



# COVID-19: An inclusive response

HelpAge

International

YAKKUM Emergency Unit/HelpAge International



## Older people and COVID-19

Older people and those with pre-existing health conditions are most susceptible to serious complications from COVID-19. In many countries, over 50 per cent of older people are affected by multimorbidity, the prevalence of which rises sharply with age and poverty.

HelpAge International facilitates a global network of organisations united to advance the health, dignity and security of older people. We leverage our partnerships with local organisations to deploy a community-based service model which addresses the disproportionate health risks faced by older people and mitigates against the collateral impacts of measures such as lockdowns and closures.

## Community cohesion and support

Working with network members, we conduct rapid needs assessments on the support required by older people. We then provide basic and lifesaving supplies at home, including:



Hygiene kits



Food



Home-based care



Medicines

Local organisations facilitate connection and support with older people, ensuring they have some social engagement and can share any fears or concerns. We extend particular support to older survivors and older people at risk of violence, abuse and neglect.

We strengthen health and community care, working with Ministries of Health to improve the healthcare of older people and ensure care is available to older people at home. We also support family carers with advice about caring for their older loved one at home, including at the end of life. HelpAge supports the safe payment of social pensions, cash transfer and social protection reforms that protect older people from the social and economic fall-out of COVID-19.

## Advocacy and campaigns

We advocate for the dignity and wellbeing of older people to be front and centre of responses to COVID-19, including directly advocating to the United Nations for better protection of older people's human rights. We campaign in collaboration with network members and older activists to challenge stereotyping and discrimination on the basis of age.

## Increasing awareness

HelpAge is disseminating accessible COVID-19 health information to older people and caregivers in 85 countries. Our network provides critical resources to older people who are often missed by public awareness campaigns that don't accommodate for access challenges, including illiteracy and sensory disabilities. Through Older People's Associations (OPAs), HelpAge mobilises older people to campaign for their rights and entitlements.

We utilise safe channels, including:



Banners



Radio messages



Pictorial leaflets



Phone buddy check-ins

## Policy change and stakeholder influencing



COVID-19 guidance

HelpAge has drafted COVID-19 guidelines on inclusion, caregiving and social pensions for humanitarian actors.



Technical training

HelpAge trains government and NGO leaders on caregiving, home-based care, protection and inclusion, psychosocial support, contingency planning and social protection.

# Our global response

HelpAge reaches older people where health and social infrastructure to fight COVID-19 is weakest. We are on the ground in the world's poorest communities and operate in complex humanitarian situations. Our focus is on low and middle-income countries, where 80 per cent of people over the age of 60 will live by 2050.

## Ukraine

HelpAge works in the Donbass region of Ukraine in 40 locations all within five km of the line of contact. Since 2015, HelpAge has provided home-based care in Ukraine to older people, many of whom live alone and have disabilities. In response to COVID-19, HelpAge is mobilising 160 community volunteers across 40 locations to prevent loneliness, isolation and deterioration of health.

### Hygiene kits

Distributed 2,000 COVID-19 hygiene kits to older people (includes wet wipes, toilet paper, soap, toothpaste and toothbrush, shampoo, foot balm and sponges).

### Home-based care

Reaching 2,000 older people with home-based care support, COVID-19 health information and hand sanitiser.

### Technical support

HelpAge in Ukraine leads the UN protection cluster's age and disability technical group and provides input on how to make cluster activities more inclusive of older adults.



## Ethiopia

HelpAge is adapting existing health and care programmes in Addis Ababa and Hawassa to respond to COVID-19. We've mobilised 150 home-based care volunteers in these communities who help us support over 3,000 older people and people with disabilities. Humanitarian programmes that support South Sudanese refugees in Gambella are reaching older people with protective measures and information.

### Awareness and education

Developed a radio programme on COVID-19 airing nationally; translated and disseminated posters and brochures. Media activities will reach at least 20,000 people.

### Home-based care

Supporting care homes to develop protective measures and procure supplies. HelpAge is providing disinfectant, gloves and masks.

### WASH and food security

Providing older people who are most at risk with disinfectant, soap and food.



## Venezuela

According to a rapid needs assessment HelpAge conducted on older people in Venezuela, 80 per cent reported difficulties getting food they could eat. Over 60 per cent of older migrants in La Guajira reported not having access to toilets or bathing facilities. HelpAge is bridging access barriers and mitigating the impact of COVID-19 containment measures for older people in Venezuela and displaced in Colombia.

### Food security

Delivering two hot meals per day to 750 Venezuelans who are displaced or homeless.

### Psychosocial support

Supporting older people, people with disabilities and caregivers through referral services and reporting mechanisms for gender-based violence.

### Hygiene and sanitation

Providing 850 households with hygiene supplies, including disinfectant, face masks and soap in Pamplona and Bucaramanga.



## Bangladesh

In Cox's Bazar, home to about 855,000 refugees displaced from Myanmar, severe overcrowding, poverty and a chronic lack of health care facilities are fuelling concerns that COVID-19 could quickly spread, exacerbating an already dire humanitarian crisis. HelpAge has worked in Bangladesh since 1991 and is adapting programmes to increase awareness among older people about the virus and put preventative measures in place.

### Awareness and education

Broadcasting audio messages in the Rohingya language developed by BBC Media Action via loudspeakers; informing older people through outreach services.

### Hygiene and sanitation

Distributing hand sanitisers and detergent to 21,000 older people; established handwashing points at service facility entrances.

### Procuring PPE

Procuring medical gowns, surgical masks, gloves, goggles, hand sanitisers and shoe covers; preparing volunteers to provide community health care and WASH support.



## Partner with us

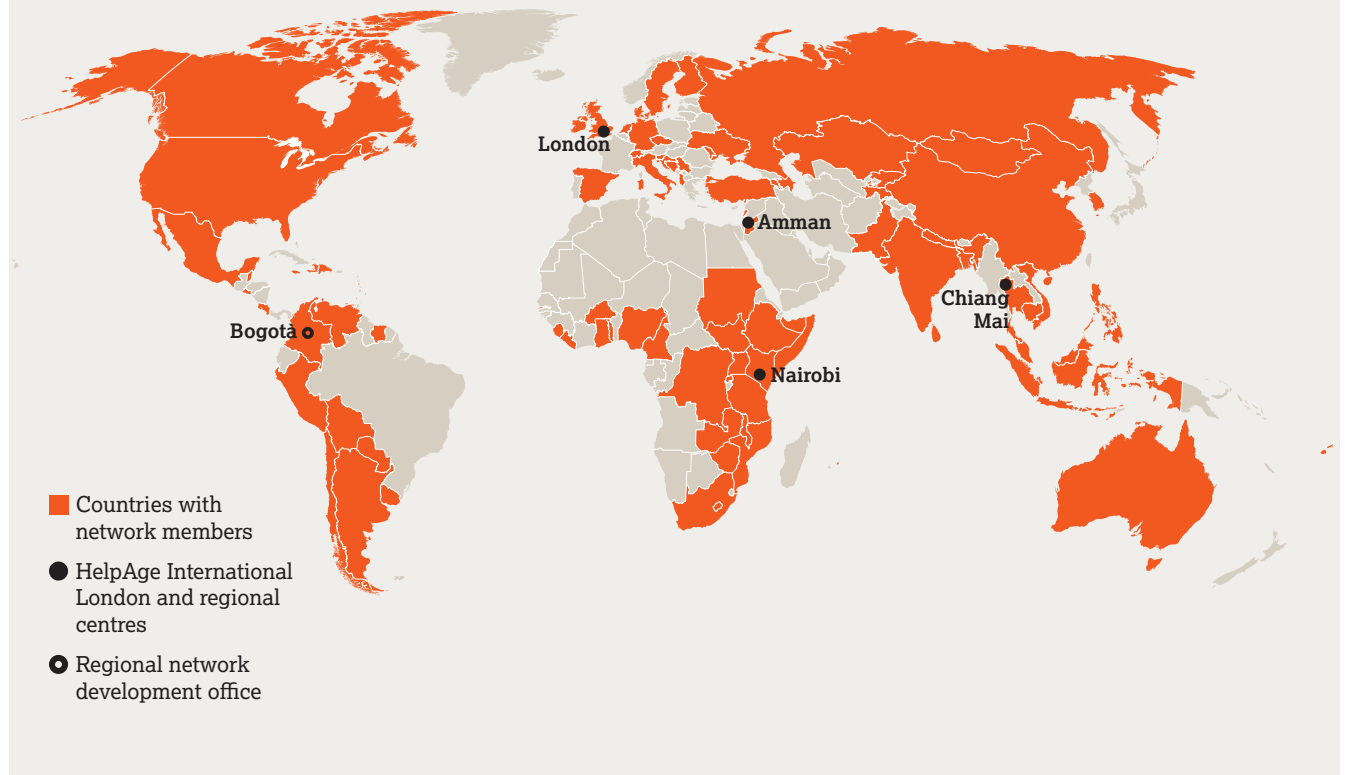
**Localising the response** HelpAge collaborates with its network members and partners on rapid need assessments, programme design and monitoring, resource development, and programme delivery to ensure older people's needs are met. HelpAge supports these local organisations with technical assistance and advocacy. In the past, HelpAge has responded to a wide range of emergencies, working in partnership with local organisations to deliver outreach services, WASH, health and care, home-based care, food and income support, and psychosocial support.

**Technical assistance** HelpAge provides guidance and training to governments, NGOs, and donor agencies across a range of sectors. This covers advice on how to address the needs of older people in humanitarian response and preparedness, as well as in health and care, social protection, gender, disability, protection and inclusion, and mental health and psychosocial support. HelpAge has developed a range of guidance materials in response to COVID-19, including on social protection, health and care, and psychosocial support. Many governments and agencies have adapted this guidance to frame their policy and programme response to include older people's needs.

**Research and policy analysis** HelpAge bridges gaps in data on older people and builds an evidence base for interventions that are age- and disability-inclusive. Our recent analysis of the UN's Global Humanitarian Response Plan to COVID-19 and corresponding \$2.1 billion USD appeal provided concrete proposals for how to strengthen needs analyses, monitoring frameworks and financial requirements to address the needs of older people.

**Advocacy and campaigns** We advocate for governments, donors and agencies to recognise the heightened risk that older people face to their dignity and wellbeing in this pandemic. We listen to their voices, and ensure they have equal access to prevention measures, support and services in all settings. For example, we successfully advocated for the United Nations to put older people front and centre of its COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan.

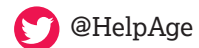
## Our global network has 154 network member organisations in 85 countries



HelpAge works within the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), Humanitarian Standards Partnership (HSP) and Sphere Standards. In 2018, we released the *Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities* with a consortium of NGOs.



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