

REINTEGRATION OF OLDER PEOPLE INTO MOLDOVAN SOCIETY

GOOD PRACTICE MANUAL

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INTRODUCTIONS

'Older people have a particular situation in our society. The total number of older people is up to 20% of the total population. Many older people live alone, (often in villages where only older people live), their material situation does not cover the costs of the 'minimal food basket' (which is now over 100\$). In Moldova there has been no concept of active aging. In recent years the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection has increased pensions step by step.

The project 'Reintegration of Older People into Moldovan Society" demonstrates to Moldovan society the potential of older people as the founders of society and people who can play an active role in providing social services to other layers of society and to other older people. The experience of the self-help groups created on this project will be considered as a model for the future design of social support services. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is considering the future design of a social strategy for older people and development of standards for offering help to older people.

Representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection were pleased to be involved in the project training seminars and participated at the majority of these events.'

**Tatiana Gribincea, Director of the Department for Social Work,
The Ministry of Labour, Republic of Moldova
November 2004**



Since 2003 Second Breath and HelpAge International have worked together on the project "Reintegration of Older People into Moldovan society" with the generous financial support of the European Commission's TACIS Institution Building Partnership Programme and Development Co-operation Ireland.

Second Breath works with older people with the aim of creating self-help (or support) groups in different regions of Moldova: the villages of Ciniseuti in Rezina and Trinca in Edinet, and in Orhei and Chisinau. The project activities included regular meetings and trainings for older people and for several leaders of older people's NGOs ("Batrinete fara tristete", "Sperantele Batrinilor de la Nordul Moldovei", Association of Veterans from Orhei, Association of Pensioners "Bunatarea", Association of Nursing).

During the 24 months of project activities approximately 700 old people were involved in the project including participation at 6 training events, 3 conferences and 60 meetings in these regions. These activities developed the network of NGOs working with and for older people and a network of the older volunteers working to develop the society.

NGOs involved in the project continue to collaborate closely with each other within the HelpAge International project for 9 countries throughout South East Europe on advocacy of older people's rights. Thanks to this on-going project Second Breath will continue to strengthen its capacity through training of staff.

There were many unexpected results of this project including the interest of different NGOs from abroad. A representative from Second Breath and an older participant were invited to Bulgaria by the Swiss Red Cross to advise on the creation of self-help groups. Representatives from the project, again including an older participant, were also invited to present the project in front of TACIS IBPP grant recipients in Kyiv in October 2004. Second Breath were also asked to advise representatives of The British Red Cross on working with vulnerable older persons in Georgia.

During seminars conducted by HelpAge International and international consultants worked with during this project, learning from Moldova has provided a basis for learning with and by other groups of older people and their NGOs in Bulgaria, Romania, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus and even at a meeting of older people's organizations across Asia in Vietnam!

The activities started on this project will be continued and developed by older people and NGOs in the future.

We hope the following information and case studies gathered by older people as volunteers and beneficiaries, and by older people's NGOs in Moldova, will provide inspiration and good practice guidance for other groups of older people wanting to organise and for other NGOs, local government and donor organisations to consider new ways in which they could effectively engage with older people in their communities.

Dr Irina Baicalov
Director, Social Association, Second Breath
November 2004

PROJECT SITES – OLDER PEOPLE AND THEIR ORGANISATIONS

The project sites outlined in the section below by older people themselves were all supported by a ‘mentor’ NGO to the local groups of older people as they worked together on self-help and advocacy initiatives.

Key characteristics of project sites:

- A local ‘mentor’ NGO is committed to developing participatory means of working with vulnerable older people
- Older people in the community express a willingness to participate in the project
- The NGO has worked with older people as beneficiaries as part of their previous work
- Direct beneficiaries are older people and NGOs supporting them in 5 sites. NGOs are committed to facilitate greater integration of older people within the broader communities
- NGOs are committed to ensuring that vulnerable older people are supported to develop new models of self-help and advocacy according to needs which they have themselves identified and activities that they design and implement themselves
- NGOs commit to attend workshops with Second Breath and HelpAge International and to implementing and supporting older people to implement action plans agreed in workshops
- NGOs commit to contributing to the Steering Group of the project to enable shared learning and detailed discussion of challenges faced.
- NGOs commit to supporting older people to share their learning with other local stakeholders in government, media and other community organisations

The Public Association “**Age without Sadness**” was registered in April 1999. The association’s objectives are to reduce the social and medical experienced by older people and abandoned children. Its work includes the creation of a Day Centre for older people. The association promotes the United Nations principles to ensure a decent quality of life for all layers of society including older people, regardless of ethnicity, nationality or politics.

The association consists of an administrative council, Audit Commission and members. It distributes humanitarian aid: clothes, shoes, wheel chairs, furniture and food to socially vulnerable layers of the local population, especially to older people in Ciniseuti and neighbouring villages. In 2003 the association established a regular bus route connecting Cinisieuti and Chisinau. This route is particularly beneficial for the older people of the village.

Historians first mentioned the **village of Ciniseuti** in 1495 but nobody knows exactly when its first inhabitants arrived. Nowadays Ukrainians and Moldovans live and work peacefully together in the village. For centuries inhabitants of the village struggled to avoid poverty. Despite this, during the Second World War the people of Ciniseuti bought a tank from their own resources and sent it to war. Older people recall that the Nazis didn’t enter the village in 1941 because it was considered such a strategic region.

Earlier this century there were 124 ‘micro factories’ in the village making pottery, china, jars, whistles and other objects out of clay. Unfortunately only one micro factory remains today where Mr. Zingaliuk and his wife continue to make clay whistles and animals.

Since the transition of the 1990s people of Ciniseuti and all over Moldova, have had to overcome financial problems and find ways to achieve a decent standard of living. Many older villagers feel life was easier during the Soviet era; people had jobs and the village flourished. Now there are few employment opportunities and young people go abroad to earn money leaving older people alone to support grandchildren and cultivate the land given to them when the *kolkhozes* were destroyed. 815 older people live in Ciniseuti, 109 of them are registered disabled. Despite these difficulties, the people of Ciniseuti believe the future will change and their shared efforts can bring benefits for everyone.

‘The Organisation of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei’ was originally set up by the communist party as “The Organisation of War Veterans”. Since March 2000 the organization has worked to protect the rights and interests of all pensioners, and their involvement in the cultural and social life of the Orhei region. At present 23 volunteers including coordinator and trainers work with beneficiaries in the framework of this project.

Orhei has been an administrative, commercial and political centre for centuries due to its location on the commercial routes from the Black Sea, The Danube and The River Nistru. Orhei was traditionally a centre for the development of agricultural products, contributing to Basarabia’s rapid economic development and population growth in 1918.

Extensive archeological excavation in old Orhei uncovered the walls, foundations and sanctuary of an ancient Dacian fortress. The foundations of a medieval fortress, a chief magistrate’s palace, an Orthodox church, Muslim mosque, the place of the mausoleum of the last Khan and the grave of a relative of Stefan cel Mare were also found.

Stefan cel Mare and King Vasile Lupu both contributed to the development of Orhei. Vasile Lupu brought books, printing, and the first high school to Moldova. At the beginning of the 20th century as an act of gratitude and respect a grand monument of Vasile Lupu was erected in the center of the town. After the monument was transported to Craiova, Romania and then reconstructed in Chisinau in 2004 it was returned back to its place after 67 years after its first installation.

The Moldovan Association of Nursing was registered in 1995 and it offers qualitative medical care to older people from Chisinau. The Association is a member of the European Forum of Nursing. It has 38 branches all over Moldova.

The volunteers of **The Moldovan Association of Nursing** at the outset of the project consisted of 15 active, older people, motivated to help older people who could not live independently, who were isolated and poor. Doctors, medical assistants, teachers, lawyers, former social workers and other volunteers all got involved. One of the main activities of the volunteer group is homecare for terminally ill patients living alone but volunteers provide many services including spiritual assistance, help about the house, handicrafts, reading, accompanying older people to church, growing pot plants and teaching patients to care for themselves better.

The **Republican Association of Older People “Kindness”** originated in December 1995 and provides material and spiritual support to a large number of older people in **Chisinau**. The attention of ‘Kindness’ is focused on large numbers of socially vulnerable and impoverished older people to ensure they receive adequate social protection.

Chisinau -the capital of Republic of Moldova- was first mentioned in 1436 during the reign of Ilie and Stefan as a settlement on the banks of the River Bic. Documents from 1666 mention merchants of Chisinau and it is clear that Chisinau had already become a centre of commerce. At this time the county’s administration moved from Lapusna to Chisinau and developed rap-

idly. In the 1830s the Tsarist government approved a plan for the town's development and the bell-tower Cathedral was built. Over the years 1845-70 Chisinau changed dramatically under the influence of architect Alexander Bernardazzi. In 1871 a rail route between Chisinau and Tiraspol opened and in 1889 trams -towed by horses- began to run. Between the two world wars many schools, university departments and cultural institutions, were established.

Chisinau today constitutes about a third of the country's total population. Chisinau gradually grew to take in surrounding villages that are now recorded as regions or streets of Chisinau (Malina, Melesteu, Schinoasa, Buiucani, Ciocana, Visterniceni, etc). According to the population census of 1989, 6,614 thousand people lived in Chisinau and the population is very ethnically mixed. At present in the capital of Moldova live about 800.000 people.

The NGO, "**The hopes of older people of the North of Moldova**", **Trinca Village** was founded and registered in September 2000 and has branches in Edinet, Briceni, Ocnita and Donduseni. The NGO aims to establish and train multidisciplinary medico-social teams to provide homecare services for older people, protect the interests of older and disabled people in society and support older people medically and socially.

The oldest settlement in **Trinca** is in Scridon cave which is 80-85 000 years old. Explicit references to Trinca village prove it existed in the XV century during Stefan the Great's reign.

Many families from Trinca were deported to Siberia in Soviet times and accused of being "kulaks" or rich peasants. These people worked hard, but everything they worked for was lost. They were deported and their property was collectivized. For years these people were prohibited from returning to the homes they had left, and instead had to settle with relatives in neighboring villages. They had neither food nor the means to obtain food; they had no shelter. Eventually some families were allowed to return to their native villages and their old houses.

The population of Edinet region is 315,025 people, of which 92,390 or 29,32 % are older people. Of the total population of Trinca (3,924 people), 1,100 are older people and 325 need homecare services. The majority of older people live alone, some are immobile and are dependent on the support or services of others.



VOLUNTEERING AND VOLUNTEERS: PERSPECTIVES FROM PRESENT DAY MOLDOVA

“We are always and everywhere,
We are in a hurry somewhere.
Thoughtful and with sad glances
In shabby clothes as if from our graves.

We are searching for yesterday
When life was smiling on us.
Ex doctor, welder, peasant, teacher
We are all beggars today.

We are begging with our arms reached out in front of us. Trembling.
No charity – our dignity won’t allow us that,
Only social equality, the human laws of life
Prevent us from dying of starvation...”

Section from “the prayer of the older people” by Petru BUNACALEA

Many volunteers interviewed during the project and preparation of this manual described their heart-felt need to address the chronic poverty, suffering and indignity of many fellow members of their generation. This section explores the perceptions of older volunteers, beneficiaries and NGO leaders about volunteering and reasons to volunteer.

‘UN principles acknowledge the possibility for older people to develop themselves within the services offered by the community. Yet the older people from Ciniseuti say, “before creating these self-help groups nobody was interested in our experience and knowledge”.’

Valeriu MARCIUC, the president of the association “Age without Sadness”, Ciniseuti

As Anastasia Raicova a volunteer of the Moldovan Association of Nursing observed, ‘older people now ask themselves, ‘what is the meaning of my life? What did I do for society? What is left when I am gone?’

For volunteers and beneficiaries touched by this project, through a range of varied volunteering activities, a few answers have been found to these questions. The following section gives some personal insights into the importance of volunteering to contemporary Moldovan society.

What is a volunteer? Why does volunteering matter?

‘The concept of a volunteer is well known as the person who freely acts from his or her own initiative, without being forced or asked by someone to do something, urged by his or her own heart. This definition is in the DEX Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Romanian Language. In

Moldova, the word ‘volunteer’ is more frequently used to refer to men who took action to defend their nation or save someone in extra-ordinary situations: fire, drowning, stopping an enraged horse, bull, or a moving vehicle that threatens the lives of other people.’

Organisation of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei

‘The social protection of older people is a challenge in most countries, but is particularly acute in countries like Moldova that are still developing. Moldovan society has undergone transformations at the social and economic level. The population is under permanent stress because of the rapid increase in poverty and declining efficacy of the family in protecting and supporting its members. Inadequate income, in some cases none at all, prevents the older population from having a decent standard of living.

Although many volunteers and beneficiaries are impressed that UN principles recommend the “support of the community” for older people, in reality older people only receive support from the groups of volunteers.’

The Moldovan Association of Nursing

‘I worked for 32 years in healthcare, providing all the support I could to sick people.

At the age of 70 I became very ill. When I found myself unable to care for myself I was horrified. I asked myself, what should I do? I believe that a supernatural force protects us; in these hard times messengers of God brought light and kindness to my home.

I am grateful to all those who organised support for me, and who work with such kindness. It requires initiative to organise a meeting with people who are sick and aggrieved because of our difficulties. Please pass my most sincere gratitude to all who are a part of this team, let God reward you tenfold for all that you do.”

ELENA, disabled older person, Chisinau

As Maria’s example illustrates, for several organisations, a key moment in recruiting volunteers and gaining access to beneficiaries, is when they are able to link project volunteering to more traditional practices of mutual support and volunteering in their community.

Maria Cenusă is a former teacher and Regional Inspector of Education in Soroca. She has also been Regional Deputy and Secretary of The Cultural and Educational Commission.

‘A volunteer is a person who offers their services unselfishly and benevolently.

I think I have been a volunteer all my life. During the war we shared our last piece of bread with our neighbours, despite the fact that father was at the front and it was difficult for us to survive. After the war my father died and the family’s situation became very difficult, but our mother taught us not to despair, to be good and offer our help to those who need it.

During the famine, many people in the village died of hunger. Our grandmother had two cows and often sent me to take dairy products to those in need. Seeing the sick people’s difficulties, I took them food products without my grandmother’s knowledge. From 1954 until my retirement I was active in the trade union movement, which I also consider to be volunteer work.’

MARIA, Volunteer, Association of Kindness, Chisinau

'We help older people, people like us; we help those who find themselves in very difficult situations. We do this without payment, but from our hearts. A volunteer cannot be indifferent to somebody else's pain and should inspire hope, charity and bring joy to older people.'

Organisation of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei

'As a volunteer in Trinca I observed the impact of our volunteering upon our beneficiaries:

- They become more sociable,
- They are more optimistic about the future,
- They become more confident of their own abilities,
- They desire to live,
- They feel that they are "somebody",
- They feel that people consider them
- They are ready to give to charity from the small amount that they have,
- They see the world around them differently,
- They feel the need to take care of personal hygiene and the room in which they live.'

Volunteer, Trinca village

Who is a volunteer?

The age of the volunteers in Orhei is 55 to 75 and the age of the beneficiaries varies from 60 to 97 years old. This age group is slightly wider than for the rest of the NGOs. The majority of volunteers are Romanian or Moldovan and there are slightly more women volunteers than men. The volunteers differ across project areas – for example in Chisinau, an urban setting, much of the work is done by retired professionals, whereas in Cinisauti, which is a rural village, most of the volunteers are retired agricultural workers.

'Volunteers are gentle and kind-hearted despite the fact that they are themselves often poor. The volunteers in Orhei have many special qualities making them suitable for working with older beneficiaries. They are unusually tactful, sensitive and good conversationalists, caring for beneficiaries as they would their own family. Some volunteers combine medical knowledge with their other aptitudes for volunteering.'

Project report from Organization of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei

'Volunteers of the Association are active, older people, who help those who are struggling to live independently, and those who are isolated and poor. Doctors, medical assistants, teachers, lawyers, former social workers and other volunteers all get involved in this movement.'

Project report from the Moldovan Association of Nursing

During the initial planning workshop and in later chapters of this manual, older people's representatives have explored some of the barriers that might exist to potential volunteers from certain socio-economic groups who might otherwise volunteer.

Why volunteer?

'I am very glad that I become a volunteer. I felt I could help someone, I made many friends, I

enjoyed the attention of many older people, and I inspired goodwill and received it back. I was congratulated on all special occasions. I was always busy and the time went by without me noticing, and that made me forget my own difficulties. I got acquainted with many interesting people. I traveled a lot. I worked together with my husband, children and grandchildren; the whole family got involved in volunteering. I felt younger and forgot that I am a pensioner. I read lots so that I have things to tell my beneficiaries. I'm grateful to the group with whom we work shoulder to shoulder, sharing our experience. I recruited other volunteers and I hope this will continue. Join the volunteer movement and you will feel younger, more optimistic, needed by many people surrounding you and your life will have meaning!

Elenore BOGUS, 63, volunteer Orhei

'When the association first spoke with older people about volunteering their reaction was rather negative, but their attitude to it changed and older people started to want to help each other, communicate with each other, learn from each other, and to be useful for the society despite the fact that society seems to forget them.'

'In small groups of volunteers, older people share their rich experience with younger generations and sometimes have the opportunity to earn small amounts of additional income. Working in small groups provided them with opportunities to understand what volunteering meant, and develop ways of fulfilling themselves in their current conditions.'

Valeriu MARCIUC, President, "Age without Sadness", Ciniseuti

Volunteers feel that their work makes a difference...

- 'We witness how volunteers working with older people receive moral satisfaction when they see the results of their work: they get pleasure from knowing they can help someone
- They feel that older people eagerly await their visits
- They make many friends
- They are able to organise particular activities with older people
- They develop skills and learning through volunteering'

Alexandra TETIU, Director, "The Hopes of Older People of the North of Moldova"

Volunteers involved in other forms of active ageing programmes also report that they enjoy their involvement in their local communities and continue to feel they are doing something useful.

"In the evening [my wife and I] sit on the doorstep of the house and talk about meetings at the Mayor's hall with other volunteers, about how we went to Balti and Chisinau for different conferences, about how we went to Ungheni to an exhibition".

Constantin ZINGALIUC, owner of last remaining micro-factory in Ciniseuti and active volunteer

Through feedback from beneficiaries and in the local and national media, potential volunteers learn that they can have an impact both on their own situation and that of others...

'I have not been a volunteer long, but I came because I want to help those who are more

vulnerable than I am. Having been a teacher, I helped people all my life. When I meet my beneficiaries I remember my activities with children; older people also need support and they are glad when someone comes to listen to them. Of course the majority of them need material help, but there is also another side – the moral, spiritual and psychological.'

Anastasia RAICEVA, volunteer, Moldovan Association of Nursing, Chisnau

Selecting and training volunteers

To identify, recruit and prepare volunteers able and willing to take on the tasks outlined in the section E, the 5 NGOs with the support of Second Breath and HelpAge International developed models for information meetings, volunteer selection and their own training and mentoring systems that are outlined below.

During the early project planning seminars, representatives of older people's NGOs discussed in small groups how they would plan meetings with potential older volunteers.

They considered:

- Where and when?
- Who?
- How older people would be invited?
- Other logistics?
- How long the meeting would be?
- Small group discussions or open meeting discussions?
- How representatives would introduce themselves, the project and explain their plans?
- What questions would they get them to discuss?
- How would they facilitate it?
- How would they finish the meeting and explain what happens next?

The following ideas were discussed further amongst all the seminar participants:

- 'I can organise a meeting at my home. I can invite younger people to provide entertainment to attract older people. Food can be provided. We can ask older people to talk about life in their childhood and ask them to discuss old traditions.'
- 'Find older people who could invite others to their home, gathering others with similar ideas. They can talk about the past and about what they want to do now.'
- 'Initiate groups of volunteers to get in touch with older people who have no one to care for them, and arrange visiting. If some older people cannot get out of their homes, they can be brought activities that interest them e.g. sewing. We could celebrate holidays in people's homes.'
- 'A lot of humanitarian aid went through our organisation, so we already have a database of vulnerable older people, and they know us from when we visited.'

The list below was generated by representatives of older people's NGOs at the end of the first project year and includes some new techniques:

Tools used by Moldovan older people's NGOs to facilitate meetings with older people:

- Use of photographs from older people's youth to provoke discussions
- Small group discussions (e.g. about traditional medicines, contributions of older people)
- "Pyramid" methods of identifying older people e.g. each volunteer finds 5 older people
- Food provided at the end of the meeting

- Meeting took place at the home of an older person
- Meeting took place at the market place (as it was finishing for the day)
- Meetings took place as part of a public holiday

Feedback from older people's representatives in June 2003 project seminar

Some key learning points from the first round of meetings with older people were:

- Ask older men known to the group how to involve other older men. This may also apply to under-represented ethnic groups.
- Check the date for other events such as elections or harvests
- Ensure older participants can access the meeting location - physically and financially, if they have to pay for transport to get there

Content of info meetings:

'During the early days of the project, "Age without Tears" held 3 meetings with 45 older people in the district of Rezina. The group discussed volunteering; what it is and how it is done.'

During HelpAge International's initial training and project planning seminar with older people's representatives, exercises were used to build awareness of and empathy with the situation of the most disadvantaged older people in society. Many of these were replicated in information and volunteer recruitment meetings that took place in the NGO communities.

Power and powerlessness:

- Thinking quietly by oneself about a scenario in which you felt powerless. Participants are encouraged to reflect on the feelings they experience and why they have these reactions. These are shared with a fellow participant who reflected on a situation in which they felt powerful.
- Sculptors and clay. The group is separated into two sub-groups. One group is told they must move however the other group tries to shape them. The second group (sculptors) is told to shape the clay into an object of their choosing. When the first group has guessed the shape they were moulded into, both groups share how they felt about the exercise

Sculptors are asked to be gentle with the clay- especially if any participants are infirm.

Ageism:

- Participants are divided into groups and given flip chart paper. One group is given the sentence 'Older people are...' to complete; the other group is asked to complete the sentence 'Younger people are ...' with any adjectives and judgments they have. These should be both positive and negative and participants are encouraged to be as open as they can. When the groups present to each other, the facilitator switches the headings so that the 'younger people are...' becomes 'older people are...' and vice versa. The group is asked whether either list describes only younger or older people.
- Participants define what 'ageism' means and give examples from their own experience. Their definition is compared to the definition: "Treating people in a negative way because of their age, through deliberate or thoughtless behaviour and attitudes". Participants are then asked to consider what deliberate or thoughtless barriers might prevent older people from fully participating in their organisation's activities and design plans to address these.

Awareness of older people and their needs:

- NGOs ask existing volunteers to present on the situation of older people in their community, and the particular needs and contributions of older people. This will vary depending on the focus of volunteer activities selected by older people in each project site.
- Existing volunteers share their experience of volunteering, the commitment required, skills needed and what it gives them as volunteers.

For example in Trinca,

'The volunteer trainer shares information about homecare with the person enquiring about becoming a volunteer. The trainer conveys that volunteers don't just care about medicine, it is:

- Nutrition and food,
- Fresh air,
- Emotional support,
- To be able to move about,
- To rest,
- To be protected,
- Communication,
- Information,
- Recuperation,
- Learning (how to keep oneself healthy).'
- Participants are encouraged to think about the difference between 'development for' (or 'acting for'), 'development with' and 'development by' older people and reflect on their own experience of community initiatives that fit these different categories.

In some cases, organisers may feel that at this point it is useful to share the following:

Principles for Empowering Older People

These are five principles developed by older people's organisations as members of the Eastern and Central European Network of HelpAge International.

Principle 1: Listen to older people

- Make an effort to actively listen and understand.
- Be sensitive to culture and community.
- Include everyone when holding consultations

Principle 2: Build on older people's capacity

- Acknowledge older people's capacity.
- Delegate obligations and responsibilities to older people.
- Encourage active participation.
- Facilitate older people in taking the initiative.
- Learn from the expertise and experience of others.
- Build on willingness to help and work.



Principle 3: Create a partnership based on honesty and reality

- Be honest about the organisation's limitations.
- Accept people's limitations.

- Meet basic needs first, where appropriate.
- Pay attention to psychosocial needs.
- Foster collaboration.

Principle 4: Place older people at the centre of the service

- Respect human rights.
- Respect differences.
- Show respect.
- Allow older people choice and the freedom to take risks if they want to.
- Be fair and transparent with older people.
- Value older people.
- Don't view older people as all belonging to the same homogenous group.

Principle 5: Include older people in society

- Network.
- Build support in the community.
- Integrate older people into society.

As volunteers from Trinca observed, it is necessary to run recruitment training and selection meetings periodically, because some volunteers may move on or pass away. In addition, volunteer leaders and organisers will need to decide how to divide any 'taster' training that takes place prior to volunteer recruitment from more practical activity training once volunteers have been selected and committed themselves.

'Taking into account the role and responsibility of each member and the fact that members of the team may change, the NGO needs to have ongoing training and information about homecare services (treatment of bed-sores, changing bed clothes, intimate and personal hygiene etc.), feeding the patient, support of the terminally ill.'

Criteria for the selection of appropriate volunteers

Just as the content of information and training meetings varies dependent upon the focus of older people's activities, the criteria for appropriate volunteers will also vary between potential homecare volunteers and for example, volunteers joining a group to grow medicinal herbs. Volunteer organisers or NGO leaders will need to discuss with their original members and beneficiaries, the qualities that they feel are essential for each activity taken on by a volunteer. According to the feedback of volunteers from the 5 NGOs on this project, the following is a 'volunteer person specification' according to which selection can take place.

• AN ABILITY TO EMPATHISE AND LISTEN TO OTHERS

It is important to differentiate this from being in the same position as the beneficiaries. As several volunteers observed, at first, all the older people they met wanted to be heard because they felt nobody listened to them. Another older person is not necessarily able to listen to what another individual older person feels about their situation.

'Volunteers from Cisneuti say that working with older people is not always easy; everyone has their own opinions and it is important to know how to put ourselves in the shoes of others so that we can understand them better, to know what it feels like to be an older person in society- often in isolation, without any support and forgotten by the society.'

'Volunteers have to be able to listen to older people, because this is what beneficiaries want.'
'Working with older people, the most important thing is that someone is able to pay them attention, and provide moral support because many older people feel disappointed about how society treats them. Older people are our living history.'

• RELIABILITY

As a volunteer, older people and other volunteers depend on your contribution. If a volunteer is late, the older beneficiary may go hungry, cold, miss their medication, feel lonely or simply worry. When isolated beneficiaries rely on volunteers to connect them to the world, being punctual and keeping one's word send out strong messages of respect for the dignity and value of another human being.

'Our older volunteers are punctual and well-disciplined when they come to work during open hours, they all support in solving problems.'

'We are punctual, modest, and on hand to provide moral support older people.'

• PATIENCE

Older beneficiaries may not move as quickly as they once did, their memories may fail them, they may not hear what is said the first time, they may be incontinent. Volunteers receive training to deal with these challenges, but not everyone is patient in these circumstances...

'If the older person does not receive a volunteer in a kindly manner or is suspicious of them, the volunteer should be patient.'

• HONESTY

Many older people feel cheated by society and apart from patience, volunteers need to be able to demonstrate that they are honest and can be trusted. Rather than reinforce the mistrust that many older people have in society, volunteers are encouraged to be generous in spirit and in giving of themselves. Many volunteers particularly value the trust of their older beneficiaries.

'Every beneficiary is an individual, and in order to inspire trust, volunteers need to work assiduously upon themselves.'

'If a person is reserved, greedy or unsociable, they are not suitable to get involved in the volunteer movement. To volunteers, older people are like patients to doctors.'

• DIPLOMATIC AND NON-JUDGMENTAL

Older people are very different from each other, like anyone else in society. Apart from avoiding condemning any potentially sensitive actions or beliefs, volunteers should demonstrate that they are able to avoid expressing assumptions they have about their older beneficiaries. Older people will share their stories and beliefs with volunteers in their own time.

'Before knowing the older person well, volunteers should be careful with political discussions and avoid risking causing offense. The older person needs support, not a political rival. Volunteers should be careful in any conversations about religion. Religion is everybody's private business.'

'We consider freedom of speech, free expression of ideas, legal and religious rights.'

• ABILITY TO RECOGNISE ONE'S OWN LIMITATIONS

Volunteers witness suffering and despair, and some potential volunteers struggle to accept that

there are limits to what they can or should do for beneficiaries. Sometimes potential volunteers have difficulty sharing these problems with fellow volunteers and therefore cannot ask for the support to deal with their own frustrations.

'Volunteers should not promise things that they won't be able to do. It is better to admit that some things are impossible.'

'We work with older people in a conscientious and open way, so that they have the opportunity to understand us and our work can be enhanced.'

• WILLINGNESS TO LEARN AND CARRY ON LEARNING:

In order to participate effectively in this model, potential volunteers need to be open to learning from older people themselves, other volunteers and more experienced volunteers. Volunteers are also expected to contribute their own experience and skills however possible.

'Volunteers have to read so they can answer the many questions that older people will ask them.'

'The information we have about beneficiaries must be appropriate, exact and concrete.'

• DISCRETION

To build trust amongst older beneficiaries and other volunteers, volunteers in areas like homecare are required to respect when to keep information within the supportive environment of the volunteer group. A volunteer's inability to recognise when information should remain confidential could be damaging not just to the trust of beneficiaries, but also to the volunteer group's reputation.

• OTHER RELEVANT SKILLS

As one of the volunteer co-ordinator's in Orhei commented, 'the volunteers are simple and ordinary people;' however, the nature of the volunteering model values skills and experiences of each individual volunteer and seeks to mobilize them for the benefit of the local community.

'Volunteers who previously worked in medicine, instruct other volunteers on how to help in difficult cases, what medicine the beneficiaries should use and how to measure blood pressure'

'We find out about interests of older people, organize mutual help amongst older people and supply them with access to written media where possible.'

'Success in work with older people requires the acknowledgement of the style of life of older people, their problems, needs and awareness of a diversity of activities and services that would adequately correspond to them.'

'I use music to help relieve pain, remember the past, invoke emotions and provide personal support. We like to joke and I always try to find the humour that the patient likes.'

Selection of appropriate volunteers:

'Elenora selects volunteers whom she trusts, who she feels are reliable. At the beginning 8 people were recruited of which 6 remained and 5 are more active.'

In order to assess whether potential volunteers meet the criteria identified by older volunteers and their NGOs, volunteer and NGO leaders use several different techniques. In Orhei and Edinet and Trinca, the following techniques were tested, often in combination:

- **One-to-one discussions**

These are very useful if group representatives want to know more about the motivations of potential volunteers. However, one-to-one meetings can seem threatening unless care is taken to put potential volunteers at their ease.

- **Self-assessment**

One of the volunteer co-ordinators from Orhei reported that after attending an information meeting, three potential volunteers decided they were unsuitable.

This option can be very effective if potential volunteers are given the opportunity to discuss any concerns they have before leaving. In some cases it may simply be a lack of confidence that dissuades potential volunteers from continuing. Volunteer leaders and co-ordinators also need to consider what action they will take if a clearly unsuitable volunteer wishes to continue.

- **Group discussions**

In the context of an information meeting it may feel more comfortable opting for selection within groups. To some, this process will seem familiar especially in an environment where everyone knows each other and it can be very successful with an appropriate facilitator. Volunteer representatives may have less control over the selection process than the community as a whole and in some cases; this may be inaccessible to more shy members of the group.

Additional considerations:

- As the points above suggest, it is particularly important to **monitor the profile of group volunteer membership** to ensure that volunteers represent the diversity of the population they serve and that most needs their support. In the current project this was done through volunteer questionnaires. If certain groups are not participating, consider asking them why
- Since one of the criteria emphasised by volunteers is honesty, your group may consider whether it asks volunteers to provide a **character reference** from a respected member of the community. This can be difficult if this concept is new to the local community and consideration will need to be given as to how to ask for this delicately

Training volunteer co-ordinators and leaders

Throughout the project, international consultants, HelpAge International and Second Breath have provided seminar training, support visits and mentoring to enable older people's representatives to develop skills to enhance the effectiveness of their organisations.

Each seminar was attended by at least 2 representatives of each organisation, who shared their group's experience with other representatives from the network. Training seminars and support visits have included regular reviews of project activities in each NGO and impact. Representatives were required to participate in action planning sessions at the seminars and upon return, share their learning with other volunteers in their groups.

The section below outlines a selection of exercises that took place during project seminars, which older people's representatives then shared with their volunteer groups:

Presentation on Project planning May 2003

Projects:

- *Have a defined goal*
- *Are planned, implemented and evaluated during a definite period of time*
- *Have a pre-determined input of resources*
- *Use specific ways of working*

Projects fail because

- *Not enough time is spent on preparation and reflection before starting work.*
- *There are problems with the logistics: there is not enough money; there is not enough time. These problems are often related to poor planning.*
- *There is little participation by the proposed beneficiaries. A project is far more likely to be sustainable if there is real and active involvement by the people you are seeking to help. This means that the project can continue after the end of the project period and the organisation leaves.*

Project planning exercises

Participants explored the main elements of the project planning process through six questions, in small group work and plenary debates. Participants were encouraged to focus on each question, and not rush too far ahead. When planning projects people often move too quickly to deciding their activities without reflecting on why the project is needed and what will change if the project is successful. These elements are crucial to achieving a successful project.

JUSTIFICATION: What is the problem that the project is going to address?

A process of thinking about why the project is needed; the problem the project will resolve.

Participants considered the overall project, "Reintegration of vulnerable older people in Moldovan society". What are the problems faced by older people in Moldova?

The following were identified as the main issues through small group work and plenary debate:

- Older people are isolated and lonely. Younger people emigrate to find work leaving older people behind. Some people do not care about their older relatives.
- Older people experience great poverty, due to small pensions and lack of work. The government has few resources to meet their needs. Following the fall of the old soviet system the currency was devalued and many older people lost their savings.
- Older people experience many health problems. They lack money to buy good quality food. Although provided with land they were not provided with the technical means to work it.

OBJECTIVE: What would an improved beneficiary situation look like?

Participants considered the project's long term IMPACT; the results that the project achieves. Participants looked at problems identified in the 'justification' and turned these into results:

- Older people will be less isolated. They will work together to help each other.
- Older people will be enabled to become active members of society. Their needs and contributions will be recognised by their communities.
- The quality of life of older people will improve. Older people will have improved access to information, and more medical and social services.

ACTIVITIES: What can your organisation do to improve the situation?

The next step is to identify the activities that will achieve the results that you want by the end of the project. The activities must contribute to achieving the aim of the project, namely the “reintegration of vulnerable older people in Moldovan society”. The activities, must relate to the problems identified in the ‘justification’ (1) and the objectives (2).

Participants worked in groups to develop and present their mini-project ideas. Although all ideas had merit, it was felt that some did not relate closely enough to the overall project. Irina Baicalov reminded participants of the requirements: The mini-projects to be funded by the project will be small. They should create models for involving older people and aim to form self-help groups based on the interests of older people, with older people supporting each other.

It was agreed to take one of the mini-project ideas to use as a model for the remaining stages of the project planning process. The main activities presented in this project were:

- 20 older people will be identified who are active, able to work and want to be involved in the project as volunteers. Each of the 20 will have 5 more vulnerable older people to support.
- The knowledge of the 20 volunteers will be assessed and a programme of instruction developed and a support group established.
- A plan of activities for vulnerable older people will be developed based on their needs and interests. This may include activities like sewing, crafts growing plants etc. Any products made can be displayed and sold at an exhibition, with profits being given to older people.
- It is hoped that the project will contribute to improved attitudes towards volunteering in Moldova, and to the creation of a volunteer movement. Students could be invited to help.

OUTPUTS: What will be the results of the project?

A plenary discussion took place about the possible outputs of the mini-project described above. In what specific ways will older people’s lives improve because of this mini-project? Participants identified the following outputs:

- There will be increased activity by older people
- Interest groups will be created
- Older people will be more involved/engaged with society
- Older people will be less isolated
- Older people will gain more self assurance
- There will be more skilled older volunteers
- Older people will have more skills to help themselves
- There will be an increase in reciprocal help
- There may be a small income from the sale of goods produced
- There will be an increase in volunteering
- Older people will feel needed and will have attention paid to them
- The skills of older people will be utilised

INPUTS: What are the resources that will be needed for the project?

Participants considered the resources that will be required to undertake the project. Thought was given to human resources, materials and finances. A reminder was given that financial resources available for the mini-projects are small. It will not cover office rental or purchasing transport.

Project managers should always think about resources that can be contributed from their own organisations, local government, communities, churches and from the older people (beneficiaries) themselves. Think about non-financial contributions that can be made, such as providing a venue, or food for a meeting.

MONITORING/EVALUATION: How will you know if the project has been successful?

Monitoring is a continuous process of information gathering throughout the project. Information collected can be used to evaluate progress, so that adjustments can be made if necessary. At the end of the project an evaluation checks whether objectives set at the beginning have been achieved. Evaluation is much easier if you have collected information throughout the project.

If we do not monitor and evaluate, we cannot know whether we are being successful. INDICATORS measure progress in a development project. They 'indicate' whether you are making progress. A crucial question at the start of a project is what will be the best things to measure to indicate whether you are making progress towards the objectives that you have set.

Some indicators measure the quantity of something (how many older are attending the groups each week?); other indicators measure quality (what benefits are older people gaining by attending the groups?). The latter are more difficult to measure, but are important as they measure improvements in people's lives.

When you have decided what to measure you need to consider HOW you will measure. This should be related to the OUTPUTS you have identified.

Participants considered some indicators for the mini-project:

- The number of older people visited each week (a register to be kept)
- The number of older people attending interest groups (a register to be kept)
- The increased skills of older volunteers (evaluated before and after training takes place through a questionnaire and testing)
- An improved quality of life for older people (questionnaire about whether the project has made any improvements in their life)

Involving older people in advocacy

Participants were reminded of previous training on participation. Undertaking advocacy in a participatory way is about enabling disadvantaged people to articulate their own needs and desires, and to gain the confidence and ability to influence decisions that will affect their own future.

Participants worked in small groups to brainstorm ways in which older people can be involved in advocacy:

- Participation of older people in Council meetings (attending on mass)
- Letters and petitions signed by older people
- Collaboration between NGOs of older people
- Direct contact between older people and their local members of parliament
- Basing campaigns on the needs identified by older people
- Meet with older people to plan the end of year conference
- Invite older people who are beneficiaries to attend the conference, and volunteers to talk about their experiences

Involve older people in the media – interviews, writing articles etc

Audience Analysis

Gather as much information as you can about the proposed audience for your message so that you deliver accurate, credible, appropriate and timely information to them and thereby prompt them into taking action.

Where do they go for information to help them make decisions?

Who do they listen to and for what kind of advice?

What time of day are they likely to be most receptive to 'your' kind of information?

Planning for advocacy campaigns...

- **Set your objectives:** Identify and research the issue you will be working on. Set **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound) objectives for the short, medium and long term.
- **Analyse stakeholders:** Identify all stakeholders. Who will be affected? Define targets, allies and adversaries. Prioritise key stakeholders.
- **Build alliances** if appropriate to bring more resources and support on board.
- **Participatory planning:** Involve participants in identifying the issues and planning the strategy.
- **Assign roles** or responsibilities
- **Identify your target audience:** Spell out who it is that can make the changes laid out in your objectives.
- **Analyse the target:** How do they make decisions? Who do they listen to?
- **Define your message:** Decide what information you need. Do you need more research to prove your case to the target?
- **Identify media:** Which media will be most useful in getting to your target?
- **Build an Action plan:** (1) Prepare a timeline. List external and internal events and opportunities you could use as pegs. (2) List the activities to be carried out. Find an appropriate mix of 'tools' for your audience: direct lobbying, public campaign, media etc. (3) Define responsibilities for carrying out actions. (4) Analyse any problems. What should you change?
- **Monitor:** Build reflection, learning and flexibility into your plans.
- **Evaluate** your advocacy strategy.

In the following seminar the group representatives reviewed the learning from the advocacy seminar and subsequent discussions with their groups...

Ciniseuti

Key learning points

1. We understood the meaning of advocacy
2. How we could find a more efficient way to get the message across
3. Which are the aims and methods of advocacy in Moldova
4. Stakeholder analysis
5. How we could involve older people for creating a message

Action taken

Negotiated at the level of regional public administration to find a way to open a social canteen, involving local economic agents

Chisinau, Nurses

Key learning points

1. Got acquainted with notion of advocacy - it is the strategy of changing the situation of older people. A. Older people should be included in society; B. possibilities should be created for a healthy way of life
2. Importance of using information in a strategic way in order to change policies at local, national and international level

3. Merits of older people should be identified and rewarded
4. Local powers should be used, mayor's hall, ministers, NGOs, donors
5. Methods of stimulating volunteering, rights and obligations

Action taken

Addressed the teachers house to get help for ex-teachers - refused, but were promised help for Veterans on 9th May (Victory Day)

Mrs Stempovski spoke on radio and congratulated older people on the Easter holiday, and reflected on the situation of older people.

MEDIA WORK

Reactive includes:

- *Responding to requests from the media for interviews and articles*

Pro-active includes:

- *Developing materials for a campaign*
- *Documenting and following up what is published and broadcast*
- *Developing contacts with journalists and photographers*
- *Maintaining a database of contacts*
- *Placing information in key publications*

Audiences:

When planning any kind of media work it is important to think about what audience you want to reach. They could be, for example:

- *Policy makers*
- *Older people*
- *Local professionals*
- *Community*

In each case you should ask yourself: which type of media would best reach and influence the target audience?

Getting the media interested in your work

To develop positive relationships with the media it is advisable to do the following:

1. *The need for information - journalists, like their readers or listeners, have limited understanding and awareness about ageing issues, so we need to make sure they are invited to events and given the necessary information to increase their understanding.*
2. *The relevance of ageing issues - like all of us, journalists are individuals who, directly or indirectly, are concerned and affected by the issues of older people*
3. *A pressured environment - remember that journalists are very busy and operating under lots of pressure in a competitive world, where political issues take priority*
4. *Government connections - in many countries, the main media are run by government and media organisations give priority to invitations from government. It is important for older people's organisations to jointly organise events with government counterparts to ensure high-profile government officials preside at events*
5. *Timing - time events to avoid competition from other newsworthy issues, so that presence of the media is guaranteed. Try to avoid activities during major political events, like elections.*

6. *Networking - build up friendly relations with influential media personalities and nurture friendships through consistent contact*
7. *Providing a 'good story' - the media are thirsty for news and information. Make sure you are providing them with interesting and newsworthy material that they find easy to use*
8. *Availability of contacts - ensure that your organisation is easily accessible to the media*

General Guidelines for Writing and Formatting Press Releases

- *Use short, positive sentences written in everyday language. Short paragraphs are best.*
- *Write factually and objectively.*
- *Tell how the information can help the reader, listener or viewer.*
- *Insert quotes (older people, experts).*
- *Tell the reader where they can go, what they can do, or whom they can call for information.*
- *Edit your material tightly; look for ways to shorten phrases and sentences.*
- *Try to limit news to one page.*
- *Provide a short headline that describes the content at a glance.*
- *Remember to think about the inverted pyramid*

In plenary, participants generated a list of the best approaches to working with the media in Moldova:

- Systematic co-operation of older people with national and local authorities
- Providing positive messages in the media
- Concrete articles in simple short language, authentic examples
- Considering the problems and wishes of older people
- Interesting materials
- De-politicising the media
- Raising the interests of journalists in order to reflect the problems of older people
- Press conferences with older people
- Freedom of press
- Materials should be objective and unbiased

The media are always hungry for stories. If you are clear about what you have to say and can explain why this information is of interest to a particular audience, you stand a good chance of interesting the media in your 'story'. Press releases can be used to announce news to journalists in the hope that they will publicize your story. Typical press release topics include:

- *Reporting new findings from a survey or research.*
- *Announcing an upcoming event.*
- *Presenting new information (if it's newsworthy)*

The Inverted Pyramid

Newspaper journalists use the inverted pyramid model. This model reminds the writer to:

- *Summarise important information in the beginning of the release. The reader should be able to grasp the point by reading the first sentence. This is the lead statement.*
- *Follow with details that back-up or confirm the lead statement of the release.*
- *Including less important–yet relevant and interesting–information last.*

The inverted pyramid model is used for several reasons:

- *“Who, what, when, where and why “ at the beginning quickly informs readers of content.*
- *If readers stop reading before completing the article, important information is conveyed.*
- *When space is limited, newspaper editors cut stories from the bottom.*

Participants worked in small groups (by location) to develop a press release for their project or an event.

Further details of any of the training seminars that took place on the current project are available from Second Breath in Balti or HelpAge International in London.



ORGANISATION OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AND GROUPS

'There are different objectives for self-help groups of volunteers depending on the characteristics and needs of the community where the beneficiaries live, the members of the group, and on the experience and training of the leader of the group. Irrespective of this, the objectives of the group must be clear at the outset of the group's activities.'

Moldovan Association of Nursing

At an initial seminar in May 2003, older people's NGOs and representatives developed skills to "help people shape their own lives" and involve a diversity of older people in activities.

Project partners committed to a project belonging to Moldovan older people themselves in the target communities and older people helped identify criteria for activities at the seminar:

1. Use of local resources
2. Use of project members' experience
3. Use of knowledge and skill of older persons
4. Close linkages with beneficiaries
5. Support from Balti and London
6. Connections with local and national governmental organisations and NGOs
7. Activities published and broadcast using TV, radio, mass media etc
8. Involvement of young people
9. Use of internal and community networks to attract volunteers
10. Regular assessment and review of project aims and purpose

"Two weeks ago I left with happy feelings about our learning - how to develop a small project, how to work with groups, how to help older people with our ideas"

Participant in Seminars on Project planning and Community NGO Management, 2003

Older people as community managers

'Eleonora Bogus, a former teacher and trade unionist, is secretary-accountant of the Council of veterans and pensioners and organises a group of 6 volunteers who care for 33 beneficiaries.'

'Activities are organised according to long-term or shorter term plans. All volunteers discuss plans in detail at general meetings, seminars or trainings because they know the situation of individual beneficiaries, their circumstances, structure of their families, their former profession and particular cultures. All these factors influence the specific character of help needed.'

Project report from Organisation of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei

Older people and governance:

Participatory seminars emphasised and facilitated older participant involvement in planning and decision-making about project activities both within seminars and in project sites themselves.

NGOs staged meetings in their local communities to identify leaders of older people's support groups and to enable beneficiaries to feed into the design and planning of activities. In each community, meetings were facilitated by the NGO representatives who attended the initial project management and planning seminar with HelpAge International and Second Breath.

Since the first steering group meeting in April 2003, older people from the 5 NGOs including Petru Bunacalea of the Association of Veterans and Pensioners, Orhei, and the late Gavril Gaina of the Association of Kindness, participated in bi-monthly meetings to monitor work towards project objectives and good governance. Their participation meant that project activities were rooted firmly in an awareness of the needs and constraints of older people.

A monitoring report by HelpAge International in December 2003 noted, 'Regular project steering group meetings involving older people's representatives ensure NGOs review activities, compare experiences and request advice from Second Breath and HAI, resulting in continued strengthening of capacity to support vulnerable older people in project sites.'

The steering group used several mechanisms to monitor impact on older people and their environment including the analysis below based on a participatory evaluation during a seminar.

SWOT ANALYSIS

INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES
1. TEAM WELL PREPARED 2. TEAM HAS DEFINITE AIM 3. DESIRE TO IMPLEMENT PROJECTS 4. LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE GROUP 5. MATERIAL RESOURCES 6. LINKS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT 7. INVOLVEMENT OF THE ELDERLY	1. ELDERLY TO ELDERLY 2. LOCAL PUBLIC ORGANISATIONS 3. LEGAL INSTITUTIONS 4. RELIGION, CHILDREN AND FAMILY, MEDICINE, YOUTH, PRESS 5. OTHER ORGANISATIONS E.G. PEACE CORPS ETC.
WEAKNESSES	THREATS
1. LIFE EXPERIENCE 2. WE ARE NOT LISTENING TO EACH OTHER 3. INFORMATIONAL TECHNIQUES 4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE 5. LACK OF MATERIAL SUPPORT 6. LACK OF LINKS/ COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS	1. STATUTORY STRUCTURES 2. WEAK ECONOMY 3. WEAK LINKS BETWEEN NGOS AND THE STATE 4. IMPERFECT LEGISLATION 5. CONFLICTS BETWEEN TV, RADIO AND PRESS 6. CONFLICTS BETWEEN SOCIALLY VULNERABLE GROUPS OF PEOPLE 7. EMIGRATION OF THE YOUTH

SWOT by the Project Steering Group, August 2003

In the same meeting Petru Bunacalea gave the following progress report to members of the steering group. He describes how all the volunteers participate in the local planning process and this reflects information gathered through their volunteering experience.

- “1. We informed the Mayor of Orhei about our activities. He welcomed our work.
2. We continued to find out which older people are most in need. The total number of beneficiaries we have identified is now 42.
3. After the meeting in Orhei more people were interested in becoming volunteers.
4. Once a week (on Mondays) all the volunteers meet for a planning meeting
5. Every volunteer has a notebook where he/she records all the visits to the older persons”.

Volunteering to Care- older people and community-based care initiatives

‘I have been ill for several years and was treated both in hospital and the polyclinic, but never received such good care as I have from the volunteers. I live with my sister who is also sick. Older people have a hard life. We worked all our lives, become ill, weak and vulnerable. My pension does not cover heating and electricity costs, to say nothing of food and medicine.

I heard about the volunteers’ work on the radio. I called asking for help and didn’t have to wait long! Tania and Valentina are like guardian angels and visit regularly. I received a wheel chair and can move around the room; they also brought food parcels. They organised a “Warm House” and other older people came. We told each other about our lives and looked at pictures. Over tea and cakes made by volunteers, we exchanged telephone numbers and recipes.

The Lord took pity on us; volunteers helped us daily for over a year. I was in complete despair, unable to walk and feeling gradually worse. Now I am recovering morally and physically. I hope volunteers continue to visit me and that other older people receive this support in the future.’

TAMARA, 85

Selecting beneficiaries

‘We select beneficiaries according to where they live in relation to volunteers, taking lists from former places of work and the Department of Social Assistance give us names of the poorest older people.’

The Organisation of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei

NGOs also used training events with potential and current volunteers to update lists of beneficiaries and receive calls from concerned neighbours or older people themselves following media events or the local grapevine. Beneficiaries tend to be particularly poor (based on their income and the cost of their ‘basket of goods’ for the household), bed-ridden or living alone and at risk of isolation from the community.

Types of care

‘The variety of older people’s groups reflects the variety of their problems and needs.’

Elena STEMPOVSKI, The Moldovan Association of Nursing

Older people’s volunteer groups working in rural communities highlighted the importance of helping beneficiaries maintain their land, crops or garden, which is rarely necessary in towns. Some NGOs incorporated younger volunteers in activities for example, they carry water or visit

older people, promoting integration between generations through joint activity. This integration was particularly successful where NGOs using retired teachers to coordinate with local schools. The section that follows emphasises different support services provided dependent on beneficiary needs and the capacity of local volunteer groups, but as Tamara's story illustrates, groups often provide a mixture of nursing, humanitarian and spiritual care, and contact with local communities and a chance for older people to feel valued and intellectually stimulated.

76 year-old Chisinau volunteer, Ion Coniuc highlights this typical mixture of care services. He has volunteered at "Kindness" for over four years, taking care of older people who live alone.

'I work alongside volunteers Eugenia and Antonina. to provide moral, practical, material and medical support to 7 older people whom we visit in the Botanica region of Chisinau.'

Warm House

Beneficiaries and volunteers in all sites used the low cost, flexible 'Warm House' model to provide community-based support. Warm House takes place in a beneficiary or volunteer's home; volunteers organise refreshments and invite other beneficiaries or volunteers. It is a combination of celebration, friendship and spiritual support, but can provide a useful informal setting for consultation. The following quotations give insight into why they are so successful...

"Warm house" is not entirely new; in previous eras people gathered for a "*shezatoare*" and birthdays. So, when the Warm House programme was proposed all our volunteers accepted it.'

'The first Warm House was organised in the home of an older man whose wife had recently died. With his permission, volunteers went to his home and organised a small gathering in memory of his wife. They discussed life, daily problems and departed loved ones. The occasion was very sad but when they said good-bye, the older people said they wanted to gather again.'

V. MARCIUC, Age without Sadness, Cinisauti

'It requires initiative to organise meetings with people, sick and aggrieved because of daily troubles. The name of the meetings is original; I don't know whether the house is warm, but our hearts certainly warm up at these meetings! They have a special significance for each of us.'

ELENA, disabled older person, Chisinau

At a Warm House in Gheorghe and Vera's home on her 79th birthday and their 50th anniversary they discussed newspapers and literary magazines, sang songs and thanked volunteers.

'Volunteers wished Irina happy birthday. Older people remembered their youth, sang and discussed features in "*Babusca*" (Granny) magazine, to which they receive a free subscription.'

Association of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei

'On the International Day of Older People 2003, a Warm House took place at Marina's home, where older people gathered to offer moral and emotional support to each other, chat and to relax. The hostess thanked everybody with tears in her eyes asked them to come again.'

The Hopes of Older People of the North of Moldova, Trinca

NGOs reported extensive use of Warm House as a forum for discussion and feedback from beneficiaries and to thank volunteers for dedicated service (section G). As beneficiaries testify above, this model brings a community to some of its most vulnerable and isolated members.

A final word of advice comes from Orhei, ‘...volunteers should invite selected older people according to common criteria, and otherwise they may experience some unforeseeable behaviour!’

House keeping

Most volunteers give examples of helping beneficiaries with housework, gardening, cooking or paying bills for utilities. This may sound less demanding, but volunteers need to be sensitive because beneficiaries often feel embarrassed by an inability to maintain their home. If disabled, they may rely on ordering possessions in a certain consistent and accessible way.

‘Alexandra lives alone; she has poor sight and hearing, and struggles to support herself. Nina helps tidy up, helps with personal hygiene and upkeep of the garden. With a group of school children, Alexandra arranges for flour to be made at the mill, bakes bread, brings firewood from the forest, cooks, pays public utilities for her and informs her of village and national news.’

The Hopes of Older People of the North of Moldova, Trinca

Healthcare and personal care

‘Older people arrive at the hospital where I work and fear they will not receive treatment because they have no money.

Ivan Grigorencu is 76 and although an invalid, he tries to be active. He used to earn extra money as a night watchman until last autumn when he was working in his garden and felt unwell. He decided to finish work but arriving home he fell down and couldn’t get up again. He was paralyzed. For over 6 months I have visited regularly and try to advise and encourage him.’

Tamara RUSSU, Doctor and volunteer of The Moldovan Nursing Association

‘In 1973 I moved to the building where Iulia lived. She could only move round the room with the support of a stool. She used to live with her daughter, also a pensioner, but her daughter was often in hospital, so I cared for Iulia. I bought her food, medicine, administered injections prescribed by doctors and massage. Iulia died aged 102 and now I care for her daughter.’

Maria CENUSA, volunteer, Association of Kindness, Chisinau

Many older people are poor, live alone or with dependents, and many beneficiaries also suffer temporary debilitating, or sometimes, terminal, illness. Many older people in Moldova experience a healthcare system that is under-resourced, physically and financially inaccessible and at times, corrupt. Doctors, *Primarias* and ‘patients’ alike have therefore welcomed care organised by volunteers who are formally trained in healthcare and can provide direct support to older patients or train fellow volunteers. In the last 2 years, volunteers visited older patients at home and in hospital, organised Warm Houses in the homes of sick patients, informed older people about healthcare and alternative medicine, distributed medicine and where necessary, trained medical volunteers administered injections, in co-ordination with local doctors.

In Trinka, 15 volunteers care for between 3 and 5 older people each in some cases for a certain period of time in others, until the end of their lives. Volunteers from the Moldovan Nursing Association provide homecare for terminally ill patients living alone. Since the project started, volunteers cared for 145 older people.

Nina Orac is a medical assistant and volunteer. With the consent of older patients and supervision of the doctor, she provides skilled help to patients, administering injections and taking blood pressure for three very sick older people. She monitors their state of health and in emergencies, informs the doctor, purchases medicines and if necessary, administers medicine.

Spiritual support, friendship and celebration

'The dependence, isolation, loneliness, and lack of communication often feature in old age generate a range of problems. Together with the physiological, they prevent older people from adapting to social difficulties. As a result, a need for public and medical services increases in later years. Self-help groups support older people who face social isolation, enabling them to communicate, enjoy others' company and encourage each other to face shared problems.'

Elena STEPANOVSKI, The Moldovan Nursing Association

'When we visited one blind older man for the first time, we were horrified to discover his flat infested with cockroaches and rats. Volunteers lobbied the council to decontaminate the flat. During a visit a few weeks later, volunteers noticed that cockroaches and rats had returned. The volunteers asked the man how he thought this was possible. The man replied that he when he was sitting in his chair, he had heard rats scratching at the window, had felt sorry for them and let them in. It haunted me that he had so little self-worth and was so lonely that he could tolerate rats and cockroaches for company.'

Volunteer, Chisinau , October 2004 Dissemination Conference

To the project's older volunteers, their activities gave them a 'sense of pride and responsibility'. One volunteer said, 'reciprocal moral support encourages you to live.' As a result of their project involvement, 23% of interviewees described themselves as 'happy', which is surprising given their inadequate income, poor health and frustrations with ineffectual and corrupt officials.

PAVLIC, A. Summary of Questionnaire Results with Older People, Balti, October 2004

To beneficiaries who participated in support groups and warm houses organised by these volunteers, and who had regular visits, case studies suggest the project generated optimism, hope for the future and a will to live. Beneficiaries repeatedly thanked volunteers for their time, for listening and simply showing that someone was thinking about them.

'Nina is a very active older woman in the spiritual assistance group. She holds daily meetings with older people. They discuss many things connected with the difficulties experienced nowadays. After meetings older people have more enthusiasm and hope for the future.'

Age without Sadness, Ciniseuti

Volunteers and beneficiaries emphasised the importance of religious life, values and the role of the project in this. Volunteers repeatedly cite The Bible as an inspiration in caring for those who are less fortunate than themselves and several beneficiaries noted that volunteer support enabled them to attend church, celebrate Christmas and Easter and read religious books. Echoing HelpAge International's experience in other countries, older people also value volunteers' willingness to support them to organise their own funeral or that of a dependent.

'Volodija and Olga had three children but they all left the village; one daughter lives in Voronej, another in Balti and a son lives in St. Petersburg. In January 2004 Volodija died. One daughter was to bring food for the funeral, but a snowstorm blocked the roads. Volunteers gathered at Gheorghe's house and shared tasks between them. When the daughter arrived, the food was already prepared. After the funeral her daughter wanted to take Olga to Voronej for good, but Olga said such kindness and warmth could not be found elsewhere.'

Alexandra TETIU, Director, Trinca

Humanitarian aid

Knowledge that the project NGOs gained about the situation of older people in their communities and their regular visits to sick, isolated and poor, older people has meant that each NGO distributed food parcels, wheelchairs, clothes or medicine to beneficiaries. They were approached by or lobbied international organisations to distribute aid. Volunteers proudly report that their groups ensured all aid was recorded accurately to ensure fair and honest distribution. According to homecare volunteers, humanitarian aid was often critical in gaining initial access to older beneficiaries who might be slightly suspicious of volunteer motives.

Volunteers used information they had gathered about the most disadvantaged older members in their communities to update lists held by their local Department of Social Protection on those entitled to humanitarian aid and extra concessions in their administrative regions.

Connection to the world

Apart from an opportunity for human contact, many volunteers and beneficiaries enjoy the chance to find out about what is going on in their local communities, nationally and globally.

Volunteer visits, warm houses and support groups give older people opportunities to hear news from their own communities. The NGO network connects older people to compare and contrast their lives and initiatives throughout Northern Moldova. Input from international trainers, HelpAge International's newsletter, *Ageways* and the partner organisations' involvement in a project for older people's organisations throughout South-East Europe, gave older people access to international news and experience. In several project sites, Second Breath subscribed beneficiaries to newspapers free of charge. Volunteers report that this inspired the most isolated community members to take an interest in the world around them.

'Mrs. Dantis tries to keep pace with life and with programmes in Romanian because of her interest in the changes since 1989. She has lived alone for many years because her husband died in the Second World War. Her sister's husband died three years ago and I always find them together although they live in different parts of Orhei. They await me, and the new books I bring. They study them and we discuss together. It makes them optimistic about the future.'

Volunteer, Orhei

Occupational activities and older people

Alexandra Tetiu from Trinca observed, 'the opportunity to work and use their former profession makes older people feel useful to society, they may have additional income to supplement the family budget and serve as a good example of how to live life to the younger generation.'

According to questionnaires completed by older people in all project sites, the pension older people receive is 167-218 lei and 54% try to survive without additional income, (contributions from children or relatives, humanitarian aid or income from small-scale business.) For these older people, the minimum cost of living is on average five times greater than their income.

PAVLIC, A. Summary of Questionnaire Results with Older People, Balti, October 2004

In this project only 9% of older people questioned supplemented their income with any small-scale business. Older people were given the opportunity to select their own activities, and training focused on care provision, advocacy and volunteering, therefore income generation was not a key element of this project. Despite this, in rural areas of Ciniseuti, Trinca and villages around Orhei with appropriate resources, some income generation activities took place. For one older person interviewed in October 2004, these activities were as important in demonstrating the principle of older people deciding for themselves when they retire.

Types of Occupational Activities

The following occupational activities were considered appropriate within the criteria (at the beginning of this section), particularly local expertise and ability to attract volunteers.

In Ciniseuti one group took on the challenging task of rearing rabbits. Many rabbits died over winter and the group had not anticipated the special feed and treatments needed. They persevered to ensure the activity continues and they have learnt a great deal, but it has not generated much income. Bee keeping and production of honey were more successful income generation activities because of the leadership of Matei Lujan.

With the expertise of group leader Mr. Zingaliuc, another group in Ciniseuti revived the last remaining traditional pottery 'micro-factory'. Inspired by project meetings and financially supported by the Association, the 63 year-old started making whistles and these were exhibited all over Northern Moldova, impressing both locals and international people. 'As the first group in Ciniseuti, this led the way in demonstrating that older people have the right to self-fulfillment and can earn an income by themselves to overcome difficulties they face in Moldova.'

A final group in Ciniseuti cultivates medicinal herbs, a particularly successful activity given that most older people cannot afford to buy medicine and still believe in alternative folk therapies.

In Trinca a group of older people led by 80-year-old Vasile Gudumac, used his vocational expertise to dig 80 wells to irrigate crops and collect water for drinking. Another local elderly couple keep bees, have a hive and sell their honey and Professor Dumitru Bajureanu leads a group of older people researching the archaeology of the village. Several older people in Trinca earn small sums of money growing pot plants and vegetable cuttings like the Gudumacs.

Volunteers from Ciniseuti report that occupational support groups had greater impact on older people's financial problems not through significant and sustainable income generation, but because older people were encouraged to share experience and purchases to make money go further. Support groups provide information about organisations offering humanitarian aid and where members can buy cheaper products. Many older people do not have experience of

administering their own finances, so when a partner passes away, or they lose this ability due to illness, support groups also help them to allocate their budget so that limited resources, are not wasted. To facilitate more successful and sustainable income generation activities more specific project training in business and market analysis and planning would be necessary.

Older people and advocacy and media activities

'An older man from the village of Tipala-laloveni writes to the newspaper: "All my three children left the country, work illegally in Italy, all of them have higher education, and two grandchildren are left under the guardianship of two sick and helpless older people."

Whose rights have been violated?

- *the rights of his children, because they don't have jobs and had to leave their children,*
- *the grandchildren, because they miss their parents and are devoid of parental warmth,*
- *the older people, because they cannot choose to relax in old age?'*

In this project groups of older volunteers were trained to design and implement advocacy and media campaigns at a local and national level. Many of these made reference to the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR) and the United Nations Principles for Older People which international governments including Moldova signed up to in 2001. See Annex 1

Advocacy is a process of using information strategically to change policies or lack of policy that affect lives of vulnerable people. Through this process older people articulate their own needs and desires, gain confidence and an ability to influence decisions affecting their own future.

It is clear from the statements of older people themselves that advocacy can and has helped to change hearts and minds, through increased awareness of the issues and a belief in their own ability to make a difference. Older people themselves, people in the community and policy makers have become better informed with varying degrees of success.

To ensure consistency of **national advocacy** messages across the 5 sites, volunteers from network NGOs began detailed planning together during the seminar. Following their training the Moldovan network released a declaration to the media and government departments in preparation for International Day of Older People 2003, illustrating their joint principles.

OCTOBER 1 2003 – THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PEOPLE

We are one of the most vulnerable social layers of people and many of us live in poverty, Our number continues to rise in society, soon we'll constitute 20% out of the total population of the country,

Approximately 30 000 of the elderly die every year. 87% die at home without adequate assistance. What can be worse than being old, poor, hungry and dying alone?

We are still active, we are able and we want to help the society and ourselves.

We are asking you to pay attention to us:

- *To implement the UN principles recommended for older people in Moldova (independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment, and dignity).*
- *To implement the UN Strategy of the Second World Assembly on Ageing at a statutory level. Including this Strategy in the National Program of Gerontology.*
- *To draw special attention to the elderly in the poverty reduction strategy of Moldova (reform of pensions, and of the medical and social services).*

This declaration followed a brainstorming session and participant vote on the subject of an advocacy campaign. Here is an example of small group discussions:

'Older people need accurate information to make them aware of their rights and to participate actively in every day life

1. What evidence do you have on this issue? Give concrete examples supporting the message
Some pensions are insufficient to enable older people to subscribe to publications.

Radio does not reach some rural areas. Lack of TV and radio shows on older people's problems. Lack of access for older people to express opinions on radio and TV

2. What further evidence do you need to support your message? How will you get this?

Submitting requests to subscribe vulnerable older people to newspapers for free. Involving volunteers in distribution of newspapers, leaflets and current information to the older population. Presentation by mass media of the rights and active participation of older people in every day life. Organising weekly shows on older people's problems on radio and TV

3. Which individuals and government departments influence policy and practice on this issue?

Department of Social Assistance in the Ministry of Work; sponsors; local administration; NGOs; Departments of social assistance; mass media. Lets invite to conference - Chief of Social Assistance Dept; representatives of government and parliament dealing with these issues

4. What methods will you use to deliver your message (before and at the conference)?

Produce video clips from the real lives of older people. Campaign to inform older people of rights and their active participation in every day life

5. How will you involve older people in the campaign?

Group meetings, warm houses, promoting positive examples, experience exchange. '

During the advocacy seminar, participants began to work on ideas for inclusion in letters to be written on behalf of the whole group. Three volunteers agreed to draft letters that were submitted to the Steering Group in April. Here is the group plan for one-such letter:

'Letter Two: To the Head of Social Assistance - suggestions for the new proposed law on volunteering and the role (and funding) of NGOs.

- *Define the notion of volunteering - the mission and vision*
- *Methods of stimulating volunteers*
- *Volunteers rights and obligations*
- *Specify categories of volunteers*
- *Specify services offered by volunteers*
- *Offering financial resources for developing a volunteer movement*
- *Involving NGOs in the volunteer movement'*

'I was one of the group of older people who, on behalf of "Kindness" met with the President of the Moldovan Parliament on social problems. At the time of writing, we have been advised that the reform of the law on social assistance will be reviewed together with older people '

On a **local level**, older people developed strong advocacy initiatives. In all project sites, volunteers influenced information held by the Directorate of Social Assistance and Town Hall about older people in need of urgent financial help, by organising regular meetings with representatives of these two bodies and preparation of necessary documents. As one of Orhei's volunteer co-ordinators (herself a volunteer) said, 'before I was aware of volunteering, I dealt personally with all these difficult cases. When a case was reported, I went to the older person's address, studied their situation, reported it to the Town Hall or Directorate of Social Assistance and they sent paid employees to prepare documents for material or financial help.' The role of the association cuts out time delays and saves the council money which can be used to sustain low cost volunteer care services. Over the last 3 years, the association ensured 3000 older people received humanitarian aid including 780 older people this year.

'An important aspect of the association's activities has been gathering and collation of information about legislation and implementation of laws affecting the lives of older people. We submitted this and our proposals about legislation that would improve the situation of older people and how to better observe and implement existing legislation to key official institutions.

As a result of our lobbying, in 2003 the Municipal Social Support Foundation allocated 15 000 lei to 50 older beneficiaries. For the celebration of Easter, the Social Support Foundation assigned 3750 lei to 25 older people, paid 100 lei to each pensioner from Trusenii older than 70 in 2003 and in 2004, 1400 pensioners and invalids received 16 kg of pasta each.'

Republican Association "Kindness", Chisnau

In Orhei, the association negotiated with Orhei Centre of Rights, (part of the Pro Democratia Association) to open a branch where older people access weekly consultations free of charge. Many older people voiced a need for legal consultations, but these are usually very expensive and older people are often considered timewasters, so this is a popular service.

'Galina is blind and leads a difficult and lonely life since her husband and son were buried. The water company refused to change her drinking water pipe until she paid 600 lei. She paid, but went hungry and was left with unpaid public utilities. Even when the pipe was replaced, the water was not connected. Despite this, the company sent invoices regularly. She tried to bring water from the well, but stumbled, fell down, hurt herself badly and could not get up. Luckily, a former pupil was passing by, helped her up, led her home and brought her water.

When we heard about her situation, we contacted "Apa-canal" demanding they connect her to the water supply. We applied to the Town Hall to allocate material help so that she could repay her debts for public utilities and buy food. We selected two volunteers to support her"

Volunteer, Orhei

Older volunteers also took up **local advocacy campaigns that affected a cross-section of generations in the community**. The following example is taken from Trinca:

'For generations, village inhabitants burnt limestone to produce lime for a living. To burn a pit of lime 15-20 people, stone and fuel for burning are needed. There are about 45-50 pits around the village. Fuel has become more expensive, so villagers started to burn oil or used tyres.

Without warning, because toxic gases released into the atmosphere have a negative impact on public health, representatives of the Centre of Preventive Medicine and the Economic Police,

bulldozed 15- lime pits. For nearly three years lime burners were embroiled in a legal battle with representatives of these bodies, hoping to be compensated for the money they lost, all in vain. The lime is necessary for whitewashing and for disinfection of wells throughout Moldova and Ukraine; this is apart from the impact on family budgets of the lime burners.

Villagers asked if the state was prepared to exercise the same sanctions against industrial enterprises situated in town centres, who also pollute the air?

Volunteers liaised with the local administration and secured agreement with the Centre for Preventative Medicine to permit the continued activity of the lime producers. One person was designated responsible for the burning schedule, permitting only 2 limekilns a day with fires made only with firewood.'

Volunteers found that **the media** were generally receptive to the accounts of older volunteers from the project. Several of the NGOs timed their media activities around 1st October as International Day of Older People, although the target in each setting may have been different.

Whilst a radio broadcast about alternative therapies by a volunteer from the Moldovan Association of Nurses was targeted at older people themselves, in Trinca a traditional village 'shazatore' event was filmed by local and national television and covered in local and national newspapers, and as an intergenerational event, attracted the attention of the wider community.

The Association of Kindness, used publications distributed to the media and ruling officials on the systematic violations of older people's constitutional rights. A handful of the articles published by volunteers include: "The alpha and omega of land privatization", "Wills and land", "Pensioners endure hunger", "Taking bread from the mouths of older people", "Indexation is postponed", "Guide to the International Year of Older People", "The bill on the law on veterans".

'After the seminar on working with mass media older participants from Age without Sadness used their new-found knowledge to write a press release addressed to other older people all over the country to give them hope. This was printed in several national newspapers.'

High levels of media coverage are in part explained by the volunteers' careful forward planning:

- Long –term development of case studies and other materials for campaigns
- Discussing materials that are published with older volunteers and beneficiaries
- Ongoing contact with journalists

Throughout this project, the **enthusiasm and commitment** of older people and their NGOs, aided by receptive media and journalists were probably the most effective advocacy. In all 5 sites, more volunteers were attracted to activities than envisaged, many older beneficiaries heard about care received by their contemporaries and asked for help, and older people's groups from the South of Moldova requested extension of the project to their communities.

Fundraising by older volunteers

As a result of volunteer cooperation with government and charitable organisations, in the last 10 months, 200 people received warm dinners in the canteens of "The Red Cross", "Caritas Moldova", "the House of the Providence", café "Codru" and the canteens in the "Mevon" factory. The Association of Pensioners "Kindness" would like to express its gratitude to "The Moldovan Red Cross" for supplying free dinners, clothes for 120 people, 90 food parcels, and 80 packs for personal hygiene.

Volunteers from Kindness found sponsors to help in the following ways:

- Since September 2000, "Union Fenosa" provided free meals for 20 people every month. At the time of writing 160 poor older people have been fed. This scheme continues.
- Following written communications from a volunteer of the association, the Town Hall allocated 5000 lei in financial help to 50 poor older people during the winter months.
- With the support of the social assistance department of Botanica region 10 tickets for free hair cuts are distributed on a monthly basis to the most disadvantaged older people
- The store for pensioners "Benefactor" provides discount clothes for older people
- Iurie Dodon, director of the market "Fina", distributed food parcels when one of the programs "Warm House" was organised

'The Orhei Association for Veterans and Pensioners obtained 32,5 hectares of land from the Mayor, which the association divided amongst one thousand older people who are active and willing to work the land and grow fruits and vegetables. Older volunteers plough and prepare the land for planting. The association has also made contact with "Save the Elderly and Children" in Germany through F. Lichtgolz, a former doctor of Orhei. This organisation sent spectacles, medication, crutches, hearing aids, food, and wheel chairs and used clothes.'

'Vasile Botoroga is always active and full of joy. He inspires optimism in his beneficiaries and gives them the strength to get through their difficulties. When people complained to him that the bridge across the river was broken and they could not get into town, he went to the Town Hall and demanded the repair of the bridge. He found a sponsor who acquired the wood and in three days the bridge was rebuilt and the whole population of the town thanked him for it.'

Volunteer's accounts, Orhei

Winning Funds:

The Association Kindness was particularly successful in fundraising from local businesses through applying the following principles:

- *Thanking them for the meeting*
- *Thinking about a good time to approach.*
- *Not giving up*
- *Maintaining contact by sending information about activities*
- *Inviting to older people's meetings and events*
- *Thanking in a public way*

At the fundraising seminar in June 2004, participants considered the following joint fundraising activities that might form part of a project between the network member NGOs starting in 2005:

- An exhibition of items made by older people (with items for sale)
- A Miss Grandma and Mr Grandpa contest
- Writing a declaration to government about older people's issues signed by all NGOs
- Joint lobbying
- A Round Table meeting with all beneficiaries from different locations
- A concert with older people's bands from different locations, singers and dancers etc
- Opening a bathing and hairdressing place for older people run by volunteers
- An event to recognise contributions made by older people in each community
- Recognising the oldest inhabitants
- Recognising those who have been married for 50 years

From their experience of fundraising participants developed the following key principles:

- Make sure you do good research and really know what you want the money for
- Find out as much as possible about the donor (the way to his heart)
- Funding for real needs, and having realistic targets
- Donors look for sustainable projects
- Cooperation between groups for funding
- Putting yourself in the shoes of the donor (what will they be looking for?)
- Knowing as much as possible about the donor
- Involving beneficiaries at all stages (this will impress donors)
- Be insistent with donors
- Lobbying and advertising to raise the profile of the organisation
- Good planning is essential
- Diverse funding - local, national, international
- Find ways to bring benefits to local business donors (e.g. public thanks)
- Think about local activities to raise money (lotteries, sponsored events, selling products etc)
- It is a competitive arena - be innovative, find new ideas to impress the donor

Managing funds and donated resources

Of their experience of managing funds and donated resources The Association of Kindness volunteers ensured that donors were publicly thanked and importantly *'drew up documents as required and controlled all material goods ensuring that they were deposited in such a way as no one could use them for their own personal interests. The commission included older volunteers from the association Kindness. When an attempt was made to illicitly remove some of the humanitarian aid, this was reported and recorded.'*



SUPPORTING, MOTIVATING AND RETAINING VOLUNTEERS AND OLDER PEOPLES' GROUPS

Providing support

Volunteers, beneficiaries and older people's NGOs all noted that working with older beneficiaries could at times be challenging. Volunteers witness poverty and injustices against older people that make them angry, they may feel frustrated by the limited support they can personally provide and many volunteers experience the death of one of their older beneficiaries or fellow volunteers. Older people and their NGOs in all sites developed support mechanisms for volunteers, and in turn, older people's representatives and NGO leaders received support and guidance from Second Breath, HelpAge International and each other, on the project steering group.

Both in Trinka and Orhei, project reports emphasised the role of volunteer trainer- co-ordinators. More experienced volunteers provide guidance to members of homecare teams and in the case of Orhei, each supports 6-7 volunteers. Co-ordinators ensure that volunteers have the opportunity to **meet regularly with each other to discuss** difficult situations they have found themselves in or any beneficiaries that the group feel need additional support. The group also have the opportunity to mentor newer volunteers and up-date lists of beneficiaries who are most in need of their services.

The following from The Moldovan Association of Nursing illustrates the importance of support groups for volunteers to share feelings, 'off-load' and obtain a second opinion:

'Volunteers are encouraged to share their experiences and explore new models of working. They are invited to listen to each other and to support each other by exchanging information and advice. Support groups offer older people the chance to demonstrate their wisdom and to use their experience.'

Another crucial element of support is recognising when **additional training and information** is needed to fulfil the volunteers' planned activities. In section F we explored some of the training volunteers received throughout the project. Additional training was provided for example by HelpAge International South East European Network member, The Romanian Alzheimer's Association, in response to training needs identified by volunteers in the course of their activities.

'Our work would not have had full effect without the instruction at seminars and meetings regularly run by Second Breath and HelpAge International who continually shared their knowledge and practice in the sphere of volunteering and older people. We are able to train our volunteers and ensure the well-being of sick and weak people.'

Volunteer Co-ordinator, Orhei Association for Veterans and Pensioners

The network gave NGOs the opportunity to improve the quality of volunteering through co-operation with other organisations. When older people's representatives and NGO leaders met at training events and steering group meetings, participants shared experiences so that learning enhanced the quality of all network NGOs' activities.

'Even we as group of leaders, had things to learn from each other. Every time we met we shared experience from our volunteering practice and successes we achieved.'

Elena STEMPOVSCAIA, Moldovan Association of Nursing

Although project activities were largely informal so that volunteering remained accessible to older people and others in the community, volunteers established their own **procedures** to provide support to new and existing volunteers and beneficiaries. For example, in The Association Kindness, volunteers take particular pride in the records they keep both of visits to beneficiaries and of humanitarian aid distributed.

'The volunteers accepted the new requirements and liked the new conditions in which they volunteered, because they felt that when working with vulnerable older people, volunteers need to demonstrate an ability to communicate and to give beneficiaries the opportunity to share their thoughts, loneliness and feelings of helplessness.'

Volunteer Co-ordinator, Orhei Association for Veterans and Pensioners

Finally, another form of support identified by volunteers is **recognising the limits** of the older people and volunteers. This includes appropriate selection of volunteers for activities for which professional training or life experience prepares them or instructing volunteers to be honest with beneficiaries about things they cannot provide.

Motivating volunteers and older participants

Older people's NGOs on the project were very good at supporting their volunteers, but it is not just this support that ensured older people remained committed to the project...

'2-3 years ago we did these activities almost mechanically, like a job, but without the same results. Then a time came when our eyes and our beneficiaries' eyes were opened. We had a new understanding of the process of helping vulnerable people, an understanding of people who help without material gain. This change in understanding took place when the project with HelpAge International and Second Breath began.'

Volunteer, Orhei Association for Veterans and Pensioners

'...Warm houses were unforgettable; they were like holidays for older people involved... At Christmas volunteers organised home visits with food parcels and teams of carol singers. This was a ray of light for these older people... At Easter volunteers went to the theatre, to church, had the Easter cake blessed and took it to older patients.

A range of activities was organised for the support groups of volunteers. On the International Day of Older People a free excursion was organised to the National Museum, where none of the volunteers had been before. A roundtable was organised and the rights and problems of older people were discussed. The volunteers were congratulated by representatives of Help Age International, Second Breath and by the head of the Nursing Association. On this occasion the volunteers received small gifts.'

'As an effective means of showing appreciation to volunteers the NGO organises a social gathering and a programme chosen by older people themselves.'

Volunteers, Moldovan Association of Nursing

'A meeting was organised in the ex-sanatorium situated near the village. Volunteers walked around the grounds, remembered their youth, their first loves; remembered what a good sana-

torium it had been. The older people held a celebratory lunch with traditional village dishes and the association gave them food parcels.'

Valeriu MARCIUC, Age without Sadness, Cinisauti

'In Trinka and Edinet volunteers and older people supported by the project worked for three weeks to prepare a presentation of their activities and informal social event. The participants were very enthusiastic. Everybody was delighted to take part in the gathering and proud to be the first in the village to gather and remember the past. They rehearsed 2 to 4 hours a day and consulted other people from the village.'

Alexandra TETIU, The Hopes of Older People of Northern Moldova

Some methods used to increase motivation include:

- An outing for volunteers
- A presentation ceremony and certificates
- A warm house event with fellow volunteers and beneficiaries
- Inviting the volunteer to become more involved in project steering groups etc.
- Small gifts such as food parcels, handicrafts made by older beneficiaries
- Media coverage or events to showcase their activities to local communities
- Ensuring volunteers have the opportunity to input into project design
- Ensuring positive feedback from the beneficiaries is passed on to volunteers
- Attendance at project network training event

Like older beneficiaries, volunteers are different from each other. Some people like attention; other volunteers appreciate more discrete recognition.

This project illustrated that when volunteers are supported and motivated, they tend to be impressively dedicated to their activities. Many older volunteers have already committed nearly 2 intensive years of volunteering to older beneficiaries and rather than recruitment to replace a constant watershed of volunteers, the NGOs have all witnessed a steady growth in the number of volunteers. Visibly committed volunteers are a strong advocacy tool for the rights and interests of older people, and civil society as a whole.

Challenges for volunteers and organisations

In the final stage of the project it may be possible to forget significant challenges faced by older people, NGO leaders and the two partner organisations, but these challenges shaped the creative and locally appropriate models. In keeping with the participatory nature of the project, older people as beneficiaries, volunteers and NGO leaders led the process of identifying and implementing solutions to the challenges below.

Mentality

At the October 2004 dissemination conference, older volunteers and NGO leaders from the current project highlighted the challenge of working with the expectation that someone else would always be responsible for changing the situation people find themselves in. Several presenters linked this to the Soviet experience under which a majority of the popu-

lation had little control over their own destiny but became accustomed to receiving guaranteed benefits from the State. Presenters reported that this ‘mentality’ meant that some people were reluctant to participate without an initial material incentive or that at first, they found the concept of volunteering difficult to accept because they felt the state should provide services to older people.

This problem eased as the project progressed and potential volunteers and beneficiaries witnessed the enthusiasm of existing project participants, but in the earlier stages of the project organisers had to identify creative solutions to this challenge. Volunteers and beneficiaries were presented with food parcels in several of the project sites as a means to engage with them sufficiently to listen to a presentation of the project objectives and question them about their needs and potential activities. Older people in Orhei and Trinca may have seemed more receptive from the outset of the project because activities were presented as being in keeping with existing informal support systems to which older people were already accustomed.

Mistrust and suspicion of older people

‘Some beneficiaries refuse to receive volunteers without any material or financial support. For instance, Mr. Stici is an invalid with sight problems and paralysis of his right arm and leg. After extensive treatment he learnt to walk again with a crutch. Mr. Stici has to walk, because his wife is seriously ill, and had many expensive operations in Chisinau. Volunteers felt that Mr. Stici is angry at the whole world. The first time he sent the volunteers away because they hadn’t brought anything for him. The volunteer co-ordinator intervened personally, explaining the aims of the group, preparing documents for the Town Hall and helping Mr. Stici to get an extra 300 lei. Since then the volunteers gained his trust. Now Mr. Stici is a volunteer himself, and helps his blind neighbour.’

‘As volunteers, we are optimists. If at the beginning beneficiaries do not trust us, we are usually able to persuade them that our motives are benevolent, and eventually they receive us with an open heart, listen to us and greet us with kind supportive words. If we give them help of any other kind, we gain their full trust.’

Volunteer Co-ordinator, Association for Veterans and Pensioners, Orhei

These comments from Orhei illustrate the suspicions that some volunteers faced when trying to support project beneficiaries. Volunteers completing a questionnaire in Autumn 2004 felt that many older people are fed up with only talking about problems and politicians who break promises once elected. Some older people felt the project might be another instance of this and sought to shield themselves from more disappointment.

Again as the project progressed, older people have heard through fellow beneficiaries and media reports that the project had an impact on many people’s lives, but at the outset of the project, volunteers and NGO leaders needed to establish credibility.

They did this through persistence, listening patiently to older people’s frustrations and their ideas for how their situations could be improved, and in some cases, through providing small amounts of material aid in the form of food parcels.

Consultation and participation

‘In Ciniseuti, the local NGO and volunteers initially chose activities which older people within

the community were not interested in as a result of limited consultation. It was necessary to review work and plan activities that older people expressed interest in.'

HelpAge International report, December 2003

According to HelpAge International's global experience, the most important factor in the success of activities with older people- particularly those who are expected to benefit from or implement the project- is the participation of these older people at every stage of the project's design, implementation and evaluation. This is reflected in the following feedback from Association of Veterans and Pensioners of Orhei:

'At project seminars, trainings and conferences, the organisation gathered its members and discussed how to arrange initial volunteering activities with older people in Orhei. The idea was popular with the Association members from the outset and more than 20 people enrolled, eager to become volunteers.'

The first stage of this process began before a project application was submitted to the European Commission, when Second Breath and HelpAge International interviewed groups of older people and their NGOs to identify the most vulnerable older people in potential project areas, their needs and ideas about what was needed for their situation to improve. At the beginning of implementation, older people's NGOs (see Section C) were supported to use participatory techniques in meetings with older people to identify how each group would use their budget for 'mini activities'.

Within the context of a funded project, the participatory process can be frustratingly slow. It is often necessary for NGOs to conduct several meetings to ensure older people- beneficiaries and project participants- have the opportunity to consider what will make a difference, what resources, skills and experience they currently have at their disposal, how money will be used and how they can collect evidence of activity impact. It is tempting to 'encourage' the discussion along in the direction the NGO hopes activities will go. In order to combat this, ideally as in the case of Orhei, older people will facilitate their own discussions, or they will be briefed in advance to 'observe' NGO facilitators and monitor levels of participation.

Another related challenge is ensuring that an appropriate balance of ethnic groups, genders and social strata participate. The balance of participants within the group will have a considerable effect on needs identified and activities chosen and it may mean the exclusion of the most vulnerable older members of the community. For example, several of the groups found there were significantly less men participating than women. With varied levels of success they considered where men might gather in the community and encouraged male participants to introduce their contacts. Groups might also reconsider the methods they are using with the group, where they are meeting or who is facilitating discussions.

Barriers to older people

Other potential challenges relate to unconscious barriers that prevent certain groups from participating. A selection identified by older people on this project include:

- Access to meeting venues. Do older people need to take transport? Do they need to pay to get there? Do group members have mobility problems?
- Assumptions about older people. In one group an older person was assumed to be Christian but was actually Muslim. Volunteers realised afterwards that this might have caused offence and could have excluded this participant due to where and when meetings were held or refreshments provided.

- External events distract people. One group found that older people had to look after crops because of the hot weather; on another occasion elections were taking place and during another meeting, the census was conducted!

Everyone makes assumptions; the key learning point was to try to be aware of making them. Events should ideally always be planned with older people, to ask where it is easy for them to meet, about their beliefs and about events taking place. Of course, some things cannot be planned and even the best plans are disrupted by the weather!

Engaging other stakeholders

A key project activity was to target government, NGOs and other stakeholders with advocacy led by older people, but all project participants knew from the start that this would be a major challenge. Here are a few reflections on project stakeholders by older volunteers and beneficiaries:

- ‘The laws are written but not observed, especially by officials at different levels’;
- ‘We need less praise and more sincerity on behalf of officials’;
- ‘If non-governmental organisations were less sporadic and would unite in a network independent from officials, it would be possible to work with them’

PAVLIC, A. Summary of Questionnaire Results with Older People, Balti, October 2004

This feedback was gathered at the end of the project because despite major achievements, older people experienced many set backs in their advocacy activities. Reflecting on these in a later seminar, participants identified the following learning points:

- Define primary targets - people in the best position to achieve what you want. If your chosen route to decision-makers is not working, look for a new ‘way in’.
- Spend time developing relationships with targets. Think about them in terms of individuals not institutions. Learn what you can about them.
- Follow-up on commitments you think people have made - Beware of paper victories and false starts.
- Don’t underestimate the time needed - advocacy is long term, policy change is slow and can be reversed.
- Work as a team. Successful advocacy requires a range of skills, including research, communication, project management and policy skills.
- Work in a participatory way to root your advocacy in the experiences and views of disadvantaged people and understand the impact that policy has on their lives.

Limitations of volunteer work

Older people and their NGOs identified recognition of their limits as a key characteristic of potential volunteers, but in practice some of the most committed and experienced volunteers found saying no, thinking of their own needs, a major challenge. Volunteers who commit to do something for those more vulnerable than themselves often need to be particularly self-disciplined and receive very good support from fellow volunteers and NGOs to be able to recognise their own limitations.

‘Mr. Vidru, a war veteran, has open wounds all over his body and doctors cannot do anything for him. The family is in despair and Mr. Vidru screams from pain all day and night. No matter

who comes to visit, Mr. Vidru demands medicine to alleviate his pain through death. His wife has no more cloth to spread under him and unsurprisingly, although they help as much as possible volunteers feel their words are superfluous.'

Volunteer, Anonymous

Funding

Despite the successes outlined in section D and others not mentioned here, several older volunteers felt that fundraising has not and will not 'make a sustained impact on the eradication of the poverty of older people'. Despite increased understanding of how to lobby potential sponsors, and improved sponsor and government understanding of the role of older people and their activities, some obstacles will take a long time to address and may only be possible with sustained government support.

Older volunteers identified the following key obstacles to fundraising in Moldova:

- Legislation does not encourage people to make donations
- Lack of understanding by businessmen towards NGOs
- Indifference of potential sponsors
- State organisations do not understand older people
- Our activities are non-profit which does not attract sponsors
- Competition between NGOs for funding
- Lack of traditions in Moldova for sponsoring

Despite these points, older people and their NGOs expressed their intention to continue with many of the low-cost activities once project funding ceased.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

'It would be nice if people became old and could choose to sit in a chair, read their book or play with the grandchildren. Nowadays, older people are considered a burden to society and nobody cares about them.'

Alexandra Tetiu, Director, The Hopes of Older People of the Northern Moldova

The experience of NGOs and older people on this project confirms that the majority of older people have been severely affected by transition from the Soviet system. There is a dramatic imbalance between older people's income and the cost of living; many older people face additional expenses through obligations to support dependents such as grandchildren whose parents are working abroad, and expensive medicines or health treatments. The social impact of these economic changes and the post-Soviet shrinkage of state services and budgets has been the isolation of certain parts of the population, in particular older people living alone or with debilitating illness.

Preliminary project research indicates that older people feel that despite these pressures, their quality of life has been greatly enhanced by involvement in self-help activities and they still feel a strong sense of responsibility to care for fellow members of their community.

The following are a few of the concluding remarks from older people and their NGOs:

- 'Old age is part of the programme of every person's life, and it is a process which can be accelerated or slowed down depending on their conditions of existence.'
- 'As a result of the project, for a substantial number of older people in Moldova, life has become more interesting and they have been inspired to lead a more active life.'
- 'The most active older people from the village realised they could unite, help others and try to encourage them not to fall into despair.'
- 'A key factor in the Association's improved performance is participation at seminars and collaboration with NGOs from the network working with and for older people.'
- 'We help older people to integrate into society. In this way people become better informed, participate actively in everyday life, feel more important and necessary.'
- 'Personal care; information about older people's rights and what is going on in the world; emotional support are all realisable services and there is great demand for them.'

Local pilot NGOs have shown that self-help models can be integrated into local communities in Moldova and are important to the development of civil society institutions to compliment statutory state services. Initial resistance to the concept of volunteering has been replaced by a desire to be part of an active volunteer network. Regular meetings take place in all sites and older people developed locally appropriate mechanisms to recruit, train, support and motivate their volunteers. The project shows that civil society organisations can be built at grass roots level in Moldova and older people can and do organise themselves for the benefit of the wider community.

Based on the feedback of older volunteers and beneficiaries, and participant NGOs the following recommendations are made:

a) NGOs:

- Are encouraged to seek further information about this project through Second Breath and HelpAge International
- Consult older people on how they are affected by their (NGOs') activities and how older people can contribute to the resolution of specific community problems
- Consider how they can share more information about their activities to ensure greater complementarity and learning from each other's experiences
- Seek to be more transparent about relationships with official and state institutions
- Campaign together on common concerns like the proposed law on volunteering

b) State institutions in Moldova:

- Ensure adequate resources are allocated to the development of volunteer-run social assistance services
- Consult extensively and co-ordinate activities with older people and their NGOs on issues relating to well-being of older people, whether in relation to pensions, to the proposed strategy on ageing, or specific sector issues like local transport strategies
- Implement the commitments on older people signed up to by the Moldovan government in Madrid in 2002 and seek advice from older people's NGOs, Second Breath and HelpAge International on how to do this
- Reward officials who demonstrate accountable government and foster effective partnerships with civil society organisations in their work

c) Recommendations to international institutions:

- Ensure older people feature in development and implementation of country Poverty Reduction Strategies
- Monitor country performance against international agreements such as The Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing
- Invite older people's NGOs to apply for funding for their activities and consider how to improve access to funding opportunities for less experienced community groups
- Ensure the situation of older people features in any negotiations for strengthening ties to or accession to the EU

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