



Funding for older people in humanitarian crises:

reversing continued neglect



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International



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HelpAge International is a global network of organisations promoting the right of all older people to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives.

Funding for older people in humanitarian crises: reversing continued neglect

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Glossary

CAP	Consolidated Appeals Process
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GHO	Global Humanitarian Overview
GBV	Gender-based violence
HNO	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HPC	Humanitarian Programme Cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IATI	The International Aid Transparency Initiative
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NNGO	National non-governmental organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
RFT	Refugee Funding Tracker (UNHCR tool)
RRP	Regional Response Plan
SADDD	Sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD)
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Organisation for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs



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Foreword

HelpAge International's new report exposes an issue that is too often neglected: the exclusion of older people from humanitarian funding and response.

As this report clearly shows, despite decades of commitments by the international community to principled, inclusive humanitarian action, older people remain among the most systematically overlooked groups in crisis settings. This is not just a technical oversight; it is a failure of accountability that undermines the quality and effectiveness of humanitarian response. While the report draws on data from selected sources, it offers a broader reflection of the structural nature of the exclusion of older people. The absence of dedicated funding not only limits older people's access to essential services but also contributes to the erosion of their agency and participation.

What stands out in this report is not only the stark data on the minimal funding made available for programmes that target or include older people, but also its examination of the central role of donors in shaping the system and the power dynamics that continue to have an effect on progress on inclusion. The current humanitarian model places disproportionate power in the hands of donors, leaving frontline actors and affected communities subject to shifting priorities and political pressures.

We are seeing the consequences of that imbalance play out in real time, as the humanitarian sector faces an existential crisis triggered by recent, dramatic funding cuts. Donor priorities are shifting to domestic concerns or military interests, while some actors are retreating from long-held commitments to human rights, equality and inclusion. The result

is that affected populations are not being reached, coordination structures are unravelling, and local and national organisations are being pushed to the brink.

This situation has accelerated changes to the system, forcing a "humanitarian reset" that is focused on prioritisation and a narrow definition of lifesaving; one that risks leaving the most marginalised behind. If we are serious about system reform, we must be serious about delivering principled, impartial and inclusive responses, where prioritisation does not mean exclusion. That means rethinking how decisions are made, how resources are allocated, and whose voices are heard.

HelpAge is part of the effort to push back against these trends. It supports locally led humanitarian action, working alongside a network of 199 members in 98 countries in a unique alliance standing up for the rights of older people. By amplifying the voices of older people and the national and community-based organisations that represent them, HelpAge works to build a fairer world in which everyone, including older people, can live safe, healthy and dignified lives.

This report is a vital call to action at a time when inclusion is increasingly threatened in the humanitarian system and the space for rights-based discourse is shrinking - but it also comes at a rare moment of opportunity to reshape how the system works. It challenges us to do better, but not only for older people but for everyone. It contributes to the broader conversation on how to rebuild a humanitarian system that is fairer, more locally led, and grounded in the dignity of all people, regardless of their age.



Dr Jamie Munn
Executive Director
International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA)

Executive summary

The world is facing multiple crises, such as conflicts, the climate emergency, the lingering impacts of COVID-19, and entrenched poverty, that disproportionately affect those already in a vulnerable situation, including older people. Shifting political landscapes and changing perspectives on foreign aid policy among longstanding donors to the humanitarian system mean there are uncertain times ahead. In addition, population ageing is having far reaching and complex effects: in countries most impacted by climate-related disasters and conflict, the proportion of people aged 50 and over is expected to rise from 257.7 million in 2024 to 584.3 million in 2050. Humanitarian needs are as varied as the populations affected, but funding decisions often fail to reflect this.

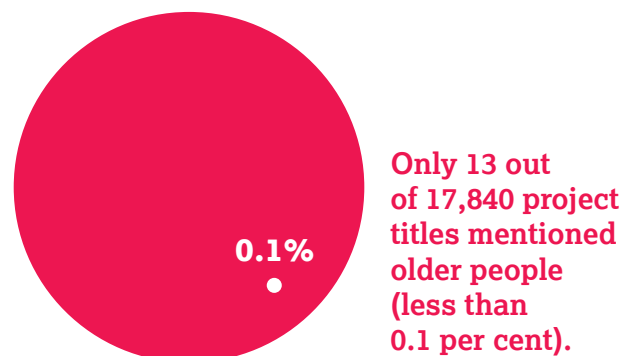
Using a keyword search methodology to analyse the proportion of project titles (available on the UN OCHA-managed Financial Tracking Service database) and project descriptions (available on the International Aid Transparency Initiative database) that identify older people as a target group for funding, this study provides compelling insights into how the humanitarian system is failing to uphold the rights of older people and other at-risk groups. Humanitarian funding allocations mentioning older people are strikingly limited, highlighting a clear disconnect between needs and funding, challenging our collective ability to deliver inclusive, equitable and impartial assistance.

Research completed by HelpAge International in 2016 found that less than 1 per cent of projects reviewed from the United Nations (UN) Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) included activities targeting older people. Almost 10 years later, using an updated methodology, this study found that there has been little improvement.

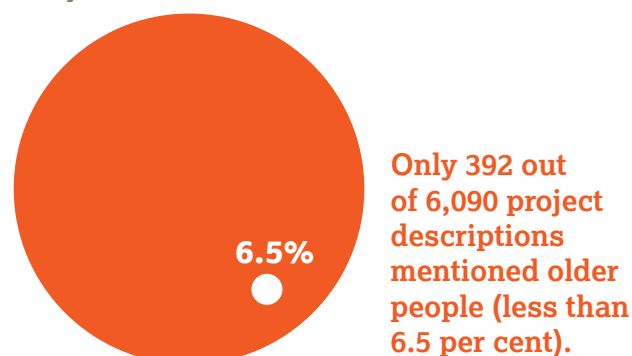
The data analysed in this study focuses on funding information from 12 HelpAge target countries. In addition, key informant interviews were undertaken with stakeholders including donors, UN officials, representatives of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and national non-governmental organisations (NNGOs), including

members of the HelpAge global network. The findings highlight significant gaps in the inclusion of older people in humanitarian response. Between 2019 and 2023:

OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS):



International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI):



The lack of references to older people in OCHA FTS project titles indicates a lack of specific focus on this group, while the limited mentions in IATI project descriptions highlight missed opportunities to mainstream older people into broader programmes where they reasonably could have been included.

While limited progress has been made in ensuring that other at-risk target groups are prioritised by the humanitarian community, older people are not systematically considered.

The absence of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability means older people in all their diversity often remain invisible, unable to access assistance that promotes their participation and responds to their needs. As a result, older people continue to endure significant hardship and the humanitarian community misses an opportunity to support their agency and empowerment, overlooking their important roles in their families and communities as community leaders and decision makers, caregivers, and holders of traditional knowledge.

Insufficient funding, reflecting limited efforts to promote inclusion in humanitarian responses, has contributed to perceived competition between advocates for different at-risk groups and created apparent hierarchies of inclusion, where certain groups are prioritised over others in a response. This prioritisation may not always respond to identified needs and is often influenced by factors such as donor priorities, presence of assertive advocates for specific groups, and the prevailing trends that influence which issues receive attention in the humanitarian system.

Collaborative, intersectional approaches could address the shared as well as unique risks faced by at-risk groups, promoting a more inclusive humanitarian system and ensuring that no one is left behind.

Donors have an important role to play as their influence significantly shapes the priorities of other humanitarian actors. While some donors are taking steps to integrate inclusive practices, incorporating age considerations into funding requirements and undertaking staff training, the absence of dedicated focal points for older people often means they are

overlooked. Donors have the opportunity, and responsibility, to promote intersectional approaches to reduce competition and encourage collaboration between advocates for at risk groups. In addition, they have a critical role in supporting the localisation agenda, with local actors delivering more cost-effective assistance and reaching at-risk populations more effectively.

This study contributes to the limited body of evidence on humanitarian funding flows for older people and highlights the need for a more inclusive and transparent approach to the funding of humanitarian assistance. Improved reporting is essential to address data challenges, both in terms of the frequency and comprehensiveness of reporting from donors, UN agencies and NGOs. In addition, funding databases must be enhanced to provide more detailed and accessible data. This will enable a clearer understanding of where and to whom funding is allocated and where the funding gaps are, and thus help ensure that it effectively reaches those most in need.

Full recommendations are included at the end of this report.



Jorge Panchoaga / Fairpicture / HelpAge International

Introduction

The world is facing an unprecedented convergence of crises that disproportionately affect those already in a vulnerable situation, including older people. The climate crisis and the increasingly destructive events it fuels,¹ widespread conflict,² growing displacement,³ rising food insecurity,⁴ the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic,⁵ and poverty⁶ together expose and intensify existing inequalities, especially for girls and women of all ages, who already face higher levels of poverty and heightened risks of discrimination, violence and exploitation.

A growing proportion of older people are set to be impacted by humanitarian crises – for example, in countries most affected by climate-related disasters and conflict, the population aged over 50 years is predicted to rise from 257.7 million in 2024 to 584.3 million in 2050.^a Against this backdrop there is a growing urgency to ensure that humanitarian responses are more inclusive, address the rights and needs of older people in all their diversity, and recognise their experiences and capacities. However, the current reality is that these responses leave older people, especially older women,⁷ almost entirely invisible in humanitarian policies, programmes, and funding priorities.

This study presents new findings on how the humanitarian system continues to fail older people and other at-risk groups during crises. The research on which this report is based indicates that humanitarian funding allocations mentioning older people are strikingly limited, which highlights a clear disconnect between needs and funds. This challenges the humanitarian sector's ability to deliver inclusive, equitable and impartial assistance.



Action for Humanity

A note on methodology

The absence of, or inability to access, comprehensive project data makes it impossible to accurately quantify the extent of age-related humanitarian funding globally. For this reason, the study uses references to older people in project titles and descriptions (gathered using a keyword search methodology) as a proxy indicator for older people's inclusion in humanitarian funding flows, particularly when taken in comparison with other at-risk groups. While this approach by definition relies on partial information, the study nevertheless provides valuable insights and serves as a call for more detailed and disaggregated funding data.

For a full description of the methodology used for this report, see the Methodology section.

^a This calculation is based on data from UN DESA's World Population Prospects: The 2024 Revision available at <https://population.un.org/wpp/>, [accessed 16 January 2025], for countries listed in OECD, States of Fragility 2022, Paris, OECD Publishing, 2022 (States of Fragility 2022 | OECD).

Context

Humanitarian crises can have a devastating impact on older people. In research carried out by HelpAge International and Age International in 2020,⁸ older people living in crisis situations reported facing huge problems, ranging from lack of shelter, food and water, to neglect and isolation, denial of resources, opportunities and services; financial abuse; emotional abuse; and having no safe place in the community (Figure 1).


At breaking point


The findings of our assessments make clear that older people's basic needs are often unmet:

20% 
said they had no access to shelter

64% 
did not have enough to eat


77% 
had no income

25% 
had no access to safe drinking water

62% 
had no access to bathing facilities

36% 
had no access to handwashing facilities

35% 
could not get to a toilet

36% 
said neglect and isolation, and denial of resources, opportunities or services were risks for older people

Humanitarian funding is shrinking

Humanitarian need is far outstripping available funding, affecting the sector's ability to respond. In 2023, the humanitarian sector experienced one of the worst funding shortfalls in years,⁹ with just 40 per cent of global humanitarian funding requirements met.¹⁰ This was accompanied by a shrinking of the international donor base, with global contributions in 2023 coming from just 20 donors, and the top three of those donors accounting for 60 per cent of funds.¹¹

The figures are stark: the Global Humanitarian Overview 2024, which required US\$49.60 billion to assist 197.3 million people in 77 countries, was only 45.5 per cent funded.¹² And the latest Global Humanitarian Overview made clear the severity of the situation, cautioning that “2025 is set to be no less challenging. The warning signs are clear, and we cannot look away.”¹³ In 2025, the humanitarian sector is facing an existential crisis, with dramatic cuts to budgets, shifting donor priorities and attitudes, reduced multilateralism¹⁴ and increasing scepticism of human rights, equity and inclusion meaning that there are uncertain times ahead.¹⁵

If, as this report sets out, levels of funding for humanitarian responses in general can be used a proxy indicator for levels of funding available for older people (and all other vulnerable populations), the outlook for this at-risk group is bleak.

Historic underfunding undermines crisis responses for older people

Compounding the current decline in funding for humanitarian responses in general is the longstanding underfunding of projects and programmes specifically for older people. As far back as 2005, the Humanitarian Practice Network reported that “aid funding to directly support older people represents a tiny proportion of the overall sums channelled through the UN and NGOs – usually 1 per cent or less of a donor response in a given country, and significantly short of the 7 per cent benchmark recommended by SPHERE”.¹⁶

Despite the availability of ample guidance on including older people in humanitarian responses,¹⁷ research in 2016 found that little had changed – older people continued to be excluded from humanitarian funding considerations, with less than 1 per cent of humanitarian funding allocated to projects that involved at least one activity targeting older people.¹⁸ This research painted a grim picture of a humanitarian system struggling to design, fund and deliver an impartial and evidence-based response, based on need.

Moreover, during an expert meeting in 2019, it was noted that use of the Gender and Age Marker, a tool used to assess how gender and age are considered in humanitarian projects, was a “tick box exercise” that was “based on a description that perpetrates ageism, without evidence that it has had a positive impact in ensuring the quality and inclusiveness of assistance at the level of funding going to older persons”.¹⁹

Case study

Empowering older people to support their communities

On the third day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Alla, 68, made the decision to leave her hometown of Berdiansk in Zaporizhzhia. Together with her daughter she fled the advancing conflict, but her husband and son stayed behind. Describing what she calls the most challenging part of her life, Alla recalls how her husband remained in their home and died before she could see him again.

“I had no contact with him for a long time, and I was in a deeply depressed state, struggling even to cook meals for my grandchildren. In the summer of 2023, he passed away without ever leaving the occupied city. I couldn't even attend his funeral.”

Alla is now one of 3.7 million internally displaced people in Ukraine, most of whom have been uprooted for over a year.³¹ A 2022 needs assessment by HelpAge International found that the psychological impact of the conflict has been significant for older people, who have experienced traumatising journeys, family separations and bereavement. Ensuring ongoing psychosocial support is critical as the mental scars of the conflict are likely to be deep and long-lasting.³²

Alla now works as a social care worker in a HelpAge International project, funded by the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), which supports some of the most at-risk older people across Ukraine. This project provides home-based care for those who are isolated and lonely, offers activities in community safe spaces, facilitates peer-group support, and provides health information and self-care guidance. Through her work, Alla believes she has made a significant impact on the wellbeing of older people in her community.

“Ultimately, I can ... rely on my life experience – I know how to find the right words to lift someone's spirits, calm them down, and keep them positive.”

To prepare her for her role, Alla received training on communication skills, preventing burnout,



Natalia Stupak, HelpAge International

managing stress, and providing psychosocial support to others. Her daily routine involves visiting displaced older people in hostels, offering emotional support, and connecting them with necessary services. She describes feeling fulfilled by her ability to offer comforting words and support to those who have lost everything.

“This job brings me joy and self-confidence. I started to smile, I'm filled with the desire to connect with people, I know I can support and help them, which they need – and this gives me the strength to live.”

Alla believes that the role of older people has changed for the better since the conflict began, with older people more active now than they were before the war, volunteering and supporting each other.

“I lead an active life, and my work with HelpAge demonstrates that age-related stereotypes are simply constructs of the mind. Many of my peers, like me, seek out active lifestyles and don't want to give up. We have much to offer, not only to younger people but also to our peers who, for various reasons, may need help – no-one is immune to that.”

HelpAge's research in 2020 found that older people were continuing to suffer immensely; interviews with nearly 9,000 older people exposed that there had been no tangible change in the historically limited support available to this at-risk group during crises.²⁰

With challenges in obtaining funding for programmes that specifically target older people, organisations have found alternative approaches, with some reporting that they are writing proposals for minority groups more broadly so that older people can be included alongside at-risk groups that are considered more of a priority.²¹

Shifts in humanitarian planning may leave more at-risk people behind

Recognising the difficulties ahead, in 2024 the humanitarian community made significant changes to its approach to humanitarian planning and appeals processes. These set boundaries to focus responses more narrowly according to types of interventions, severity of need, or geographical areas. This has led to reductions in the number of people being identified

Case study

Starting from scratch is possible with the right support, regardless of age

Though widowed years before, Abadit, aged 65, says that prior to the conflict in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, “[my] children and I were leading a happy life, all my children were attending school. I had worked hard to ensure my children had a good education and a bright future”.

However, everything changed when the conflict started in 2020. Abadit's children stopped going to school and were living “in constant fear of attacks and bombings”. Then her eldest son was tragically killed in a drone attack. Abadit recalls how this devastating loss to their family “plunged us into even more hardship than we were already facing”.

Abadit and her family were forced to leave their home, becoming one of the almost two million internally displaced people in Tigray. Recalling the suffering she experienced during that time, she says that “the pain was so overwhelming that I became bedridden for a long time, unable to muster the strength to face the world outside my bed. My whole world had been turned upside down, and I struggled to find a reason to go on.”

However, Abadit heard from local community leaders about a project with HelpAge's partner Relief Society of Tigray (REST), which supports the most at-risk older people in Tigray with multi-purpose cash assistance.

“I was so glad when I heard that I was chosen for this multi-purpose cash assistance. It was a miracle for me. I never expected to receive such support, especially during these difficult times.”



HelpAge Ethiopia

Abadit describes how she benefited from the project, which involved business training provided by REST staff. She received 9200 Ethiopian Birr (approximately US\$73), all of which she invested to start trading, buying spices like turmeric, fennel, ginger, mustard, cinnamon, and black cardamom. She began selling the spices and is now making a profit. With ongoing support and motivation from REST staff, who visited her regularly, Abadit noticed that she was not only making money but feeling better.

“My health improved as I socialised with customers and other vendors. I felt that running my own business helped me to cope with the loss [of my son] and gave me something to focus on.”

Seeing the improvements in her life, Abadit believes that starting again is possible with the right support, regardless of age.

“Age is not an obstacle to start from scratch, when you have supporters who believe that you can do it.”

as in need, the number of people targeted in a response, and the overall level of funding sought.^{22,23} While intended to improve the credibility and focus of humanitarian responses, these adjustments raise serious questions,²⁴ including the extent to which at-risk and marginalised groups are considered and included.

In December 2024, HelpAge International joined over 100 NGOs in a joint statement raising concerns that, in the context of such boundary-setting and narrower definitions of people in need, “it is unclear who will target those left behind”.²⁵ These concerns have increased as dramatic budget cuts in 2025 have led to further prioritisation. Humanitarian needs are not homogenous; they are experienced differently by diverse populations – be they older people, women, children, or people with disability. With inclusive programming that takes account of the diverse needs of these groups often viewed as optional, there are risks that such programming will be the first to go²⁶ and that historically marginalised groups, including older people,²⁷ may be further excluded.

Lack of disaggregated data on older people hinders progress

One of the main barriers to addressing the rights and needs of older people in humanitarian programming and funding processes is that data disaggregated by sex, age and disability is not collected, analysed, used and reported on widely in emergency response settings.²⁸

“Many agencies and NGOs tell us, why do I have to disaggregate any further when my donor only considers 50 plus and puts everybody there... In terms of inclusion, if you do not disaggregate and if you do not do proper analysis then older people with their different needs are often invisible”

NGO Interviewee

Data is crucial as it highlights where the needs of the most at risk lie, allowing humanitarian donors and humanitarian organisations to allocate resources more effectively and strategically. Disaggregated data enhances the quality and relevance of interventions, ensuring that the most inclusive approaches are systematically used.²⁹ The lack of data on older people has a ripple effect in emergency settings; the absence of reliable information about their specific needs, experiences, capacities and contributions, means older people are often left invisible in decision-making processes,³⁰ including those related to funding.

Older people’s needs are invisible and misunderstood

In the absence of the legal protections that would be provided by a UN convention on the rights of older people, older people face significant challenges in having their rights recognised and upheld in humanitarian responses – despite increasing commitments to inclusivity and impartiality within the humanitarian sector.

A 2022 Humanitarian Policy Group report highlighted that “common hierarchies around inclusion [are reinforced], with gender and AAP [Accountability to Affected Populations] at the top, disability sometimes considered, and other aspects lagging far behind”.³³ Even where gender and disability are considered, they are not seen through the lens of older age.

Multiple factors contribute to this, including ageism and age discrimination,³⁴ a lack of sex, age and disability disaggregated data, lack of participation of older people and their representative organisations in the programme cycle, limited policy guidance, and the absence of specialised agencies to advocate and provide inputs in every crisis.³⁵

“We were doing RNAs with two separate international NGOs. And it came to a point where they told us, no more interviews with older people because we were not going to reach the indicators, so they forced us to exclude them” NGO Interviewee



HDC South Sudan

Without data or direct feedback from older people, humanitarian actors often rely on assumptions about older people's lack of contributions to their families and communities, which can be very much at odds with the reality³⁶ (see Box 1). The immense pressure on communities can erode positive attitudes toward older people and reinforce harmful stereotypes that they are “unproductive, dependent, helpless, weak, forgetful, and a poor investment for skills and credit programmes because they are unable or unwilling to learn”.³⁷

Box 1: Common myths around older people's capacity and contributions

Older people are often perceived as dependent on others and seen as recipients of charity, rather than as rights holders with the capacity to participate and make decisions about their own lives. However, research in 2020 found that older people do play important roles within their families and communities, with 63 per cent of older people in emergency settings caring for at least one child, and 44 per cent caring for another older person.

In the context of increasing frequency of climate-related crises, older people have vast experience, traditional knowledge and resilience, which are crucial for effective climate adaptation strategies. Ignoring older people's vast capacity and important roles undermines their agency and can lead to “one-size-fits-all” approaches to funding that fail to empower them or meet their diverse and intersecting needs.

Even when projects do target older people, the assistance delivered may be difficult or impossible to use in practice. Support that appears appropriate on paper can fall short if it fails to account for the diverse realities of people's lives. Without considering the full range of circumstances experienced by crisis-affected individuals, and without ensuring appropriate follow-up support, humanitarian assistance risks reinforcing exclusion rather than addressing it.

Acknowledgement is not enough

HelpAge has seen some progress, albeit limited, in attention for older people in humanitarian contexts in recent years, particularly after the introduction of HelpAge Age Inclusion Specialists to provide technical guidance and support to country-level Protection Clusters. In an analysis of humanitarian

needs overviews (HNOs) and humanitarian response plans (HRPs) from 2024,³⁸ it was found that most HNOs did identify older people (alongside women, children, people with disabilities and displaced people and others) as a group disproportionately affected by crises. Similarly, HRPs highlighted the importance of addressing the specific risks faced by older people in crisis situations and responding to their needs.

However, this research indicates that these acknowledgements and commitments are not translating into meaningful action. Acknowledging the risks older people face and highlighting their needs does not necessarily mean that the barriers they encounter are adequately explored and understood. Equally, it does not translate into HRP-sector objectives being tailored to older people, specific age indicators being included within response plans, or intersectionality being considered. This allows the disconnect between identifying older people as an at-risk group, and funding projects to support and empower them, to persist.

“They do now mention older people in their marginalised populations. But I think that’s just semantics, right? Come to the real core of it, do they actually fund a large percentage of their money towards this?” INGO interviewee



Maheder Hailelassie Tadese / Fairpicture / HelpAge International

Case study

Humanitarian assistance must reflect older people's realities



Maryna Moroz, HelpAge International

Oleh is a 62-year-old man who has survived two strokes and lives with partial paralysis and a leg amputation. Despite these health challenges, he evacuated with his wife from Luhansk region to the city of Dnipro, Ukraine, fleeing the war.

The couple now lives in a shelter, where Oleh encounters daily barriers. Although a humanitarian organisation provided him with a wheelchair, he is unable to use it due to the building's inaccessibility. There are no ramps, and the stairs are too steep to descend safely.

"I can't even leave the room on my own, let alone go outside. The only place my wife can wheel me to is a small terrace by the entrance, from where I can watch the world go by. All this makes me feel isolated and completely dependent on others."

A similar situation applies to his prosthetic leg, which he is unable to use due to a lack of access to doctors and medical services.

"This is a painful issue for me, in every sense. I have to treat myself because I simply cannot reach a doctor. I would need specialised transport, which I cannot afford. And doctors do not come to the shelter..."

With a pension of just 2,093 UAH (around £40.72), Oleh cannot meet even his most basic needs. Through a HelpAge project, he received a hygiene kit, incontinence pads, financial support, a winter pack, and a blood pressure monitor. Thanks to referrals, he was also provided with food, a bedside table, anti-bedsore equipment for people with limited mobility, bedding, kitchenware, and legal advice to help secure IDP payments.

However, a critical issue remains unresolved. Infrastructural and medical barriers continue to prevent Oleh from using his wheelchair and prosthesis significantly restricting his mobility, independence, and social participation.

"Unfortunately, people in my situation need continuous support. Only thanks to humanitarian aid can we live more or less with dignity in these circumstances."

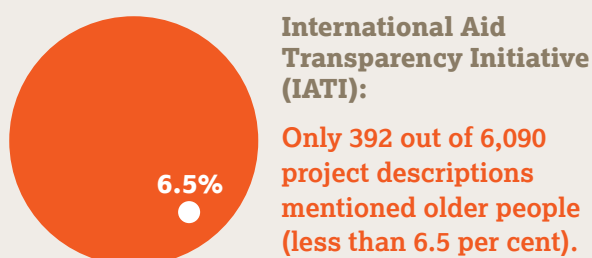
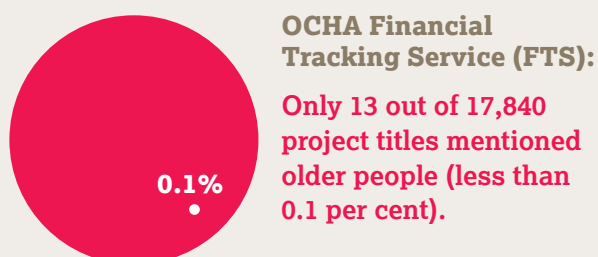
Key findings

The data analysed in this study is focused on funding information from 12 HelpAge target countries: Afghanistan, Colombia, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Myanmar, occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), Philippines, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Ukraine and Venezuela, for a period of five years. Project descriptions analysed only include “ended” projects (International Aid Transparency Initiative – IATI); or “paid” projects (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Financial Tracking Service (OCHA FTS), to ensure that the projects were fully funded and implemented.

Funding for older people

Research for this report reveals the following for OCHA FTS and IATI projects between 2019 and 2023 (Box 2):

Box 2: OCHA and IATI funding for older people and other at-risk groups – key findings



By comparison, some other at-risk groups are mentioned more frequently:



Children: 7 per cent of OCHA FTS project titles; 23 per cent of IATI descriptions.



Women: 2 per cent of OCHA FTS project titles; 20 per cent of IATI descriptions.

(Other target groups such as youth and people with disabilities were rarely mentioned in project titles or descriptions.)

OCHA Financial Tracking Service

An analysis of project titles (or funding flows) from OCHA FTS for the 12 HelpAge target countries revealed that of the 17,840 “paid” project titles analysed, less than 0.1 per cent of titles mention older people as a target group. This amounted to just 13 projects in six countries: Ukraine (five projects), Colombia (two projects), oPt (two projects), Syria (two projects), Venezuela (one project), and Ethiopia (one project).

The OCHA FTS findings are comparable to findings from HelpAge’s previous research in 2016, which found that projects specifically targeting older persons accounted for less than 1 per cent of programmes.

International Aid Transparency Initiative

Similarly, of the 6,090 “ended” IATI emergency response project descriptions analysed from the 12 HelpAge target countries, just 6 per cent mention older people as part of the project. This amounted to 392 projects.

Countries with the highest percentage of projects mentioning older people include Ukraine (13 per cent, or 103 projects), Venezuela (13 per cent, or 33 projects), Syria (7 per cent, or 76 projects), Afghanistan (7 per cent, or 39 projects), South Sudan (6 per cent, or 44 projects) and oPt (5 per cent, or 24 projects). Of the countries analysed from IATI, only El Salvador had no project descriptions mentioning older people.

The higher proportion of project descriptions referencing older people in Ukraine is to be expected, as Ukraine has the largest percentage of older individuals impacted by conflict in any country, with a quarter of its population aged 60 or older.³⁹

Key informants interviewed for this research highlighted that funding priority is often linked to population size rather than being based on impartial and equitable responses that concentrate on need and reaching the furthest behind first.

This means that with older people in most settings making up a smaller percentage of the population, they tend to receive less attention.

Funding for women, children, and other at-risk groups: a comparison

All people have equal rights to assistance, but humanitarian funding often fails to provide the necessary support for at-risk groups to fully access and exercise those rights, resulting in imbalances in addressing their needs. Limited progress has been made in prioritising support for some groups, but this represents a small proportion of total funding, and significant gaps remain.

Analysis of descriptions of 6,090 “ended” projects on the IATI platform using a keyword search methodology revealed that 23 per cent of projects mentioned “children”, while an assessment of 17,840 “paid” OCHA FTS project titles found only 7 per cent mentioned “children” or other related key words such as “girls”, “orphan”, or “unaccompanied”). Similarly, “women” were mentioned in 20 per cent IATI project descriptions, with only 2 per cent of OCHAFTS project titles including references to women or “females”.

As it is not possible to track funding flows to any specific target group (including children), there is inadequate data on the needs of children and how well funded these are. However, positive recent

improvements to the disaggregation of data on the UNHCR Refugee Funding Tracker (RFT) platform mean that in 2023 there is more information available on child protection funding in refugee contexts.⁴⁰ In some contexts, such as Syria, South Sudan, and Chad, research indicates that child protection has become better funded over time.⁴¹

Despite a relatively higher frequency of mentions of women in humanitarian project titles and descriptions, research on funding for women-focused programming indicates there are persistent gaps. For example, gender-based violence (GBV) programming remains chronically underfunded, with only 28 per cent of funding requirements met in 2021.⁴² In addition, older women are often excluded from gender funding, with just 0.1 per cent of gender-equality focussed spending specifically including older women.⁴³

Other at-risk groups such as youth and people with disabilities are even less visible than women and children in humanitarian project titles and descriptions. Only 5 per cent of project descriptions from IATI mention youth, and just 1 per cent of OCHA FTS project titles. Similarly, people with disabilities were referenced in just 6 per cent of IATI project descriptions and 1 per cent of OCHA FTS project titles.



Admasu Brook / HelpAge International

Case study

Supporting immediate needs can help promote self-worth



Convite

Affected by recurring annual flooding, Maura recalls how floods in December 2022 were particularly devastating for her rural community in Zea, Mérida State, Venezuela.

The flooding affected thousands of people in the area, leaving the community grappling with how to rebuild. Living with her husband and orphaned granddaughter, Maura relied on their homestead as a source of both food and income. But the floodwaters swept away much of their crops, including corn that was nearly ready to harvest.

“When I realized that the ravine had taken away everything that I had built with so much work, I felt very bad – unmotivated and very hopeless,” Maura recalls. “The corn, that was almost ready to harvest and which we had made plans for, was completely gone overnight.”

Forced to flee to a neighbour’s house, Maura and her family returned home five days later when the water subsided, only to face the full extent of their losses. Without their crops, they struggled to provide for their granddaughter’s education and afford essential medicines for Maura and her husband.

Maura reflects on the challenges older people often face:

“Older people are invisible, that is, we go unnoticed ... I think that we play an important role in the community, because of our knowledge, our experience, our values, but we are not taken into account.”

In the aftermath of the disaster, Convite A.C., supported by HelpAge International, Meals4Hope, and funded by the Start Network, provided critical assistance to older people, including food supplies, drinking water, medicines and other items such as blankets, lightbulbs, and personal hygiene essentials. The assistance she received not only addressed her immediate needs but also helped to restore a sense of dignity.

“They really saw us.”

For Maura’s family, the proximity of the ravine remains a constant source of anxiety, especially during heavy rains. Despite the challenges, she remains determined: “I have planted again, but the floods of the streams with these rains take everything away. That’s when you say, ‘life changes in a moment’.”

Funding databases present challenges in assessing funding targets

While the impact of humanitarian crises on older people is well documented and understood,⁴⁴ humanitarian data systems and reporting practices on funding flows for older people remain inadequate. A critical challenge – as illustrated in the research for this report – lies in the inability to quantify the extent of global-level humanitarian funding targeted for older people, which prevents a clear understanding of how they are being either supported or excluded in emergency responses.

Backward steps in data availability hinder inclusivity analysis

The transition from Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) as the mechanism by which the humanitarian sector plans, coordinates, funds, implements and monitors humanitarian response^b was intended to streamline the process and improve results and accountability.⁴⁵ Under the CAP system, it was possible to access project funding sheets, which provided details on planned activities, target populations and funding requirements.⁴⁶ In contrast, current systems under the HPC, namely the OCHA FTS, as well as other initiatives like IATI (both are key resources for tracking humanitarian funding) offer very limited information and are not as easily searchable, making it challenging to assess whether funding is reaching at-risk groups like older people. The shift in data availability represents a significant step backward in the ability to analyse the inclusivity of humanitarian funding. Without detailed project-level data, it becomes nearly impossible to track whether age-specific (and other) needs are being addressed, or to hold stakeholders accountable for their commitments to inclusivity and impartiality.

Disaggregation is not mandatory in voluntary data platforms

In addition, these voluntary platforms do not currently require the gathering, analysis and presentation of funding data in a sex, age and disability disaggregated manner. The data provided to the platforms is limited by the information shared with them by donors and implementing partners, who often struggle to report regularly due to resource constraints and competing priorities in emergency settings. Strengthening data systems to capture and analyse sex, age and disability disaggregated funding information is essential to ensure that the needs of older people are visible and prioritised in humanitarian responses.

Donor commitments to older people are not translating to action

Lack of understanding of older people's needs in humanitarian crises

While there is evidence that donors are increasingly committed to strengthening inclusion,⁴⁷ especially in areas of gender and disability, the focus on older people remains limited.⁴⁸ Key informants highlighted that, among donors, the UN, and NGOs, there is a lack of awareness and understanding of the rights and needs of older people. Donors were highlighted as the most influential stakeholders, with the power to shape priorities within the humanitarian system, but if donors do not recognise and prioritise older people's rights and needs, then INGOs and NGOs are unlikely to focus on them either.

Some donors indicated that they are taking steps to enhance understanding of inclusion by integrating age considerations into funding requirements and providing staff with regular training from inclusion experts. However, it was noted that without dedicated teams or focal points for older people (like those established for gender and disability) progress may be limited. The absence of champions to advocate for older people's rights means that they are often deprioritised or overlooked.



HelpAge International Pakistan

^b HPC was established in November 2012, and CAP ended in March 2013.

Case study

Supporting older people to recover and rebuild

Noor Muhammad, aged 70, from Shaheed Benazirabad in Sindh Province, Pakistan, faced significant challenges when heavy rains destroyed his home in 2022. As Noor is paralysed on the right side of his body, he found it difficult to reach safety.

“I lost my house which was my biggest asset,” he says. “Thank God the community members came to help me and helped me save the few animals that I had.”

Noor’s neighbours helped him to reach a temporary shelter along with his animals. However, the floods swept much away; like many others in the area, he was unable to access the vital medicines he depends on, and his health began to deteriorate.

The floods also destroyed healthcare infrastructure, with hospitals, health centres and pharmacies either swept away or inundated with water. Despite everything, Noor remained positive.



HelpAge International Pakistan

“I am hopeful that I will build my house again and these days will be over soon.”

In response to the flooding, HANDS, with support from HelpAge, helped the district government to drain floodwater from important buildings such as hospitals and dispensaries. They also distributed emergency shelter materials and essential household items to older people and their families, helping them recover and rebuild their lives.

Coverage and scale may be prioritised at the expense of inclusivity

Donors acknowledged that coverage and scale are the prevailing measures of success for humanitarian programmes, often at the expense of quality, inclusive responses.

Older people were noted as making up relatively smaller proportions of affected populations and were therefore prioritised less.

“For Ukraine [where a quarter of the population is over 60] there is a good case, but for other countries it becomes more challenging”

INGO interviewee

Programmes that specifically target the most at-risk individuals were frequently viewed as slower and ultimately more expensive, creating further disincentives to invest in approaches that prioritise equity and inclusion. This overlooks the broader benefits that inclusive responses can provide for communities. By ensuring the humanitarian responses are inclusive of all, it is possible to support

not only those who face specific barriers, such as older people or people with disabilities, but also those who may face temporary barriers, such as those impacted by illness or injury, or other (e.g. language or socio-economic) barriers.

While donors clearly do not have limitless funds, adopting one-size-fits-all approaches to humanitarian response can erode any existing inclusivity. Instead, prioritising quality, equitable approaches can support those furthest behind and most in need and working to reduce common barriers can help ensure that all at-risk groups are more resilient. One practical demonstration of this could be the funding of local NGOs rather than international ones, as they may be more effective and cost-efficient when responding holistically to communities’ needs.

Donors can help overcome hierarchies of inclusion

Key informants highlighted apparent hierarchies of inclusion and a perception that advocates for certain at-risk groups are protective of their established status and will not leave space for those advocating

for other at-risk groups, especially in an environment of chronic funding shortfalls.

“The best opportunity we have for for more meaningful inclusion of older people is, if three or four steps have been met already, so funding secured, and then almost like ticked off for women and children, and various other marginalised groups, and then older people can be brought on as a consideration”

INGO interviewee

This underlines findings from previous research and emphasises the need for donors to consider how they can be part of reducing competition and hierarchy between groups and encourage intersectional approaches that boost collaboration and inclusivity in addressing the needs of at-risk groups in humanitarian settings.⁴⁹

“The rising tide that lifts all boats is the kind of energy that we need here rather than elbowing others out of the way for space.”

Donor interviewee

Donors can help promote localisation and thereby more effective responses

While practices can be slow to change, donors have an important opportunity, and responsibility, to consider how they can be part of restructuring humanitarian responses to achieve more impartial approaches, in line with humanitarian principles. A key aspect of this is supporting the localisation

agenda; alongside the ethical and moral imperative to shift the power, local intermediaries can provide assistance that is 32 per cent more cost-effective than international intermediaries⁵⁰ and they have a deeper understanding and closer ties to affected communities and hidden or vulnerable groups.⁵¹

Overall, the findings of this study indicate the need for urgent action on the part of donors as they play a critical role in driving progress towards a more inclusive humanitarian system. With their support, there is a significant opportunity to ensure that older people's rights and needs are addressed more systematically.⁵²

Standards are not driving inclusion in practice

While donors play a key role in shaping priorities and accountability frameworks, they are part of a wider system responsible for advancing inclusion. Standard-setting bodies such as the Sphere and CHS Alliance help define what quality and inclusive humanitarian programming should look like and UN agencies, international NGOs and local organisations are expected to adhere to these standards.

To close persistent gaps in inclusion, there is an opportunity to strengthen how these standards are understood and applied, particularly as standard-setting bodies often assess or certify organisations against these benchmarks.



Admasu Brook / HelpAge International

Conclusion

There is historic under-representation of older people in humanitarian funding and programming

This study focuses on the period 2019 to 2023 and provides insights into how the humanitarian system has failed to consider the rights of older people and other at-risk groups during this time, as evidenced by the lack of references to older people in OCHA FTS project titles (which indicates a lack of specific focus on this group), and limited mentions in IATI project descriptions (which indicates missed opportunities to mainstream older people into broader programmes where they reasonably could have been included). Reported humanitarian funding allocations mentioning older people are strikingly limited, meaning there remains a persistent gap between rights of older people to receive equitable support in humanitarian settings and the resources allocated to achieve this. This disconnect reflects a broader failure within the humanitarian system to uphold its obligations to deliver impartial assistance in line with humanitarian principles.



Nur Mohamed / HelpAge International

Donors can play crucial role in driving inclusivity

Given their influential position in the humanitarian community, donors have a crucial role to play as advocates for inclusivity. As one UN official noted in a discussion as part of this study, donors are key inclusion allies, who can drive the change urgently needed in the sector. This study emphasises how important it is for donors to prioritise older people in their funding decisions and to drive interest and awareness around older people among NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies. They can also encourage intersectional approaches and collaboration across a range of actors.

More funding and better data can end the vicious cycle of older people's invisibility in crises

The paucity of inclusive funding practices and systems underscores the urgent need for better sex, age and disability disaggregated data collection, analysis, use and reporting. Without this, marginalised groups, including older people, remain invisible within the humanitarian funding landscape. Understanding the diverse and intersecting identities of at-risk people means that humanitarian actors will be better able to address the shared, as well as unique, risks they face and embed these considerations into funding decisions and programme design to ensure that no one is left behind.

Inclusivity must not be lost in the scaling-back of humanitarian responses

It remains to be seen whether the changes made to the Humanitarian Programme Cycle in 2025 will exacerbate existing inequalities. As acknowledged in the Global Humanitarian Overview (GHO) 2025, humanitarian actors were already being forced to “scale back operations, and make the toughest choices, with real human costs”. As resources become scarcer, it is vital for donors and humanitarian actors to use available funding more

effectively, ensuring it is allocated in a way that recognises and addresses the rights and needs of diverse populations.

This study provides valuable insights, but relies on partial information due to data limitations, such as the inability to access project data or understand the specific intentions behind a project. These constraints highlight the need for improved reporting mechanisms on humanitarian funding. Holding

humanitarian actors to account for their commitments to improve humanitarian response activities includes better reporting from all actors, including donors, UN agencies, INGOs and local partners. This should be done in parallel with enhancements to funding databases, ensuring the availability of more detailed information to better understand where funding is allocated and whether it is effectively reaching those most in need.

Case study

Funding programmes for older people can be a crucial lifeline for them and their families

Nanay Maria, an 85-year-old widow, lives with two of her seven children and her grandson in a makeshift home constructed from iron and bamboo in Pampanga, Philippines. Mobility issues have left Nanay Maria confined to a chair since 2012. Living across from the Pampanga River, Nanay Maria and her family were deeply affected by Typhoon Doksuri (Egay) in 2023, which affected 2.7 million people. Weeks later, Typhoon Falcon (the sixth that year) further worsened the situation.

With the floodwater rising to six feet deep around her home, Nanay Maria recalls the terror she felt due to the heavy rains and rising water levels. Sheltering in her daughter's home, she felt helpless, asking herself "what if our old house is swept away by floodwater? Where are we going to stay after the typhoon? What will then happen to our family?"

Raul, Nanay Maria's son and main carer, worked as a farm labourer and his income was affected as the rice field where he was employed was badly damaged. Without another source of income, the family was fearful for the future.

In response to the crisis, Coalition of Services of the Elderly, Inc. (COSE), supported by HelpAge, provided multi-purpose cash assistance to households with older people and people with disabilities. This programme quickly mobilises funding in the aftermath of low-attention natural disasters, ensuring that people can receive support



Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE)

within days. Nanay Maria was among those who received PHP 2,000 (approximately US\$34) from COSE to tide her over in the aftermath.

Receiving direct financial support had a significant impact on Nanay Maria, not just by meeting her immediate needs, but also supporting her sense of independence and dignity. Being able to make choices about her own care was an important reminder of her autonomy.

"It is an unexpected blessing. For one week or so, I have money to spend on my food and vitamins. And the food is not just for me, but for all of us who stay in this house."

The assistance also eased the situation for Raul and his siblings, providing a critical lifeline during a time of great difficulty.

Recommendations

All humanitarian actors should:

- Ensure that older people are recognised as equal rights holders, with the same right to access and assistance as all other individuals, regardless of what proportion of the affected population they make up.
- Prioritise an equity-based approach, focusing on reaching the furthest behind first and ensuring that protection and assistance are prioritised for the most at-risk and marginalised groups.
- Acknowledge and respond to the diverse and unequal experiences of affected populations, with particular attention given to the intersection of age with other characteristics such as gender and disability.
- Adopt collaborative, intersectional approaches to inclusion to address both shared and unique risks faced by at-risk and marginalised groups and develop partnerships that promote holistic and equitable responses to their rights and needs.
- Allocate resources to support the engagement, participation, empowerment, agency and autonomy of older people, including them in formal and informal decision-making structures and incorporating their perspectives and experiences in plans, programmes and monitoring.
- Review and adapt their programmes and internal processes to ensure they align with global standards (such as Sphere and CHS) that promote quality and inclusion.

Donors should:

- Advocate for the inclusion of older people in humanitarian response and encourage intersectional approaches that consider factors such as age, gender and disability to promote the rights and needs those most at risk.
- Designate organizational focal points to champion older people's rights and needs and ensure financial resource allocation for their inclusion in humanitarian response.
- Invest in capacity-strengthening activities to expand age, gender and disability expertise within their organisations and ensure the integration of sex, age and disability disaggregated data, and age and gender analysis, into all programming.
- Include older people as a specific target group in their priorities and funding guidelines, criteria and programme portfolios, and provide multi-year, flexible funding for organisations, particularly national and local organisations, that have expertise in humanitarian support for older people.
- Ensure that the entire project cycle is informed by age, sex and disability disaggregated data, increasing budgets to ensure adequate allocation for age, gender and disability expertise.
- Report regularly and transparently to OCHA FTS and IATI, to provide greater accountability and visibility of humanitarian funding flows. Require funded partners to adhere to these reporting standards, including on disaggregated data, to maintain consistent and comprehensive data.



IASC and UN agencies should:

- Show leadership in upholding humanitarian principles and setting strategic, policy and operational priorities that are inclusive of older people during times of crisis.
- Develop comprehensive guidelines on the inclusion of older people in all their diversity in humanitarian action – similar to the IASC Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action 2019 136 – in close consultation with older people, their representative organisations and other humanitarian actors.
- Assign a clear focal point or group within the inter-agency structures to advise and guide the inclusion of older people in humanitarian actions in general and in HPC processes in particular.
- Ensure guidance is available for IASC members and partners on the consistent inclusion of older people as a specific target group across the humanitarian programme cycle, including in evidence-based needs assessments, HRP planning and development.

UN OCHA should:

- Ensure that older people are more meaningfully included in presentation of data for the HPC, and that HRPs include clear objectives and indicators to support and monitor the inclusion of older people in the response.
- Provide guidance, technical advice and expertise to partners on collecting, analysing, using and reporting sex, age and disability disaggregated data, as well as age and gender analysis, to effectively assess and address the needs of older people.
- Encourage humanitarian actors to report on humanitarian funding flows to specific target groups in the FTS database.
- Enhance the FTS database to allow analysis of project-description-level data to enhance analytical potential.

International Aid Transparency Initiative should:

- Encourage humanitarian actors to report on humanitarian funding flows to specific target groups in the IATI database.
- Enhance the IATI database to allow analysis of project-description-level data to enhance analytical potential of humanitarian spending.

NGOs should:

- Prioritise and promote older people's rights and needs in planning and resource mobilisation efforts throughout the humanitarian response.
- Invest in capacity-strengthening activities to expand internal age, gender and disability expertise and ensure the integration of sex, age and disability disaggregated data and age and gender analysis of data in programmes.
- Consult and work with local and national organisations to ensure community-driven responses that are age and disability-inclusive and gender responsive.
- Engage older people in programme design and implementation and include their feedback in the revision of programmes and processes.
- Report regularly and transparently to OCHA FTS and IATI, to provide greater accountability and visibility of humanitarian funding flows.

Standards-setting bodies should:

- Provide clear, actionable guidance and tools, grounded in the experiences of crisis-affected populations, to support humanitarian actors in translating inclusion commitments into meaningful, practical action.

Methodology

Stakeholder consultations and case studies

This research study included stakeholder interviews and case studies that were used to triangulate the quantitative data gathered.

A total of 10 key informant interviews were conducted, involving diverse groups of stakeholders selected by HelpAge. These included donors, UN officials, INGO and NNGO representatives (including members of the HelpAge global network). These interviews provide valuable insights from various perspectives within the humanitarian community, significantly contributing to the final research report. The identities of all interviewees have been kept anonymous for confidentiality purposes.

In addition, case studies were developed and included throughout the report to amplify the voices of older people, ensuring their experiences and perspectives are represented in this report.

Data sources

The main data sources for this study were the UN OCHA-managed Financial Tracking Service (FTS) and the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

The FTS is described by OCHA as “a centralised source of curated, continuously updated, fully downloadable data and information on humanitarian funding flows”.⁵⁴ More information is available at: <https://fts.unocha.org/>.

IATI is described as bringing “together governments, multilateral institutions, private sector and civil society organisations and others to increase the transparency and openness of resources flowing into developing countries”.⁵⁵ More information is available at: <https://iatistandard.org/en/>.

All data used for this research was accessed and correct as of 11 October 2024.

Data analysis: OCHA Financial Tracking Services (FTS)

Project titles (also described in FTS as “funding flows”) were searched for the presence of relevant key words about older people (including as older people, older persons, elderly, seniors, elders) and other target groups. The inclusion of target groups in the project titles acts as a proxy indicator for

the prioritisation of these groups in humanitarian funding flows. The analysis was developed based on funding flows between 2019 and 2023, covering a five-year period.

While OCHA FTS does not track funding to specific target groups, the database does provide several options for filtering available data. Country-specific project titles can be filtered according to plan, emergency, source (specific); source type, source level, destination organisation (specific); destination organisation type, sector and flow status.

First, project titles for analysis were refined by country, as 12 HelpAge countries were analysed for the study. Second, project titles were filtered according to those that were listed as “paid” under the filter “Flow Status”. This was the only filter used to refine the list of projects under each target country.

Data analysis: International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI)

Project descriptions were searched on the website for the presence of relevant words about older people and other target groups. The inclusion of target groups in the project description acts as a proxy indicator for the prioritisation of these groups in the project. This contrasts with the analysis completed on data from OCHA FTS, which analysed project titles/funding flows rather than project descriptions. The analysis was developed based on funding flows between 2019 and 2023 (a five-year period).

IATI does not track information on humanitarian funding flows toward target groups. Instead, country-specific project titles can be filtered according to country, sector group, activity status, reporting organisation, sector and year. First, data on just the projects which were “ended” was used to ensure that projects were fully funded and implemented. Second, project descriptions for analysis were refined by country, as just 12 HelpAge countries were analysed. Third, projects were filtered under Sector Group for Emergency Response, as much of the data was concerned with long-term development initiatives. Fourth, projects were filtered as ‘Yes’ for Humanitarian Activities.

Limitations of the research

Acknowledging the constraints of the research methodology is crucial to evaluate the viability and reliability of the findings:

• **Limitations of analysing funding flows/ project descriptions:** Currently, it is not possible to quantify the extent of global-level, age-related humanitarian funding. As a result, the methodology developed for this study sought to analyse information that provides an indicative estimate regarding humanitarian funding flows for older people. However, reliance on target groups being mentioned in project titles or descriptions is limited as it is possible target groups were reached by projects, despite the titles and descriptions not indicating this. Furthermore, project description fields on OCHA FTS and IATI are approached differently by different reporting organisations, thus the mention of target groups is not consistent or accurate across all entries. Notably, other research has undertaken a similar approach, such as research completed by UNHCR on child protection funding, and Development Initiatives on gender relevant humanitarian response.^c

• **Incomparability to previous HelpAge research:** In 2016, HelpAge conducted research using the United Nations (UN) Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) as a proxy indicator^d for the period 2010–2014. However, the CAP process is no longer used by OCHA FTS. As a result, it was not possible to replicate this research to undertake a direct comparison.

• **Limitations of humanitarian funding databases:** OCHA FTS and IATI are useful sources of information on global humanitarian funding flows. However, the data should be considered as indicative rather than representative, as the information is collected on a voluntary basis from humanitarian actors. As a result, reporting is not systematic across all humanitarian actors, and data gaps remain. Furthermore, the historical focus of FTS has been on tracking funding progress against humanitarian plans, with information from actors outside of the UN-coordinated system not included.



Steph Roberts

^c <https://alliancecpha.org/en/unprotected-analysis-funding-cpha-2023>

^d <https://www.helpage.org/silo/files/end-the-neglect-a-study-of-humanitarian-financing-for-older-people.pdf>

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