

Promoting community-based disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and emergency response

For older people and other vulnerable groups in ASEAN countries and Japan



Regional workshop in Bangkok, Thailand
15-19 October 2012



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Background

Asia is the region most affected by disasters, and it also has the largest and most rapidly growing population of older people in the world. Aside from the 2011 Great Eastern Japan Earthquake, Asia also suffered from the 2004 Asian tsunami which killed 230,000 people in Indonesia alone, the 2008 Cyclone Nargis which killed nearly 150,000 people in Myanmar, and regular floods such as those that hit Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and the Philippines and other countries in recent months. When disaster strikes, older people are among the most vulnerable to neglect, injury, death and disease. Yet their needs are often overlooked. With such high loss of life and extensive economic damage, increasing the resilience of its 10 member states is a key priority for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). With rapidly ageing populations, in particular, ASEAN countries need to prepare their older citizens and other vulnerable groups to protect themselves and their communities. Japan has already reached levels of population ageing that ASEAN countries are moving towards, and has much to share from its advanced approaches to protecting and assisting such vulnerable groups in serious disasters. ASEAN nations and Japan have experienced major disasters in the recent past and have realised the need for a stronger disaster risk reduction (DRR) approach to build resilient communities.

Overall objective

To share best practices and agree on action points for promoting disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and emergency response among vulnerable groups by working through community-based institutions of older people in ASEAN countries and Japan.

Specific objectives

- Practical experience shared by civil society organisations in other ASEAN countries in how to strengthen community-based older people's associations (OPAs) so they can enhance protection from disasters for vulnerable groups;
- Greater understanding of Japan's community-level experience in preparing and responding to disasters affecting older people and other vulnerable groups;
- Technical knowledge of DRR and its implementation from regional experts to contribute to ASEAN's goal of Building Disaster-Resilient Nations and Safer Communities in Asia/Pacific;
- Common language and concepts in discussing climate change adaptation (CCA)/DRR in developing countries within the HelpAge Regional Network of organisations, expanded to include participation from Japan;
- Increased capacity on working with older people in emergency response focusing on their resourcefulness and vulnerabilities;
- A publication to disseminate the conclusions and lessons of the workshop, with acknowledgement of the Japan Foundation's support.

Participants expectations

At the commencement of the workshop, participants were invited to write down their key expectations for the week. The participants expressed common expectations in the following areas:

- To talk, listen and learn from others;
- To share experiences and knowledge about including older people in DRR planning and response;
- To learn and share best practices about activities, policies and practices in different country contexts;
- To learn more about climate change/climate change adaptation;
- To make sustainable networks for the future;
- To learn how to empower older people in disasters and understand their risks and vulnerabilities

The participants were encouraged to continuously contribute questions as they arose during the workshop, which could be addressed during the open discussions at the conclusion of each day.



Wiraphat Wilaisitpaleru/FOFDEV Thailand

Participants sharing their expectations for a week-long workshop



Wiraphat Wilaisitdeleer/POPDEV Thailand

“Disasters don’t strike equally across the globe; they hit the poor the hardest, which often perpetuates poverty”

Aslam Perwaiz, Head, Disaster Risk Management Systems, Asia Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC), Thailand

Disaster risk reduction and older people

Day one

Mr Godfred Paul from HelpAge International Asia Pacific Regional Office opened the workshop and welcomed to 46 participants attending from 12 countries. He described the five-day workshop as being an opportunity to exchange knowledge and share best practices. In reference to the latest report on *Ageing in the 21st Century*, published by HelpAge and UNFPA, Mr Paul concluded by remarking that, “Every second, two people celebrate their 60th birthday – we should wish them a bright future with zeal and enthusiasm as we would wish a child.”

Opening addresses were also given by Mr Aslam Perwaiz, Head, Disaster Risk Management Systems (DRMS), Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) Thailand, Mr Kazuhiro Fukuda, Director General, The Japan Foundation, Bangkok and Ms Nanda Krairiksh, Director, Social Development Division, United Nations ESCAP. All speakers highlighted the pertinence of including older people in disaster risk reduction (DRR) and emergency response in the Asia-Pacific, a region most affected by disasters and which has the fastest growing population of older people in the world. Ms Krairiksh concluded by saying that the subject of this workshop was very relevant and timely and expressed her desire to create a society to empower, protect and benefit from the contributions of older persons.

In the opening session Mr Aslam Perwaiz, presented on disaster risks to the Asia region and lessons for the future. He highlighted the fact that disasters do not strike equally across the globe; they hit the poor the hardest, which often perpetuates poverty. He said that poverty causes disasters and disasters cause poverty and this statement could be considered particularly true in many places in Southeast Asia, a region he described as a ‘supermarket’ of natural disasters. He emphasised that the frequency of disasters can have a significant impact on the recovery of a country; by the time it takes a community to recuperate, another disaster can occur and the coping mechanism is compromised. Mr Perwaiz said building resilient economies is equally as important as building resilient societies and that DRR should be part of a country’s poverty alleviation strategy.

Mr Godfred Paul, from HelpAge International, gave a presentation on the vulnerability of older people in disasters. Describing the changing population demographic, Mr Paul explained that while the increasing number of older people reflects an achievement it also poses a challenge. Over 26 million older people are affected by disasters each year and currently only 0.2% of UN Flash appeals for humanitarian relief is targeting older people. Older people’s vulnerabilities in emergencies were highlighted including their limited mobility, exclusion from or inappropriate food distribution, unique health needs, difficulty in

restoring livelihoods and security and protection issues. Mr Paul emphasised that older people can make invaluable contributions towards DRR and should be included and consulted in developing DRR strategies. These contributions include: community knowledge, knowledge of past weather and environmental patterns, their role as leaders and can look after the vulnerable, and can be key mediatory and peacemakers. Older people share wisdom and knowledge of the impacts of past emergencies and therefore can help prepare for the next. Mr Paul discussed the role of older people's associations (OPA) in DRR and their ability to coordinate DRR, response, recovery and support in rebuilding lives and communities.

Next **Ms Aiko Akiyama**, Social Affairs Officer at the Social Development Division of ESCAP presented on the vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities in disasters. Some of the key points that arose from her presentation were the linkage between persons with disabilities and older people. Ms Akiyama explained the functionality difficulties shared by these two groups as well as the similar barriers they face. She highlighted the fact that older people constitute a large share of all persons with disabilities. In ASEAN it is reported that Vietnam has the highest prevalence rate of persons with disabilities and Thailand has the highest share of older people with disabilities. Ms Akiyama described some of the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in relation to the 2011 Japan earthquake explaining that there was a higher death rate of this group, among them people with hearing impairments were the highest. Similarly as with older people, Ms Akiyama said one of the best ways forward at a local/national level was inclusion and to encourage the participation of people with disabilities in the decision-making process. Ms Akiyama said that both older people and people with disabilities can be a resource in post-disaster situations and that organisations focusing on these vulnerable groups should work together in solidarity.

Ms Sayako Nogiwa from Association for Aid and Relief (AAR), Japan concluded the sessions for day one with a seminar on the Great Eastern Earthquake and Tsunami in Japan and its impact on older people. Ms Nogiwa used the analogy of the Japanese government being like an elephant – while it is very big, it moves very slowly. Therefore it is up to the community and civil society organisations to act like mice on the ground, working quickly, efficiently and prolifically. She explained there are many 'pattern' organisations that need to collaborate together to achieve as much as possible. Coordination is critical between national government, local government, INGOs, NGOs and the community, in order to share problems and discuss future plans. Ms Nogiwa explained some of the work AAR Japan has been doing on-the-ground and recommended that the participants attend as many cluster meetings as possible and appeal the importance of considering people with disabilities and older people so that gradually the government will make changes.



Wiraphat Wilaisitdejler/FOPDEV Thailand

“Every second, two people celebrate their 60th birthday – we should wish them a bright future with zeal and enthusiasm as we would wish a child.”

Godfred Paul from HelpAge International concluding the opening workshop

Discussions and evaluations

One of the participants raised the question of introducing local knowledge and indigenous practices into DRR programs. He said that in Bangladesh there is much opportunity for this and local knowledge is being integrated in to DRR in many regions. Mr Aslam Perwaiz responded that while there is good documentation of how important local and traditional knowledge is in DRR, we should rely on a combination of both scientific and indigenous knowledge. It was highlighted that in reality, scientific knowledge remains with the scientists and does not necessarily reach community so it is essential to improve the linkage between these two bodies and thus improve the community's capacity and knowledge for effective DRR. Mr Perwaiz noted that while traditionally we always try to learn from developed countries stakeholders must be open to start learning from ASEAN countries. He said that both Indonesia and the Philippines are exemplary countries working at a national level and also integrating DRR at a community level.

Pursuing the development of a UN convention on the rights of older people was an important issue that was raised by the group. Many participants believed that this would be a critical step in securing the rights of older people and ensuring their inclusion in policies and DRR planning. It was mentioned that a convention is a legally binding document and countries that ratify must abide by its framework as opposed to the current Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) framework, which is not binding. It was contended that while this is true, ultimately what is important is what happens at a national level and there is a lot that can be done – MIPAA remains a good basis to work from.

Day two

During the morning session, representatives from each country shared lessons learned and gave presentations based on their country's work in disaster risk reduction and emergency response. Highlights included:

Japan – Japan is an 'ultra-aged society' with 29.47 million older people and it was in that context, the great eastern earthquake and tsunami occurred. Many people who lost family and friends questioned why they were lucky to survive. This was enhanced with older people especially when their children or grandchildren had died. YMCA had special grief care programs for older people where they could participate in excursions such as visiting hot springs to improve psychosocial wellbeing.

Thailand – Traditionally Thailand has a minimum risk for disasters however this is changing. Foundation for Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV) has developed intergenerational camps between children and grandparents that incorporate an element of DRR training and have been positive for bonding between family members. FOPDEV works with media and Thai public broadcasting services to do a citizen report and develop a network that can communicate information about disasters via social media. They also work on-the-ground to disseminate information to community, often through community radio.



Janevit Wisojongsakram/FOPDEV Thailand



Janevit Wisojongkram/FOPDEV Thailand

Philippines – Coalition of Services for the Elderly (COSE) focuses on raising awareness so that older people know their rights in emergencies. OPAs play an important role in organising post-disaster relief and have formed disaster committees. Older people's involvement in the entire process has been the key to success. Mitigation and preparedness actions led by the older people include sand bagging, tree planting, recycling, hazard mapping, capacity and vulnerability assessment and community drilling.

Bangladesh – HelpAge Bangladesh has been working in a consortium as a technical partner to mainstream ageing in DRR. It has been more effective to make partnerships with local partners as they have found them to be flexible and communicative and genuinely interested in ageing issues. They are also using and applying indigenous knowledge for sustainability of community-based disaster risk reduction.

Nepal – Nepal has developed a consortium called the Nepal Risk Reduction Consortium, which unites government, humanitarian organisations and financial institutions such as the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank. HelpAge Nepal will develop a concept with the theme of mainstreaming senior citizens in policy and programmes in regards to DRR and Disaster Risk Management (DRM). Currently there are 40 active OPAs and they will be trained in 'active ageing' as well as in DRR.

Myanmar – Myanmar has been working with communities to assist them with developing and implementing DRR action plans. They have found that older people can play an active role in establishing Village Disaster Management Committees and are capable of making significant contributions to historical analysis, hazard analysis and climate change analysis. Older people have become focal persons to receive and disseminate information about early warnings.

Vietnam – The Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) has organised community based intergenerational self-help clubs and has mainstreamed DRR into these clubs. Members are able to share best practices and lessons learned to others through exchanges and field visits. The VWU collects evidence and documents lessons learnt to share at a national and international level to humanitarian stakeholders and policy makers.

India – India has approximately 100 million older people with many disasters of many various forms. Older people are either 'lost or last' in relief efforts. HelpAge India advocates that older people should be proactive and brought to the centre and educated on their rights. The delegate from India said to be heard in a cacophony of voices, you need to shout as no-one will listen if you are murmuring. Because of this, HelpAge India engages in 'Aggressive Advocacy' for older people, as well as the 'Elders for Elders' approach where senior citizens help one another.



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Participants sharing their country experiences during the regional workshop

Indonesia – Thousands of disasters occur every year in Indonesia. Housemaids and able family members are being trained to help older people when disasters strike as before they did not have capacity or adequate knowledge. Communities’ capacity to deal with disasters is being enhanced through first aid training and mock drills with the involvement of older people so they can contribute their ideas and knowledge.

Cambodia – Cambodia is not prone to severe disaster but the population has very little asset and capacity to recover when it does occur. The country has been experiencing affects from climate change including a shift in timing and duration of the seasons and increased frequency and intensity of floods and droughts. HelpAge Cambodia advocates that older people can be considered as agents of change and the mechanism for this change is the OPAs. Further replication of OPAs is a potential mechanism to effectively respond to climate change and DRR.

Following the country presentations Mr Godfred Paul presented a seminar on the role of older People and older people’s organisations in community-based DRR and how they add value. Through a participatory exercise the participants were divided into groups to discuss and develop action points for how they would best involve OPAs in their organisation’s community-based DRR. Some of the key findings and conclusions suggested in the feedback from the group were:

“Older people could share knowledge in schools and colleges, meeting once a month. CSOs could develop an agreement with the schools and students will benefit from the knowledge that older people can share on disasters in the community.”

“Through peer education there is possibility to use proactive older people to reach out to those who prefer to be left alone.”

“Increased representation in local and national DRR bodies. Engagement with local government is a good place to start.”

“Advocacy is very important, as ageing is not an issue that is on the radar for a lot of people.”

“Engage older people as consultants and mediators.”

“Train OPAs so that DRR can be more mainstreamed within other activities of HelpAge’s projects.”

“There is a shortage of IEC (information, education & communication) materials for older people in DRR, more age-friendly materials can be developed.”

“Social pensions, livelihoods and microfinance can increase capitol in the village to respond to disasters.”

“Harness indigenous knowledge, and compose it in a way that makes sense to the people who matter.”

“Use OPAs to promote environmentally friendly initiatives such as keeping the community clean and awareness raising to ensure people know about the consequences of garbage - one of the biggest causes of urban flooding.”

A participant reflecting the role of older people’s organisations in community-based DRR and how they add value

In summary of the session it was highlighted that an OPA can be what you dream it to be and can be leveraged to full advantage. It was emphasised that if older people will be involved in various stages of DRR, legitimacy of older people’s knowledge must be built and documented in a format that is acceptable to the stakeholders that need to be influenced.

Concluding day two, **Dr Nahoko Okamoto**, from the College of Nursing, Japan Red Cross, presented findings from a recent report of the study of the Great Eastern Earthquake in Japan. Ms Okamoto said that the prefectures affected by the tsunami comprised between 26 and 27 per cent older people and about 63 per cent of the earthquake-related deaths were people aged 60 years or older. She explained this was because older people were unable to escape from the water and debris and were not clear of which direction to go. During the emergency response, affected older people faced a range of challenges including difficulty accessing health and welfare services, a concern for those requiring treatment for chronic disease. The study sought to learn what the impact of the disaster was on older people’s mental and physical wellbeing; the coping strategies and support available; the role older people played in assisting their families and communities to recover; and the long term implications of disaster affecting a high proportion of older people. Some of the findings included older people showing strengths in family support and community living however there were weaknesses found particularly in the early stages where older people had difficulty accessing treatment and care services, water, food, clothes and were often physically and mentally tired. Highlighting the gender differences between older men and women, Ms Okamoto stated many of the women in the temporary homes liked to socialise whereas the men were apprehensive and tended to isolate themselves. This reinforced the need to integrate men into older people social activities particularly in emergency responses.

Discussions and evaluations for day two

A question was raised about the psychosocial impact of disasters, an area that lacks evidence and research, and what support mechanisms could be developed to help older people. A participant from the Philippines said that one of the most effective ways to mitigate social isolation and improve the psychosocial wellbeing of older people post-disaster is by encouraging older people to actively get involved in activities and initiatives that help others. Through this engagement they can develop a sense of self worth and no longer feel like passive victims therefore alleviating feelings of helplessness or depression. This highlights the importance of OPAs and activities that could be generated by these associations during times of disaster that would have a two-fold benefit.

The importance of effective communications materials for a variety of stakeholders was also raised. It is essential to develop age-friendly IEC materials for older people as well as presenting knowledge to scientists and academics in an appropriate and convincing form.

It was suggested that OPAs can develop their own programme or guideline for DRR in countries that do not already have an existing model, with an emphasis on every country developing a model specific and appropriate to their own culture and context.

Participants proposed that the next step is to consider promoting OPAs to be autonomous in functioning at a local level and to develop a federation or national OPA alliance to represent at a district level transcending the community level. Ultimately this could be up scaled to create a network of OPAs at the regional level.

Day three

During the opening seminar on day three, **Mr Nokeo Ratanavong** from ESCAP gave a presentation on the impacts of disasters on vulnerable people, highlighting case studies from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Thailand floods. He reinforced the theme that people who are most vulnerable in disasters include older people, persons with disabilities, children, women and people living in poverty. He noted however that in some cases men can be more vulnerable in disasters as they may put their life at risk by trying to save others or may stay behind to protect their family's assets. Mr Ratanovong said there is an availability of disaster data but limited disaggregated data, which makes it difficult to assess the impact of disasters of elderly men and women in order to design DRR that would adequately address their needs. The key recommendations he presented were to mainstream gender, older people and persons with disabilities into all disaster risk management initiatives; to ensure sex and age-disaggregated data is collected for inclusive DRR as policy-making needs to be evidence-based; and to strengthen social protection at both normal times and times of disaster to provide better resilience from falling into deeper poverty.

Following this, **Mr Gregory Pearn** from Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre presented a seminar discussing DRR planning and the opportunities for vulnerable groups to be included in this. He commented that DRR planning has become more decentralised, bringing the responsibility down to local levels and enabling more practical, specific preparedness actions to be assigned to community through a participative process. Mr Pearn explained the different levels of DRR planning including national, provincial or district level, and community level, and discussed the positives and challenges of engaging older people in DRR plans. This includes possibilities and constraints of having more older people representatives on DRR, finding ways to ensure that the poor and marginalised older people can participate, identifying the specific vulnerabilities of older people as well as their capacities and incorporating these into DRR plans.

Mr Robert Francis B. Garcia from OXFAM GB, Philippines then presented an overview of AADMER implementation and civil society participation in ASEAN (APG). Mr Garcia emphasised that doing regional work through a coordinated DRR approach is important because geographic resources are shared and there are certain ecological conditions that affect multiple countries. He explained the



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legally binding ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) as well as some of the multilateral groups doing DRR in the region including the AADMER Partnership Group (APG). While regional frameworks such as AADMER are important, Mr Garcia remarked that their implementation reaching communities is equally important, a motivation behind the formation of APG, so that CSOs can work with the ASEAN secretariat to ensure this happens. Mr Garcia concluded that APG should be considered as one of the good practices in the region that demonstrates how a regional body can successfully work with civil society in order to achieve national and regional commitments on DRR.

Developing action points

The group then divided into their various countries to develop a DRR action plan they would take home and implement within their organisations. The plans included identifying actions and stakeholders at a national, regional/provincial and community/local level. The participants reconvened and the plans were then presented to the group. Commonalities among the groups included mainstreaming older people into current DRR, engaging with other CSOs and policy makers, and advocacy for the older people to be included in DRR at a national level. Other highlights of the plans per country included:

The facilitators urged participants to refine their plans over the following days and take them back to implement through their respective organisations. It was commented that while all the plans and approaches were good, there may be barriers from various stakeholders due to lack of awareness. The facilitators concluded that as there

| Country | Community level | National level | Regional level |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| Bangladesh | Formation and organisation of OPAs and then consultation through baseline surveys and interactive sessions to raise awareness on DRR | Mainstreaming ageing in DRR through lessons learned workshop, coordination meetings and the development of guidelines. | Sensitisation of district legal bodies, raising awareness and capacity building on DRR and ageing, develop evidence and data to inform guideline development. |
| Cambodia | Design DRR proposal through community orientations and consultations using tools developed by UNDP Cambodia. | Mainstream ageing in DRR national coordination of policies through HelpAge's participation and contribution in key meetings, workshops and forums. | Develop a collaboration agreement with provincial key stakeholders in DRR and mainstream ageing in provincial DRR plan. |

| Country | Community level | National level | Regional level |
|------------------|---|--|---|
| India | Develop pilot programs to extract evidence to replicate | At the regional and state level, use older people as resource persons, selling the concept to other CSOs who are working and lobbying at the state level. Involve big INGOs and develop 'whispering' campaigns | |
| Indonesia | Assess the communities' capacity for DRR. Collect data regarding older people in the community. Develop an awareness program so older people are aware about DRR and their rights and create a livelihood program for older people. | Hold a workshop for NGOs, INGOs, National Board of DRR on older people to mainstream ageing into their DRR planning. | Enhance the capacity of regional DRR groups to work with older people in the programs. Gather information about older people at the community level and channel this to the regional level. Develop tools for older people's preparedness, emergency response and rehabilitation. |
| Japan | Organise OPAs in temporary housing shelters in remote areas that have been semi affected by disasters. | Develop a national advisory committee of elderly people and invite a famous senior advisory person for their support | Hold coordination meeting. |
| Myanmar | Teaching DRR at the community level to encourage people to participate in regular simulation exercise. Older people will be invited to deliver talks about their knowledge and experience. | Compulsory DRR to be included in the school curriculum. Invite retired older people to development the curriculum | TOT training for school teachers and including older people to participate as trainers. |
| Nepal | Spend considerable time with local community, gauge their true needs and assess if and then what DRR should be a priority. | More older people will be encouraged to speak up and be part of the entire policy-reform structure. HelpAge Nepal can lead them from behind but older people will be the ones leading the campaigns | Once the local community has an understanding of the need for DRR, the OPAs will be supported to teach and share these practices with other neighbouring OPAs. |

| Country | Community level | National level | Regional level |
|--------------------|--|---|--|
| Philippines | Updated database information for older people and other vulnerable groups, representation of older people at focal special bodies. Specific program activities include mapping and developing community DRR and emergency plans. | Increase partnership and collaboration with CSOs and NDRRMC on DRR agenda, through conducting orientation, consultation session and information drive with older people, other vulnerable sectors and other stakeholders. | Include DRR on the major advocacy agenda of the regional coordinating and monitoring board or the federation of older people. |
| South Korea | Conduct pre-check for disaster prevention, update and distribute safety precaution in disaster situations through the OPAs using an age friendly approach (i.e. develop materials with more visuals and large font). | Advocacy to include and consider older people issues in DRR that would address their specific needs | Improve capacity and share information about DRR with older people which would include DRR training and orientation at a regional level. |
| Thailand | Collect information to provide for the database at a provincial and national level. | Organise consultative meetings between GO, NGOs and CSOs with representatives from older people. Develop working groups and a database for older people and people with disabilities. | Replicate the above at a provincial level. |
| Vietnam | Involve older people in the planning of DRR at the communal level with trainings, and organising inclusive volunteer groups. | Increase the awareness of the decision makers and community about DRR by advocating for the inclusion of older people in the national DRR plan and developing IEC materials and trainings. | Establish a task force of relevant government and agencies and develop a specific coordination plan between implementing agencies. |

The facilitators urged participants to refine their plans over the following days and take them back to implement through their respective organisations. It was commented that while all the plans and approaches were good, there may be barriers from various stakeholders due to lack of awareness. The facilitators concluded that as there are many common themes it would be good to share challenges and successes about what was worked at various levels.

Climate change adaptation and older people

Day four



Dr Senaka Basnayake, Head of Climate Change and Climate Risk Management Department at APDC Thailand, opened the day with an overview of climate risk in the Southeast Asia region and highlighted the scientific evidence that has shown an increase in global mean temperature and a rise in sea levels. This has been occurring dramatically over the past few decades. He said that while floods and droughts are not new, climate change has enhanced the extremity and frequency of these events, and has also altered the time of year they can occur. Dr Basnayake explained that this scientific-based information is very useful for DRR practice and that projected changes are important to have an understanding in order to make policy decisions and plan accordingly to reduce disasters associated with weather and climate. He explained different sectors, such as the water and agricultural sectors can use this information to make relevant adaptations. In conclusion Dr Basnayake reiterated the importance of information sharing and integrating climate resilience into sustainable development by linking science, institutions and society.

A question was raised about whether we should still advocate for countries to reduce carbon emissions seeing as climate change could be considered favourable in some regions such as Canada where agricultural lands are expected to increase. Dr Basnayake responded that while there are instances to demonstrate that climate change may have a favourable impact, these are exceptions and as humans we need to control global climate change and we should contribute to mitigation.

Mr Atiq Kainan Ahmed, Climate Information Application Specialist at ADPC Thailand, presented on climate smart DRR programming. He highlighted the fact that vulnerability to climate change varies greatly among sectors and social groups, and that the capacity to adapt also varies greatly; recognising the differences in vulnerability and capacity of different groups should influence the formulation of adaptation strategies so that they are specific to their needs. Among the most vulnerable groups, older people often remain neglected. Mr Ahmed pointed out that many disasters are now turning into ‘mega disasters’ as a result of climate change and while these hazards are increasing, adaptive capacity is not increasing. He emphasized that as we are entering a critical situation with the end of Kyoto Protocol and the end of the Millennium Development Goals, now is a good opportunity to shape future policy commitments.

Mr Ahmed explained that the Climate Smart Disaster Risk Management approach (CSDRM) has three pillars: Tackle changing disaster risks and uncertainties; enhance adaptive capacity; and address



Janevit Wisojongkram/FOPDEV Thailand

**Mr Wansao Chaiyakul,
Project coordinator, Disabled
Peoples' International
Asia-Pacific Region (DPI/AP),
Thailand**

poverty and vulnerability and their structural causes. He recommended these as being a good base to begin thinking about climate smart programming. In the context of Ageing Smart Climate Change Adaptation programming, Mr Ahmed suggested using specialised knowledge to increase the understanding and the interpretation of the risks for older people, then it is possible to design adaptation strategies to address the specific needs and change factors for older people. He has also pointed out that climate smart programming approach should be considered at multiple scales ranging from policy to practices taking proactive pathway into consideration for future. He has also mentioned that the upcoming 5th Asian Ministerial Conference is an opportunity to make concerted actions for the policy actions for the older people.

Following the morning seminars **Mr Marcus Skinner** and Mr Godfred Paul from HelpAge International gave the afternoon presentation on Older People and Climate Impacts. It was proposed that climate change could be appropriated as a new lens to add further weight to advocating for the inclusion of older people in policies. With more older people being displaced as a result of climate change, the need to advocate about the specific vulnerabilities of older people living in displacement camps was raised. The importance of developing age-friendly cities that have planned for the needs of older people was also highlighted due to the fact that climate change may contribute to urban migration and an influx of '*climate refugees*'. The point was raised that society needs to deliver a mechanism for older people to adapt to climate change through providing them with social pensions, and there is possibility to reframe social protection advocacy to complement this new lens.

Mr Skinner emphasised that while much anecdotal evidence exists, there is a need to develop more substantiated evidence to convince governments through advocacy. It was reiterated that while scientists hold the information about climate change, people living in the villages who need it most do not have access to this knowledge. Therefore there is an urgency to filter this information down to a local level in a digestible format to ensure it reaches communities.

The group was divided and asked to formulate an ageing smart climate change adaptation plan that demonstrated a flow of information from the community-based level to program implementation, to evidence building and culminating in policy influencing work. Each group discussed various actions and ideas to take forward, as well as partnerships and capacity needs to be fulfilled in order to achieve success. The groups concluded with the following common themes.



Janevit Wisojongkram/FOPDEV Thailand

Actions and ideas to take forward

Community level:

- Interviews and consultations with community members, story telling activities, meeting with OPA members, documenting stories about older people and their traditional methods from the older people themselves, research and study conducted.

Programme level:

- Focus group discussions, OPA gathering and intergenerational event, exchange visits of OPA and older people to understand and be able to apply a self-assessment; training and technical support between OPAs.

Evidence-building level:

- Developing appropriate IEC materials, research data, reports, needs assessment, documentation making, case studies, sharing best practices, presenting key findings, channelling stories of older people through media to the public.

Policy-influencing level:

- National level workshops, national and global campaigns such as ADA, advocate to policy makers, media campaigns, creating and facilitating forums to have an interface of dialogue between older people and scientists.

Partnerships and capacity needed to achieve this

Community level:

- Partnerships with key people in villages including OPA group leaders and local authority, religious leader, technical experts – all trained to collect and extract information from their communities.

Programme level:

- Partnerships with both the private and public partnerships, OPAs, civil society, community with capacity includes documentation, IT and communication.

Evidence-building level:

- Enhance relations with community, Local NGOs, other INGOs, private sector, academia and media. Capacity includes analytical skills to develop reports and communications skills

Policy-influencing level:

- Linkage with policy makers, line ministries, media, public, academics to present and advocate the evidence that has been collected

In conclusion, Mr Godfred Paul reinforced the importance of maintaining interaction with older people in the communities otherwise knowledge can be lost. He recommended that the participants create these linkages and opportunities beginning now and subsequently the exchange of information can begin to flow.

Helping older people in emergencies (HOPE)

Day five

The final day of the conference opened with an address from **Ms Sasinapa Asavaphanlert**, Programme Assistant at ECHO, Bangkok, who expressed her thanks and appreciation for the invitation and a commitment to older people. She remarked she was very pleased to be part of an important training to ensure that the voices and specific needs of older people are included in our emergency interventions.

Ms Rhea Bhardwaj from HelpAge International introduced the HOPE training workshop and explained that there is currently a lack of research and evidence for older people and stated that the day's focus should be on how to further and enrich that evidence-base to convince cynics in the sector. She reiterated the point that mind sets can only be changed with solid statistics and through demonstrating real examples of exclusion.

Ms Bhardwaj recounted her personal story of being an internally displaced person in Kashmir. She said every disaster has a commonality and a common outcome for the affected people, which is loss of life and loved ones. She described her vivid memories from Kashmir and told the group that her family was given a choice to either die or leave. She said she still remembers clearly the difficulty of trying to convince her grandparents and great grandparent to leave their home. Ms Bhardwaj explained eventually she lost one of her grandparents and this is why HOPE resonates so strongly with her.

Participants next took part in an interactive simulation exercise which aimed at developing their understanding of the effects of ageing. All participants were asked to simulate impaired conditions by:

- Wearing a pair of glasses (simulating cataract or macular degeneration)
- Inserting cotton balls in their ears (simulating hearing loss)
- Inserting cotton balls in their nostrils (simulating loss of smells)
- Wearing gloves (simulating sensory loss and grip loss)
- Wearing these impairment devices, participants were asked to undertake the following activities:
- Thread a needle
- Unbutton and button a shirt
- Eat a biscuit without chewing
- Stand in a queue and make a cup of tea or coffee



Participants taking part in an interactive simulation exercise which aimed at developing their understanding of the effects of ageing

“This exercise was a good way to empathise and relate to how older people feel. It is something I would like to take home and re-enact with my colleagues.”

“It was difficult to line up for the tea break because I felt disorientated without having all of my senses.”

Reflection from participants after the simulation exercise



Janevit Wisoisongkram/FOPDEV Thailand

The group reconvened and the participants were able to reflect on their experience of being ‘impaired’. The group was asked to consider particular difficulties and feelings they experienced during the exercise, and what new thoughts about ageing arose as a result. Feedback from the participants:

“I am impressed because it is not easy to live alone or be isolated. We need help from one another even for the most basic tasks.”

“I didn’t feel happy needing to rely on others to help me.”

“My movement was very slow and this highlighted how older people need support from their family.”

“I didn’t like being in a crowd because it was difficult to hear and I felt claustrophobic.”

“I felt like disengaging from the conversation because I couldn’t hear what people were saying and it felt like they were shouting at me.”

“We should start preparing and practicing for older age now so we will be able to take better care of our selves when we age.”

“This demonstrated to me that we need more capacity to support our selves and be secure in old age.”

“Not many people think about older people being pushed in a queue, prioritising people of setting up a resting place could make a big difference.”

Ms Bhardwaj commented that providing a resting place or giving older people priorities in distribution queues could make a world of difference and that these simple changes can be made when developing a response if time is taken to think about the needs of vulnerable groups. It is also essential that people in the sector are sensitized about communicating with older people and that they are trained to be able to effectively do so.

Mr Quyen Tran from HelpAge International then presented a session on the legal frameworks, policy and demographic shift surrounding older people and emergency response. He encouraged the group to anticipate reasons why older people are not included in emergency response and develop easy to understand data to counter those arguments to use as advocacy tools. He insisted that advocacy should also highlight why governments must invest in older people and what the returns of this investment are. Mr Tran recommended that all the participants develop a deep understanding of the existing policy frameworks and disseminate this information widely; he explained that governments can use these frameworks to develop national policies. Mr Tran also commented on the potential role that mass media could play in influencing public opinion.

Mr Marcus Skinner discussed the gaps in humanitarian practice and said that beyond HelpAge, in the humanitarian system, there are scarcely any agencies working with older people. He spoke about the importance of working with agencies such as the Red Cross for family re-unification and making links between children and older people caregivers in the context of conflicts and HIV or other instances when the middle generation has been wiped out. He suggested that this could be another lens that could potentially bring older people into the mainstream. Mr Skinner gave examples where small changes as a result of making efforts to understand the context had made a huge impact for older people. He provided an example of a good practice in Darfur where medical units dedicated an afternoon slot exclusively to older people, which he explained had led to a huge increase in older people using health services. He encouraged the participants to think creatively and contextually, and proposed that even small changes to existing programs can make services more accessible to older people.

The afternoon session involved another interactive exercise where the participants were divided into smaller groups each comprising a facilitator, a technical advisor and a challenger. The challenger had been secretly briefed to oppose the group's discussions, and this was intended to reflect a real life situation. Groups were asked to discuss and strategise an inclusive emergency response plan that incorporated older people for two hypothetical scenarios – a flood and an earthquake. During the feedback for the exercise participants expressed that usually, despite the challenger's objections, some kind of compromise was arrived at to suit all parties. One participant highlighted that they didn't purely focus on one specific group, they considered other vulnerable groups and how to consult all groups to ensure that the response was inclusive and cohesive for the community. One of the participants offered a real life example from Cambodia where they established a specific vocational training centre for older people, he said that after a few months the older people felt isolated and detached from the community highlighting the importance on developing inclusive approaches with all social groups and promoting cohesion.

It was also reinforced by the facilitator that sometimes when you address the need of one group, you might end up covering other vulnerable groups. For example, in Pakistan, Handicap installed toilets in emergency shelters designed specifically for people with disabilities. This also had a positive outcome for older people as they were inadvertently age-friendly and many older people were able to use them.



Wiraphat Wlalsilpdelet/FOPDEV Thailand

Making it Happen

Participants were encouraged to consider what the enabling factors and disabling factors of achieving age-friendly emergency response in their own countries are and were then asked to develop two realistic and tangible action points to commit to as their own HOPE Personal Action Plan. The plans were submitted to Mr Godfred Paul and Rhea Bardhwaj from HelpAge International who will personally follow up with participants subsequent to the workshop. The group shared some of the following personal plans and ideas to take forward:

- Return home, share findings and information materials collected from the workshop with colleagues and search for more knowledge on DRR and emergency response
- Communicate information from HOPE training through organisation's website.
- Talk with partners and relevant stakeholders at a national workshop.
- Incorporate age friendliness into future programs of my organisation
- Share information about the needs and risks of older people in emergencies.
- Gather more resources and material in order to design and develop the HOPE curriculum in my country's local language.
- Replicate the simulation activity with other staff members.
- Establish an emergency response group as a focal point for the country office.
- Collect baseline information on older people throughout the country.
- Invite older people to share disaster response practices that they have been doing.
- Develop a training document with information to disseminate to staff members in the country.
- Begin to sensitise younger children to the issues and vulnerabilities of older people.
- Set up an OPA exchange program to raise awareness and promote best practices learnt from this workshop.
- Replicate a HOPE workshop that is integrated with young and old and invite local media and the private sector to join.

Ms Cai Cai, from UNESCAP complemented the participants for their commitment in the work with older people and the new learning gained during the workshop over the week. She also gave presented the certificate to the first of the participants. Participants then participated in presenting certificates to each other. Ms Cai Cai encouraged the participants to be engaged and to link with UNESCAP on policy issues.

Conclusions, key findings and recommendations



Janevit Wisajongkram/FOFDEV Thailand

- Asia-Pacific is a region that is most vulnerable to disasters, including those caused by climate change – from floods to droughts, earthquakes and tsunamis. In fact, over the last three decades, this region accounted for a staggering 85 per cent of deaths due to natural disasters.
- Asia-Pacific is at the forefront of the global phenomenon of population ageing: the number of older persons is rising at a pace unprecedented and a scale unmatched by any other region in the world. Currently, the region is home to just over half of the world's elderly population. In 40 years' time, however, almost two thirds of the world's older persons will be living in our region.
- Greater emphasis to be placed on the heightened vulnerability and specific needs of older persons in community-based DRR, CCA and emergencies and it is essential that these needs are addressed.
- A high proportion of these older persons will also have disabilities, which will make them even more vulnerable to disasters. It is important for civil society organisations working with older people and people with disabilities to work together on DRR and emergency response programs.
- While much anecdotal evidence exists, there is a need to strengthen research/data (age and gender disaggregated) and develop more substantiated evidence to convince governments and key decision makers.
- Through advocacy and sensitising civil society organisations to the vulnerabilities of older people, their capacity can be strengthened to incorporate age-friendly approaches into their existing programs.
- Strengthen coordination/mechanisms for an inclusive community mechanism for DRR and CCA
- Support the formation of older persons' associations to provide an effective community mechanism for DRR and CCA. These organisations can then link at a national and regional level to create a strong networks of OPAs.
- Promote the establishment of comprehensive social protection systems for older persons - this can be achieved through a new lens on climate change and DRR.
- Ensure the meaningful participation of older persons in the devel-

opment and implementation of national and local DRR and CCA plans and strategies and incorporate their local/indigenous knowledge into developing these plans.

- Strengthen the flow of information between communities and scientists by developing age-friendly IEC materials for older people and presenting community knowledge to scientists in an appropriate and convincing form.
- Advocate for the establishment of a Convention on the rights of older persons
- Accord priority to mainstreaming the gender dimension into national responses on DRR
- Continue to network and strengthen regional cooperation and sharing of experiences to better address the needs of older persons in DRR and CCA plans and strategies.

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