

The EU's role in achieving sustainable development for people of all ages

*HelpAge EU network
EYD 2015: Call for Action*

**HelpAge
International**

global network



The European Year for Development 2015 (EYD 2015) is an important opportunity to consider common challenges and trends of a truly global nature. Global ageing is one of these important trends. The ageing of populations is a triumph of development to which the EU, as the world's biggest donor, has made a significant contribution.

Ageing is transforming societies and economies worldwide and increasing longevity brings significant opportunities. Young people today can expect to live longer lives than ever before.

As part of the action/2015 movement, the HelpAge global network is working with people across generations to raise awareness of older people's vision of the

world they want to live in and to show the value of older and younger people working together.

The HelpAge network in the EU calls upon EU decision-makers to ensure that effective responses to population ageing are embedded in both the EU's external and internal policies, and that the global framework for sustainable development post-2015 delivers for people of all ages.

People in later life must be empowered to fully claim their human rights and challenge discrimination. States must ensure that they meet their human rights obligations towards older people.

Here we present specific policy recommendations in four areas linked to monthly themes of the EYD 2015.



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**our world
our dignity
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Women and Girls

Twenty years ago, the UN Beijing Declaration recognised age discrimination as one of the factors contributing to the barriers to women's empowerment and advancement. The Beijing Platform for Action makes a number of specific references to older women with regard to their poverty, health, violence against them, obstacles they face in entering the labour market, discrimination at work and as a civilian group particularly affected by armed conflict. It also recommends the collection of data disaggregated by age and sex. However, older women and population ageing have been low priorities for the vast majority of countries. The challenges older women face are almost entirely absent from the national 20-year reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Women over 50 account for almost one quarter of the world's women.¹ Despite this, many population-based surveys that measure development progress do not go beyond the age of 49; for example, surveys on violence against women. This means at least one third of a woman's life is ignored, at a time when she is likely to be particularly vulnerable.

This disregard of women's later lives is an example of the often unrecognised ageism that women are subjected to in older age. This discrimination on the basis of older age can exacerbate, or be exacerbated by, the accumulated impact of the gender-based discrimination women have experienced throughout their lives. It can intersect with other forms of discrimination based, for example, on women's marital status or their mental health. This can have devastating effects unless specifically addressed.

The EU policies on gender equality and women's empowerment, including a new Action Plan for its external action, must address gender equality and the human rights of girls and women of all ages throughout their entire lives, including in older age.

Health

The EU recognises the importance of achieving universal health coverage in the post-2015 global framework for sustainable development. However, more attention must be given to the growing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, heart and lung diseases, diabetes, mental health and dementia.

In low- and middle-income countries, people aged 60 and over account for 71 per cent of deaths from NCDs.² Overburdened health systems, particularly in developing countries, are being challenged to meet the increasingly complex needs of a growing older population.

In its work on global health, the EU must support universal health coverage and access to essential healthcare services by addressing the challenges of NCDs through health promotion and prevention strategies, treatment, care and support for people at all ages.



Humanitarian Aid

The European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid includes a commitment to addressing the specific needs of older people and other vulnerable groups in humanitarian crises. ECHO's gender- and age-sensitive approach is a positive step forward in strengthening the quality of humanitarian assistance for girls, boys, women and men of all ages.

Despite this, our experience shows that mainstream humanitarian responses do not take older people's specific needs into account. This includes in the priority sectors of health and nutrition, food security, protection and shelter. For example, nutrition interventions consistently fail to assess older people's nutritional status, or provide accessible or appropriate treatment.

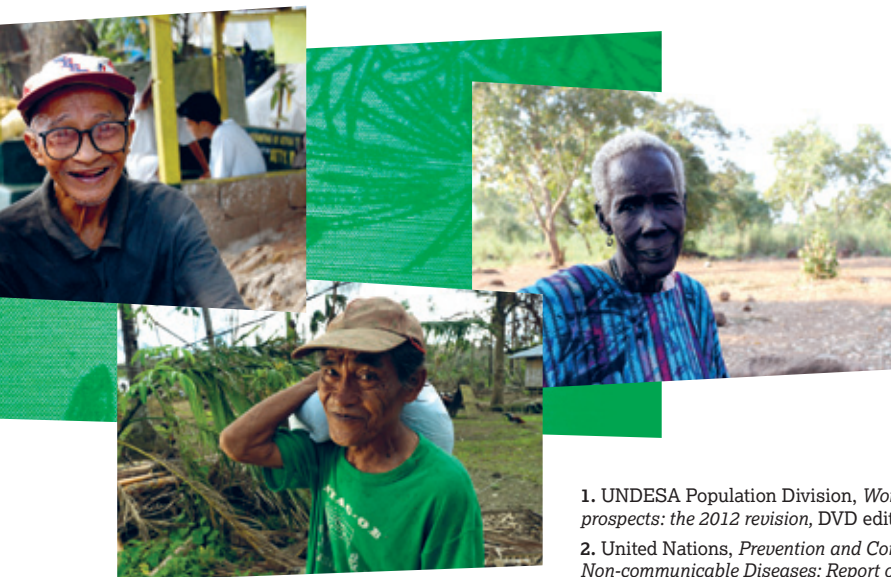
The EU must ensure its continued implementation of the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid addresses the specific needs of older people across all sectors of humanitarian assistance.

Demography and Migration

The world is experiencing dramatic demographic change, including population growth, ageing, migration and urbanisation. The rapid ageing of the world's population is transforming nations. In 2000, for the first time, there were more people over the age of 60 than children under 5. And by 2030 there will be more people aged 60 or over than children under 10.³

Far from affecting only higher-income countries, population ageing is happening fastest in developing countries. Currently, more than two-thirds of older people live in developing countries. By 2050, this will be four-fifths.⁴ This has profound implications for development.

The EU must ensure that its internal and external policies relating to sustainable development take into account population ageing in all regions of the world through the explicit protection of human rights for people of all ages and through supporting the full disaggregation of data by age and sex at all stages of life.



1. UNDESA Population Division, *World population prospects: the 2012 revision*, DVD edition, 2013

2. United Nations, *Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2011

3 & 4. UNDESA Population Division

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**HelpAge International helps older people claim
their rights, challenge discrimination and
overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified,
secure, active and healthy lives.**

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