

Ageing & Development

Issue 4 • December 1999

United Nations plans global conference on ageing

Ageing was the focus of a two-day session at the United Nations General Assembly debate on social development in New York in October, when representatives of 64 countries met to review the International Year of Older Persons.

Opening the debate, UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Frechette spoke of the challenges posed by ageing in the coming century. These could be turned into opportunities, she said, if we didn't cling to traditional ways.

It was particularly important to understand the varying responses that were needed. Whereas industrialised countries focused on social insurance questions, ageing in developing countries was taking place alongside general population growth and development.

'When it comes to ageing policies, one size doesn't fit all,' she said.

Finland's Minister for Social Affairs and Health, Maija Perho, who also spoke on behalf of the European Union, highlighted the poor response from governments in reporting their progress on the Vienna Plan of Action on Ageing, and welcomed the possibility of a global review of ageing and development.

Hector Maraval of Spain emphasised the importance of linking ageing and development. He presented the Spanish government's offer to host a global conference in 2002 to review the Vienna Plan and progress towards a global strategy for a society for all ages.

The UN Ageing Programme website is at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing.htm>

Launch of 99+ a plan of action

Following the success of the International Year of Older Persons in raising awareness of the needs and contributions of older people, HelpAge International has launched 99+, an action plan to end discrimination against older people. The broad aims are:

- Campaign for the United Nations Principles of Older Persons (covering independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity) to be accepted as a legal charter to which all governments are bound.
- Lobby for national and international strategies that tackle social attitudes and address older people's basic needs.

- Work with policy makers to set development targets which recognise older people's contribution to society and which chart progress in key areas such as poverty reduction, health status and income support.

- Argue for older people to be directly involved in the planning and implementation of research and policy initiatives that affect them.

HelpAge International is developing a consultation process to plan how to put each of these ideas into action. If you have any comments, please write to Ageing & Development or e-mail: cstill@helpage.org

Asia-Pacific sets targets

Delegates from governments, international agencies and NGOs met in Macau in October to set targets for the Macau Plan of Action on Ageing. The plan, agreed last year, is the first regional action plan on ageing.

The meeting, hosted by the Government of Macau's Social Welfare Department and the UN Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific, set targets in key areas such as health, income security and housing, and called for the development of national plans on ageing throughout the region.

Key recommendations also included gathering and sharing data on the situation of older people, and encouraging collaboration between governments and civil society organisations in implementing policies.

The UN Social Development Division website is at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev>

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Leading Global Action on Ageing

How older people lose out in emergencies

New research by HelpAge International (HAI) reveals a wide-spread lack of understanding by relief agencies of the needs of older people in emergencies and a need for more information.

Over 53 million people are estimated to be refugees or internally displaced as a result of conflict or natural disasters. While most relief agencies aim to provide emergency relief to whole communities, their priorities, assumptions and delivery systems can obstruct or exclude older people from accessing that relief.

The research, funded by the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), had three strands – documenting HAI's 15 years' experience of relief work; exploring links between humanitarian organisations and older people in emergencies through a questionnaire and workshop for NGOs; and recording the experience of older people in different types of emergencies in four countries – Bangladesh, Bosnia, the Dominican Republic and Rwanda. The findings were presented to government representatives and NGOs at a conference in Helsinki in September, sponsored by ECHO, the Finnish government and the Finnish Red Cross.

Despite a great deal of common ground in the understanding of older people and NGOs, the research revealed a clear gap in understanding. Older people were concerned with re-establishing their coping mechanisms, while relief agencies focused on delivering welfare (see table).



Sam Frost/HAI

Older people in emergencies face specific problems which need to be tackled.

Older people highlighted income as a priority. Poverty led to a spiral of problems related to shelter, food, water, health, transport and schooling of children in their care, which further undermined their ability to support themselves. Many older people felt vulnerable and dependent on external support in the absence of resources to manage their changed circumstances. Most felt that with some start-up help, they could generate some income and manage most of the practical problems focused on by relief agencies.

Humanitarian agency staff commonly said that it was neither possible nor desirable to prioritise one group, such as older people. However, the majority of those questioned reported policies identifying particularly vulnerable groups, especially children.

Men and women face different experiences in emergencies. Older women, though usually more numerous, are likely to be excluded from decision-making and resources. However, a majority of NGO respondents thought that there was no significant difference between the experiences of older men and women.

Three key principles

Older people consistently asked:

- *to be seen, heard and understood*
- *to have equal access to essential support services*
- *to have their potential and contributions recognised and supported.*

Rather than establish special services for older people, these principles require changes in the way that essential services are delivered and older people are viewed.

The most important types of support that NGOs identified to enable them to improve their services to older people included information and reference materials. HAI is following up these requests by publishing best practice guidelines.

A report of the research findings, *The Ageing World and Humanitarian Crises*, is on HAI's website at <http://www.helpage.org/members/index.html>

A full report of the research and best practice guidelines for NGOs will be available from HAI in February.

Problems identified by older people	Main activities of NGOs	NGO perceptions of older people's problems
Income	Health	Food and nutrition
Access to health services	Food and nutrition	Isolation/separation from family
Shelter	Water and sanitation	Access to health services
Access to age-sensitive health services	Basic need/non-food items	Age-related services
Food and nutrition	Shelter	Psychosocial needs
Isolation/separation from family	Skills training	Destruction of social structures

The six most common problems in emergencies identified by older people differed from the six most common activities of the NGOs surveyed, and the six most common problems that NGO staff thought older people would face in an emergency.

Report highlights urgent need for policy shift

The case for a fundamental shift in policy and opinion on global ageing is powerfully demonstrated in *The Ageing and Development Report*, published by HelpAge International.

The report, a comprehensive survey of development issues affecting older people, is based on HelpAge International's experience in 60 countries and the contribution of world experts in the field.

The report calls for politicians and economists to stop focusing on what they see as the 'crisis' of ageing and start meeting the *challenge* of ageing. This includes acknowledging the contribution to economic and social development made by older people, and addressing the needs of older people in the context of their basic human rights.



Tawach Mallia / HAI

Older people play an important role in families.

'It is important to realise that older people are active to the limit of their energy. We don't sit idle.'

Dorothy Mulangwje, 60, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide

The urgency of this is clear – older people, especially older women, are on the margins of the development process, living in increasing poverty and exclusion. Many older people are resourceful survivors who contribute to the wellbeing of their families and communities, yet policy makers see only the 'burden' and not the benefit to society of its older members.

The Ageing and Development Report documents for the first time the reality of older people with regard to key development themes such as family life, health and wellbeing, gender, migration and economic security.

Five areas are identified as priorities for policy change and immediate action by donor and developing country governments, and NGOs:

- *The UN Principles for Older*

Persons should be given greater global prominence.

- *National and international action to address the situation of older people needs to be based on an integrated approach within the context of broader social policy.*
- *The profile of ageing and the policy issues it raises in the South need priority attention.*
- *Policy makers need to acknowledge, measure and support the contributions of older people to their societies.*
- *Policy making for older citizens should actively involve them. The experience of older people needs to be recognised as a major resource in the development process.*

The Ageing and Development Report is available from Earthscan, Freeport 1, 120 Pentonville Road, London N1 9BR, UK. Fax +44 171 278 1142. Price £14.95 plus postage and packing (£2.50 UK, £3.60 elsewhere).

A 16-page summary in English, French and Spanish is available free from HelpAge International.
E-mail: cdobbing@helpage.org

Decade of Older Persons?

A UN Decade of Older Persons and national plans of action on ageing were called for at the 4th Global Conference on Ageing of the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) in Montreal, Canada, in September.

The conference, attended by over 1,800 delegates, recognised the increasing inequalities between developing countries and the rest of the world, between rural and urban environments, and within individual countries. It called attention to the fact that the 1991 UN Principles for Older Persons were still not universally recognised nor adhered to, and that agreements made in Vienna in 1982, and enshrined in the Vienna Plan of Action, had not been fully implemented.

Part of the conference was dedicated to a round-table discussion with ministers from 40 countries. Each made a public commitment to national plans of action and ensuring that ageing concerns were included in social planning.

The next major IFA conference will be in Perth, Australia in 2002, and will aim to include at least 50 per cent of delegates from developing countries. The year 2000 meeting will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in September. Website: <http://www.ifa-fiv.org>

For a copy of a paper presented at the conference by HelpAge International, 'Fostering creativity', e-mail: nickyp@helpage.org

Making changes

Ageing and Development has quickly established itself as a forum for news and debate on policies affecting older people worldwide.

To strengthen its impact we will be making some changes. Issue 5 will have a new design, making it more attractive and easier to use. It will contain more clearly defined sections containing news, comment, briefings, profiles and resources on current topics of interest to those involved in advocacy and policy making.

HAI News, mailed to HelpAge International members, will cease publication and be incorporated into the new *Ageing and Development*.

Age Bites



Website on elder abuse

The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) has given a new look to its monthly newsletter and has opened a website including the newsletter: <http://www.inpeabuse.org>. Requests and comments can be e-mailed to Paul Kingston at: spa03@cc.keele.ac.uk



Report on family violence

The First World Report on Violence is to be published in 2001, in response to a resolution passed at the 49th World Health Assembly. The Assembly declared violence to be a leading worldwide public health problem. INPEA is contributing a chapter on 'Violence against the elderly' within the section on 'Family and intimate violence'.



Post-traumatic stress project

INPEA members are involved with a project initiated by the UN, in collaboration with the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies and the Transcultural Psychosocial Organisation, to prepare guidelines and policies that could be used by countries to improve their handling of post-traumatic stress. It will involve the preparation of two reports.



Promoting a culture of respect

A group of NGOs working with older people in Lima, Peru, have published a manual in Spanish, *Del Maltrato al Trato Digno* ('From abuse to respect') on how to promote a culture of respect for older people. It is aimed at older people themselves – it has large print and much of it is in cartoon strip form. A follow-up manual for health professionals is in production. For more information, email: mesaperu@computextos.net

Violence – a hidden problem

Despite a lack of hard data, there is growing evidence from a number of countries that violence against older people is a major, though hidden, problem in the developing world. Since elder abuse is closely linked with poverty, attacking the causes of poverty could greatly improve the security of older people.

These points were made in a paper presented to the World Health Organization's Global Symposium on Violence and Health, held in Kobe, Japan, in October 1999.

Within the family, those at greatest risk are older members whose productive value to the household has declined or whose family status undergoes an abrupt change. In many countries, for example, there are numerous cases of widows being forcibly removed from the family home.

Witchcraft allegations

The paper, presented by Todd Petersen, chief executive of HelpAge International (HAI), raised particular concern about the violence directed at older people, especially women, as a result of witchcraft allegations. These accusations are common in a number of countries in both Asia and Africa. Accusations have often been connected with unexplained local events, such as sudden death or crop failure, or have been a response to rapid social and economic change. A more recent feature, however, is that the excessive number of deaths from HIV/AIDS has begun to be blamed on witchcraft.

Where community violence is endemic, older people often become victims because of their greater vulnerability. In Kingston, Jamaica, older people describe the impact on them of uncontrolled gang warfare – it limits their mobility and increases their overall sense of insecurity. A similar picture emerges from the evidence of older people in South African townships, while there are also parallels in the transition countries of East and Central Europe. Political violence, too, can affect older people.

A recent Amnesty International report

on political violence in the Rift Valley of Kenya found that of 35 reported deaths, 14 were people over 55 – a far higher proportion than in the general population.

Abuse can take a number of forms – physical abuse may include not only injury, but also malnutrition or withholding physical care. Psychological abuse may be in the form of threats, verbal abuse or isolation.

Steps to prevent abuse

The paper also looked at what could be done to prevent abuse. Since violence against individual older people raises the level of fear and insecurity of all older people, one strategy is to support and foster relationships that serve to empower and strengthen older people's rights by developing their self-confidence.

For example, the Muthande Society for the Aged in Durban, South Africa has developed an older person's literacy programme in one of the most violent townships. This has resulted in older people feeling more in control and less vulnerable when out in the community.

There is also a need to foster close and supportive inter-generational ties. Recognising that violence and abuse within families is often caused by the strain of caring with inadequate resources, a number of HAI member organisations support programmes offering respite to hard-pressed families. HelpAge Sri Lanka and HelpAge India, for example, support day care centres that look after dependent elders.

Since abuse of older people is strongly associated with poverty and growing material insecurity, attacking the structural causes of poverty will have a significant impact on the physical and mental security and sense of wellbeing of older people in the developing world. This in turn will substantially improve their mental and physical health.

For a copy of the paper, 'Violence against older people and its health consequence', e-mail: nickyp@helpage.org

Changing roles of older people in Africa

Studies in South Africa and Tanzania point to increased financial pressures on older people and suggest that involving older people in research and policy development would reduce abuse.

Pressure on pensions in South Africa

A study of older people in South Africa shows that black older people, particularly women, play an important role in supporting the family, especially grandchildren, with their pension – school fees and food account for a large proportion of their spending.

The study, by HelpAge International (HAI), was the second part of a study in Ghana (see *A&D*3) and South Africa in 1998/99, commissioned by the UK Department for International Development. The participatory approaches have fed into research and policy work by HAI in other countries, including Tanzania.

Older people in South Africa also take care of others, particularly grandchildren, people with HIV and orphans. They free younger adults to work by looking after their children and providing household and community security. Another important role is as custodians of cultural and traditional values.

The study found that there was little awareness of other state benefits that could ease older people's financial burden. Their pension provides their main income, but is not enough to meet their basic health, nutrition, and other needs. A particular concern is the inadequacy of health facilities and the lack of attention they receive. 'In the hospital there is no respect', said one older man.

Older people also feel particularly vulnerable to crime and abuse, including domestic abuse. The lack of family support is a major cause of unhappiness. 'We are important to our families when we get our pensions', was the view of some. Human rights organisations often receive reports of pensioners being accompanied to pension pay-out points by younger relatives and being forced to hand over their money.

A key feature of the research was the participation of older people in a workshop to discuss the findings,

enabling them to have a direct dialogue with policy makers. Older people suggested that there should be more cooperation between government and civil society. It was also felt that education was needed about the rights and needs of older people and that older people ought to be consulted and involved more.

The study highlighted the need to strengthen processes for involving older people in policy development.

HAI is to develop a training programme and manual for researchers and policy makers, and hopes to develop a

programme with the South African government to implement ideas based on the research findings.

For more information contact Amanda Heslop at mheslop@helpage.org

'In the hospital there is no respect. I prefer not to go to get any help, but I will go when I die to get a death certificate'.

Older man at the workshop to disseminate the research findings, South Africa

Making ends meet in Tanzania

Older people in Tanzania still have an important role in the community, but in recent years their role has changed significantly.

This was one of the findings of nationwide research into the situation of older people, undertaken by HelpAge International's Tanzania programme and partners in 1998.

'I know I am too old to depend upon, but what can I do except try to support them?'

Tanzanian woman aged 80, who had been left with four orphans

In recent years, older people's role as guardians of traditional practices and advisers to younger generations has much diminished. Older people undertake a variety of work to make ends meet. The vast majority are economically active, but their contribution is not always recognised by their communities and families.

They have also taken on major responsibility for bringing up grandchildren. One woman of 80, who had been left with four orphans after her daughter died, said, 'I know I am too

old to depend upon, but what can I do except try to support them?'

Older people are finding it more and more difficult to meet their basic needs, due to the decline in family support and socio-economic changes. Access to healthcare has become more problematic because of the introduction of cost-sharing, and is not made easier by a lack of commitment by health staff to treating older people.

Women face particular problems. Many more women than men have been widowed, while others may have been replaced by a younger wife. Older women living alone are at risk of being thrown off their land and dispossessed, and are much more likely to be accused of being witches, often with violent consequences.

The research made recommendations in three areas: practical projects; lobbying, action and awareness-raising, and capacity building to strengthen structures providing support to older people.

For more information contact Liz Holmes, HelpAge International Programme, Tanzania.
Fax +255 51 700015
E-mail: helpage@udsm.ac.tz

Newsletters

Coalition '99 Update March/April 1999 carries a lengthy statement by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) on 'an important issue that needs to be addressed, both in preparation for the Beijing Conference +5 and World Summit for Social Development +5.' The issue is the status of older women. The website is at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw>

The May/June issue contains messages from five international experts in the field of ageing and includes an exhaustive overview of global ageing trends. Website: <http://www.coalition99.org>

The Caribbean Regional Newsletter of HelpAge International, April/May 1999, notes that, while attention to ageing issues is on the increase in the Caribbean – three examples of community-based approaches to working with older people are given – Jamaica is the only English-speaking Caribbean country that has adopted a national policy for older persons. A number of others have draft policies.

Ageing in Africa, May 1999, contains a profile of HelpAge Kenya, which has been working since 1982, and reports on the observance of World Health Day in Ghana and Uganda. It also reports that the first regional Training of Age Care Trainers in Africa was conducted in Nairobi February/March, 1999, attended by 23 participants from nine countries.

ATCOA News (Asia Training Centre on Ageing), July 1999, reports on numerous training courses organised by ATCOA. These included an advanced course on Training for Aged Care Trainers, organised with HelpAge Sri Lanka in Colombo. The two-week course was attended by 31 participants from six countries. In the first six months of the year, five workshops for professional people were held in Vietnam. For more information see: <http://chmai.loxinfo.co.th/~helpage.htm>

The Four Pillars of the Geneva Association, August 1999, summarises a Communication from the European Commission 'Towards a Europe for all ages', which looks at the challenges posed by an ageing society: the relative decline of the population of working age and the ageing of the workforce; the pressure on pension schemes and public finances; the growing need for old-age and health care; the growing diversity among older people in terms of resources and needs. The full text can be obtained from: http://europa.eu.int/comm/dg05/key_en.htm

HelpAge India News, March 1999, reports that HelpAge India centres in many cities ushered in the International Year of the Older Person in their own way. Whether this was students and teachers visiting old age homes to entertain the residents, or children presenting plays, or eminent older persons receiving awards, the message was the same – that older people need not feel lonely or isolated.

Conferences

Securing rural rights

A conference on 'Rural aging: a global challenge' will aim to strengthen commitment to helping all rural people secure the right to healthy ageing.

The conference, to be held in Charleston, West Virginia, USA, from 7-11 June 2000, is designed for researchers, clinicians, academics, healthcare professionals, advocacy groups, service providers, carers and leaders in the field of ageing.

It is being organised by the West Virginia University Center on Aging in collaboration with the UN Programme on Ageing, the World Health Organization and the International Association of Gerontology.

Topics will include behavioural/social sciences; health, clinical and functional aspects; services; environment/geography; education/training; social research, planning, practice, policy, economics and technology.

Invited keynote speakers include US first lady Hillary Clinton, former US senator and astronaut John Glenn, Alex Kalache of the WHO Programme on Ageing and Health, and Alexandre Sidorenko of the UN Programme on Ageing.

Reduced registration fees are available for those registering before 6 March. To register or obtain more information, visit the conference website at: http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/rural_ageing

Focus on gerontology

The World Conference on Gerontology will be held on 1-6 July 2000 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. For information fax +604 291 5066 or e-mail: gutman@sfu.ca Website: <http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/gero>

Information sources

New databases on social security

Social Security Worldwide is a set of five databases produced by the International Social Security Association of the ILO, giving a comprehensive view of social security and social protection issues around the world.

The databases cover five aspects of social security: outlines of social security systems, including old age benefits, in 170 countries; summaries of important reforms in social protection programmes; references to over 14,000 pieces of legislation in 170 countries; bibliography with more than 20,000 references, including 900 specifically to older people; thesaurus of key social security terms in English, French, Spanish and German.

The databases are available on CD-ROM (US\$400/SwFr600 single user, US\$800/SwFr1200 multi-user) and the Internet (US\$700/SwFr1000), with a 20% discount to HAI members in developing countries. Enquiries can be e-mailed to: issadoc@ilo.org Forms are also available on the website: <http://www.issa.int/ssw>

Age Bites



Slovakia strengthens links

The Slovak Forum on Ageing held its first conference in Bojnice in October 1999, attended by NGOs, age care professionals and government representatives. This was the first national meeting of NGOs working with older people in East and Central Europe, and marked a key stage in strengthening links between NGOs and government.

For more information e-mail: phinchli@helpage.org



Courses on gerontology

Three short training programmes are on offer from the International Institute on Ageing (INIA) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). They are on 'Social gerontology' (February), 'Economic and financial aspects of ageing in developing countries' (March) and 'Health care for older persons' (May).

E-mail: INIA@maltanet.net



Conference on public health

The World Federation of Public Health Associations is calling for papers for its 9th Congress to be held in China in September 2000 on 'Challenges to public health'. Sub-themes relevant to ageing include 'Globalisation of health', 'Poverty and social justice', 'Health and human rights', and 'Health and development'.

Contact Washington Secretariat
Fax: +1 202 777 2487



Strengthening social security

The International Social Security Association launches its Initiative 2000 in Rome in December. 'Strengthening security in social security' will explore plans to strengthen social rights and the degree to which social provision promotes feelings of security. It will include workshops, meetings and conferences and use of the Internet.

Website: <http://www.issa.int>

UK government explores rights-based approach

Strategies to ensure a human rights-based approach to working with older people were presented to UK Department for International Development (DFID) social development advisers at their annual meeting in September.

DFID advisers and HelpAge International (HAI) Secretariat staff explored the barriers faced by older people and the contribution they make to development, and discussed older people's concerns learnt through participatory research in developing countries. Ageism was recognised as a contributing factor in excluding older people from development programmes.

HAI staff explained why a rights-based approach was especially relevant to work with older people, and how it should be grounded within a poverty-oriented framework that was capable of assessing the experience of poverty from the perspectives of older women and men.

There was agreement that affirmative actions needed to be taken to avoid unwittingly discriminating against older people, such as ensuring that older people-based issues were included in country strategy papers.

For a copy of the HAI paper, 'A rights-based approach to working with older people', e-mail: nickyp@helpage.org

Paper on ageing

The DFID Social Development Department has published a working paper on *Ageing and Development* by Amanda Heslop, HAI Secretariat.

It describes the multiple ways in which older people experience poverty and exclusion, and suggests that solutions to the difficulties experienced by older people require a policy framework that is inclusive and poverty-focused.

E-mail: sdd@dfid.gov.uk

Website: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk>

Productive ageing discussed in Seoul

'Productive ageing' was one of the themes at the 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs in October, which focused on 'The role of NGOs in the 21st century'.

At HelpAge Korea's request, HelpAge International presented a paper, 'Older people for change', which highlighted the part played by older people in community development, and stressed that older people's contribution needed to be both recognised and advanced through NGO and governmental practice and support.

Recommendations from the conference to the UN included placing greater emphasis on research, planning and programming on issues of older people.

For a copy of the paper, e-mail: nickyp@helpage.org

Boost in Chile

Work to support the rights and needs of older people in Latin America and the Caribbean received a boost when two conferences were held to coincide with each other in Chile in September – one for civil society representatives, sponsored by HelpAge International, and one for government officials and technical experts, sponsored by the UN Population Fund and the Pan American Health Organization.

After the final day's proceedings, representatives of the two meetings joined each other to present their recommendations. Both noted the structural poverty, exclusion and discrimination faced by older people. The civil society conference, in particular, stressed the need for programmes to support older people as citizens with rights and the ability to contribute to society.

For more information, e-mail Tiempos: cec@interaccess.cl

Dementia – a major health issue

Dementia is now recognised as a major health issue affecting an increasing number of people. It is estimated that by 2025, one in ten people will have dementia by the age of 65, and three in ten by the age of 85.

Asia project raises awareness

There is a growing need to create awareness of dementia, to encourage early detection and treatment and dispel prejudice. Professionals need to be trained in diagnosis and clinical care, and networks of professionals need to be developed establish effective models of care.

The Asia Training Centre on Ageing (ATCOA) – an initiative of Help Age International – is responding to these needs by starting a project that aims to raise awareness of dementia among governments, NGOs, community leaders and health workers and encourage them to plan services for older people with dementia.

The project will be launched at a workshop in Perth, Australia, in December, organised in collaboration with Anglican Homes and the Sir James McCusker Foundation. Participants from a number of Asian countries will learn how to develop models of dementia care. They in turn will train other carers.

For more information, e-mail ATCOA: atcoa@helpageasia.com

Improving care in Guatemala

Improved occupational and recreational therapy for people with dementia is being promoted by the Guatemalan member of Alzheimer's Disease International, Asociación Grupo Ermita, with the support of President Haydee A de Lopez.

Specialist trainers conducted training earlier this year for 40 church members who are carers of people with Alzheimer's and 40 therapists whose work includes identifying and caring for people with Alzheimer's. For more information e-mail: alzquate@quetzal.net

Training in Belize

Training for volunteer and professional carers is a priority for HelpAge Belize in the coming year. The training will cover communication, counselling, the role of the family, basic therapy and safety measures.

Workshops for about 30 participants will be conducted by ageing experts Marianne Walzer and Karen Wells of the Miami Jewish Home and Hospital for the Aged.

HelpAge Belize fax: +501 2 45282

Projects in India

India has 60 million people aged over 65. Of these, more than 3 million are estimated to have Alzheimer's and related disorders. However, there is a lack of awareness about dementia, even among professionals.

For the past three years, the Alzheimer's and Related Disorders Society of India (ARDSI) has undertaken a wide variety of activities to support people with dementia. These include providing day-care facilities and home-based care, guidance and counselling, and information on dementia, as well as carrying out research, and organising community geriatric nursing training.

ARDSI has 12 chapters and is largely funded through membership fees. HelpAge India has provided some funding for the Urban Community Dementia Services (UCDS) project, a voluntary scheme that provides specialist home-based, community-based and institutional care, counselling, and other services in Cochin.

<http://www.alzheimerindia.org>

Keep up-to-date with ageing and development issues

HelpAge International is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in the quality of their lives.

Ageing & Development is part of HelpAge International's contribution to increase public awareness of the need to take ageing into account in all development policy and practice. It is available free of charge in English and Spanish.

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