

Guidebook for developing and supporting older persons' organisations

**An Outcome of HelpAge International's Projects
aiming at "Reintegration of Older People
into Moldovan Society"**

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Introduction

Background

Moldova, a former Soviet Republic achieved independence in 1991. Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe, however the economy has started growing after years of severe contraction. Moldova has the population of 3.58 million¹ of which roughly two thirds live in rural areas. The proportion of older people has seen an incremental increase from less than 10% during 1970s to currently more than 13% of the total population. However with the massive emigration of the working age population the actual proportion of older people in the resident population is much higher.

The average life expectancy is 65 years, with 61 years at birth for men compared to 69 years for women. The latest World Bank report suggests that incidence of poverty is relatively higher amongst families headed by pensioners (35.1%) compared to national poverty i.e. 29%. Pensions are the main source of income for older people, however, still are only roughly 60% of the minimum consumption requirements. Those not entitled to contributory pensions receive social pensions or allocations which are less than 5 US dollars a month. The social assistance benefits are category based, however marred with targeting issues. The mass exodus of the working age population has left older people with no choice but to assume the child and home care responsibility for families left behind, thus adding to their misery and stress.

This guidebook results from a series of consultations and participatory meetings by HelpAge International Moldova with local partner organisations, older volunteers, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders over the past few years. This guidebook further draws on practical learning from the field experiences of two projects, implemented by a series of partners in twelve locations across Moldova.

The project undertaken in Southern Moldova between 2005 and 2006 and a previous project in Northern Moldova (2003-4) envisioned social reintegration of vulnerable older people through the development and implementation of models of community care based on principles of volunteerism and

¹ Source, Moldova Dept. of Statistics, population statistics excluding those living in Transnistria.

community service. These projects developed community models of social support for older people as a workable option to complement state social services for older people in Moldova. The project interventions have directly benefited around 7000 older people, helping them reintegrate into mainstream society. The indirect beneficiary numbers include household members and the wider communities, and as such run into tens of thousands.

The projects demonstrate the practical challenges of building grass-root representative institutions. During project development, twelve community organisations (including some initiative groups) were supported to form older persons' support groups at the community level. With training, the groups began to lobby for wider public consideration of the challenges facing older people. In addition, they developed specific community led services to address priority needs. Both the community based organisations and older persons' support groups were trained to engage with local and national stakeholders such as local and national government, business, media, and political representatives in order to highlight older peoples' individual and collective issues.

It is encouraging to note that older people have responded to community outreach positively, citing their experiences of engagement in the projects and displaying increased confidence in their own abilities and worth. The projects successfully introduced and demonstrated the relevance of concepts such as volunteering, community care, networking and partnerships between stakeholders to create innovative practices and solutions for social inclusion of older people as sustainable options to complement state social services.

At twelve project locations, more than 250 volunteers became members of older people's support groups (a progressive increase in number of volunteers is evidence of people's growing trust in older people's support groups and their achievements) and over a thousand have received trainings and participated in conferences and meetings. The increased capacity of volunteers has led to the development of demonstration activities offering a range of services to under-served older people in the domains of home-care, livelihoods and intergenerational activities. Project statistics suggest that it was mostly older people who came to the support of vulnerable older persons around them; for example, in the second project the average volunteer age is 63 years (of 161 volunteers), and the average age of home-care beneficiaries is 71 years.

The first project was implemented with five implementing partners from Northern Moldova:

- *Speranta*, Edinet
- *Batrinete fara tristete*, Aneni Noi
- *Moldovan Association of Nursing*, Chisinau
- *Republican Association of Pensioners*, Bunatatea, Chisinau
- *Organization of Veterans and Pensioners*, Orhei.

The second project established partnerships with seven organisations from Southern Moldova:

- *Organisation of Veterans*, Ialoveni
- *Women's Club – Speranta*, Lapusna, Hincesti
- *Win – Avante*, Cazangic, Leova
- *Pro-Democracy – Pro-Democratie*, Satu-Nou, Cimislia
- *Women's Club (Community) – Comunitate*, Carabetovca, Basarabasca
- *Inspiration*, Vdokhnovenia, Comrat
- *Artizana*, Pascani, Cahul.

During the second project, northern partners from the previous project assumed a mentoring role. HelpAge International, as lead partner, provided technical, managerial and coordination support, while national partners Second Breath from Balti (partner and affiliate of HelpAge International) and Rural Social Initiative from Bardar, Ialoveni extended much needed local advisory and operational support.

As a result of these joint efforts, Moldova currently boasts a network of fourteen older persons' organisations together with twelve older persons' support groups. These organisations and programmes offer an institutional platform to organise, co-ordinate and support future work to highlight the on-going needs and potential contributions of vulnerable older people. In particular, these organisations and programmes provide opportunities to negotiate with local and national authorities by voicing older people's concerns and ideas collectively.

Direct project activities have enabled older people's support groups to build their capacity to engage in planning, assessing and managing grassroots programme development. Because the organisations that worked as partners are geographically diverse and are of varying levels of size and organisational strengths, this facilitated building partnerships and fostered a culture of sharing learning and mutual respect.

This diversity has further encouraged experimentation in approaches as different organisations have brought different skills and experiences to the table. All participating partners have expressed a commitment to continue working within their communities post-project, and a number have secured funds for ongoing activities in-country. The national network will be supported by Second Breath's upcoming TACIS (Strengthening Civil Society) project.

Methodology

A mixed methodology was used to gather information and catalogue inputs from stakeholders. Methods of data collection were used throughout project activities to gather primary level information and included round table and focus group discussions, administration of questionnaires, collection of case studies, and field monitoring visits.

To demonstrate our commitment to learning and development, regular reviews and conferences were convened involving all key stakeholders to encourage direct communication, information exchange and above all to stimulate positive self-critique as a core learning process. Programme learning has been documented and shared both internally and externally through reports and regular project publications, such as newsletters. This guidebook represents the consolidation of all joint programme learning. It has been produced to present programme learning to wider audiences from both public and civil society sectors to learn and benefit from our experience as well as help stimulate the replication and expansion of programmes to support the needs of vulnerable older people throughout Moldova.

Guidebook format

This guidebook is structured in such a way as to share our experiences developing and support older persons' support groups with a view to providing practical advice and guidance to other groups (community groups, NGOs, local government and donor organisations). They are also intended to help community groups consider new ways to effectively engage with older people and contribute to their reintegration into mainstream society. The contents have been distributed into different sections, and it starts with an introduction which outlines the situation of older people in Moldova and continues with the description of the project, objectives, interventions and

purpose of the publication. The next section presents the project learning in a step-by-step framework, however for easy comprehension the information has been subdivided into six chapters each with a thematic focus. This is followed by the conclusion and recommendations sections, which addresses different external stakeholders and offers advice on follow up actions and replication of our work. The last section provides profiles of the partners as an acknowledgment of their contributions and support.

Chapter 1

Organising older persons' support groups

Older person's support groups [provide a] platform to get positively engaged with older people and use their skills and experiences to deliver social services for disadvantaged and vulnerable older people".
(**"Inspiration", Comrat**)

What are older person's groups?

Older people's support groups are voluntary associations of roughly 15-20 members who meet regularly to discuss, develop, monitor and review issues involving older people's active community reintegration and support needs. Each group elects an older person to act as a leader. Some groups further form advisory or working committees to support the leader on particular issues. Groups with substantive volunteer bases can be subdivided into working groups based on needs, interests, locations and experiences of volunteer members. Representatives from community based organisations and older people's support groups participate in skills training on topics such as participatory project planning and management, budget development and monitoring, volunteer mobilisation and management, advocacy, fundraising and networking. The sharing of best practice, illustrative case studies, and educational demonstration activities were frequently used to build confidence and encourage engagement amongst group members.

Success of older person's groups

The experience of forming older persons' support groups through community based organisations in Moldova has been a great success. Particularly effective has been the mobilization of older people through ensuring their participation both within the groups and in wider community debates.

Older people's groups have been able to speak with a collective voice to engage with local and national stakeholders for improved social service delivery for older people. This has contributed significantly in raising older people's awareness of local and international legal frameworks regarding their rights, and encouraged them to take lead and develop innovative initia-

tives tailored to their needs. This in turn has heightened the profile of older people and their needs within communities.

Step by step processes of developing and support groups

The community based organisations, who took on the role of implementing partners, were given technical support in creating older people's groups in their communities, by project partners. The CBOs initially faced challenges in convincing older people and community actors to engage as active community figures. Older people expressed scepticism as to both their roles and the effectiveness of non-governmental organisations. This pessimism on the part of older people limited initial response and engagement. However, regular interaction with community leaders and the involvement of local authorities enabled project partners to show communities the potential for actually achieving goals and influencing local development debates. Demonstration activities helped a great deal to restore trust between actors, and the gradual successes – as services developed and grew, and local authorities began to work more closely with communities – has led to an increased inflow of volunteers. Now older people's groups which were initially very much older people centred, have begun to diversify with younger volunteers joining and the scope of older people support groups meetings expanding.

Based on experiences amongst all partners, the following recommendations regarding the development and structure of older people's groups have been identified:

- Identify and mobilize a core group of 20-25 volunteers or activists in the community
- Set up 'one-to-one' and collective meetings to explain the objectives of the programme and emphasize how voluntary work can find innovative and sustainable ways to support inclusion of older people
- Keep group membership open and encourage broad participation including membership from all age groups
- Involve church and spiritual leaders to generate community wide appeal and support
- Arrange meetings with local public administration, and explain objectives and activities to secure support. Make efforts to include local public officials as members to add to group credibility
- Encourage group members to elect a respected group leader (preferably an older person) and, if required, establish a working committee to advise and support the leader.

Meetings should be held on a regular basis (preferably monthly) and at a time and date convenient to all group members. Group leaders should note specific member expertise and skills and where required divide volunteer members into sub-groups based on needs, knowledge, and relevant expertise. Meeting agendas should be prepared and distributed in advance and content include: planning, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating activities against objectives and according to work schedules. The agenda for meetings should be prepared and distributed in advance. There should be a designated secretary who documents the proceedings in minute form and retains records for future reference and information; minutes from the previous meetings should be distributed in advance of each meeting for review and correction.

Meetings can be made more efficient and representative by:

- keeping meetings short and encouraging the exchange of ideas, achievements and impressions
- ensuring that older participants can physically and financially access the meeting and participate actively
- promoting open participation by encouraging group members to bring friends and families to the meetings – to increase information sharing, visibility of programme success, and attract more members
- inviting local public authorities, social workers, civil society groups etc, to both build networks and seek support for planned activities
- encouraging volunteers to share their experiences and learning to allow information exchange and build mutual trust and confidence among members
- Secure space for regular meetings and to demonstrate work – liaise with local public administration to acquire meeting place

Meetings can also be used to identify training needs of volunteers as well as run short training sessions and/or education presentations for older volunteers and beneficiaries. Whenever possible, group members should seek opportunities to acknowledge and publicise volunteer and member contributions both internally and with external stakeholders. Aside from regular business needing to be addressed during meetings, members can benefit from coordinating meetings with national public holidays or other special community events to further highlight older people's needs, issues and contributions.

Chapter 2

Volunteering and volunteers: Moldovan perspectives

“Volunteering is candid, non-remunerated benevolent mutual help activities set up between CBOs. It is important that by helping others and supporting them morally, we become kinder and more generous. This sets good example for the younger generation.” (“Speranta”, Lapusna Hincesti)

Volunteering

Volunteering is not unknown in Moldova. However, recent HelpAge partner projects have introduced a new approach by organising coordinated voluntary work with older people acting as the key stakeholders.

The development of older people's groups through the impetus of older community activists has been a great success throughout Moldova. The determination and dedication of group members, specifically older people themselves, have illustrated that community based models of volunteering as an opportunity to provide support to marginalised groups can be measurably successful.

At twelve project locations, more than 250 volunteers became members of older people's support groups (a progressive increase in the number of volunteers is evidence of people's growing trust in older people's support groups and their achievements) and over a thousand have received trainings and participated in conferences and meetings. The increased capacity of volunteers has led to the development of demonstration activities offering a range of services to under-served older people in the domains of home-care, livelihoods, intergenerational activities etc. Project statistics suggest that it was mostly older people who came to the support of vulnerable older persons around them – for example, in the second project the average volunteer age is 63 years (out of 167 volunteers), and the average age of home-care beneficiaries is 71 years.

Participants in community groups report positively about the involvement as volunteers. They note that it improves self esteem by creating a feeling of being needed and valued and stimulates positive changes in community attitudes towards older people, while reassuring them that they can

still contribute positively to societal welfare.

Selection

Appropriate selection of volunteers is of paramount importance, particularly as many volunteers will be engaged in activities that involve sensitive work with immobile older people confined to their beds and homes. Based on HelpAge experience in Moldova, volunteers with the following characteristics tend to be strong and effective volunteers:

- empathetic and good listeners
- reliable and responsible
- patient
- honest
- diplomatic, tolerant and non-judgmental
- able to recognize and work within their own personal limitations
- willing to learn and carry on learning
- discreet

Attracting volunteers

Community mobilisation efforts need to be undertaken in order to attract volunteers. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, but HelpAge has found that making personal contacts through community activists is highly successful. These activists can explain programme goals to other interested individuals (or groups of individuals) and motivate potential participants to commit to specific activities. Recruiters may wish to start building their volunteer base by sharing their experience with friends and neighbours and then expand to work with



Vatița Matei (83) is a widow from Cazangic who lives on her own with only a meagre pension as support. Her husband died 28 years ago, and children have moved out of the village. Vatița Matei's house is at the edge of the village, which bothers her and she feels like loneliness would kill her. Sometimes she manages to reach to the gates and if she sees a child, she asks him to bring her a bucket of water. She pays them one lei for a bucket. To her joy a volunteer from the project comes to her twice a week and helps her around the house.

She says, "The most difficult thing is to be alone, this makes you feel terrible, I'm happy when the volunteer comes and tells me of what is happening around, I need somebody to listen to me and to communicate".

Vatita Matei, beneficiary "Avante"
Cazangic, Leova district

community groups (religious, educational, government) when they are confident about recruiting larger numbers of volunteers.

Wherever possible, volunteers should be sought from diverse age, sex, professional and academic backgrounds. This diversity will add value to projects and encourage innovation.

Organising volunteer work

Once volunteers have been identified, it is useful to assign them with specific tasks. These tasks should be time bound and appropriate to their capacity, background, family status, and professional expertise. Take note of volunteers' physical and personal challenges while delegating tasks and reinforce awareness of concepts such as active aging and healthy living

Be creative in delegating tasks to volunteers and try to strike a balance between individual and team tasks for team building and mutual respect amongst members. If the volunteer base does not have specific skills, arrange training and development activities for volunteers to enable them to build their skill base and improve their knowledge.

The motivation and retention of volunteers involves regular support. Volunteers may need support and reaffirmation to ensure they are not discouraged by pessimistic attitudes from older people they are trying to help. Group leaders (or designated persons) should keep regular contact with volunteers to both monitor their work with older beneficiaries as well as to encourage and reinforce their volunteering commitment. External training may be specific to immediate programme needs as well as for general volunteer education on issues such as: communication with older people, home care, organising and documenting localized events, older people's rights and responsibilities, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002, and United Nations principles of work with older persons.

Arrange team-building activities such as choir groups, visits to local sites, celebrations of local events, outing/picnics etc to further strengthen team feeling.

- Hold presentation ceremonies and award certificates/gifts for volunteering work
- Organise volunteer meetings
- Present small gifts to volunteers – food parcels, handicrafts, maybe products made by older beneficiaries

- Organize events including media events to showcase volunteer activities to local communities
- Encourage and ensure volunteers have the opportunity to input into project design
- Ensure positive feedback from beneficiaries is passed to volunteers
- Encourage volunteers' attendance in training and development activities organized internally or through external stakeholders

Chapter 3

Community based models of social service delivery for older people

Service provision – opportunities for change

The institutional framework for social protection and assistance in Moldova is in a transition phase, and on the whole, financial constraints are resulting in gaps in critical service provision. This offers opportunities for community based and non-governmental organisations to complement state services by building localised partnerships and developing innovative practices to empower communities to advocate for service provision to meet local needs.

HAI provided national partners and implementing organisations with (limited) financial and (substantial) technical support to develop community based programmes for and with older people. Through multiple demonstration projects, each organization developed and experimented with innovative ideas for older people's social reintegration while keeping older people actively involved in the planning, management of review of activities. Activities could broadly be categorized as such home care and support, income generation & livelihoods support, intergenerational communication and solidarity, resource development and lobbying, fundraising and information and dissemination.

The active participation of more than 500 older people at twelve project sites in design, delivery and evaluation of demonstration activities attests to projects success in terms of empowering people, and developing and organizing collective activities. This contributed significantly in highlighting older people's challenges and special needs while developing a greater community understanding and appreciation around the potential of older people to organise and lead communities to improve services for vulnerable older people.

Partner capacities were built through various interventions including: trainings, conferences, field visits, reflective thinking, meetings, resource development etc. Constructive training results are evident through increased participation of older people in demonstration activities, the gradual evolution

from simple to more complex activities, expansion of localised networks and alliances, and a gradual diversification of funding sources among partner organisations.

The lessons learned were collated and have been summarised in these guidelines so that other partners can successfully replicate services in light of the local context and sustained through active participation of communities. These models are offered as alternative ways to address service provision gaps and complement social services for vulnerable older people, in particular. The guidebook, while providing examples from successful community based work, offers innovative ideas to public authorities to rethink current service provision approaches and develop positive engagement with NGOs, CBOs, and community groups to identify, develop, coordinate and deliver quality social services with the participation of older people as both recipients and deliverers of these services.

While the guidelines do encourage community based organisations to benefit from HelpAge International's experience and use it to further develop their work with vulnerable older people, we would strongly encourage readers to take care in drawing analogies with their local contexts and circumstances and adapt these guidelines and suggestions as to their specific circumstances and needs.



Anastasia Leanca (volunteer from Satul Nou, Cimislia) provides home care support to three older people. Ana Zaporojan, is one amongst them is completely bed-ridden. Leanca says, "I visit her more often, because she can't move and needs special care. We were colleagues once, and now in every meeting she keeps enquiring about other co-workers. This shows her interest in life outside her bed and home".

Ecaterina is 83 years old however; she is relatively more active than Ana. "If I miss one day she comes to my place to enquire and stays around for chat. My neighbour Ana Mocanu (83) is the third person I take care off. All these people I take care and support are single, with children being busy with their own families. "I bring them medical plants, cakes and could sense how much they value my attention" thanks God for everything he has given to me.

Anastasia Leanca, Volunteer, "Pro-Democratie", Satul Nou, Cimislia district

Models of home-based care and support

Home based care has remained the flagship activity across organisations and project activities and has provided a platform for older person focused organisations to become visible, demonstrate effective community actions, and link up with other community actors to solicit support. Home based care activities have also contributed significantly in attracting volunteers, which in turn has broadened the scope and geographic spread of programme activities.

The home based care and support services for HelpAge and partners in Moldova are volunteer centred and driven activities. Volunteers help with domestic chores like cleaning, washing, gardening, cooking, payment of utility bills, purchase of medicines, arranging medical appointments, and reading newspapers to housebound, sick and solitary older people in their communities.

For most beneficiaries, home based carers provide the sole link to the outside world, thus emphasizing the imperative to build volunteer capacity in effective communication and service provision.

Beneficiary and volunteer selection

The internal learning gathered through reflective sessions with volunteers and beneficiaries of home care services are enumerated as recommendations below:

- Volunteers should take responsibility for as many beneficiaries they can manage well – usually one active volunteer can provide home care support to 3-5 people.
- While arranging support for an older beneficiary, care should be taken in terms of finding a volunteer who is:
 - a distant relative or friend of beneficiary
 - lives in the neighbourhood, thus enabling easy access to the beneficiary
 - aware of the beneficiary's specific needs and has the expertise to address them
 - physically able to provide regular support for home care work.
- Older people's groups need to delineate (local appropriate) criteria that outlines suitability for receipt of home based care. This ensures that individuals are chosen neutrally and transparently.

- Definitions of vulnerability, and thus criteria for receipt of home based care, may vary regionally and geographically. (Our work in rural communities suggests that disabled older people and single men are more at risk than others, so you may wish to give these categories greater priority.)

Guidelines for home based care volunteers

Volunteers need to schedule regular visits to beneficiaries depending on time, availability and convenience to both. HelpAge community based work has indicated that it is advisable to visit a beneficiary between 2-3 times per week. Volunteers need to agree the time and date for next visit at the end of each beneficiary visit, and they should inform beneficiaries of any changes to the visit plan in case they can't visit the beneficiary on agreed day or time. They may also wish to bring local newspapers or other publications and read them to beneficiaries with visual challenges to keep them abreast of the latest news and developments.

A checklist for use by volunteers may vary, but items which should be noted are:

- Has the volunteer kept a record of the home care visit? Including:
 - Time
 - Day
 - Person visited
 - Activities carried out – including physical activities or exercise, meeting with neighbours
 - Issues raised
 - Planned response to issues raised, including legal advice, additional volunteer support, collection of pension etc.
- Does the volunteer have a list of the beneficiary's doctors, social workers, and local family members and are they being kept involved of beneficiaries needs and/or changes in medical condition?
- Is the volunteer discreet and does s/he maintain the confidentiality of the beneficiary

Community groups and/or trained volunteers should be involved in training new volunteers, especially in areas of communication with older beneficiaries, assistance with personal hygiene, safety etc. Whenever possible, volunteers should encourage relatives to come forward to provide care. Should they seek training or further information, the volunteer should refer them back to the older person's support groups/NGO/CBO for additional support.

Finally, if possible, volunteers should be encouraged to take along gifts, such as flowers, as a way of breaking the ice with their beneficiaries.

Models of income generation and livelihood support

The incomes of people over 60 in Moldova are either limited or are so insignificant that they struggle to make ends meet. Contributory pensions are major source of income for older person headed households. However, the average national pension is less than 50% of minimum subsistence requirements². The incidence of older people in poverty is comparatively higher than national poverty rate, and again the rural poverty is more extreme compared to urban poverty³.

During interviews and focus group discussions, older people cited economic marginalisation as the root cause for their social exclusion, discrimination and lack of access to basic services. Through community participation, income generation activities have been developed to address these issues. Income generation interventions mostly supported the purchase of raw materials for handicrafts and domestic animals to help older people engage in productive and gainful activities offering potential to raise their income and increase their confidence. Special care has been taken to develop income generation activities which fit the local context, ability and skills of older people and offered prospects for long term economic security for older people.

The limited funding for demonstration activities constrained widespread reduction of older people's poverty. Nevertheless, the model activities undertaken offer replicable programmes which have the potential to contribute significantly towards poverty reduction amongst older people if scaled up.

Demonstration activities also helped in effective targeting of state benefits for older people, offering prospects for greater involvement of communities in defining vulnerability according to the local context and identifying, assessing, and nominating the most vulnerable for improved targeting of social benefits.

² The Statistics Dept. 2005 report suggests that average contributory pension is 335 lei per month as against the minimum subsistence requirement of 577 lei per month.

³ World Bank Moldova Poverty Update 2006 suggests that 35.1% pensioners live below poverty line as against the 29% national poverty rate during 2005.

Income generation activities in rural Moldova – lessons learned

Activities which older people in rural Moldova could undertake for income generation offering dependable potential to raise older people's incomes include:

- seasonal herb collection, processing and sale to local pharmacies; this activity could also be done on an inter-generational basis with school children during summer breaks.
- Handicraft production (crochet, pottery, rugs, etc); raw materials may be secured at discount through entrepreneurs or retailers.
- Growing seasonal flowers and indoor plants for the home
- Rabbit and poultry farming

In addition, special exhibitions or fairs could be organized through older person's support groups and in conjunction with local events/celebrations to showcase and sell handicrafts made by older people. Group activities could be organized to plough and harvest the fields of older people both on a volunteer basis and in exchange for products cited above.



Nicolae Forțu (80) is a well known artist for his handicrafts. He specialises in osier baskets and traditional Moldovan sandals called "opinci". Mr. Nicolae is member of older persons' support group formed at Manta (Cahul) by CBO Artizana. He with fellow members come regularly to Artizana's workshop where they work together to make handicrafts. To him, the work is rewarding both economically and spiritually as this keeps them active, engaged and self-respected.

Lately, Mr. Nicolae received visitors from Chisinau who placed an order for 30 pairs of traditional sandals, for a popular folk dance ensemble named "Joc". "I feel fulfilled and proud when I watch "Joc" performing on TV wearing my sandals" says Nicolae. To him it is like an endorsement of a long held belief that older people in Moldova have a lot to share and have opportunities for productive engagement.

Nicolae Forțu, volunteer, "Artizana",
Manta, Pascani, Cahul district.

Support interventions by civil society and community groups

The following are a variety of support interventions which, in our experience, can be arranged through the older people's support groups and in partnership with civil society organisations. These interventions are just a sample, but have proved socially and economically empowering for vulnerable older Moldovans:

- Arrange vaccinations, through local authorities, for poultry and animals owned by older people.
- Organise the regular purchase of dairy and farm products through local vendors and shops.
- Lobby local businesses to hire older people for jobs that they are physically able to do.
- Reinforce social and economic successes both individually and through the support groups as a form of positive reinforcement and encouragement for others.
- Organise older people into local associations, such as milk producer's associations, to increase their bargaining power to negotiate good deals for themselves and other vulnerable older people.
- Link up older people with entrepreneurs or directly to retailers/distributors to create demand for their income generation products.
- Organize older people into smaller groups and facilitate improved access to local creditors and banks offering small loans. If possible, negotiate and arrange these loans on softer terms.
- Ensure the availability of raw materials throughout year. Where possible link older people directly with suppliers to avoid seasonal unavailability of raw materials.
- Use older people's knowledge and expertise in transferring knowledge around handicrafts to younger generations.

Models of intergenerational communication and solidarity

Intergenerational activities were developed and implemented across all sites as cross-cutting interventions. These blended in well with other demonstration activities such as information dissemination, homecare, income generation and livelihoods and provided opportunities for older people and children to interact and communicate freely. Intergeneration programme focus further fostered intergenerational connect, understanding and mutual

respect for each others needs and aspirations. The opportunities for exchange helped children talk and interact with their grandparents and older people in neighbourhood in a completely different context, resulting in greater appreciation of the experience and wisdom of older people.

UNICEF suggests that more than 1/3 of children⁴ living in Moldova live without one or both parents. This is largely due to labour migration abroad. With the absence of biological parents, grandparents have assumed parenting and home care responsibilities for the families or their migrant children. Through demonstration activities, grandparents received psycho-social support from volunteers relieving stress and facilitating a deeper understanding of good parenting skills and recognition of special developmental needs of today's children.

In six project communities inter-generational clubs including grandparents and grandchildren were created to carry out joint activities. These included, but were not limited to: exhibitions of older people's handicrafts, song and dress competitions, and joint herb collection expeditions. Repeated intergenerational activities increased cross generational harmony and connect, which directly raised older people's self-esteem and created, for them, a feeling of being needed and useful.



The Organization of Veterans of War and Labour Ialoveni pioneered and formed the club of "Grandparents and Grandchildren" which meets every week. It aims to establish communication, understanding and mutual respect between generations. Each meeting, children have something new to learn from older people like cooking recipes, embroidery and other house-keeping secrets.

Luminița Bumbu (13) attends the meetings regularly and says "I don't have grandparents; they died before I was able to know them. This club has given me many, many of them". I acquired many useful skills in these meetings like I learnt embroidery; crochet work etc. The best of all are old time songs which I learned by heart while performing together with old people", says Luminița

Organisation of Veterans, Ialoveni,
members of club "Grandparents and
Grandchildren"

⁴ UNICEF funding requirements 2007-11, April 2006.

Intergenerational Activities

Recommendations gleaned from intergenerational activities are outlined below:

1. Organise and arrange regular meetings of intergenerational clubs to promote free communication and exchange of ideas and thoughts.
2. Invite children to join older people while they are producing handicrafts, collecting herbs, and undertaking other activities to provide opportunities for skills transferring from older people to children.
3. Involve adolescents in home care support – have them read newspapers to housebound older people.
4. Seek the support of local government and schools to organise intergenerational activities.
5. Encourage shared planning and management of intergenerational activities by involving both children and older people.
6. Organise events as fashion shows, songs of past, for both older people and children to see and appreciate changing trends in fashion and music.
7. Organise joint activities to celebrate special events such as the International Day of Older Persons, International Children's Day, and Volunteers' Day.
8. Ensure participation of children in regular older people's group meetings, and encourage both children and older people to openly acknowledge and express mutual appreciation.

Chapter 4

Information, resource development, dissemination, lobbying, and advocacy

These are the activities in which information is generated and used in a strategic way to change policies and the mindset that affects the life of old vulnerable people. (“Artizana”, Pascani, Cahul)

Information generation and dissemination remained a key priority throughout the project implementation period. Activities undertaken in this domain overlapped with community based interventions. Information and dissemination interventions had multiple focuses: developing field based information resources, channelling information to raise the awareness and understanding of older people's rights, and developing evidenced based lobbying/advocacy agendas.

Partners learned the value of information gathering and its strategic use to empower people to link up with public authorities and demand policy action. These activities increased the visibility of partners and older person's support groups as well as practically facilitated effective networking with local and national stakeholders. Partner organisations were trained and equipped with skills to enable the collection of critical information, systems to disseminate it strategically, and the use of evidence to demand action on meeting the needs of vulnerable older people's needs and outline ways that public agencies and civil society partnership may help address those needs. A range of activities were developed and implemented which included: writing petitions, organising roundtables, and producing leaflets, fliers, articles, and newsletter. Partners were also trained in developing partnership with local and national media and undertaking activities to inform and educate media representatives to shape positive public opinion.

Information generation, dissemination and advocacy activities

The lessons learned through demonstration activities around methodology, approach and use of information for raising awareness, and networking are outlined below:

- CBOs and older people's support groups should encourage members to write articles and document case studies around ageing, the socio-economic challenges face by vulnerable older people, and the positive experiences of volunteering. These can then be published in local newspapers or newsletters.
- Inform and educate the media (both print and electronic) and government and civil society leaders to shape public opinion about older people's rights, contributions and needs.
- Invite older people to participate in roundtable discussions to inform them of the legal framework around rights and services and guide them as to the relevant public authorities from whom to seek assistance and support.
- Conduct basic research to compile information about proportion of older people in communities, percentage of pensioners, numbers of people with disabilities, incidence of older people as care givers for grand-children, poverty, priority social service needs etc. Use this information in communication with media and local authorities.



Valentina landovscaia, from Ialoveni is a beneficiary of project lobbying and advocacy work. Valentina, lost her legal papers to claim her pension and did not receive her rightful entitlements for the last three years. She lives with her daughter and granddaughter and this October she turned 60. The volunteers from Ialoveni partner CBO came to greet her which was fulfilling and made her happy. The volunteers and partner organisations approached the local administration and arranged her legal papers. Together they lobbied the concerned authorities for her pension which was approved. She receives social assistance benefits for category I invalid (508 lei per month) and was compensated for the last three years equalling 18.288 lei. Additionally, she received 500 lei from local Social Assistance Department for medical examination and treatment. She is thankful to volunteers and project partners for their support in accessing her entitlements

Valentina landovscaia, beneficiary,
Organisation of Veterans, Ialoveni

- Engage with other civil society groups like lawyers, media, the Association of Veterans and Pensioners etc, to develop joint programmes.
- Arrange information sessions about international conventions such

as the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, local regulations, UN principles on Ageing, and invite local authorities and political representatives to inform and educate them of older people rights and state obligations. Develop partnership with local lawyers' or associations' and seek their help to make comprehensive presentations around local legal frameworks.

- Organise roundtables and invite public authorities, political representatives, civil society actors and older people representatives to attend. Encourage open dialogue and discussions between different stakeholders.
- Share any new information about international conventions and national legal instruments with public authorities.
- Engage with religious institutions and leaders to encourage their interest in older people's issues and work to develop partnerships to involve religious groups in working with older people. This both raises interest among large numbers of people, but also enables groups to work more effectively and influentially with local authorities and decision makers.
- Develop and maintain distribution lists. Send out informational materials on regular basis to all included in the list.

Lobbying and Advocacy

During projects, participants representing partner organisations worked in small groups to brainstorm ways in which older people can be involved in advocacy. The following recommendations came from these meetings:

- Spend time developing relationships with potential partners; think of them as individuals not institutions. Learn what you can about them.
- Follow up on commitments you think people (government functionaries) have made – beware of paper victories and false starts.
- Don't underestimate the time needed for action to come to fruition – advocacy is long term, policy change is slow and can be reversed.
- Work as a team. Successful advocacy requires a range of expertise including research, communication, project management, and policy skills.
- Work in a participatory way to root your advocacy in the experiences of disadvantaged people; be aware of the impact that policy has had on their lives.

Developing Partnerships

The development of partnerships is a key element in carrying out effective and sustainable awareness raising and advocacy. When specific issues arise which highlight the need for proactive advocacy, CBOs and older people's groups should engage with public authorities and seek approval for participation of older people in Raional / Primaria council meetings. To emphasise the active role of older people in issue raising, groups should encourage older people to write letters and petition local and national authorities. If possible, get all members of the support group to sign the documents. Invite older volunteers and beneficiaries to key conferences and roundtables so they may express needs themselves, thus improving the impact of the messages. Letters, petitions and presentations should link campaigning with practical and demonstrable work on ground. They can further act as the impetus to develop direct contacts between older people and their local members of Parliament.

Media Work

Media work can either be pro-active or re-active. Based on our experience, it is advised to be pro-active. However, all groups must remain open and flexible to any media opportunities that arise, such as requests for interviews, production of articles etc. Proactive media work may include:

- developing materials for campaigning
- documenting and following up on what is published and broadcast
- developing contacts with journalists and photographers
- maintaining a database of contacts
- placing information in key publications.

To develop positive relationships with the media it is advisable to provide them with the following:

1. **information** – journalists like their readers or listeners have a concise understanding and awareness of ageing issues, we need to make sure they are invited to events and given the necessary information to increase their understanding.
2. **opportunity** – journalists are busy and operating under pressure in a competitive world where political issues take priority, give clear messages in a timely fashion.
3. **political relevance** – in many countries, the media is controlled by government and media organisations give priority to invitations from

government. It is important for older people's organisations to jointly organize events with government counterparts to ensure that high-profile government officials preside at events and report on current issues.

4. **timing** – coordinate events to avoid competition from other news worthy issues, avoid activities during major political events like elections.
5. **networking** – build friendly relations with influential media personalities and nurture friendships through consistent contact.
6. provide a good story – the media is thirsty for news and information, provide them with interesting and news worthy material that they find relevant and easy to use.
7. **accessibility** – ensure that your organisations is easily accessible to the media and that one individual can act as the point person for contact.
8. **resource** – use media effectively to publicize work and tune messages as to attract attention and soliciting more support from range of readers/audiences.

Best Approaches to work with Media in Moldova

In plenary, participants generated a list of the best approaches to work with the media in Moldova:

- systematic cooperation of older people with national and local authorities
- provide positive key messages for the media to take forward
- write articles using simple language, include authentic examples
- highlight the problems and wishes of older people
- de-politicising the media
- raise the interests of journalists in order to reflect the problems of older people
- hold press conferences with older people
- materials should be objective and unbiased.

Chapter 5

Models of localised fundraising for self-sustainability

Financial sustainability is of profound importance to all non-profit organisations and has become increasingly relevant and significant in Moldova. Shrinking pots of development aid and an ever increasing competition between civil society organizations are making diversified fundraising a necessity. Because fundraising is tied to visibility and networking, partners were trained and supported to make strategic use of information resources to develop contacts and partnerships with both private and institutional donors as to ensure sustainability of their good work.

Partner capacities were built to increase the quality of written proposals through participatory methods and participants were guided on how to maintain and manage donor relationship through effective communication. Partners were kept informed of in-country donor funding frameworks and supported in their efforts to tap onto in-country funding mechanisms.



Exhibition of older people handicraft work, Comrat



Exhibition of older people handicraft work, Carabetovca

Key learning for localised fundraising

The key learning from localised fundraising activities in terms of tools, processes, principles and barriers may enable readers to better organise their own future actions in terms of fund raising:

- Use mixed fundraising techniques such as, letter writing to influential people, local authorities, businesses and economic agents, making presentations to donors, seeking personal donations, hosting charity dinners, charity boxes, developing proposals to funding institutions.
- Invite local influential people and potential donors to older people's events to creating compassionate appeal.
- Follow up on funding requests through telephone calls and personal meetings
- Ask for contributions from members and volunteers and be open to accept material and services support as well as direct financial contributions
- Keep track of funding opportunities from institutional donors for small grant projects. Try to partner with local administrations and local civil society actors to add credibility to the organisations and strengthen the case for funding.
- Use the mass media to publicise your work and appeal for funding and contributions.
- Produce introductory brochures of the organizations and send them to potential donors with requests for specific programme support.
- Involve religious institutions in appeals for funding.
- Research legal requirements for business charity contributions and follow up with local businesses.
- Organise fundraising events like exhibitions, concerts and invite influential community members.
- Inform donors of activities and the way their contributions been used through reports, presentations and publications
- Conduct periodic financial and programme audits and share results with donors to increase organisational credibility and reflects transparency of operations.
- Diversify funding by having mix of private contributions, membership fees, hosting localized events for fundraising and securing aid/support through in-country donors and international aid agencies.
- Don't get discouraged by failures as fundraising is difficult and continuous process, do reflect on best strategies in your own surrounding and use them for reaching out to more people.
- Secure office or secretarial support through local public administration by involving them in your activities.

The partner organisations during plenary outlined the following obstacles in fundraising & presented ideas and principles of successful fundraising in Moldova.

When financial or human resource donations have been secured, be sure to thank the donors for their gift. Depending on the type of donation, this may be achieved simply through a thank you card, or for larger donations a public press release and/or event may be appropriate.

When specific donors have been identified, it is vital to research them so that you can pitch your request to meet their interests and financial capacity. Be realistic when targeting specific donors, and involve them in all stages of the programme. Plan programme budgets clearly so that you can be sure to have a programme which is sustainable through its entire life.

Key obstacles for localised fundraising

While many lessons have been learned in terms of ways to carry out effective fundraising, there remain some key obstacles to effective and successful fundraising. These may include the:

- lack of effective implementation of legal instruments whereby businesses can easily contribute to social development and charity activities
- lack of understanding by businesses of NGO activities and corporate social responsibility
- indifferent attitudes of potential donors
- state organisations which are not interested in and don't understand older people's issues
- Our activities are non-profit which does not attract sponsors
- competition between NGOs for limited funding opportunities
- lack of tradition or history in Moldova for sponsoring/making donations.

Chapter 6

Models of networking and the promotion of cross-organisational information and experience exchange

Networking has involved building alliances and partnerships with a range of stakeholders, most significantly civil society, local public administrations, educational institutions, local businesses and economic agents, media and religious institutions. Networking has sought not only to raise awareness around older people's issues, but to solicit and secure added support for activities. Capacity building efforts for partners has involved training them to expand their networks of associates and supporters by linking with local authorities, civil society actors and society at large.

Networking has worked well in terms of raising the profile of older people's issues and adding recognition, respect, and credibility for partner community organizations and groups. Partners were encouraged to be proactive in sharing experiences and knowledge through exchange visits, sharing publications, conferences etc.

The idea of cross-organisational knowledge and experience exchange facilitated community based organisations' understanding of contextual differences across different regions of Moldova and created desire to learn about successful activities and strategies that brought good results at other locations.

Networking and partnerships

The lessons learned from developing and managing information exchange and networking activities are as follows:

- Undertake participatory assessments to identify potential partners and allies for networking.
- Establish contacts with potential partners and allies and present ideas to seek support for achieving objectives.
- Make and maintain contacts with local public administrations & keep them involved in planning and management of activities.

- Develop joint activities with local public administrations which adds value in terms of enhanced credibility, securing community trust and also stimulates wider community participation of activists and reformers.
- Share information with civil society actors by holding information sharing events, producing newsletters, joint planning of important international and local events.
- Arrange meetings between media, public authorities, beneficiaries, and volunteers as this brings in a personal touch whatever being said or written by CBOs or NGOs.
- Organise roundtables on different themes while combining them with important local and national festivals to draw wider media coverage.
- Seek support and space from local administration to hold different networking events.
- Publicise activities through diverse channels and offer open attendance.
- Invite representatives of local public administration, civil society, media and business, church and spiritual leaders to regular events and showcase your work before them with requests for support and partnership.
- Write letters to potential network partners explaining work of the organizations and try to have quotes from beneficiaries and volunteers to add a personal touch.
- Invite potential networking partners and allies to main project activities so that they could see your work personally and understand and realise its importance.
- Make efforts to draw network partners representation in local trainings and other capacity building events.

Communication/Information and experience exchange

In order to ensure organisation learning through experience exchange, it is important that partners and older people's groups arrange regular meetings of volunteers, beneficiaries, network partners and encourage them to share activities, challenges, successful alternative strategies and lesson learned. These meetings should be organised so that participants can review and reflect on experiences and formally document their impressions and thoughts. From these outputs, publications like newsletters, reports, suggestion notes, leaflets and brochures can be developed and shared with other stakeholders at organizational and individual levels. Arrange roundta-

bles on thematic issues and time them with special community events to add value. Ensure maximum participation of network partners and use opportunity to further publicize the work and achievements as to expand networks and alliances. Informally, during regular volunteers interaction with beneficiaries, during home care visits, celebrations of holidays and other events, participants can communicate and share their work and views.

Roundtable organisation

Based on HAI work in Moldova, the following recommendations have been drawn for civil society groups to organise roundtables and achieve intended results:

- every roundtable should have a thematic focus like pensions, health care etc, which should be determined through a consultative process within the group or organization.
- invite all key stakeholders including those indirectly involved and encourage open and candid discussion and debate.
- ensure participation of local network partners to have their views on the issue.
- invite local representatives from Ministry of Health and Social Protection to present an overview of the legal framework and operational arrangements around entitlements of older people.
- CBOs or NGO can present overview of their work and share their perspective of the issue based on consensus between volunteers and beneficiaries.
- invite local administration and local civil society, media and business to share their perspective of the issue and present ideas on how could this be meaningfully addressed.
- time roundtables with important local and national celebrations to further highlight the issue more broadly.
- invite the media and if possible arrange media packs, give interviews and issue a press release for the event.



Round Table, Ialoveni, September 06

Field exchange visit for information and experience exchange

- develop a structure for each visit and preferably with a thematic focus on sharing experiences and achieving some bigger objectives
- the host organisations should plan events well in advance and extend invitations to all local and non-local network partners or individuals and organizations offering potential to be partners and allies.
- host organisations should prepare list of participants (based on confirmation by participating agencies and individuals) and should get attendance list signed for record and information
- document the proceedings of exchange visits for record and reference
- older people statements and impressions (quotes) should be underlined in exchange visit documentation which could then be used for referencing in future publications and media communication
- all key network partners should be given opportunity to share learning to promote shared ownership, representation and visibility
- always build in older people's volunteer and beneficiary presentations in the programme
- encourage partners and allies for public authorities and civil society to share their share their projects, communication, pictures and reports etc to broaden scope of learning and experience exchange
- encourage honesty and be open to accept mistakes and failures
- each exchange visit must come up with conclusions and recommendations at the end. A joint network communiqué would be the best outcome.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The experience of NGOs and older people during these projects confirms that a noticeable proportion of older people have been severely negatively affected by the political transition from the Soviet system. The consequent imbalance between older people's incomes and expenses has contributed to fuelling high levels of poverty, exclusion and despair for vulnerable older people. With an increasing outflow of adults to neighbouring countries as economic migrants, older people are now witnessing a profound change in their role as home carers and care-givers of grandchildren. This transition is accompanied by an added burden and is taking its toll on older people physically, mentally, economically and socially.

The major issue behind older people's isolation and despair is poverty. State pensions and benefits, the major income sources for older people, are either too low (not even matching the bare minimum requirements) or have serious targeting issues. The transition from the Soviet to a market system has strained family support for older people, which has always been looked at as a natural social safety net for people in old age. Furthermore, older people are faced with inadequate healthcare, low nutritional intake, inability to access information and services which coupled with poverty have contributed to feelings of dismay, mistrust and helplessness among this vulnerable population.

The research and evaluations undertaken through HelpAge International's Moldovan projects have indicated that older people feel that, despite these pressures, their quality of life has been greatly enhanced by involvement in self-help activities. Community volunteering practices have encouraged families, distant relatives and neighbours to come forward and take responsibility to assist single older relatives and neighbours. Moreover, the CBOs and older people groups have won the trust of older people in particular and started getting recognition and appreciation for their work from various stakeholders like local public administration, civil society organisations, the media and communities at large. Another measure of success is the replication and expansion of activities in neighbouring villages, facilitated greatly by extensive information dissemination campaigns through multiple channels. Older people's organisations and groups have been able to find more partners locally to expand their networks and have started raising funds,

evidence in itself of marked attitudinal change amongst older people and communities in general. This emerging valuing of self-help and community service as effective mechanisms to empower communities and address priority issues is empowering community based organisations and older people in particular to feel respected, valued, and needed.

The experience of HelpAge and partners in Moldova reaffirms that community based organisations and community groups as agents of civil society can offer innovative alternatives to fill the gaps in social service delivery through community based approaches offering sustainability and lasting impact.

However, the organisations and groups should develop complementary services to support the state apparatus rather creating parallel service structures of their own. The demonstration projects have helped build bridges between public authorities and non-profit organisations and promoted partnerships for the greater good of communities. HelpAge International and partners have been disseminating achievements and lessons learned with a wide range of stakeholders including the Republican authorities and in-country donors underlining the need to forge partnerships between public authorities and civil society in Moldova to find sustainable solutions to everyday community problems. No doubt there is a huge potential for community based organisations to contribute and complement in diversification, quality and effective delivery of social services to most vulnerable groups. However things would only move forward if there is a genuine desire and mutual trust on both sides.

Following are the recommendations by older people's organisations and groups, summarising their views and impressions of the work through two projects:

- Old age is part of everyone's lives and is a process which can be accelerated or slowed down depending on their conditions of existence.
- As a result of the projects, for a substantial number of older people in Moldova, life has become more interesting and they have been inspired to lead more active lives.
- The most active older people from the villages realised they could unite, help others and try to encourage them not to fall into despair.
- We can help older people to integrate into society, be better informed, participate actively in everyday life, and feel more important and necessary.

Based on the feedback of older volunteers and beneficiaries and partner NGOs and CBOs, the following recommendations are being forwarded to:

NGOs – Non Governmental Organizations

- Seek further information about this project through the HelpAge Representative Office, Project Partners Second Breath (Balti) and Rural Social Initiative (Bardar Ialoveni).
- Consult older people on how they are affected by their (NGOs) activities and how they can contribute to the resolution of specific community problems.
- Consider how they can share more information about their activities to ensure greater complementarities and learning from each other's experiences.
- Seek to be more transparent about relationships with official and state institutions
- Campaign together on common concerns.

State Institutions in Moldova

- Ensure that adequate resources are allocated to the development of volunteer run social assistance services.
- Consult extensively and coordinate activities with older people and representative NGOs on issues relating to the wellbeing of older people, whether in relation to pensions, to the proposed strategy on ageing, or specific sector issues like local transport strategy.
- Implement the commitments on older people signed up to by the Moldovan government in Madrid in 2002 and seek advice from older people's NGOs, HelpAge International and Partners.
- Reward officials who demonstrate accountable government and foster effective partnerships with civil society organisations in their work.

Recommendations to International Development Institutions

- Ensure that older people feature in development and implementation of country poverty reduction strategies.
- Monitor country performance against international agreements such as the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing.

- Invite older people's NGOs to apply for funding for their activities and consider how to improve access to funding opportunities for less experienced community groups
- Ensure the situation of older people features in any negotiations for strengthening ties to or accession to EU.

Partner Profiles

HelpAge International (HAI) is a global network of not-for-profit organizations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in the quality of their lives. HelpAge International has been working in Moldova since 2000, supporting local civil society partners by building their capacities to highlight older people's issues and to mainstream ageing as priority development agenda for public organisations, civil society, and donors.

Second Breath, the National Gerontological Association, formed in 1998, is active in promoting a rights based agenda for older people in Moldova. The association is a HelpAge International affiliate and worked as the main partner for the 2003-4 project with older people's organisations in Northern Moldova. Second Breath has also assumed an advisory role in the recent project undertaking in particular to organize the participation of northern organizations as mentors.

Rural Social Initiative (RSI), Bardar, Ialoveni is a national not-for-profit organisation working in Moldova since 2000. RSI is committed to the alleviation of poverty by building both the capacity and provision of support for disadvantaged groups including older people in rural communities. RSI also promotes education in international human rights relating to vulnerable groups by encouraging self-help initiatives working at different levels of the local community.

Northern implementing partners

Age Without Sadness – “*Batrinete Fara Tristete*”, Aneni Noi, was registered in April 1999. The association's objectives are to reduce social and medical problems experienced by older people and abandoned children. Its work includes creating day care centres for older people.

Hope – “*Speranta*” was founded and registered in September 2000 and has branches in Edinet, Briceni, Ocnita and Donduseni. The NGO aims to establish and train multi-disciplinary socio-medical teams to provide homecare services for older people, to protect the interests of older and disabled people in society and to support older people medically and socially

The Organisation of Veterans and Pensioners, Orhei, was originally set up by the communist party as 'the organisation of war veterans'. Since March 2000, the organisation has worked to protect the rights and interests of all pensioners and support their involvement in the cultural and social life of the Orhei region.

The Moldovan Association of Nursing, Chisinau, was registered in 1995 and offers qualitative medical care to older people from Chisinau. The association is a member of European Forum of Nursing and has 38 branches throughout Moldova.

The Republican Association of Pensioners – “*Bunatatea*”, Chisinau, originated in December 1995 and provides material and spiritual support to older people in Chisinau. The association focuses on socially vulnerable and impoverished older people to ensure they receive adequate social protection.

Southern implementing partners

Women's Club (Hope) – “*Speranta*”, Lapusna, Hincesti started activities in 2002 with the aim of providing protection and assistance to socially vulnerable persons and to reviving cultural traditions at community level.

Artizana, Pascani, Cahul, was founded in 2000 and aims to preserve Moldovan traditions among rural people, to provide moral and material support to housebound older people from Pascani and Manta, to create jobs and improve living conditions for them. The group is particularly keen to develop its work with older people living in inter-generational households through income generation activities

Women's Club (Community) – “*Comunitate*”, Carabetovca, Basara-beasca, was registered in 2002 to promote rural development, increase levels of well-being, and improve the standard of living for older people. “Comunitate” is keen to develop its work with older people and children, as well as to develop handicraft based income generation activities for disadvantaged people and to improve water and gas supplies for the local population.

Initiative for sustainable community development, Comrat was set up in 2005 under the guidance of the Association of Women of Gagauz. In 2006, members of the initiative group decided to register their own NGO, Inspiration. The main aims include reintegration of older people in society, improvement of their quality of life, provision of consultative services to older

people, humanitarian aid to older people, children and the housebound, as well as organising community cultural and recreation activities.

“Avante”, from Cazangic, Leova, was registered in 2003 with the aim of community social and the promotion of volunteering services by and for older people. Previous activities include reintegration of socially disadvantaged people through traditional activities and providing meals on wheels for older people.

Pro-Democracy – “Pro-Democratie”, Satul Nou, Cimislia started in 2002 to encourage democracy in society to the benefit of the community. The organisation aims to develop greater transparency in local decision making and provide humanitarian aid to poor members of the community. They also encourage initiatives to protect human rights and facilitate citizen access to information.

Organisation of Veterans, Ialoveni, was registered in 1998 with the principal aim to protect the rights and interests of veterans and pensioners, to secure greater involvement of veterans in social, economic and cultural life. They are also keen to collaborate with similar organisations in different regions of Moldova and to organise activities of common interest for veterans.

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