

Terms of Reference

Review of links between nutrition and social protection for older people

A. Background and rationale

Nutrition is important for physical and cognitive functioning, but older people face special challenges. Dietary needs change with age. Many people become less active with age and their metabolism slows, while their ability to absorb nutrients become less efficient. Chronic conditions and medications can affect nutrition requirements. Yet geriatric nutrition is often overlooked, particularly in societies providing limited healthcare.

Food is typically one of the main ways that older people use their own income – not only food for themselves, but also for other members of the family. But as people grow older, earning an income from work becomes increasingly challenging, as a result of ill health, disability, social norms and a lack of appropriate jobs in the labour market. Traditions of family support remain strong in many countries and most older people have family to look to for food and other material support; nevertheless, families in poorer countries are often facing poverty and vulnerability themselves, and struggle to provide an adequate income for their older members. The result is that many older people struggle to cover basic needs like food and health expenses. The levels of support available from family are also likely to reduce in the coming decades due to population ageing.

Social protection for older persons, particularly pensions, aims to address gaps in income in later life. Pensions may be contributory or non-contributory. While contributory pensions are common in many high-income countries, their coverage is limited in many low- and middle-income countries because of the informality of much of the workforce. Non-contributory or social pensions are also a core component of national social security systems in many high-income countries and have become increasingly popular in low- and middle-income countries in the last two to three decades. Social pensions are tax-financed non-contributory cash transfers paid to older people on a regular basis. Currently over 100 countries around the world have social pensions. These schemes have been recognised as an effective way to rapidly increase pension coverage in contexts where contributory pensions are only set to expand slowly. A universal approach, where all older people over a given age receive the social pension, has achieved high levels of targeting accuracy in contexts where administrative systems remain weak.

Social pensions have been shown in some countries to improve nutrition-related indicators among older people and even members of their households. In Bolivia, Brazil, China, South Africa and Uganda, social pensions have boosted the wellbeing of children, improving nutrition, reducing child labour and increasing school enrolment. In South Africa, for example, girls in households with older person receiving the social pension were found to be 3-5cm taller than girls in other households, largely as a result of improved nutrition. HelpAge aims through this study to analyse documented links between nutrition and pensions in old age, particularly social pensions.

B. Purpose of the assignment

The purpose of this study, through a review of international literature, is to document and summarize the researched links between nutrition and social protection for older people, particularly social pensions, and analyse the potential pathways to improved nutritional outcomes through social protection.

C. Methodology and specific tasks for the consultant

This is a home-based desk study, based primarily on a scoping of international literature. It is anticipated that the international literature precisely on nutrition and social pensions may be fairly limited, so the study will initially start with a wide perspective and draw inferences to the extent possible, before narrowing the scope. The key expected tasks are as follows:

- Clarify the nature and scope of the task with HelpAge, by distance. The consultant may also be asked to respond to suggestions and feedback from HelpAge or its partners.
- Propose a structure for the report, starting with the assumptions under Output below.
- Conduct a scoping of global literature on the potential connections between nutrition and social protection for older persons, initially a rapid scoping with a wide lens and then narrowing the focus. Initially, that is:
 - Begin with evidence related to income security in old age broadly, then move to social protection and pension availability in general, and then ultimately focus on social (non-contributory) pensions to the extent evidence is available.
 - Begin with evidence related to food intake and food security broadly, and then focus on geriatric nutrition outcomes as the evidence allows.
 - Examine impacts not only on the pension recipient (the older person) but also any evidence on benefits to other household members arising from social protection for older persons.
- From the global evidence, summarize and categorize key findings and present a framework for understanding the key variables that connect social protection/pensions with improved nutrition (see Output below).
- Draft the Output below, revise based on feedback, and complete the assignment.

D. Output

The consultant will produce the following Output under the assignment. The angle of the study is social protection as it interacts with food and nutrition, rather than an in-depth analysis of the nutrition challenges faced by older people per se.

Report: An analytical report of about 20-25 pages plus bibliography in a structure to be agreed. The consultant should write the study in clear English, avoiding long sentences, jargon, and abbreviations as much as possible. Technical terms should be clearly explained or else avoided. This is the starting assumption about content:

- (a) *Executive summary* (about 2-3 pages)
- (b) *Introduction and background:* This section will briefly describe the purpose (problem addressed), methodology and limitations of the study. (about 1-2 pages)
- (c) *Nutrition and income security for older people:* This introductory section will be a short overview of the key nutritional issues older people face and the factors affecting their nutrition. This may include common nutrition issues and behaviours and needs among older people and their special nutrition care needs (e.g. eating behaviours, social perceptions of family). It will then summarize the documented

association in general between nutrition and income security in later life. (about 3 pages)

- (d) *Nutrition and social protection for older people:* This section is the core of the report. From the literature review, it will document any researched links between social protection for older people and nutrition, including (i) evidence of impacts of pensions and other broad social protection programmes on older person's food intake, eating behaviours, food security or nutrition, (ii) evidence of impacts of pensions and other broad social protection programmes on the food intake, food security, nutrition and related social perceptions of other members of the recipient's household, (iii) evidence of the above specifically related to social pensions. (about 6-10 pages)
- (e) *Key variables affecting the nutritional impacts of social protection for older people:* From the above discussion, analyze factors that influence whether social protection is likely to lead to improved nutritional outcomes, either for the older person or other household members. These may include characteristics associated with the policy environment or pension programme itself including pension adequacy, targeting or regularity of payment. It may also have to do with characteristics associated with recipients including gender, disability, urban-rural residence, local food availability, household living arrangements/interactions, extent of intra-household transfers, support from community-based actors, spending priorities or other variables documented in the literature or inferred by the consultant based on the literature. (about 3-5 pages)
- (f) *Conclusions and recommendations:* Based on the analysis in section (e) above, where should governments or advocacy players invest their social protection efforts targeting older people in order to have greater impacts on nutrition? (about 2-3 pages)

Appendix: Bibliography

E. Duration and timing

Below is a tentative timeline for the assignment:

- May: Consultant selection and contracting
- End July: Report draft submitted to HelpAge
- Early September: All final Outputs submitted and assignment completed

F. Qualifications of Consultant

HelpAge anticipates hiring an individual Consultant, but applicants may also be teams or organizations (e.g. firms or academic bodies). HelpAge is looking for the following qualifications:

Essential

- Advanced degree(s) in a field relevant to the nature of the study
- Expertise in either social protection or nutrition and a good understanding of the other topic, with at least basic understanding of geriatric nutrition issues
- Demonstrable experience conducting similar research assignments including literature reviews and analysis

- Professional background demonstrating a clear understanding of social policy interventions addressing such issues as income insecurity and food insecurity in low- and middle-income contexts, ideally in Asia
- Exceptional analytical and summarising skills
- Access to relevant sources and academic journals
- Appropriate IT/computer skills
- Strong writing skills in English with a clear, simple writing style

Desirable

- Knowledge and experience related to ageing and older people, including geriatric nutrition
- Understanding of the contexts of Asia

G. How to apply

Interested applicants are invited to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) of about 3-4 pages for delivery of the assignment, including:

- 1) Summary of skills and experience relevant to Section F above
- 2) Consultant's understanding of the assignment in their own words, and access to resources for the literature review
- 3) Any comments or suggestions about this TOR including the approach
- 4) Workplan with target dates
- 5) Budget (see below)
- 6) Appendixes (not included in 3-4 pages)
 - a) CV
 - b) 1-2 relevant studies previously produced as attachments

The costing/budget (point no. 5 above) should include professional fees (daily rates x number of days) and any other costs to carry out each assignment. The contract will be output-based rather than time-based. HelpAge anticipates spending between US\$7,000 to \$8,000 for this assignment.

Selection of the Consultant will be by a panel and based on the experience of the Consultant, the quality and relevance of the expression of interest, and the proposed budget (i.e. value for money, within resources available).

The deadline for submission is **Monday, 24 May 2021**. Please contact peter.morrison@helpage.org for further information or to submit your EOI.