

Missing millions

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HelpAge

International

Up to **14 million older people with disabilities** may be affected by humanitarian crises. But they are largely **excluded from humanitarian response**.

What we did

We explored the experiences of older people with disabilities in different humanitarian contexts.



Reviewed

literature and humanitarian guidelines.



Analysed

data from population-based surveys.



Interviewed

older people with disabilities in Western Tanzania and Eastern Ukraine, and humanitarian actors.

What we found

In humanitarian crises older people with disabilities face barriers to accessing:

Income

- Less opportunity to work
- Too low pensions
- Restrictive systems for claiming social protection

Health

- More health problems
- Out-of-reach services
- Unaffordable treatment
- Shortage of medicines
- Lack of rehabilitation services
- Mixed attitudes of staff

Humanitarian assistance

- Lack of information
- Out-of-reach services
- Discriminatory attitudes
- Unequal distributions
- Inaccessible and unaffordable transport

Psychological wellbeing

- Lower quality of life
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Poorer mental health
- Stigma and discrimination

Protection

- Difficulty escaping danger
- Unsuitable housing
- Risk of theft

Participation

- Less included in decision-making processes
- Barriers to inclusion in society
- Difficulty with daily activities

Things that work

- Assistive devices
- Accessible infrastructure and transport
- Inclusive social activities
- Inclusive aid distribution systems
- Support from family and neighbours
- Home visits by support services

About humanitarian actors

What's working now

- Some collaboration between age and disability organisations
- Training and awareness raising

Gaps in response

- Disconnect between age and disability
- Efforts to be inclusive not always successful
- Challenges to being participatory
- Mixed approaches on data collection
- Lack of long-term funding for this work

5 ways forward

1 Demonstrate leadership and institutional will

- Use the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities.
- Strengthen alliances between disability and age-focused organisations.
- Ensure that NGO senior staff are accountable for the inclusion of older people with disabilities.
- Support humanitarian response work only where data that is fully disaggregated by sex, age and disability is used.

2 Strengthen evidence and data

- Routinely collect, analyse and use data on sex, age and disability throughout the programme, including data on mental health and cognitive impairment.
- Identify the specific experiences, needs and capacities of older people with disabilities.

3 Promote participation and empowerment

- Support humanitarian actors to better understand protection risks for older people with disabilities.
- Invest in activities to tackle age and disability discrimination.

4 Put inclusion principles into practice

- Support non-specialist organisations to include older men and women at all stages of the response.
- Support welfare state departments and service providers to make services accessible, for example any existing social protection schemes.
- Remove barriers that may limit older people's participation, and advocate for low-cost adaptations to enable safer, more independent living for older people with disabilities.

5 Change attitudes and approaches

- Recognise the rights, participation and capabilities of older people with disabilities.
- Support older people, their families and carers to advocate for rights and to understand the value of enabling older people with disabilities to participate in society.
- Use existing tools, training and guidance to include older people with disabilities in all stages of humanitarian response.

Learn more at helpage.org/missingmillions

“Sometimes I tighten a rope around my stomach and sleep on my stomach because I’m so hungry.”

62-year-old woman, Tanzania

“When people lower their voice at a meeting, I can’t hear them. I’m not involved.”

81-year-old man, Ukraine

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