

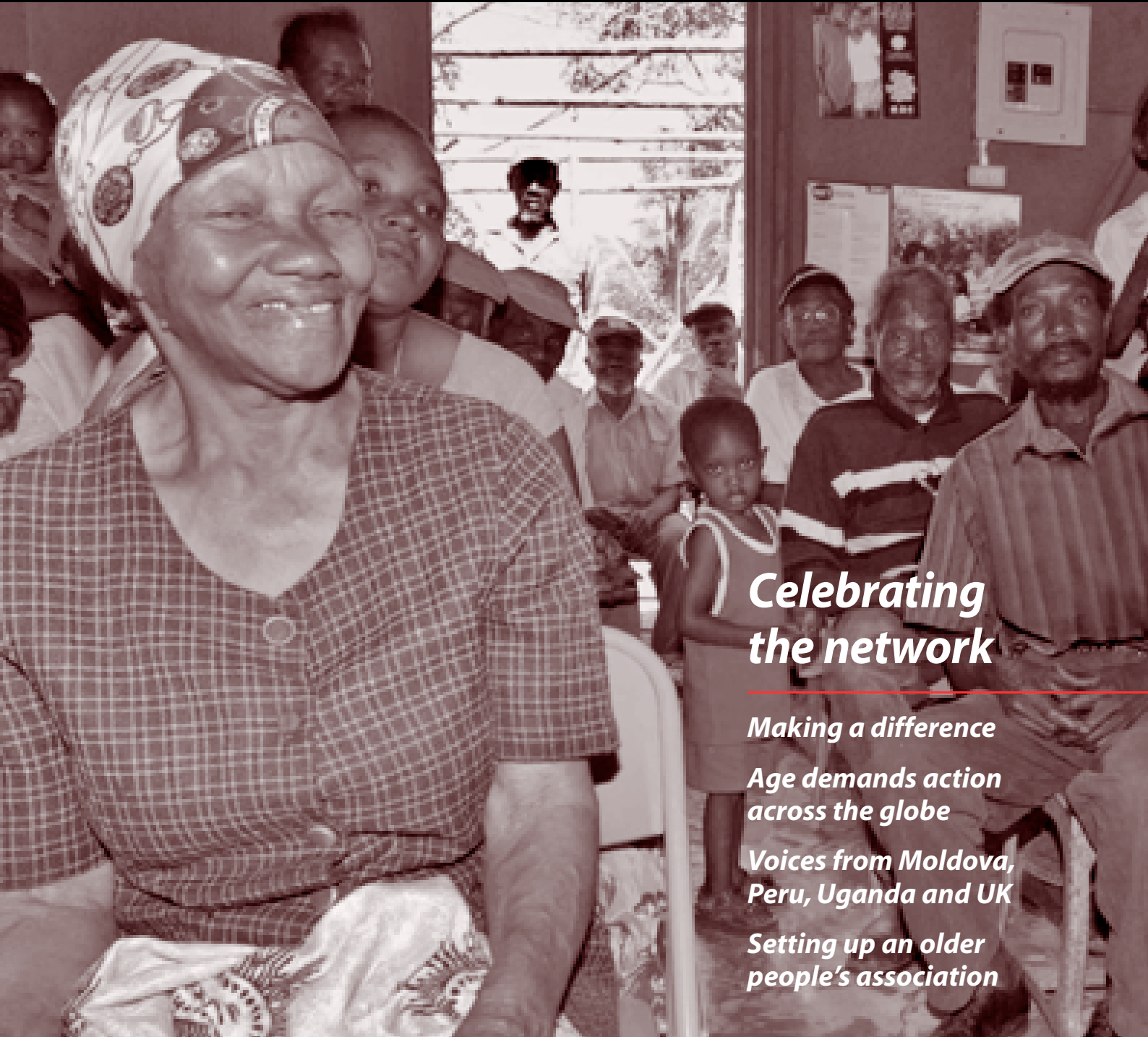
Ageways

ISSUE

72

Practical issues in ageing and development

OCTOBER 2008



Celebrating the network

Making a difference

*Age demands action
across the globe*

*Voices from Moldova,
Peru, Uganda and UK*

*Setting up an older
people's association*

25
years as
a global
network
2008

**HelpAge
International**

Leading global action on ageing

www.helpage.org

Comment

Age helps

Welcome to *Ageways* 72. This issue celebrates the achievements of HelpAge International on its 25th anniversary. It also shows that, with the right support, older people can achieve much for themselves and their communities.

The HelpAge International network has a great deal to be proud of. It has improved the lives of hundreds of thousands of older people and their families, and put ageing issues on the agenda of governments and the public the world over.

It is also time to celebrate how age helps – to recognise the experience, expertise and understanding that come with age, and the contribution that older people make to society. This is at the heart of HelpAge International's work as it moves into its next 25 years.

Celia Till
Editor

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Future issues

Ageways is published twice a year. Issue 73, due in March 2009, will look at how age helps. We welcome articles for consideration by the end of January.

Letters

Still active at 92

I have preserved copies of *Ageways* since issue 40. Although my age is now is 92 years, I am still active. I am a member of the governing council of the Indian Federation on Ageing, which is an apex organisation of senior citizens based in Mumbai.

In 2007, the Government of India passed the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act. I notice that in our capital city, very senior citizens are being abandoned by children and grandchildren. The old Indian family system, which was a great safeguard for older people, has now disintegrated.

Mahindar Singh, Member, Governing Council, Indian Federation on Ageing, S-314, Panch Shila Park, New Delhi 110017, India.

Caring with no support

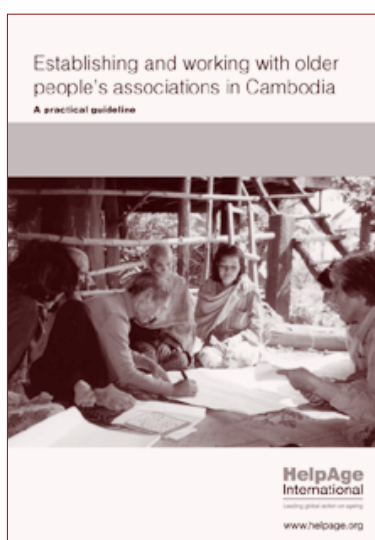
We are a community-based organisation working in remote rural villages of Zambia. Most of our members are women over 60. Three-quarters of them are either sick or disabled. Some have leprosy

or TB or cannot walk. Some are widows or widowers and have no one to look after them.

To make matters worse, these same vulnerable older people with no support keep orphaned children whose parents have died from AIDS. These people depend entirely on farming, but they cannot do hard work. They suffer terribly and sometimes go without food – with no meal the whole day.

Samson Nyendura and Edina Mwale, Chisamba Rural Churches, PO Box 86, Old Age Rural Village Group, Fringilla, Zambia.

We welcome letters from readers. Please write to: The Editor, *Ageways*, HelpAge International, PO Box 32832, London N1 9ZN, UK. Fax: +44 20 7713 7993 Email: ctill@helpage.org Please include your name, organisation (if any) and postal address. Letters may be edited.



Establishing and working with older people's associations in Cambodia

This manual provides guidelines on working with older people's associations, based on HelpAge International's experience in Cambodia. It includes sections on forming an older people's association, encouraging participation, activities, record-keeping, and networking.

HelpAge International, 2006
Download from www.helpage.org/resources/manuals

News

Age Demands Action

Delegations of older people in 36 countries pressed their messages home to their governments on 1 October, International Day of Older Persons, in a testament to the strength and breadth of the HelpAge International network.

The Age Demands Action campaign calls for older people to be included in development policies and programmes so that their vital contribution to society can be recognised.

The ambitious campaign started last year when 27 organisations took part. Besides raising awareness of older people's rights and contributions, tangible benefits were achieved. In India, the government agreed to give an additional million older people identity cards. In Ethiopia, older people were included in

Akbar Nazriev/HelpAge International



Oleg Guseynov, a member of the Age Demands Action delegation in Tajikistan.

programmes to provide water to the most vulnerable communities.

The 2008 day of action has built on last year's success, with new countries including Cameroon, Fiji and Peru taking part. At least five delegations arranged to meet their country's president. The Indonesia government pledged to increase by 5,000 the number of people who can access a social pension.

Renowned rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu has given the campaign his full support. He writes: 'With the support of the international community, we can create a society in which all older people fulfil their potential to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives. But to realise this vision, we must act now.'

'The day's global profile is very important in raising awareness about ageing,' says Henry Matthews, campaign coordinator. 'The campaigning voice of HelpAge International would be nothing without the commitment of network members supporting older people to speak out. Let's make the next day of action on 1 October 2009 even bigger.'

Turn to page 8 to see more about Age Demands Action.

Reflections



Gustavo Trigo/HelpAge International

Don Hectór Sandoval.

Changing times

Don Hectór Sandoval, aged 82, is one of HelpAge International's longest-serving and oldest members of staff. He was already 66 when he joined the Latin America regional development centre in La Paz, Bolivia, a few months after it opened in 1991. He reflects on his experience.

When the Bolivia office opened, there was only the regional representative. After four months a project officer was recruited. They needed more support and I was invited to work as administrative assistant.

I was interested in working for older people. I enjoyed participating in the inauguration of rural older people's groups. I travelled to Peru, Argentina and villages in different parts of Bolivia. I still send and receive letters from older people I met during those trips.

One of the best times was in 1996 when the Bolivian government passed a new decree in favour of older people. Another was our fundraising campaign 'Just one boliviano, one time only' which we launched in

1998. It was the first street collection to raise money for older people.

As an older person myself, I understand the problems that people of the third age face. I feel good about being part of a great cause. The early days were hard, but now, as we celebrate HelpAge International's 25th anniversary, we are a strong institution with a well-trained workforce providing better support for older people.

I hope that those who replace me will come to work with love, and endeavour to ensure that the institution continues this way.

Don Hectór Sandoval was talking to Gustavo Trigo, Regional Communications and Advocacy Officer, HelpAge International, Latin America.

Helping age to make a difference

Ageways reviews the network's achievements over the past 25 years and highlights the increasing focus on older people establishing their own organisations.

Global span

The idea quickly took hold and grew into what is now a global alliance of 76 affiliate organisations in more than 50 countries, linking with hundreds more organisations working on ageing issues.

In 1988, Mark Gorman, HelpAge International's director of strategic development, joined HelpAge International with the task of developing the network.

'I was very interested in helping to expand the group of organisations, which then numbered about twenty,' he says. 'We produced publications, provided fundraising and skills training and developed an "associate" category so that smaller organisations could become members. People join for various motives but most of all they value the idea of being part of a global movement.'

In the 1980s, ageing was not on the development agenda. The 1982 Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing did not focus on the developing world. Some organisations such as the UN and the World Health Organization had programmes on ageing, but the number of researchers could be counted on one hand.

Growing interest

Now there are numerous individuals and institutions researching ageing and a growing literature. There is more awareness of ageing issues, particularly in countries going through rapid demographic transition in Europe, China and India. Governments and civil society are becoming increasingly aware of rising numbers of older people and the need to respond.



John Cobb/HelpAge International

Members of an older people's committee in southern Bangladesh meet with HelpAge International's affiliate, RIC, to organise a response to Cyclone Sidr.

Age makes a difference, and we are helping it make a difference. That is the message of HelpAge International as it celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

In November 1983, five organisations – Help the Aged, HelpAge India, HelpAge Kenya, Help the Aged Canada and Pro-Vida Colombia – set up the HelpAge International network to provide a stronger basis for supporting older people in developing countries.

Chris Beer, former chief executive officer of HelpAge International, led the way, after carrying out a consultancy for Help the Aged in Africa. 'It was the time of the Ethiopia and Somalia wars. It became clear

that older refugees were not being looked after by other agencies. They had real healthcare needs that were not being met and they could not stand in line to get food,' he says.

He was taken on by Help the Aged to set up older people's organisations in Africa. 'We saw that ageing was a growing issue, that traditional forms of support could no longer cope. The idea was to become a lobby for older people and develop programmes such as eyecare and community care.

'We recognised that the days of trying to do things from the UK were over, and we had to start building coalitions of organisations in developing countries. The idea we had was a good one.'

In Africa, for example, governments are developing social protection programmes, including social pensions for older people. UNICEF has recognised the impact of HIV and AIDS on older carers and called for programmes to assist them. The leading policy-making body of the humanitarian aid system is now promoting strategies to meet the particular needs of older people in emergencies, and to see older people as an asset.

New approaches

Developments such as these owe much to HelpAge International's influence. In 1993, HelpAge Kenya carried out the first participatory research with older people, to make sure that their experience was properly understood.

In 1999, HelpAge International published guidelines on how to respond to older people in emergencies, based on research and experience.

In 2002, HelpAge International arranged consultations with older people in 32 countries. These helped to shape the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing – a marked improvement on the Vienna Plan, committing governments to include ageing in all social and economic development policies. HelpAge International also arranged for 60

'Before, we were denied seats and had to sit on the floor. Now people will applaud when we walk in and say "the senior citizens have arrived."'

Member of an older citizens group in Tanzania

older people and their representatives to speak at the World NGO Forum on Ageing.

The same year, partner organisations in five countries launched the first older citizens' monitoring projects, in which groups of older people learnt about their entitlement to social protection schemes and lobbied the authorities for improvements.

In 2007, older people's organisations in 27 countries took part in Age Demands Action, the first global coordinated campaign in which older people presented their issues to governments (see page 8).

Affiliates and partners across the world provide healthcare and livelihoods support to hundreds of thousands of older people, including 30,000 through the Sponsor a Grandparent programme, which is run with Help the Aged and which celebrates its 35th anniversary this year.

Many of these activities are organised by older people themselves, through

the 2,500 older people's associations supported by the network.

For example, older people's associations supported by Resource Integration Centre (RIC) in Bangladesh conveyed early warnings about Cyclone Sidr in November 2007, helping to save thousands of lives, and identified vulnerable older people for relief distribution.

There are more examples in this issue of how older people are joining forces to help their communities in Moldova (page 10), Peru (page 11), and the UK (page 14).

'It is pleasing to see the way the network has grown, how older people's organisations have become more professional, and how our messages are being picked up by other organisations,' says Mark Gorman.

'We still have a vision of a democratic network, with older people at its heart. I sense a new level of understanding of what we mean by this – an increasing focus on older people establishing their own organisations and taking action themselves to bring about change.

'A member of an older people's committee in Bangladesh once said: "Once we were lambs, now we are lions." This is a reflection of how older people themselves are becoming a force for change.'

'Before, I was like a thrown-away item. Now, after sitting in this workshop alongside government officers and respected people, I am rising up.'

Member of an older people's association in Ethiopia

Why we are part of *the network*

Ageways asked affiliates what it means to them to be part of the HelpAge International network. Here are some of their replies.

“The advantages are numerous, including exposure to other networks through conferences and workshops. It has raised the profile of our organisation and strengthened our care programmes and advocacy activities.”

*Thembekile Hlubi,
Manager,
Muthande Society
for the Aged,
South Africa*

Listening and learning in Sri Lanka.
Vidarshi de S Wijeyeratne/HelpAge International



“For us it is important to be part of a big international network. We insisted on taking the name ‘HelpAge’ because we are convinced of the need to create an international ‘brand’ in order to create a strong lobby for older people’s interests.”

*Michael Bunte,
Manager,
HelpAge Deutschland,
Germany*

“The network allows voices from the grassroots to travel further and the message to become stronger. It facilitates learning. By attending or hosting regional meetings and workshops, HelpAge Sri Lanka has grown in capacity and understanding of the issues of ageing.”

*Tilak de Zoysa, Chairman,
HelpAge Sri Lanka*

“It provides a support network for older people themselves to speak up on their own behalf. This is crucially important if life for older people in the future is to be changed for the better. Help the Aged is proud to be a member of the HelpAge International family.”

*Mike Lake, Director General,
Help the Aged, UK*

“We have exchanged experiences and benefited from the extensive research and documentation of good practice in working with older people. We have implemented joint programmes in emergency situations and we have started exploring joint efforts in advocacy.”

*Mariet Mulders, Teamleader,
Sector Health and Well-being,
Cordaid, The Netherlands*

Creating links and solidarity

Erina Baingana, a founder member of Uganda Reach the Aged Association (URAA), describes her visits to Europe and the United Nations to raise awareness about ageing in Africa.

Erina Baingana (pictured) was hosted by Slovene Philanthropy, Slovenia and Zivot 90, Czech Republic in October 2006 as part of a HelpAge International project funded by the European Commission. Its aim was to raise awareness of ageing issues in Africa and encourage the European Union and its new Member States to include these issues in their development policies. She also addressed a side event at the 45th session of the UN Commission for Social Development in New York in February 2007.

My visits to Europe and the United Nations were wonderful. It's good to understand how people age differently – and also to understand the similarities.

We visited the Pensioners' Association of Slovenia which organises many activities for members, such as learning to manage pensions, singing and exercise. Those who are more frail are supported in their own homes or in special homes.

Association members are trained in advocacy and are very successful as a pressure group. They even have their own Member of Parliament who works with the association to support older people.

I gave a speech about ageing in Uganda to a Slovenian university students' conference. Many asked how they could help to improve the situation of older people in Africa.

In the Czech Republic we met with government officials and learnt about the situation of older people. The most important thing I learnt from both countries is that the government has a role in caring for older people and protecting their rights.



Alice Livingstone/HelpAge International

I also learnt about the importance of the spirit of volunteerism. I hope we can learn to strengthen volunteering in Uganda. There are many older retired people in Uganda who have lots of expertise and skills. They should remain active and help organise older people's associations as they do in Slovenia.

At the Commission for Social Development I met with older people's associations from all over the world. Latin American and Asian associations are very organised and are lobbying

their governments and sensitising people about older people's rights and needs.

Before I went I thought issues faced by older people in Uganda were the same everywhere. But when you learn about other people's experiences – what services are provided, how to organise older people's associations and form pressure groups – you see what needs to be done in your own country. Older people themselves must be organised to have one voice, to be a pressure group and fight for their rights.

In Uganda, my organisation believes that the government has a duty to support older citizens who have contributed towards the country's development. We've done a lot to make government ministers aware, although there is still much more to be done.

Since coming back I've made recommendations to our board on adapting the ideas I learnt in Europe and New York to Uganda's culture and resources. I hope that our older people's associations can become pressure groups to lobby the government.

Exchange visits such as these create links of understanding, friendship and solidarity between older people in Europe and Africa. They have helped URAA sharpen its skills in advocacy.

Erina Baingana was talking to Alice Livingstone, Programme Officer, HelpAge International, London. More information: Erina Baingana, Board Member, c/o URAA, PO Box 6775, Kampala, Uganda.

Age Demands Action worldwide

On the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October, senior citizens across the world lobbied their governments in the biggest-ever day of global action on ageing (see page 3).

The map highlights the countries that took part in the impressive range of activities over the two years. Just a few of these activities are shown in the photos.

25
years as
a global
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HelpAge Kenya

Kenya Older people and HelpAge Kenya met government officials to ask for more support for older carers of children orphaned by AIDS.



Help the Aged

UK and Netherlands Petitions presented by Help the Aged last year and CORDAID and WorldGranny this year called for government support for social pensions in developing countries.

Sign the petition!

You can show your support for older people worldwide by signing the Age Demands Action global petition at:
www.helpage.org/agedemandsaction



REACH Dominica

Dominica Older people and REACH Dominica met the prime minister to raise concerns about housing, healthcare and town planning.

HelpAge India

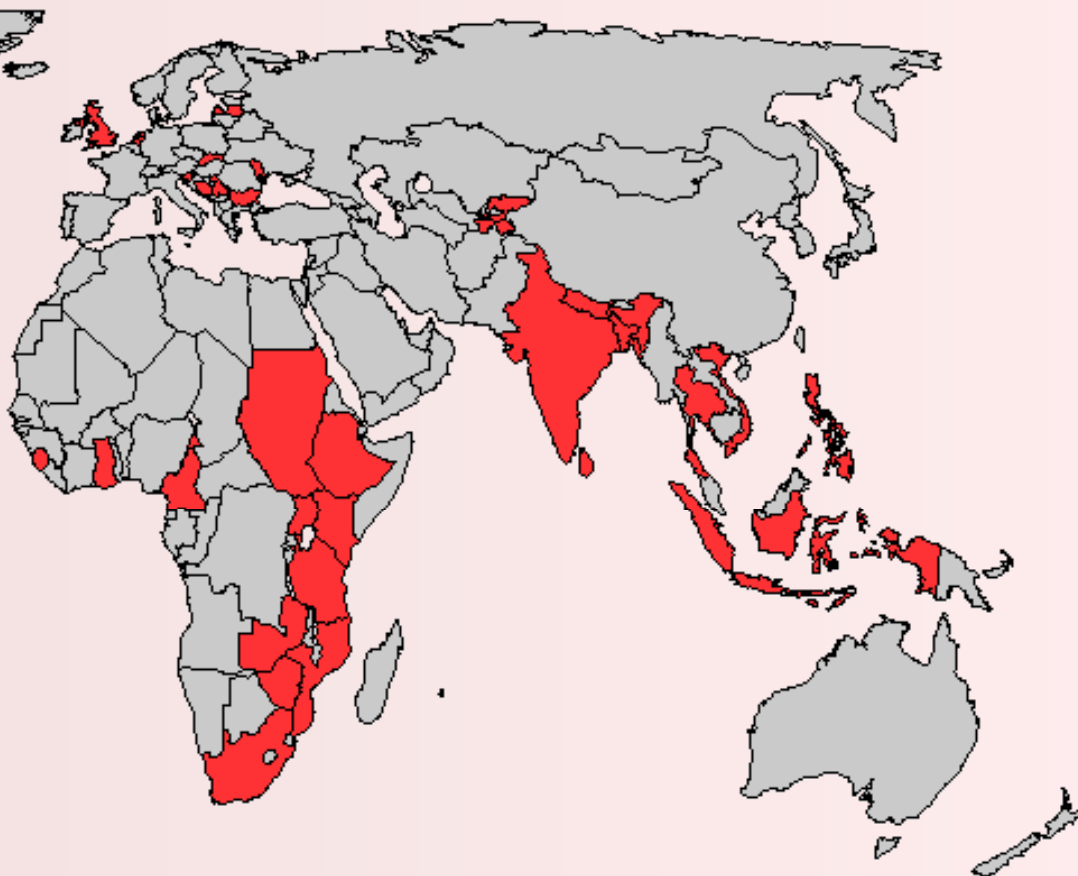


India Staff of HelpAge India's mobile medical units collected hundreds of signatures from older people to call for better access to the social pension.



RIC

Bangladesh With support from RIC, older people lobbied ministers for improvements in healthcare and an increase in the Old Age Allowance.



COSE



Philippines COSE coordinated an older people's march to parliament to demand that a bill to extend social pensions be passed.

Inspiration

is our way of life

Valentina Micotina, leader of the Moldovan organisation, Inspiration, describes how older people are joining together to press for their rights – and have some fun.



Maxim Ahner/HelpAge International

Inspiration promotes an active and healthy life for older people in many ways.

Older people in Moldova are mainly concerned with day-to-day existence – how to feed themselves and obtain medical care. Average pensions are well below the amount required to live on. Social protection benefits are minimal and poorly targeted. Mass migration of the working-age population has left large numbers of older people living alone.

Nevertheless, older people have a strong sense of community. In 2005, we formed an association called Inspiration in the city of Comrat. Our mission is to support the reintegration of older people into society. The association is supported by HelpAge International and its Moldovan partner, Second Breath, with funding from Irish Aid.

Inspiration was officially registered in 2006. In February 2008, we secured an office and funding from the local

authority. There are now 15 volunteers who are older men and women with goodwill and compassion. They are guided by the Russian saying: 'Old age is not a joy, nor is it a sorrow.'

Ecaterina Cambur, a 68-year-old volunteer, explains: 'I met our leader, Valentina Mitocina, in the city quite accidentally. I started talking about my problems and complaining about old age, and she invited me to join the group as a volunteer.'

The volunteers provide information to other older people about their rights and entitlements such as social pensions, health insurance, subsidised medicines, the right to work, property rights and inheritance, and help them claim their entitlements.

A survey by HelpAge International showed that although older people were interested in their rights, nearly half knew little or nothing about what they were. The volunteers each work

with two to six families to help them with their problems, which are usually related to healthcare and lack of financial resources.

We have used newspaper articles, news stories on TV and radio programmes to publicise the volunteers' work and promote an active and healthy life for older people in all corners of the city. We have also raised funds from USAID, IREX, the Soros Foundation and the local authority to distribute food, clothes and money to older people on national and local holidays.

As well as our advocacy work, we arrange much-loved social activities, including dancing and handicraft sittings. A special place belongs to our choir, which has given public performances for three years running. In 2007 the choir participated in the annual Victory Day festival and was given an honourable mention by the local administration.

The older people simply love the choir, they cherish it and take pride in it. They sing songs of their youth, they dance and recite poems, and they listen to old records. 'Inspiration' is not merely the name of our organisation, it reflects our spirit, our way of life.

It is not an isolated movement, but part of a national network of 14 older people's associations in Moldova that are supporting older people to bring about change. We have become a tree with many branches. When we meet, we learn from each other and we have developed friendships. It is great to be united, to be part of a network. Our motto is: 'One for all and all for one.'

More information: Tatiana Sorocan, Programme Coordinator, HelpAge International, Moldova (address on page 15). Email: tsorocan@helpageinternational.org

Older people on the alert

Luz Barreto describes how teams of older people in Peru are helping communities to protect themselves against disasters.

Equipped with red caps, aprons and manuals for disaster risk reduction, teams of senior citizens in Peru are helping communities prepare for emergencies.

Disaster preparedness is vital in Peru, which is beset by earthquakes, extreme weather and other natural disasters. Older people have also lived through 20 years of a civil conflict that left 30,000 dead and many more thousands displaced. They have a great deal of experience to contribute to their communities.

With funding from the UK's Big Lottery Fund, HelpAge International started working with the Coordinating Group for Older People, a collective of organisations working with older people in Peru, to train older people in disaster preparedness and response.

Representatives from 18 older people's associations in several provinces were chosen to attend three days of training in civil defence and preparedness, with input from civil defence authorities, the fire service and specialists in risk management.

Members were selected on the basis of their communication skills, calmness and mobility (needed in emergency situations). A total of 60 people aged 60-75 completed the training, equal numbers of men and women.

Teams of older people, calling themselves White Alert Brigades, are now mapping out where older people live, putting up emergency instruction signs in houses and public buildings, clearing access ways for evacuation, and visiting schools and sports clubs to educate

communities about preparing for emergencies. They have also lobbied local authorities to prioritise older people in emergency response efforts.

The brigades' role came to prominence in two recent disasters – the eruption of the volcano, Ubinas, in 2006 and a large earthquake in the coastal south in 2007. The brigades provided much-needed support to older people, including shelter and food, and coordination with health authorities.

Their calmness and experience after the earthquake was recognised by the mayor of Chinchabaja district, Emilio Del Solar. 'Older people have been a great support, assisting other older people and accompanying them to health centres,' he said. 'It is important to coordinate their activities with the Civil Defence.'

The White Alert Brigades are also helping to organise shelters for older people living on the outskirts of Lima and in the Andes, where winter temperatures drop to -15°C. They have delivered scarves and blankets to the poorest, many of whose houses have only plastic or cardboard roofs.

There are now 30 representatives of different associations of older people in Peru who are training groups of older people in disaster preparedness. And as a result of the brigades' work, three new older people's associations have been formed.

The brigades' next challenge is to become incorporated into the national system of civil defence. Maria Alvarez, from Independencia, Lima has been active since the organisation was founded in 2000. 'We have proved that we are able to help other older people,' she says. 'Together we can defend the rights of older people.'

Luz Barreto is president of the Centre for Social Progress, a founder member of the Peru Coordinating Group, and a board member of HelpAge International.

More information: Luz Barreto, Centre for Social Progress, Antonio Garland 514, San Martin de Porras, Lima, Peru. Email: luxbar1@yahoo.es



White Alert Brigade members distribute relief items after an earthquake.

Setting up an older people's association

Older people's associations are a lifeline to many older people and they can be a way to bring about change. Here are some guidelines on how to set one up.



Nile Sprague/HelpAge International

Older people's associations run many activities from exercises to advocacy.

For tens of thousands of older people around the world, belonging to an older people's association is a lifeline. It improves their quality of life, their access to services and their confidence to stand up for their rights and bring about change in their communities.

These guidelines may be useful if you are interested in setting up an older people's association.

Consultation Talk with older people in your community to discuss what an older people's association is, and how the community could benefit from setting one up. Consultation can be done in several ways: by calling a large meeting of senior citizens; by holding smaller meetings where people might feel more comfortable to speak up; or by visiting people in their homes.

Consult with community leaders and local authorities and invite them to attend initial meetings. Once the association is formed, it is important that local leaders are supportive, as their permission may be needed to organise events.

A small group of people could visit an existing older people's association to find out how it works. Or someone from an existing association could come and talk to a community meeting.

Remember that, even if initial interest in forming an older people's association is not high, support will grow as the association proves that it can organise activities that benefit the community.

Establishment After the groundwork has been done, call a meeting at which anyone interested in joining or supporting the association can

come along. The meeting will need to decide on:

- the purpose of the older people's association
- rules and responsibilities
- structure and leadership
- internal procedures.

Key principles or rules may include:

- the association should be open to all older people in the community (a starting age may need to be defined), regardless of their economic status, ethnicity, religion, gender or political affiliation
- the association should serve the interests of older people, especially those most in need due to illness or hardship.

Draw up clear, fair criteria for choosing who the association should support and what activities it will carry out. This will help to prevent disputes at a later stage.

A basic rule should be that a full meeting will discuss any activities before they are decided upon. Another rule should be that, although an elected treasurer may be responsible for the organisation's finances, the use of the association's funds needs to be authorised by a majority vote. Regular meetings of the association should take place so that members stay informed and active.

Leaders need to be selected to organise meetings and manage activities. Many older people's associations choose to have a 'governing committee' made up of:

- a president or chair, who chairs meetings, monitors projects, reports to funders, addresses problems and oversees finances
- a vice-president or vice-chair, who acts on behalf of the president when the president is away
- a treasurer, who supervises cash and materials, and keeps financial records
- somebody (a secretary or the vice-president) who keeps records of decisions at meetings, deals with correspondence and reports on activities.

Ideally, leaders should be elected by secret ballot, so that members feel free to vote for people they think will do the best job, rather than on the basis of social pressure. It is important to make sure that women are well represented in the leadership structure. Women leaders can act as a communication channel for other women in the community and encourage women to become active in the association.

Leaders should receive training in good governance, record-keeping and financial book-keeping. Ideally, leaders should change every one to two years to encourage other members to learn new skills, and to guard against power being held by the same people for too long.

If the association is very large, members can be divided into separate working groups, each with a leader. For example, working groups might be formed for specific activities such as setting up a rice or grain bank.

When the leadership and procedures are established, the association should be registered with the appropriate authority.

Participation

Older people's associations work best when they actively involve a wide section of senior citizens, not just the most vocal. They should also support members to change their own lives and contribute to the whole community, rather than being viewed as providing 'charity'.

Whenever meetings or events are organised, think about how to ensure that everybody who wants to attend can. For example, choose a place that is easy to get to, especially for people who cannot walk long distances. If you are using a building, make sure it is accessible for people with mobility problems.

Choose an appropriate time for holding meetings – not when

'I am very happy to be part of this older people's association. I feel more secure being with older people who care about me.'

Pan Oun, 78, Preah Sre Older People's Association, Cambodia

members would be busy or tired. Also, ensure that the meeting does not go on too long, or that it has breaks.

Consider the needs of people with hearing difficulties, by asking participants to speak loudly and clearly. Encourage participants who are having trouble with hearing to signal this, so that the speaker can raise their voice or move somewhere where they will be heard. The person chairing the meeting could regularly summarise what has been said.

Meetings should feel welcoming to newcomers. The person chairing the meeting should make an effort to include everyone by asking questions and promoting discussion. They should be a good listener who shows respect for all members. Sometimes it is a good idea to find an outside facilitator with these skills, for example a community worker or teacher. Remember that not everyone will feel

comfortable speaking in a big, mixed group. There may be times when discussions or education sessions are best done in smaller groups – for example, women-only and men-only AIDS awareness sessions.

Make sure that people who are not literate are not excluded. For example, secret ballot voting could be based on pictures or symbols rather than words.

If a membership fee is decided on, make sure it is affordable even to the poorest people.

Ensure that activities are as participatory as possible. Members will have a wealth of skills which many of them will be pleased to contribute if they feel valued.

This article is taken from 'Establishing and working with OPAs in Cambodia', published by HelpAge International. It is available at:

www.helpage.org/resources/manuals

Activities

Activities of older people's associations around the world include:

Social activities: social support for members; community events; ceremonies; funerals (including funds or loans for members organising funerals)

Information gathering: finding out about issues affecting older people through surveys and consultations

Health: home visits to sick or disabled members; health education; exercise; AIDS awareness

Improving livelihoods: income-generation schemes; savings and credit schemes

Food security: home gardens; improving farming techniques; rice and grain banks

Advocacy: monitoring older people's access to official entitlements such as pensions or health schemes; lobbying authorities for changes that benefit older people

Fundraising: organising fundraising events; applying for grants

Campaigning: calling for change, for example, through Age Demands Action (see page 8).

Speaking up for our age

Help the Aged's Speaking Up for Our Age programme celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. Debbie Beale explains how it gives older people in the UK a voice.



Help the Aged

Older people's forum members flex their muscles at a regional conference.

All too often, services are provided for older people without asking them if this is what they want. This means that services are not used and public money is wasted. Speaking Up for Our Age supports older people to set up local forums, through which they can influence the way in which services are provided.

There are now some 700 older people's forums across the UK. Most are self-help groups working on a purely voluntary basis. They are generally run by an elected committee of about 10 people.

Some forums are supported by their local authority, but most want to be independent, so that they can truly speak out about their concerns. They all have individual names and slogans, such as Cambridge Older People's Enterprise: 'Our strength is in our

numbers', Eastleigh Southern Parishes Older People's Forum: 'A force to be reckoned with', and Newcastle Elders Forum: 'Nothing about us without us.'

There are three aspects of the forums' activities: consultation, campaigning, and communicating with their community. Most forums are involved in all these activities to a certain degree, but the emphasis may vary. Having some fun with a cup of tea and a chat, rather than sitting at home alone, is the biggest attraction to new members. The social aspect is a good way for forums to increase their membership. Some forums have over a thousand members.

Most forums hold regular public meetings so that older people can meet service providers and hear about services. They ask questions and the speakers are asked to come back with solutions to the concerns raised.

Many forums are asked to elect representatives to attend planning meetings for local authority or health services. Some have sub-groups for particular issues, for example, transport, health or social care. The members become extremely knowledgeable and are a good match in discussions with local councillors and service providers.

Bristol Older People's Forum has run an opinion research programme for the past five years. In 2006 it published its own local Pensioners Charter, which produced a marked change for the better in its relationship with the local council.

After a seven-year campaign by the Braintree Pensioners Action Group, the town is to have a new community hospital. 'It will do hip and knee operations, helping Braintree older citizens,' says action group chair, Phyllis Webb. 'Our group played a major role.'

Help the Aged provides the forums with start-up and development grants, information about fundraising from other sources, and advice on ways of working. It publishes a newsletter and website for the forums to share ideas and learn about government policy and how to influence it. It also organises conferences and training events, and offers advice through its team of regional development officers.

By linking with Help the Aged, the forums also raise issues at national level. They worked closely with Help the Aged on its Just Equal Treatment campaign, which has ensured that older people will be included equally alongside other groups in the government's forthcoming legislation on discrimination.

Is your organisation interested in making links with the forums, via the web perhaps? If so, please contact Debbie Beale, Engagement Development Manager England, Speaking Up for Our Age, Help the Aged. Email: debbie.beale@helptheaged.org.uk

HelpAge International Affiliates

Caribbean

Action Ageing Jamaica
ECHO, Grenada
HelpAge Barbados/Barbados National Council on Aging
Haitian Society for the Blind
HelpAge Belize
National Council of and for Older Persons/HelpAge St Lucia
Old People's Welfare Association (OPWA), Montserrat
REACH Dominica
Society of St Vincent de Paul (SVP), Antigua

Africa

Age-in-Action, South Africa
APOSEMO, Mozambique
CEM Outreach, Sierra Leone
Elim Hlanganani Society for the Care of the Aged, South Africa
HelpAge Ghana
HelpAge Kenya
HelpAge Zimbabwe
Kenya Society for People with AIDS (KESPA)

Maseru Women Senior Citizen Association, Lesotho
Mauritius Family Planning Association
Muthande Society for the Aged (MUSA), South Africa
Regional Centre for Welfare of Ageing Persons in Cameroon (RECEWAPEC)
Senior Citizens' Association of Zambia
Senior Citizens' Council, Mauritius
Sierra Leone Society for the Welfare of the Aged
Sudanese Society in Care of Older People (SSCOP)
Uganda Reach the Aged Association

Asia/Pacific

Bangladesh Women's Health Coalition (BWHC)
China National Committee on Aging (CNCA)
Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE), Philippines
COTA National Seniors Partnership, Australia
Foundation for Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV), Thailand
HelpAge India
HelpAge Korea
HelpAge Sri Lanka

Helping Hand Hong Kong
Instituto de Acção Social de Macau
Mongolian Association of Elderly People
NACSCOM, Malaysia
Office of Seniors Interests, Australia
Pakistan Medico International
Resource Integration Centre (RIC), Bangladesh
Senior Citizens Association of Thailand
Senior Citizens Council of Thailand
Singapore Action Group of Elders
Tsao Foundation, Singapore
USIAMAS, Malaysia

Europe and Central Asia

Age Action Ireland
Age Concern England
Caritas Malta HelpAge, Malta
Centre for Policy on Ageing, UK
Cordaid, Netherlands
DaneAge Association, Denmark
Elderly Woman's Activities Centre, Lithuania
HelpAge Deutschland
Help the Aged, UK
Mission Armenia
NGO Lastavica, Serbia
Second Breath (Gerontological

Association of Moldova)
Slovene Philanthropy
UMUT (Resource Centre for Elderly People), Kyrgyzstan
WorldGranny, Netherlands
Zivot 90, Czech Republic

Latin America

Asociación Gerontológica Costarricense (AGECO), Costa Rica
Caritas Chile
CooperAcción, Peru
CESTRA, Colombia
ISALUD, Argentina
Mesa de Trabajo de ONGs sobre Personas Mayores (Lima Co-ordinating Group), Peru
Red de Programas Para al Adulto Mayor, Chile
Pro Vida Bolivia
Pro Vida Colombia
Pro Vida Perú

North America

AARP
Help the Aged (Canada)
HelpAge International America
West Virginia University Center on Aging

HelpAge International Regional development centres

These offices can put you in touch with affiliates in their region.

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- Older people's organisation/pensioners' association
- Community-based/non-governmental organisation
- Local government
- National government
- Training/educational institute
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25
years as
a global
network
2008

Words of wisdom

'Age makes a difference.' This view is reflected in many proverbs from around the world that celebrate older people's knowledge and experience. Here are just a few.

What an old person sitting down can see, a young person on top of a mountain can never see.

Cameroon

A home without a grandparent is not a home.

Uganda

When an old person dies, it is as though a whole library has burned down.

Mali

Praise the ripe field, not the green corn.

Ireland

Old is gold.

Kenya

Those who do not pay attention to the wise counsel of the older people will suffer the consequences.

Kenya

In youth we learn, in old age we understand.

Mexico

The older the fiddle, the sweeter the tune.

Ireland

Wisdom comes with years.

The Netherlands

With thanks to Jacqueline Athieno, Prince Bengha Ngochia Martin, Mariet Mulders and Hawi Odingo for providing proverbs.

*Do you know of any similar proverbs from your country? Please send them to the Editor, **Ageways** (address on right) and we will include them in the next issue.*

HelpAge International has a vision of a world in which all older people can lead dignified, active, healthy and secure lives.

We work to ensure people everywhere understand how much older people contribute to society and that they must enjoy their right to healthcare, social services and economic and physical security.

Ageways exchanges practical information on ageing and development, particularly good practice developed in the HelpAge International network. It is published twice a year by HelpAge International, with funding from Help the Aged (UK).

Ageways is also available on the web at: www.helpage.org

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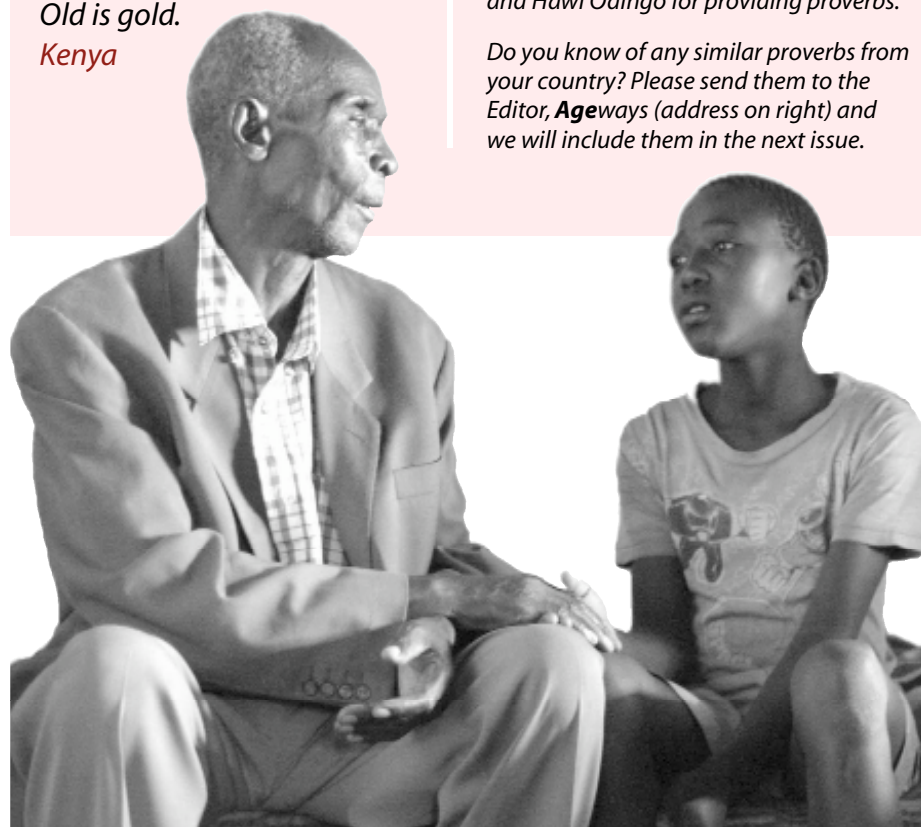
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Front cover: Meeting of a senior citizens' association in Jamaica, supported by HelpAge International's partner SACDA.
Photo: Neil Cooper/HelpAge International

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Kate Holt/HelpAge International