

Right to life without violence in old age

Newsletter, February 2012



The problem of domestic violence against older people

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In many parts of the world, violence against older people occurs with little recognition or response. This serious social problem is still often hidden from the public view and considered mostly as a private matter.

There is currently no data detailing the extent of domestic violence against older people, often because research at international and national levels considers only women of reproductive age giving the unintentional, yet striking impression, that women over 50 years do not experience violence, or are not considered women. The facts of domestic violence against the elderly remain invisible, unreported, and not recognised as a serious violation of human rights. Older people who experience violence are reluctant to talk about it because of shame, humiliation, and mainly because of fear. Fear that if they share their problem, it would only worsen their already intolerable situation.

In Kyrgyzstan, there are services helping victims of violence. They include 13 Crisis Centers. They are engaged in providing aid and support to women and girls. Old women quite rarely turn to Crisis Centers for help.

In 2003, Kyrgyzstan adopted «The Law on Social and Legal Protection from Domestic Violence», according to which the state authorities are obliged to engage in prevention of domestic violence, provide aid and support to victims of violence, and collect statistical data. However, the national



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HelpAge International



Association
of Crisis Centers

«We were aware of the problem of violence against elderly, but did not actively engage in it, and now it is the most appropriate time for this. On the one hand, we want to make elderly people more socially active, on the other hand we want to draw attention to the problems that older people face. This project is implemented not because the violence has increased, but because vulnerability of older people has become obvious,» - A. Eliferenko, Chairman of the ACC said

legislation is not enough applied or implemented in relation to domestic violence against older women and elder abuse. Health and social workers tend not to consider domestic violence as an issue for older women and men and therefore rarely ask about it.

Existing community structures, such as courts of elders, women and youth councils, health and social workers, neighborhood inspectors lack the capacity to identify, counsel and care for victims of domestic violence and elder abuse.

Older people are not aware of their rights and existing protection measures against domestic violence. Older victims of domestic violence, particularly in remote rural communities have no access to support or redress for the violence perpetrated against them.

The project «Right to Life Without Violence in Old Age» implemented by HelpAge International in partnership with the Association of Crisis Centers, funded by the European Union, under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is intended to address the above issues.

About the project «Right to Life Without Violence in Old Age»

The project is implemented in 26 rural communities of Chui, Talas, Jalal-Abad, Naryn, Osh, Issyk-Kul and Batken oblasts of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Target groups: staff of the Association of Crisis Centers; older people groups; staff of local self-governance in 26 villages.

The overall objective: is to contribute is to alleviate all forms of neglect, abuse and violence against older women and men in the Kyrgyz Republic.

In summary, the project will collect direct evidence on prevalence of elder abuse, with a specific focus on older women. This information will be presented at the Parliamentary hearings and included in the report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of the Discrimination Against Women (the CEDAW Committee) in order to strengthen the legislative and policy measures to protect the older people's rights. The project will build the capacity of 13 existing Crisis Centers to diversify their services to provide age-appropriate support for older victims of violence and abuse.

We have already implemented the following activities:

1) The Crisis Centers have established 26 older people's groups (OPG) which include active, organized older people who have life experience and wisdom, and who are ready to break the taboo around the issue of domestic violence against the elderly and to improve the situation in the target rural communities.

«At first, the OPG had difficulties in working in the villages, as they met misunderstanding and even insults from the villagers» - Mambetalieva G., leader of OPG from Kara - Oi village, Issyk-kul rayon, said.

After going through all the difficulties, OPG could express themselves in the communities by their activities. And now people turn to them for help.

What do the older people's groups do in their communities?

- raise awareness of their villagers on the domestic violence against older people;

«If earlier the Crisis Centers were working primarily with women of reproductive age, now their work has expanded significantly,» - Jyrgal Aynabekova, director of the CC «Altynai» said



«Groups are created in the communities to support, take care of the elderly, so they do not feel lonely. When a person is alone, he becomes more vulnerable, and therefore may be subjected to violence,»

- K. Mankieva, coordinator of the ACC noted

«Every day we are working to identify and address the concerns of older people. We work in cooperation with Ayil okmotu, and Crisis Centers. Older people themselves said that they felt better, particularly they felt better morally.»
- A. Aitbaeva, OPG leader, from Myrza-Ake village said

- discuss critical issues of the community;
- identify families at risk;
- using the principles of mediation, resolve the reconciliation issues;
- help in restoring the documents;
- work on elimination of harmful traditions in a village on issues of reducing costs for wedding parties, commemoration, funerals.

For this purpose, they closely cooperate with local community structures, such as Ayil okmotu, courts of elders, religious leaders, police departments, women's councils.

The OPG leader of Myrza-Ake village Ainash Aitbayeva emphasizes that under this project, serious problems of the elderly were identified, which were known but ignored to people.

2) Staff of the Crisis Centers and OPG leaders took part in a 3-day training organized by HelpAge International and the Association of Crisis Centers. During the training, participants have improved their knowledge about ageing, have gained new knowledge and skills on domestic violence and elder abuse issues and have been introduced to emergency response work and preparedness.

3) Representatives of the Ayil okmotu, courts of elders, social workers, religious leaders and OPG raised awareness about domestic violence against elderly, as well as how they can prevent, intervene and support the victims of domestic violence and abused older people. The Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation has been signed with by Ayil okmotu to undertake the project activities and other initiatives.

4) Mobile consultations have been organized by Crisis Centers to provide psychological and legal assistance to vulnerable older people in the target rural communities.

«At first, it was difficult to work. Older people confused the terms «psychologist» and «psychiatrist» and were closed. But gradually people began to turn to us», G. Borbieva, the Meerban CC psychologist said.

5) To inform the public about the project activities, the information boards have been placed in buildings of Ayil okmotu, FAPs, articles have been published in the newspapers «Kyrgyz Tuusu» and «Slovo Kyrgyzstana.»

The project plans include the following:

- Conduct public opinion survey on the issue of violence against the elderly
- Provide information about the situation in the field of domestic violence against older people for an alternative report to the CEDAW Committee
- Conduct a round table and the final conference on the project findings

Our partners: Association of Crisis Centers

Association of Crisis Centers of Kyrgyzstan (ACC) – is a network of non-government organization established in Kyrgyzstan, in March, 2001.

Mission of the Association of Crisis Centers (ACC) is to reduce gender violence in the society, promote rights and freedom of women, facilitate elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, create the opportunities for sustainable development and effective performance of the national Crisis Centers.

At present, the Association includes 13 Crisis Centers and NGOs working in urban, regional, district and rural areas of the country.

Which services do the Crisis Centers provide?

The Crisis Centers provide a wide range of services to the population:

- The centers have hot lines, provide counseling services of a psychologist, lawyers, and counseling of physicians, gynecologists, social workers as needed;
- A number of Crisis Centers have shelters and provide rehabilitation services and safe accommodation to women who have experienced violence.
- Crisis Centers hold extensive outreach work at the local and national levels with different groups of people - women, youth groups, representatives of state and local governments to improve the sensitivity, legal awareness and mobilize the community to jointly prevent violence against women.



16 Days International Campaign Against Gender Violence

«From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!»

The International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women is celebrated on November 25.

That day the annual campaign initiated by the UN «16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence» starts and it finishes on December 10 on the International Human Rights Day. Thus, 16 days of the campaign symbolize the inextricable link between the promotion of human rights and elimination of gender violence.

The campaign «16 days against violence» is carried out worldwide in over 153 countries in order to draw the attention of the society and the state to problems of gender violence. Crisis Centers and older people groups were also actively involved in this campaign. They conducted a series of events in their regions to raise awareness about the problem of domestic violence against older people.

«These events have good impact on the younger generation, develop such characteristics in them as care and respect of the older generation» - Kurmanbek Isakov, school director of Alysh village, Naryn oblast said

«It's nice to know that people do not forget us, that we are still needed.» - Kalipa Turdugulova, a 73 year older women said

Drawing contest «Older people are happiness for the families!»

In the target communities, drawing contest among school students «Older people are happiness for the families!» was held in order to revive good tradition of respect, honor, support for older people, to strengthen the links between the younger and older generations. The drawings were diverse. Children have painted beautiful, intelligent, wise faces of their grandparents. Through drawings children have expressed their attitude to older people.

«Share warmth» action

Under this action, the event under the slogan «Share warmth!» was held. Families invited lonely older people in their village to their home and treated them to sweets and a variety of dishes. In turn, older people blessed the family and home, saying kind words and wishes. This campaign was a manifestation of care, kindness and respect for the elderly by the younger generation.

«16 days of care!» action

Under the slogan «16 days of care!» the volunteer teams have provided assistance to the needy older people. Lists of needy elderly people were identified by the OPG leaders in cooperation with social workers.

«There were many school students willing to participate in the campaign. The boys helped the elderly to chop wood, brought water, cleaned in the stable. The tenth grade students in Kirov village helped the 80-year older Rakyime eje. This woman lives alone - her husband died long time ago, and the children and grandchildren come to visit her only occasionally.» - Salima Turdakulova, an activist from Kirov village, Panfilov district, told.

«This campaign helps to develop sense of compassion, tolerance and cordiality in children. It teaches to care and pay attention to older people»- Darika Asylbekova, head of «Ak-zhurok» crisis center said.

Contest for the «Best Mother-in-Law of the Village!»



«I liked the contest «Best Mother-in-law in the village». I think this is a great idea. Our grandmothers brightened up, their enthusiasm reappeared, and their eyes twinkle. The contest strengthened the relationship between kaiyn ene (mothers-in-law) and daughters-in-law.» - Aingul Sataeva, representative of the women's council of Kara Oy village, said.

Under the campaign, the contest for the «Best Mother-in-Law of the Village!» was held among older people. Generally, the contest has attracted attention of both the local residents and the media. The contest was held to draw attention to capacity of older people: their skills and knowledge, wisdom, and

vitality. The scenario was developed by active OPG members and representatives of Ail okmotu, and the contest had several stages: greeting, ability to welcome guests, questions and answers, ability to resolve conflict situations with the daughter-in-law, and at the final stage, the panel assessed ability to sing, dance, and other talents.

In some target villages, contests were held with participation of daughters-in-law. They helped their mothers-in-law during the performance, participated in a mini-plays and supported them during the question and answer sessions.

At the end of the contest, the best mothers-in-law of the village were selected, among which there was the most charming and wise mother-in-law. All the participants received various gifts - tea sets, flasks, electric kettles, shawls.



«We were able to see violence against older people in the Kyrgyz community and understand its consequences»

Performance of the mobile theater

Under the campaign, residents of Tegizchil villager, Ak-Suu district, Choң-Sary-Oy village of Issyk-Kul oblast, Dobolu village of Naryn district, Sasyk-Bulak village of Talas district, Panfilovka village of Panfilov district, watched an instructive play «Kart daraktyn koz zhashy» (Tears of the older tree). The play was about the relationship «between fathers and children» and showed that in the Kyrgyz society older people are neglected and abused. The play helped to create the emotional spirit in the audience. It was obvious that each viewer was concerned by this issue. During the discussion, many people said that the problem is critical for most families and that it is impossible to hide it and keep silent. The volunteer viewers were invited to the stage to give their own ways of solving the problem.

The play provided an opportunity for viewers to reconsider the values of life such as family, parents, and children.

Activities of the 16-day campaign were broadcasted by radio and published in the newspaper articles covering the problem of violence against older people. Calendars with children's drawings on happy and dignified old age, information flyers about the types of domestic violence against older people and contact details of Crisis Centers were distributed among the population.

What is necessary to know about violence against older people

All types of domestic violence experienced by older people:

Physical violence:

- bodily injury, assault

Psychological violence:

- causing mental anguish; verbal abuse; threats; slander; humiliation; neglect of the needs, and bullying older people
- hindering meetings and contacts with relatives, friends, etc.

Economic violence:

- misappropriation of assets and savings of an older person
- coercion to change wills or other documents in favor of children, families
- financial control over personal assets of an older person
- refuse to provide financial support

Sexual violence:

- forcing to perform sexual acts

Neglect:

- refusal to care, insufficient attention to basic needs of an older person for food, clothing, medical care, supervision

How to recognize signs of domestic violence against older people**Signs of physical violence:**

- traces of beatings, bashings
- sprains, dislocations or internal injuries
- broken teeth, broken limbs

Signs of psychological violence:

- helplessness
- closeness, offishness
- upset and exited
- reluctance to engage in dialogue, talk about themselves, their problems
- sudden changes in behavior of older people
- constant tension in communication
- sleep disturbance
- unexplained fears
- obedience and despondency

Signs of economic violence:

- sudden changes in a will or other financial documents
- disappearance of valuable property
- unpaid bills and bad medical care, despite the availability of necessary resources
- proof that the signature of an older person was forged
- sudden appearance of new relatives
- the older person's lacking money (cash or bank account)
- family members' interest in the assets belonging to the older person
- a person who cares, prohibits visitors to be alone with the older person

Signs of sexual violence:

- bruising in the chest
- torn or dirty underwear
- statements by the older person of being sexually abused

Signs of neglect:

- loss of weight
- unsanitary living conditions
- dehydration
- malnutrition
- neglected health problems
- poor personal hygiene



*Training for Crisis Centers
and OPG «Awareness of
Ageing Issues»
Bishkek city, May 24-26,
2011*

Why does violence against older people happen?

At present, very often, the elderly are not considered by the state and the family as important and valuable members of society. Many families consider the older people as a burden for family. The society has no conditions for involvement of older people into active life. Isolation of older people at home is both a cause and a consequence of abuse. Many older people are isolated because of physical or even mental illnesses. In addition, loss of friends and family members reduces the possibility of social interaction.

Cultural norms and traditions, such as age and gender discrimination play an important role. Older people are often portrayed as frail, weak and dependent, which makes them less worthy of public investments, and even family care, but they represent a ready object of exploitation.

Weakening ties between the generations in the family is often caused by migration of young, able-bodied family members from rural to urban areas. Leaving parents without custody, they thereby create conditions for abuse of older people.

Economic dependence on younger family members, chronic diseases are also the grounds for humiliation, abuse and neglect of needs

The consequence of elder abuse¹

For older people, the consequences of abuse can be specially serious. Older people are physically weaker and more vulnerable than younger adults, their bones are more brittle and convalescence takes longer. Even a relatively minor injury can cause serious and permanent damage. Many older people survive on limited incomes, so that the loss of even a small sum of money can have a significant impact. They may be isolated, lonely or troubled by illness, in which case they are more vulnerable as targets for fraudulent schemes.

Regardless of the type of violence, abuse leads to suffering, pain, loss, violation of human rights and worsening the quality of life. Older people who have been abused are more likely to have depression or psychological distress than their peers who were not exposed to violence.

Model behavior in the form of abuse and neglect can be assimilated by the younger generation. For example, the grandchildren who are witnesses of violence against older people may consider such attitude to older people as acceptable, or even normal. The violence causes psychological harm, reduces life, breaks will, deprives independence, makes older people vulnerable.

Response of Crisis Centers and OPG to types of domestic violence against older people

If a victim suffered the physical violence, it is necessary to:

- Explain the victim of domestic violence of his rights
- Inform about existing support services where they can get support
- Involve the local government bodies, the court of elders into resolution of the problem
- Provide psychological assistance to the victim
- Summon the abuser to the meeting of OPG, the court of



Representatives of local self governance and OPG members at the training on domestic violence against older people. Jany-Dyikan village, Djalalbad oblast

1. World report on violence and health. Chapter 5. Abuse of the elderly. Page 138 Edited by Etienne G. Krug, Linda L. Dahlberg, James A. Mercy, Anthony B. Zwi and Rafael



Participants of the training are discussing methods and approaches in addressing the problem of domestic violence against older people. Chon-saryoi village, Issyk-Kul oblast

elders and explain that he violated the law and liability he bears for this

- With the consent of the victim of domestic violence, notify the law-enforcement bodies and prosecutor's office about violence in the family or its threat
- Recommend filing a complaint to the police department for a temporary protective order
- Refer the victim to the appropriate medical examination
- Monitor the situation in the family

If the victim experienced economic violence:

- Provide legal assistance, to clarify the victim of domestic violence about his rights
- Help in making a complaint to the police, court, prosecutor's office, appeal against the illegal actions of the abuser
- Inform the local self-government bodies, the court of elders, women's councils

If the victim experienced sexual violence:

- Provide psychological support
- Explain to the victim of sexual abuse about his rights
- Provide legal assistance
- Encourage the victim to pass forensic examination
- Help to making a complaint to the police
- Put the victim (with his consent) to the social hotel (asylum)

If the victim experienced psychological violence:

- Provide psychological assistance
- Conduct initial survey of families with a view to establishing the nature of the situation
- Hold conversation with the abuser
- Attract attention of local authorities to this situation
- Upon consent of the victim, bring the case to discussion in the court of elders
- Inform the victim about the existing support services and hot lines

Effective measures to prevent violence against older people²

1. Raising awareness

Prevention starts with awareness. One important way to raise awareness – both among the public and concerned professionals – is through education and training. Those providing health care and social services at all levels, both in the community and in institutional settings, should receive basic training on the detection of elder abuse. A typical basic syllabus suitable for most disciplines includes an introduction to the topic of elder abuse, consideration of the signs and symptoms of abuse, and details of local organizations that can provide assistance.

The media are a second powerful tool for raising awareness of the problem and its possible solutions, among the general public as well as the authorities. More positive images and a greater prominence for older people in the media can work towards changing attitudes and reducing the stereotyping that exists around the elderly. Such activities will also give the older people strength and self-esteem.

2. World report on violence and health. Chapter 5. Abuse of the elderly. Page. 131/ Edited by Etienne G. Krug, Linda L. Dahlberg, James A. Mercy, Anthony B. Zwi and Rafael

Programmes, in which older people themselves play a leading role, for preventing abuse of the elderly in their homes include:

- recruiting and training older people to serve as visitors or companions to other older people who are isolated;
- creating support groups for victims of elder abuse;
- setting up community programmes to stimulate social interaction and participation among the elderly;
- building social networks of older people in villages, neighbourhoods or housing units;
- working with older people to create “selfhelp” programmes that enable them to be productive.

Preventing elder abuse by helping abusers, particularly adult children, to resolve their own problems is a difficult task. Measures that may be useful include: suffering services for the treatment of mental health problems and substance abuse; making jobs and education available;

2. More effective laws and policy

- the existing laws on domestic violence should be extended to include older people as a group;
- relevant existing criminal and civil laws should explicitly cover the abuse, neglect and exploitation of older people;
- governments should introduce new laws specifically to protect older people.

Information and advice for older people

Are You Being Abused?

The following several examples will help you to determine whether you are experiencing abuse and what type of abuse it is.

«After my wife died, I had to live in a house with non-working son - drunkard, who lives at the expense of my pension. Sometimes, being drunk, he beats me, demanding money for alcohol».

If anyone causes you physical pain by hitting you, burning or rough handling you – **this is physical violence.**

«I live with my family's son since my wife died. Daughter-in-law does not want to wash my clothes, do not serve food.»

«Before my illness I was an energetic and cheerful woman. I did everything at home. Then, I got into an accident, and was confined to bed. The youngest son and his wife refused to take care of me. They do not give medicines on time, and sometimes they do not give me food».

If the person providing your care consistently leaves you alone, without food and medication – **this is neglect which is also a form of violence.**

«My daughter takes my pension and I can not even buy medicine».

«I was married for 35 years and had happy life with my husband. I didn't have my own children, only 2 adopted ones. When my husband passed away I remained alone. Children used to visit me from time to time. When my children got divorced they moved back to father's house and kicked me out of my house».

«All my life I lived in my house, but my son sold the house without my consent. He told me that if I didn't want to live in the city with his family I would stay on the street».

If they take your savings, or deprive you of property (house, apartment, property, etc.) without your consent, **this is financial abuse.**

«My son has no job and insists that I should sell the apartment,



Training for representatives of local self governance and OPG members on domestic violence against older people. Karakhochkor village, Osh oblast

According to the statistics of crisis centers for the period from May to December 2011 (8 months), 998 appeals for psychological and legal assistance were made, with an overwhelming majority, 645, being made by older people (531 women, men 114). The breakdown is as follows:

*Psychological violence experienced 363 (56.2%)
Economic violence - 240 (37.2%)*

Physical violence - 30 (6%)

Sexual violence - 1

and wants to use the money to go to America. I disagree. Where will I live, if I sell the apartment. For this reason, every day he finds fault with me, insults in different words. It hurts me much. I brought him up».

If anyone cause you emotional pain by calling you names, yelling, insulting or threatening you, **this is psychological abuse.**

Why are the older people experiencing domestic violence reluctant to tell the truth?

- Because of shame and humiliation
- Fearing that if he tells about his problem, the situation will worsen
- Unwillingness to harm their family, whom they love and trust
- Often fear of losing the only family member, caring of them
- Many people believe that such attitude is normal
- Not knowing where to get support

What should be done in case of domestic violence?

- Tell about domestic violence against you to the person, whom you trust. It can be a friend, neighbor, local doctor, neighborhood inspector, a social worker.
- Call the hotline of the Crisis Center
- Visit the Crisis Center, where you can get support
- Contact the police

Did you know that there is the Law «About Social and Legal Protection against Domestic Violence» in the Kyrgyz Republic, which guarantees everyone the state protection from domestic violence.

A victim of domestic violence shall have a right to³:

- submit a complaint to the police or the prosecutor's office, of the committed domestic violence or threat of commission, in the state or official languages;
- transportation to the healthcare facility and provision of primary health care;
- being placed in a safe place or in a specialized social service institutions as they wish;
- receive information on protection of own safety, legal aid and advice;
- appeal to the court of elders in the community for public censure of conduct of the offender;
- receive the protection order or appeal to the relevant authorities to bring the offender to administrative or criminal liability.

There are two types of Protection Orders:

- **temporary protective order** – is issued by the bodies of internal affairs within 24 hours of receipt of appeal on the fact of domestic violence or the threat thereof. It can be issued for up to 15 days, during which the offender is obliged to respect the terms of the temporary protective order.
- **protective court order** – is issued by the court for a period of 1 to 6 months. Documents for a protective court order are prepared by the inspector on duty or neighborhood inspector. Protective orders protect against escalation of violence or repeated violence and are issued to victim, and the abuser, i.e., person who has committed domestic violence.

3. Law of the Kyrgyz Republic «About Social and Legal Protection from Domestic Violence», 2003, Article 6.

Under the terms of protective orders:

- abuser is prohibited from performing any acts of violence against the victim
- he may be made to leave the shared house
- pay the cost of medical treating the victim
- in case of failure to observe these conditions, the administrative penalty as a fine shall be imposed on the abuser



In case of domestic violence you may call the Crisis Centers of the Association:

- «Ak-Jurok» CC, Osh city, (3222) 4 59 76, p. 4 60 22
- «Aruulan» CC, Osh city, (03222) 5 56 08
- «Meerban» CC, Osh city, (03222) 4 96 74
- «Akytkarachach» CC, Osh oblast, Alai raion, Gulcho village, (03234) 5 12 84
- «Kaniyet» CC, Jalal-Abad city, (03722) 2 50 04
- «Ayalzat» CC, Karakol city, (3922) 5 10 91
- «Altynai» CC, Cholpon-Ata city, (03943) 6 27 03, 6 26 69
- «Tendesh» CC, Naryn city, (03522) 5 02 70
- «Maana» CC, Talas city, (03422) 5 58 85
- «Shans» CC, Bishkek city, (0312) 43 53 01



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