two-hour adult literacy class at a *salachortien* (social and religious centre) in her village of Tuol Prom in Battambang province. Her new skills will enable her to expand her source of livelihood beyond the one-hectare rice farm that leaves her and her family short of food for three or four months each year.

The class is one of thirty being held in villages in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces, supported by HelpAge International, with funding from the European Commission and Age UK. The idea for the classes came from discussions with members of older people's associations.

## More older women

Because so many men were killed during the Khmer Rouge regime of the 1970s, older women in Cambodia outnumber older men. There are twice as many women over 60 as men, and two-thirds of these women are widows. As a result, most members of older people's associations are women.

Many of these women cannot read or write because they never went to school. In Cambodia, almost four-fifths of older women had no schooling, with the result that seven in ten women aged over 65 cannot read or write. Many older women have to support themselves, but their opportunities to earn an income or play an active part in society are limited.

Rumnea Roth/HelpAge International



**Literacy classes are popular with older women because they encourage learning by doing and are timed to fit in with their daily routines.**

Women in the older people's associations gave many reasons for wanting to learn to read and write. They wanted to understand signs at bus stations and health centres, read posters, books and government information, follow instructions, for example, on growing vegetables, and do calculations for shopping and running businesses. Literacy skills would also mean they could write to adult children who were living away and help their grandchildren with homework.

HelpAge worked with provincial coordinators of the Department of Education to develop a six-month course and recruit and train village volunteer teachers. The teachers are retired schoolteachers and monks living in the village, who work on a voluntary basis.

The classes are small, with just ten students in each, and the teaching methods encourage learning by doing. The classes are offered free of charge to members of older people's associations. Nearly all the students are women over 40.

An important aspect of the classes is their timing to fit in with the women's daily routines. They take place either in the middle of the day or at the end of the afternoon, allowing the women time to cook, feed their animals, work in the rice fields or sell cooked food. Sometimes the classes are rescheduled if the women need to attend religious events or put in extra time in the fields.

Thanks to her own determination, and the enthusiasm and commitment of her teacher, Meur Sang has not missed a single class. "I have reached the 21st session," she says, "and my reading and writing skills have really come on."

**Jamie Pugh is Programme Officer, HelpAge International, London (address on back page). Email: [jpugh@helpage.org](mailto:jpugh@helpage.org)**

**With thanks to Touch Sok, Project Coordinator and Rumnea Roth, Area Coordinator, HelpAge International, Cambodia for providing information for this article.**

**More information: Touch Sok, Project Coordinator, HelpAge International, Cambodia (address on page 15). Email: [toch-hai@online.com.kh](mailto:toch-hai@online.com.kh)**





Older women can be encouraged to lead discussions, as in this older people's meeting in Bangladesh.

Abu Riyadh Khan/Resource Integration Centre

# How to include older women

Here are ideas for making sure that you include older women at all stages of your programme, from carrying out consultations to monitoring and evaluation.

By including older women in development projects you are helping to redress gender inequalities that have existed throughout their lives, and that are exacerbated in old age.

Projects that empower older women, for example, through education, healthcare, micro-credit or legal advice, not only improve the quality of life of individual older women and help them fulfil their right to an adequate standard of living, but also benefit their families and communities because they can contribute so much more.

## Planning a programme

Take steps to include older women at all stages of working with a community, from assessing people's needs to organising activities. Invite older women to events and give them the opportunity to express their opinions. Design a programme that takes their needs into account.

Consider supporting older women to set up their own self-help groups to organise social and development activities. Include older women in monitoring and evaluation.

When you are reporting, indicate whether the source is a man or a woman.

## Collecting data

When collecting data, always record people's age group and sex (see page 12). This will highlight the different experiences of different groups of people. For example, in wellbeing ranking exercises, older women, especially those who are widowed or single, have been found to be among the least well off, according to local definitions.

Also think about how you will collect the data. Individual interviews, followed by focus group discussions, generally work best with older women.

When interviewing older women, consider the age and sex of the interviewer and interpreter. Older women may be reluctant to discuss some issues with men.

*“We must make the case for human rights-centred development. We can't let aggregate numbers obscure inequality.”*

Mary Robinson, President, Realizing Rights  
and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights



## Meetings and workshops

Older women who have had little education and who have a low social status are often hesitant to speak in front of others. In mixed groups, men often dominate discussions. Here are some ways you can encourage older women to take part in meetings and workshops:

- Arrange meetings at times that fit in with women's daily routines.
- Specify that you want equal numbers of men and women, or reserve a minimum number of places for women.
- Consider having separate meetings for men and women.
- Direct questions to different people, not just the dominant speakers.
- Sit at the same level as the women.
- Avoid using written materials if members of the group lack literacy skills.
- Provide opportunities for women to lead discussions, facilitate meetings and summarise results.
- Spend time at the beginning of the meeting helping women relax before moving on to discussing problems.
- Allow women to speak without interrupting them, and thank them for sharing their ideas with others.
- Encourage women to prioritise their problems and needs in a group and let them know what they can expect to happen next.
- Provide opportunities for women to stand for election in older people's associations.
- Train women in skills such as leadership, communication, advocacy, facilitation and book-keeping.

## Emergency relief

Men and women face different experiences in emergencies. Older women are less likely than older men to have a source of income. Widows may be left isolated and reliant on the goodwill of relatives or neighbours.

Older women are far more likely than older men to be caring for children. Without an income or access to services they may be unable to provide for children in their care.

Social or religious customs may restrict older women's movement, or they may be hampered by traditional forms of dress, making it harder for them to escape from sudden emergencies such as floods or hurricanes. This is more likely happen with older women than younger women because they are more likely to observe traditional codes of dress and behaviour.

Without appropriate protection, older women are at risk of sexual abuse and violence. Consider having separate areas for men and women in emergency shelters and collection centres to protect their privacy and reduce the risk of abuse. Do not mix older women and men without the informed permission of the older women. Provide separate sleeping areas and toilets for men and women.

Try to provide clothing for older women that is acceptable to them. Some older

women may find it difficult to abandon traditional forms of dress.

Recognise older women's role in society and the skills they can offer. Older women, in particular, often provide comfort to others affected by disasters.

In times of food shortages, it is generally older women who know how to collect, process and prepare wild foods. Older women have an important role in food preparation and hygiene and should be included in any training.

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**With thanks to Annie Nut, Programme Manager, HelpAge International, Cambodia, Peter Morrison, Regional Programme Manager, HelpAge International, East Asia/Pacific and Chattip Sorulump, Regional Communications Officer, HelpAge International, East Asia/Pacific for information for this article.**

Other sources include the following HelpAge publications, which can be downloaded from: [www.helpage.org](http://www.helpage.org)

*Older people's associations in community disaster risk reduction: a resource book on good practice* (2007)

*Establishing and working with older people's associations in Cambodia: a practical guideline* (2006)

*Participatory research with older people: a sourcebook* (2002)

*Addressing the nutritional needs of older people in emergency situations in Africa: ideas for action* (2001)

*Older people in disasters and humanitarian crises: guidelines for best practice* (1999)



Cindy Powell/HelpAge International

**Older women line up for aid after this year's earthquake in Haiti.**

# Beating the stigma of HIV

**The HIV epidemic places a heavy demand for care on older women.**

**Le Thi Dan, age 70, from Thai Nguyen province, Vietnam, describes how groups of older women are supporting each other and educating their communities.**

Before my daughter-in-law died, my life was pleasant. My husband and I had small pensions. Sometimes our children gave us money or gifts.

In 2004, my daughter-in-law died. People said that she had died of AIDS. After that, my health became worse because of my depression. I found out that I had a severe lung infection. It was very painful.

When our neighbours learnt that my daughter-in-law had died of AIDS, they stopped coming to see us. They didn't allow their children or grandchildren to play with my grandchildren. They said that as my daughter-in-law had died of AIDS, other family members might also be infected. Because of the stigma in our community, I didn't even dare to tell our relatives about my daughter-in-law's illness.

When my grandson was old enough to go to kindergarten, no kindergarten would accept him because his mother had died of AIDS.

My son became bored and started wandering about doing nothing and coming home very late at night. He went to the hospital for an HIV test and told me there was no problem. Even so, the whole family lived with depression and stigma.

## Sharing experiences

In 2005, I joined a club for people affected by HIV and AIDS. Since then, I've felt much better. My family has received regular visits from other club members and volunteers. We share the difficulties and joys in life with each other.

At club meetings, we have learnt how to look after ourselves and how to care for people living with HIV. The club also organises tours. Many of us never thought that, during our lifetime, we would have a chance to go on a tour. Every quarter, the club organises health check-ups for members.

The best thing is that the club management board has persuaded the local kindergarten to allow my grandson to go there. We are all much happier, especially my son, who has gone back to his job.

With the knowledge and skills I have acquired from the club, I have become a community communicator. I advise young people to stop using drugs.

Whenever someone in a club member's family dies, I and other members visit them and help them organise the funeral. I also often tell other members in the local Buddhism Association about the club so that people can understand more about our club.

My only wish now is to take my grandson to have an HIV test, so that I can be sure of his status. The club will help me with this.

---

With thanks to Tran Bich Thuy, National Project Coordinator, Programme Management Team, Vietnam Women's Union, 39 Hang Chuoi, Hanoi, Vietnam. Email: tranbichthuy2@yahoo.com

The empathy clubs are supported by the Vietnam Women's Union and HelpAge International with funding from the Big Lottery Fund (BIG).



**Empathy clubs provide an opportunity for families affected by HIV to support each other.**

**With new knowledge**

**I can help others**



# Easing ethnic tensions

**The collapse of the Soviet Union and tension between different ethnic groups has left older people in Kyrgyzstan feeling insecure and disillusioned. Dina Muhataeva, age 62, describes how older women are helping to ease these problems.**

I have been interested in human rights ever since I had to give up my job as an accountant after I was injured in a car accident at the age of 38. I started helping people in my community apply for identity documents, settle disputes over land or property and take up complaints against the authorities.

In 2006, both my husband and my son died. I live alone but my children visit me often.

In 2008, I was invited to a meeting by HelpAge International and Babushka Adoption, two organisations working with older people in Kyrgyzstan, in my village of Jany Pahta, Sokuluk.

I took part in training sessions where I learnt how to organise seminars, work with the media, conduct surveys and network with other groups. I became recognised in the community and even at international level after appearing on TV.

## Setting up a group

Back in my village I set up an older people's group of 12 men and eight women, called Yrys (which means "Prosperity" in Kyrgyz). Six of the women members formed a self-help group to promote better relations between different ethnic groups. Women in their roles as mothers and housekeepers turn out to be more successful at resolving conflicts.

***"Women in their roles as mothers and housekeepers turn out to be more successful at resolving conflicts."***



**Dina Muhataeva (left) with refugee Jeengul Zabirowa (right).**

HelpAge International

The women are from different backgrounds, including internal migrants from the south of the country and ethnic Kyrgyz refugees who have recently moved here from Tajikistan. The group helps unite these women by encouraging them to spend time together celebrating public holidays, cooking national dishes and organising weddings and funerals.

We sew quilts and blankets and grow vegetables which we sell to raise money for the group. We use the money to celebrate occasions such as Older People's Day, New Year and *Nooruz* (spring equinox) and distribute food and clothes to vulnerable older people. Together with the village government we have created the Council of Inter-Ethnic Cohesion to try to prevent inter-ethnic conflict and support vulnerable village residents.

For example, we have helped an 82-year-old woman and her son, who are ethnic Kyrgyz refugees from Tajikistan. They were finding it difficult to adjust to their new environment, even within their refugee community.

Perhaps it was because the woman had left her husband, which is not accepted in her culture, or because her son had a mental disability. They had difficulty applying for housing and medical care because they did not have proper identification documents. They were living in an old abandoned building up two flights of steep stairs which became icy in winter.

We organised a marathon to raise funds to help them. Thanks to our efforts, the son has received treatment which has improved his health. We also asked the village council for a plot of land for a house. We have been given the land and we are now applying to different organisations for assistance with construction materials.

Dina Muhataeva was interviewed by Aisuluu Kamchybekova, Communications Officer, HelpAge International, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (address on page 15). Email: [akamchybekova@helpageinternational.org](mailto:akamchybekova@helpageinternational.org)

The older people's groups are being supported as part of a project funded by TACIS-IBPP European Commission.

# How to collect data

**This article gives guidelines on collecting data broken down by age and sex and presents some basic data on older women and men.**

You will need to collect data at the beginning, during and end of a project to help you plan the project and see how it is going. Data is also essential for advocacy.

Exactly what data you need will depend on what you are setting out to do. At the very minimum, however, you should collect data broken down by age and sex, since men and women of different ages may have very different experiences.

For example, a survey of people's access to credit facilities, carried out by the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria, showed that far fewer older people than younger people had access to micro-credit. Only 10 per cent of people over 60 were accessing micro-credit, compared with 43 per cent of people aged 30-44.

These figures are significant, but they do not present the full picture. For the survey also showed that within the 10 per cent there was a big difference between access by older men and older women. Only 4 per cent of older women had access to micro-credit, compared with 12 per cent of older men.

Knowing this, you could start to ask questions not only about why so few older people were accessing micro-credit, but why so few older women, in particular, had access. You could investigate what the issues were and how they could be resolved, and plan an intervention accordingly.

Having data broken down by age and sex is also important if you want to work with specialist agencies, such as women's organisations.

For example, data collected by HelpAge International staff on abuse of older women in Bolivia, Mozambique and Tanzania was presented to the committee that monitors implementation the UN Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.



**Men's and women's groups compare their wealth ranking in Cambodia.**

HelpAge International

As a result, the committee recommended that the governments of these countries specifically include older women in their programmes to implement the Convention. In the next round of reporting, these governments will have to report on what they are doing to protect older women's rights.

You can collect data from a number of sources (see box). For more specific data you may need to carry out your own research.

If you carry out your own survey, ideally, include the following age groups: 50-59, 60-69, 70-79 and 80-plus. At least include: 60-79 and 80-plus.

Collecting data by sex is simple. Ask or note whether the person is male or female.

In Kyrgyzstan, for example, HelpAge International has used the National Statistical Committee and reports from donors and other development agencies. HelpAge International is currently collaborating with UNFPA, UNICEF and the Association of Crisis Centers in Kyrgyzstan to carry out a survey on violence against older women, which will also include focus group discussions with older women.

## Where to find data

Sources of baseline data may include:

- UN agencies such as the UN Population Division, World Health Organization and UNESCO
- National statistics bureaux
- Local government censuses
- Reports from NGOs and donor agencies
- Records held by institutions such as schools and health centres.

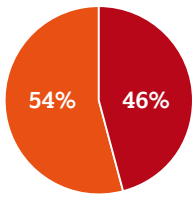
## Sources for graphs on opposite page:

1. UNDESA, *World population prospects: the 2008 revision*, <http://esa.un.org/unpp> (14 May 2010)
  2. UNESCO UIS (Institute for Statistics), Ageing population (65+) literacy rates and illiterate population by country and territory, data received by email (5 March 2010); UNESCO UIS, Build your own table: adult literacy rates (total, male and female), <http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/tableviewer/document.aspx?FileId=50> (27 May 2010). Data is for different years for different countries (1999-2008).
  3. UN data, <http://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=Gender&f=inID%3A36> (25 May 2010)
- World Health Organization, *World health report 2004*, Annex table 4, [www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/gbdwhr2004hale.xls](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/gbdwhr2004hale.xls) (14 May 2010). Data for life expectancy is for 2000-2005. Data for healthy life expectancy is for 2002.

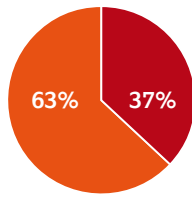
**With thanks to Fiona Morgan, Policy Intern, HelpAge International, London for data research.**



## 1. There are more older women than older men



Age 60 and over



Age 80 and over

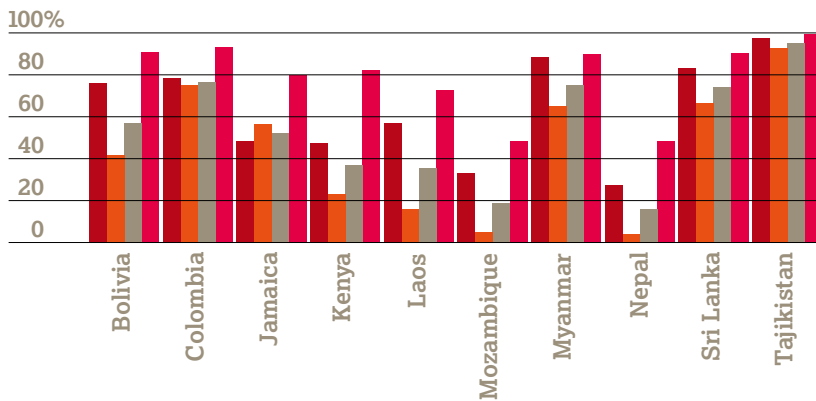
### World population in 2010

There are more women than men over 60 worldwide, and significantly more women than men over 80. Nearly two-thirds of people over 80 are women.

Women

Men

## 2. Older women have the lowest literacy rates



### Literacy rates by age and sex

In a cross-section of countries in which HelpAge International works, the literacy rates of people aged 65 and over are all lower than those of the general adult population (aged 15 and over). In all countries except one (Jamaica), older women have a lower literacy rate than older men. In some countries, the literacy rate for older women is extremely low, for example, 5 per cent in Mozambique and 4 per cent in Nepal.

Men (65+)

Older people (65+)

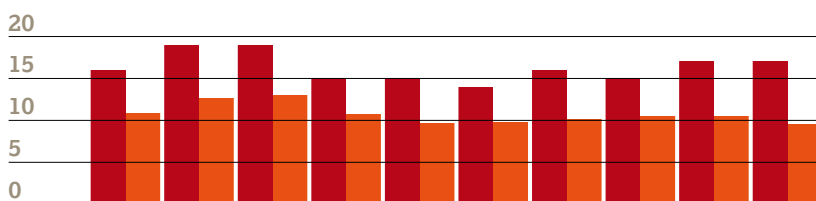
Women (65+)

Adult population (65+)

## 3. Women live longer but live more years in ill-health

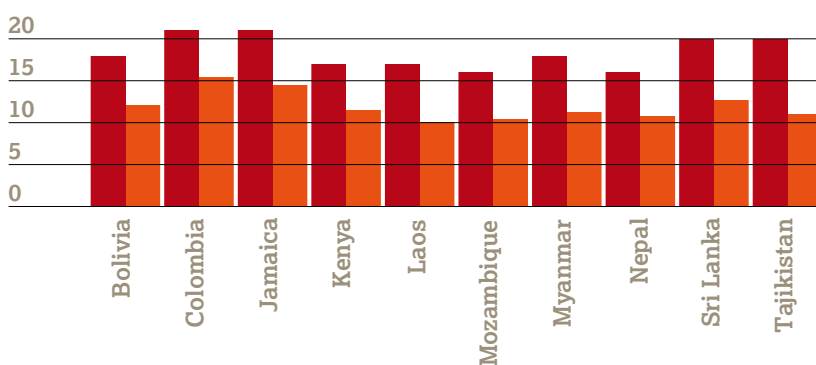
### Men

25 years



### Women

25 years



### Men's and women's life expectancy and healthy life expectancy at 60

In a cross-section of countries in which HelpAge International works, women aged 60 have a longer life expectancy than men. In all countries except one (Colombia) women aged 60 will live more years in ill-health than men.

Life expectancy

Healthy life expectancy

# Meet our ambassadors

*Ageways introduces you to five men and women who are championing older people's rights as HelpAge International's global ambassadors.*



**Professor Nana Araba Apt** is an academic from Ghana who has published widely on ageing in Africa. She is currently Dean of Academic Affairs at Ashesi University College, Accra. She was previously based at the University of Ghana, Legon, where she created and ran the Centre for Social Policy Studies. She is a founder member and current president of HelpAge Ghana.

*"Who would have thought that Africa, well acknowledged for its traditional caring systems, would now face a crisis of caring for its ageing family members? I have committed much of my academic life to exploring avenues to make older people's life less burdensome in Africa and I welcome this role with HelpAge."*



**Baroness Sally Greengross** is a commissioner for the UK Equality and Human Rights Commission. She was director-general of the older people's organisation, Age Concern England from 1987 to 2000. She received a life peerage in 2000 and is an independent member of the House of Lords. She holds offices on a number of all-party parliamentary groups. She is currently chief executive of the International Longevity Centre UK, the leading think tank on demographic change.

*"The contribution older people make to society is often forgotten. Older people's voices need to be heard, their needs expressed strongly and their wishes relayed to those who can provide help, care and resources. This is what HelpAge does and I am delighted to represent them and work with them to achieve their goals."*



**Dr Alexandre Kalache** pioneered "active ageing" at the World Health Organization as head of the Ageing and Life Course Programme from 1995 to 2007. He now heads the International Centre for Policies on Ageing, Brazil, is a special adviser for global ageing to the New York Academy of Medicine and a member of the advisory board of the World Demographic and Ageing Forum.

*"I am firmly committed to HelpAge and strongly believe in its core values and principles. I will strive to serve as an ambassador – an honour – particularly in what concerns my own region, Latin America, and the consolidation of our struggle towards strengthening the rights of older people worldwide."*



**Dr Alexandre (Sasha) Sidorenko** has raised older people's issues worldwide as head the United Nations Programme on Ageing from 1993 to 2009. He was responsible for the 1999 International Year of Older Persons, the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 and the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). He currently holds a range of advisory roles, including as a member of the board of trustees of the World Demographic Association Forum Foundation of St Gallen.

*"HelpAge has proven to be the major if not the only developmental agency on ageing. Being part of this effort is an opportunity to continue what I have been doing at the United Nations and to fulfil the tasks which as a professional I set for myself."*



**Dr Mary Ann Tsao** has pioneered new approaches to elder care in south-east Asia as a founder member, former chief executive and current president of the Tsao Foundation. After training and working as a doctor in the USA, Dr Tsao set up the Tsao Foundation with her grandmother in 1993 to provide community health services for older people and promote successful ageing. She was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2000 and Public Service Star in 2004 for her work on ageing.

*"On establishing her foundation, my grandmother said: 'There's nothing as desperate and bleak as being old and poor. Poor young people can always work for a brighter future. For poor older people, however, especially for those who are weak and sick, there is absolutely no hope for a better tomorrow.' HelpAge International works tirelessly to improve the wellbeing of disadvantaged older people around the world, and I am privileged to join its effort as an ambassador."*



## HelpAge International affiliates

### Caribbean

Action Ageing Jamaica  
ECHO, Grenada  
Haitian Society for the Blind  
HelpAge Belize  
HelpAge St Lucia/National Council of and for Older Persons  
Old People's Welfare Association (OPWA), Montserrat  
REACH Dominica  
Society of St Vincent de Paul, Antigua

### Africa

Age-in-Action, South Africa  
APOSEMO, Mozambique  
CEM Outreach, Sierra Leone  
Elim Hlanganani Society for the Care of the Aged, South Africa  
HelpAge Ghana  
HelpAge Kenya\*  
HelpAge Zimbabwe  
Kenya Society for People with AIDS (KESPA)  
Maseru Senior Women Citizen Association, Lesotho  
Mauritius Family Planning Association  
Muthande Society for the Aged (MUSA), South Africa

RECEWAPEC, Cameroon  
SAWAKA, Tanzania  
Senior Citizens' Association of Zambia  
Senior Citizens' Council, Mauritius  
Sierra Leone Society for the Welfare of the Aged  
Sudanese Society in Care of Older People (SSCOP)  
Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA)

### Asia/Pacific

Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition (BWHC)  
China National Committee on Aging (CNCA)  
Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE), Philippines  
Council on the Ageing (COTA), Australia  
Foundation for Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV), Thailand  
GRAVIS, India  
HelpAge India  
HelpAge Korea\*  
HelpAge Sri Lanka\*  
Helping Hand Hong Kong  
Instituto de Acção Social, Macau  
Mongolian Association of Elderly People

NACSOM, Malaysia  
Office of Seniors Interests, Australia  
Pakistan Medico International  
Resource Integration Centre (RIC), Bangladesh  
Singapore Action Group of Elders (SAGE)  
Society for WINGS, Singapore  
Tsao Foundation, Singapore  
USIAMAS, Malaysia

### Europe and Central Asia

Age Action Ireland  
Age UK  
Caritas Malta HelpAge  
Centre for Policy on Ageing, UK  
Cordaid, Netherlands  
DaneAge Association, Denmark  
Dobroe Delo, Russia  
HelpAge Deutschland, Germany\*  
Mission Armenia  
NGO Lastavica, Serbia  
Second Breath (Gerontological Association of Moldova)  
Slovene Philanthropy  
UMUT (Resource Centre for Elderly People), Kyrgyzstan  
WorldGranny, Netherlands  
Zivot 90, Czech Republic

### Latin America

AGECO, Costa Rica  
Caritas Chile  
CooperAcción, Peru  
CESTRA, Colombia  
ISALUD, Argentina  
Lima Coordinating Group, Peru  
Pro Vida Colombia  
Pro Vida Perú

### North America

AARP  
Help the Aged (Canada)  
HelpAge USA\*  
West Virginia University Center on Aging

\*HelpAge "sister" affiliates



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- ☐ National government
- ☐ Health service/social care
- ☐ Research institute/university
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# Improving lives with better stoves

**Jaime Castilla describes how a small intervention can make a big difference to older women's lives.**

Juana is an active member of *Yachaq Runa*, an older people's group in Ayacucho, Peru. Until recently, she spent much of her day cooking lunch for the organisation's fifty members.

The work not only took up a lot of time, but was unhealthy too. Juana had to find firewood and carry it back to the kitchen. While she cooked, she breathed in smoke from the stove. The smoke also affected the taste of the food. Juana had started to feel the weight of this labour on her 68-year-old shoulders.

The problems being caused by woodstoves were identified as part of a project coordinated by HelpAge International to improve the livelihoods of older people in Peru. HelpAge International is working in partnership with four local organisations – Huanta, Carmen Alto and San Juan Bautista in Ayacucho and Huancavelica in Lircay.

A key moment for Juana, and for the women cooking for other older people's clubs, was when an engineer from the rural training centre of the National University of San Cristobal of Huamanga installed a new fuel-efficient stove in the club's kitchen. Juana and the other women were shown how to use the new stoves and received training in nutrition and food hygiene.



**Juana is more active in her older people's organisation, now that she spends less time cooking.**

They learnt how to use locally available ingredients for a balanced diet, particularly for older people and infants, and how to store and handle food.

The new stoves have made a big difference. "I didn't imagine it was going to be this easy," says Juana. "I no longer have to lift such a heavy pot and the food doesn't taste of ash any more."

*"I didn't imagine it was going to be this easy."*

Perhaps most significantly, the improved stoves have allowed the women to spend more time on other activities. They are learning to read and write and are now participating more actively in their organisations.

**Jaime Castilla is Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, HelpAge International, Peru (address on page 15).  
Email: [jcastilla@helpagela.org](mailto:jcastilla@helpagela.org)**

**With thanks also to Maria Isabel Rivera, Regional Communications Officer, HelpAge International, Latin America.**

**The project is funded by the European Commission.**

**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](http://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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