

AgeNews

East Asia/Pacific

Information sharing
to strengthen
HelpAge's Network

Issue 12
April 2012



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HelpAge wins Hilton Humanitarian Prize 2012

HelpAge International received the prestigious 2012 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize on 16 April in Washington. The award was given by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation at a special ceremony at the 2012 Global Philanthropy Forum annual conference in Washington.

The award is the world's largest humanitarian prize, and is presented each year to an organisation that has delivered extraordinary work to alleviate human suffering.

Steven M. Hilton, CEO and president of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, presented the award to HelpAge International CEO Richard Blewitt. He said: "Over the past three decades, HelpAge International has demonstrated that older people are their own best advocates and with support can claim their rights to healthcare, social services and security.

"HelpAge's work is even more urgent today as the world faces a monumental demographic shift, particularly in developing countries where the

proportion of older people is growing fastest. By 2050 nearly one in five people in developing countries will be over age 60.

"The Prize is especially meaningful to draw the world's attention to the historic transformation being brought about by global ageing and the plight of millions of older people who face overwhelming hurdles every day."

HelpAge would like to acknowledge our global network of rooted affiliates working on our shared mission in 70 countries around the world. As a global network with a singular focus on providing assistance to and advocating for older people, it is our responsibility to use this great opportunity to engage even more people with the cause of ageing.



Hilton Humanitarian Prize
2012 recipient

Read more:

<http://www.helpage.org/newsroom/latest-news/on-international-womens-day-helpage-receives-hilton-humanitarian-prize/>

MIPAA review in Beijing

To support the organisation of the Intergovernmental Meeting, the Preparatory Meeting for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Second Regional Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing was held in Beijing during 22-24 November 2011.

Mr Eduardo Klien, Regional Director, HelpAge International, provided an overview of the key issues concerning social protection for older persons. He emphasised the importance of furthering older persons' participation and the effectiveness of older people's associations (OPAs). In addition, given that only 1 in 5 persons in Asia reaching old age have pension coverage, he called for greater attention to the development of pension schemes which provided a secure and regular income into old age.

**HelpAge
International**

age helps

Forum in China on the implementation of the 12th five-year plan on ageing



The “High-level Forum on the Implementation of the 12th five-year plan on Ageing” was held in Beijing, China during 21-22 December 2011, led by the China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA). The objective of the event was to share the plan with relevant government institutions and selected provinces as well as to seek their feedback for the implementation of the 5-year plan on ageing.

The 5-year plan has four headings: Development, Security in old age, Health and Participation.

Senior officials from China’s government were present at the event including from the Ministry of Finance, National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, and the China National Committee on Ageing (CNCA). UNFPA and HelpAge International were also invited.

HelpAge shared international experiences in the implementation of ageing plans starting with a brief overview of the scope and implications of ageing globally and in Asia. Then the presentation highlighted the three main aspects of the Madrid

International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), with emphasis on practical experiences in social pensions, older people’s associations (OPAs) and self-care in health.

Some of the key points raised during the meeting were:

- “Ageing brings a situation that can be volatile and complex. We need to do

continuous research on the implications of ageing”, **President, CNCA**

- “Developing strategies for care may take time. Institutional care may become an unsustainable financial burden, so we need to develop a continuum of care with goals for percentages ageing at home, at community level and at institutional care”, **Counsellor, State Council**

(EK)

The Regional conference on ageing 2012

“HelpAge Network Asia/Pacific Regional Conference on Ageing 2012” will be held in Yangon, Myanmar during 7-11 May.

The event is organised by HelpAge International in collaboration with the local host, the Myanmar Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement with the support of the UNFPA, Age UK, New Zealand AID, Htoo Foundation and Air Bagan.

The Conference will be attended by approximately 130 policy makers and practitioners from civil society, academics, international bodies and government agencies representing an

estimated 29 countries. The main objective is to share regional experience and formulate action points for addressing the care needs of older people and for highlighting their contributions to society in Asia/Pacific.

Simultaneously, “The Forum on the Voice of Older People”, will be held at the same venue. The Forum will provide an opportunity for 18 older women and men from across the region to freely share their experience and thoughts on real life manifestations of population ageing and what the current policies and programmes mean to the everyday life of older people.

HelpAge signed MoU with university in Cambodia



Annie Nut, Country Director, HelpAge Cambodia Office, signed agreement with Dewey International University, Battambang.

HelpAge signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Dewey International University, Battambang (DIU) on 21 February 2012.

The partnership will give DIU students experience in community service learning, such as helping poor and older people in rural areas.

The two organisations will work together to help older people in and around Battambang in several ways including:

- Students from DIU will travel to older people’s associations (OPAs) to assist them in MIPAA classes.

- The students will gather case histories of older people for research projects and possible publication.

- Students and professors from DIU may from time to time be recruited to gather information for HelpAge, e.g. baseline surveys, project evaluations, and impact assessments.

- DIU and HelpAge will work together to provide educational resources, both human and material, for the OPAs.

- DIU and HelpAge will engage in continuous dialogue concerning ways to assist the older persons.

Social Transfer Course

Forty three participants representing 18 countries around the globe, converged on the beautiful Alpine Golf Resort in Sankamphaeng in Chiang Mai from 24 October - 5 November last year to attend the course “*Designing and Implementing Social Cash Transfer Programmes*” organised by HelpAge International in collaboration with the Economic Policy Research Institute, and accredited by the University of Maastricht and IDS in UK.

Over the past four years over 200 policy makers, government officials and practitioners from 35 countries have graduated on the course, which covers in depth conceptual and practical issues in the development of social transfer programmes.

We were honoured to have Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development of United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs open the course.

One of the highlights of the course was the highly interactive session on the role of income transfers in times of economic recession led by Jomo. Other highlights included the field visits, which are an integral part of the course to allow participants to see Thailand’s social transfer schemes in action.

Participants visited Mae Taeng district to meet members of the older people’s association (OPA) and local government

to discuss the implementation of the Old Age Allowance. Later they visited San Kamphaeng district to meet a community recovering from widespread flooding to learn about the role of cash transfers as part of the response of the Royal Thai Government to the devastating floods that hit the country last year.

This year’s course will be held again in Chiang Mai from 14-27 October 2012. For the first time this year specialist modules on social protection policy, monitoring and evaluation, micro-simulation analysis and social protection in our ageing societies will be offered as part of this year’s course, for participants joining the full two week course and as stand-alone modules for participants requiring some specialist knowledge in these areas.

For further information on this year’s course please contact Meredith Wyse at asiacourse@helpageasia.org

(MW)



Dr Jomo Kwame Sundaram

Regional coordination on DRR and emergencies

In Southeast Asia, governments are seriously committed to fulfilling their obligations to build disaster-resilient communities. Civil society plays an important role in this endeavour.

Therefore, cooperation and partnership between civil society organisations and governments is increasingly becoming important.

HelpAge is now member of the governing board members, with six other humanitarian agencies in the region, to support civil society participation in the implementation of the ASEAN Agreement of Disaster Management and Emergency

Response (AADMER). The other agencies are Oxfam GB, Plan International, World Vision, Save the Children, ChildFund International and Mercy Malaysia.

The AADMER project aims to bridge the work of civil society to engage governments in promoting and realising disaster resilience in the region. It is being implemented in Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos and Myanmar.

HelpAge is also taking a lead in Thailand and with Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc.(COSE), the co-lead in the Philippines.

- **Thailand:** HelpAge responded to the unprecedented flooding in Thailand by providing food, water and medicines to needy older people. In partnership with FOPDEV, YMCA Bangkok and REEDA, the project not only provided the much needed relief aid and medication to the older people but also raised awareness on their specific needs among humanitarian agencies, the UN agencies and the government. Mercy Malaysia, an organisation of volunteer doctors in Malaysia, in partnership with HelpAge, installed water purifying systems in 11 villages. They also provided blankets and mosquito nets to 2,000 people.

- **Philippines:** Together with COSE, HelpAge delivered aid to older people affected by typhoon Ketsana, Megi and Nesat in the past two years. Thousands of older people received financial assistance to repair their shelters and to restart livelihood activities. This included solar lighting to 76 households, water purifying stations run by OPAs and group income generating activities. The unique aspect was the OPA leaders and members taking the lead in the emergency response programme and its monitoring.

- **Japan:** Following the 2011 Japan earthquake and tsunami, older people have been traumatised and many of them are still struggling to come to terms with the loss of their dear ones, their houses and their possessions. They are also the ones taking a lead in assisting the younger age groups to rebuild their lives and communities. HelpAge in partnership with the National Council of YMCAs in Japan is supporting the older people through psycho social activities including intergenerational activities to assist in their recovery.

- **DRR training:** HelpAge will run several training programmes on disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the region over the next two years to support its Affiliates and Country Offices to grow their work on DRR. The first of these trainings will be conducted in partnership with the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) in October 2012 in Bangkok.

(GP)

When the older meets the younger 'Intergenerational event 2011'



The Intergenerational Event took place during 6-11 November 2011 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It was a collaborative effort between Plan International, Foundation for Older Persons' Development, HelpAge International and Traidhos Three Generation.

A striking feature of Thai society is the large number of grandparents who serve as caregivers for their grandchildren. As in many other countries in the region and around the world, this is often due to the migration of parents to cities for work or the loss of parents to accidents or HIV/AIDS. In many other cases, grandparents care for children during the day while the

parents are working. So they serve an important role in raising children, passing on cultural values and contributing to the economic situation of their families. As grandparents age, they may require care themselves and older grandchildren may begin to reciprocate caregiving.

Fifteen pairs of grandparent caregivers and their grandchildren from Thailand participated in five days of activities and sessions with three objectives: (1) Strengthen the cultural learning and sharing (2) Exchanges among grandparents and grandchildren regarding child care and child protection and (3) Start a movement leading to the

achievement of wider social recognition of the role of grandparents as care takers of children in Thai societies and beyond.

The following are the main recommendations for the future development of intergenerational events:

- Continued intergenerational events in Thailand to serve as pilots for the refining of the model. The model would focus on strengthening the bonds between grandparents and grandchildren, and increasing awareness on issues of the rights and care needs of children and older people. A user-friendly curriculum would be developed with interactive activities to accomplish these goals.
- Documentation of the model in manual form and also with visual samples
- Once a model for intergenerational events have been refined, tested, and documented- expansion of the model could commence

The follow-up discussion with the implementing partners focused on how to broaden the impact of this event and which objectives to continue emphasising in future events.

The 2011 event's broader impact is seen through communication releases in Thai newspapers, and partner organisations newsletters. Still, a wider impact could be made in future years.

(QT)

Health education radio programmes in Laos

HelpAge produced a series of radio programmes (8-10 min each) on health promotion and healthy ageing in Kamu language. It was broadcasted by Luang Prabang Radio in May 2011. Six key health messages:

- **Smoking:** Misconception about smoking stopping insects and mosquitoes, symptoms of smoking impact, dangers of second hand smoke/passive smoking.
- **Responsible drinking:** Symptoms of liver disease include paleness, lack of appetite, weight loss, frustration.

- **Respiratory illness:** Misconceptions as to causes of respiratory illness; genetic because parents had it, it is from eating raw foods and hard foods. This is worse from second hand smoke such as from cooking or others smoking. Other messages, including signs and symptoms of respiratory illnesses.

- **Peptic ulcer:** When you have a peptic ulcer, don't eat too fast, chew food well, avoid food and drinks that worsen the condition such as spicy foods, alcohol and smoking, eat healthy balanced diet including fruit and vegetables and reduced fat. Try to reduce stress.

- **Joint pain:** Causes of arthritic pain, how to manage with exercise, stretching, reduced hard work and correct work positions, traditional medicine compress on joints and muscles, and what foods to eat and avoid egg.

- **Ageing:** Common conditions of ageing include tiredness, loss of appetite, not being able to do what they used to. To feel your best in old age you should not work too hard or have too much stress, rest well and sleep 8 hours per night, eat healthy food including fruit and vegetables and don't drink or smoke. Empower their group by organizing group exercises in the village every day.

ADA 2011

In East Asia/Pacific, the Age Demands Action (ADA) campaign took place in eight countries; Cambodia, Fiji, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam.

2011 marked five years of ADA, the only globally coordinated campaign led by older people themselves. They decide which issues they want to raise with their governments, meet politicians and decision makers face-to-face and demand real change to improve their lives.

Highlighted actions include:

- **Indonesia:** Up to 100,000 older people will be able to access home care services as the Government's home care programme has been expanded to many places in Indonesia.
- **Pakistan:** Northern Areas Transport Corporation was one of many transport associations to pledge a 50% discount for older people.
- **Myanmar:** A National Ageing Committee will be established and older people's self-help groups will be supported to set up their own bank accounts and register with the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Fiji:** Campaigners won the Pacific region's first ever National Policy on Ageing after two years of concerted ADA campaigning in Fiji. At a meeting with 85 older people in Suva, Minister for Social Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation, Dr Jiko Luveni announced that a new National Council Of Older Persons would be established to monitor the implementation of the policy.

ADA leaders

In 2011 for the first time, older people from communities around the world have nominated their Age Demands Action leaders.

These ADA leaders are committed to fighting for older people's rights and have experience of age discrimination. They are spokespeople who are able to represent their community and country in the media, at conferences and government meetings.

At the national level, they chair meetings and support delegations of older people. Globally, they will champion the cause and share older people's experience at an international level.



At the moment, we have ADA leaders from Gaza, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Jamaica, Mozambique, Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, the Philippines and the number is growing every day.

'Older people can still contribute to community development.'

Beatriz Guaño, 67, the Philippines, ADA leader in East Asia/Pacific

In East Asia/Pacific, ADA leader is Beatriz Guaño, 67, from the Philippines, a member of the Confederation of Older

Persons' Associations in the Philippines (COPAP). In this role Beatriz helped to lead the successful campaign for the expanded 2010 Social Protection Bill in the Philippines.

Beatriz has participated in Age Demands Action since 2007. As a leader in her community she has spoken up for the rights of older people and this experience has given her the confidence to speak at a national level. In 2008 Beatriz's dedication was recognised when she was awarded one of the "Sampung Ulirang Nakatatanda" ("Ten Outstanding Older People") awards.

Find out more about ADA at: www.agedemandsaction.org

Thai CSOs participated in Social Protection Floor

The Civil Society Forum on "Social Protection Floor in Thailand" held in Bangkok, 23 February 2012 aims at providing information on the social welfare for CSOs and an opportunity to input in the Social Protection Floor (SPF) discussion in Thailand

Recommendations include:

Children: Social welfare for children should be universal coverage. Options for the benefit and eligible age could be (1) 0-3 years old - 400 Baht/ Month; (2) 0-6 years old - 400 Baht/ Month.

Working age: Social security for the working age population is not comprehensive and it is different between the formal and informal sectors. Social security for this segment of population should be sufficient for them to help themselves and also other groups such as children and elderly under their care.

Older people: Options recommended for improvement of the scheme (1) change the 500 Baht scheme to progressive rate of 600, 700, 800 and 1,000 Baht per month, according to age groups - 60-69, 70-79, 80-89, 90 years and over respectively (2) Option 1 plus indexation to reflect inflation rate.

Health services: The universal coverage scheme of healthcare is considered a successful social protection floor, which covers more than 98% of Thai people. The issues that should be discussed is the extension of the scheme to cover all Thais and everyone who lives in Thailand (not only Thai citizens).

Thus, a desired social welfare system is the system that enable all ages to have basic income security.

(UK)

Find out more about Social Protection Floor at: <http://www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowTheme.do?tid=1321>

Light for life

Simple solutions that can be implemented through older people's associations (OPAs).

Low cost innovations to produce electricity bring light and hope to hundreds of homes in villages in South East Asian countries.

Solar bottle bulb: In many poor and overcrowded slums in Asia, households depend on dirt cheap galvanized iron roofing material, which totally blocks out sun. It is amazing to know how many older people or people with mobility problems who have to stay indoor most of the time are deprived of sunlight.

Even in daytime they risk further hazard of tripping or stepping on sharp objects. Other alternatives have other challenges.

Thatched roof needs replacing every few years at best and is highly flammable (not ideal to slum communities). Tiles are often too expensive for those who earn less than a dollar a day.

Functional yet a very simple change to light up poor households that are deprived of sunlight, the solar bottle bulb has been known to poor and darker corners in countries like Brazil and Philippines for some years. In essence, it is made from the discarded one-litre soda plastic (Poly Ethylene Terephthalate-PET) bottle, with bleached water.



Once installed on the roof, the law of physics will do the rest to diffract the sunlight and rid the entire room of darkness. The light is equivalent to a 55W commercial bulb.

Already in Manila Philippines, a NGO *Litre of Light*, is working to give this gift of light to a million homes. There are yet too many houses to be illuminated elsewhere, even only at daytime.

The by-products of solar bottle bulb are the reduction of solid waste and potential for community-based recycle business.

The solar bottle bulb costs less than £1 in mass production and provides free light for around five years without any cost of maintenance.

Solar Energy: Low cost solar lighting is being installed in many houses that never had electricity. With free sunlight guaranteed most of the year in the region, this is an energy source that needs to be fully tapped to bring maximum benefits to people in villages still living in darkness. Many people in these villages burn kerosene lamps which provide poor lighting are bad for health.

The set up consists of two panels fixed onto the roof or an elevated post in case of thatched roof not strong enough. The solar panels are connected to a battery



which captures the sun's energy and transforms it to electrical power. The charged battery provides electricity to 2 energy saving bulbs, runs a radio and charges mobile phones. The light is brighter for students to study in the night and it does not create health problems as there is no smoke pollution.

Each solar lighting set up cost £150 and provides free electricity for 5-8 years without any cost of maintenance.

(GP, TL)

Green electricity in Myanmar

Around 750 homes, ten primary schools, ten monasteries and six health centres receive electricity produced by the Older People's Self Help Groups (SHG) in Myanmar.

The electricity is produced through two **hydro electric generators** and eight diesel generators operated with rice husk. Former automobile mechanics who are now members of the SHGs, are leading the way in innovations to bring electricity for the first time in these villages. The husk from the rice is stored after harvest and used to run the generators which reduces the use of diesel by almost

80% and produces 220w electricity for household use. The hydro electricity is generated in villages with natural waterfalls.

Each household pays a monthly fee of USD2 which covers the cost of maintenance and enhances significantly the profits for the SHG to grow their activities. Schools, health posts and temples receive electricity at no cost.

The profits are used wisely with 30% set aside for replacement of the generator while 40% is used for various community needs such as scholarships for bright student, roads have been repaired, street lamps have been

put up and job opportunities have been created for the youth who maintain these units. The equipments are expected to last a maximum of five years.

These generators have brought light for the first time to their villages, improving the quality of life for people of all ages. Children can study after dark, adults can do their household chores with more convenience and the whole family can get together to watch television in the evenings.

A generator cost with installation is £2,500. This will provide electricity to 200 households.



World Health Day 2012

An impending 'greying tsunami' is how some commentators are describing the increase in the ageing population underway in the ASEAN region. Today approximately 9% of the population of the ASEAN member states is 60 years old and over. Women live longer, but spend a greater length of time in poor health.

On the occasion of the International World Health Day with the theme Adding Life to Years, how can ASEAN member states ensure their growing ageing population is healthy, productive and able to maximise their contribution both economically and socially to society?

The epidemic of 'non communicable' diseases is one of the key challenges the ageing region will face. Non communicable diseases (NCDs) are non infectious diseases such as diabetes, ischaemic disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and dementia, distinguished by their long duration and slow progression, which can only be managed rather than cured, which is why they are also known as 'chronic' diseases.

NCDs are now the main cause of death and disability in ASEAN countries, accounting for 60 per cent of all deaths in the region. Older people aged 60 and above account for 70 per cent of these deaths and 84 per cent of disability in old age is related to NCDs. Population ageing will be a key driver in the growth of NCDs in the near future.

There is a commonly held but perverse argument that non communicable diseases are an inevitable part of the ageing process. This is a fallacy. NCDs are not inevitable and premature deaths from NCDs are costly on many levels.

Older people play an important and often unrecognised role in our societies. Correspondingly ill health is expensive, reducing the ability of a person to earn an income and increasing costs from medical treatment and care requirements. The burden is felt by the individual, their family, the community and the state.

There are a wide range of factors which determine the development of NCDs. Biological disposition and genetics, environmental factors such as air pollution, and adequate nutrition in pre natal stage and early childhood stages are all important determinants in the

development of NCDs. Reducing the four main risk factors in adulthood of poor diet, excessive drinking, tobacco use and physical inactivity will reduce the likelihood of developing NCDs. However just as the determinants of NCDs are broad ranging, this means the solutions to prevent NCDs need to be as well.

The Ministries of Health in the region have a key role in promoting education on healthy lifestyles as well as of course ensuring the health systems are able to manage and treat effectively NCDs. Instead of treating younger populations with single curative interventions, health systems will need to adapt to ensure high quality, safe care, beyond the hospital setting, for older populations who often have several chronic diseases and disabilities.

However the responsibility does not stop with the Ministries of Health. Preventing

NCDs means promoting enabling environments for healthy lifestyles at all ages – access to affordable fruit and vegetables, reducing the availability and 'cheapness' of unhealthy food, safe spaces to exercise in, clean air to breathe and so forth.

With the ASEAN region experiencing a profound change in demographics, and the 'greying' of the region, preparations taken now to anticipate and address public health challenges will pay dividends in the future. Just as in the ongoing battle against communicable diseases required the efforts and coordination of many different members of our society, so does the approaching war on NCDs. Adding life to years in our old age is something we all should be striving for.

(MW)

Mastering the art of fundraising

The HelpAge International older people's associations model has been replicated in Vietnam in the form of self-help clubs. In 2012, there are over 600 multifunctional OPAs working in Vietnam. The 67 clubs formed six years ago in the project Community Mechanisms for Mitigating the Impact of HIV/AIDS, are still operating and active 18 months after the project ended.

The most important key to sustainable clubs is their ability to generate their own funds. Each club formed through the HelpAge projects in Vietnam receives project money to fund its establishment and activities. But the project also requires clubs to generate their own funds. The self-generated funds come from five main sources:

- **Membership fee:** Members pay a monthly membership fee ranging from VND 2,000 to 10,000 per month.
- **Revolving loan fund:** The fund is used to provide micro credit for members to borrow with low interest rate, usually about 1 percent, so they can invest in income generating activities. The borrowers pay the principal and interest

in monthly installments or pay the principal at the end of the loan. The interest forms part of the club's self-generated fund.

- **Savings:** In addition to the principal and interest, borrowers must pay money into a savings scheme. Again, the terms are decided by the club. A typical case would see a borrower with a VND 3 million loan saving VND 50,000 a month.
- **Collective activities:** Members use their own talent and creativity to form ideas for collective activities. Successful examples included a singing group who perform at events, a group who cares for bonsais at a school, a group who washes bicycles at markets and events and a group who repairs a village road.
- **Donations:** The clubs that have been successful in securing donations from local businesses and community members are the ones that are good at demonstrating their worth to the community through charity and community service.

(QT)



Resources

Publications



Reducing poverty in Myanmar through older people's initiatives

By HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2012



We will be better prepared: A story of community disaster preparedness

By HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2011



Community-based home care for older people in South East Asia

By HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2011



A snapshot of older people's lives in rural Shaanxi

By HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2011



What do older people need in emergencies?: The experience in the Philippines after Typhoon Ketsana

By HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2011

Posters

"Disaster Risk Reduction" Poster series, HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2011

"Social Protection Floor" Poster and postcard series, available in Thai and English, HelpAge East Asia/Pacific, 2012

You can email hai@helpageasia.org to request for free copies or download at www.helpage.org/resources.

Measuring economic vulnerability in Myanmar

As part of its programming in Myanmar, HelpAge and its partners recently carried out a baseline survey in target villages using a new tool for assessing economic vulnerability, in agreement with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The project, funded by the Livelihood and Food Security Trust Fund (LIFT), aims to improve livelihoods and reduce economic vulnerability of food insecure households through inclusive community-based interventions. Conducting a household survey, the project assessed the situation in target villages according to an Economic Vulnerability Scale by analysing 10 factors: indebtedness, income, assets, food security, livelihood diversification capacity, health, water and sanitation, dependents, social participation, and decision

making. In the case of livelihood diversification capacity, for example, income derived from a single source is more vulnerable to shocks, so the project aimed to expand the sources of income to give households greater resilience. The project is implemented with the entire community, not only with older people, but special attention is given to older people to ensure the activities are inclusive.

The survey was conducted with 1,194 households in the central Dry Zone of Myanmar, which is a 1:4 sample of the total target population of 4,776 households. Because of low rainfall levels, the Dry Zone is a challenging place for farmers to earn a living. The results of the survey were analysed by HelpAge's consultant, Dr Mike Griffiths. The analysis showed that households with an older person were at increased risk of being vulnerable, and that

this vulnerability was associated with age. The likelihood of vulnerability increased for the over 80's households and was even higher for households with a member over the age of 90. The likelihood of vulnerability was higher if the older person was female or disabled, and if the older person was economically inactive. Households in which the older person contributes to child care were also associated with an increased risk of vulnerability.

Overall, the assessment showed that the presence of older persons adds risk to vulnerability for the household on average. Dr Griffiths' conclusion was that development work aiming to address poverty and economic vulnerability should take into account age-related factors in programme design.

(PM)

We believe age helps. With age comes experience and understanding. The contribution older women and men make to society is invaluable.

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

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

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Age UK provides core funding to HelpAge International, and is also a leading partner of HelpAge International's global network of not-for-profit organisations.



Hilton Humanitarian Prize
2012 recipient