

# Europe: Lead the Way

Why the EU needs to include older people in its development strategy



As the largest donor of aid, the EU is a force for good in the world, and this should be celebrated.

**But the EU could go further.** Europe can and must become “age active” by recognising the value of older people and actively including them in EU aid strategy.

In doing so, the EU can set an example to the rest of the international community and lead the way in making the world a better place for all older people.

This paper intends to show why this is important and how it can happen.



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

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This publication is part of the Age Demands Action campaign of HelpAge International and the HelpAge Global Network. Age Demands Action is a global campaign championing older people's rights and fighting age discrimination wherever it exists.

# Summary

- **The world's population is ageing at an unprecedented rate. By 2050 there will be more people over 60 living in the world than children aged 14 and under.<sup>i</sup>**
- **And in Africa the number of people over 60 will more than triple by 2050.<sup>ii</sup>**
- **The force of this change will be felt most strongly in the world's less developed regions where currently 65 per cent of the world's older population lives.<sup>iii</sup>**

But despite these facts, older people are often excluded from global policies, targets and guidelines on how poverty should be tackled. The impact of this discrimination is that older people are some of the poorest of the poor: 100 million live on less than a dollar a day<sup>iv</sup>.

If this trend continues then the phenomenal contribution older people can make to reducing the poverty of themselves, their relatives and the rest of their community will not be realised. And as the world's older population increases so too will the number of people living in extreme poverty, making it harder to reach global anti-poverty targets.

Age Demands Action is a global campaign run by HelpAge International and the HelpAge Global Network in nearly 50 countries. It aims to champion older people's rights and combat age discrimination wherever it exists.

When institutions are "age active", this means that they are actively tackling age discrimination. The Age Demands Action campaign believes the world's largest donor, the European Union (EU) needs to become more age active by actively including older people in its aid strategy.

**It must start with changing the European Consensus on Development policy so that the rights and poverty of older people are included as a cross cutting issue to be addressed across all areas of development.**

# What's the problem?



The decisions on how to distribute the EU's aid to the people that need it are based on a series of policy guidelines and strategies. Older people are invisible in the key ones.

This means that the strategies that are developed by the EU further down the aid pipeline leave out ageing as an issue to focus on. Here's how it happens:

9 The masterplan of EU aid is *The European Consensus on Development*. This outlines the EU's priorities. It highlights discrimination in anti-poverty programmes as something to be careful of. But it makes no mention of older people.

10 Based on that document the EU then produces a set of guidelines which its offices around the world use when deciding how to spend the EU's aid money. These guidelines refer to the issues which the European Consensus on Development highlights for action across all areas of development. A key paragraph states:

**"gender equality, the promotion of human rights, children's rights and indigenous people, environmental sustainability and combating HIV/AIDS require special attention as issues to be mainstreamed."**

But older people are missing.

11 This has impact further down the aid pipeline because these guidelines are then used to draw up Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs). CSPs and NIPs set out how the EU's aid money will be spent in each country. It is these papers that distribute EU aid money to individual development projects run by NGOs and the government in that country. If older people aren't included in them, then aid does not reach them.

An analysis of two CSPs from Kenya and Mozambique shows that neither mention "older people", "the elderly" or "ageing" but children, women and youth are mentioned several times in relation to poverty, health, work and education. And these papers are not unusual.

## Why is this important?



**By including older people in key development policies such as the European Consensus on Development, older people would become more visible in aid programming guidelines and documents. This would mean that older people have a greater chance to benefit from European development funding. This will have several benefits:**

- 1** Developing countries would be better able to combat old-age poverty.
- 2** Reducing old age poverty would in turn benefit other age groups who are dependent on older people.
- 3** In highlighting the needs of older people and understanding the contribution they make when supported properly, communities and governments would be more aware of older people's rights and the need to tackle age discrimination.

**Each of these points is expanded on below:**

- 1** Research demonstrates that people who remain poor into old age, pass on their poverty to their children and grandchildren. They and their children will make up the majority of the 900 million people still living in poverty in 2015, even if the Millenium Development Goals are met.<sup>vi</sup>
- 2** Research also shows that when people in old age are supported properly, they make a huge contribution to the rest of society.

For example, an older person may use their pension income to pay for better food for the whole of their household having a direct impact on other generations. This is the case in South Africa where a study showed that young girls who live in a

household with a pension income are on average 3-4cm taller than girls who don't.<sup>vii</sup>

- 3 And thirdly, not actively catering for older people's needs reinforces the broader issue of older people's rights not being protected like those of other potentially vulnerable groups. While the rights of children and indigenous people are mentioned in these EU documents, older people's rights are not.

This is a serious omission as older people's rights are routinely violated in a number of different ways around the world. For example, Kenya has seen an upsurge in the number of brutal killings of older people accused of witchcraft. An estimated 42 older people were killed in three districts in 2008 and 23 older people were killed in three provinces in the first half of 2009 alone.<sup>viii</sup> This cannot be ignored.

## What can be done?



**We are calling for the EU to open its eyes to global ageing and actively include older people in its aid strategies.**

**It must start with changing the European Consensus on Development policy so that the rights and poverty of older people are included as a cross-cutting issue to be addressed across all areas of development.**

And policies such as the EDF Programming Orientations guidelines must be changed so that older people are highlighted as a group that require special attention in development strategies. The following paragraph must change:

**“In keeping with the mainstreaming modalities under the ‘European Consensus’, gender equality, the promotion of human rights, children’s rights and indigenous people, environmental sustainability and combating HIV/AIDS require special attention as issues to be mainstreamed.”**

Including older people in this paragraph as a cross-cutting issue would show that the EU acknowledges older people’s rights and will ensure that vital aid reaches them.

These guidelines are not due to be renewed until 2013. However, the process of reviewing the European Consensus on Development will start in late 2010. So the opportunity for change is here.

If this opportunity is not taken, the number of older people living in extreme poverty is likely to continue to increase and the poverty of their dependants will also persist. It is crucial to do this if the fight against extreme poverty is to be truly won.

**For more information and to see how you can get involved with this campaign visit <http://www.helpage.org/get-involved/campaigns/>**

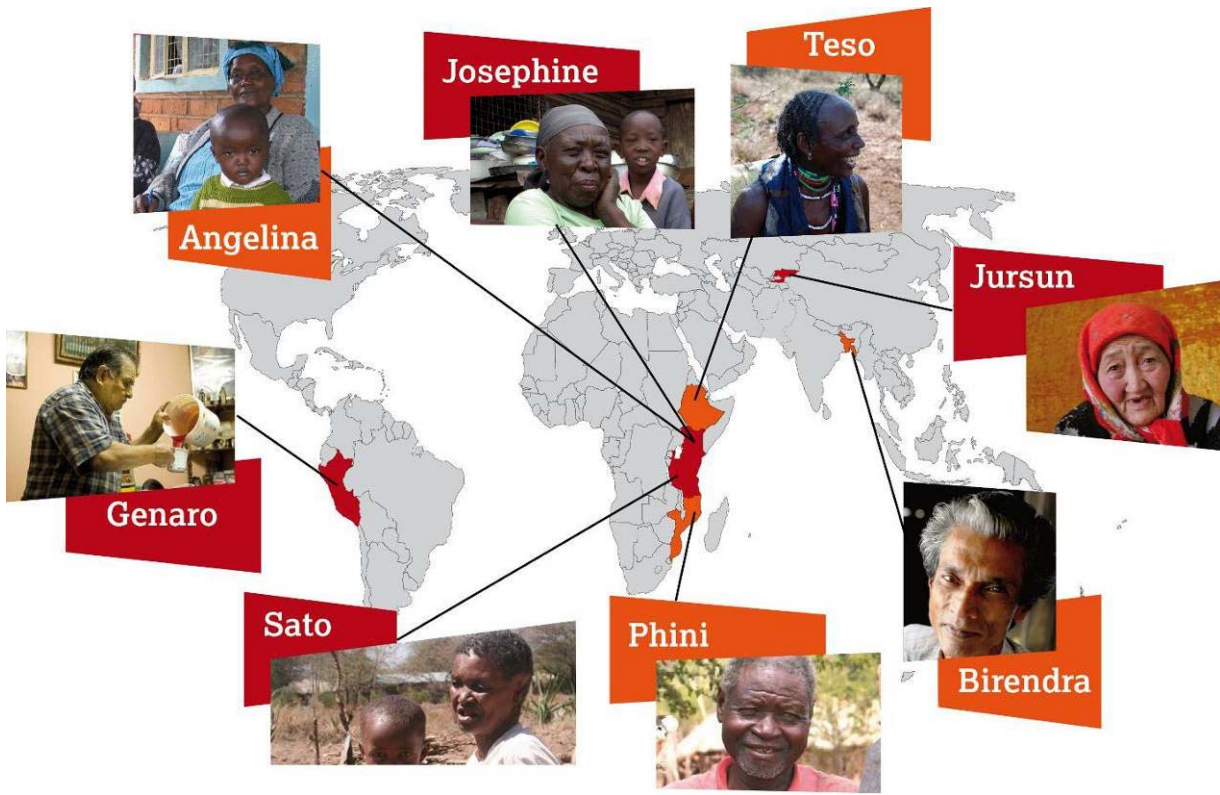
# Appendix: Stories of struggle and support

The European Consensus on Development aims to address poverty across a variety of themes. Here we show how older people when supported in these areas deliver significant contributions to reducing poverty in the wider community.

But when they are not, they are condemned to a life of struggle which keeps them in poverty and affects the life chances of their dependants. These stories aim to show that by supporting older people you help the rest of society as well.

The orange labels indicate a story of older people being supported, and the dark red labels indicate a story of an older person struggling.

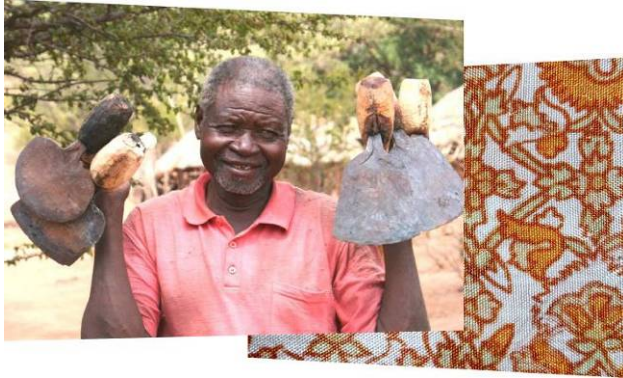
Some names have been changes to protect people's identities





# Employment, income generation and social cohesion

**Supported:**  
**Phini, 72, Mozambique**



72-year-old Phini Supinho lives in a village in Tete province, Mozambique. He lost his livelihood as a carpenter because of failing health.

He received a cash grant through HelpAge International and UNICEF's Living Together programme and this enabled him to retrain as a blacksmith.

Four years later, the business has grown and he now supports the needs of the community who can't buy the tools anywhere else locally.

"People come from the surrounding villages to buy from me. They used to have to travel to Tete which is very far from here.

"I am providing a good service to the community by making these tools locally. I sell the big hoes for 50,000 meticaís (€1.5) and in Tete they cost 120,000 meticaís (€3.7). I now have the money to support my family with immediate needs like sugar, oil and salt and during hard times with maize", says Phini with renewed pride.

**Struggling:**  
**Josephine, 78, Kenya**



Josephine Napkonde is 78 years old and comes from Kenya. She looks after five children who were abandoned by a relative.

She receives no pension from the government so she has to work from 5am to midnight to provide for them.

"My future hope is to have my own house. I could have got land after my husband died but his brothers sub-divided the land.

What makes me happy is my children and God who gives me the strength to do my work. My talent is doing business. And to that I give my all, day and night.

My day starts at 5am when I prepare breakfast for my children and then see them off to school. I then go out to do my business and return home at midday and cook lunch for two of my children. In the evening I prepare supper and make sure the kids go to bed in their pyjamas. I sleep late, around midnight."

# Governance, democracy, development and human rights

**Supported:**  
**Birendra, Bangladesh**



Birendra is the president of the local older people's association. He lives with his granddaughter who is dependent on him.

"Traditionally in this region, people did not look after their elderly relatives because of lack of money. But since RIC [a HelpAge International partner] has helped us set up associations, and is trying to help us access pensions for our older relatives and for ourselves, this situation is improving.

"We hold weekly meetings to encourage older people to stand up for their rights and have opened channels of communication with government officials. So far we have ensured that eight people in our organisation get pensions. I am hopeful that this will increase, now we have support to do this."

**Struggling:**  
**Sato, 72, Tanzania**



Sato was attacked after being accused of being a witch. She fled her home and the police have not pressed charges.

"I was married but my husband died when I was young. We had five children. I was attacked in my home one night in 2000. My hand was cut off. I don't know who attacked me. My sick neighbour went to the traditional healer for treatment and he had indicated I had bewitched her. Just because we're old and live alone doesn't mean we are witches but people think we must be to be able to survive.

"The assailant attacked me with a panga and I was seriously injured in the head. I started screaming and he cut my right hand while I was trying to save my head. After I was attacked, a suspect was arrested and held in police custody for a long time but one of his relatives was a policeman so he was released and there was no case. I didn't make a follow up."

# Water and energy

**Supported:**  
Teso, 64, Ethiopia



HelpAge has provided a pond for Teso's village as well as an alternative water source nearby for times when the pond dries up, giving the community guaranteed water all year.

This gives Teso, who cares for five children, more time to work rather than having to fetch water.

"Without the generator and water, after the haro dry up we would be dead in two months. The haro are not enough for the population. The well water is also cleaner."

"Every day I fetch water and go to the bush to collect firewood. Sometimes I am able to sell some wood at the market. When the animals have gone to feed I collect bush roots that I can sell for 1 Birr (6¢) a bunch. I also use the roots to make plates and decorate pots. I only have time to make about two every year but I can get 100 Birr (€6) for each one I sell.

"I show my children how to make things so they too can make some money that will help them."

**Struggling:**  
Jursun, 75, Kyrgyzstan



Jursun is 75 years old. Her family has six members: one of her daughters and her husband, and their three children, two girls and a boy. One of the school-age children does not go to the school since she has a cleft lip.

The family's sources of income are the wages of Jursun's daughter, and benefits of around 700 som (€16) for her granddaughter. But this is not enough to keep the family warm in winter.

"What makes living in winter difficult is heating. We don't have enough money to buy fuel like coal. We usually use a bunch of bushes and dry manure for heating, which doesn't provide much heat and quickly gets cold. Since food is also expensive, we usually eat just bread and tea without sugar or milk."

# Infrastructure, healthcare, communications and transport

**Supported:**  
**Angelina, 65, Kenya**



Angelina organised older people to campaign for better treatment at the local hospital.

"We were treated badly at the hospital. We had to wait for many hours and sometimes we would leave without even seeing the doctor. The nurses' attitude was that we were old, and didn't need medicine.

"Two groups of 10 older people went to see Dr Muthoka, the doctor in charge at Kangundo general hospital, 20 km away.

"We told them that when we went to the hospital pharmacist we were not given the correct medicine or were told that there was no medicine. The doctor told us to go away and wait for while. He said he would make changes to improve the situation.

"I have been to the hospital three times since we had the meeting. It is now very clean, there are new wards and the patients sleep one to a bed."

**Struggling:**  
**Genaro, 74, Peru**



Genaro receives no pension after a lifetime of work. He now sells jelly to support himself and his wife who is ill.

"I worked for a construction company for 20 years. I had to stop when I had an accident. I am entitled to a 700 soles (€196) monthly pension from my old company but we've never received a penny from them.

"For the last 10 years we have been surviving any way that we can. I get up at 5am to start preparing jelly cups, which I then sell in the local market for 25 cents each. Food prices are rising so fast that it's impossible to sell enough jelly to pay for the things we need.

"Even though I am a man, sometimes I cry because I feel so angry that I can't make enough money to buy the medicines that my wife needs to get better, but what can I do?"

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