

# **Sustainable Development in an Ageing World:**

A call to UN Member States on the development agenda beyond 2015

*"To ensure sustainable development we need to know how many people inhabit the planet now and how many will be added in the years to come... We need to know how old they are and how age distribution will change. Population growth and aging, migration and urbanization affect all development objectives."*<sup>1</sup>

*"Countries with an ageing population need policy responses to support the elderly so as to remove barriers to their full participation in society while protecting their rights and dignity."*<sup>2</sup>

We welcome these statements from the UN Secretary-General and the following suggestions he made in his report to Member States<sup>3</sup>:

- Recognise age as one of the cross-cutting issues that must be taken into account across all goals and targets;
- Create a universal rights-based framework;
- Eradicate poverty in all its forms for all people;
- Leave no one behind by tackling inequality and exclusion, including removing barriers to the full participation of all people in society regardless of age, disability and gender;
- Promote inclusive growth, decent employment, social protection and ensuring access to all for essential services;
- Improve health by addressing universal healthcare coverage, access and affordability, and address the burden of non-communicable diseases;
- Promote better accountability through a 'data revolution' with age disaggregated data –to measure and monitor progress by age, gender and disability to capture gaps within and between population groups.

Recalling the statement of the UN System Task Team's report on population dynamics: *"A post-2015 development agenda should account for a progressively and rapidly ageing world by promoting healthy ageing and economic well-being in old age, and by providing enabling and supportive environments where older people are integrated into the development process as an asset rather than a burden."*<sup>4</sup>, we reiterate our concern that there is still a lack of a consistent, strong and positive narrative on global population ageing.

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<sup>1</sup> UN Secretary-General's Video Message to the 27th Annual Conference of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, Busnan, 26 August 2013.

<sup>2</sup> A/68/202 : *A life of Dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015*: United Nations, New York, 2013

<sup>3</sup> A/68/202 : *A life of Dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015*: United Nations, New York, 2013

<sup>4</sup> *Population dynamics*, UN System Task Team on the Post-2015 UN Development Agenda, May 2012

The effect of rapid population ageing across the world is that we are entering into the era of the 'age bulge', where by 2030 there will be more people over 60 than children under 10. By 2050, there will be 2 billion older people in the planet, the majority of whom will be women - current figures show that there are 84 men for every 100 women over the age of 60<sup>5</sup> - and most older people will be living in developing countries<sup>6</sup>. This is why we must ensure that the voices of older women and men are heard and their participation facilitated in the development of the post 2015 framework.

We support Beyond 2015's call for a single universal development framework which takes into account poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, inequality, human rights and global responsibility. Older people are contributors to sustainable development and poverty eradication. Lifetime inequalities of income, education, employment, health, disability and gender are likely to increase with age and must be recognised. Discrimination on the basis of age is still widespread in all regions of the world.

Therefore to ensure that the post-2015 development framework truly 'leaves no one behind', is inclusive of older people along with others and addresses the rights and needs of people of all ages, we insist that **population dynamics, including global population ageing, must be taken into account across all goals, targets and indicators for the post-2015 sustainable development framework to be effective and legitimate.**

We make the following recommendations to UN Member States:

- The post-2015 sustainable development framework must be **human rights based** for all people of all ages and abilities. All goals and their targets must take account of the rights of people at all stages of their lives, from cradle to grave. The specific abuse and discrimination faced by older women must be recognised and stopped.
- The 'data revolution' called for by the High level Panel and the Secretary General must give priority to improved **data collection and reporting** which ensures **all data be collected, disaggregated, analysed and disseminated for all ages up to and over 100**, as well as by gender and disability. Goals and targets adopted by Member States must be measurable and accountable to all their citizens, and have specific data on older age groups. Data must be age disaggregated to show how policies and budgets - including those to ensure regular income, education, decent work, protection in conflict and humanitarian crises and a supportive and safe environment - are delivering to all across the life-course.

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<sup>5</sup> *Ageing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: a celebration and challenge*, chapter 1 page 27: UNFPA and HelpAge International: London 2013

<sup>6</sup> *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, UNFPA. <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>

- The framework should have a goal on universal **social protection and decent work for all people of all ages and abilities**. Social protection and decent work are at the heart of the social contract between the State and its subjects. Social protection floors are rights-based, nationally owned and have clear measurable objectives. They play a distinctive role in poverty eradication and good governance and underpin the realisation of multiple goals beyond poverty and inequality.
- Any health goals within the framework should be framed to **maximize healthy life expectancy at all stages of life**, including universal health coverage to ensure the health of girls, boys, women and men across the life-course.<sup>7</sup> With three quarters of the global burden of chronic and non-communicable disease affecting people over the age of 60, special emphasis must be given to diagnosis, care and effective treatment of older people.
- The framework should have a **gender equality goal with indicators and targets that are inclusive of all people of all ages and abilities**. Lifetime gender based inequalities often result in older women experiencing financial and physical abuse and discrimination, along with poor health and increasing disability. Older men also face economic and social exclusion and discrimination linked to ageing.

We look forward to a dynamic and universal response to ageing in the framework. As population structures change, laws, policies, social attitudes and institutional practices must do the same. UN Member States have an historic opportunity to ensure that the next global development framework takes a life-course approach that will help ensure sustainable and equitable development for people of all ages and abilities.

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<sup>7</sup> *Advanced unedited copy: Progress report on the work of the General Assembly Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals at its first four sessions, paragraphs 87-89*  
<http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1927interimreport.pdf>



This statement is endorsed by the following organisations:

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| AARP  | HelpAge International                       |
| ACAMAGE, Cameroon                             | HelpAge USA                                 |
| ADD International                             | IAGG  |
| Age Action Ireland                            | IAHSA                                       |
| Age International                             | ILC Global Alliance                         |
| Alzheimer's Disease International             | ICSW  |
| African Population and Health Research Center | IFA   |
| African Platform for Social Protection        | International Alliance of Women             |
| Commonwealth Medical Trust                    | International Federation for Home Economics |
| Cor Pro Adulto Mayor                          | INPEA                                       |
| FEMNET  | Instituto Qualivida                         |
| Gray Panthers                                 | Madre                                       |
| Gender and Development Network                | NGO Committee on Ageing, NY                 |
| Generations United                            | Pro Global, Sweden                          |
| Handicap International                        | Prosalis                                    |
| HelpAge Canada                                | Sightsavers                                 |
| HelpAge Deutschland                           | Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur              |
| HelpAge International Espana                  | Zivot 90                                    |