



HelpAge

International

End the neglect:

*a study of humanitarian financing  
for older people*

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

## End the neglect:

*a study of humanitarian financing for older people*

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# Executive summary

Today, as the scale of humanitarian needs around the world is greater than ever before, the financing of humanitarian response is coming under increasing scrutiny. Data from the latest *Global humanitarian assistance report* show that in 2014, international humanitarian funding rose for a second consecutive year, reaching a record high of US\$24.5 billion – 19 per cent up on the previous year. Yet the data also reveal a growing gap between funding and needs. In 2014, while US\$12 billion was allocated to UN-coordinated appeals, US\$7.5 billion of requirements (38 per cent) were unmet.<sup>1</sup>

At a global level, discussions of humanitarian financing, such as those reported on by the United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel, are addressing three critical questions: how to reduce humanitarian needs by addressing the root causes of crises; how to increase the resource base for the response; and how to improve the way aid is delivered while at the same time using it more effectively.<sup>2</sup> The question of whether existing funding actually reaches the people most in need – a crucial one for all those concerned with the impartiality of humanitarian response – receives less attention.

Since 2010 HelpAge International has conducted an annual analysis, using humanitarian funding as a proxy indicator, to quantify the degree to which the specific needs of older people are reflected in humanitarian programming. In the absence of full reporting of humanitarian spending, HelpAge uses the United Nations (UN) Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) as a proxy for humanitarian funding (for further details see the Methodology section). Our analysis in 2010 and 2011 found that fewer than 1 per cent of projects reviewed included activities targeting older people – a figure that rose only marginally to 2.1 per cent in 2012.<sup>3, 4</sup>

This report is the most recent study in the series. It provides new data on funding allocations in 2013 and 2014, and gives a longitudinal analysis of the extent to which humanitarian response is meeting older people's needs.

## Key findings

We analysed **16,221** projects implemented between 2010 and 2014:

**154** projects included at least one activity specifically targeting older people

**48%** only **74** of these projects were funded

**855** projects included at least one activity that mentions older people alongside other vulnerable groups

**51%** **439** of these projects were funded

## Five appeals

in 2013 and 2014 (Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, Gambia and the Sahel regional response) did not include any projects targeting older people or even mention them among other vulnerable groups

## Two donors

(ECHO and Japan) consistently provided funding to projects that address the needs of older people

## Key findings

Our findings paint a bleak picture of a humanitarian system that seems unable to design, fund and deliver an evidence-based response based solely on need. In many cases, humanitarian response is neither identifying nor addressing the needs of older people, who remain one of the most vulnerable and neglected groups in humanitarian crises. Even where the response does identify the distinct needs of older women and men, the resources allocated to addressing those needs are far from adequate.

In their preparatory statements for the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016, the UN Secretary-General and the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator recognise that addressing the neglect of marginalised groups – including older people – is central to fulfilling the global commitment to “leave no one behind”, as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>5</sup> Yet our findings offer a sobering analysis of the extent to which vulnerable older people are being left behind. This presents a major challenge for the international humanitarian community and highlights the extent of the changes needed to collectively deliver on the humanitarian commitment to an impartial, needs-based response.

The concluding section of this report presents our recommendations. HelpAge urges all actors involved in humanitarian response to play their part in delivering the changes needed. They should:

- fully identify older people's needs
- provide sufficient funding to address those needs
- strengthen coordination
- improve monitoring to ensure humanitarian response reaches older people and other vulnerable groups.

# Introduction

Today, about 12 per cent of the world's population is aged 60 and over (928 million people). In just four years' time, the number of older people will surpass 1 billion. By 2050, there will be nearly as many people aged 60 and over as children under 15.<sup>6</sup> These major demographic changes are not just of concern for high-income countries; two-thirds of the world's older people live in low- and middle-income countries, where disasters are more likely to occur and the humanitarian impact is greater. By 2050, it is estimated that four-fifths of the world's older people will live in low- and middle-income countries.<sup>7</sup>

Available data, although limited, clearly show that older people are disproportionately represented in disaster-related morbidity and mortality. When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, 75 per cent of those who died were over 60, even though this age group comprised only 16 per cent of the local population.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, in the Japanese tsunami of 2011, 56 per cent of those who died were 65 and over, despite this age group comprising just 23 per cent of the population.<sup>9</sup> Data from low- and middle-income countries, although less robust, paint a similar picture. Philippine Government data from Typhoon Haiyan, which struck in November 2013 (see case study on page 4), show that 151 of the 393 fatalities (whose ages were recorded) were over 60 years (38.4 per cent), although older people comprise just 7 per cent of the population.<sup>10</sup> In Nepal, of 678 people hospitalised as a result of the 2015 earthquake, 18 per cent were over 60,<sup>11</sup> yet only 8.1 per cent of the population are aged 60 or over.<sup>12</sup>

Global demographic change has implications for the response to humanitarian crises, but understanding the numbers and needs of different groups within an affected population also demands knowledge of contextual factors. High rates of rural-urban migration, difficulties faced by older people fleeing conflict, and the impact of HIV, combined with different social and cultural definitions attached to "older age" mean that the numbers of older people in an affected population may be even higher than national statistics suggest. Furthermore, the increasing incidence of emergencies in countries such as Syria and Ukraine, which are classed as middle-income and where life expectancy tends to be longer, further increases the numbers of older people affected. Pre-crisis data from Ukraine show that 23 per cent of the population were aged 60 and over; many have been unable to leave the conflict-affected eastern regions, resulting in a disproportionately large number of older people affected by the crisis and in need of support.

Contexts such as these pose significant challenges for a humanitarian system that is currently set up to deliver "one-size-fits-all" responses that do not meet the needs of different sections of the population, and for the delivery of appropriate needs-based response.

## Methodology

As with the previous studies in this series, data from the UN Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) form the basis of our analysis. The primary data collection tool was the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) managed by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The FTS project sheets were analysed to identify projects that included at least one activity specifically targeting older people, and projects that included activities that mentioned older people alongside other vulnerable groups. The FTS captures all information on projects in the appeals; however, reporting on whether a specific project is funded is done on a voluntary basis by the donor, the recipient, or both. It is recognised that donor funding is not limited to the contributions to UN appeals, and hence the study does not provide a full picture. Nevertheless, it is considered a sufficient proxy indicator for the levels of assistance provided to older people.

Recent reforms of humanitarian financing mechanisms and the shift from UN CAP to Strategic Response Plans (SRPs) have impacted on the methodology for this study. Where countries have made the transition from the CAP to the SRP, the original methodology outlined above could not be applied due to the lack of

individual project sheets in the SRP process. The phased introduction of the SRPs across the study period means we have been able to undertake a near complete analysis of country responses in 2013 and 2014, and while in 2015 the sample size is reduced,<sup>13</sup> the findings indicate a continuation of the trends found in previous years. For the purposes of this study, the 2015 data are excluded from the analysis due to the limited sample size, and baseline data are taken from the 2010 analysis. A full list of the countries included in the study can be found in Annex 1. An overview of the main findings is presented in Annex 2.

## Key findings

Of the 16,221 projects analysed that were implemented between 2010 and 2014:

- Just 154 included at least one activity specifically targeting older people; only 74 of these projects (48 per cent) were funded.
- 855 projects included at least one activity that mentions older people alongside other vulnerable groups; 439 of these (51.3 per cent) were funded.
- Of the 154 projects that included at least one targeted activity for older people, 61 (39 per cent) were submitted by HelpAge International.

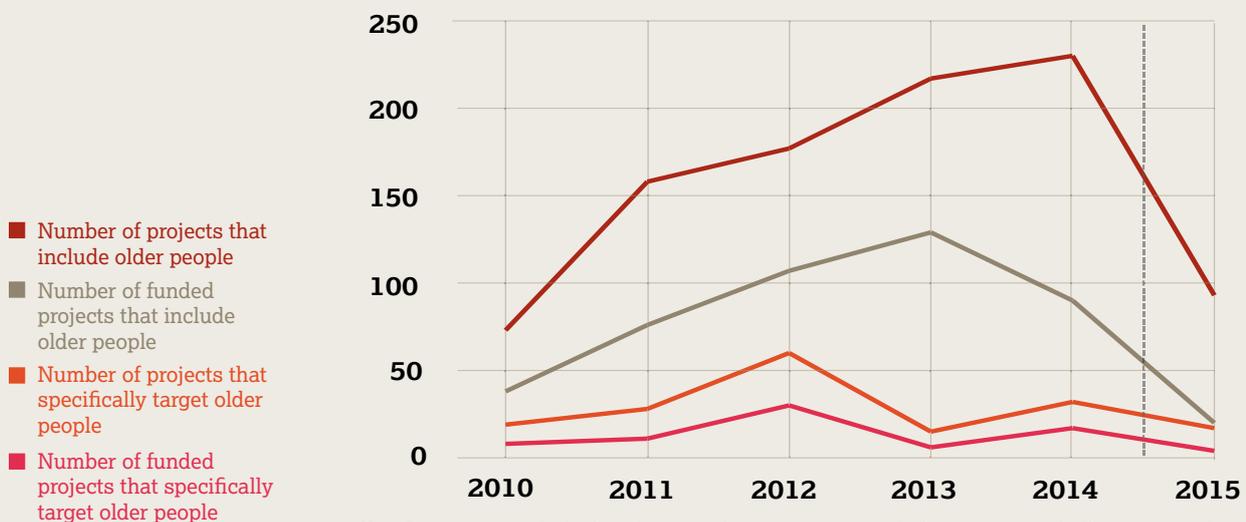
Advocacy by specialist agencies concerned with the needs of vulnerable groups and some donor initiatives (including ECHO's Gender-Age Marker<sup>14</sup>) differentiate between two forms of assistance: targeted assistance to meet specific needs; and adapted or mainstream assistance to ensure equitable access for all.

The increase in the number of projects that identify older people alongside other vulnerable groups is a positive trend (see Figure 1). It illustrates that humanitarian partners are increasingly aware of the challenges faced by older people and are giving them greater consideration in proposals as part of their focus on ensuring access for all vulnerable groups.

In contrast, the number of projects targeting older people and designed to address their specific needs remains low and virtually unchanged across the study period – 19 projects in 2010 (0.66 per cent) rising to just 32 in 2014 (1 per cent), of which 19 were funded.

These findings suggest that evidence and knowledge of older people's needs and their requirements for targeted and tailored assistance – for example, the screening and management of non-communicable disease – is either unavailable or, if available, it is not being translated into programming. In contrast, where evidence of the specific needs of other age groups is available, targeted programming has become the norm in humanitarian response, illustrated by the number and scale of child-focused health, protection and nutrition interventions.

**Figure 1: Total number of projects and funded projects addressing older people's needs**



Note: Changes to humanitarian financing mechanisms mean the sample size for the study was significantly reduced in 2015, which explains the sudden drop in the total number of ageing-sensitive projects. However, the number of projects taken as a percentage of total projects submitted continues to illustrate the trend of previous years.



## *The response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines*

On 8 November 2013, Typhoon Haiyan – one of the strongest tropical storms ever recorded – hit the Philippines. The humanitarian coordination system was activated and there was a major response by national and international actors. The analysis carried out for this report shows that 2014 saw the highest number of projects addressing the needs of older people, and the Philippines appeal accounted for a significant proportion of that total: 18 per cent of all projects targeting older people alongside other vulnerable groups in that year were submitted in the Philippines, as were 64 per cent of projects specifically targeting older people.

In 2014, excluding HelpAge's own projects, 28 agencies submitted 38 projects targeting older people alongside other vulnerable groups, while seven agencies submitted seven projects specifically targeting older people. Between 2013 and 2014 there was a 90 per cent increase in emergency shelter projects (11 in total) that addressed older people's needs alongside other groups. Food security partners included 11 such projects, having submitted none in 2013. The protection and health sectors saw a 75 per cent and 50 per cent increase respectively in projects (four per cluster) addressing the needs of older people and other vulnerable groups. While the overall number of projects submitted remains low, the overall trend is positive and warrants further investigation.

So why was the Haiyan response more sensitive to ageing concerns than other appeals? The explanation is complex but a number of likely factors can be identified. A HelpAge staff member seconded to the Global Food Security Cluster was deployed as the Food Security Cluster coordinator, which allowed for ageing concerns to gain a higher profile in cluster and appeal documents and project review. In addition, a HelpAge adviser was deployed to the Protection Cluster to complete an ageing-specific assessment and provide support on programme design. HelpAge also worked with a number of disability partners to establish an Age and Disability Task Force under the auspices of the Protection Cluster to promote greater inclusion of older people in humanitarian response. While the inclusion of older people cannot be directly attributed to these factors, the overall attempt to raise the profile of older people affected by the crisis is likely to have played a role.

In addition, the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) coordinator (deployed to OCHA and the World Food Programme) consulted with older women and men and highlighted their needs in the resulting report. The profile of AAP and the support it received from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) is likely to have contributed to this greater recognition of the specific needs of older women and men.

## Funding and donors

Humanitarian appeals are known to be chronically under-resourced, with a growing gap between humanitarian needs and the finances committed to address them. The data available for this study allow us to provide a comparative analysis of the financing gap for appeals as a whole, and for projects targeting older people.

- In 2013, the total appeal was 62 per cent funded, while projects targeting older people and other vulnerable groups were 51 per cent funded.
- In 2014, the total appeal was 59 per cent funded, while projects targeting older people and other vulnerable groups were 41 per cent funded.

We can immediately see that the funding gap, when analysed from an ageing perspective, is greater than the overall humanitarian funding gap. This gap has severe consequences for the delivery of responses that are appropriate to the needs of older women and men, and has major implications for the impartiality of humanitarian assistance. Donors need to make urgent and concerted efforts to address this funding gap.

The study also provides insights into which donors are making a greater contribution to addressing the needs of older people.

Between 2012 and 2014:

- The number of donors funding projects that addressed the needs of older people grew from nine in 2012 to 28 in 2013 and 31 in 2014.

Yet, between 2010 and 2014:

- Only two donors (ECHO and Japan) consistently provided funding to projects that addressed the needs of older people (either targeted assistance or support for older people alongside other vulnerable groups). The United States provided funding in all but one year.
- 14 donors allocated funding to projects that specifically targeted older people, but none provided funding in all the years analysed. Only three donors (Ireland, UK and Denmark) allocated more than 1 per cent of their total UN appeal contributions to these projects.

The increase in the total number of donors allocating resources to projects that address the needs of older people reflects the overall growth in projects that identify the needs of older people. However, we should be cautious in interpreting these findings. Overall, the level of funding for projects that meet older women and men's needs remains very low. Furthermore, the availability of such funding is highly unpredictable. The Good Humanitarian Donorship Principles<sup>15</sup> and the findings of the High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing<sup>16</sup> both call for predictable financing as a central pillar of improved humanitarian response, yet only two donors consistently provide such assistance. This situation similarly highlights the need for concerted donor efforts to overcome this lack of consistency in their approach to meeting older people's needs.

## Country-specific findings

Previous studies showed that entire country responses and sectors had failed to identify or address the needs of older women and men.<sup>17</sup> The updated analysis for 2013 and 2014 shows that there continue to be regions and countries where older people are excluded from humanitarian response. Most conspicuously, West African countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria are consistently represented among the least age-inclusive.

In 2013 and 2014:

- Five appeals (Afghanistan, DRC, Senegal, Gambia, and the Sahel regional response) did not include any projects targeting older people or that even mentioned older people alongside other vulnerable groups.
- 16 of the appeals we analysed included projects that mentioned older people alongside other vulnerable groups. In 2015 this number fell to 12.

Given the numbers of older people in affected populations and the risks they are known to face, it is a major concern when the humanitarian response in a country fails to recognise or respond to their needs. It means that almost inevitably, the quality and impartiality of the response is gravely compromised.

## Sector-specific findings

Analysis of humanitarian response by sector provides a more encouraging picture. We found projects that recognise the needs of older people alongside those of other vulnerable groups across the spectrum of humanitarian programming.

In 2013 and 2014:

- All sectors (except emergency telecoms and logistics) included projects that mentioned older people alongside other vulnerable groups.

However, the level of inclusion masks the fact that the overall number of projects in each sector remains very low, and that the majority (63 per cent) are concentrated in just five sectors: food security; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); shelter/non-food items (NFIs); protection; and health.

Projects that specifically mentioned older people were submitted in eight sectors, but again the response was not system-wide.

In 2013:

- 53 per cent of projects in which at least one activity specifically targeted older people were submitted in three sectors: protection, WASH and shelter.

In 2014:

- Three sectors – food security, shelter and health – accounted for 72 per cent of all projects.

In both cases, it is encouraging that projects are being submitted for sectors in which older people have specific needs and challenges, such as health, shelter and protection. However, given that age, like gender, is recognised as an issue that cuts across all sectors of humanitarian response, a system-wide response to ageing remains critical for the delivery of impartial assistance.



Erna Montesnot Hintz/ HelpAge International

## *Starting small: nutrition programming for older people*

In recent years, HelpAge International has contributed to a growing body of evidence illustrating the significant risks older people face from undernutrition. Yet previous studies identified the absence of older people from projects submitted in the nutrition sector, reflecting the near-complete focus of humanitarian nutrition programming on pregnant and lactating mothers and children under five.

For the first time since we began our analysis, in 2013 and 2014 a total of four nutrition projects addressing older people's needs were submitted. In line with the overall findings of this report, the level of response remains far from adequate and is undermined by the donor response – only one of the four projects was funded. Nonetheless, this small shift in the ageing-sensitive nature of the response should be encouraged. Combined with ongoing efforts to raise the profile of older people's nutrition risks among partners and donors, and to build knowledge and capacity for response, an increase in ageing-sensitive projects can help overcome the neglect of older people's needs in this life-saving sector.

## Evidence-based programming

Evidence-based programming is a key priority for humanitarian actors. For example, the collection and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data is recognised as a crucial element of vulnerability analysis and the identification of those most in need.

HelpAge's 2012 study of humanitarian financing found a clear disconnect between evidence presented in the needs assessment section of CAP project sheets and the activities implemented. Older people were regularly referenced in the needs assessment, but this rarely translated into activities to meet older people's needs. For the period 2010 to 2014, data from project needs assessments were not uniformly available. Consequently, this report has considered the degree to which older people being identified in the "beneficiaries" part of the project sheet resulted in specific activities designed to address their needs.

We found that in 2010:

- 63 projects included older people as beneficiaries in the project description section.
- Just 14 of these also included older people in activities section.

In 2014:

- 223 projects included older people as beneficiaries.
- The number of projects that also included older people in the activities section rose to 21.

These findings reflect the overall improvement identified by this study – greater recognition of the vulnerabilities facing older women and men – but they also reflect the continuing failure of humanitarian actors to address their needs. The findings also contribute to a growing body of evidence indicating a disconnect between assessed needs and programme design. It seems that project activities are selected based on a pre-conceived assumption of needs and vulnerabilities, which often fails to take account of the diversity of affected populations. This disconnect has severe consequences for the delivery of impartial, accountable, needs-based assistance, and requires immediate action by the humanitarian community.

## Conclusions and recommendations

This study provides powerful insights into how the humanitarian system is failing to address the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in a humanitarian crisis.

There has been some welcome progress in identifying the risks faced by older women and men. This is reflected in the number of projects that mention older people alongside other vulnerable groups and the number of older people being included as project beneficiaries in project sheets. In addition, older people's needs are increasingly being considered by different sectors of humanitarian response, particularly those that have previously been "ageing-blind".

However, these positive outcomes do not detract from the main picture painted by the data, which is one of continuing neglect of older people's needs in humanitarian crises. Entire country responses continue to fail to identify or address the needs of one of the most vulnerable population groups. The impartiality and accountability of those responses must therefore be in serious doubt. Although some progress has been identified – most notably in relation to the growth of the mainstream response to the needs of older people – the overall number of projects remains too low to represent significant improvement. Furthermore, this progress is itself undermined by the vastly insufficient level of financial resources allocated to projects that address older people's needs.

Evaluations of humanitarian programming and response such as the 2015 *State of the humanitarian system report*<sup>18</sup> and the synthesis report of the World Humanitarian Summit consultations<sup>19</sup> recognise system weaknesses relating to global ageing and the need to address the neglect of older people. This discussion is often framed within a broader discussion on the use of evidence and data to improve response.

However, our studies show a clear disconnect between evidence of need and the assistance that is provided in response.

As in our previous studies, we recognise that the findings are based on partial data. OCHA's Financial Tracking Service does not capture the entirety of humanitarian response, while the project sheet descriptions and activities listed do not go into great detail. However, in the absence of more comprehensive data, these data are an adequate proxy that provides valuable insights.

With the Humanitarian Summit and post-Summit process offering a crucial platform to discuss and agree reforms to the design and funding of assistance, we present the following recommendations for action. If implemented, the Summit could grasp the opportunity to avoid replicating the current neglect of older women and men in populations affected by humanitarian crises.

### **Humanitarian donors should:**



Ensure that funding is commensurate with the scale of needs and is allocated impartially, recognising the needs of different groups including older people.



Ensure funding is allocated only to funding actions that include an inclusive analysis of needs based on data that is fully disaggregated by sex, age and disability.



### **Humanitarian responders should:**

Systematically engage with all affected people, including older women and men, to deliver meaningful participation and ensure that their views are reflected in responses, including assessment, design, delivery and monitoring and evaluation.



Collect, fully disaggregate, and utilise data for different population groups including older people, in order to provide robust evidence to design, revise and learn from programming that is reflective of, and appropriate for, the people and needs identified.



Address gaps in the quality of primary healthcare services for those with chronic diseases, ensuring adequate provision of NCD drugs and access to laboratory tests at primary healthcare level.



Ensure services to address psychological distress are accessible to older women and men, providing outreach counselling and support services for those who are unable to attend health centres.



Ensure mainstream response activities consider the needs of older women and men providing age-sensitive and physically accessible services. Provide outreach services for isolated people who cannot reach services.

### **All humanitarians should:**



Contribute to developing the understanding and skills of humanitarian actors so they can identify the needs of older people and deliver appropriate assistance.



Take responsibility for building core understanding among staff of the humanitarian principles and available guidance in support of inclusive programming for marginalised groups including older people. Where appropriate, build specialist skills to address the needs of vulnerable people in crisis.

# Endnotes

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# Annex 1: Full overview of country appeals analysed for this study between 2010 and 2015

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		2015	
				Project sheets available	Project sheets unavailable	Project sheets available	Project sheets unavailable
Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Burkina Faso	Afghanistan	Burkina Faso	Afghanistan
Central African Republic (CAR)	CAR	Burkina Faso	Burkina Faso	Cameroon	Myanmar	Cameroon	CAR
Chad	Chad	CAR	CAR	CAR	Philippines	Chad	DRC
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	DRC	Côte d'Ivoire	Chad	Chad	DRC	Gambia	Djibouti
Haiti	Haiti	Chad	Djibouti	Gambia	South Sudan	Mali	Iraq
Kenya	Kenya	Djibouti	DRC	Haiti		Mauritania	Libya
Occupied Palestinian territories (oPt)	Libya - Flash Appeal	DRC	Haiti	Iraq		Niger	Myanmar
Somalia	oPt	Haiti	Kenya	Mali		Nigeria	Sudan
Sri Lanka	Pakistan - Flash Appeal	Kenya	Mali	Mauritania		oPt	Syria Response Plan
Sudan	Somalia	Liberia	Mauritania	Niger		Sahel regional	Ukraine
West Africa	South Sudan	Mali	Niger	Nigeria		Senegal	Yemen
Yemen	Sri Lanka	Mauritania	oPt	oPt		Somalia	
Zimbabwe	Sudan	Niger	Philippines	Philippines Typhoon		South Sudan	
	West Africa	oPt	Somalia	Sahel regional		Syria	
	Yemen	Philippines	South Sudan	Senegal			
	Zimbabwe	Somalia	Sudan	Somalia			
		South Sudan	Syria	South Sudan			
		Sudan	Yemen	Sudan			
		Yemen		Syria			
		Zimbabwe		Yemen			

## Annex 2: Overview of key research findings

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of countries analysed					
12	16	20	18	19	12
Number of projects submitted					
2,858	3,145	2,803	2,949	3,140	1,326
Number of projects with an activity that includes older people alongside other vulnerable groups					
73	158	177	217	230	93
Percentage of the total projects that have an activity that includes older people alongside other vulnerable groups					
2.55	5.02	6.31	7.36	7.32	7.01
Number of funded projects with an activity that includes older people alongside other vulnerable groups					
38	76	106	129	90	20
Number of projects with an activity specifically targeting older people					
19	28	60	15	32	17
Percentage of total projects with an activity specifically targeting older people					
0.66	0.89	2.14	0.51	1.02	1.28
Number of funded projects with an activity specifically targeting older people					
8	11	30	6	19	5
Number of projects with a specific activity for older people submitted by HelpAge International					
12	12	14	11	12	5
Percentage of projects with a specific activity for older people submitted by HelpAge International					
63.16	42.86	23.33	73.33	37.50	29.41



Jonas Wresch / HelpAge International



## Take action

### **Inclusion Charter:**

#### *five steps to impartial humanitarian response for the most vulnerable*

To achieve the World Humanitarian Summit objectives of putting people at the centre of decision making and alleviating the suffering of the 100 million people at risk of being left behind, steps must be taken by all those involved in response, including national governments, NGOs and civil society, UN agencies and Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies to address the neglect of all vulnerable and marginalised groups.

The Inclusion Charter has been developed by leading organisations with a specific mandate to support particular vulnerable groups including children, youth and older people, as well as national and international NGOs and networks that are concerned about ensuring humanitarian assistance reaches the most vulnerable crisis-affected people. It outlines five steps that can be taken by humanitarians to deliver accessible and appropriate response for all.



### **Sign up to the Inclusion Charter:**

[www.inclusioncharter.org](http://www.inclusioncharter.org)

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