

AgeNews

East Asia/Pacific

*Sharing information
to strengthen
HelpAge Network*

**Issue 13
August 2014**

Inside:

- New social protection project kicks off in Myanmar
- Who is farming the land?
- Story from the field: the Philippines
- Unlocking potential in later life
- Interview with Honorary President of HelpAge Korea
- Towards a caring future
- Age Demands Action for a UN convention

Hae Ju IM/HelpAge International

**HelpAge
International**

global network

Editorial

AgeNews is back, with support from the European Union, and carrying the enthusiasm and commitment not only of our network members in the region, but also of all those who aim to have societies that express the rights and aspirations of older people and of all generations.

We gather for our Regional Conference in Chiang Mai from 1-4 September and this year's theme is **Older People in Ageing Societies: Burden or Resource?** This question is one which occupies the thoughts of many policymakers, academics, and network members, and the conference aims to present stimulating and challenging ideas and discussions which lead to innovation in this area.

With the Regional Conference in mind, this edition of AgeNews presents some thoughts on how to unlock potential in later life, facilitate the positive contributions of older people and avoid the perception of older people as a burden. We take a look at care and at the issue of ageing in farming populations, and deliver an encouraging story from the Philippines of the strength of united older people.

HelpAge is fortunate to have the support of the European Union in our regional project to strengthen the East Asia/Pacific civil society network on ageing. This project is supporting the growth of a network that works in collaboration with older people and their organisations. In that way, organised older people can become strategic for the future development agenda.

Last but not least, we are working to make AgeNews valuable for anyone with interest in ageing. Let us know if you have any comments, and please feel free to share this newsletter with your friends and colleagues.

Eduardo Kliem

Regional Director, East Asia/Pacific
HelpAge International

New social protection project kicks off in Myanmar

Following a launch ceremony in Myanmar's capital, Naypyitaw, on 15 May 2014, opened by the Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, HelpAge is moving ahead on a new three-year project aiming to support the Ministry to assume its leadership role in expanding social protection for vulnerable groups in Myanmar.

The project, funded by the LIFT donor consortium, will provide support to the government through a HelpAge team placed in the Ministry's offices. The team includes a Social Protection Advisor, Dr Wesumperuma, who has provided leadership for the work of HelpAge in the region for nearly two decades.

The project has two themes:

- training and technical assistance to the government on social protection policy for all vulnerable groups in Myanmar, and
- support for policies and programmes related to ageing specifically.

The project's activities include workshops for government and civil society leaders, research, conferences, and expert technical support for policy development and service delivery.

Building on existing social protection work: A second national dialogue workshop on social protection took place on from 18-20 June in Naypyitaw. During this workshop, the recommendations from the first national dialogue workshop, held in March, were converted into policy options and concrete scenarios. This national-scale project will enhance HelpAge's collaboration with the government and its involvement at policy making level.

(AH)



Social Transfer Course

The course **Designing and Implementing Social Transfer Programmes** offered by HelpAge International and the Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI), will be held once again this year from 6-17 October 2014, in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The course aims to provide decision makers with an in-depth understanding of the development of social transfer programs. Cash transfers are a relatively modern tool that have proven extremely successful at accelerating development and lifting populations out of poverty.

The course is two weeks, though it is possible to attend just the first week or one of the specialized topic modules offered in the second week. HelpAge International will be facilitating the second week module on Ageing and Social Pensions, while EPRI and Bankable Frontiers will be offering modules on monitoring and evaluation, financial inclusion, social protection policy, and micro-simulation of social transfer programs.

The experience, models, achievements and challenges from schemes implemented in countries around the world are presented by top-level academics and officials from those countries. Theme-oriented sessions and technical skills-building workshops are supported by practical case studies and field trips to see Thailand's social transfer scheme in action.

For more information, please email Caitlin Littleton at asiacourse@helpageasia.org

(CL)



Who is farming the land?

The ageing of rural populations, and farm populations in particular, has recently been in the media spotlight. “In ten years, who will farm the land?” asks the Beijing News, while Reuters worries that “Ageing farmers threaten Indonesian food security”.

Despite the increasing interest in this topic, there has been little systematic analysis. To start addressing this gap, HelpAge has analysed existing data sets including agriculture census data of 55 countries in Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The findings show a universal trend across the different regions: older people make up an increasing proportion of those living in rural areas, as the numbers of younger people in rural areas decline. The proportion of older farmers specifically is significant and growing.

Across the 55 countries for which agricultural census data is available, the percentage of farmers over 65 is 9.6 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa, 11.4 per cent in Asia, 13.3 per cent in the Caribbean and 16.5 per cent in Latin America.

The ageing of farmers has occurred most rapidly and significantly in Southeast Asia and southern Africa which have seen significant increases (over 5 per cent) in the proportion of farmers over 65 in less than a decade. At the same time, labour force surveys show that agriculture



Joanne Hill/HelpAge International

is the most important source of employment for older people in these regions.

This emerging demographic reality demands attention from policy-makers and practitioners alike. The prevailing view, which labels older farmers as unproductive, unable to adopt new technologies and unwilling to link with markets, is not backed by existing evidence.



Wang Jing/HelpAge International

Given that the majority of economically active older people in rural areas derive their primary income from agriculture, policymakers and practitioners need to ensure that they have equal access to productive resources and adequate support.

(TV)

The full HelpAge research report: “The ageing of rural populations: evidence on older farmers in lower and middle income countries” will be available on HelpAge’s website shortly.

“A land for all of us”

Mr Dalangao, 68, is from Barangay La Roxas, Mindanao, in the Philippines. He works as farmer to support his family. He plants vegetables and other crops and sells them in the nearby market. He is a member of La Roxas Elderly Group, established in 2013 to address the difficulties that local older people face accessing basic health services. La Roxas is one of the farthest and most remote areas in the municipality and many young people have migrated away. “We have to find ways to support ourselves, but we need to share what we have,” says Mr Dalangao.

The Elderly Group decided to start an alternative livelihood that would benefit the whole community. Farming is their

main skill. “The only thing we are good at is farming. We may not produce as much as we used to, but if we do it together, we can produce as much as we want to.” The members decided to grow flowers and sell at the local market. Some of the members were already growing flowers, so they knew the techniques. Mr Dalangao offered to lease ½ hectare of his land to the group for their activities for PHP 3,000 (USD 69) per year. His land is very fertile and has easy access to water. “Even though I still have some vegetables in that land, I have used that land enough for my family. This time I would like my fellow older people to come work together. We may develop this piece of land, a land for all of us.”

(FK)

Story from the field

“We have to find ways to support ourselves, but we need to share what we have”



Unlocking potential in later life

In Asia, we are facing a demographic transition that requires us to re-think 'old age' – what is it? What does it mean?

At HelpAge, we believe that we need to redesign societies to turn the challenges of an ageing population into opportunities. This demographic transition is a chance to build a society for all ages.

All levels of society, from rural villages, to national governments, and beyond to regional and global leaders such as ASEAN and the United Nations, have a role in the redesign of society.

From 1 to 4 September 2014, more than 150 civil society leaders, HelpAge network members, government officials, academics and donors will come together in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to discuss this very idea – **Older people in ageing societies: Resource or burden?** The delegates to the HelpAge Regional Conference have been drawn from nations across East Asia, South Asia, the Pacific, and beyond. They are influential thinkers and actors.

The conference delegates will discuss the active engagement of healthy older people in economic, social and environmental development, and innovative strategies,



Mayur Paul/HelpAge International

policies and programmes to achieve this goal. The conference aims to rebalance perceptions of older people away from 'burden' and towards 'resource', and reorient public discourse on older people.

Redesigning societies

Demographic change is occurring rapidly in Asia. One third of Japanese people born today are likely to live until they are 100 years of age, and Vietnamese people today are living on average ten years longer than they did just ten years ago.

This demographic change leads to a reduced proportion of children, and in a few years also a reduction in the proportion of people in working age.

An ageing transition that took 80 to 100 years in Europe is happening in only 20 to 30 years in most Asian countries. These countries are undergoing demographic transitions in parallel with dramatic economic and social developments.

This would not be the first time that societies have redesigned themselves to adapt to a demographic change. When child survival increased dramatically in

the 20th century, societies adapted by improving education, health care systems, and protection policies for children. We must take action again.

The common and simplistic perception of older people is that they are a burden, and ageing societies will struggle under the weight and costs of health care and pensions.

This is not necessarily true. Older people are valuable, contributing members of society, and it is up to us to ensure we do not ignore their resources. By enabling older people to make a greater contribution to societies, we benefit older people as well as entire communities. If we fail to tap into the skills, experience and willingness to contribute of older people and instead view them as a burden, it will be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Far from a period of decline and withdrawal from society, later life is a time when people have much to give, and can be active participants in all areas of society – working for an income, providing care and service, leading their communities and sharing their social, cultural and practical knowledge.



Dominika Kronsteiner/HelpAge International



Jinhyang Kang/HelpAge Korea



Interview

Take 5 with Mr Cho (Sr.),
Honorary President of HelpAge Korea

How long have you been involved with HelpAge?

I worked with HelpAge for 23 years, from 1983 to 2005, and now I remain involved as honorary president of HelpAge Korea.

Do you consider older people as a burden or a resource, or both? Why?

I think older people can be both a burden and a resource. No matter how older people keep their physical health, age brings its unmistakable signs with it. Many older people cannot live without assistance from others and that can make older people a burden to a family and a country.

However, older people can be a resource. I am an example of that. I am currently the elder chairperson at Korea Association of Social Workers. About 20 retired social workers who are over 65 have been working with me. We have been helping small organisations by offering consultancy services for the last 3 years and we help around 30 organisations each year. Most of the senior social workers were social welfare professors and chairpersons of welfare centres. We are pleased not to let our experiences and our 'know-how' wither away.

In your opinion, how can we raise the capacity of older people to be a resource in their communities?

I think older people fail to be a resource when they are neglected. However, when they are activated and supported by the society, older people can perform great roles. This is why it is important to create an atmosphere in society that older people can be leaders in a community.

In my opinion, we must urgently develop potential leaders among older people and develop the current older leaders in a community and a country. Moreover, we should strive to create an atmosphere where older people can eagerly participate in society. The more we build that atmosphere, the better the welfare of older people.

What do you like to do when you have free time from working with HelpAge Korea?

I love to watch musicals – my favourite is 'Miss Saigon'. I saw a performance of it in London and it really impressed me.

Do you travel in the East Asia and Pacific region?

I like to travel, especially to Singapore. I love Singapore; the city is clean and beautiful. My favourite place in Singapore is the botanic gardens and I love to go there early in the morning to walk with jogging people and to have a simple breakfast at an open air cafe in front of the garden.

(AS)

So what needs to be done?

- We need policies and structures which encourage healthy, active ageing, self-care, and community-based care
- We need older people's associations to enable older people to join forces and better support their families and communities
- We must not allow older people to fall into poverty as they age – social pensions and income security are essential
- We need policies and strategies that will enable the continued participation of older people in the workforce – flexible arrangements, gradual retirement

The challenge for the HelpAge network is to transcend a common focus on older people's vulnerabilities and become advocates for the creation of conditions, policies and practices that enhance the contribution of people in later life. The HelpAge Asia/Pacific Regional Conference will be an important step in this respect.

In this first part of the 21st century we stand at the crossroads of population ageing in Asia. It is within our capacity to take the right steps in the right direction.

(JM)

International date

19 19 August: World Humanitarian Day

The following explanation of World Humanitarian Day is taken from: <http://worldhumanitarianday.org/en/about>:

World Humanitarian Day falls on 19 August, the day in 2003 when 22 aid workers were killed in a bombing at the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

It's a day to commemorate all people who have lost their lives in humanitarian service and to celebrate the spirit that inspires humanitarian work around the world.

Towards a caring future

By 2025, there will be 700 million people aged over 60 in Asia. The pace of ageing in the Asia/Pacific region is rapid and unprecedented. It has brought many challenges for nations, including the big question of how to care for older people.

What is 'care'?

The goal of care is to enable older people to live a quality life in terms of their physical, mental, emotional and social state. Individual requirements for care are spread along a broad spectrum of need.

As we age, we are more likely to experience health problems, more likely to become frail or have limited mobility, and more likely to have difficulties performing the activities of daily life, like shopping or cleaning, or managing our finances or personal affairs. Coupled with a withdrawal from the workforce, these limitations in the activities of daily life leave older people more susceptible to social isolation and poverty.

Ageing in place

The message from older people is that they want to 'age in place' – this means growing old at home, in their communities, with their regular lifestyle

maintained to the extent possible. A national survey of 20,000 people in 20 Chinese provinces, conducted by the Chinese Research Centre on Ageing in 2010, found that 88.7% of urban elderly and 87.5% of rural elderly expressed a preference for ageing at home.

Why community-based care?

Home care and community based care are also far less expensive strategies of long term care, especially when those being cared for do not require intensive support with their activities of daily life. Lower cost care strategies mean that more people can access care, and that care is more likely to be sustainable.

The ROK-ASEAN model

The ROK-ASEAN Home Care for Older People Project has been implementing a community care model, where care is provided in the home by volunteers, in ASEAN countries since 2003.

The model encompasses volunteer recruitment and training, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation. To determine recipients of care, a needs assessment is conducted and a care plan for each individual is developed. Volunteers and care recipients are matched based on the



interests and characteristics of both parties and the specific needs of the older person.

The future

Care is a strategic area of focus for HelpAge International. With commitment and innovation, solutions to meet the care challenge are within the grasp of every nation in Asia Pacific.

(JM)

In brief

● **Good news from Fiji – Social pension scheme allowances increased by 66%:** The government of Fiji has announced that it will increase the monthly social pension allowance, currently paid to 9675 older people, from FJ\$30 (USD 16) to FJ\$50 (USD 27). The increases will take effect in 2015.

In Fiji, recipients of the social pension are 70 years and older, do not have any other form of income or pension and have never been part of a superannuation scheme.

The Social Pension Scheme was first introduced in 2014 with a budgetary allocation of FJ\$3.2 million.

Fiji also has a bus fare concession scheme which offers discounted or free bus travel to Fijians over the age of 60 or those with a disability.

The increase in the monthly pension allowance was based on the requests of senior citizens, particularly in rural communities, and shows the encouraging results of direct engagement and campaigning by older people with their governments.

Even though the increased allowance is low in comparison to the national minimum wage – currently FJ\$2 per hour, or around FJ\$90 per week – this news is an important step forward in Fiji's support for its older people.

● **The first Independent Expert on rights of older people:** HelpAge International welcomes the news that the UN Human Rights Council has appointed Ms Rosa Kornfeld-Matte as the first Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons.

Ms Kornfeld-Matte has served as the National Director of the Chilean National

Service of Ageing and has a long career as an academic, working for 22 years at the Pontificia Universidad Catolica de Chile where she founded their programme on older people.

The announcement was made on 8 May 2014, granting Ms Kornfeld-Matte a three-year mandate to assess the implementation of existing international instruments with regard to older persons, undertake country visits to identify best practice and gaps in the implementation of the existing law, and raise public awareness through media. She will work in close coordination with the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG).

To read more about the appointment, visit:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/OlderPersons/IE/Pages/IEOlderPersons.aspx>

To read more about OEWG, visit:
<http://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/>

Age Demands Action for a UN convention

UN conventions currently in place formally protect the rights of women, children and the disabled, yet ageism remains one of the last frontiers of tolerated discrimination. Older people's ability to contribute to their communities is often curtailed by the violation of their rights at a family, community and institutional level. But older people across the world are starting to fight back and raise their voices.

Age Demands Action (ADA) is a global grassroots campaign led by older people who are challenging age discrimination and fighting for their rights. At present, the campaign is held in 60 countries with over 200,000 campaigners taking part each year by joining marches, meeting governments, collecting signatures to petitions and speaking to the media.

Internationally the campaign is calling for a **UN convention on the rights of older people**. A UN convention would provide clarity about government responsibilities to protect older people's rights and provide a system to hold them to account. A convention would also be a powerful advocacy tool and encourage a shift away from the perception of older people as recipients of welfare to rights holders with responsibilities.

Over the course of three years, a petition calling for governments to support a UN convention has gained a massive popularity and received over 250,000 signatures, including signatures from high level officials such as the Prime Minister of Nepal, members of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Philippines and members of the European Parliament in Slovenia.

The ADA campaign has three spikes every year:

- 7 April, World Health Day, when campaigners call on their national governments for better access to healthcare for older people;
- 15 June, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, when campaigners across the world raise awareness of elder abuse and lobby their governments to protect older people; and
- 1 October, the International Day of Older Persons.

(MP)

You can show your support for older people by signing the ADA petition on <http://www.helpage.org/signthepetition>

ADA for Rights in the region

The ADA for Rights campaign was held on 15 June 2014 to coincide with World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. Designated by the United Nations, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is a time to highlight, condemn, and take action against the abuse and suffering inflicted upon some of our older generations.

By promoting the rights of older people, ADA campaigners have an opportunity to influence governments to stop elder abuse and violence against older people. It is also an opportunity to build political engagement and support for a United Nations convention on the rights of older people.

The ADA for Rights has seen great success in the East Asia and Pacific region, led by HelpAge International's partner organisations, and this year was no exception.

Six countries took part in this year's campaign and were able to maximize this opportunity for the movement of laws to protect the rights of older people, the engagement of government representatives in the activities of the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing, and nationwide media coverage on World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

Some key activities in the ADA for Rights campaign:

Cambodia: Three Federations of Older People's Associations in Battambang, with a total membership of 2730 older people, held sessions with their members on the rights of older people, and they are eager to join in the campaign. In addition, about 200 NGOs showed their support for the campaign by signing the petition, shared by HelpAge Cambodia via email.



What older people around the world are saying:

"We, the people, are the builders of modern Jamaica. We want a voice. We are proud to be part of Age Demands Action, a global movement of older people"

Kenneth Hemley, 72, President of an older person's association in Jamaica.

"I advocate for equality between people so that there is no more discrimination. All people in the world have the right to live in peace, safety and dignity."

Abed Errahman Shehada, 74, member of the Arab Writers Union from the occupied Palestinian Territories.



Fiji: Events to mark the ADA for Rights campaign and World Elder Abuse Awareness Day were staged in Nadi with local older people and Pacific Islands NGO leaders. The activities included the Pacific Islands Association of Non-Governmental Organisations, a regional platform for Pacific civil society organisations. Pacific NGO leaders present were impressed by the campaign and will take it home to their countries. There was strong support for a UN convention on the rights of older people.

(MA & AS)

Resources

Publications



Advocating for social pensions: Lessons learnt from the Philippines

By HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2014



Older people's inclusion in the Typhoon Haiyan response

By HelpAge-COSE, 2014



Promoting the rights of older people in the community in Mae Hong Son province

By HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2014

Infographics

Older people during the Typhoon Haiyan response, by HelpAge-COSE, 2014

Older people's associations: improving the lives of older people in Asia, by HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2014

All HelpAge publications are available to download from www.helpage.org/resources.

Old age protection for informal workers – feasible or too far away?

By Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2014
<http://www.giz.de/fachexpertise/downloads/giz2014-en-old-age-protection-for-informal-workers.pdf>

Blog

Securing a Dignified Old Age for All

By United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2014
[http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/newsview.nsf/\(httpNews\)/EDC449B992DC12FAC1257CC40049E7B7?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/newsview.nsf/(httpNews)/EDC449B992DC12FAC1257CC40049E7B7?OpenDocument)



www.AgeingAsia.org

Announcement!

New website launched: The HelpAge East Asia/Pacific Regional Office is pleased to announce that our website www.AgeingAsia.org is now online!

We are striving to build this website to be a hub of knowledge on ageing in East Asia and Pacific. The wide range of information, including news, stories from the field, country and theme profiles, and resources is designed to meet the needs of our network in the region.

By subscribing to our e-newsletter, we will deliver regular updates, including the AgeNews newsletter, straight to your desk!

Follow us



www.facebook.com/HelpAgeAsia



twitter.com/HelpAgeEAPRO

Share your ideas with us: We welcome your opinions, ideas and suggestions. Let us know what you think about AgeNews and how we can improve.

In addition, we welcome articles for consideration. Please send articles at any time to:

AgeNews Editor
HelpAge International East Asia/Pacific
6 Soi 17 Nimmanhemmin Road
Suthep, Muang, Chiang Mai 50200 THAILAND
hai@helpageasia.org

AgeNews is published three times per year by HelpAge International East Asia/Pacific. Copies of AgeNews are available free of charge to people working with older people. You can also download AgeNews as a PDF from our website: www.AgeingAsia.org

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

AgeNews East Asia/Pacific aims to highlight issues of ageing and the rights of older people in East Asia/Pacific as well as share experiences of working with and for older people.

HelpAge International East Asia/Pacific

6 Soi 17 Nimmanhemmin Road
Suthep, Muang, Chiang Mai 50200 THAILAND

Tel: +66 53 225440, 225081
Fax: +66 53 225441, 894 214
hai@helpageasia.org
www.helpage.org

London office

HelpAge International
PO Box 70156, London WC1A
9GB, United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 7278 7778
Fax: +44 (0)20 7387 6992
hai@helpage.org

Contributors

Anne Hallaire (AH)
Atchareeya Saisin (AS)
Caitlin Littleton (CT)
Eduardo Klien (EK)
Fransiskus Kupang (FK)
Justine Marshall (JM)
Marifer Arevalo (MA)
Mayur Paul (MP)
Tessa Vorbohle (TV)

Registered charity number: 288180
Copyright © HelpAge International 2014
Any parts of this publication may be reproduced for non-profit purposes unless indicated otherwise.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. To view this licence, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0>

With funding from



AgeNews published under the regional project "Strengthening the civil society network on ageing in Southeast Asia", funded by the European Union.

Publication ID: EAPRDC0006