



Agenda 2030

The Sustainable Development Goals and Global Ageing

This paper has been prepared for the HelpAge global network and HelpAge offices as an introductory resource on the links between the Sustainable Development Goals and the HelpAge International 2020 organisational strategy.

HelpAge

global network

Introduction

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030.¹ The SDGs vision is of a world that by 2030 has achieved zero poverty, where all people can live in dignity throughout their lives, free from poverty, exclusion, violence and discrimination.

These ideals connect directly to HelpAge's 2020 Strategy, with its own vision of a world in which all older people can lead dignified, healthy and secure lives. This paper aims to show how far the SDGs with their central concept of 'leaving no one behind' are reflected in the key objectives of the HelpAge global network. It is intended to be an introductory resource for members and partners in developing their advocacy and influencing in relation to the SDGs. We hope that HelpAge global members and partners will use this discussion paper to shape and inform their advocacy approaches and priorities in specific national contexts. This initial paper will be followed by thematic papers and other tools to support our engagement on the SDGs.

The SDGs will have a major impact on development thinking and practice to 2030, so it is important to know how well they addressed issues important for ageing and older people. To make sure that older people are not left behind, data will have to be better collected and analysed, their voices will need to be heard in policy making and implementation, and discriminatory practices which exclude them from earning a living, receiving entitlements (such as pensions and healthcare) and ignore elder abuse, will have to be challenged and changed. But how far do the SDGs meet these requirements?



In the preparatory process for the SDG summit, population ageing was mentioned as a global trend and challenge to which the post-2015 agenda should respond. This has been only partially reflected in the final 2030 Agenda document, and we should understand that, while we can see the potential impacts for older people throughout the SDGs these may not necessarily be acknowledged by the wider development community.

‘Leave no one behind’ – a key theme of the SDGs

A rights-based approach is at the heart of the SDGs, with the core pledge that no one will be left behind and the endeavour to reach the most disadvantaged, those furthest behind, first. These are key concepts for HelpAge, providing us with the opportunity to ensure the inclusion of all older people in the 2030 development agenda. The idea that ‘no goal should be met unless it is met for everyone’ is well established in the rhetoric around the new goals. This means ensuring that every individual achieves all the rights and opportunities contained within the SDGs.

It is less clear what this will mean in practice. For example, some institutions – including the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) acknowledge the need first of all to establish who is being left behind, where they are and why they are excluded. For this DFID say that it will be necessary to strengthen the collection and use of disaggregated data, and build evidence of what works with the most disadvantaged groups.²

Another key area identified to ensure no one is left behind is empowerment. The voices of the most disadvantaged must be heard, whether it is in the design and delivery of policy and programme changes, or in holding governments and service providers to account. Within this, gender equality and women's empowerment have been highlighted as key elements of the overall commitment to just and democratic societies for development. At the same time there is a strong focus on the need to challenge negative social norms, and to reform discriminatory laws and institutions.

Finally, while economic growth is a priority for the SDG agenda, the ‘leave no one behind’ principle requires that this should be inclusive for all. In particular older people and especially older women who are among the most disadvantaged. The same is true for political institutions and systems, and for social protection, basic services, and infrastructure, all of which should be made accessible to all. The central MDG³ objective of halving extreme poverty was achieved well ahead of the 2015 deadline. It is important to recognise that this achievement has benefited many older people but many more may still be ‘left behind’.

While Agenda 2030 is an integrated development agenda, the following SDGs or global goals have particular relevance for the HelpAge global network, since they relate directly to our strategic priorities as set out in HelpAge's 2020 Strategy:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

Structure of the discussion paper

The remainder of the discussion paper is organised under four thematic headings reflecting HelpAge's strategic policy priorities. The world we want to see is one where every older woman and man, regardless of where they live, can say:

“I have the income I need”

“I enjoy the best possible health and quality of life”

“I am safe and secure, free from discrimination and abuse”

“My voice is heard”

The SDGs also have particular relevance to three other key areas of our work which are also included in our discussion paper, namely:

Urbanisation

Disaster Risk Reduction

The development of data systems inclusive of older people

Each section of the paper follows the same format: HelpAge's strategic goal is stated, HelpAge's position on the goal is outlined and the relevant SDGs identified. Where appropriate, information on the targets and indicators associated with the specific SDGs are also included. This is followed by a short discussion on the HelpAge position.



I have the income I need

HelpAge's position

- Social protection supported under the SDGs must be rights-based, universal and support older people.
- Old age pensions are a key component of lifelong social protection.
- Older women and men have a right to equitable access to decent, adequately paid and appropriate work.

What the SDGs say

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Target 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

Target 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Target 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

The Indicators identified to measure these targets both specifically highlight that they should be disaggregated by age.

Other SDGs which are relevant include:

SDG 5 on gender equality which includes target 5.4 to recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies.

SDG 8 on promoting decent work, including target 8.5 to achieve decent work for all women and men, with equal pay for work of equal value and target 8.8 to protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers.

SDG 9 on promotion of inclusive, innovative and sustainable industrialisation with target 9.3 on access to financial services.

SDG 10 on reduced inequalities, including target 10.4 regarding the adoption of fiscal, wage and social protection policies which achieve greater equality.

What HelpAge says

The aim of SDG 1 to ‘end poverty in all its forms everywhere’ makes this arguably the headline goal, and experience from implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) suggests that this goal will gain particular attention. We welcome the implicit inclusion of ageing in the first two targets and their indicators with the specification that both should be disaggregated by age; and the fact that social protection (as a core part of ensuring older people ‘have the income they need’) also appears prominently under this goal. Its inclusion in a number of goals also highlights the fact that social protection contributes to a wider range of outcomes, not only poverty but health, employment, reduced hunger, decent work, peace and justice.

Social protection was absent from the MDGs, so its recognition under SDG1 on poverty signals a significant shift in understanding of how social protection contributes to poverty reduction. The specific reference to social protection floors also provides an entry point for our strategic focus on pensions. Social protection floors are defined in ILO Recommendation 202 as a set of social security guarantees that provide basic income security and access to healthcare across the life cycle.⁴ This framing of a package of benefits that support people at different stages of their lives provides far greater scope for policy discussion of old age and pensions, than where social protection is defined in terms of a residual safety net for the very poorest. The concept of a social protection floor is also underpinned by various human rights instruments and puts emphasis on universality, which supports HelpAge’s advocacy towards universal or near-universal social pensions. Old age pensions are a key component of social protection, and have commonly been a first step to a wider system.

The inclusion of social protection under the goal on inequality is also positive. However, the wording of Target 1.3 suggests that the focus should be on ‘the poor and vulnerable’, which could contradict the spirit of social protection floors by putting the focus on a ‘safety net’ approach. We challenge the idea that social protection is about helping a small, residual group of poor people. For HelpAge, social protection is about sharing risk across societies as a whole, rather than focusing limited resources only on the very poorest people.

Social protection also needs to be addressed in the wider context of income security and economic opportunities for older people. The SDGs, while they recognise the need to address income inequality and commit to support youth employment and women’s empowerment, ignore the livelihood strategies, as well as the productive capacities and potential of other age groups, including older people. This is a significant omission since targets such as 2.3, to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers by 2030, will not be achieved without addressing the support needs of the growing proportion of smallholders who are older people.



I enjoy the best possible health and quality of life

HelpAge's position

- We welcome the inclusion of a specific goal of ensuring healthy lives and wellbeing for all at all ages.
- We strongly support the ambition to achieve universal health coverage (UHC), access to quality healthcare services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines for all.
- Indicators to monitor UHC must track both access and financial risk protection elements and be inclusive of people of all ages.
- The concept of 'premature mortality' (dying before the age of 70), infringes older people's rights. We will continue to campaign against this discriminatory target.⁵
- We welcome the inclusion of older people in the target to end malnutrition, but the accompanying indicators must include older people as well as girls and younger women.
- Responsibility for older people's care must be shared between families, professional providers and governments, with the latter prioritising development of systems of care. For older people, access to long-term care is an integral part of UHC.

What the SDGs say

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

Target 3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.

Target 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

Target 3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States.

Target 5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.

Other SDGs which are relevant include:

SDG 2 End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture and its associated target 2.2 – By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including addressing the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

What HelpAge says

We welcome the much broader approach to health in the SDGs than the MDGs, and in particular the inclusion of a specific goal (SDG 3) focused on health, to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages. The wide range of targets addressing the spectrum of diseases and the systems and infrastructure needed to ensure health and wellbeing also mark a step forward. While we strongly support the inclusion of a target on NCDs (3.4), its focus on reducing ‘premature mortality’, (dying before the age of 70), poses a challenge for the inclusion of older people who are most affected by NCDs. Policy and programme responses need to address prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care across the life course.

Older people are also affected by communicable diseases suffering a ‘double burden’ of disease. Responding to the ‘ageing’ of HIV, Target 3.3 is inclusive of people of all ages, but the single SDG indicator for HIV focuses on new infections, risking the exclusion of treatment, care and support, all crucial services for older people who have been living with HIV and using antiretroviral therapy (ART) for many years.

The focus on UHC in the SDGs provides an opportunity to address a range of barriers faced by older people to accessing health and care services – from primary health through to long-term care. However, UHC will not be achieved for older people if efforts are guided by the target’s two indicators. The first tracks access to services including treatment for hypertension and diabetes which are two key health concerns for older people. Where the data is drawn from USAID’s Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) or WHO’s STEPS surveys, limited information will be available for older people. DHS surveys normally exclude women aged 50 and over, and men aged 55 or 60 and over; and WHO guidance

suggests the inclusion of people only up to age 69 in the case of STEPS. What this means is that these surveys do not track whether coverage is universal. The second indicator measures ‘the proportion of the population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure’. By focusing on financial hardship at the household level, the indicator will not provide any information about intra-household, individual level access to health services. The lack of individual level information will make it difficult to monitor older people’s access and financial risk protection to ensure they are not left behind in efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage.

Health and care systems in low-and middle-income countries are failing adequately to meet the increasingly complex health and social care needs of people as they age. There needs to be a greater focus on the provision of both health and care services at the community level, delivered in a more integrated way, ensuring a continuum of care is provided to older people close to where they live. The target on the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce offers an opportunity to address this, if focused at primary level. But training on older people’s health would be one of a number of competing priorities and the indicator for this target will not track health worker training.

In many low- and middle-income countries, care systems do not yet exist and care for older people is provided by other older people, particularly older women, and by families and communities. Target 5.4 on recognising and valuing unpaid care, including through social protection policies, should support greater recognition of the role of older women and men in the provision of care. The target includes the promotion of shared responsibility within the family and household but not with governments. This risks care responsibilities continuing to fall on families and communities, and again in particular on women, rather than emphasising that governments should also prioritise the development of care systems.



I am safe and secure, free from discrimination and abuse

HelpAge's position

- Implementation of the SDGs must recognise different forms of violence and abuse, from financial and economic to sexual and physical, or neglect; a range of perpetrators (including family members); and the victimisation of both older women and men.
- Violence against women must be addressed for all women throughout their lives, recognising particularly the prevalence of domestic violence.
- Laws, policies or practices that discriminate on the basis of age (such as mandatory retirement ages or upper age limits to healthcare treatment) must be abolished.
- Data collection, prevention and support services, and justice systems must address all forms of violence which targets older women and men.

What the SDGs say

Freedom from discrimination is addressed in a number of the SDGs:

SDG 5: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

Target 5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

Target 10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

Target 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

What HelpAge says

Steps taken to achieve the SDGs on inequalities could contribute to HelpAge's goal that all older people are free from experiencing discrimination, if the complex nature of discrimination in older age is recognised and taken seriously. This is a major task, since ageism continues to be unrecognised, ignored or condoned, and often treated differently from other forms of discrimination. Age discrimination can be complex. Older people may be discriminated against for different reasons, for example because of their age, their sex, their marital status. They may also be uniquely subjected to multiple discrimination; older widows for example, may experience discrimination based on their sex, age and marital status.

In many legal systems discrimination on the basis of age, sex or race are outlawed though some forms of discrimination continue to be exempt within the law, particularly in employment and in access to services, such as healthcare and financial services for example requirement to retire at a particular age or age caps on access to services. As people grow older, the cumulative impact of years of discrimination, particularly for women, can build up to have a much greater impact.

Actions arising from the SDGs to address age discrimination should therefore mean, for example, ensuring that laws and policies do not discriminate against women (such as some pensions policies), and abolishing laws, policies or practices that discriminate on the basis of age (such as upper age limits to healthcare treatment); and also revising laws, policies and programmes that exclude older people, for example domestic violence legislation or humanitarian response programmes.

The SDGs identified here have some relevance to HelpAge's goal relating to discrimination, violence and abuse. For example, we say that issues such as violence against women have to be addressed throughout life, and that there should be a greater focus on the violence to which they are subjected in the private and the public sphere, at home and in community or care settings, as well as structural violence, and on harmful practices such as those related to witchcraft.

While relevant issues are highlighted through the SDGs, there are limitations from the perspective of older people. For example, SDG 5.2 calls for elimination of violence against all women and girls, but the two main data sources⁶ are not available for every country, and are age-limited.⁷ The SDGs will only contribute to our goal if data collection is inclusive of older people; and if prevention and support services, and reforms of the justice system address all forms of violence and are also inclusive of older people.

National policies implementing the SDGs must also recognise different forms of abuse, ranging from financial and economic to emotional and psychological to sexual and physical, or neglect. There may be a range of perpetrators, from adult children to fraudsters. Victims may be men as well as women. Ageism can also intersect with gender-based violence, with ageism as a primary driver. In framing policies and laws on violence, abuse and neglect of older people, decision-makers will face the challenge of striking a balance between the personal autonomy and right of individuals to make decisions about their own lives, even when hazardous, and their right to protection from violence, abuse and neglect.



My voice is heard

HelpAge's position

- Accountability mechanisms must be accessible for all, and special measures are needed to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable and marginalised older citizens are heard.
- Duty bearers and decision-makers should be aware of older people's rights and the exclusions they face so as to be proactive in enabling their voices to be heard and their meaningful participation in decision-making and public debate.

What the SDGs say

Voice is addressed in a number of SDG targets:

Target 5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Target 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.

Target 16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels.

What HelpAge says

We believe that 'voice' is about redressing power imbalances within societies and strengthening older people's capacity to express their views, leading to greater inclusion in decision-making and influence over government policy priorities. Helping older people understand that they have human rights and responsibilities is fundamental in strengthening their voices. However, the conventional instruments of voice and empowerment – information and communication – are often out of reach for older people, particularly older women.

Furthermore, enabling older people to analyse their problems and become advocates for their rights is only one side of strengthening voice. Duty bearers need to know about older people's rights and the exclusions they experience. Accountability mechanisms for civil society and government to interact are necessary, and should be accessible to older citizens.

We would have liked the SDGs to better address accountability processes for marginalised groups such as older people. For example indicator 5.5.1 (proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments) relates to formal posts in parliament, government, public institutions or businesses, which are out of reach for the large majority of older women, with no route provided to strengthen their participation. The indicators are equally limited and have little to say about the inclusion and participation processes that are critical for strengthening for voice of overlooked groups and accountability of national decision-makers to these groups, including older people. From our own work in the field of older citizen monitoring, and from the experience of Older People's Associations in both Asia and Africa, HelpAge has practical knowledge of models of engagement that are highly effective in promoting older people's inclusion and participation.⁸ We would like to see those models recognised, used and further developed through processes arising from the implementation of all of the SDGs, and notably SDGs 5.5, 10.2 and 16.7.

Other HelpAge areas of work

In addition to HelpAge's four strategic priorities, the SDGs are also relevant to three other areas of our work: **Urbanisation**, **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)** and **data systems inclusive of older people**. These are addressed on the following pages.



Urbanisation and older people

HelpAge's position

- If we are to deliver on the pledge to leave no one behind, it is essential that older people have a say, participating in consultations on urban planning initiatives and influencing decisions about urban developments that will affect their lives.
- Urban planning should support the creation of spaces and communities that are welcoming, walkable and mixed use, well maintained and designed, feeling safe and secure at all times.
- Safe, affordable and accessible public transport and non-motorised forms of travel such as walking and cycling are essential to the inclusion of older urban populations.
- Livelihood opportunities available to older people in cities, particularly informal street based activities should be protected and promoted.
- The inclusion of older people in all city level disaster resilience and response planning and support to older displaced people is essential.
- Efforts to reduce air pollution, and to change poor diets and sedentary lifestyles that lead to higher rates of NCDs should be urban public health priorities.

What the SDGs say

SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Target 11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

Target 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

What HelpAge says

With nearly two out of three older people globally living in cities, and almost 300 million older people in cities in LMICs, urbanisation has consequences for older people in terms of health, income security, resilience and collective social action to achieve political and social change. The SDGs call for inclusive urbanisation for all; this should enable older persons to have access to safe and affordable public transport, and enjoy secure, inclusive and accessible public spaces. To achieve this they must be able to participate in planning and decision-making consultations, particularly in relation to street and public space design, housing and public transportation and to ensure urban spaces work for everyone throughout their lives. Achieving the delivery of the 'Leave no one behind' agenda requires us to continue to emphasise the importance of cities that are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable for all people as they age.

Practical implementation of SDG 11 has been partly addressed by the New Urban Agenda agreed at the Habitat III conference in October 2016.⁹ The New Urban Agenda strongly argues for the inclusion of older people in all stages of planning and decision-making and demands age- and gender-responsive actions. It also highlights a number of policies and perspectives that more broadly protect and promote rights in older age in

urban environments. However, both the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs have serious gaps in relation to older people. For example, we would like to see both the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda pay greater attention to the impact of NCDs in urban areas; the failure to highlight the impact of air pollution on health and mortality is an issue of particular concern for older people in cities. Furthermore, given the reality of poverty for many older city-dwellers, the limited livelihood opportunities available to older people in cities, particularly informal street based activities, need to be better recognised and supported both by the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda. In addition, in recognition of the increasing incidence of humanitarian crises taking place in urban areas, and the 60 per cent of refugees and 80 per cent of internally displaced people now residing in urban areas, we see a challenge for humanitarian actors developing new approaches in urban areas; critically, they need to reach frequently marginalised people and link them effectively to essential services and systems including social protection mechanisms and NCD treatment and management. Highlighting these issues has to form part of Help Age's advocacy regarding the SDGs going forward.

Alongside national governments, the New Urban Agenda recognises the key role of local and city-level governments in implementing change. Urban populations have great potential influence to bring about progressive change that can lead to progress at the national level, and the collective action potential of older urban populations should be harnessed.



Disaster Risk Reduction, resilience and humanitarian responses

HelpAge's position

- The design and implementation of adaptive, sustainable and resilience-based strategies for disaster risk reduction must reflect the rapid demographic transition to an ageing world.
- Targets on ending malnutrition, addressing NCDs and mental health and tackling violence against women, must take into account humanitarian and recovery situations.
- We must highlight the incidence and address the causes of violence against older people in conflict situations.

What the SDGs say

Whilst there is no single SDG addressing humanitarian aid or DRR, a number of the SDGs cover relevant topics:

SDG 1 on poverty, with target 1.5 on resilience of the poor to climate-related extreme events and other shocks and disasters, including environmental, has no explicit reference to older people or age.

SDG 2 on zero hunger includes target 2.2 on ending malnutrition, specifically including older people, as well as target 2.4 on ensuring sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters.

SDG 3 on health and well-being includes target 3.4 on reducing premature mortality from NCDs by one third and promoting mental health and well-being.¹⁰

SDG 5 on gender and equality has target 5.2 to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls.

SDG 13 on climate action has several targets on strengthening human resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters, as well as institutional capacity, policies and measures. There are no references to older people.

What HelpAge says

The SDGs are aimed at supporting longer term global sustainable development and are not intended to act as a humanitarian framework. However, they are partly about reducing risk and increasing resilience, and the SDGs should address the protection of people of all ages from disaster and increasing risks, treating it as an issue of rights and aligned with the pledge 'to leave no one behind'. The SDGs commit to ensuring consistency with international law rules and commitments, including international humanitarian law and principles. There is also a formal collaborative process in place to ensure that there is a bridge between SDG indicators and indicators to measure outcomes of the Sendai Framework for Action 2015 – 2030, a global plan for disaster risk management and reduction which critically identifies older people as one of their stakeholder groups. While no single SDG addresses either humanitarian aid or wider disaster management, some goals and targets are relevant as identified above and the future challenge rests in ensuring age inclusive implementation of commitments made in those goals. Successful collaboration between SDG and Sendai Framework monitoring processes would also work to the benefit of older people and have positive impacts for the people and environments in which HelpAge works in DRR and humanitarian programmes.



Data systems inclusive of older people

HelpAge's position

- Data gaps must be addressed in order to measure the impact of the SDGs for older people.
- Upper age limits excluding older people should be removed from international surveys.
- Action is needed both with national and international agencies to influence the design, collection, analysis, reporting and utilisation of survey data.
- Data should, as a minimum, be disaggregated by age, gender, disability and location.
- We must stimulate wider debate on the assumptions used in measuring household and old age poverty.

What the SDGs say

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Target 17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing states, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

What HelpAge says

Data systems are not fit for purpose in today's ageing world. Data on older people is either not collected, or where it does exist it is not fully analysed, reported or utilised, leading to serious gaps in information for policy and planning. The SDGs have been accompanied by a call for a 'data revolution', recognising that concerted action is needed at all levels of the data system from collection to utilisation, and from all stakeholders, to improve the quality and range of data. The scale of the challenge of better data on ageing and older people is immense.

Age needs to be taken into account as a cross-cutting issue in all goals and targets. In practice, while the SDGs incorporate 22 targets which either directly name older people as a group or indirectly include them by referencing 'all people', 'all ages' or 'universal', only eight indicators call for disaggregation by age. The likelihood is that these eight indicators will also be disaggregated by gender and, of the eight, only three are likely to be further disaggregated by disability.

Furthermore, it is not clear what the level of age disaggregation will be for the eight indicators in question – will it be a single group aged 60 plus or disaggregation by single year or in age groups? This is a critical issue since the needs of people at different points in later life vary enormously and decision-makers need to plan to meet the needs of ageing populations in all their diversity. At a minimum, HelpAge would like to see data on older people disaggregated in five year cohorts. The Inter-Agency Expert Group on the SDGs is responsible for the indicator framework which is being used to measure progress in implementing the SDGs among the Member States of the United Nations. The indicator framework will be reviewed in 2020 and 2025. These reviews will present critical influencing opportunities for HelpAge in terms of highlighting data gaps on older people and options for closing those data gaps for example removal of age caps and better disaggregation of data.

There are also methodological issues with the measures of poverty referenced in the SDGs, of which the most fundamental is that measurement is based on the use of household income and expenditure surveys. Household surveys can give some indication of whether older people live in poor or non-poor households, however, they have limitations. Firstly, they cannot tell us whether, as

individuals, they receive their fair share of income in a given household. Secondly, whether or not older people appear to be more or less poor than average has been found to be highly sensitive to assumptions used in poverty analysis – particularly around consumption needs of people of different ages and economies of scale at a household level. To date there has been limited discussion, and there is no consensus, on the assumptions that should be used to measure old age poverty in low- and middle-income countries.¹¹ As a result, there is a risk that age-disaggregated poverty analysis undertaken under the SDGs leads to incorrect conclusions about older people being less poor than the rest of the population which can result in older people being given a lower priority in policymaking. In practice, we need a more multi-dimensional approach to evaluating the poverty or income security of older people. In essence, this is about finding data to answer questions like: Do older people have an individual income either from work, pensions or savings? Is it adequate? If not, to what extent to family fill the gap? Does this support allow older people to live with autonomy and dignity? For an example of how these questions have been explored in practice, see our report, *Work, Family and Social Protection: Old age income security in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam*.¹²

Conclusion

HelpAge broadly welcomes the more universal, inclusive approach set out in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in comparison to the MDGs. The explicit inclusion of older people in global commitments to end poverty, ensure health for people of all ages, as well as support to a lifelong approach to learning, are positive developments. The SDG process offers a mechanism to highlight policies and issues of relevance to older people and to hold governments to account on the inclusion of ageing and older people in policies, programmes and budgets. At the same time, we cannot ignore the reality that the promise of some SDGs and targets is not always reflected in the ambition of the accompanying indicators to measure implementation, for example upper age limits for data disaggregation, limits imposed by concept of premature mortality and concerns about the measurement of poverty. And implementation of the SDGs will be the acid test of the success or failure of Agenda 2030.

As the HelpAge global network we commit to vigilance in monitoring the implementation of the SDGs and to working together in ensuring that the vision of leaving no one behind is realised for all older people. We do this recognising that adherence to the commitments set out in Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development is voluntary for Member States. Unlike a UN convention, Agenda 2030 is not a binding international treaty. Women, children and people with disabilities already have the protection of UN Conventions for their rights. If SDGs are not implemented, they still enjoy the support of an international treaty. Older people do not have this protection. That is why, as well as advocating for Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, HelpAge will continue to advocate for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People. Older people deserve no less.

Endnotes

1. <http://un.org/sustainable-development/development-agenda> is the link to the main SDG document, and <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/> is the link to the related indicators.
2. www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582315/Data-disaggregation-action-plan-Jan-2017.pdf
3. Millennium Development Goals, the predecessors to the Sustainable Development Goals.
4. ILO. 'Recommendation No. 202 – Social Protection Floors Recommendation,' 2012. www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en
5. We recognise that the indicator associated with this target has had the upper age limit removed but the target itself remains problematic.
6. National surveys and Demographic Health Surveys.
7. Demographic Health Surveys are typically age-capped and many national surveys do not include questions on violence against women and girls.
8. www.helpage.org/what-we-do/older-citizen-monitoring
9. <http://habitat3.org/>
10. See above p.7 for HelpAge's position on this target.
11. See, for example, Priebe, Jan, and Fiona Howell. *Old-Age Poverty in Indonesia: Empirical Evidence and Policy Options – A Role for Social Pensions*, 2014 and Knox-Vydmanov, Charles, Aura Sevilla, and Daniel Horn. *The Feasibility of a Universal Social Pension in the Philippines*. Quezon City, 2017.
12. Knox-Vydmanov, C. (2016), *Work, family and social protection, Old age income security in Bangladesh, Nepal, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam*, Chiang-Mai: UNFPA and HelpAge International.

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HelpAge International is a global network of organisations promoting the right of all older people to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives.

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