



# Accelerating inclusive climate action for a resilient future:

*HelpAge International position paper for COP29*

**HelpAge**

**International**

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# Glossary

**COP:** Conference of the Parties, the main decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). COPs are annual international summits where world leaders gather to address the impact of climate change.

**GHG:** Greenhouse gas emissions contribute to global warming as a result of human activities and natural sources.

**GST:** Global Stocktake is a comprehensive assessment of the world's progress actions agreed for climate change mitigation at the Paris conference in 2015. The last Global Stocktake was carried out in 2023.

**HIIP:** Health Impact Investment Platform is a partnership between the African Development Bank (AfDB), European Investment Bank (EIB), Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and World Health Organization (WHO) to drive investment in strengthening primary healthcare (PHC) and health systems in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

**IPCC AR 6:** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's sixth assessment report, the sixth in a series of reports which assess the available scientific information on climate change. The IPCC Assessment processes are pivotal in shaping global climate change policy dialogues, including COP conferences.

**Loss and Damage Fund:** a financial mechanism proposed in international climate change discussions to provide support for countries that suffer from the adverse effects of climate change, particularly impacts they cannot avoid or adapt to. These include extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and slow-onset events like desertification and melting glaciers. It is especially relevant for nations that contribute little to greenhouse gas emissions but are disproportionately affected by climate change.

**LMICs:** Low- and middle-income countries, the classification based specifically on income levels defined by the World Bank who categorise countries according to their income levels, primarily using Gross National Income (GNI) per capita as the metric. LMICs include countries whose income falls below the high-income threshold. This term is quantitative and avoids socio-political implications, focusing solely on economic data.

**Nbs:** Nature-based solutions leverage ecosystems to address environmental challenges, enhancing resilience to climate impacts while supporting biodiversity and human well-being.

**NCQG:** New Collective Quantified Goal, a key element of the Paris Agreement, which was adopted in 2015 to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change.

**NDC:** Nationally Determined Contributions are commitments that countries make to reduce their GHG emissions as part of climate change mitigation.

**SDGs:** The Sustainable Development Goals are a global blueprint aimed at achieving a better and more sustainable future, addressing issues like poverty, inequality, and climate change to promote prosperity for all.

**UNFCCC:** United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

**UNDESA:** United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

**UNEP:** United Nations Environment Programme

**WHO:** World Health Organization

# Introduction

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) COP29 takes place in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 11 to 22 November 2024, at a time when the world is grappling with record-breaking temperatures and a surge in catastrophic climate events such as heatwaves, floods, storms, and droughts. These extreme weather patterns have caused widespread destruction, leading to severe losses and damages that have impacted both communities and ecosystems across the globe.

In this context, COP29 must rise to the occasion as a pivotal moment for driving ambitious and transformative climate action. As delegates gather in Baku, there is an urgent call for accelerated progress, especially in increasing climate finance and enhancing resilience through inclusive adaptation. The voices of communities on the frontlines, directly affected by these climate crises, need to be integrated into the decision-making process. Their involvement is critical to shaping mitigation and adaptation policies with long-lasting impacts.

## Major issues for discussion at COP29

**Scaling up climate finance: Establish the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG)** to mobilise funds for climate action in developing countries, replacing the unmet USD100 billion target.

**Reviewing the Global Stocktake:** Leverage 2023 Global Stocktake findings to evaluate progress, identify gaps, and set more ambitious climate targets at COP29.

**Strengthening Loss and Damage Mechanisms:** Build frameworks to ensure affected communities receive adequate compensation and support for recovery.

**Enhancing Inclusive Adaptation:** Empower marginalised groups in adaptation efforts to foster community resilience.

**Accelerating Emissions Reductions:** Commit to transformative actions to limit warming to 1.5°C and secure a sustainable future.

Guided by the latest scientific findings and informed by the global stocktake concluded in 2023, COP29 presents a significant opportunity to strengthen the 2015 Paris Agreement's objectives across all its pillars. It is essential to prioritise the needs of populations exposed to risk and the ecosystems they depend on, ensuring that the outcomes of this conference reflect a stronger commitment to both immediate and long-term climate solutions.

In the face of climate change, older populations are particularly vulnerable to displacement caused by disasters and severe health risks such as heat stress, respiratory issues, compounded by mobility and resource limitations. However, their extensive knowledge, experience, and resilience represent invaluable resources for climate adaptation strategies. Many have firsthand understanding of local ecosystems and sustainable practices, which can enrich community-based adaptation efforts.

As COP29 unfolds, it is vital for global climate policy mechanisms to formally acknowledge and incorporate the contributions of older individuals. Their inclusion not only ensures a more comprehensive approach to resilience but also promotes intergenerational equity in climate solutions. By advocating for policies that prioritize older populations, COP29 can set a precedent for inclusive climate action that benefits all generations.

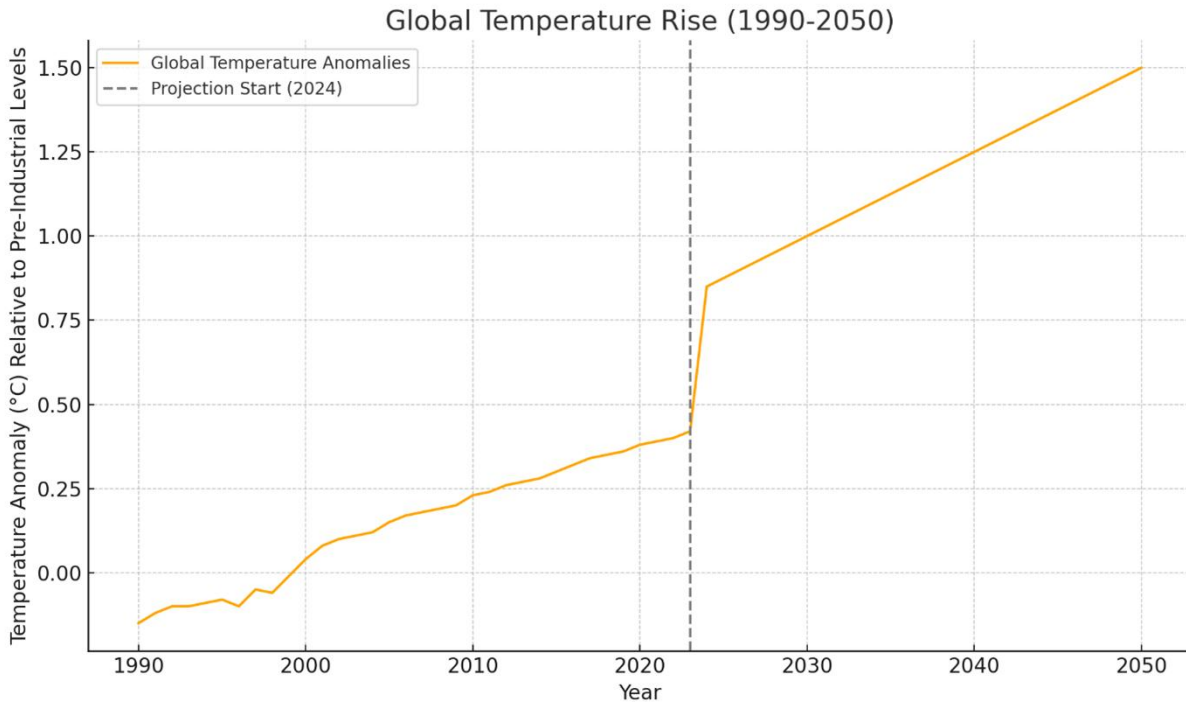
**Read: [The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030](#)**

**Read: [HelpAge's call for collective action for older people and highlight their role and needs in the fight against climate change.](#)**

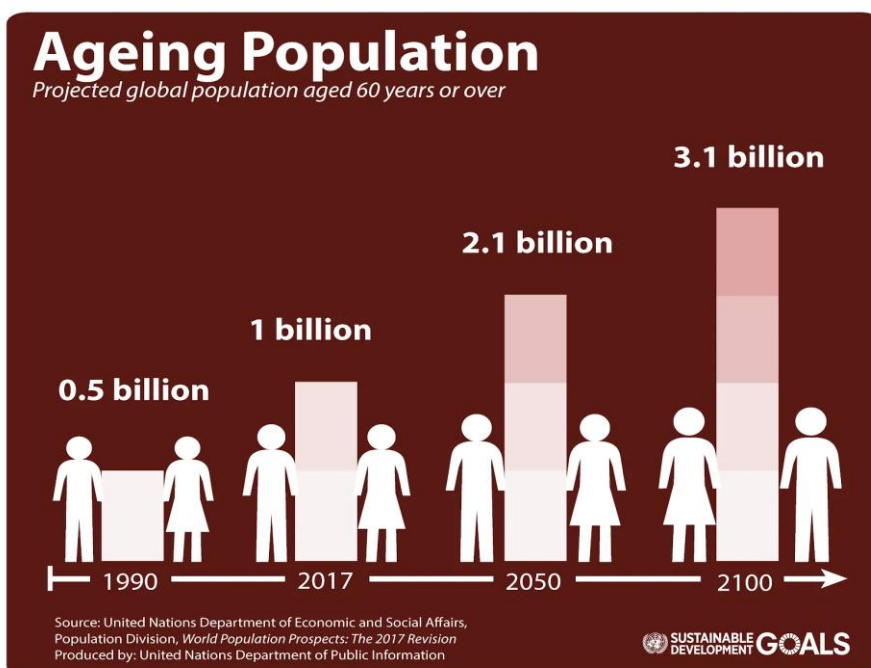
**Read: [Grey and Green Manifesto - HelpAge International](#)**

# 1. Urgent action is needed to prevent catastrophic temperature rise

**Critical context:** The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's sixth assessment report (IPCC AR6) warned that overshooting 1.5°C will lead to "increased and more severe impacts on ecosystems, biodiversity, and human systems, particularly in regions already vulnerable to climate extremes"<sup>1</sup>. According to the United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) emissions gap report 2024, global greenhouse gas emissions rose by 1.3 per cent in 2023, reaching their highest levels in history and coming close to breaching the 1.5°C limit. At the current pace the world is on track for a 3.1°C rise by the end of the century - far beyond the Paris agreement targets with severe consequences for ecosystems, vulnerable communities, and global stability<sup>2</sup>.



Source: NASA Global Temperature  
Data: NASA Climate Change: Global Temperature



The alarming rise in temperatures coincides with the rapid population ageing. The global population of those aged 65 and older is expected to double to 1.4 billion by 2050, with the “oldest old” (80+) almost tripling to 425 million<sup>3</sup>. These figures, while stark, are not merely statistical projections. They are human lives, disproportionately at risk due to the accelerating impacts of climate change.

**Call to action:** Global warming is fuelling more frequent and intense heatwaves, floods, and cyclones, disproportionately affecting older people and other vulnerable groups. Older people face heightened risks from extreme heat and mobility challenges, making them particularly susceptible to the devastating impacts of climate disasters. As rising temperatures strain access to healthcare, housing, and social services, older people find themselves increasingly exposed or at risk. According to the World Bank in 2021<sup>4</sup>, climate-related disasters significantly affect older people, while in 2020 the UNDESA warns that unchecked global warming will exacerbate inequalities<sup>5</sup>.

HelpAge urges Parties to significantly increase their ambition in cutting Green House Gas (GHG) emissions, close the implementation gap, and phase out fossil fuels in a just, equitable, and orderly manner.

HelpAge also calls for COP29 to prioritise addressing these impacts by including older people in climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction strategies. This will ensure their protection and help build resilience among one of the most at-risk communities.

**Read: [Climate change in an ageing world](#) HelpAge report highlighting the critical link between ageing populations and climate change.**

## 2. Global Stocktake review: confronting the climate action gap



Credit: Maheder Haileselassie Tadese / Fairpicture / HelpAge International

**Critical context:** The Global Stocktake (GST) review is a vital moment to reflect on the world’s collective efforts to address climate change under the Paris Agreement. At COP29, the review will reveal whether current climate actions are sufficient to keep global warming within the 1.5°C limit. Early signs suggest a significant gap between what has been pledged and what is needed, raising concerns about the pace of progress on emissions reductions,

adaptation, and climate finance. This process demands a clear-eyed assessment, urging countries to confront shortcomings, strengthen their commitments, and act with greater urgency to avert the worst impacts of climate change.

**Call to action:** As we set to revisit the 2023 GST at COP29, HelpAge calls for urgent reflection on whether the vulnerability, risks, and adaptation needs of all communities—especially older people—have been sufficiently understood and addressed. The GST will highlight the gaps in climate action, and it is critical to ensure that the voices of the most at risk are not overlooked. Older people are often on the frontlines of climate impacts, yet their specific needs are frequently neglected in policy and planning.

HelpAge urges governments and stakeholders to engage in an honest assessment of whether current strategies account for these vulnerabilities. This is not just a matter of fairness and justice, but also a strategic and policy imperative. Addressing the needs of all communities is essential to achieving the ambitious climate goals set out in the Paris Agreement. Without course correction, we risk leaving those in the most vulnerable situations behind and undermining the broader effectiveness of climate action. Now is the time to ensure that no one is left out of the solutions needed to save our planet.

**Read this HelpAge paper that looks at older people’s experience of climate change, their awareness of it and their exclusion from climate change debates: [Witness to climate change](#).**

### 3. Urgent call for high-ambition NDCs to prevent catastrophic 2.5-3.1°C warming

**Critical context:** With UNEP’s 2024 Emissions Gap Report projecting a dangerous 2.5 to 3.1°C temperature rise by the end of the century, HelpAge is urgently calling on all Parties to deliver their most ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) by February 2025. These NDCs must unequivocally align with the 1.5°C target and be backed by robust national legislation and regulatory frameworks to ensure full implementation and accountability. This is a critical moment—the future of global climate action hinges on these commitments.

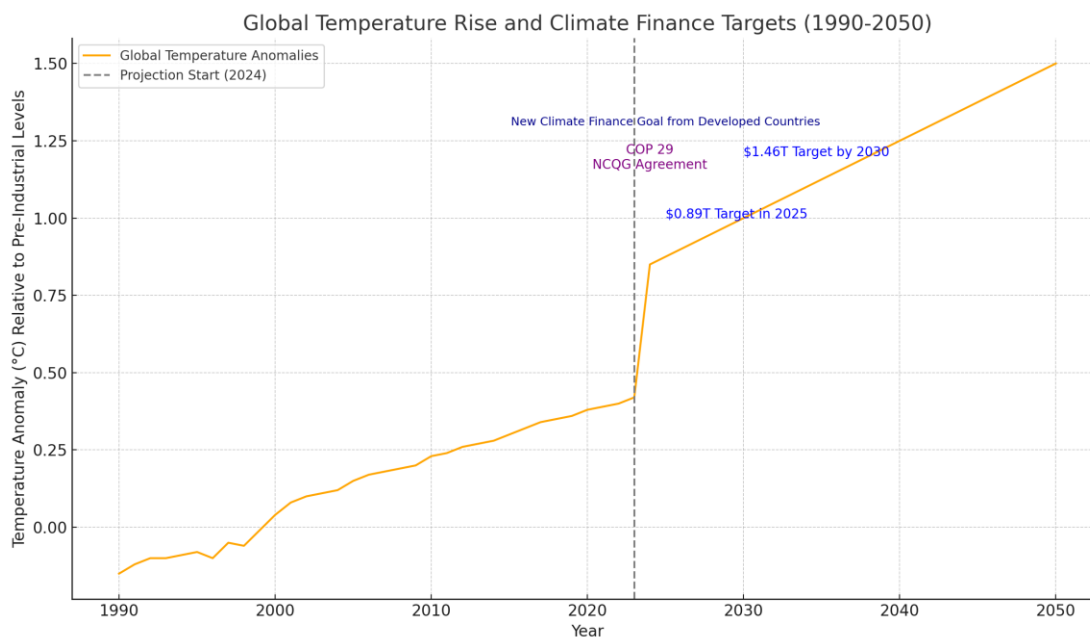
**Call to action:** As the world faces the prospect of alarming temperature rises by the end of the century, it is crucial that COP29 Parties enhance their NDCs to align with the 1.5°C target.

Older people have long been stewards of natural resources, contributing to the preservation of ecosystems and climate resilience through their time-tested knowledge, skills, and practices. They hold unique insights into sustainable land use, water management, and conservation methods that have been passed down through generations. By integrating older people's wisdom and experience into NDCs development and implementation, countries can strengthen their capacity to meet climate goals.

HelpAge urges parties to actively engage older people in shaping climate policies and actions, ensuring their voices are heard and their contributions acknowledged. This is not only a matter of fairness but a vital step toward leveraging all available resources in the fight against climate change. By empowering older people as key actors in climate action, countries can enhance the ambition and effectiveness of their NDCs—building a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable future for all.

**Read about the role of older people, as community leaders in enlightening community action and the need to include them in plans of action at national and global level: [Older people and climate action](#).**

## 4. Call for just climate finance and social protection for communities at risk



Data source: [The New Collective Quantified Goal on climate finance, UN Trade and Development](#)

The graph showing global temperature rise from 1990 to 2050, with annotations for the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) targets at COP29. It includes historical data until 2023 and projections up to 2050, along with the financial targets for climate finance (\$0.89 trillion by 2025 and \$1.46 trillion by 2030) as part of the NCQG efforts to support developing countries.

**Critical context:** One of the most pressing concerns is the mobilisation of adequate climate finance to support mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage compensation. LMICs particularly those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, require substantial financial resources to both adapt to the ongoing crisis and compensate for irreversible losses caused by extreme weather events. At COP29, there is a heightened expectation for wealthy nations to deliver on their commitments to provide \$100 billion annually in climate finance, alongside discussions on establishing more sustainable and equitable long-term funding mechanisms, including fully operationalising the Loss and Damage Fund.

**Call to action:** At COP29, HelpAge calls for urgent action to address global asymmetries in climate finance. Developing countries, especially those most vulnerable to climate change, require substantial resources for adaptation, mitigation, and compensation for loss and damage. While the \$100 billion annual commitment is essential, we need more ambitious and sustainable financial mechanisms, including full operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund.

HelpAge urges all Parties to establish a New Collective Quantified Goals (NCQG) target at COP29 that mobilises increased concessional and grant-based financing for developing nations. This goal must leverage diverse funding sources and ensure that the communities in the most vulnerable situation, particularly older people, benefit from climate finance and achieve income security in these uncertain times through social protection and other measures.

Strengthening adaptation measures and providing financial incentives for mitigation must be prioritised for low-income countries. Climate finance should also be inclusive, addressing the needs of older populations, often disproportionately impacted by climate change, by ensuring social protection and access to resources to build resilience.

Wealthy nations must honour their historical responsibilities by supporting long-term, equitable financing mechanisms. Only through a just climate finance system can we achieve a sustainable future for all and fulfil the goals of the Paris Agreement.

**Read [A rising force for change: Older people and climate action.](#)**



## 5. Urgent need for adaptation strategies inclusive of older people

**Critical context:** Ensuring that climate action addresses the specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of all populations, particularly the most marginalised such as older people, people with disabilities, indigenous communities, and women, is an urgent and critical issue. As climate impacts intensify, adaptation measures that exclude these groups risk deepening existing inequalities and leaving millions even more exposed to the devastating effects of extreme weather events, food insecurity, and displacement. Ahead of COP29, the pressure is mounting for countries to close the widening adaptation gap between well-prepared and less-prepared nations by prioritising community-led solutions that empower local populations.

Failing to adopt inclusive, community-driven approaches could exacerbate the disparities between nations and hinder progress toward global climate resilience. This growing call to action emphasises the need for a more equitable distribution of climate finance and a greater commitment to empowering communities to lead their own adaptation efforts.

**Call to action:** HelpAge calls for inclusive adaptation which values the resilience and contributions of older people in climate action. As the climate crisis deepens, it is essential that adaptation strategies not only recognise the vulnerabilities of older people but also actively leverage their knowledge, resilience, and adaptive capacities. Older people, especially in LMICs, are often among the most affected by climate change, facing disproportionate risks from extreme weather events, food insecurity, and deteriorating health infrastructure. However, their invaluable experiences, particularly in managing natural resources and cultivating long-term resilience, are often overlooked in climate adaptation policies.

HelpAge calls on governments and international institutions to advance inclusive adaptation strategies that prioritise older people in the fight against climate change. This approach involves recognising their unique needs and contributions, integrating social protection measures, supporting community-led solutions, and ensuring meaningful participation of older individuals in climate governance processes. According to the United Nations Environment Programme in 2021<sup>6</sup>, empowering local communities—particularly older generations—can lead to more sustainable and effective adaptation outcomes.

At COP29, HelpAge urges all Parties to act decisively. Countries must prioritise strategies that address the vulnerabilities of older people while recognising and valuing their roles in resilience-building and grassroots climate action. Successful global climate action depends on the full inclusion and engagement of older people. Let us harness their wisdom, leadership, and commitment to build a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable future for all generations.

**Read: [Older People and Action on Climate Change: A Powerful but Under-utilised Resource.](#)**

## 6. Include older people in promoting nature-based solutions



Credit: FOPDEV

**Critical context:** Protecting ecosystems and advancing nature-based solutions (NbS) to combat climate change have emerged as urgent global priorities. Preserving forests, restoring wetlands, and safeguarding biodiversity are vital for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and essential for enhancing the resilience of communities and ecosystems in the face of escalating climate impacts. These natural systems play a crucial role in sequestering carbon, regulating water cycles, and buffering against extreme weather events.

As COP29 approaches, there is growing recognition that NbS must be at the forefront of climate action. This includes stronger commitments to halting deforestation, restoring degraded ecosystems, and ensuring that ecosystem preservation is fully integrated into national and international climate policies. Failure to protect these natural assets could significantly undermine global efforts to limit warming to 1.5°C and adapt to changing climatic conditions.

**Call to action:** At COP29, HelpAge calls for the active and meaningful engagement of older people in promoting and implementing nature-based solutions. In many climate-change hotspots, older people act as frontline guardians of ecosystems, possessing deep-rooted knowledge and wisdom about natural environments. As younger generations often migrate for economic opportunities, older people are left as stewards of local biodiversity, uniquely equipped with generational knowledge essential for addressing complex environmental challenges.

Their experience is invaluable in identifying, refining, and implementing NbS that not only address climate change but also support biodiversity conservation and ecosystem resilience. Integrating their insights with the innovative ideas of younger generations fosters an intergenerational approach, enriching the development of NbS with both wisdom and fresh perspectives. This collaborative model can lead to sustainable, effective solutions that serve both people and the planet.

HelpAge urges all Parties to set ambitious, measurable targets for NbS within their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), making these solutions a core component of global climate action. Strong environmental safeguards are essential, particularly in the operationalisation

of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, to ensure the protection and integrity of nature-based carbon sinks and other essential ecosystems.

Moreover, HelpAge advocates for the full inclusion of older people, people with disabilities, indigenous communities, and local groups in all relevant UNFCCC processes, including the adoption of the 2025-2027 draft work plan of the UNFCCC Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform. Recognising older people as key players in climate leadership at COP29 is essential for building a just, resilient, and sustainable future for all generations.

**Read:** [Decent work among older people engaged in nature-based solutions in Indonesia.](#)

## 7. Include older people in climate and health solutions to build resilient communities

**Critical context:** Climate-related health risks, such as heat-related illnesses, vector-borne diseases, and respiratory issues due to air pollution, are intensifying as global temperatures rise. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), climate change is expected to cause an additional 250,000 deaths annually between 2030 and 2050 due to malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea, and heat stress<sup>7</sup>. The urgency to integrate health into climate policies is clear, with WHO emphasising that climate action could save millions of lives each year and yield significant economic returns, generating over four US dollars for every one dollar invested in mitigation efforts<sup>8</sup>.

At COP29, the Health Pavilion, led by WHO, will advocate for the inclusion of health in climate discussions, calling for stronger commitments to reduce air pollution, improve public health infrastructure, and support climate-resilient healthcare systems. Initiatives such as the Health Impact Investment Platform (HIIP), aimed at bolstering healthcare in low-income countries, will be pivotal in addressing health disparities exacerbated by climate change. By framing climate action as a public health imperative, COP29 presents an opportunity to galvanise global efforts to protect vulnerable populations from the worst health effects of climate change.

**Call to action:** At the intersection of climate change and health, the vulnerability of older people must no longer be overlooked. Older people face disproportionate health risks from the escalating impacts of climate change, including increased exposure to extreme heat, air pollution, and climate-induced disasters. Conditions such as cardiovascular diseases, respiratory illness, and heat stress are especially prevalent among older populations.

HelpAge calls on all Parties to urgently include older people in climate change and health policy discourse. Global frameworks like the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) commit nations to leaving no one behind, yet older people often remain marginalised in these critical discussions. Their unique needs must be recognised, but so too should their wealth of knowledge and their capacity to contribute to resilience-building within communities. International agreements, including the UN Principles for Older Persons and Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees the right to adequate living standards, including health - underscore the obligation to protect all older people<sup>9</sup>.

COP29 offers a pivotal opportunity to ensure that climate and health strategies are inclusive, protecting the rights of older people as enshrined in global agreements, while leveraging their resilience and adaptive capacities to build stronger communities for all.

**Read:** [Healthy ageing for us all, what older people say about their right to health.](#)

**Read:** [Climate change and healthy ageing: An assessment of the impact of climate hazards on older people.](#)

## 8. Integrate the humanitarian-climate nexus into global climate policies



Credit: Hope Revival / HelpAge International

**Critical context:** Climate change poses a growing threat to human security, particularly in conflict zones and fragile states. As the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events escalate, humanitarian crises are becoming more frequent, complex and severe. Communities already in vulnerable situations due to armed conflict, poverty, and displacement are often disproportionately affected by climate-related disasters such as droughts, floods, and heatwaves. These areas often lack the institutional capacity to adapt to climate change, leading to increased food insecurity, health risks, and forced migration.

Global climate policies must prioritise humanitarian needs by ensuring that climate finance reaches conflict-affected regions, where adaptive capacities are often limited. This funding must be new and additional, not diverted from essential humanitarian aid. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has urged stronger climate commitments in these fragile settings, highlighting that over half of the most climate-vulnerable countries are also conflict zones<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) emphasises<sup>11</sup>, climate change is a key driver of displacement, making it essential for negotiations at COP29 to address the climate-peace-mobility nexus. Policies should focus on preventing displacement, building resilience, and providing humanitarian aid to affected populations, ensuring that no one is left behind in the global climate response.

**Call to action:** By 2050, it is projected that 20 per cent of the global population will be over 60 years old, with the majority (80 per cent) residing in low- and middle-income countries<sup>12</sup>. HelpAge is calling for humanitarian action to be fully inclusive, integrating older people into climate change and environmental solutions, including in conflict and disaster settings. The impacts of climate change, including extreme weather events, can be devastating for older people who can be among the most at risk from food insecurity and displacement.

In conflict zones, where institutions are fragile, older people face heightened vulnerability to climate-related risks, including health crises, limited mobility, and isolation. Climate change compounds these challenges by intensifying extreme weather events and resource scarcity, further straining weak institutions and exacerbating the risks for older populations.

They are often sidelined in humanitarian responses when they should be given roles that recognise their status as community leaders and as holders of traditional knowledge which can both help with resilience-building and adaptation efforts in the face of climate impacts.

The United Nations Principles for Older Persons stress the right to inclusion, participation, and protection for older people, which must be honoured in all climate and disaster interventions. In conflict zones, where institutions are fragile, older people face heightened vulnerability to climate-related risks, including health crises, limited mobility, and isolation. Climate change compounds these challenges by intensifying extreme weather events and resource scarcity, further straining weak institutions and exacerbating the risks for older populations.

Recognising their presence and needs is essential to ensuring that no one is left behind in the global humanitarian response to climate change.

HelpAge calls on all stakeholders to not only protect but also empower older people in climate responses, leveraging their skills, wisdom, and experience to build more resilient communities.

**Read: [Out of sight, out of mind](#) which shows how older people are typically overlooked in emergency response in favour of larger, more visible groups.**

**Read: [Respond to humanitarian crises](#).**

## Conclusion

COP29 represents a pivotal moment for global climate action, with an urgent need to align policies, finance, and adaptation strategies with the real challenges faced by communities worldwide. This HelpAge position paper emphasises that achieving meaningful progress requires a comprehensive approach, one that considers the unique vulnerabilities and contributions of older populations. As the climate crisis deepens, it is essential to prioritise those disproportionately affected by environmental hazards, particularly older individuals, who often possess invaluable knowledge and resilience.

The New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance and the Global Stocktake process are critical to driving robust commitments that address current gaps in mitigation, adaptation, and resilience-building. A just climate finance system, inclusive adaptation strategies, and nature-based solutions that integrate older people's wisdom and experience will be instrumental in building a sustainable future.

HelpAge calls on all stakeholders to foster inclusive, intergenerational collaboration, ensuring that older people are both protected and actively engaged in shaping climate solutions. This approach underscores the need for climate justice, where all voices, especially those of the most vulnerable, are heard and acted upon to achieve a resilient, equitable, and sustainable world for generations to come.

# Endnotes

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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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Published by HelpAge International  
PO Box 78840  
London  
SE1P 6QR  
UK

Tel +44 (0)20 7278 7778

[info@helpage.org](mailto:info@helpage.org)

**[www.helpage.org](http://www.helpage.org)**

Registered charity no. 288180



Written by Hari Krishna Nibanupudi  
Climate Change and Ageing Adviser  
[hari.nibanupudi@helpage.org](mailto:hari.nibanupudi@helpage.org)

With inputs from: Jessica Petitprez, Sylvia Szabo,  
Susanna Flood, Hester Clark, Tanvi Patel

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