

# Ageing and Development

News and analysis of issues affecting the lives of older people

Issue 7 December 2000



Clearer focus... greater attention to developing countries has been called for in the revised International Plan of Action on Ageing.

## UN ageing plan takes shape

**Key changes that need to be made to the International Plan of Action on Ageing have started to be identified, as preparations for revising the plan in 2002 get underway.**

The UN Programme on Ageing in New York has begun to gather views on how to revise the International Plan of Action on Ageing, which was adopted at the first World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna in 1982.

So far, two expert group consultations and a meeting of a consultative group of NGOs have been held. Views from these meetings will be fed into a draft document being prepared by the UN Programme on Ageing for discussion by the UN's Commission for Social Development in New York in February 2001. The Commission is expected to draw up a draft Plan of Action, leading to wider consultation with civil society, before the Second

World Assembly on Ageing meets in Madrid in April 2002 to adopt a revised Plan of Action.

Regional consultations will also take place. Leading the way is Asia-Pacific, where the UN's regional economic and social commission, ESCAP, is planning a consultative meeting hosted by the government of Macao in September 2001. ESCAP also plans to review the plan of action for the region, which it coordinated. Similar meetings are being considered for western Asia, Latin America and Europe.

Several key requirements for the revised plan are emerging:

■ **Stronger focus on developing countries** – The UN General Assembly has called for the revised plan to pay much greater attention to the impact of ageing on the developing world. Debate has been lively over how to do this.

■ **Link to mainstream development** – A number of

voices have called for the revised plan to be linked closely to mainstream development debates on issues such as poverty, rights, promoting social integration and achieving equality and equity between men and women.

■ **International development targets** – A meeting of UN agencies and NGOs at the World Summit on Social Development in Geneva in June 2000 highlighted the need for older people to be taken into account in achieving the international development targets.

■ **Inclusion of older people in policy development** – At the October HelpAge International Asia/Pacific regional meeting in Delhi, member organisations called for the revised plan to emphasise the inclusion of older people in policy development processes affecting them.

**UN ageing plan – a flourish or a reality?** See page 6

## inside...

- 2 **News** [Active ageing fund: Studies in Ethiopia, Sudan and South Africa; Policy in Bolivia](#)
- 6 **Briefing** [Ageing plan review: flourish or reality?](#)
- 8 **Profile** [Companionship and care in South Korea](#)
- 9 **Talking point** [Disrupted lives in northern Iraq](#)
- 10 **Resources** [Publications, websites and conferences](#)
- 12 **Research update** [Details of new projects](#)

## HelpAge International

Leading global action on ageing

# News round up

Developments that affect older people's quality of life

2

## Reports recognise wellbeing and human rights, but not ageing

**Reports from the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) show that international poverty reduction strategies are at last beginning to define and measure poverty in a multi-dimensional way. But the implications of population ageing continue to be overlooked.**

*Attacking Poverty*, the World Bank's 2000/2001 World Development Report, describes the poverty experienced by over a quarter of the world's population as a state of 'multiple deprivations, where poor people live without freedoms of action'. The Bank is proposing a three-pronged strategy to overcome poverty – promoting material and economic opportunities, facilitating empowerment, and improving security by reducing

vulnerability to external shocks, including civil and state violence.

*Human Rights for All*, the 2000 report of the United Nations Development Programme, makes the case for basing developmental practice and indicators on the rights and obligations of governments and citizens enshrined in international law.

Yet neither report tackles the issues of poor ageing populations, and the implications of the growing numbers of poor older people in developing countries on developmental practice and poverty targeting.

Research into chronic poverty being developed by HelpAge International with Manchester University shows that poverty is transmitted intergenerationally,

and that age, along with gender, qualifies as a critical dimension of analysis to delineate levels and degrees of household and individual poverty. Findings show that older people are benefiting least of any age group from current development policies and practice.

'It is time for key social development agencies to include age as a world development indicator,' says Sylvia Beales, HelpAge International policy development manager. 'Poverty statistics and analysis need to be disaggregated by age.'

■ Age is mentioned in the UK Department for International Development's new strategy papers on women's empowerment and human rights.  
<http://www.dfid.gov.uk>

### World Development Report

[http://www.worldbank.org/html/extpb/wdr2000\\_2001.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/html/extpb/wdr2000_2001.htm)

### UNDP Report

<http://www.undp.org/hdro/>

## China phases out one-child policy

**China has started to phase out its one-child-per-family policy to enable care of ageing parents to be shared among more adult children.**

Chinese officials have concluded that there will not be enough adult children to care for ageing parents unless the twenty-year-old policy to slow down population growth is ended, according to Popline, the US-based world population news service.

In launching the phase-out, the Chinese government now offers exemptions to adults who have no siblings. When two of these adults marry, they will be allowed to have two children, to prevent a second generation in which one couple is solely responsible for four ageing parents.

### Popline

<http://www.populationinstitute.org>

Turning point... parents can have more children.

## Comment

### The end of the one-child policy – a straw in the wind?

China's decision to phase out the one-child family policy marks the first major strategy change by a developing country in response to population ageing.

Debate continues over whether the policy was right for China, but what is certain is that Chinese policy-makers are now looking to a future where a rising population of dependent older people have few or no younger relatives to care for them. In a country where pension coverage, though growing, still only reaches a

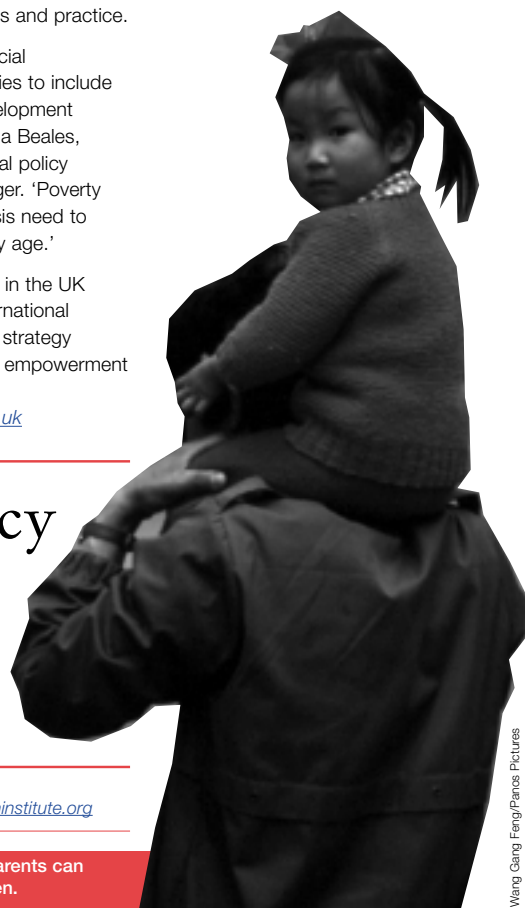
minority of the workforce, such a situation would have serious implications for public welfare systems.

Where China leads, other countries will undoubtedly follow, particularly in Asia, with its rapid momentum of population ageing. Governments will need to pay

increasing attention to sustaining informal caregiving systems, above all at family and community levels. The alternative would be an unsustainable demand on state resources.

### Mark Gorman

Director of Development,  
HelpAge International



Wang Gang/Feng/Panace Pictures

## Letters

### Abuse of older women

Thank you for keeping us informed of developments with older people worldwide. I was interested to read *A&D* 6, especially the article on how traditional misconceptions

have led to the deaths of older women in Tanzania, and the implications these have for other parts of Africa.

Our Concerned Christian Community (CCC) intervention for women sexually abused during the civil crises in Liberia and Sierra Leone shows that 8-10 per cent of victims are

older women above 60 years.

We are providing counselling (trauma and HIV/AIDS), medical and material relief aid, among others.

*Rev. Kortu Kayve Brown  
General Coordinator  
Concerned Christian Community  
PO Box 10-4875, 1000 Monrovia 10,  
Liberia, West Africa.  
Email: LMMS@Afrlink.com*

### We welcome letters from readers.

#### Please write to:

The Editor  
Ageing and Development  
HelpAge International  
67-74 Saffron Hill  
London EC1N 8QX, UK.

or email: [ctill@helpage.org](mailto:ctill@helpage.org)

Letters may be edited.

## Medical training 'fails older people'

**The majority of people who require healthcare are older people, and the current medical education system does not sufficiently cater to their needs.**

This point was made in a declaration by the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations at its conference in Portugal in August – the first of its kind to focus on ageing and health.

Participants agreed that geriatric issues should be obligatory during medical training, and that more opportunities should be provided for shared education between medical students and other disciplines for a holistic view of older people's healthcare.

The federation of about 70 associations is recognised by the World Health Organization (WHO) as the official international forum for medical students. It is carrying out a survey with WHO of how far ageing is incorporated into the medical curriculum worldwide, and assessing medical students' attitudes to ageing in selected countries.

#### More information:

*IFMSA, c/o WMA, BP 63,  
01212 Ferny-Voltaire CEDEX France.  
Tel: +33 450 404759  
Fax: +33 450 405937  
Email: [ifmsa-general@onelist.com](mailto:ifmsa-general@onelist.com)  
<http://www.ifmsa.org>*

## Bank to support 'a new culture of ageing'

**Proposals for micro-credit programmes specifically for older people are being invited by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), following the approval of an action plan for active and healthy ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean.**

The plan was proposed at an inter-regional consultation on ageing in June 2000, co-sponsored by the Pan American Health Organization, the International Federation on Ageing, and HelpAge International. It recognises that, while most older people rely on their families and communities for social security, they struggle to make any contribution because of discriminatory policies and practices.

The six recommendations which the Bank has agreed to pursue are to:

- promote active and healthy ageing initiatives and leadership
- create a fund to support civil society networks and governments in developing policies and projects for active, productive and healthy ageing
- include in its regular lending programme priority for social protection networks (emphasising the most vulnerable older people),

social security programmes, health programmes (emphasising prevention and community-based social and health services), education, and the inclusion of universal access principles in urban development projects

- support micro-credit programmes targeted at older people, and eliminate age restrictions in existing programmes
- promote age awareness within the Bank
- establish a focal point on ageing within the Bank, develop operational guidelines and indicators to measure progress.

'The plan is centred on the aggressive promotion in the region of a new culture of ageing – as a natural process, which can be active, productive, decent, healthy, and independent,' says Tomás Engler, senior health specialist at the IADB.

'The IADB has shown unique leadership in taking action to promote healthy and active ageing in the region,' says Valerie Mealla, HelpAge International's Latin America representative. 'Older people and institutions will take encouragement from this opportunity for true and fair participation in resources and benefits normally only available to younger sectors of the population.'

The IADB is a multilateral development bank providing US\$7 million a year in loans and grants for programmes aimed at alleviating poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean. Comparable institutions in other regions include the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank.

#### More information:

*Tomás Engler  
Senior Health Specialist  
Inter-American Development Bank  
1300 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20577, USA.  
Email: [ageing@iadb.org](mailto:ageing@iadb.org)*



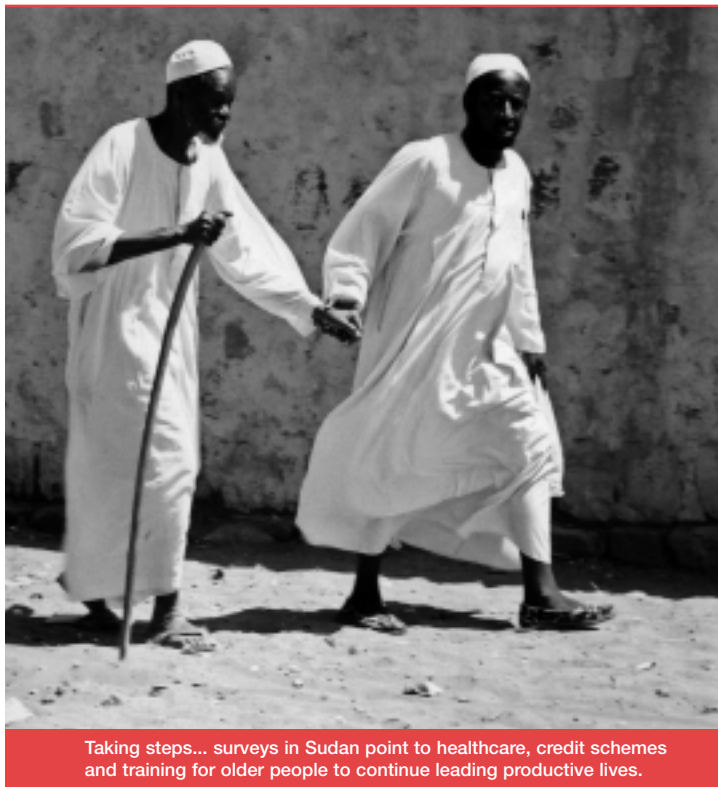
Anabella Cecilia/Panos Pictures

**Making a living... a regional plan will support active ageing.**

# News round up

Developments that affect older people's quality of life

4



Taking steps... surveys in Sudan point to healthcare, credit schemes and training for older people to continue leading productive lives.

Alison Geddes/HKI

## Attitudes to ageing in Sudan

**In Sudan, age is largely defined in terms of deteriorating physical fitness and health, according to a survey carried out by the Ahfad University for Women, Khartoum.**

Poor health is seen as the greatest barrier to older people's ability to continue productive roles. Family care and support is crucial, and is regarded almost as a religious service by those providing it.

The survey used questionnaires with 356 older and younger people from 10 villages in seven regions to study attitudes towards old age, the situation, roles and contributions of older people, and reasons given by families for supporting older relatives.

A survey in Port Sudan, carried out by the Agency for Co-operation and Research in Development (ACORD) with the HelpAge International programme in Sudan, has found that nine out of ten

older people live with their families, most of them as breadwinners. Of those working, just over half have small businesses, and most of the rest are labourers.

The survey used a questionnaire and discussions with 116 older people. The report recommends establishing a special credit scheme for older people, and training for older people to increase their role in loan advisory committees.

**More information:**  
Ahmed El Hussain,  
Acting Programme Director,  
HelpAge International,  
c/o Acropole Hotel, PO Box 48,  
Khartoum, Sudan.  
Email: [hlpqsd@sudanmail.net](mailto:hlpqsd@sudanmail.net)

## Lifting the lid off elder abuse

**A study in South Africa has defined different types of abuse suffered by older people, as part of endemic domestic abuse.**

The study by the University of Cape Town Centre for Gerontology, in partnership with the Ikamva Labantu Project, asked older, urban Xhosa speakers living in the community (21 women and 11 men) about their perceptions and experience of abuse, and how they might protect themselves.

Participants described seven types of abuse – physical (beatings, pushing), emotional and verbal (age discrimination, insults), witchcraft accusations (ostracism, physical danger), financial (control of pension money, theft of property), sexual (forced incest, rape), neglect and lack of respect (withholding affection, lack of interest in their wellbeing), and systemic (dehumanising treatment at health clinics and pension pay points, marginalisation by government).

It became clear that older people would go to great pains to conceal the abuse. 'We old people hide our problems,' said one participant. 'You see, when we talk, we can be beaten. That is why we hide them. Our children beat us.'

The study, the first of its kind in South Africa, found that elder abuse was part of endemic domestic abuse, prompted by weakening family structures and lack of family support, loss of respect for elders, urbanisation, effects of political and social change resulting in insecurity, poverty, and demise of state welfare.

The report highlights older people's apparent inability to respond to the problem of elder abuse and protect themselves as matters of grave concern. It calls for interventions to help empower, support and protect those at risk of abuse, and for further research.

**Mpathekombi, ya bantu abadala: elder abuse in black townships on the Cape Flats.**

J Keikelame and M Ferreira in partnership with Ikamva Labantu Project. University of Cape Town. 2000.

**More information:**  
Centre for Gerontology, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town, Observatory 7925, South Africa.  
Tel: +27 21 448 4840/1/2  
Fax: +27 21 447 8714  
Email: [gerontol@cormack.uct.ac.za](mailto:gerontol@cormack.uct.ac.za)  
<http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/drd/geront98.html>

## Health needs in Myanmar

**A study of older women in Myanmar highlights active roles, reliance on self-care and family support.**

Direct observation and interviews with 19 women aged 63 and over, from different backgrounds and social groups in rural areas of Taik Kyi township, showed that almost all played an active role in their families and communities. 'Besides doing the household chores, I earn by selling fish in nearby villages,' said one 75-year-old.

Most contacted health workers only when home remedies did not work. They said there were no specific healthcare services for older people in their area. Almost

all said they were looked after by their family and community. 'People in the village support older people by giving medicine and food. I have lived up to this age because of their support,' said one 80-year-old.

**Perception towards self-care among older women in rural area Myanmar**

Saw Saw et al. Department of Medical Research. 2000

**More information:**  
Dr Saw Saw, Research Officer,  
Health Systems Research Division,  
Department of Medical Research,  
PO 11191, Yangon, Myanmar.  
Fax: +951 251514



## Myths and misconceptions

**In this column we highlight a popular myth about older people and explain what the situation really is.**

**Have you heard anything about older people that may be a myth?**

**If so, write to the editor or email: [ctill@helppage.org](mailto:ctill@helppage.org)**

**Respect for older people**

**'Traditional respect for older people ensures their status and role in the community.'**

Many cultures have traditions of giving respect to older people. Older people may have pride of place or a special role in festivals or religious ceremonies, and young children are brought up to treat older people with special care and respect for their dignity.

Even in these societies, however, some older people may be excluded. Older women, particularly those without children, are especially likely to be ignored.

And in a fast-changing world, with rapid shifts in economic, social

and cultural norms, older people can find themselves left out of community or household decisions, either deliberately or accidentally, because younger people see their ideas as old-fashioned, or because they simply do not realise that older people have much to contribute.

There is also a view that, as older people have worked hard all their lives, they should be allowed to rest and be looked after. This has its dangers too. It can mean that older people are denied the right to take part in community and

family activities, leading to social isolation and deteriorating health due to lack of stimulus.

No particular age can be assumed to be a 'cut-off date' after which people are too old to play an active part. The wish of most people of any age is to continue to take part in whatever is going on, and to go on making a contribution, particularly to their own families.

Those working in social research, policy development, service provision or community development need to be alert to the differences between 'respecting' older people and sidelining them.

## Older women's life as nuns

**Research in Ethiopia throws light on older women who become *menekusits* (nuns) as a form of old-age security. The women give up most of their possessions and live in nunneries or, where none exist, in tombs in church compounds.**

The research by Heran Sisay from the Sociology Department of Addis Ababa University, funded by HelpAge International Ethiopia's Community Support for Older People programme, used interviews with 30 older nuns and other key informants in a rural nunnery and a church in Addis Ababa.

All the women interviewed originally came from farming communities. Most had married and had had children, although many had lost children to disease or military service. Some had not married because they were disabled. Most had become nuns because their husbands had died, and any children still alive were unable to help them.

The nunnery provided the older nuns with a stable structure and regular, though meagre, meals. However, the nuns lacked medical treatment, because they did not trust the male doctor, and any

social activities. Older nuns in the church compound lived in cold, damp conditions with no regular meals, depending for food on churchgoers or begging.

The report recommends developing policies to fund the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to care for older people; encouraging social institutions to broaden their services to meet the social security needs of older people; strengthening government support to organisations supporting older people; and formulating a policy for older people.

***The socio-economic situation of elderly nuns in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church: the cases of Debre Libanos and Kechene Medhanialem***

Heran Sisay, June 2000

**Contact:**

Senait Ayelle, HelpAge International Programme, PO Box 3384, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Fax: +251 1 517748 Email: [hai@telecom.net.et](mailto:hai@telecom.net.et)

## New policy in Bolivia

**A national plan on ageing has been produced by the Bolivian National Commission for Older People, following consultation with civil society representatives and government departments.**

The plan, set to become official policy, is guided by seven principles – participation, dignity, right to attention, self-realisation, independence, equity and justice. It promotes a vision of active, healthy ageing, and emphasises older people's participation in society and respect for their rights. Objectives include developing policies, strategic plans and programmes, and strengthening older people's organisations.

A law protecting older people has also been drafted. However, it does not respond to the plan. It considers older people to be children who must be protected and have no capacity to exercise their rights. The national network, Defensa del Anciano, will continue working to produce laws that respond to the needs and rights of older people.

**Defensa del Anciano**

Email: [danciano@ceibo.entelnet.bo](mailto:danciano@ceibo.entelnet.bo)



**Rights issue... policy in Bolivia will emphasise older people's participation but a draft law limits their rights.**

HAI

# Briefing

Analysis of current topics in ageing

6

## Reviewing the UN ageing plan – a flourish or a reality?

In the twenty years since the International Plan of Action on Ageing was adopted, limited progress has been made towards implementing it. **Mark Gorman** looks at the reasons why, and at how the plan can be improved.

Nearly two decades ago, with belief in the possibility of effective international action for development at its height, the United Nations convened an international conference to address 'the serious problems besetting a growing proportion of the populations of the world'.<sup>1</sup> The conference, held in Vienna in 1982, concluded with a Plan of Action on Ageing. The plan aimed to 'strengthen the capacities of countries to deal effectively with the ageing of their populations and with the special concerns and needs of their elderly'.

The plan contained 62 recommendations across the range of social development, from health to education. It recommended an international response to population ageing, through the establishment of a new economic order and increased technical cooperation, with a particular focus on developing countries. It also stressed the need to link ageing issues with the wider development issues of rights, women, population, healthcare and economic development, which the UN was promoting at that time.

The plan gave grounds for supposing that ageing issues would take a more prominent place on development agendas – 126 governments signed up in 1982, and more have signed up since. However, regular reviews have revealed little progress in implementing the plan. In its most recent review – the fourth, in 1996 – the UN reports 'some modest progress' but describes implementation as 'a largely incomplete task, particularly in developing countries'.<sup>2</sup>

### Why so little progress?

Opinions vary as to why this should be. Some people point to what they see as a general UN problem. In the words of an acerbic newspaper comment on the UN's Millennium Summit, held

in September 2000, it is a 'warily familiar ... old conundrum: the UN is good at drawing up idealistic conventions, but near-useless in getting them drawn up into political reality'.<sup>3</sup>

Others point to basic flaws in the conception of the Vienna Plan, seeing it as an attempt to universalise concepts and solutions devised by the western world. In *No Aging in India*, the anthropologist Lawrence Cohen



Henri du Plessis/HAI

A better future... the revised Plan of Action on Ageing needs to address the issues of the mainstream development debate as they affect older people, if it is to be relevant to the needs of the developing world.

describes the 1982 World Assembly as an extension of an 'archetypal gerontological conference' in 'naming old age as a problem and inculcating the need for a uniform response among the ignorant'. That response, he says, was called for by the Vienna Plan, whose recommendations each began 'Governments should...'. This defined the state as the sole agent of solutions to the 'problem' of ageing, but ignored the fact that for most governments, compliance with these recommendations demanded resources well beyond their means.



Generally there is a feeling within both governments and NGOs that the Vienna Plan is of limited relevance, particularly to developing countries. In reviewing the plan, a group of HelpAge International members and partners in the Caribbean noted that it 'does not sufficiently recognise the different realities and impact of ageing across regions (of the) developed as against the developing world'.<sup>4</sup>

#### The way forward

The feeling that the Vienna Plan was at best in need of review and amendment has now been translated into UN action. In 1999, a UN General Assembly resolution called for a Second World Assembly on Ageing to be held in 2002, and accepted the offer of the Spanish government to host it. The meeting in Spain will adopt a revised plan of action and long-term strategy on ageing.

Preparations have begun. The UN Programme on Ageing (in the Division for Social Policy and Development), which has been tasked with revising the plan, is drawing up a draft document for discussion by the UN's Commission for Social Development in February 2001. It has been holding a series of expert consultations to help work out what to include in the new plan and strategy.

The UN General Assembly has called on ageing-focused NGOs, research institutions and private sector representatives to take part in the Assembly and to contribute to the preparations by organising meetings and studies related to the themes to be addressed by the Assembly. However, time is short for this process, and it is not yet clear what the key themes will be – although the UN General Assembly has called for special attention to be paid to developing countries.

#### Into the mainstream

What is emerging is a growing consensus that, to be relevant to

the needs of the developing world, the revised plan needs above all to address the issues of the mainstream development debate as they affect older people. This was one of the key points of the Vienna Plan, which called for ageing to be 'considered within the framework of other international strategies and plans'.<sup>5</sup> The need for these links to be made becomes more pressing as the development agenda becomes more complex.

Debating ageing issues within mainstream development agendas would require a strategy that targets these agendas – in the same way, for example, that the Copenhagen Social Summit in 1995 set out to make social improvement an integral part of development strategy at both national and international levels, and place people at the centre of development efforts.

HelpAge International (HAI) believes in the need for older people's issues and aspirations to be included in mainstream development processes, for their rights to be properly recognised and the contributions that they make to their families and communities actively supported. HAI will press for the plan to promote ageing issues as part of the mainstream development agenda, by linking the concerns of older people to the key commitments which emerged from the Copenhagen conference. The commitments – to create an enabling environment, eradicate poverty, promote social integration, achieve gender equity and improve access to health and education services – all have an 'age dimension'.<sup>6</sup>

Approaches to ageing issues are equally important. HelpAge International will argue for discussion of ageing issues to be rooted in concepts that have become basic to development theory and practice, especially 'social inclusion' and 'rights-based' approaches to development. This argument

corresponds with the Copenhagen summit's adoption of the idea of 'a society for all' – a concept extended by the UN for the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 to 'a society for all ages', which also emphasised social inclusion as an intergenerational issue.

In its Proclamation on Ageing of 1992 the UN General Assembly recognised 'humanity's coming of age and the promise it holds for maturing attitudes and capabilities in social, economic, cultural and spiritual undertakings, not least for global peace and development in the next century'.<sup>7</sup> The current process of drawing up a Plan of Action appropriate to the needs of the growing numbers of older people in the world will be a test of whether this statement was merely a rhetorical flourish, or whether it can be made a reality.

*Mark Gorman is  
Director of Development,  
HelpAge International*

#### UN Ageing Programme

The draft plan will be posted on the UN Ageing Programme's website at: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/index.html>

A&D will continue to update you on the review of the Vienna Plan, including key issues in the UN Commission for Social Development's draft plan, and outcomes of the Second World Assembly in 2002.

#### References

1. *Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing*. New York: United Nations, 1983. p.11
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3. 'Nearly useless'. In *The Guardian*, London. 4 Sept 2000. p.17
4. Internal review by HAI members and partners. HAI Caribbean Regional Development Centre. Aug 2000.
5. *Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing* (see above). p.12
6. *Intergenerational solidarity: the key to a society for all ages*. London: HelpAge International, 2000. p.4
7. *'Conceptual Framework for a Society for All Ages'*. New York: United Nations, 1995.



# Profile

Taking older people's interests forward

8



Welcome visitor... HelpAge Korea volunteer Mrs Lee Kyung Ja has visited 87-year-old Mrs Lee Sun Ok for 13 years to provide care and company.

Brent Madison/HAI

## Companionship and care in South Korea

**On the eve of the International Year of Volunteering, A&D looks at how volunteer home-helpers are providing vital care services to growing numbers of older people living on their own in South Korea.**

In common with many other countries, South Korea is witnessing a significant shift in the age balance of its population. Between 1960 and 2000, the proportion of South Koreans aged over 65 rose from 2.9 per cent (726,000) to 7.1 per cent (3.3 million).

Health and mobility problems for older people are widespread. In 1995, research showed that nearly a third needed help with day-to-day activities.

The vast majority of older South Koreans live in the community. But, despite a tradition of care by family members, increasing numbers of older people are having to manage alone, as family units become smaller and younger adults move to find work. In 1981, only one in five South Koreans aged 60 or over lived apart from their families. Within seven years, the proportion had doubled. The trend is even more pronounced in rural areas.

In 1987, HelpAge International member HelpAge Korea, founded in 1982 to support poor and needy older people in their communities, introduced its first volunteer home help project to support older people who were housebound and on low incomes, and could manage some self-care.

Just over ten years later, the national government is running a programme of 5,600 volunteer home-helpers and 380 paid home-helpers, supporting a total of 7,300 older people. In addition, nearly 40,000 volunteer home-helpers now deliver services for older people, working through a network of over 300 community welfare centres. HelpAge Korea itself is one of the training centres, and employs 90 volunteers and four paid home-helpers.

Services include helping with housework, personal care, offering companionship and running errands. And emergency contact is easy, thanks to an enlightened government policy which provides older people with free telephones and rental. Home-helpers exchange home phone numbers with their clients, so that help is just a phone call away.

Mrs Lee Sun Ok, an 87-year-old widow who lives on government 'care money', has been visited for 13 years by HelpAge Korea volunteer Mrs Lee Kyung Ja to help with cooking, filling in forms or going to the bank. 'When she comes, my life is no longer empty,' says Mrs Lee.

So what were the critical success factors which turned a local project into the model for a national programme? Says Mr Cho: 'In one word, timing.' South Korea's tremendous economic expansion led to widespread changes in the composition of families and communities, alongside a sharp rise in numbers of older people.

Another big factor has been the loyalty and dedication of well-trained and supported teams of

volunteers. War and conflict in Korea have torn families apart, says Mr Cho, and many people's parents have died, or live far away. Volunteering offers an important way of recreating a sense of family – by showing care and love for somebody else's parents.

### More information:

Hyun Se Cho, Executive Secretary, HelpAge Korea, PO Box 59, Youngdungpo, Seoul 150-650, Korea  
Email: [helpage@nuri.net](mailto:helpage@nuri.net)

### Home-care in Asia/Pacific

In China, home-care schemes are being run by government-sponsored community committees, community-care centres and medical institutions. There are many examples of the 'young old' providing care and support to the 'old old'. For example, one 107-year-old woman in Sichuan Province is supported by an 80-year-old carer.

Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia and Fiji have homecare programmes run by NGOs, with or without government support. Some countries, including Singapore and Hong Kong, also have private home care services.

### More information:

Joseph Pannirselvam, Programmes Development Advisor, HelpAge International, Asia/Pacific Regional Development Centre, c/o Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand  
Email: [hai@helpageasia.com](mailto:hai@helpageasia.com)

### International Year of Volunteering

The United Nations has designated 2001 the International Year of Volunteering to increase recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteering.  
<http://www.iyv2001.org>

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Ageways 48 (June 1998).  
London: HelpAge International



# Talking point

Understanding older people's experience

9

## Disrupted lives in northern Iraq

**Conflict and economic sanctions have brought continued hardship to the Kurdish people of northern Iraq. A&D looks at how the lives of older people have been affected.**

The Kurds have lived for centuries in an area around the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. The Kurds in Iraq have suffered decades of persecution. In the Anfal campaigns of the 1980s, the government destroyed Kurdish villages and farmland and forcibly resettled villagers in 'collective towns'. Thousands of Kurds were killed.

In 1991, when Iraq was defeated in the war over Kuwait, the Kurds took control of part of northern Iraq. But an internal economic blockade by the Iraqi government, international economic sanctions against Iraq and intermittent conflict between different Kurdish political factions mean that Kurdish communities are still struggling to establish a way of life.

The effects of continued conflict and economic sanctions on children have been clearly charted by bodies such as Unicef, but research into the impact on older people has been scarce. HelpAge International, the only international agency in Iraq working primarily with older people, has begun a major research programme to learn about the roles and needs of older Kurdish people, using discussions with older people, interviews with religious, traditional and political leaders, and meetings with government officials.

### From prosperity to poverty

Initial findings paint a stark picture of a move from relative prosperity to profound impoverishment and social disruption. Kurds in collective towns are mainly the poorest and oldest. Those with more resources have tried to re-establish themselves in their former towns and villages where

possible, but landmines and lack of essentials such as water and transport make resettlement difficult.

Work is hard to come by. Few people in the collective towns own land. Most rely on low wages from agricultural labour, supplemented by what livestock and vegetables they can grow. Families headed by older people often have no income except for food rations provided under the UN's oil-for-food programme and in some cases a small pension.

Traditionally, Kurdish people live in an extended family, but years of persecution have scattered families and broken down normal support structures.

Older women struggle to earn money for the household – a task performed by their menfolk in the past. Many look after grandchildren whose parents have died or disappeared. There are tensions as widowed younger women shoulder the task of caring for older relatives as well as children.

'Now, after a reasonable way of life in my original village, I own nothing, except two hens,' says Rahma Rashan Faki, a 77-year-old widow who lost four sons in the conflict with the Iraqi government. 'My neighbours are kind to me. They bake bread and bring water for me every day. When my son's widow is at home she helps me with everything.'

Older men can no longer afford to play the ceremonial and social roles which used to give them status in the community. Many feel that they have lost their standing because they have lost their assets.

'My health is bad and I cannot work,' says 68-year-old Mussa Hassan Mussa. 'I have a small orchard close to my house and I go there to work.'

### Hope for the future

Though in its early stages, the exercise is showing encouraging results. The involvement of older people has helped them to recognise their role and gain confidence in representing themselves. One older people's group has already been established.

Engaging other groups has generated interest in older people's situation. Older people's issues have been featured in the media, and meetings have been held with administrators and service providers to follow up the recommendations of the research, such as improving access to

medical care. As one mayor said of older people, 'We must consult them to be able to understand their abilities and capacity.'

### References

#### PLA training in northern Iraq

HelpAge International, 2000  
Available from: Nadia Saim, Programme Officer, Emergencies Unit, HelpAge International (address on back page).  
Email: nsaim@helpage.org

#### Research methodology

Some of the participatory research techniques are described in *Ageways 55* (December 2000). For a copy write to the editor (address on back page) or email: ctill@helpage.org

### Websites

#### Arabic News

Daily coverage of Kurd protests.  
<http://www.arabicnews.com>

#### Kurdish Worldwide Resources

Articles on Kurdish issues, links to resources and human rights news.  
<http://www.kurdish.com>



Making their mark... older men draw a map of their village to help identify their roles, needs and contributions.

Nadia Saim/HAI

# Resources

New publications, websites, conferences and courses

10

## Articles

A round-up of what is being written on ageing issues. For journal details please write to the editor or email: [ctill@helpage.org](mailto:ctill@helpage.org)

### Care and social security

Exporting aged care – care for the elderly: a quality response in Hong Kong  
*D Lane, Aus. J. on Ageing 19:1 (Feb 2000)*

Assessment and service allocation for the frail elderly in Australia and Japan  
*R Kobayashi, Aus. J. on Ageing 19:1 (Feb 2000)*

Ageing in place: a private sector approach in Hong Kong  
*D Lane, Aus. J. on Ageing 19:1 (Feb 2000)*

The impact of modernisation and social policy on family care for older people in Japan  
*M Kono, J. Soc. Policy 29:2 (April 2000)*

Children and older persons: AIDS' unseen victims  
*J Knodel, M VanLandingham, Am. J. Pub. Health 90:7 (July 2000)*

Medical vans help cure a problem in India  
*Ageways 54 (Oct 2000)*

*Journal of Family Issues, 21:6 (Sept 2000). Special issue on 'Aging and eldercare in lesser developed countries':*

Ageing and eldercare in lesser developed countries

Eldercare as 'women's work' in poor countries

The current and projected distribution of the elderly and eldercare in the People's Republic of China

Terms of visibility: eldercare in an aging nation state – the Israeli case  
Culture, age and substantive wellbeing: health, functionality and the infrastructure of eldercare in comparative perspective

The impacts of HIV/AIDS on older populations in developing countries: some observations based on the Thai case

*Journal of Family Issues 21:5 (July 2000), 'Aging and eldercare: facing the 21st century in more developed countries':*

Ageing and eldercare in more developed countries: the US, South Korea and Puerto Rico  
Demographic dimensions of global aging

Eldercare and the changing family in Puerto Rico

Eldercare in the US and South Korea: balancing family and community support

### Emergencies

Forgotten generation  
*L-A Knight, The World Today (Aug 2000)*

HelpAge International and security in Kosovo  
*L-A Knight, NGO Voice 5 (Sept 2000)*

### Gender

*Gender and Development, 8:2 (July 2000), 'Gender and lifecycles':*  
Why we should invest in older women and men: the experience of HelpAge International  
*S Beales*

'At my age I should be sitting under that tree': the impact of AIDS on Tanzanian lakeshore communities  
*J Appleton*

Using life histories to explore change: women's urban struggles in Cape Town, South Africa  
*R Slater*

Intact or in tatters? Family care of older women and men in urban Mexico  
*A Varley, M Blasco*

Community research on older women in the Dominican Republic  
*J Cheetham, W Alba*

Gender, age and exclusion: a challenge to community organisations in Lima, Peru  
*F C Clark and N Laurie*

### International perspectives

Ageing problem 'underestimated'  
*S Fidler, FT 16 June 2000*

Ageing: a gendered policy concern in the South and the North  
*C Risseuw, Asian J. Women's Studies 6:2 (2000)*

Population ageing in developed and developing regions: implications for health policy  
*P Lloyd-Sherlock, Soc. Soc. and Med. 51:6 (Sept 2000)*

World views and narrative gerontology: situating reminiscence behaviour within a lifespan perspective  
*J D Webster, J. Aging Studies 13:1 (Spring 1999)*

Ageing  
*P Balam, Curr. Science 78:7 (April 2000)*

### National aspects of ageing

Changing patterns of living arrangements among the elderly: a Malaysian case  
*S Ishak, Aus. J. Ageing 19:1 (Feb 2000)*

Current status and perspectives of gerontology in Russia  
*V N Anisimov, L B Lazebnik, A-CER 12:1 (Feb 2000)*

Complicated daily tasks of Chinese elderly  
*K Wan, C H C Chan, Rehab. Psych. 45:3 (Aug 2000)*

China's burden of age  
*J Kyngse, FT 31 May 2000*

### Wellbeing

Family matters: the impact of kin on the mortality of the elderly in rural Bangladesh  
*M Omar Rahman, Pop. Studies 53:2 (July 1999)*

Relationship among activities of daily living, apathy and subjective wellbeing in elderly people living alone in a rural town  
*K Yamashita et al, Geront. 45:5 (Sept/Oct 1999)*

Generation differences in social, health and psychological status of elderly people in Zagreb  
*J D Lucanin et al, Drust. Ist. 9:2-3 (2000)*

The relationship between psychological wellbeing and physical functioning in Japanese urban and rural older adults  
*T Osada et al, J. Aging and Phys. Act. 8:2 (April 2000)*

Demographic and nutritional trends among the elderly in developed and developing regions  
*N W Solomons, Eur. J. Clin. Nut. 54:supp (June 2000)*



'Current status and perspectives of gerontology in Russia' is the subject of an article in *Ageing – Clinical and Experimental Research*.

Sean Sprague/Panos Pictures

Learning about legal matters – older people in Tanzania  
*Ageways 54 (Oct 2000)*

### Africa

*S. African J. Geront. 9:2 (Oct 2000). Special issue on 'Research for practice and development in Africa' in co-operation with HelpAge International.*

Research for practice and development in Africa  
T Nhongo

The contributions of older people to society: evaluation of participatory research methodology employed in studies in Ghana and South Africa  
*A Heslop et al*

The pattern of expenditure of social pension income of older blacks in rural and urban areas of the Free State, South Africa  
*S J E J van Vuuren, D C Groenewald*

Creating a minimum data set on ageing in sub-Saharan Africa  
*P R Kowal et al*

Methodological notes on a collaborative, action-research programme on nutrition and ageing  
*D Busolo et al*

Victimisation and killing of older women: witchcraft in the Magu district, Tanzania  
*K Forrester Kibuga, A Diang'a*

The growing problem of violence against older persons in Africa  
*M Gorman*

## Conference reports

South African nutrition congress  
*The Nutrition Congress 2000, organised in August by the Association of Dietetics in South Africa and the Nutrition Society of South Africa, devoted half a day to older people's nutrition for the first time. Papers were presented on 'The impact of urbanisation on risk factors for osteoporosis in black postmenopausal South African women', 'Dietary patterns and their association with demographic lifestyle and health variables of older people in Botswana' and 'The adequacy of diets on institutionalised older people in Bloemfontein'.*

More information: Dolline Busolo, Regional Nutritionist, Africa Regional Development Centre, HelpAge International, PO Box 14888, Westlands, Nairobi, Kenya.  
Email: [helpage@net2000ke.com](mailto:helpage@net2000ke.com)

## Conferences and seminars

HelpAge International seminars  
*A series of seminars on ageing and development is being held in the UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Spain, France and Germany from late 2000 to early 2001 to raise awareness among NGOs, aid administrators and researchers of the role of older people and the importance of intergenerational approaches to poverty reduction, civil society and social protection. Details: Sylvia Beales, Policy Development Manager, HelpAge International. Email: [sbeales@helpage.org](mailto:sbeales@helpage.org)*

2nd World Assembly on Ageing  
*April 2002, Madrid, Spain (see page 1)*  
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/geneva2000/events/csd/170200.htm>

World Leisure Asia Regional Conference: Social Development, Leisure and the Older Person  
*24-29 April 2001, Shanghai, China. Dr Yvonne Harahousou, Chair, Conference Programme Committee. Email: [harakabi@otenet.gr](mailto:harakabi@otenet.gr) <http://www.worldleisure.org> (Shanghai conference)*

World Conference on Gerontology  
*1-6 July 2001, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University at Harbour Centre, 2800-515 West Hastings St, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 5K3. Fax: +604 291 5066. <http://www.harbour.sfu.ca/gero>*

Study Group on the Family and Life Cycle Changes  
*Initiated in 1998 by the Centre for Advanced Studies, National University of Singapore to provide a cross-disciplinary platform for those interested in the study of the family and life cycle changes, as well as the promotion, coordination, intervention and evaluative measures dealing with family wellbeing and distress. <http://www.fas.nus.edu.sg/cas/family.htm>*

## New website

HelpAge International  
*The website is being relaunched in the New Year as a major focal point for news and comment on ageing and development issues. Find out about policy and research, advocacy, emergencies, practical issues and the HelpAge International network by visiting: <http://www.helpage.org>*

## Briefing

Older people's rights  
*A briefing pack about older people's rights, including questions and answers and the text of the UN Principles for Older Persons, and a new HelpAge International paper, 'The mark of a noble society' have been produced by HelpAge International. Contact: Caroline Dobbie, Development Assistant, HelpAge International (address on back page). Email: [cdobbie@helpage.org](mailto:cdobbie@helpage.org)*

## Books and reports

Ageing and Society: An International Perspective  
*M T Bazo. Cambridge University Press, New York*

Shelter and Service Issues for Ageing Populations: International Perspectives  
*L A Pastalan. Council on the Ageing, Australia*

India's Elderly: Burden or Challenge?  
*S I Rajan et al. Pacific Affairs, University of British Columbia, Vancouver*

The Political Economy of Population Ageing  
*W A Jackson. Blackwells, Oxford, UK*

Pension Systems in East Asia and the Pacific: Challenges and Opportunities  
*Robert Holzman et al, June 2000. Social Protection Unit, World Bank. <http://www.worldbank.org>*

Social Security Pensions: Development and Reform  
*Edited by Colin Gillion et al, ILO Geneva, 2000. Price: Sw.fr.120. Bureau of Public Information, ILO, 4 route des Morillons, CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland. Email: [press@ilo.org](mailto:press@ilo.org) <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2000/14.htm>*

Replacement Migration: Is it a Solution to Declining and Ageing Population?  
*United Nations Population Division. Computes the size of replacement migration and investigates the possible effects of replacement migration on population size and age structure for a range of countries with a fertility pattern below replacement level. Includes Japan, Republic of Korea and Russian Federation. <http://www.un.org/esa/population/migration.htm>*

Some Problems and Issues of Older Persons in Asia and the Pacific  
*Asian Population Studies Series No. 144, 1999. 94 pages. Price: US\$15. The Stationery Office, UK. Tel: +44 171 873 8365. Email: [book.enquiries@theso.co.uk](mailto:book.enquiries@theso.co.uk)*

Generational Accounting Around the World  
*A J Auerbach et al, 1999. Includes Japan, Thailand, Argentina and Brazil. NBER Project Report Series, University of Chicago Press*

Health Service Delivery for the Elderly in Indonesia  
*I G P Wiadnyana in International Rural Aging Project 1997-2001: expert group meeting on rural aging, May 1999, Shepherdstown, West Virginia, USA*

Old Age, Poverty and Living Arrangements: Case Studies from Latin America  
*P Lloyd-Sherlock, UN Population Division Discussion Paper UN/Pop/Age/2000/12*

Water Wisdom  
*Oral testimonies from older Nepalis (11 men, two women) about traditional and modern approaches to water resources. ISBN 99933-304-5-0. Panos Institute, South Asia, GPO Box 13651, Kathmandu, Nepal. Email: [panosktm@mos.com.np](mailto:panosktm@mos.com.np)*

Global Embrace, 1 October 2000  
*Information available on [http://www.who.int/ageing/global\\_movement/embrace00.html](http://www.who.int/ageing/global_movement/embrace00.html)*

## Video

Witness to History: Conversations with Older Cambodians  
*Thirty-minute documentary looking at Cambodia's past, present and future through the eyes of its older people. VHS/PAL and VCD, 2000. HelpAge International Programme, PO Box 525, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Email: [hai.cam@bigpond.com.kh](mailto:hai.cam@bigpond.com.kh)*

### Corrections

Alzheimer's Society Romania  
email: [alzsocro@fx.ro](mailto:alzsocro@fx.ro)

Overseas Development Institute  
website poverty and public policy section:  
<http://www.odi.org.uk/pppg/index.html>



# Research update

Major new projects

12



Study group... researchers focus on older people in Nepal.

Andrew Humphreys/HAI

will show how HIV/AIDS affects older people, and develop methods for assessing its impact. Specific aims are to: determine the specific consequences for older people, particularly older parents of young adults who die of HIV/AIDS; determine numbers of older people affected by HIV/AIDS through the infection of adult children; assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices of older people in relation to HIV/AIDS; assess risk behaviours of older people; study the interactions between health workers and older people caring for people with HIV-related illnesses; and develop methodologies for studying the multi-faceted impacts of HIV/AIDS on older people in developing countries.

Research methods include interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and data analysis. The study is from June 1998 to August 2002, with funding from the US National Institute on Aging.

Five papers have been published: *The impacts of HIV/AIDS on older populations in developing countries: some observations based upon the Thai case* (PSC research report 99-441, June 2000); *Older people and AIDS: quantitative evidence of the impact in Thailand* (PSC research report 00-443, Jan. 2000) (summarised in A&D 5); *AIDS and the elderly of Thailand: projecting familial impacts* (PSC research report 00-446, May 2000); *Sexual activity among the older population in Thailand: evidence from a nationally representative survey* (PSC research report 00-445, May 2000); *The impact of Thailand's AIDS epidemic on older persons: quantitative evidence from a survey of key informants* (PSC Research Report 00-448 July 2000).

These can be obtained from <http://www.psc.isr.umich.edu/pubs> (Current research) or from: PSC Publications, Population Studies Center of the University of Michigan, PO Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248 USA. Fax: +1 734 998 7415 Email: [psc-pubs@umich.edu](mailto:psc-pubs@umich.edu)

## Contact:

John Knodel, Population Studies Center, PO Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1248, USA  
Email: [jknodel@umich.edu](mailto:jknodel@umich.edu)

## ... and research in the north

A study in northern Thailand will show how HIV/AIDS affects older people as carers of adult children and grandchildren. Interviews with older people, families and neighbours, and discussions with key NGOs, networks of people living with HIV/AIDS, officials of village health clinics, members of older people's associations and village leaders have been carried out in San Pa Thong and Hang Dong areas. The findings of the study, which is for a masters degree from the University of Queensland, Australia, are expected to be published in March 2001.

## Contact:

Godfred Paul, Trainer, Asia Training Centre on Ageing (ATCOA), c/o Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand.  
Email: [goddy@helpageasia.com](mailto:goddy@helpageasia.com)

## Views of older people in Nepal

A participatory study of the situation of older people in Nepal is being carried out by the Nepalese NGO umbrella organisation, NEPAN, in collaboration with HelpAge International. The study will focus on social and individual perceptions of the role and situation of older people and relevant policy in Nepal. An advisory group of NGOs and government representatives has been established to assist in developing mechanisms for inclusion of older people in advocacy and policy work, based on findings of the study.

## Contact:

Joseph Pannirselvam, Programmes Development Advisor, Asia/Pacific Regional Development Centre, HelpAge International, c/o Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50200, Thailand.  
Email: [joseph@helpageasia.com](mailto:joseph@helpageasia.com)

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 and Development* aims to raise awareness of the contribution, needs and rights of older people and to promote the development of laws and policies supporting older people. It is published three times a year by HelpAge International, with funding from Help the Aged (UK).

Copies are available in English and Spanish, free of charge on request to policy makers, programme planners and researchers. Please contact us with brief details of your work. If requesting multiple copies, please explain who these are for and how they will be distributed.

*Ageing and Development* is also available on the web at: <http://www.helpage.org/publications/index.html>

Editor: Celia Till

HelpAge International  
67-74 Saffron Hill  
London EC1N 8QX, UK

Tel: +44 20 7404 7201  
Fax: +44 20 7404 7203  
Email: [hai@helpage.org](mailto:hai@helpage.org)

A&D email: [ctill@helpage.org](mailto:ctill@helpage.org)  
<http://www.helpage.org>  
Registered charity number: 288180

## Regional centres

**Africa**  
Email: [helpage@net2000ke.com](mailto:helpage@net2000ke.com)

**Asia-Pacific**  
Email: [hai@helpageasia.com](mailto:hai@helpageasia.com)  
<http://www.helpageasia.com>

**Caribbean**  
Email: [helpage@cwjamaica.com](mailto:helpage@cwjamaica.com)

**East and Central Europe**  
Email: [pinchli@helpage.org](mailto:pinchli@helpage.org)

**Latin America**  
Email: [helpage.bolivia@unete.com](mailto:helpage.bolivia@unete.com)

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## Poverty in the Caribbean

Research in four Caribbean islands – Haiti, Grenada, Jamaica, and St Vincent and the Grenadines – is being carried out by HelpAge International and Caribbean academic institutions and NGOs as part of a three-year UK lottery-funded project. The project aims to alleviate older people's poverty, by increasing their independence and their participation in economic, social and cultural life.

The first phase will use participatory methods to investigate older people's living conditions and their employment and economic situation. The findings will be used to identify practical ways of tackling the problems highlighted, such as support to income-generating activities.

In the second phase, the University of the West Indies, Jamaica, will use meetings with government officials, interviews with NGOs and families, and a literature review to investigate the impact of globalisation and economic policy on older people. The findings will be used primarily as an advocacy tool, and to guide governments in developing policy on ageing.

## Contact:

Jeff James, Regional Representative, Caribbean Regional Development Centre, HelpAge International, PO Box 8300, Kingston CSO, Jamaica.  
Email: [jeffjam@cwjamaica.com](mailto:jeffjam@cwjamaica.com)

## HIV/AIDS and older people in Thailand: a national study...

A major study in Thailand, by the University of Michigan and Tulane University, USA, and Mahidol University and Chulalongkorn University, Thailand,