

Europe: Leading the way

Why the EU must make its development cooperation age-friendly



As the world's largest aid donor, the EU is a leading force in the fight against poverty. Its achievements so far in getting aid to the people who need it most should be celebrated.

But it could do even more. Europe can and must become "age-friendly". By that, we mean recognising older people's contributions and capabilities, and actively including them in EU development policies and programmes.

Today, EU decision-makers have a chance to lead the way and make the world a better place for all older people. This policy brief sets out why they should do this, and how.



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

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Summary



- The world's population is ageing at an unprecedented rate. Between now and 2050, the number of older people (those aged 60 or over) will triple to 2 billion.¹
- The force of this change will be felt most strongly in less developed regions of the world, where nearly 80 per cent of older people will live by 2050.²
- The lack of secure income is one of the biggest problems facing older people. Around the world, half of older people lack a secure income, and fewer than one in five people over 60 receive a pension.³

But despite these facts, older people are invisible in global policies, targets and guidelines for tackling poverty. While EU aid guidelines explicitly uphold the rights of other vulnerable groups, older people's rights are not mentioned.

The impact of this exclusion is that older people are some of the poorest of the world's poor. It is estimated that 100 million older men and women live on less than a dollar a day.⁴ And as the world's older population increases, so too will the number of people living in extreme poverty. This will make it even more difficult for the international community to reach global targets to reduce poverty.

If this trend continues, the phenomenal contribution older people can make to reducing poverty – for themselves, their families and their wider communities – will not be realised.

The HelpAge International Global Network is calling on the EU to champion the rights of older people around the world. We want the EU to make its aid age-friendly by actively including older men and women in its development policies and programmes.

The EU can and should be leading the way among the international donor community. It can take a strong lead by including older people in its programming guidance for the 2014–2020 financing instruments for EU development cooperation and the European Development Fund (EDF).

What is the problem?



Decisions about how to distribute EU aid to the people that need it most are based on policy and programming guidelines. These guidelines are then used to develop national strategies in-country. But older people are hardly mentioned in these guidelines. As a result, older people's rights, and broader issues around ageing, are overlooked.

Here's how the process happens.

- The EU's key policy statement governing its development cooperation is The European Consensus on Development 2005. This document specifically mentions the need to avoid discrimination, stating that "the Community aims to prevent social exclusion and to combat discrimination against all groups".⁵

But it makes no mention of older people.

- Based on that document, the EU then produces guidelines which are used by its Delegations around the world when working with national governments to decide how best to spend the EU's development budget. In the case of the EDF, for example, the current guidelines refer to the following cross-cutting issues⁶:

"... gender equality, the promotion of human rights, children's rights and indigenous people, environmental sustainability and combating HIV/AIDS require special attention as issues to be mainstreamed."

Again, there is no specific mention of older people.

- These guidelines are used to draw up Country Strategy Papers (CSPs) and National Indicative Programmes (NIPs), which set out how the EU's money will be spent in each country. These are the documents that guide EU funds to individual development projects run by non-government organisations (NGOs) or national governments. If older people are not included in these key documents, then the EU's aid does not reach them.
- An analysis of several Strategy Papers from countries working with us on these issues (including Kenya, Mozambique, South Africa and the Philippines) found only a few, very minor references to older people and their needs. However, children, women and young people are mentioned systematically in all strategies in relation to poverty, health, work and education.

Why does it matter?

Older people's inclusion matters because older men and women are part of the solution to eradicating poverty. They have a significant contribution to make to improving the lives of their families and their wider communities. But they need the right kind of support to do this – which is where the EU's aid comes in.

The EU's key development policies and programming documents must rise to the challenge of poverty reduction by enabling older men and women to claim their rights and participate fully in development programmes. Including older people in this way will result in the following benefits:

Developing countries will be better able to combat the growing issue of old-age poverty.

- Older people are often poorer than other age groups, with people over 70 facing the greatest risk of poverty of any age group⁷. Given that the number of older people living in developing countries will increase rapidly by 2050, this presents a serious threat to the successful achievement and sustainability of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Reducing old-age poverty will benefit other age groups who are dependent on older people.

- Family support to older people is declining due to factors such as changing household composition, migration, and the impact of HIV and AIDS. Evidence shows that older men and women are increasingly taking on the role of primary carer for their children and grandchildren. Research demonstrates that people who remain poor into old age pass on their poverty to younger generations. These older people and their children will make up the majority of the 900 million people still living in poverty in 2015, even if the MDGs are met.⁸
- When older people receive the right kind of support (such as pensions or healthcare), they can and do make a huge contribution to the rest of society. For example, an older person may use their pension income to buy more nutritious food for the whole of their household, having a direct impact on other generations. This is the case in South Africa, where a study showed that young girls who live in a household with a pension income are 3-4cm taller on average than girls who do not.⁹

By highlighting older people's needs and recognising the contribution they can make, the EU would encourage local communities and governments to protect older people's rights and tackle age discrimination.

- It is of great concern that older people's rights are not being protected to the same extent as other vulnerable groups. For instance, while the rights of children and indigenous people are referred to in key EU programming and policy documents, older people's rights are not explicitly mentioned.

The EU must address the omission of older people in its development policies and programmes. Until it does, older people will continue to face exclusion, whether through lack of access to healthcare, denial of inheritance rights, violence and abuse, and lack of social security.

What needs to be done?



We are calling on the EU to champion the rights of older people around the world by actively including them in its development policies and programmes.

We are asking Member State governments and the European Parliament to ensure that the European Commission makes aid age-friendly by:

- **Mainstreaming the issue of global ageing into EU development policy**, in line with key priorities highlighted in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) 2002.¹⁰ The plan emphasises the importance of mainstreaming ageing into national development frameworks and poverty eradication. This is an important opportunity for the EU to contribute to achieving the objectives of the MIPAA on its 10th anniversary.
- **Demonstrating its commitment to older people and their rights.** Through the joint programming process, older people's rights should be included as a cross-cutting issue throughout the EU's guidance for the 2014–2020 financing instruments, particularly the European Development Fund Programming Orientations and Country Strategy Papers.

The EU has recognised the importance of ageing by marking 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations. It is through such opportunities, where the EU can lead the way in improving the lives of older people around the world. If it fails to grasp this opportunity, the number of older people living in extreme poverty will continue to increase, and it will be even harder for younger generations to break the poverty cycle. MEPs and Member States must act now to ensure that EU aid achieves its main goal of eradicating poverty.

Age Demands Action



Age Demands Action (ADA) is a grassroots campaign that aims to fight age discrimination and poverty worldwide, wherever it exists. Campaign activities take place throughout the year, but 1 October is UN International Day of Older Persons, and is therefore a key date for the campaign. Over the past four years, ADA campaign has spread across the globe, from 26 countries in 2007 to more than 55 countries in 2011.

Through the ADA campaign, people around the world are calling for their governments to show leadership in the fight against age discrimination and older people's fight against poverty. They want to change the perception that older people are not important in society and have little to contribute. In developing countries, older people have formed delegations to lobby decision-makers on key issues like access to free healthcare, pensions and support to livelihood activities.

HelpAge International is working with partners in the Czech Republic, Ireland, the Netherlands and Slovenia, together with groups in developing countries. Our aim is to build solidarity among different generations to highlight ageing and development issues and motivate people to act to protect older people's rights.

In Europe, many inspirational older people and young people are building awareness of ageing and development issues within the European Union. They are working with their counterparts in developing countries to promote greater inclusion of older people in EU and other aid programmes. Campaign actions in Europe have included a "solidarity fun run", conferences, and raising the issue with the press.

Stories of struggle and support

The *European Consensus on Development* aims to address poverty across a variety of themes including healthcare, income generation and infrastructure. Here, we show how, given the right support in these areas, older people can make significant contributions to reducing poverty for themselves, their families, and their wider communities.

But these stories also show that when older people do not get the right support, they are condemned to a life of struggle, which keeps them and their families in poverty, and affects the life chances of their dependants.

Some names have been changed to protect people's identities.

Employment, income generation and social cohesion

Supported:
Phini, 72, Mozambique



72-year-old Phini Supinho lives in a village in Tete province, Mozambique. He lost his livelihood as a carpenter because of failing health.

He received a cash grant through HelpAge International and UNICEF's Living Together programme, which enabled him to re-train as a blacksmith.

Four years later, the business has grown and he now supplies farm tools to his local community.

"People come from the surrounding villages to buy from me. They used to have to travel to Tete, which is very far from here.

"I am providing a good service to the community by making these tools locally. I sell the big hoes for 50,000 meticaís (€1.5) and in Tete they cost 120,000 meticaís (€3.7). I now have the money to support my family with immediate needs like sugar, oil and salt and, during hard times, with maize", says Phini, with renewed pride.

Struggling:
Josephine, 78, Kenya



Josephine Napkonde is 78 and from Kenya. She looks after five children who were abandoned by a relative.

She receives no pension from the government, so she has to work from 5am to midnight to provide for them.

"My future hope is to have my own house. I could have got land after my husband died, but his brothers sub-divided the land.

"What makes me happy is my children and God, who gives me the strength to do my work. My talent is doing business. And to that I give my all, day and night.

"My day starts at 5am when I prepare breakfast for my children and then see them off to school. I then go out to do my business and return home at midday and cook lunch for two of my children. In the evening, I prepare supper and make sure the kids go to bed in their pyjamas. I sleep late, around midnight."

Governance, democracy, development and human rights

Supported:
Angelina, 65, Kenya



Angelina organised older people to campaign for better treatment at the local hospital.

"We were treated badly at the hospital. We had to wait for many hours and sometimes we would leave without even seeing the doctor. The nurses' attitude was that we were old, and didn't need medicine.

"Two groups of 10 older people went to see Dr Muthoka, the doctor in charge at Kangundo general hospital, 20km away.

"We told them that when we went to the hospital pharmacist, we were not given the correct medicine or were told that there was no medicine. The doctor told us to go away and wait for while. He said he would make changes to improve the situation.

"I have been to the hospital three times since we had the meeting. It is now very clean, there are new wards and the patients sleep one to a bed."

Struggling:
Sato, 72, Tanzania



Sato fled her home when she was attacked after being accused of being a witch. The police have not pressed any charges against her attacker.

"I was married, but my husband died when I was young. We had five children. I was attacked in my home one night in 2000. My hand was cut off. I don't know who attacked me. My sick neighbour went to the traditional healer for treatment and he had indicated I had bewitched her. Just because we're old and live alone doesn't mean we are witches, but people think we must be to be able to survive.

"The assailant attacked me with a panga (machete) and I was seriously injured in the head. I started screaming and he cut my right hand while I was trying to save my head. After I was attacked, a suspect was arrested and held in police custody for a long time. But one of his relatives was a policeman, so he was released and there was no case."

Water and energy

Supported:
Teso, 64, Ethiopia



HelpAge has provided a pond for Teso's village as well as an alternative water source nearby for times when the pond dries up, giving the community guaranteed water all year round.

This means Teso, who looks after five children, has more time to work rather than having to spend hours each day fetching water.

"Without the generator and water, after the haro (ponds) dry up we would be dead in two months. The haro are not enough for the population. The well water is also cleaner.

"Every day I fetch water and go to the bush to collect firewood. Sometimes, I am able to sell some wood at the market. When the animals have gone to feed, I collect bush roots that I can sell for 1 birr (6¢) a bunch. I also use the roots to make plates and decorate pots. I only have time to make about two every year, but I can get 100 birr (€6) for each one I sell.

"I show my children how to make things so they too can make some money that will help them."

Struggling:
Jursun, 75, Kyrgyzstan



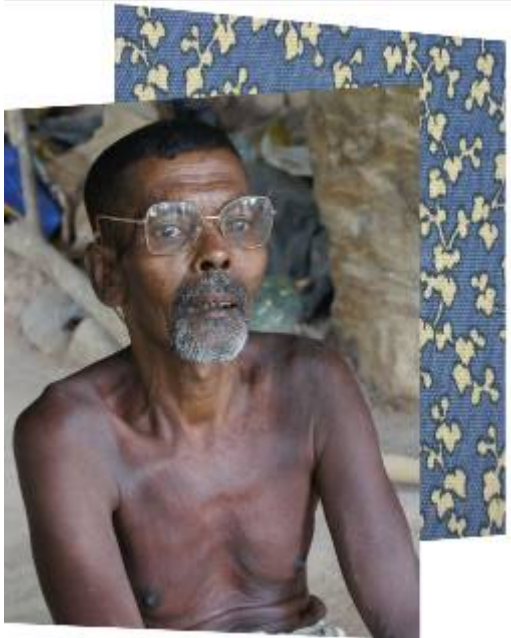
Jursun is 75. She lives with one of her daughters and her son-in-law and their three children, two girls and a boy. One of the children does not go to school because she has a cleft lip.

The family's only sources of income are Jursun's daughter's wages, and benefits of around 700 som (€16) they receive for her granddaughter. But this is not enough to keep them all warm in winter.

"What makes living in winter difficult is heating. We don't have enough money to buy fuel like coal. We usually use a bunch of bushes and dry manure for heating, which doesn't provide much heat and quickly gets cold. Since food is also expensive, we usually eat just bread and tea without sugar or milk."

Infrastructure, healthcare, communications and transport

Supported:
RM Dharmadasa, 69, Sri Lanka



Mr Dharmadasa is 69 years old. For 18 years, he has been living in a cave with his partner after his children moved him out. He has two children (a son and a daughter) and three grandchildren. His daughter visits him from time to time. However, she is very poor. His son earns an income but does not come to see him. The closest village is 2km away where Mr Dharmadasa gets some food and can sell broomsticks which he makes.

Mr Dharmadasa has eye problems and needs glasses. Transportation is a big problem for him. Although the government provides 100 rupees (65¢) per month in cash, it is not enough for him to travel to a local hospital. The nearest hospital is 10km away and he has to pay 80 rupees (50¢) for the return bus fare. He is eager to get new glasses because his poor eyesight affects his livelihood activities.

HelpAge Sri Lanka runs Mobile Medical Units which provide medical and eyecare services to older people across the country. Through such services, Mr Dharmadasa can receive free eye examinations and glasses without having to travel a long distance.

Struggling:
Genaro, 74, Peru



Genaro receives no pension after a lifetime of work. He now sells jelly to support himself and his wife, who is ill.

"I worked for a construction company for 20 years. I had to stop when I had an accident. I am entitled to a 700 soles (€196) monthly pension from my old company, but we've never received a penny from them.

"For the past 10 years, we have been surviving any way that we can. I get up at 5am to start preparing jelly cups, which I then sell in the local market for 1 sole (25¢) each. Food prices are rising so fast that it's impossible to sell enough jelly to pay for the things we need.

"Even though I am a man, sometimes I cry because I feel so angry that I can't make enough money to buy the medicines that my wife needs to get better, but what can I do?"

Endnotes

¹ UNDESA (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs), Population Division, 'World Population Ageing 2009', New York, United Nations, 2009

² UNDESA (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs), Population Division, 'World Population Ageing 2009', New York, United Nations, 2009

³ Forteza A, Lucchetti L and Pallares-Mirallas M, 'Measuring the coverage gap', in R Holzman, D Robalino and N Takayama (eds), *Closing the coverage gap: role of social pensions and other retirement income transfers*, Washington DC, World Bank, 2009

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⁵ The European Consensus on Development 2005, para 97, 'Social cohesion and employment', www.enpi-programming.eu/wcm/en/what-is-enpi-programming/political-framework/the-european-consensus-on-development.html

⁶ Known as the European Development Fund (EDF) Programming Orientations for National and Regional Programming

⁷ UNDESA (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs), Population Division, *World Population Ageing 2009*, New York, United Nations, 2009

⁸ Chronic Poverty Research Centre (CPRC), *The chronic poverty report 2004–05*, Manchester, CPRC, 2009, p.3

⁹ Case (2001) cited in Barrientos A and Lloyd-Sherlock P, *Non-contributory pensions and social protection*, International Labour Organization (ILO), 2002

¹⁰ United Nations Report of the Second World Assembly, *The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*, 2002

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