# HelpAge International glossary

Welcome to HelpAge International’s glossary. This is designed to help HelpAge staff write clearly and consistently, using language our audiences understand. It also underpins our aim to promote the rights of older people and protect our reputation as a leading source of information on ageing and development.

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A-Z list

**Δ** means this is a technical term to be used with caution. Use it only if you are sure that your audience will understand it (and you understand it yourself). These terms may not be understood by the general public.

**X** means avoid this term as it may be misleading or derogatory.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Term** | Definition | **Comment** |
| active ageing | Defined by WHO as the process of optimising opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age.  Source: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, 2015, p.225, http://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015-launch/en | **Δ** This term causes controversy among gerontologists. If you use it, explain what you mean as it is understood in different ways. |
| age-friendly | Defined by WHO as fostering healthy and active ageing  Source: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, 2015, p.225, <http://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015-launch/en/> | **Δ** Often used to refer to services that address the needs and concerns of older people, taking into account their physical and mental ability ad their economic and social situation.  If you use this term explain what you mean as it may not be clear |
| age-friendly environments | Defined by WHO as environments (such as in The home or community) that foster healthy and active ageing by building and maintaining intrinsic capacity across the life course and enabling greater functional ability in someone with a given level of capacity  Source: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, 2015, p.225 | **Δ** If you use this term explain what you mean as it may not be clear |
| ageism | Stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age; ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs  Source: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, 2015, p.226 | We encourage the use of this term as we want it to be better understood. Define it the first time you use it if your audience is not familiar with it. |
| ageist | See “ageism” | We encourage the use of this term as we want it to be better understood. Define it the first time you use it if your audience is not familiar with it. |
| beneficiary/ beneficiaries | Person/ people receiving aid or government financial assistance | **X** Avoid “beneficiary” as it implies magnanimity on the part of the donor or NGO. Use a more neutral term such as “recipient”, ”participant”, “person” or “older person”. |
| best practice | inspiring example | **Δ** |
| capacity | ability | **Δ** |
| capacity building | training/ supporting/  providing technical support | **Δ** |
| care | Support to people who are no longer able to do the basic tasks of daily life without assistance. This may be informal (care by a relative, friend or neighbour) or formal (care by a professional worker). |  |
| care home | Residential place where people with particular needs are looked after | Use in preference to terms such as “old people’s home” |
| case study | Story about an individual or project, describing the need, the action and the difference it made | To avoid confusion, use “case study” or “project case study” for a project and “personal story” or “testimony” for an individual. |
| cash transfer | Money/ cash/ financial assistance/ payment | **Δ** |
| civil society | The “third sector” of society, along with government and business. It comprises civil society organisations and non-governmental organisations.  Source: www.un.org/en/sections/resources/civil-society/index.html |  |
| data revolution | The transformative actions needed to respond to the demands of a complex development agenda, improvements in how data is produced and used; closing data gaps to prevent discrimination; building capacity and data literacy in “small data” and big data analytics; modernising systems of data collection; liberating data to promote transparency and accountability; and developing new targets and indicators.  Source: www.undatarevolution.org/data-revolution | **Δ** If you use this term explain what you mean as it may not be clear |
| dependency ratio | A measure showing the number of people who are so-called dependants (relying on others) aged under 14 and 65 or over, to the total so-called working population, aged 15-64.  HelpAge challenges the validity of this measure, which is frequently quoted to “prove” that older people are an economic burden. It ignores the many older people who support themselves and others or contribute to the economy in other ways, such as caring for grandchildren while their parents work. | **Δ** |
| developing/ developed countries | Terms going out of use to categorise countries according to their economic and industrial development | **Δ** These terms imply that developing countries are inferior to developed countries, and assume a desire to develop along the traditional Western model of economic development which some countries choose not to follow. They are going out of use though still used by UNDESA.  Use “high-income countries” and “low- and middle-income countries” in preference to “developed countries” and “developing countries”.  Avoid “Third World”, “under-developed”, “industrialised”, “industrially developed” and “developed”. “North” and “South” are disliked by some because they are geographically inaccurate, and they are not widely understood outside development circles.  When referring to parts of the world, consider whether you need to refer to specific regions. For example, you might say “in some parts of the world” or “in many cultures”.  Instead of saying “both in developing and developed countries” you could say “across the world”.  If you need to refer to specific regions, use geographical descriptions. |
| digital exclusion | See “digital inclusion” |  |
| digital inclusion | Often defined in terms of:   * digital skills - being able to use computers and the internet * connectivity - access to the internet * accessibility – access to digital services designed to meet all users’ needs, including those dependent on assistive technology.     There is seldom just one reason why people are digitally excluded, and there is no single approach to solving it. Digital inclusion is about overcoming all of these challenges.    Adapted from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy> |  |
| digital transformation | The process of shifting your organisation from a legacy approach to new ways of working and thinking, using digital, social, mobile and emerging technologies. It involves a change in leadership, different thinking, the encouragement of innovation and new business models, incorporating digitisation of assets and an increased use of technology to improve the experience of your organisation’s employees, customers, suppliers, partners and stakeholders. Source: [www.theagileelephant.com/what-is-digital-transformation](http://www.theagileelephant.com/what-is-digital-transformation) | **Δ** If you use this term explain what you mean as it may not be clear |
| disaggregated | Broken down | **Δ** For example, “data broken down by age, sex and disability” |
| eligibility criteria | Rules for deciding who may or may not make a claim, for example, for financial assistance | **Δ** |
| field/  field work/  in the field | The area where the project is taking place | **X** This can sound derogatory as it implies somewhere remote and distant from the centre. Use a term such as “project site” or name the place. |
| filial piety | In Confucian philosophy, “filial piety” is a virtue of respect for one’s parents, elders, and ancestors. In more general terms, it means to be good to one’s parents; to take care of one’s parents; to engage in good conduct not just towards parents but also outside the home so as to bring a good name to one's parents and ancestors.  Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filial_piety> | **Δ** Sometimes used by academics |
| functional ability | The health-related attributes that enable people to be and do what they have reason to value; it is made up of intrinsic capacity of the individual, relevant environmental characteristics and the interaction between the individual and these characteristics  Source: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, 2015, p.225, [http://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015-launch/en](http://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015-launch/en/) |  |
| geriatric | Relating to illnesses and medical care of older people | **Δ** Used to describe services for older people, especially healthcare, but also used offensively to mean old, obsolescent, worn out or useless, so it is going out of use. Use a more respectful term instead, such as “elder care” or “care of older people”. |
| growing old before growing rich | See Appendix 1 | **X** Misleading cliché often used in the media to describe countries. For a full explanation see Appendix 1. |
| healthy ageing | Defined by WHO as the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age  Source: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, 2015, p.228 | **Δ** If you use this term explain what you mean as it may not be clear |
| home-based care | Medical, practical or social care provided in the home |  |
| hub | centre of activity | **Δ** |
| human rights | Human rights are the rights people are entitled to simply because they are human beings, irrespective of their age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, physical, mental or cognitive health status, indigenous, national, racial or ethnic status, access to technology, political or other opinion, economic, migrant, refugee or any other status.  These rights are set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR 1948) and other subsequent international human rights conventions.  Adapted from Why it’s time for a convention  on the rights of older people, p.2 <http://cotavic.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Why-convention-older-people1.pdf> |  |
| hyper-ageing/ hyper-aged | With a particularly high proportion of older people | **Δ** A “hyper-aged society” is defined as 21% or more of the population aged 65 years or older by Florian Coulmas, Population Decline and Ageing in Japan – the Social Consequences, Routledge, 2007. Source:  [http://wisdom.unu.edu/en/ageing-societies](http://wisdom.unu.edu/en/ageing-societies/)  Other definitions may also exist.  If you use this term explain what you mean as it may not be clear. |
| implement | carry out/ run/ put into practice | **Δ** |
| inclusion | See Humanitarian section |  |
| income generation/ income-generating activity | employment/ business/ job/ work | **Δ** |
| indicator | A way to measure the state or level of something. For example, rising life expectancy is an indicator of better health in a country. | **Δ** |
| inmate | Used in some cultures tomean a resident of a care home. | **X** Avoid this term as it is more widely understood to mean someone who is confined to an institution such as a prison or hospital. Use “resident” instead. |
| intergenerational | Of or involving people of different generations, such as parents and children, or grandparents and grandchildren |  |
| intergenerational approach | An approach that looks at relationships and interdependence between different generations and how two or more generations can work together to the mutual benefit of the different generations. |  |
| International Day of Older Persons | UN day observed on 1 October each year | More info: www.un.org/en/events/olderpersonsday |
| intrinsic capacity | The composite of all the physical and mental capacities that an individual can draw on  Source: *World Report on Ageing and Health*, WHO, 2015, p.225, [http://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015-launch/en](http://www.who.int/ageing/events/world-report-2015-launch/en/) |  |
| left behind | left out/ excluded | Often used to mean “left out”, particularly since the pledge to “leave no one behind” in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.  Be careful about using “left behind” in a humanitarian context where it could mean older people literally being left behind. |
| life course | The events and transitions that happen over the course of a person’s life, with these combining to create a particular pathway through life. Events include entering and leaving education, starting and leaving work, entering into personal relationships, and experiences of loss and change, such as bereavement. Transitions may be moving into certain roles, such as becoming a parent, family carer or grandparent.    Taken from [www.nuigalway.ie/ilas/project-lifecourse/thelifecourse](file:///C:\Users\ctill\Desktop\www.nuigalway.ie\ilas\project-lifecourse\thelifecourse) | **Δ** An academic term. Alternatives to “throughout the life course” include “throughout life”, “throughout a person”s lifetime” or “at different stages of a person’s life” |
| life-course approach | An approach that views our lives as a journey with many different phases, events and transitions along the way, none of which are seen in isolation from each other. These may include starting education, leaving home, joining the workforce, marriage, widowhood, leaving the workforce/retirement.  A life-course approach recognises that the decisions we make about our lives and the way we are treated by others are affected by what we have experienced in our past and what we will think or hope our future will be.  This approach acknowledges the complex interactions that we have with the people and structures around us, recognising that none of us lives in isolation from others. The decisions and experiences that we make over our life course are influenced to a large degree by formal and informal institutions (in the sense of rules and regulations) such as laws, entitlements, tax incentives and societal norms that provide incentives or disincentives for certain life decisions at different points or stages of the life course. At the same time, it allows for the examination of common experiences and characteristics of any of these phases or transitions in our lives.  A life-course approach looks at the links between the different stages of an individual’s life. | **Δ** |
| life cycle | Usually defined as the series of changes and developments that an animal or plant passes through from the beginning of its life until its death | **Δ** “Life cycle” and “life course” are often used indiscriminately or interchangeably which can cause confusion.  A life-course approach looks at every aspect of an individual’s entire lifespan from birth to death. The life cycle is sometimes used to describe this but can also be understood as being only to do with sexual and reproductive health at different stages of life. |
| low- and middle-income countries |  | Use in preference to “developing countries”. Avoid the abbreviation “LMICs”. |
| long-term care | Continuous support to people who are no longer able to do the basic tasks of daily life without assistance, enabling them to maintain a level of functional ability sufficient to live a dignified life. This may be informal (care by a relative, friend or neighbour) or formal (care by a professional worker). |  |
| mainstream | include | **Δ** An alternative to “mainstream ageing issues” is “include older people” |
| marginalisation | The complex process of relegating specific people or groups of people to the lower or outer edge of society economically, politically, culturally and socially.  Source: www.sociologyguide.com/civil-society/marginalization.php |  |
| multigenerational | More than one generation, usually several generations | Often used to describe households with more than two generations living together, or with grandparents and grandchildren living together. |
| older person | See Ageing and older people section |  |
| palliative care | An approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families who are facing problems associated with life-limiting conditions. It prevents and relieves suffering through the early identification, correct assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual.  Adapted from: www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs402/en |  |
| peer education | people educating others of a similar age and background | **Δ** Often used for health promotion and HIV prevention. Alternatives may include “older people educating other older people” |
| persons/people | Plural of “person” | Collins English Dictionary says: “The usual word for ‘more than one person’ is people. The form ‘persons’ is used as the plural in formal or legal language.” However, in many countries, “persons” is commonly used as the plural of “person”. In specific contexts, “persons” is always used. For example, “persons with disabilities” has been adopted by a certain group of people.  “People’s rights” is used for collective rights, “persons’ rights” for individuals’ rights.  We can be flexible and use the most appropriate language for the audience.  Population ageing is occurring because of declining fertility rates, lower infant mortality and increasing survival at older ages.  Use “population ageing” in preference to “ageing” if you are referring to populations rather than individuals. |
| peoples | Plural of “people” when “people” refers to everyone from a particular country or group |  |
| population ageing | An increasing share of older persons in the population  Source: UNDESA, *World Population Ageing*  *2013* | Population ageing is occurring because of declining fertility rates, lower infant mortality and increasing survival at older ages.  Use “population ageing” in preference to “ageing” if you are referring to populations rather than individuals. |
| psychosocial support | Counselling, befriending and practical assistance to help someone recover after a crisis. Psychosocial support aims to improve the wellbeing of individuals and communities.  Adapted from: IFRC, Psychosocial interventions: a handbook, 2009 | **Δ** Non-technical alternatives may include terms such as “emotional and social support”, “comfort” |
| race | Group of people of common ancestry, distinguished from others by physical characteristics | **X** Generally avoid “race” and “tribe”. When not used accurately, these may be derogatory. Use “ethnic background” or “people”. |
| residential care | Long-term care provided in a residential setting | Use “residential care” or “care home” instead of terms such as “old people’s home”, “geriatric home”, “infirmary” |
| rights based | Based on international human rights standards |  |
| rights-based approach to development | An approach in which the core objective is to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights.  Adapted from www.humanrights.dk/our-work/human-rights-based-approach | A rights-based approach to development shifts the core objective of development from charity to the obligation to respect, protect, and fulfil human rights.  It does this by integrating the human rights standards and principles enshrined in international human rights law into every area of development cooperation. Within a human rights based approach:   * The goal of development programmes consists of both the realisation of human rights and reduction of poverty. * Programmes and processes of development are guided by human rights principles and norms. * The focus of development programming should be right holders and duty bearers and their capacities to claim and fulfil their obligations towards human rights |
| saved / saving |  | Avoid talking about “saving” older people as this implies passivity. For example, “Rita was saved from a life of poverty.” We work with older people. An exception may be in a disaster response where we deliver life-saving assistance. |
| shanty town | Area of improvised housing, usually in or near a city | Use ”informal settlement” or “informal housing” as it has fewer negative connotations |
| silver market | Market segment of people aged over about 50, considered as a group to which products and services can be sold | **Δ** Informal term used particularly in the US |
| slum | Usually defined as a densely populated urban informal settlement characterised by substandard housing and squalor | **X** This is a derogatory term implyingdirt and disorder. Use a more neutral term such as “informal settlement” instead. |
| social exclusion | A complex and multi-dimensional process involving the lack or denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole.  www.poverty.ac.uk/definitions-poverty/social-exclusion |  |
| social pensions | Regular state-provided (tax-financed) cash transfers to older people, where eligibility is not dependent on past contributions or earnings.  Source: HelpAge International Programme Proposition on Social Protection, May 2016 | Also known as non-contributory pensions |
| social protection | The system of social transfers – usually provided by the state – that offer income security to people in case of poverty, unemployment, sickness, disability, old age and loss of the breadwinner.  Source: HelpAge International Programme Proposition on Social Protection, May 2016 | There is no single definition of social protection and navigating this issue remains a challenge in implementation of our work. But HelpAge internally is quite clear on the issue. Our 2008 Social Pensions Strategy outlined our definition of social protection for operational and advocacy purposes as “the system of social transfers – usually provided by the state – that offer income security to people in case of poverty, unemployment, sickness, disability, old age and loss of the breadwinner”. Important features of this definition are an emphasis on (a) state provision, (b) social transfers (rather than services) and (c) lifecycle shocks and stresses. |
| social protection floor | Minimum set of social security guarantees that countries should prioritise in expanding their social protection system.  Source: HelpAge International Programme Proposition on Social Protection, May 2016 | The concept of a social protection floor has developed over the last decade, as a minimum set of social security guarantees that countries should prioritise in expanding their social protection system. Its clearest articulation, and legal underpinning, is in ILO Recommendation 202. Since the adoption of the recommendation in June 2012 the concept has been increasingly prominent in social protection policy at both national and international levels. |
| stakeholder | Someone with an interest in the project or organisation | **Δ** This can be very vague. Better to be specific about who the person is and why they have an interest in the project or organisation. A less technical alternative is “interested party”. |
| victim | Someone who has been harmed or killed by another person or adverse circumstances | **Δ** Avoid “victim” in relation to chronic illness or disability as it is often considered demeaning and disempowering. Use terms such as “person living with… ” instead. Use “survivor” in preference to “victim” for someone who has lived through a disaster. |
| vulnerable | At risk | **Δ** We should be specific about what people are vulnerable to. We should not imply that all older people are vulnerable. |
| working-age population | Used by economists to describe the total population that is considered to be able to work. People of working age are usually considered to be between school-leaving age and retirement age (often 15-64).  “Working-age population” is different from “working population”, which is the number of people who are actually employed, regardless of age.  In many countries, “retirement age” applies only to a small minority of workers, and many older people are still part of the working population after age 65. See also “dependency ratio”. | **Δ** |
| youth | Young person or people between childhood and maturity, especially in adolescence and early adulthood  “Youth” can mean different ages in different countries. UNESCO defines “youth” as people aged 15-24.  www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition | Make sure you define “youth” if you are using it with statistics. |

# Ageing and older people

We strive to avoid using any language that is either explicitly or implicitly ageist.

**Explicit ageism**

Explicitly ageist language is widespread. “Little old lady”, “old hag”, “over the hill”, “old coot” and “old fogy” are a few examples.

Derogatory phrases are often used to describe feebleness or incompetence due to older age. For example, “long in the tooth”, “you can”t teach an old dog new tricks”, “mutton dressed as lamb”, “past his use-by date”, “past her shelf life”.

Negative terms that are used to describe population ageing or older people are also ageist, such as “the ageing tsumami”, “agequake” and “age bomb”.

**Implicit ageism**

Implicit ageism might be harder to spot. For example, if you say “I’m having a senior moment” when you have forgotten something, you are implying that all seniors or older people are forgetful.

As with sexism, qualifying a description of someone in relation to their age often demonstrates ageism. For example, if you refer to “a quick-witted 75-year-old”, “an agile 65-year-old” or “a responsible teenager,” you’re implying that these qualities are unusual in people of these ages and therefore need special mention. You’re saying that “quick-wittedness” and “being 75” do not normally go together. The problem with this kind of stereotyping is that it’s wrong. There are many 75-year-olds who are extremely quick-witted (and many 30-year-olds who aren’t).

Language can be implicitly ageist when it implies that people of a certain age are incompetent. For example, “At 70, she still cooks her own meals.” By giving her age, this implies that most 70-year-olds cannot cook their own meals and that it is unusual for her to be able to do so.

Language can be implicitly ageist when it implies that ageing or being older is only a negative experience or only has negative connotations, as in “the challenge of ageing” or ”the problem of ageing”. While problems associated with ageing or being older are not to be denied, we prefer to take a more balanced view that also acknowledges the opportunities that these bring. WHO is now talking about a capabilities approach, focusing not on what a person cannot do but on what they can do.

Language can be implicitly ageist when it is used to exclude older people, as in “Person sought for young, vibrant company”. By describing the company as young and vibrant, it implies that the employer is looking for a similar type of candidate, and that no older people need apply.

| Term | Definition | Comment |
| --- | --- | --- |
| elder | older person (noun)  of or for older people (adjective) | Used in some societies to mean “older person”. Increasingly used as an adjective, for example, “elder care”, “elder abuse”. |
| older person | We use this term to describe someone in later life.  It is common in all societies and cultures to divide our lives into different stages, with older age being the latter stage and an older person being someone in that stage. | Make clear what you mean by “older person” or “older people” the first time you use this term. For example, you may be referring to people in later life. Or you may be referring specifically to people aged 50-plus, 60-plus or another age group, or to a specific group of older people, such as pensioners.  If you are defining older people by age, start by giving the age, such as “people aged 60 and over”. After that, you can say “older people”, as this will be understood to have the same meaning.  It is essential to define “older people” if you are quoting statistics.    Avoid tautology. There is no need to say “older person aged 65”. You can say “older person” or “person aged 65”.    Use “older person”, “in later life” or words that older people prefer in the region you are writing for. For example, in some cultures, older people are known as “elders”, “seniors” or “senior citizens”.  Consider using alternatives to “older people” to avoid over-using this term, such as “older generations”, “older age groups”, “older relatives”.  Avoid “the aged”, “the elderly”, “elderly people” and “old” as these have connotations of frailty and “otherness” (a group apart) and not all older people are frail or set apart. |
| “oldest old” | Used by UNDESA in their World Population Ageing reports to refer to people aged 80 years or over. | If you use this term, put it in quotation marks and make sure you define it the first time you use it. |
| pensioner | A person who receives a pension, especially a pension paid by the state to retired people | Acceptable when referring to someone who receives a pension. |
| retiree | A person who has retired from work (mainly United States) | Acceptable when referring to someone who has worked for an organisation. |
| senior / senior citizen | older person | Acceptable in regions or cultures where this term is used. |

Gender

**Gender-neutral terms**

Avoid gender-specific words that are used to mean both men and women, such as “forefathers” (ancestors), “man-made” (artificial), “manpower” (human resources, staff), “mankind” (humankind).

Avoid “he”, “she” or “s/he” to mean “he” or “she” – instead, use “he or she”, “they”, repeat the noun, or use plural.

Do not assume the sex of a particular group of people. For example: “business people”, not “businessmen”.

Avoid phrases such as “316 people including 78 women” as this suggests men are the default group. Use a phrase such as “316 people (238 men and 78 women)” instead.

The following terms and definitions are taken from the glossary of gender terms in Helpage International’s online gender training.

|  |  |  |
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| Term | Definition | Comment |
| sex | Refers to physical and biological attributes such as sex chromosomes, gonads and reproductive organs, which are used at birth to identify individuals as female or male |  |
| gender | Refers to social differences ascribed to women, men and people of other gender identities: they are learnt, changeable over time and vary within and across cultures. It is gender (rather than biological sex) that largely determines one’s place in society. |  |
| gender and age analysis | Provides qualitative information on gender differences and inequalities, and how they change across the life course. It helps us understand specific issues faced by older women and older men, and how gender norms, roles and relationships change with age. |  |
| gender identity | Refers to each person’s deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with their sex assigned at birth. |  |
| gender equality | Equal rights, responsibilities, opportunities and treatment of women, men and people of other gender identities. |  |
| gender roles | Specific behaviours, entitlements and responsibilities considered acceptable, appropriate or desirable for men and women. |  |
| gender sensitive | Refers to programmes or projects that address the differing needs and interests of older women and men. The response is more likely to focus on their practical or immediate needs. |  |
| practical needs | Practical needs do not challenge, although they arise out of gender divisions of labour and women’s subordinate position in society. They are addressed through short-term, immediate, practical assistance that reduces women’s work burden and gives them more time to perform their triple roles (reproductive, productive and community). Addressing practical needs does not aim to challenge existing gender norms and socially accepted roles. |  |
| strategic needs | Meeting strategic needs includes long-term responses that challenge existing gender roles and women’s subordinate position contributing to achieving gender equality. Strategic responses tend to relate to gender division of labour, ownership and control of resources, tackling violence and abuse,and so on. |  |
| intersectionality | Different characteristics such as age, gender, race, disability, sexuality, class or geography interact with each other, creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. |  |
| transgender | Having a gender identity that does not correspond with a person’s sex assigned at birth. Transgender people may identify as male or female, or they may feel that neither label fits them. |  |
| older women and men |  | May be used to emphasise that you mean both women and men, but not to be used as a standard replacement for “older people”.  “Older people” is felt by some to hide their gender and perpetuate a stereotype that older people are gender-less or asexual).  However, “older women and men” or “older men and women” assumes only two gender identities when there is increasing recognition of non-binary sexual identity.  If you use “older women and men”, you can use the full phrase the first time and follow it by using “older people”. |

Humanitarian

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| Term | Definition | Comment |
| basic needs | In the context of a humanitarian response, all needs essential for survival with dignity including protection, food (security and nutrition), shelter, non-food items, water, sanitation, hygiene, health and education |  |
| cash-for-work | Cash payments provided on condition of doing designated work. Cash-for-work is usually provided for public or community work, but can also be provided for home-based or other forms of work. |  |
| conditional cash transfer | A cash payment provided on condition that the recipient undertakes a specific activity, such as going to school, building a shelter, attending nutrition screenings, working or training. Cash for work, cash for assets and cash for training are all forms of conditional transfer. |  |
| disaster risk reduction | Reducing damage caused by natural hazards such as earthquakes, floods, droughts and cyclones by analysing and managing the factors that cause disasters, including reducing exposure to hazards, reducing the vulnerability of people and property, managing land and the environment wisely, and being better prepared for adverse events |  |
| e-transfer | A digital transfer of money or vouchers from the implementing agency to a programme participant. E-transfers provide access to cash, goods and/or services through mobile devices, electronic vouchers, or cards (such as pre-paid, ATM, credit or debit cards). | “E-transfer” is an umbrella term for “e-cash” and “e-vouchers”. |
| evolving hazards | Hazards that change over time, such as armed conflict, drought and food insecurity, and so require continued monitoring after onset |  |
| e-voucher | A card or code that is electronically redeemed at a participating distribution point. E-vouchers can represent cash or commodity value and are redeemed using a range of electronic devices. |  |
| food security | People are considered food secure when they have adequate access at all times to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. We determine food security status based on the combination of food availability, food accessibility and food utilisation |  |
| hazard | An event such as a flood or conflict that has the potential to cause a disaster |  |
| humanitarian principles | Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence  Source: OCHA, https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples\_eng\_June12.pdf |  |
| humanity | Human suffering must be addressed wherever it is found. The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for human beings.  Source: OCHA |  |
| impartiality | Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of need alone, giving priority to the most urgent cases of distress and making no distinctions on the basis of nationality, race, gender, age, religious belief, class or political opinions  Source: OCHA |  |
| **inclusion** | **The state of being included.**  **Inclusion is about valuing all individuals, giving equal access and opportunity to all and removing discrimination and other barriers to involvement in the design and delivery of humanitarian assistance.** |  |
| independence | Humanitarian action must be autonomous from the political, economic, military or other objectives that any actor may hold with regard to areas where humanitarian action is being implemented.  Source: OCHA |  |
| internally displaced person | A person who has been forced to flee his or her home for the same reason as a refugee, but remains in his or her own country and has not crossed an international border.  Source: www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee | The term “displaced people” can be used for both internally displaced people and refugees. |
| neutrality | Humanitarian actors must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.  Source: OCHA |  |
| malnutrition | Lack of adequate nutrition. People are malnourished if their diet does not provide adequate calories and protein for growth and maintenance or they are unable to fully utilise the food they eat due to illness (undernutrition). They are also malnourished if they consume too many calories (overnutrition). |  |
| multi-purpose cash grant / multi-cash transfer | A cash payment (either regular or one-off) corresponding to the amount of money a household needs to cover, fully or partially, a set of basic and/or recovery needs. They are by definition unrestricted cash transfers. |  |
| person with specific needs | Girls and boys at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children, persons with serious health conditions, persons with special legal or physical protection needs, single women, women-headed households, [older persons](https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/67543), [persons with disabilities](https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/67443), and persons with a diverse sexual orientation or gender identity  Source: https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/64324/identifying-persons-with-specific-needs-pwsn |  |
| personal basic needs | These include getting dressed, bathing, eating, toileting, paying the bills, cleaning, shopping, making telephone calls, etc |  |
| protection | Broadly encompasses activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of all individuals in accordance with international law – international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law – regardless of their age, gender, social ethnic, national, religious, or other background  Source: www.unocha.org/what-we-do/policy/thematic-areas/protection |  |
| refugee | Someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.  Source: www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee | The term “displaced people” can be used for both internally displaced people and refugees. |
| relief aid | The provision of assistance to those affected by a disaster, based on an initial rapid assessment of needs, and designed to contribute effectively to their recovery  Source: Humanitarian Coalition, http://humanitariancoalition.ca/media-resources/factsheets/humanitarian-needs |  |
| restricted cash transfer | A cash payment provided on the basis that the recipient spends the money on specific, pre-determined goods or services. Vouchers are by default restricted transfers. |  |
| risk | The combination of the probability of a hazardous event and its negative consequences. If a hazard is likely to occur and the impact will be significant then the risk is high. |  |
| specific needs | In the context of a humanitarian crisis, specific needs are linked to specific personal factors including new individual incapacities. Taking those needs into account aims to optimise persons’ independence as well as preventing and handling the consequences of trauma. |  |
| threshold | A point or context (usually identified using indicators) that, when reached, requires action to be taken to minimise negative impacts |  |
| unconditional cash transfer | A cash payment provided without the recipient having to do anything in return |  |
| voucher | A paper, token or e-voucher that can be exchanged for a set quantity or value of goods, denominated either as a cash value (eg US$15) or predetermined commodities or services (eg 5 kg maize; milling of 5kg of maize), or a combination of value and commodities. They are redeemable with preselected vendors or in “fairs” created by the agency. | The terms “vouchers”, “stamps”, or “coupons” are often used interchangeably. |
| vulnerability | The conditions determined by physical, social, economic and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards  Source: UNISDR |  |

Disability

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Term | Definition | Comment |
| accessibility | The degree to which an environment, service or product allows access by as many people as possible, in particular, persons with disabilities |  |
| albino / albinos | Person/people with albinism | **X** “Albino” is regarded as derogatory. Use “person with albinism”. |
| assistive device / assistive technology | Any device designed, made or adapted to help a person perform a particular task. Products may be specially produced or generally available for people with a disability. |  |
| common barriers | Attitudinal, communication, physical , transportation, social and environmental  Source: www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml |  |
| disability | Disability results from the interaction between persons with physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.  Source: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1 www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf |  |
| person with disability | Includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.  Source: UN Convention on the Rights of Persons  with Disabilities, Article 1 www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf | Different terms are preferred in different countries. Use “person with disability” (used in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) or terms preferred in your country, such as “disabled person” (used in legal documents in the UK) or “people with disabilities” (used in legal documents in the USA). If in doubt, use terms used in the UN Convention.  Avoid “the disabled”, “handicapped” or any term that implies a defect or limitation such as “retarded”.  “PWD" is a commonly used abbreviation for “persons with disabilities”. However, it is not widely accepted and should be avoided (see Abbreviations section).  See also www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability |
| person with impairment | Person with a problem with body function or structure  Source: WHO ICF, www.int/classifications/icf/en |  |

HIV and AIDS

Follow UNAIDS terminology guidelines:

[www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\_asset/2015\_terminology\_guidelines\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2015_terminology_guidelines_en.pdf)

The definitions and comments below are taken from these guidelines.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Term | Definition | Comment |
| AIDS  orphans |  | **X** Avoid this term as it not only stigmatises children, but it also labels them as HIV-positive, which may be untrue. Use “orphans and other children made  vulnerable by AIDS” |
| HIV/AIDS |  | **X** Avoid HIV/AIDS whenever possible because it can cause confusion. Most people with HIV do not have AIDS. It is preferable to use the term that is most  specific and appropriate in the context. “People living with HIV”, “HIV prevalence”,  “HIV prevention”, “HIV testing”, “HIV-related disease”, “AIDS diagnosis”, “children made vulnerable by AIDS”, “national AIDS  programme”, “AIDS  service organisation”,  “HIV epidemic” and “AIDS  epidemic” are acceptable,  but HIV epidemic is a  more inclusive term. |
| people living  with HIV |  | “People living with HIV”  and “children living with  HIV” as preferred terms they reflect the fact that persons with HIV may continue to live well and productively for many years.  The term “people affected  by HIV” encompasses  family members and  dependants who may be  involved in caregiving or  otherwise affected by the  HIV-positive status of a  person living with HIV.  Avoid terms such as “AIDS sufferer” and “AIDS victim”.  Avoid abbreviations such as PLHIV, PLWHA or PLWHIV since this is dehumanising. Instead, write out the name or identity of the group in full. Abbreviations for  population groups may, however, be used in charts or graphs where brevity is required, provided they are explained. |

Dementia

Follow Dementia Voices style guide:

<http://dementiavoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/DEEP-Guide-Language.pdf>

HelpAge terms

| Term | Definition | Comment |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Affiliate | Previously used to describe organisations that are part of the HelpAge global network (see “network members”) | **X** We no longer use this term |
| HAI |  | **X** Do not use “HAI” as an abbreviation for HelpAge International |
| HelpAge | Short form of “HelpAge International” | Always spell out “HelpAge International” in full the first time. After that you can use “HelpAge” unless there is any risk of confusing it with a HelpAge network member such as HelpAge Ghana or HelpAge Kenya. If so, go on spelling it out in full. |
| HelpAge International | Official name of the network and the secretariat |  |
| HelpAge global network | Unofficial name of the network (hence lower case 'g' and 'n') | The HelpAge global network brings together a wide range of organisations and individuals working to promote the rights and meet the needs of older women and men, nationally and/or internationally.  At the core of this network are civil society members, a group of civil society organisations working with older people around the world. These organisations share a vision of a world in which all older people are valued, and lead dignified, healthy and secure lives.  Source: Strategy 2020 |
| network members | Organisations that have formally joined the network |  |
| partners | Organisations that the HelpAge International secretariat works with, which may include network members |  |
| our network |  | **X** Avoid this term as it sounds possessive |
| secretariat | All HelpAge International offices including London, regional and country offices |  |
| supporting member | Network member that raises funds for HelpAge International’s work and may work directly with partners |  |

Abbreviations

Avoid abbreviations as far as possible in both internal and external communications. They look unsightly, may be difficult to pronounce, and can be hard for readers to understand if they are not familiar with them. Abbreviations can be confusing in translated materials. Providing a list of abbreviations does not necessarily make it easy.

In particular, avoid using abbreviated terms for people, as it is dehumanises them.

You can avoid abbreviations by using a shorter version of the full name. For example, after saying “older people”s self-help groups”, instead of using “OPSHG”, you can refer to them as “groups”.

If you use abbreviations, spell out the name in full, followed by the abbreviation in brackets. After that, use the abbreviated form. Very familiar names such as UN and EU may be abbreviated without being spelt out in full.

For organisations, check if or how they abbreviate their name.

| Term | Definition | Comment |
| --- | --- | --- |
| AARP |  | This is the name of the organisation formerly known as the American Association of Retired Persons |
| ACAP | Assessment Capacity Projects | **Δ** |
| ADA | Age Demands Action |  |
| BIG | Big Lottery Fund | Not “BLF” |
| CIDA | Canadian International Development Agency |  |
| CMS | contract management system | **Δ** Also used by the Asian Development Bank to refer to their Contracts Management System |
| COSE | Coalition of Services of the Elderly |  |
| DANIDA | Danish International Development Agency |  |
| DEC | Disasters Emergency Committee |  |
| DFID | Department for International Development |  |
| DRR | disaster risk reduction | **Δ** |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization |  |
| FOPDEV | Foundation for Older Persons’ Development |  |
| GBV | Gender-based violence | **Δ** |
| HAP | Humanitarian Accountability Partnership |  |
| HOT | Health Outcomes Tool | **Δ** |
| ISHC | intergenerational self-help club | **Δ** |
| JICA | Japan International Cooperation Agency |  |
| JOAC | Jersey Overseas Aid Committee |  |
| MIPAA | Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing |  |
| NCD | non-communicable disease |  |
| OCM | older citizen monitoring | **Δ** |
| OEWGA | Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing | **Δ** |
| OPA | older people’s association | **Δ** |
| OPF | older people’s forum | **Δ** older people’s forums is a preferred term in certain countries, such as Tanzania |
| OPG | older people’s group | **Δ** |
| OPO | older people’s organisation | **Δ** |
| OPSHG | older people’s self-help group | **X** This is a long abbreviation that is difficult to pronounce |
| oPt | Occupied Palestine Territories |  |
| PWD |  | **X** See Disability section |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |  |
| Sida | Swedish International Development Agency | Not “SIDA” |
| UNDESA | United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs |  |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |  |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |  |
| UNHCR | United Nations Refugee Agency | Use “UNHCR” or “the United Nations Refugee Agency”, not “United Nations Commissioner for Refugees” |
| UNISDR | United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction |  |
| UNOPS | United Nations Office for Project Services |  |
| UNOCHA | United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs |  |
| UNRWA | United Nations Relief and Works Agency |  |
| WASH | water, sanitation and hygeine |  |
| WFP | World Food Programme |  |
| WHO | World Health Organization | Use “WHO”, not “the WHO” |

Appendix 1: “Growing old before growing rich”

“Growing old before growing rich” is a misleading cliché often used in the media to describe countries, which we should avoid using. The comment that low- and middle-income countries “are growing old before they grow rich” has been used so often over more than three decades that it is rarely questioned. On closer inspection, however, the reality seems rather different.

The expression “old before rich” refers to the idea that “poor” countries are going through demographic transitions (with falling birth and death rates) towards significantly larger older populations much faster than “rich” countries did. France and Brazil are often contrasted – France took 200 years to double the proportion of over 60s in its population; Brazil is taking less than twenty years.

While this is factually correct, the “old before rich” argument doesn’t stop there, but says that these “poor” countries will therefore face major social and economic challenges that the rich world had more time to absorb. This is often presented as a crisis. Here is a recent example: “Without unprecedented economic growth, LAC [Latin America and Caribbean] governments will not have the resources to provide the same level of old-age benefits [i.e. equivalent to those provided by countries such as the US, Japan and Sweden] to increasing numbers of eligible elderly”.[1](file:///H:/Everyone/Advocacy%20and%20Communications/Publications/Publications%20management/Terms%20and%20definitions/Contributions/Old%20before%20rich%20for%20glossary%2027%2009%2016.docx#_ftn1)

To accept that countries are growing old before they grow rich, we are asked to make several assumptions. Firstly, we are asked to accept that societies need to attain a given level of economic development in order to be able to “afford” ageing populations. Secondly, that rich countries are making adequate provision for their older populations. And thirdly, that the low-income world will inevitably follow a social welfare template developed by high-income countries as the benchmark for their own provision for ageing populations.

None of these arguments stands up to analysis. Regarding the first point, it is simply not relevant to compare the economic development of a country like Nepal with that of, say, Germany, and decide that one can afford an older population while the other cannot. It is more important to look at the spending decisions made within Nepal, given the level of resources available. Some very poor countries (such as Nepal and Bolivia) have, for example, made the decision to offer comprehensive basic pensions to their older citizens, something the USA has not yet done. In a study of social welfare policy in Uganda, Okuonzi makes the telling point that “Economic growth is… not the leading guarantor of a nation’s wellbeing. How a country deploys its resources for public use determines mortality outcome.”[2](file:///H:/Everyone/Advocacy%20and%20Communications/Publications/Publications%20management/Terms%20and%20definitions/Contributions/Old%20before%20rich%20for%20glossary%2027%2009%2016.docx#_ftn2)

The second argument, that rich countries are providing adequately for their older citizens, is equally questionable. We hear constant criticism across high-income countries of the inadequacies of both health and care systems in adapting to ageing societies. The comments in a recent Age UK report could be applied to many wealthy societies. Discussing the shortfalls in health and social care funding, the report says, “Unless there is significant change to the funding of our health and care system for older people… we look to the future with considerable foreboding.”[3](file:///H:/Everyone/Advocacy%20and%20Communications/Publications/Publications%20management/Terms%20and%20definitions/Contributions/Old%20before%20rich%20for%20glossary%2027%2009%2016.docx#_ftn3)

The third point, that low-income countries will follow in the footsteps of high-income countries, creating health and welfare systems like those of the high-income world, is equally dubious. As noted above, many low- and middle-income countries are introducing health and welfare programmes benefiting older people. To quote Okuonzi again, “Social welfare can be achieved by poor countries too. It is not true that welfare and reduction in mortality must always be accompanied by economic growth.”4] Indeed, one of the key problems that many low-income countries are facing is precisely because they have followed rich world models. In health, for example, health systems in many low-income countries still tend to focus on hospital-based services which are remote and inaccessible to older people. The great majority of older people in poor countries have no access to basic services, let alone hospitals.

The argument we are finally left with is the speed of transition to high numbers and proportions of older people, leaving low- and middle- income countries struggling to adjust. But as the discussion above indicates, it is not the speed of change but the reaction to it that matters. That is why some “poor” countries do surprisingly well in the Global AgeWatch Index, while some “rich” countries underperform.

1. Paola Scommegna and Marlene Lee, ‘Life Expectancy Gains and Public Programs for the Elderly in Latin America and the Caribbean’, *Today’s Research on Aging, Program and Policy Implications,* Population Reference Bureau, Issue 30, April 2014, p.3

2. Sam Agatre Okuonzi, ‘Dying for economic growth? Evidence of a flawed economic policy in Uganda’, *The Lancet,* Volume 364, Issue 9445, 30 October–5 November 2004, pp.1632–1637

3. Jill Mortimer and Marcus Green, *The Health and Care of Older People in England 2015,* Age UK briefing, 2015

4. Sam Agatre Okuonzi, ‘Dying for economic growth?’

Appendix 2: Useful resources

Style guides and glossaries

HelpAge International editorial style guidelines

[www.helpage.org/brand](file:///\\public\helpage\everyone\Advocacy%20and%20Communications\Publications\Publications%20management\Terms%20and%20definitions\Working%20documents\www.helpage.org\brand)

World report on ageing and health, WHO, 2015, Glossary, p.225

www.who.int/ageing/publications/world-report-2015/en

United Nations editorial manual

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://dd.dgacm.org/editorialmanual>

UNAIDS terminology guidelines

http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\_asset/2015\_terminology\_guidelines\_en.pdf

Progressives style guide

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.sumofus.org/images/SUMOFUS_PROGRESSIVE-STYLEGUIDE.pdf>

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Brief on Violence Against Older Women (includes a glossary of key terms)

<https://app.box.com/files/0/f/8236728813/1/f_68175083541>

United Nations Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse<http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/un_glossary_on_sea.pdf>

Terminology on DRR, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR)

www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology

Dementia

<http://dementiavoices.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/DEEP-Guide-Language.pdf>

Disability

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability

Articles and blogs

Proposed working definition of an older person in Africa for the MDS Project (WHO)

http://www.who.int/healthinfo/survey/ageingdefnolder/en

Grey dawn or the twilight years? Let’s talk about growing old (The Conversation)

<https://theconversation.com/grey-dawn-or-the-twilight-years-lets-talk-about-growing-old-62488>

Who Are You Calling An Old Biddy? How To Describe Modern Aging (Huffington Post)[www.huffingtonpost.com/kari-henley/ageism-seniors\_b\_10918418.html](file:///C:\Users\ctill\Desktop\www.huffingtonpost.com\kari-henley\ageism-seniors_b_10918418.html)

A progressive’s style guide (CharityComms)

<http://www.charitycomms.org.uk/articles/a-progressive-style-guide?utm_source=eNews&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=22062016&utm_campaign=progressive%20style%20guide%20Hanna%20Thomas>

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