Older people's associations in community disaster risk reduction

A resource book on good practice

HelpAge International has a vision of a world in which all older people fulfil their potential to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives. HelpAge International is a global network striving for the rights of disadvantaged older people to economic and physical security; healthcare and social services; and support in their caregiving role across the generations.

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Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rationale

HAI and its network partners work with older people, frequently through older people's associations (OPAs),[1] in a variety of development programmes at community level. Experience shows that older people gain increased visibility and greater recognition within their communities after becoming members of an OPA.

Two key observations about older people in situations of disasters are:

a) older people have specific needs, related to health, nutrition and access to essential services, that are seldom given due consideration in disaster response programmes

b) older people have specific capabilities which are rarely utilised in preparedness, relief and rehabilitation programmes. They can and do play important roles within their communities in times of disasters when provided with the opportunities to do so.

Building community capacity through OPAs enhances the resilience of a community in the event of a disaster. Lessons learnt suggest that there are many ways in which older men and women can contribute in planning and coordinating community responses to disasters.

Older people organised in Banda Aceh, Indonesia

1.2 Resource book aims and audience

This *resource book* aims to strengthen the capacity of organisations working with older people in planning and implementing age-sensitive responses to disasters. The resource book draws on the practical experiences of HAI, network partners and OPAs in preparing for and responding to disasters.[2]

This resource book is for managers of government and non-government development/humanitarian organisations in the Asia/Pacific region, including:

- HAI network partners
- organisations with humanitarian programmes
- local level government departments and/or ministries
- non-governmental organisations/community organisations working at grassroots level
- mass organisations.

The contents draw on the experience of working with OPAs in several countries, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

[1] In this document, older people's associations (OPAs) refer to groups of older people who are organised within their communities. Within HAI's global network, these groups are referred to by a variety of different names – for example, Older People's Groups, Self-Help Groups, Older People's Clubs, Older Citizens Monitoring Groups and Village Elders Care Committee.

[2] The resource book does not focus on complex political emergencies as partner experience in this capacity in the Asia/Pacific region is limited.

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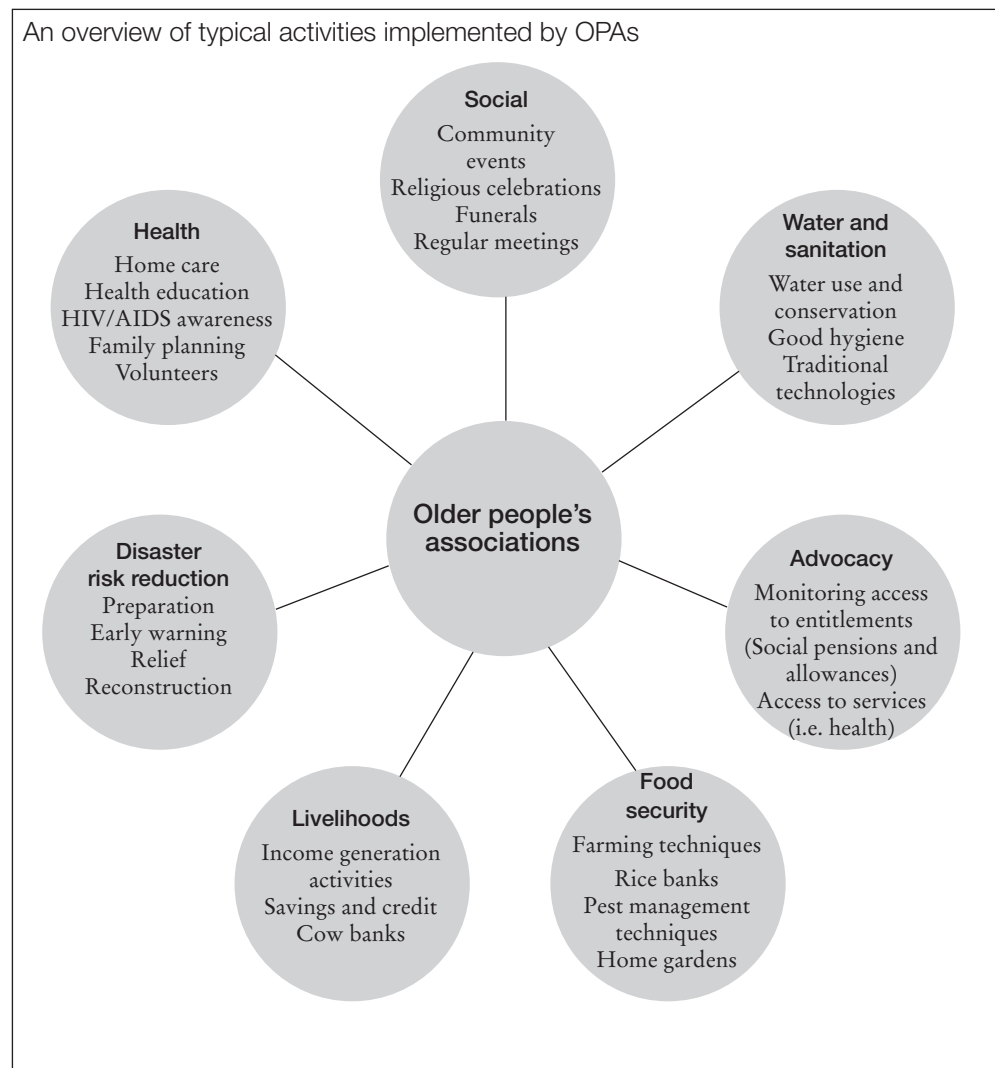**Older people's associations**

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Chapter 2: Older people's associations

An older people's association (OPA) is a community-based group of older people working together to improve the situation of older people and the community they live in. OPAs benefit older people by:

- promoting the dignity and quality of life of older people in their communities
- increasing older peoples' skills and confidence to plan and implement activities that benefit themselves, their families and their communities
- reducing older people's sense of isolation by providing opportunities to meet and socialise regularly and encouraging more active members to support more vulnerable members
- promoting community cohesion through organising activities and events which involve different age-groups
- increasing older people's visibility as productive and active members in their communities.

OPAs vary in their size and focus of work depending on the context of their communities. The diagram below gives an overview of the various types of activities undertaken by these organisations. OPAs typically implement a combination of these activities depending on the priorities identified by older people.

An overview of typical activities implemented by OPAs

Social
Community events
Religious celebrations
Funerals
Regular meetings

Health
Home care
Health education
HIV/AIDS awareness
Family planning
Volunteers

Water and sanitation
Water use and conservation
Good hygiene
Traditional technologies

Older people's associations

Disaster risk reduction
Preparation
Early warning
Relief
Reconstruction

Advocacy
Monitoring access to entitlements
(Social pensions and allowances)
Access to services
(i.e. health)

Livelihoods
Income generation activities
Savings and credit
Cow banks

Food security
Farming techniques
Rice banks
Pest management techniques
Home gardens

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Some OPAs have been established as part of community development or post-emergency reconstruction programmes. In some countries, OPAs are promoted by governments and are widespread. In the Asia/Pacific region network, there are several models of OPAs:

- *Community development*: OPAs in Cambodia (Battambang and Banteay Meanchey), China (Shaanxi, Sichuan and Hunan), India (Rajasthan), Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam have been organised around community development and health activities.

- *Post-emergency*: OPAs in Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), India (Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala), Indonesia (Banda Aceh) and Sri Lanka have been organised as a way in which community-led post-emergency reconstruction activities can be implemented.

- *Nationally promoted*: In China, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, there are officially promoted OPAs that can rapidly increase their capacity for self-management and implementation of community development activities.

- *Monitoring entitlements*: OPAs in Bangladesh (Pirojpur, Gazipur, Cox's Bazar, Dhaka, Munshiganj and Narshingdi) have been organised around monitoring and gaining access to specific government entitlements for older people.

OPAs are effective mechanisms through which older people can prepare for and respond to disasters within their communities. Disasters are disruptive and community structures are often placed under serious strain as communities attempt to cope with disruptions. An OPA which incorporates disaster preparedness planning into its activities is in a strong position to provide leadership and/or support in responding to a disaster event.

Annexes 1-4 provide information on forming OPAs and examples of the rules and regulations, typical roles and responsibilities of OPA leaders and members, and meeting record formats.

2.1 Reasons to work through older people and OPAs in disaster risk reduction

- Older people, through their experiences and familiarity with their communities, are well placed to identify the needs and vulnerabilities of their families and neighbours, including the most vulnerable older people, as part of disaster preparedness planning.

- The number of older people in the world as a proportion of the overall population is increasing. In disasters, older people's needs differ to other age groups and should be taken into consideration in disaster preparedness plans.

- Communities in developing countries are more vulnerable to natural disasters, with the poorest tending to live in the most hazard prone areas. As older people tend to be amongst the poorest and most vulnerable groups in society, they are most likely to be affected by disasters.[3]

- Older people are respected sources of knowledge in their communities, providing information on traditional coping mechanisms and/or their experiences of previous disasters, which is invaluable as part of preparedness planning.

- Active older people often provide support as carers in their communities. Where adult children are incapacitated or unavailable, older people often assume responsibility for the wellbeing of their grandchildren. Including

> OPAs are
> effective
> mechanisms
> through which
> older people
> can prepare for
> and respond
> to disasters
> within their
> communities.

[3] Jo Wells (December 2005), *Protecting and assisting older people in emergencies*, HPN Network Paper Number 53, ODI, London, p1

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older people in emergency response and long-term development programmes improves their ability to provide better care and gives them a sense of security.

- Participation in OPAs has contributed to increased confidence amongst older people, particularly older women. Where OPAs are already established, they have demonstrated their ability to plan and lead appropriate responses to disasters using the skills acquired. These activities benefit both vulnerable older people and their communities.

- Older people, through OPAs, have worked successfully in promoting and responding to the specific needs of vulnerable older people affected by disasters.

- Involving older people in planning processes will result in the inclusion of older people in emergency responses, thus mainstreaming ageing in disaster risk reduction plans and activities.

- Involving older people in DRR is also related to government commitments made in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing ('Issue 8: Emergency situations').

2.2 Assessing OPA capacity

Organisations working with OPAs should assess their capacity at regular intervals, providing follow-up training where necessary.

- In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, HelpAge India conducts capacity assessments of OPAs every six months. OPAs are graded according to specific criteria, and shortcomings are analysed with alternatives suggested to the OPA committee.

Suggested criteria for assessing OPA strength

- Number of regular members and number of new members
- Frequency of meetings, regular attendance and number of women attending meetings
- Records/minutes (accurate, regular)
- Regular nomination and election of office bearers (process)
- Management and implementation of specific activities (accurate and regular record keeping, repayments, management of savings/credit, rice, cow or seed banks)
- Observation of communication at meetings
- Number of training sessions on general management (management, leadership, record keeping, fundraising)
- Number of training sessions on specific activities (rice and cow banks, community funds, savings groups)
- Examples of OPAs taking the initiative to plan and implement activities within their communities
- OPA fundraising capacity and successes
- Inclusion of older people through OPAs in local government consultations

2.3 Roles and responsibilities of organisations working with older people[4]

HAI and organisations working with older people have a vital role to play in establishing and strengthening OPAs. Within the context of emergencies and long-term development, governments and organisations working with older people through OPAs should lobby for the inclusion of older people in disaster risk reduction and emergency response programmes. The governments and organisations should:

- Be aware of the specific needs and capacities of older people and ways of working with them.
- Be responsive to older people and/or OPAs approaching them for support.
- Ensure, where relevant, that OPAs incorporate disaster risk reduction into their activities and plans.
- Work with OPA members to identify areas of weakness and provide training to strengthen capacities and confidence.
- Organise and facilitate exchange visits to successful OPAs.
- Work with active older people and community members to assess community risk and vulnerability to hazards, and plan appropriate mitigation and relief response actions.
- Work with OPA members to strengthen their confidence and skills to communicate with local government and other relevant agencies.
- Work with OPAs to locate and secure funding support for OPA activities.
- In emergencies, provide support for the procurement of items appropriate for older people in relief packages.
- In emergencies, ask for the support of OPAs to deliver relief packages to the most vulnerable community members.
- In emergencies, facilitate communication between OPAs and local government/relief agencies.
- Post-emergency, facilitate OPA input into community-wide reconstruction programmes.

Organisations working with older people tend to gain entry to communities through focused projects – for example, post-disaster reconstruction or livelihoods strengthening and community development. It is important, however, to ensure continuity in providing advice and guidance to OPAs, especially once funding support is withdrawn at the end of a project.

> **Long-term partnerships**
>
> - **In Moheshkali, Bangladesh:** OPAs organised after a disaster have developed a successful savings and credit fund with the support of local NGO Resource Integration Centre (RIC), and now provide funding for one RIC staff member based in Moheshkali community.
>
> - **In Rajasthan:** local NGO Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS) maintains close links with OPAs even after project related funding has ended, providing support within the community and facilitating links between government and OPAs so that OPA members are able to confidently express their needs to government representatives.

Network partners emphasise the importance of continuity in providing advice and guidance to OPAs especially once funding support is withdrawn at the end of a project.

[4] For further information on training sessions for organisations working with or interested in working with older people, please contact HelpAge International's Asia/Pacific Regional Development Centre on hai@helpageasia.org

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**Age-friendly information
gathering**

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Where older
people will
be involved
in information
collection, tools
need to be easy
to use so that
OPA members
can collect
and manage
information
without difficulty.

Chapter 3: Age-friendly information gathering

Older people, with support from the organisations working with them, should collect information on the types and frequency of hazards as well as vulnerabilities and capacities in their communities.

Training older people to collect and manage information:

- gives older people ownership of information on their communities
- gives older people confidence to identify and prioritise problems and plan appropriate responses
- gives older people the ability to contribute to disaster risk reduction plans and activities managed by local leaders/organisations
- ensures that data on community vulnerabilities and capacities is disaggregated by age.

Where OPAs are already established, it is likely that some information collection exercise – for example, a baseline survey, has already taken place to enable the monitoring of impact over the course of the project. Therefore, organisations working with OPAs should continue to support OPAs to ensure that information collected on vulnerability to hazards and community capacities during emergencies builds on existing community level information.

Maintaining records on vulnerable older people in Bangladesh

RIC conducted a village mapping exercise with older people as part of the development of an OPA in Moheshkali Union in Cox's Bazar District. OPA members were ranked by poverty and health, with the information updated annually by OPA members and RIC community workers. When the community was struck by a cyclone, the OPA used this information to identify the most vulnerable people (based on poverty, poor health and mobility) who needed to be targeted for urgent assistance.

3.1 A selection of general participatory tools[5] for information gathering

Collecting information on communities' vulnerabilities and experience of hazards allows organisations working with older people and OPAs to map information on the community, and contribute to local community development and disaster preparedness plans.

Some information – such as, where older people live, which ones are disabled or bed-ridden – can be collected easily by older people themselves. Other types of information – for example, detailed socio-economic or health surveys – may be more complex to conduct and will need to be led by community workers with input from older people and other key community groups.

Where older people will be involved in information collection, tools need to be easy to use so that OPA members can collect and manage information without difficulty. In many countries, older people, particularly older women, are likely to have lower levels of literacy. In such circumstances, visual tools may be more user-friendly. In addition, older people can work with younger community members to collect information on their communities.

The following is a list of typical participatory tools used to collect information about their communities:

[5] For detailed list of participatory tools and techniques, please refer to *Participatory research with older people: a sourcebook* HelpAge International, 2002; and *Establishing and working with Older People's Associations in Cambodia: a practical guideline* HelpAge International, 2007

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are discussions based on a set of questions. They can take place with individuals, small groups (12-15) and key informants (i.e. local leaders, health workers).

Small group discussions can be organised so that different group views are heard – for example, in communities where men and women tend not to mix or where women are more reluctant to speak in public, small group discussions with older women can be separate to those with older men to ensure that older women are able to express their views and identify their priorities clearly.

Oral traditions and stories

Older people often have an important role in raising younger people and teaching them about the history and traditions of the community. In some cases, traditional stories or songs could contain information on the types of past events and ways communities coped with hazards, which can be used when developing community disaster preparedness plan.

> **Older people and traditional knowledge**
>
> In Rajasthan, India, GRAVIS noted that older people have invaluable knowledge on traditional water harvesting technologies. 'Storing every drop of rain is the best option that we have to survive in this desert,' says a 75 year old person.
>
> Village elders, living in communities experiencing chronic drought, were credited with the development of simple but effective structures such as the Khadin (dyke), Taanka (underground water storage tank), Beri (shallow percolation well) and Naadi (community pond) – structures which are still in use today. A Khadin helps retain rainwater in agricultural lands and thus increases crop productivity. A Taanka stores rainwater and provides a source of drinking water for humans and cattle for many months. All these traditional technologies have played a very important role in the survival of drought-impacted communities in the Thar – the world's most populated desert.

Mapping

Maps are an important tool that enable people to work together to represent their communities. Community workers can work with older people and other community members to map the community's resources (i.e. homes, schools, village meeting places, health centres, religious buildings, wells, rivers), land use, roads, areas prone to hazards, homes of vulnerable community members, safe areas (i.e. higher ground) and the location of resources in the event of an emergency.

> **Social mapping in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, India**
>
> As part of its tsunami response programme in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, HelpAge India has produced a detailed social map of all the villages in which it works. Data, collected through village surveys and individual interviews, is represented visually in a series of maps available on CD-ROM. The maps show each house, the type of house (brick, thatch), houses with older people, beneficiary houses and type of activity (i.e. livestock, artisan). Clicking on individual houses gives details of the older person living in that house, including information on name, age, house type, dependants, health issues, and details of their livelihoods activity as supported by the project. Each social map is also available at village level on a 12 x 8 foot canvas.

In Rajasthan, India, GRAVIS noted that older people have much invaluable knowledge on traditional water harvesting technologies.

'Storing every drop of rain is the best option that we have to survive in this desert,' says a 75 year old person.

Transect walks

A transect walk is a guided walk through a community with community members. It helps to provide context to other tools such as mapping and a greater understanding of the community.

Seasonal calendars, timelines and trend analysis

Older people, through their age and experience, can be a good source of information on their communities. Seasonal calendars generate discussion on seasonal patterns/events/changes across a time period. A seasonal calendar can show when regular events – such as planting and harvesting, and hazard events like flooding – take place in communities. Other factors which can be plotted include food shortages, cash flow and water shortages.

Understanding flood patterns in the Thar: Rajasthan, India

In Rajasthan, desert communities used to dealing with chronic water shortages experienced a sudden and devastating episode of flooding in August 2006. As a result, GRAVIS is working with older people, to conduct a research study on the patterns of flooding over time in these desert communities, so as to increase understanding on the timing of events and which communities may be affected. This information will then be fed into the community's flood preparedness planning activities.

Timelines and trend analysis allow community workers to work with older people to identify the frequency and intensity of hazard events, how things have changed over time and whether there are relationships between different factors, such as changing land use and increased flooding.

Wellbeing ranking in practice in Southern India

HelpAge India and local grassroots NGOs work with OPA members to rank households according to wellbeing using leaves to represent different categories of wellbeing. Green leaves represent a household which is financially secure, where household members have enough to eat, high social status and enough wealth to give loans. Conversely, dry/brown leaves represent households with no or low income, where household members have a low social status, are sick or unable to work, lack support from family members, and have to beg. Working in small groups, community members are asked to define what each leaf represents – for example, owns a cow/land – then rank other households.

Ranking (hazards, wealth/wellbeing, health, etc.)

Ranking helps communities develop priorities for action – for example, hazard ranking helps community members identify which hazards are the most disruptive within their communities and then plan actions to minimise or respond to those specific hazards.

Wealth or wellbeing ranking helps community members differentiate between households which are better-off from households which are less well-off. Community workers can work with OPAs to identify relevant criteria that can be used to classify households. OPAs can use ranking to identify the poorest households and through this identify reasons for poverty – for example, age, mobility, widowhood – and potential beneficiaries of activities.

Livelihood analysis

Livelihood analysis reveals information about a household's sources of income (cash/non-cash) and expenditure. It also helps identify how household members use resources – for example, older men and younger men may have different types of incomes and expenditures, while belonging to the same household. It can also help increase understanding on how resources are used and shared between different household members – for example, older women as carers tend to invest any income they gain in their families, especially their grandchildren's education.

Venn diagrams

Venn diagrams or flow diagrams help to visually represent different actors and the relationships between them – for example, do older men and women have access to local disaster management committees and is there a difference in the level of access? Diagrams can help groups identify the causes and effects of events and activities on people's lives.

Checklists (quick assessments)

Checklists (Annexes 5-6) enable rapid assessments within communities in the event of a disaster. Developing a checklist with community members, including older people, gives OPA members the capacity to rapidly assess the situation and identify the most vulnerable or badly affected community members and their immediate needs. This information can be used by OPAs to prepare community specific responses and can be shared with key agencies as part of requests for support.

3.2 Age-sensitive community based assessments in preparedness and relief responses

Assessing risk of hazards

Purpose: To identify and prioritise hazards that communities face

Suggested tools:

- Hazard map
- Hazard ranking
- Seasonal calendar/historical time line/trend analysis
- Semi-structured interviews

Key questions include:

- What are the main types of hazards in this community?
- Which hazards happen regularly?
- Is the hazard getting worse, are there some hazards which are taking place more regularly or for a longer period of time or affecting more people – for example, drought and climate change?
- Which hazard has had the biggest impact on the community? What happened?
- Is the hazard quick, does it take a long time or is it around most of the time (rapid on-set, slow on-set or chronic)?
- Can you tell when a hazard is going to happen?
- Which areas of the settlement are most vulnerable to the hazard?

Community workers can work with older people and other community members to identify and prioritise hazards. Older people in particular will be valuable

Rajasthan floods in 2006

sources of information about past events and areas in communities which have been consistently affected. Older people can also provide information on changes in hazard frequency within their communities over a period of time.

Organisations can supplement this information using data on hazards provided by government and other country-specific resources.

Assessing community vulnerability

Purpose: To identify the most vulnerable community members – for example, older people, young children, disabled, people with chronic health problems, limited or no assets, proximity to hazards and so on, in relation to identified hazards.

Suggested tools:

- Livelihood analysis
- Ranking (wellbeing/wealth)
- Risk map (showing areas of risk in combination with hazard map)
- Seasonal calendar (cash flow, food shortages, etc.)
- Semi-structured interviews
- Socio-economic surveys

Older people's vulnerabilities

Older people have specific vulnerabilities which need to be taken into consideration during community vulnerability assessments. Some of the key criteria used by HAI to identify the most vulnerable people within older populations are:

- Older women and men who are isolated because they live alone or without family support. Examples include widows, those without children or those whose family members have been killed or have been displaced from the home area.
- Older people, especially women, who provide care to grandchildren and orphans.
- Older people with health difficulties. Examples include chronic illnesses, digestion, eyesight or mental health problems.
- Older people with mobility problems. Examples include being unable to move without the aid of a stick, or being able to move only very limited distances therefore unable to access water points or central relief distribution points.
- Older people who have only limited literacy.
- Older people without the documentation – for example, birth or marriage certificates and ration cards – to prove ownership or rights to assets, including land.
- The 'oldest-old' age group (more likely to be women than men)

Source: Jo Wells, Protecting and assisting older people in emergencies, ODI, 2005, p5

Assessing community capacities

Purpose: To identify the strengths within a community that would help them cope better with hazards.

Suggested tools:

- Mapping (resources, safe areas)
- Ranking (wellbeing/wealth)
- Venn diagrams (linkages)
- Transect walks
- Semi-structured interviews.

Factors contributing to the capacity of communities to cope include:

- *economic*: savings, village funds, stockpiles, assets which can be sold, assets in safe places

- *social*: family networks, social cohesion, access to education
- *cultural*: cohesion/unity
- *institutional*: well stocked and managed health facilities which are accessible, knowledge and awareness of age related illnesses/disabilities
- *political*: local leader and government commitments and action plans on disaster mitigation and emergency response, coordination, stability
- *geographical*: safe spaces, homes built in safe areas.

Organisations can work with OPAs to identify the roles active older people can play in the event of a disaster. Questions that can be asked to identify community capacities include:

- Which older people are active and able to take a role in coordinating activities?
- What experiences do older people have of specific hazards which can help a community better prepare for a disaster?
- Are there existing disaster management plans or committees that older people can get involved in or contribute to?
- What are the activities that are taking place which can contribute to reducing vulnerability and how can older people be involved?

OPA led surveys in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, RIC has trained OPA members on how to collect information through surveys. The simple survey format includes information such as name, age, village and location, what they have lost in the flood, livelihood status and what support they can access – for example, affluent relatives. Following a disaster, OPA emergency sub-committee members go from house to house to assess damage and identify the most badly affected households and this information is given to local government disaster committee representatives and organisations providing relief assistance.

Rapid assessments

Purpose: To identify vulnerable individuals immediately following a disaster

Suggested tools:

- Checklists and rapid questionnaires (Annexes 5-6)
- Maps

Where events have not displaced entire communities, an OPA can use a checklist to collect information on vulnerable individuals within their communities immediately after the event occurs. These rapid assessments can build on information collected earlier through – for example, vulnerability assessments.

OPA members can also provide support to relief organisations where communities have been displaced and relocated in camps.

Depending on the hazards identified in communities, OPA checklists planned beforehand could include information on:

- Name, sex and age
- Civil status
- Access to support from family or neighbours
- Dependents (older people's status and responsibilities as carers)
- Health status (chronic conditions, mobility, disability)
- House status (temporary, permanent, destroyed)
- Level of income
- Access to basic needs (water, shelter, food, cooking facilities, change of clothes)

This information can feed into community disaster management committee planning and coordination, and government and other agency relief responses for the community.

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Chapter 4: Planning age-friendly responses

Community based disaster planning and preparedness activities should be an integrated part of long-term development programmes. Activities which contribute to reducing vulnerability will also contribute to a community's ability to prepare for and cope with a hazard. Information gathered by older people and organisations working with them should be used to inform OPA plans of action and feed into community level disaster preparedness plans.

4.1 Age-friendly community disaster preparedness plans

Organisations working with OPAs should identify opportunities for them to contribute to local disaster preparedness plans. This will ensure that older people and their vulnerabilities and capacities are incorporated and that they have a role to play in community disaster preparedness planning and activities.

In communities without a disaster preparedness plan, older people through OPAs can take the lead in developing a plan, with input from local leaders and key groups.

An age-friendly community disaster preparedness plan should:

- Include OPAs so that they can coordinate activities with local government and other agencies' disaster management committees.

- Take into account and address the specific issues facing vulnerable groups (including older people, young children, pregnant women, disabled people, people who are sick, etc.)

- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of various actors within the community, including older people.

- Clearly outline action to be undertaken after an early warning and/or the occurrence of an event.

OPA emergency sub-committees should also develop plans of action in the event of a disaster, which link into community disaster preparedness plans.

Suggested steps taken by an OPA following an early warning

Step 1: The emergency sub-committee and OPA leaders should meet to assess the situation and agree on appropriate action.

Step 2: If an evacuation is necessary, the OPA leaders should coordinate active OPA members and younger community members to help with the evacuation of vulnerable community members.

Step 3: Following the event, the OPA leaders should regroup and identify the most vulnerable people affected by the event.

Step 4: The OPA leaders should organise appropriate relief assistance from within the community.

Step 5: OPA leaders should contact local government agencies, NGOs, and other relevant relief agencies to provide information on affected community members and help coordinate assistance to vulnerable groups, including older people.

Integrating OPA and local government disaster preparedness plans

Moheshkali – a coastal area in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh – is highly susceptible to cyclones. Following one particularly devastating cyclone in 1991, the government of Bangladesh built cyclone shelters and established a simple early warning system. A radio signal is sent to villages, and identified community members use a megaphone to warn of the impending cyclone.

RIC established an OPA in Moheshkali as part of its post-cyclone reconstruction project. In coordination with the government early warning system, RIC and the OPA developed a plan of action to respond to future cyclones. When the community receives a cyclone warning, an emergency meeting is held by the OPA. If the cyclone is imminent, the OPA's emergency sub-committee decides which shelter to go to and identifies vulnerable older people who will need assistance to get to those shelters. OPA members then secure supplies (i.e. food), assist vulnerable members to shelters, and then seek shelter themselves. After the cyclone, the OPA emergency sub-committee assesses cyclone damage (with a special focus on older people), and then plans action to assist vulnerable community members. RIC staff provide advice and support for their activities as required.

4.2 Age-friendly community mechanisms to mitigate the impact of disasters

OPAs can develop and implement a variety of activities aimed at reducing vulnerability and increasing the ability to cope with a disaster. This section outlines a selection:

OPA Funds

In a number of countries, HAI network partners have worked with OPAs to develop funds which are used to support both older people specific and community-wide activities, depending on the identified need. Money for the funds is raised from a variety of sources. Use of the funds vary depending on the priorities of the OPA, which may support specific livelihoods and health related activities, savings and credit, support for funerals and religious/social events and emergencies.

Examples of different types of OPA funds

Rajasthan, India: a village fund managed by OPAs

In Rajasthan, GRAVIS works with new OPAs to develop and manage a Village Fund (Gram Kosh). The Fund is community focused and can be used to strengthen the OPA, provide support to OPA activities, provide capital for small businesses/cottage industries, and act as a reserve fund to be used in times of need. The money for the Village Fund is collected from a variety of sources, including membership fees and village events.

Cambodia: an OPA social fund

In Cambodia, OPAs have established a social fund which is used to finance proper funerals for OPA members and family members who lack the resources to pay for this. This fund is very important in alleviating one of the worries expressed by many older people living on their own – that of not being able to pay for a proper funeral.

Bangladesh: an OPA savings fund

In Bangladesh, Porbin Milon Dandro OPA members affected by the 1997 cyclone were very dependent on relief agencies for their immediate relief needs and subsequent rehabilitation. As part of the reconstruction process, RIC worked with the OPA to create a Savings Fund where members contribute one or two taka (US$0.014) on a weekly basis. This money can be distributed according to priority needs following an emergency. At present the OPA has saved 57,000 taka (US$800).

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Rice banks

In some countries, OPAs have established rice banks as a way to reduce food insecurity. Older people and their families can borrow rice at low interest rates both as seed stock and to feed their families during periods of rice shortage. Rice is paid back with interest following a harvest.

Rice banks in Cambodia

In Cambodia, rice banks are important in achieving food security as most families experience rice shortages over the year. OPA members contribute a set amount of rice to the bank which is supplemented by a one-off donation from HAI. Members are allowed to borrow rice seed stock at an interest rate of 30 percent, which is much lower than rates charged by private lenders. This interest is used to support especially vulnerable older people. As part of the rice bank regulations, an OPA is required to retain a set amount to meet the urgent needs of very vulnerable households at times of shortage. The amount is determined by OPA members themselves.

Community insurance schemes

With the increase in disaster incidence in the Asia/Pacific region, HAI and network partners are examining access to insurance for poorer households as one way to reduce vulnerability and facilitate recovery. Generally, insurance agencies are less willing and interested in insuring households with comparatively limited assets. In addition, insurance premiums can act as an obstacle for poor households. Organisations working with older people can play an important role in negotiating access to insurance with insurance agencies.

Insurance for poorer households: an example from Rajasthan, India

GRAVIS is working to link desert communities with community based insurance schemes which provide cover for damage to community structures, crops and livestock, so that community members are able to cover their losses. Insurance companies are coming forward to take part in the scheme, however, it remains to be seen whether these companies will deliver when necessary.

In Cambodia, rice banks are important in achieving food security as most families experience rice shortages over the year.

OPAs plan and implement activities to reduce impact of specific hazards

OPAs can identify activities which they can manage with other community members to reduce the impact of specific hazards in their communities. These activities should be part of long-term development programmes.

Drought mitigation activities in the Thar Desert

In the Thar desert, where chronic drought persists, OPAs, with support from GRAVIS, have taken the lead in traditional rainwater harvesting activities. Older people contribute their knowledge and are responsible for the maintenance of rainwater harvesting structures (wells and ponds) in their communities. They also motivate younger people to help dig the wells and ponds. Older people raise awareness on how to conserve limited supplies of water so that communities spend less on purchasing water during times of prolonged drought.

Older people raise awareness in their communities about different types of crops that use less water. This helps maximise the use of a community's limited water resources. Finally, older people are active in maintaining community grazing lands for the benefit of the entire community. OPAs, working with community leaders, earmark land and develop regulations on how to use these lands.

Community volunteers

In addition to OPA emergency sub-committees which identify active members to take responsibility for more vulnerable members, organisations working with older people and OPAs can work to establish an intergenerational group of community volunteers which will ensure the safety of identified vulnerable individuals during hazard events.

> **Community volunteers in Bangladesh**
>
> **RIC provides training for community volunteers (both young and old) before the monsoon season. This group of volunteers is trained in responding to community early warning systems. Volunteers have responsibility for identified vulnerable community members and assist in evacuating these vulnerable members to safe areas – for example, cyclone shelters.**

Chapter 5: Implementing age-friendly responses

Older people's priorities and needs must be addressed in relief processes and activities. According to research conducted by HAI and network partners, older people identified the following as key issues and needs in an emergency[6]:

- *basic needs*: shelter, fuel, clothing, bedding, household items
- *mobility*: incapacity, population movement and transport, disability
- *health*: access to services, appropriate food, nutrition, water, sanitation and psychosocial needs
- *family and social*: separation, dependants, security, changes in social structures, loss of status
- *economic and legal*: income, land, information, documentation, skills training.

Older people's priorities in these areas are often distinct from those of younger people or children. Older people may have chronic health conditions and special nutritional needs which affect their vulnerability and must be taken into consideration by relief agencies. In addition, older people may be left as primary carers for children and need to be included in appropriate livelihoods recovery activities that take into consideration their capacities – for example, older people may not be able to take part in food for work programmes which are physically demanding.

5.1 Age-friendly relief activities and processes

The type of response OPAs themselves can implement is dependent on the scale of the disaster. Where entire communities may be displaced as a result of a large scale disaster, such as a tsunami, existing OPAs may not be able to regroup as they would if the disaster was on a smaller scale – for example, localised flooding. In this situation, organisations working with older people need to coordinate with other agencies relief activities to ensure that older people are included.

Annex 6 gives an example of a Relief Services Checklist that can be utilised in relief camps to assess the provisions made for older people and raise awareness on older people's needs so that they receive appropriate support. Once relief needs are being addressed, organisations can work with the displaced older people population to form OPAs which will be one of the foundations for community reconstruction.

[6] HelpAge International (2000), *Older people in disasters and humanitarian crises: Guidelines for best practice*, p2

Age-friendly relief distributions

Where OPAs have prepared resources (such as rice banks), these can be used to provide initial relief to vulnerable people until contact can be made with government and humanitarian agencies organising assistance.

> **OPA-led relief distribution: an example from Rajasthan, India**
>
> **In 2006, during the monsoon season, the drought-impacted state of Rajasthan experienced a sudden and severe flood. Usually Rajasthan's desert districts receive around 20cm of rain in a year. But in the second half of August 2006, the downpour continued for over 100 hours bringing 50-60cm of water in only four days. In a region where chronic drought and lack of rainfall are prevalent, communities are poorly prepared for floods. Badmer and Jaisalmer districts were the worst affected.**
>
> **In Badmer, where HAI and GRAVIS are implementing a project for the empowerment of older people, the OPAs led the relief efforts through their own initiative. The OPAs, which are just over three years old, set up and ran 4 community kitchens in the worst affected areas using their Village Funds. In addition to providing money, OPA members set up the kitchens, cooked, and served food to community members. The OPA kitchens served food to over 2,200 people from flood affected communities over four days. Later, the OPAs actively collaborated with the GRAVIS team in assessing the damage and organising rehabilitation activities.**

Where communities are displaced and lack the resources to provide relief items from within the community, OPA committees can work with government and non-government organisations to help determine the content of appropriate relief packages and beneficiaries. Organisations working with older people can help secure items for relief packages from local suppliers.

> **OPA-led relief response: an example from Pubail Union, Bangladesh**
>
> **In 2003, HAI and RIC established OPAs in 54 villages in Pubail Union in Gazipur District, Bangladesh. RIC field officers worked with OPAs to build their capacity to collect information on and monitor older people's access to and inclusion in the government's Old Age Allowance scheme. In response to floods in 2004, OPA members used the records collected through their monitoring activities to identify affected vulnerable older people. They then coordinated a community response for these older people through the collection of funds and rice from more affluent community members.**
>
> **In addition, OPA members coordinating the emergency response collected and submitted a list of affected vulnerable older people and their needs to RIC, who in turn contacted HAI to help identify funding. With funding support, OPA members were able to commence the immediate distribution of relief packages, saving valuable time which RIC would otherwise have spent conducting assessments and identifying beneficiaries. The OPA and RIC then worked together to manage and distribute relief packages in three separate venues in Pubail district. In each location, an OPA leader had a significant role in managing the distribution of packages.**

Organisations working with older people should ensure that relief distributions are accessible to older people. One of the main issues identified by older people during the tsunami relief effort was their limited access to and awareness of distributions. Older people were unable to compete in queues for relief packages. In some cases, aid agencies assumed that family members or specialist agencies would look after older people. Additionally, older people's ability to digest certain types of food was not taken into consideration when preparing food packages.

Age-sensitive relief distribution: an example from Cuddalore, Tamil Nadu

Following the 2004 tsunami, HelpAge India used preliminary rapid assessments to identify affected vulnerable older people and their families. Active older people worked with HelpAge India to identify vulnerable older people to receive relief packages. They distributed tokens and clearly indicated a location and time for the planned distribution. The distribution was organised in a hall, where older people were able to sit while waiting. Only those with tokens were admitted, in many cases with a family member to help them carry their relief package. Once a token number was called, the older person was able to go up to collect their package. Using this approach, older people were able to access relief, without the chaos associated with distributions at the time.

Emotional support

OPAs, through their meetings, home visits and social events are sources of support and strength for otherwise isolated older people. Older women in particular, often provide comfort and mutual support to other older people and community members affected by disaster events.

In some cases, funds for OPAs can be used to organise pilgrimages for affected families to make peace with their losses. Following the 2004 tsunami, HAI provided support to older people in Sri Lanka to undertake a pilgrimage. Older people felt more at peace and able to fulfil their commitments to the family members they had lost.

5.2 Age-sensitive reconstruction and long-term development programmes

Older people's priorities, vulnerabilities and capacities must be incorporated into any community development programme so that they are better prepared for future hazard events. Where OPAs have not previously existed, HAI and network partners have established OPAs in order to plan and implement community reconstruction/long-term development programmes. Where OPAs do exist, older people are already in a strong position to contribute to, lead or participate in community development and reconstruction processes.

Reconstruction and long-term development to reduce older people's vulnerabilities: examples from Asia

India

In Rajasthan, GRAVIS is working with the local government health department to develop a cadre of health workers specialising in geriatric care who will be able to identify and address the specific health problems of older people.

In tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, HelpAge India has worked with local NGO partners to establish OPAs which plan and implement activities in their communities. Destitute older people in particular have benefited, as OPA activities provide a previously unavailable source of support to meet their daily requirements. HelpAge India is also working with OPAs to establish federations which give older people greater voice and visibility in their communities.

Indonesia

As part of its tsunami reconstruction programme in Indonesia, HAI is working with partners to advocate for the redevelopment of an age-friendly health system. This means that health staff will be in a better position to respond to age-related health problems and take preventative action through primary health care activities. Age-friendly refers to access to health as well as an awareness of the specific health conditions that older people can face.

Vietnam

In the provinces of Tien Giang, Phu Yen and Quang Binh provinces in Vietnam, HAI and the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) established OPAs for women as part of post-emergency reconstruction activities. The OPAs aim to empower older women, as a very vulnerable group, to address their own economic, health and social activities. Older women have been trained in planning and implementing income generation activities, microcredit and developing savings, and providing community care for vulnerable older women. As a result, older women have gained confidence to plan and manage their own income generation activities and participate in their communities. In addition, communities have a more positive attitude towards older women.

Chapter 6: Networking and advocacy

Networking and advocacy activities can be initiated by both OPAs and organisations working with older people. Networking and advocacy activities:

- raise awareness on older people and their specific vulnerabilities and capacities during emergencies
- generate interest about the benefits of being organised into OPAs
- enable OPAs to link up with government and other agencies responsible for long-term development and emergency response programmes.

6.1 Networking with older people and OPAs from other communities

Older people themselves are most effective at communicating the benefits of belonging to an OPA. When older people see successful OPA-led activities, it increases confidence in their ability to implement similar activities in their own communities.

HAI and network partners regularly facilitate networking and learning visits between OPAs in different areas and/or countries. These visits allow OPA members from different communities to discuss and learn from each other's experiences. In many HAI and network partner projects, representatives from well-established OPAs are often central to establishing OPAs in new communities.

OPAs also organise events to which older people from neighbouring communities are invited. In a number of cases, older people from neighbouring communities without OPAs have approached HAI and network partners to request support to set up OPAs in their own communities. In some instances, older people from neighbouring communities have set up their own OPAs.

Community networking between OPAs: examples from Asia

Bangladesh

Following the success of OPAs in monitoring and gaining access to Old Age Allowances and Widow's Allowances for vulnerable older people, RIC has been approached by older people in neighbouring villages, requesting support to set up OPAs. Specific training requests have focused on how to speak effectively to local leaders at various levels.

Cambodia

OPAs from different villages meet regularly with strong informal networking and support between OPAs. In addition, a number of older people from neighbouring villages have organised themselves into OPAs after seeing the positive changes in the lives of older people in villages with active OPAs.

6.2 Networking with local leaders, governments departments and agencies involved in disaster risk reduction

Organisations working with older people should provide training and support for older people to confidently present their priorities and concerns to local leaders, government departments and other agencies. In a number of cases, local leaders have started to recognise that older people are also an important source of votes and thus are more attentive to the needs and priorities expressed by them.

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Older people should also be encouraged to participate in relevant conferences and meetings at local, regional and national level to increase their visibility. Older people can use these meetings to share their experiences and suggest ways in which older people can be successfully included in community disaster preparedness and reconstruction/long-term development activities.

During emergencies, organisations working with older people should continue to advocate for the inclusion of older people with government and other agencies providing relief. In community reconstruction activities, organisations working with older people and OPAs should aim to meet regularly with local leaders and government departments to raise awareness on older people's priorities and potential contribution.

Organisations working with older people can also provide staff on secondment to key agencies operating disaster relief and planning programmes with the aim that these staff members contribute to agency programmes and plans so that they are age-friendly.

OPAs networking with local leaders, government departments and other agencies: examples from Asia

Bangladesh

RIC trained older people to monitor access to and delivery of entitlements from the government (Old Age Allowance and Widow's Allowance). RIC also provided training on how to present findings to local leaders. As a result, local leaders now invite OPA members to collect and submit updated lists of vulnerable older people who will benefit from these government entitlements. Older people are also invited to participate in community meetings.

Cambodia

Many OPAs build links with their local health centre staff to understand what services are available and to what they are entitled. Some OPAs monitor the services they get from the health centres and provide feedback to their Commune Councils and health centres in order to improve the service provided. In addition, OPAs regularly link up with local leaders and with district departments through training activities, meetings and events.

India

HelpAge India is working with OPAs in Tamil Nadu and Kerala to develop Village Elders Care Committees, which bring together village leaders, religious leaders, local NGO representatives, representatives from common interest groups and OPA representatives. The purpose of Village Elders Care Committees is to highlight older people's issues and promote the mainstreaming of ageing into village community decision making processes and activities.

Indonesia

HAI and network partners in Banda Aceh are working to increase community capacity to provide age-friendly and old-age specific health services as part of the tsunami reconstruction effort. Activities include training and education packages for community health volunteers, health administrators and practitioners, as well as capacity building to increase community outreach for vulnerable older people (with limited mobility). HAI and network partners are also working to develop a toolkit on older people's health needs in emergencies.

Glossary of terms[7]

Disasters

A disaster occurs when the impact of a hazard on a society (i.e. causing death, injury, loss of property and livelihoods) overwhelms that society's ability to cope. Vulnerability contributes to a society's ability to cope.

Disasters can vary in scale and intensity (localised, country-specific, regional), they can be:

- *slow onset*: build up over time and/or chronic condition – for example, food shortages/famine, drought
- *seasonal*: occur on a seasonal basis – for example, cyclones, typhoons, drought
- *rapid onset*: occur suddenly with little or no warning – for example, earthquake, landslides, tsunami
- *man-made*: occur as a result of human processes/actions – for example, oil spills, environmental degradation and drought, evictions, political instability, conflict, population displacement.

Disaster risk reduction

The components of disaster risk reduction can be categorised as follows:

- preparedness
- mitigation
- relief
- reconstruction.

Social safety nets and an awareness of the impact of climate change on communities are also important factors to consider in disaster risk reduction strategies.

Preparedness refers to activities focused on finding out more information about the community, the hazards it faces, its vulnerabilities and vulnerable groups and the capacities within that community. Components of preparedness include:

- *assessments*: collecting information on hazards, vulnerabilities, vulnerable groups and capacities
- *planning*: disaster preparedness plans, stockpiles of food and medical supplies, emergency services and planning, response mechanisms, roles and responsibilities
- *coordination*: coordination with government and local authority planning and strategies
- *early warning systems*: coordination, participation in local level warning processes
- *rehearsals*: evacuation, clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, pre-planned relief responses
- *education and training*: community involvement, awareness of warning systems and evacuation procedures, awareness of key contact points.

Mitigation refers to activities which either prevent or reduce the impact of a hazard.

Relief refers to activities immediately following the occurrence of a disaster. It includes rapid assessments and delivery of relief packages to the most affected communities

Reconstruction[8] refers to assessments, planning and development of long-term development programmes which not only contribute to reconstructing communities but reducing vulnerabilities to future disasters.

7 Definitions drawn from John Twigg (March 2004), *Disaster Risk Reduction: Mitigation and preparedness in development and emergency programming*, HPN Good Practice Review Number 9, ODI, London Chapter 2

8 The term 'rehabilitation' is commonly used in Asia and other parts of the world to express similar processes.

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Hazards

A hazard is a potential threat to humans and their welfare. Hazards can be natural (i.e. earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, drought, cyclones/hurricanes/typhoons, fires, landslides) or induced by human processes (i.e. industrial accidents, evictions/displacement and environmental degradation). Environmental degradation as a result of human behaviour/actions can affect the frequency and intensity of natural hazards (i.e. deforestation, desertification).

Long-term development

Long term development activities should contribute to reducing vulnerability within communities and help a community be better able to cope with hazards. In communities which have high hazard risks, OPAs implementing a variety of long-term development activities, are well placed to contribute to the reduction of vulnerability, particularly vulnerable older people and their families. Adopting a disaster risk reduction approach within long-term development is a logical step.

Vulnerability

The conditions determined by physical, social, economic, political and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards.

A community's ability to respond to or cope with the occurrence of a hazard (natural or man-made) is influenced by its vulnerability. Within a community, some groups will be more vulnerable than others. Understanding vulnerability helps communities prepare for disasters better. Communities can use information on vulnerabilities to plan and implement activities to reduce those vulnerabilities in the event of a hazard and to prepare for hazards. Information on vulnerable community members can also be used to target assistance when a disaster happens.

Annexes

Annex 1:   Step by step guide to forming an OPA

This section outlines the general steps involved in the formation of OPAs, based on HAI and network partner experiences.

Step 1: Community meetings to introduce OPAs

Introductory community meeting(s)

In order to gain community support for the formation of an OPA, organisations working with older people should facilitate community meetings involving key leaders, older people and other influential and respected community members – such as, religious leaders, teachers. OPA members from established OPAs in neighbouring communities can also be invited to participate at these meetings. The timing of community meetings is important to ensure the availability of different groups from within communities. Community meetings should introduce the concept of an OPA, what it involves and what can be achieved through it. Community meetings can also be used to address concerns about OPA effectiveness.

In some countries such as China, Thailand and Vietnam, governments already support the development of groups of older people. Therefore, there may already be established structures which organisations can work with in developing effective and self-managing OPAs.

- *India*: In Rajasthan, local NGO partner Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS) recommends that community meetings to introduce OPAs should be attended by at least 80 percent of villagers, with representation from all sections of the community irrespective of social, economic and cultural status. Potential members are identified at this meeting.

Small group meetings

Community workers can follow up an initial community meeting with smaller group meetings to ensure that the poorest and/or most marginalised older people are able to contribute to the process of establishing an OPA in their communities without feeling intimidated by authority figures.

Community meetings are important fora to identify older people who are interested in joining an OPA

Community workers should facilitate a community meeting for interested older people to form an OPA. Initially, the number of older people expressing an interest in joining OPAs may be low. However, membership grows with demonstrated successes and improvements within the community.

- *India*: In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, HelpAge India established OPAs as part of tsunami reconstruction efforts. Focus group discussions were held with 6-8 older people who were asked to identify 9-12 others interested in establishing an OPA. In addition, community workers use results of vulnerability analyses to help identify vulnerable older people as well. A further meeting is held with the full group where rules and regulations were discussed and agreed.

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Step 2: Collect community level information on older people and vulnerable groups

Community surveys and focus group discussions

Community workers should work closely with older people to collect and map information on their communities in a participatory way. A community level survey will provide information about older people and their families related to vulnerability (income, food security, assets, health status, living with family), sex, marital status (married, single, widowed) and socio-cultural status (caste, tribal group, etc.) Community workers can supplement this information with focus group discussions and government data from local authorities. Information can be used to identify vulnerable older people and community members as potential beneficiaries of OPA activities – for example:

- *India*: HelpAge India uses participatory research assessment techniques to develop databases and social maps of villages in the tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala that are available on CD-ROM for agencies working in each State and as large maps in each village.

- *Bangladesh*: The Resource Integration Centre (RIC) works with OPA members to collect and regularly update information on all older people in their communities. OPAs keep the information on their communities at RIC's local offices.

Step 3: Community meeting to agree structure, rules, regulations and responsibilities

At this meeting, community workers can work with older people to identify the OPAs purpose and objectives, structure and criteria for membership. OPAs can also discuss and agree rules and regulations, roles and responsibilities of leaders/ members, and nominate and elect leaders.

Annexes 2-4 give examples of typical rules and regulations, roles and responsibilities of OPA leaders and members, and meeting recording formats.

OPA members should discuss and agree the structure, purpose and objectives of their organisation

OPA structures vary according to their communities and stated functions. OPAs are more effective where members live close to each other, thus making it easier to meet. Therefore, in dispersed settlements, it will make more sense to form sub-groups of older people who are geographically close to each other. Further, where older women are reluctant to participate in mixed groups, it may be necessary to initially organise women-only sub-groups to encourage participation. In addition, where OPAs implement a variety of different activities such as rice banks or building wells, separate committees may be organised to take responsibility for each type of activity.

In all cases, OPAs and any sub-groups or sub-committees should include both older men and women, and ensure representation of minority/marginalised groups. Some examples from Asia:

- *Bangladesh*: OPA members select older people to form teams monitoring access to and delivery of specific government entitlements for older people (in this case, social welfare payments made by the government to vulnerable older people).

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- *Cambodia*: Where settlements are clustered, each village has one OPA. Within each OPA, sub-committees are elected by members to take responsibility for specific activities such as rice banks, HIV/AIDS education and home care.

- *India*

  - In tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, sub-groups of older people comprising 15-20 members are organised on the basis of homogeneity and proximity to each other. Representatives from each sub-group are selected by older people for the village level OPA.

  - In Rajasthan, where houses of each settlement are dispersed over a large area, sub-groups are organised by household cluster. Each village is divided into two or three clusters of 40-50 households. Older people from each cluster form sub-groups which have 7-11 members. Village level OPAs comprise 10-15 older people selected from sub-group members. Additionally, in more conservative Muslim communities, separate sub-groups are organised for men and women.

OPAs should discuss and agree rules and regulations and roles and responsibilities of members and leaders. Rules and regulations provide the framework for OPAs to manage themselves and should be publicly available to all OPA members. Typical rules and regulations relate to membership criteria and the functioning of the OPA.

OPAs commonly have an elected management committee and a broad membership, from which smaller groups are elected to manage and report on specific activities at community level. OPA members should agree the roles and responsibilities of the leadership teams and members.

Recommended guiding principles for OPAs

- OPAs are non-partisan organisations, open to all community members, regardless of status, ethnicity, political affiliation or religion.
- OPAs will act to serve the interest of older people in the community, with a special focus on those who are very vulnerable (poverty and illness) identified through agreed criteria.
- OPAs will conduct activities which are beneficial to older people and their entire community;
- Decisions on use of funds will be made through majority voting.
- Decision making on activities is participatory and transparent.
- The OPA committee will be responsible for the overall management of the OPA and OPA funds.

Source: Establishing and working with older people's associations in Cambodia, HelpAge International (2007)

OPAs should agree on membership criteria and circumstances where membership may be terminated. Membership criteria vary according to the specific conditions in each community – for example:

- *Cambodia*: new OPAs initially start up with 15-20 members and expand as the impact of OPA activities become apparent and older people express interest in joining. OPA membership can vary from 30-100 members.

- *China*: OPAs decide whether there are limits to membership (25 members) or whether membership is open to all those over 55.

- *India*
  - OPAs in Rajasthan have an age limit of 60 and above, whereas OPAs in Cambodia have an age limit of 55.
  - In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, OPA membership in sub-groups has been limited to a maximum of 20 members. Each village can have several OPA sub-groups, and representatives are elected to participate in a village level OPA.

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OPAs should elect leaders from within their membership with representation from marginalised groups

Typically, an OPA has a leadership body comprising of a President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. Office bearers are elected by OPA members and hold their post for a set period of time.

OPA management committees and membership should ideally include representation from marginalised groups such as older women and older people with low social status (i.e. caste, religion, ethnicity) or low economic status (limited number of assets).

- *Bangladesh*: RIC works with OPA groups to ensure a minimum representation of older women in monitoring teams to help foster female participation and build confidence amongst older women.

- *India*

  - In Rajasthan, GRAVIS emphasises the need for some leaders to represent marginalised groups – for example, the dalits who are the lowest strata of the caste system.

  - In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, OPA members come from groups with low economic or social status and tend to elect the most educated older people from within their membership as leaders so that they are able to interact confidently with external organisations, including the government.

OPA registration with relevant government Ministry

Where appropriate, OPAs should be registered with relevant Ministries to help establish links with local representatives and to increase their visibility, status and access to funding

Step 4: Achieving sustainability

Training and capacity building

A strong OPA is self-managing and has the confidence to initiate activities. Development organisations need to work closely with OPAs to increase older people's capacity to manage their OPA. Training and capacity building activities should focus on strengthening OPA management, effectiveness and activity-specific skills.

OPA leaders and sub-committee leaders should receive training on leadership, good governance, regular and accurate record keeping, maintaining membership lists and book keeping.

- *Bangladesh*: RIC conducts separate leadership training for older women, which has resulted in increased confidence and participation of older women in community development activities, as well as changes in how they are treated within their communities by local leaders.

- *India*: OPAs in Tamil Nadu and Kerala participated in exchange visits to Women's Self Help Groups involved in micro-finance and advocacy activities.

- *Asia*: HAI has facilitated several exchange visits (in-country and between countries) for network partners and members of OPAs to promote learning and networking between new and old OPAs and network partners.

OPA sub-committees responsible for specific activities should receive training related to those activities. Other community members can be invited to participate where they will be directly involved in the implementation of activities – for example, as health volunteers.

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- *Cambodia*: OPA members and community members receive training on integrated pest management and integrated farming systems. OPA members maintain demonstration plots using these techniques which other community members can visit and learn from, ensuring that this learning is shared within the community.

- *Bangladesh*: OPA members who are selected for monitoring activities receive training on monitoring techniques, maintaining information, analysing their findings, and communicating the results to local authorities and service providers.

Typically, an OPA established in an area with high hazard risks will identify older men and women from within its membership to form a disaster risk reduction or emergency sub-committee. The organisation working with older people then supports this sub-committee to increase their capacity to plan for and respond to hazards specific to their communities.

- *India*: In Rajasthan, disaster risk reduction sub-committees receive training on drought mitigation activities. Topics include rainwater harvesting, dryland farming, animal husbandry and healthcare in drought periods. The sub-committee then works with their community to raise awareness on drought preparedness and mitigation actions.

Fundraising

Fundraising increases the sustainability of an OPA. Funds can be raised from the following sources:

- Membership fees: This is dependent on member poverty levels. The poorest OPA members have membership fees waived.
- Community events/ceremonies such as weddings, religious festivals and school-based events.
- Donations from community members.
- Equipment rental: OPAs collectively own equipment such as a plough or water pump which is rented to OPA members and other community members for a small fee.
- Income generation activities run by the OPA.
- Collectively owned land rented to other community members.
- Local government and in-country donors.
- Collectively owned land used for cultivation by OPA.

In Cambodia, OPAs work the land collectively to grow rice. A proportion of the harvest is given to the OPA rice bank. The rest of the harvest is sold to generate income, which is then used to contribute to OPA income generation activities, social funds and other activities which benefit the OPAs community, such as the construction of latrines.

Federations

In some contexts, OPAs have gained sufficient confidence whereby the process of federation is a natural next step. Consolidating allows OPAs to share their experiences, and become a stronger group in articulating their specific concerns to local and district level authorities. Network partners' experience of federating OPAs varies.

- *Bangladesh*: Where OPAs focus on monitoring access to entitlements, OPAs mirror the various levels of government, with OPAs at village, Ward and Union level. Representatives from village level OPAs are elected to serve in Ward level OPAs. Likewise, representatives from Ward level OPAs are elected to Union level OPAs.

- *India*: In Tamil Nadu and Kerala, each village has several sub-groups of OPAs. Representatives from these sub-groups are elected to be in a village-level OPA. Members of village OPAs are in turn elected to join the district level federation which is registered with the local government.

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Annex 2: Suggested rules and regulations: an example from Cambodia

1. OPA membership will be open to older people (older than 55) in the community, regardless of religion, socio-economic status, political affiliation or ethnicity. The OPA will also be open to members younger than 55 at the discretion of the OPA members.
2. The OPA will serve the interests of older persons in the village, particularly those in need due to poor health, financial hardship or an emergency situation.
3. OPA members will visit fellow members at home or in hospital when they are ill and assist in organising traditional ceremonies and funerals.
4. OPA members will meet with the governing committee and other members before implementing any relief activity.
5. Someone from the OPA will meet with those who will receive assistance or for whom a ceremony is being organised, before implementing any activity. In the case of a funeral, the family will be consulted before any arrangements are made.
6. Upon completion of a ceremony, a statement of income, expenditure and materials used will be announced to all OPA members and participating village members. A material or cash donation will be handed over to the recipient(s).
7. The OPA will use any financial interest generated by its activities in a fair and transparent way. Interest will be used to assist the neediest people in the village or to establish or expand income-generating activities.
8. Before any funds or material support are distributed, the OPA governing committee will arrange a meeting of all members to select the beneficiaries.
9. The OPA will provide regular assistance to older people who do not have family or other support. [The list of recipients should be reviewed at least annually and the bylaws should state time periods for assistance.]
10. The OPA leaders will be elected for a one or two year term. At the end of each term a new leadership election will take place. [It is at each OPA's discretion whether leaders can fill a position for more than one term. The OPA's decision should be stated in the by-laws.]
11. An OPA leader can resign or be stood down before his or her term has expired, if s/he has a serious disease, relocates out of the community, dies, is considered to poorly serve the OPA, engages in corruption or is deemed to be acting only in the interests of certain individuals or groups.
12. Governing leaders, subcommittee members and advisors shall not receive any compensation. They serve in a voluntary capacity only.
13. These rules and regulations/by-laws come into effect upon agreement in an OPA meeting with at least 51 per cent of members present and voting to accept them. All OPA members shall abide by the rules and regulations/by-laws once they have been passed.

Note: These rules and regulations/by-laws should be displayed publicly for all OPA members to see. They should also be sent to the following groups for information:

■ all members of the committee
■ group leaders and their ordinary members, and
■ advisor(s) for the 'basic practical information'.

Annex 3:   Roles and responsibilities of leaders and members: an example from Cambodia

President

- Provides leadership to members and is responsible for managing the OPA.
- Initiates activities and motivates members to contribute time, resources, physical and spiritual assistance to other members and to the community.
- Conducts meetings to inform members of new activities and the progress or outcomes of existing activities.
- Educates and instructs members, resolves problems and addresses any issues that may affect the OPA.
- Oversees all income and expenditure and may audit the financial records kept by the treasurer at any time.
- Is authorised to supervise and monitor all small projects and activities that generate income for the OPA.
- Follows up and monitors all activities to ensure they have been consistent with their stated purpose and objectives.
- Reports regularly to project donors (if any).

Vice-President

- Acts on behalf of the president during his/her absence due to illness, travel, and so on.
- Raises awareness of the purpose and objectives of the OPA to the members when there is a special event in the association or in the community.
- Deals with tasks within and outside the OPA, on behalf of it.
- If there is no secretary in the governing committee, the vice-president performs the duties of secretary, as explained below.

Treasurer

- Supervises and controls the cash and materials of the OPA.
- Maintains records of income, expenditure and assets owned by the OPA.
- Provides a brief statement of income and expenditure to the OPA leaders and members at least quarterly, or when requested by the president.
- Announces the income and expenditure generated by special traditional ceremonies, activities and other events.

Secretary

- Takes minutes and keeps records of all OPA and small group meetings.
- Supervises and records all correspondence and visits by non-OPA members.
- Carefully verifies income and expenses with the treasurer.
- Submits a summary report on meetings, activities and budget (income and expenses related to small project activities or special events) to local authorities or village development organisations, as requested.

Note: The secretary and the treasurer can be authorised to accept the responsibilities of the president or the vice-president in the absence of these two leaders.

Subcommittees

Whether an OPA establishes subcommittees will depend on the OPA's activities. It is not necessary for all OPAs to have subcommittees. The OPA can decide to create a subcommittee to perform the following roles:

- Manage specific activities within the OPA, such as rice banks, cow banks or water and sanitation systems.
- Work with OPA leaders and members to plan and implement projects and maintain any physical assets, such as a rice barn, a pond or shallow well.

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Annex 4:   Meeting record format: an example from OPAs in Rajasthan, India

Meeting Number 1

Date: …………………… Time: …………………… Place: ……………………

Total no. of members: ………………………………..

No. of members present: ………………………………

Presided by: ……………………………..

In case of the first meeting it is necessary that the NGO Representative includes the following details:

About the organisation
▪ Introduction of the organisation
▪ Goals and aims of the organisation
▪ Various programmes being implemented by the organisation
▪ Total number of workers

About the present project

[Meeting minutes]

For subsequent meetings, the following format can be used:

Meeting Number: ……………………

Date: ……………….. Time: …………………… Place: ……………………

Total no. of members: ……………………

No. of members present: ……………………

Presided by: ……………………

The minutes of the previous meeting were read out by the Secretary ……………………., to which all the members of the village OPA.

[Meeting minutes]

Annex 5:   Vulnerable individuals (in camps) checklist[9]

The Vulnerable Individuals Checklist was developed by HelpAge International for use in camps for internally displaced people or refugees. The key themes of family circumstances, social support, health, mobility and basic needs are common to most checklists used to identify vulnerable individuals.

This checklist is a tool for highlighting indicators of vulnerability.

Vulnerable individual checklist			
Individual	**Health**		
Name	Has problems breathing	Yes	No
Age Male/Female	Has problems with digestion	Yes	No
Location	Has problems with elimination	Yes	No
Other comments	Has joint pains	Yes	No
	Has swollen legs	Yes	No
	Has skin problems	Yes	No
	Has other health problems		
Carers	Comments		
Name			
Location			
	Mobility		
Indicator	Can wash and dress self	Yes	No
Household	Has problem using latrine	Yes	No
Live alone Yes No	Uses walking stick/crutches	Yes	No
Number of children	Can walk to neighbours	Yes	No
Number of adults	Can walk to marketplace	Yes	No
Number under 14 years	Can walk to nearest health post	Yes	No
Number aged 15-50 Aged 50+	Comments		
Comments			
	Basic needs		
Social	Has adequate shelter	Yes	No
Family or neighbours provide help Yes No	Has water supply and container	Yes	No
Has regular, adequate food supply Yes No	Has cooking facilities and fuel	Yes	No
Water collection Self Helper Nobody	Has a blanket(s)	Yes	No
Fuel/firewood collection Self Helper Nobody	Has a change of clothes	Yes	No
Comments	Comments		
Other comments			

9 HelpAge International (2005), *Ageways 66: Ageing and emergencies*, p9

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Annex 6: Relief services checklist[10]

The relief services checklist allows an organisation to assess the level of services/ support being provided to older people in relief camps. The information can be used to raise awareness amongst relief agencies on the needs of older people not being met, and help to ensure that vulnerable older people receive assistance.

Relief services checklist					
Demographic data			**Distributions**		
Is demographic data, broken down by age and gender, available?	Yes	No	Are there special provisions to avoid older people queuing for a long time?	Yes	No
If not, could it be included in data collection?	Yes	No	Are there special provisions to help older people carry loads back from distribution points?	Yes	No
What is the number of unaccompanied older people?			Are non-food items (e.g. clothes, blankets) appropriate for older people?	Yes	No
What is the number of children being cared for by older people?					
How many older-headed households are there?					
How many housebound older people are there?			**Inclusion**		
			Are older people represented on committees (e.g. health, water, women's)?	Yes	No
Health					
Are there special clinic days for older people?	Yes	No	Has an older people's committees been established?	Yes	No
Are there outreach health services for housebound older people?	Yes	No	Are older people active participants in camp activities, e.g. literacy projects, life skills, agriculture?	Yes	No
Are drugs available to treat common health problems in older people?	Yes	No	Are older people represented as a vulnerable group at camp management level?	Yes	No
What are the main disabilities of older people					
Is there a record of these in the camp?	Yes	No	**Social support**		
Are mobility aid available	Yes	No	Do older people receive support from their family or neighbours?	Yes	No
Nutrition			Who is collecting fuel and water for older people?	Yes	No
Is the ration suitable for older people?	Yes	No			
Have older people been screened to enter feeding programme	Yes	No	Have older people been separated from their families?	Yes	No

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10 ibid., p8

Resources

General

Tools for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction: Guidance notes for development organisations, Charlotte Benson and John Twigg with Tiziana Rossetto, ProVention Consortium, January 2007

Advocacy with older people: Some practical suggestions, HelpAge International, 2007 (original published in 2000)

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Participatory techniques for working with older people

Participatory research with older people: A sourcebook, HelpAge International, March 2002

Impact of disasters on older people: Issues and recommendations

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Live after the tsunami: Older people surviving and rebuilding their lives, HelpAge International, 2005

Community-based disaster preparedness manual, Post Earthquake Reconstruction Project EU Gujarat, HelpAge India, 2005

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Village elders care committee: An experiment in community-based approach to elders care (India), HelpAge India, 2006

Establishing and working with older people's associations in Cambodia: A practical guideline, HelpAge International, 2007

Guidebook for developing and supporting older persons' organisations (Moldova), HelpAge International, 2006

Older people's associations in community disaster risk reduction
A resource book on good practice

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