

Action around the world

3 October 2011

Thousands of older men and women around the world took part in the latest Age Demands Action campaign



In this issue:

- Global Age Demands Action campaign in Kyrgyzstan
- We discuss the experiences of older people
- UNICEF project in Osh and Jalal Abad provinces
- Older People's achievements in the project
- Good nutrition in later life



HelpAge International

age helps

Global AGE DEMANDS ACTION

Thousands of older men and women around the world took part in the 5th Global Campaign Age Demands Action. Older activists in 56 countries took part in this action on or around the 1st of October, the International Day of Older People, supported by HelpAge network.



*ADA conference participants
HelpAge International*

Within this movement each year meetings of older people with heads of government structures and local self-governance are held, where older people concerns are discussed and relevant measures on their resolution are adopted.

On the 12th of October “Age Demands Action” was held in Dostuk hotel in Bishkek. Delegates from Issyk-Kul, Chui, Osh, Talas, Batken, Naryn provinces of the Kyrgyz Republic participated at the conference. Delegates were elected at the meetings of older people in rural areas, where they discussed the most pressing concerns of older people, and express their interests and demands to improve their life. During these meetings, the older people raised the following questions:

I. Health

1. The low level of medical care; sometimes reluctance to serve older people; the ineffectiveness of local self-government in rural areas; an additional payment for medical services; patients are required full payment at the hospital.
2. In the villages there are no municipal pharmacies. Older people have to go for medicine to district centers. In pharmacies the price for medications is not clearly indicated: they sell it at the price which they want. Commercial prices of medicines do not allow pensioners to purchase necessary medical supplies.
3. Lack of first-aid stations (FAS) in some remote villages. People cannot get timely medical care: in some villages the nearest FAS is 40 kilometers far away or more. Older people have to go to the district center for specialized medical care, which is the additional cost of transportation, medicines, etc. Moreover, doctors are not always on the ground, and the sick person has to wait for office hours.

4. Older people are not accepted to the hospital for in-patient treatment. They are prescribed medication and sent home, being explained that there is lack of hospital staff, there are no conditions for the treatment of the older people, no seats, etc.

II. Local self-governance

1. Local governments do not pay enough attention to senior citizens in local development plans. Local authorities in the communities do not cooperate with the older people and do not involve them to their activities, despite the fact that the contribution that older men and women make to society is invaluable.
2. Humanitarian assistance from the social security authorities comes to the village, but its distribution to vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, low income groups) is questionable, since there is no transparency. There are instances with distribution of coal when local government forces people to subscribe that they have received one ton of coal while in reality they are given only 4-5 sacks.



*Focus group discussion in
Bokonbaevo village
Issyk Kul
HelpAge International*

III. Pensions and benefits for the women with low income in rural areas

1. Very sensitive issue of pension for rural women, mothers of large families. Many women had not involved in formal employment, but they have grown, educated their children, who have been working for the state. Their many years of experience at home and raising children are not included while determining a pension. As a result, they receive a small pension (2000 KGS).

IV. Older carers need help in taking care of their grandchildren

Older people and their grandchildren are the most vulnerable groups. Today, when the rate of migration is growing every day, especially in rural areas, older people who are left with young children under their care, face challenges in raising their grandchildren: financial, when their pension is low to provide good nutrition for grandchildren; grandchildren miss their parents and need emotional support from grandparents. However, despite their ages older carers with all their wisdom, patience and tender take care of grandchildren.



*ADA conference participants
HelpAge International*

They teach their grandchildren to be patient and strong, encourage them to study well at school and are proud of their successes. They care about the future of the country and are making their valuable contribution to the development of the society. Older carers need support of the society as well of the government in their every day care of children.

V. Domestic violence against older people

Older people also become victims of domestic violence as the most vulnerable members of the family.

Older people living in rural remote areas where there is insufficient access to support services, have been feeling particularly vulnerable. Crisis centers that provide support to victims of domestic violence, are in regional centers. There are many cases when older women, after the death of their husband are being kicked out of home and deprived of their own corner by the husband's relatives, and these women find themselves in the street.

Having discussed the above issues and summarizing the conference, the participants of "AGE DEMANDS ACTION,» the delegation of older people, experts and activists, declare the following:

Older people despite their ages contribute a lot into the development of the society. In the villages they participate in community activities, always provide their wisdom in solving problems to young people, to village administrations through participating in Aksakals' Council, Women's Committees and other groups of the civil society. Our older people are holders of the country history, traditions and culture. They generously share their knowledge with younger generations. Every year groups of older people become more active and stronger. They take care not only of their grandchildren but of vulnerable people in their communities. However there are still many older people that need support of the government and the civil society.



To meet these challenges, the conference participants call to Parliament, Government and LSG:

Recognizing and supporting the important contribution of older people in society, to ensure transparency and accountability of local self-governance (LSG) in the community and participation of older people in LSG through their inclusion in:

- discussion and hearings on the formulation and implementation of the budget;
- development of socio-economic development plans and programs;
- the distribution of humanitarian aid to the poor, people with disabilities and families with many children;
- include questions of assisting vulnerable older people in community development plans.

Improve access of older people to health services through organisation of:

- Outreach months of mobile health services for older people in remote and inaccessible areas of the country;
- municipal pharmacies for older people;
- open wards for the older people in hospitals;
- strict control over the execution of the program of state guarantees and increase the awareness of older people about the program of mandatory health insurance (public control, telephone hotlines, public opinion polls on the execution of the program).

Review the current pension scheme, especially for older women with many children in rural areas, who had worked in the fields when they were young, working for the good of the country (growing cotton, tobacco and other agricultural products) for meager wages, and therefore now receive lower pensions.

Recognize the additional burden of older people who have to care for grandchildren and other family members in households where the younger generation has migrated in search of work, through the development of public support programs, including financial. The state also should develop a program for the development of kindergartens and pay special attention to the early childhood development issues in rural areas.

Recognize domestic violence as a serious violation of human rights through:

- Responding of law enforcement officials, social workers and all parties working on violence problems to each case of older citizens who experience domestic violence and take appropriate actions;
- Submit an article to the law on Social and Legal Protection against Domestic Violence on separation of older people as a distinct category of persons who are especially vulnerable to violence;
- Organisation of mobile teams to remote villages to provide psychological and legal assistance to older victims of family violence.

To achieve these objectives, older people can and are willing to participate in resolving the above problems and to help the government to carry out research and monitoring of the vulnerability of poor households, problem analysis and assistance to large families, migrant families; conduct polls, organize consultations, including outreach; conduct monitoring and evaluation of medical and social services; develop a network of volunteers to visit patients at home, etc. Despite their age, older people are worried about the future of their children and grandchildren and are interested in assisting in the development of kindergartens and other infrastructure.

We urge the Government of the KR, civil society and all activists to join forces and act now so that all older people everywhere are valued as equal members of society and ensure a dignified older age for everyone.



*Focus group discussion in Eshperov village Issyk Kul
HelpAge International*

Education and Protection of Children with the Help of Older People



Home Work Club activities in Osh UNICEF project HelpAge International

During April –October 2011 HelpAge International in partnering with local education departments, school teachers and older carers implemented the project in Osh and Jalalabad provinces with UNICEF support. The project was implemented in 10 communities affected by June 2010 communal violence. These were Amir Timur and Toloiken communities in Osh city; Asanchev, Madya and Furkat communities in Kara Suu rayon. There were 5 communities such as Sputnik, Aitmatov, Taigaran, Dostuk and Kurmanbek communities in Jalal Abad province. The goal of the project was to increase inter-generational solidarity and to improve access to education for children with special needs. Children with special needs from schools # 59 and 12 were also involved in the project.

Older people, school children and children with special needs worked together on this project. The project established Community School Clubs and Community Summer Clubs in target communities. School children, teachers and older people conducted different activities: Cultural Events, the End of School year; the International Day of Children and the Knowledge Day on the 1st of September. Besides, children visited the art-gallery in Osh and the theatre Altyn Uya.

Children with special needs were actively involved in the project. School children in cooperation with older people conducted the research “**My Community – My Home**”. School children with the help of older people studied the history of their communities and developed beautiful albums with photos about their research.

“I was very happy to participate in the research on the history of our community together with our grandchildren. Children were very excited to learn about our community Amir Timur. We made field trips, visited museums. Children were full of energy and I was tired. Actually, this was children’s idea to develop a play on the history from Amir Timur’s life”,
- Rejapova Miyassar, the leader of OPG in Amir Timur community, 58 years old.

During the project implementation older carers learned many useful things to support grandchildren in their learning at schools and how to take care of young children.

The Presentation of the research My Community – My Home became the most enjoyable event for both children and older people and was devoted to the **International Peace Day**.

Overall school children and older people groups' members from 19 schools including the school for children with special needs # 59 and # 12 participated in Osh. Ten schools participated Jalal-Abad event.

“We are very proud of the history of our community Mady. The greatest woman Kurmanjan Datka, later the Queen of Alay was born in Mady. We did a research of her biography. There was a monument of Kurmanjan Datka established in the front of the school. So we did an interview with the author of the monument. Our grandchildren learned many interesting things about the Alay Queen. Based on our findings children made a play and performed it during presentations”,- Tamara, Mady community, school # 86, Kara Suu rayon.

School groups made a presentation of their research in very different and creative ways – through theatre performances, poems, songs and dances, speeches and even video show. The children and adults shared their talents and information they had researched. The albums with the history of their communities that each school club had produced were presented and all participants had an opportunity to view each album. At the end children were presented books as prizes for their successful researches.

“I participated in the research since May 2011. I am very happy that I took part in the Summer School and learned a lot. We made wonderful trips to the Art Gallery in Osh, to the theater Altyn Uja. I have made many friends from other schools! I think that this is a brilliant idea to develop Summer Schools. I hope that these schools will be continued!”, - Aijamal, 14 years old, Mady community, school # 86, Kara Suu rayon.



Micro projects implemented by Older People Groups (OPG)

Dear readers,

We are happy to share with you Older People Groups' achievements during the project implementation. Last year each group of Older People (total 20) received grants in the amount of 500 euro for micro projects to reduce poverty in multigenerational households and to strengthen inter generational relations.

Older people of these groups are of different ages: 50-80 years old. Most of the groups decided to implement income generating projects. There were also projects on developing Resource Centers (RC) for older people and children. We believe that micro projects helped older people and their grandchildren to strengthen inter generational relations. Both older people and children spend some time in the RC learning from each other. Children learn to take care of domestic animals, learn how to grow agricultural products.

In our previous newsletters we informed readers on the projects. A year has passed and we would like to share with you the results of the projects.

Overall 20 OPG received 10 000 euro. **The 20 OPGs** which received **500 euro each** in October 2010 have implemented different types of micro-projects. These are livestock projects (12), Resource Centers (2), Green House (1) agricultural projects (3) as well as sewing workshops (2).

Micro projects implemented by these groups have been extremely successful. The OPGs are planning to develop their projects further. **Ten thousand euro** to date has translated to a nominal total profit of **6400 euro**. **Three hundred** older people and their dependents benefited from these projects. In average this makes 1200 people.

The OPG under the leadership of Toolonbay Davljatov from Prisavai village in Kara Suu rayon did onion project. They rented land and grew onion. Onion project has already produced 6 tons of onion!



*Resource Center in Kemin village OPG leader Tamara Bajakeeva
HelpAge International*

“We are very proud of our achievements in the project. The income from onions to date is over 2000 euros! Our grandchildren are happy too. We all worked together and now are planning to help vulnerable households in the community”- Toolonbay Davljatov, Prisavai village in Kara Suu rayon.

“Prisavai village OPG worked very hard on the field to get a good harvest. The community is very proud of their project result. Once again our older people demonstrated their enthusiasm, hard working and willingness to support vulnerable families in their communities.”- Saida Kudaiberdieva, Project Coordinator.



Miyaly village, Kara Suu project monitoring HelpAge International

Older people and children from two communities: Kemin and Tamga villages enjoy participating in Resource Centers (RC). Activities for older carers and their grandchildren have been conducted in these Resource Centers. Older carers meet there to discuss their lives, have tea and spend time.

In Kemin village migrants' children attend RC and learn using computer, get in touch with their parents in Russia and Kazakhstan through Internet.

In RC in Tamga village older people and children get together. Older People teach girls to cook and bake, children play chess, conduct contests for the best player, for the best composition about their grandmothers etc.

“We are all happy to have a Resource Center in our community. We get together here and don't feel isolated anymore. Recently our grandchildren have written a composition about grandmothers. My grandson wrote so many nice words about me! I have never heard these things from him so far. I am so happy!”- an older carer from Tamga village.

“I like to come to the RC in our village. I have learned to bake cookies and pies here. We have tea with our grandmothers, watch TV. There are many DVDs with old films. Our grandmothers like to watch them and they enjoy them. They tell us about their life when they were young. I like to listen to them.” – Tanja, 12 years old village girl from Tamga.

Bokonbaevo OPG produces national traditional handicrafts and sell them, village girls learn to do handicrafts. Some women are provided with work places in these workshops and are paid based on the handicrafts produced and sold. Some of these goods are now being pilot tested in Age UK (website: www.helpage.org) high street shops in London.

Kaindy OPG in Kemin rayon has started a sewing workshop. The group is developing Kyrgyz national style mattresses, blankets and other national handicrafts and sell them.

“Our group has become very much respected in the village. People come to us and ask for help or advice” (Jangyl, OPG leader).

Shabdan village OPG also produces national handicrafts. They bought new fine wool lamb. The group is expecting to get fine wool and use it for their handicrafts and will breed further their livestock.

OPG in Tegirmenty village in Kemin rayon has built a greenhouse. Total 50 square metres to accommodate crops. There was an opening ceremony with participation of the district and village administration and older people. Currently they are growing vegetables: cucumbers and tomatoes which will be distributed among group members. Part of vegetables will be sold and the money will be contributed to the group funds. Also the group has grown flowers which were presented to the school children of elementary school on the 1st of September (the start of school year).

Five percent of the profits that OPGs make are fed into the group funds. The group funds are normally used for the group advantage. Also some groups use funds to buy school supplies for migrants’ children or make gifts for older people on holidays.

Twenty new OPGs were developed upon the request of older people in target communities and thanks to additional funds raised by Capuccino Club each group received start-up funds of **356,3 euro**. Over the summer months the groups began to discuss their projects. Most are planning to buy livestock that will be available in the markets in the autumn, as farmers bring the animals down from the summer pastures. Livestock food will be bought for grant funds. In the next Newsletter we will inform you on progress of these groups.



*Prisavai village in Kara Suu OPG leader Tolonbai Davljatov
HelpAge International*

*Home Work Club in Kok Moinok village, Issyk Kul
HelpAge International*



Good nutrition in later life

We all need a healthy diet to keep up our energy levels and fight infections, whatever our age. A healthy diet is a balanced diet, containing food from five groups:

- Fruit and vegetables are a vital source of vitamins and minerals, as well as fibre;
- Starchy foods, such as cereals, potatoes, bread and maize are a good source of energy;
- Meat, fish, eggs and beans are good source of protein, which is essential for growth and repair of the body;
- Milk and dairy foods are good sources of protein and also of calcium, which helps to keep our bones healthy;
- Foods containing fat and sugar are good sources of energy (although when we eat too much of them we put on weight);

What older people need

Older people need smaller, more frequent meals containing a variety of food from the five food groups. They need less staple food (such as cereals and potatoes), fats and sugar than younger adults and less red meat and fish than growing children and young women. But they need just as many fruits, vegetables, pulses or beans, milk, eggs and fluids as other adults, and they need protein to help retain muscle strength.

At this stage of life, protein is important for sustaining a healthy immune system and preventing the wasting of muscle. Since older people's energy needs are less, they should eat high quality protein such as egg white, lean meat, poultry and fish. Fibre and water help to prevent constipation. Fibre is found in whole grains such as brown bread, cereals and brown rice, as well as fruit and vegetables.



Older people need micronutrients (minerals and vitamins) to protect their immune system and reduce the risk of disease. They need calcium to maintain good bone health (from milk, yogurt, cheese and green leafy vegetables); vitamin D to help absorb calcium (mainly from sunlight but also from eggs and oily fish); iron for general health (from red meat, oily fish, beans and lentils); and vitamin C to help the body absorb iron (from fruit and vegetables, especially citrus fruit and green vegetables).

Calcium is one nutrient that many older people do not get enough of, because they avoid milk, believing that it will upset their stomach. They should be getting around 1,500 mg of calcium a day. Non-fat powdered milk can be used in recipes as a substitute for milk.

It is important that older people and their carers know what foods contain these micronutrients, so even if a person is eating less, they are still getting the micronutrients they need.

In addition, many older people have chronic conditions such as hypertension (high blood pressure), cardiovascular disease (disease of the heart or blood vessels), diabetes, anaemia (iron deficiency), arthritis, chronic liver disease or kidney disease, which require special diets.

Most older people need to drink 8-10 cups of liquid a day to stay healthy – mainly water but also fruit juices and soups. Older people can become dehydrated quickly if they are not drinking enough or are losing fluids through diarrhea or vomiting. Drinking plenty of liquid also reduces the risk of constipation, along with eating enough fibre (from fruit, vegetables and cereals) and taking exercise.

Being malnourished

A person is malnourished when the food they eat does not give them the nutrients they need to stay healthy. Malnutrition commonly occurs when someone does not eat enough food. It can also occur if a person has an unbalanced diet. It is possible for an obese person to be malnourished because the food they eat lacks the nutrients that their body needs.

Many older people become malnourished because they do not eat enough of the right foods. Being malnourished makes you weak and tired and more at risk of developing infection. It also leads to poor wound healing, skin breakdown with ulceration, memory loss and confusion, decreased muscle function, and breathing and head difficulties.

Some age-related conditions require special diets, which often require extra effort. For example, a person with diabetes should follow a low-fat, low-sugar, low-salt diet high in fruit, vegetables and starchy foods. Someone with heart disease needs a low-fat, low-salt, high fibre diet; someone with high blood pressure needs a low-salt diet; and a low-calorie diet is needed for weight reduction.

It is essential that someone with a medical condition receives advice from a health worker as soon as the condition is diagnosed, followed by regular check-ups.





*Baktykan Temirbaeva (on the right), OPG leader, Miyaly village, Kara Suu
HelpAge International*



This Newsletter is published in Kyrgyz, Russian and English. Hardcopies are distributed amongst any interested groups; however, it is also accessible on our web website www.helpage.org.

HelpAge International in Eastern Europe and Central Asia
Bishkek 720070
Kyrgyzstan
Abdrahmanova Street 204, 4th floor
Tel+996 312 66 46 36
Kyrgyzstan@helpageinternational.org

Useful links:
Campaign "Age Demands Action":
<http://www.helpage.org/Researchandpolicy/AgeDemandsAction>

Global Population Data: <http://www.helpage.org/Researchandpolicy/tateoftheworldsolderpeople/Globaldata>