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global network

Sharing information to strengthen the HelpAge global network in Asia-Pacific

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Editorial

In one of my recent visits in the region, I spent three or four days in Shanghai. Of course, I knew how Shanghai was ageing fast, about the very low total fertility rate... so I decided to count the number of children I saw, on the streets, at airports, restaurants, even parks. Do you know how many I counted? Five children, in four days! That wouldn't be the case in Manila or Mumbai, of course, but this still brought to life one of the scenarios of change in population in Asia.

In the last four or five years we have all gained much more understanding, not only of the social and economic implications of population ageing but also on what needs to be done to redesign societies, adapting to the conditions of a new demographic configuration. Countries are adapting, perhaps not yet at the pace needed, but in all cases there is a sense of exploration, searching the best ways to support current and future older people, ensuring their rights and their well-being.

It is in this quest for understanding that we hold in Tehran, I.R. Iran the HelpAge Asia-Pacific Regional Conference 2018 on Family, Community and State in the context of population ageing. With reduced fertility rates, widespread migration and urbanisation, extended families give place to nuclear families. The traditional source of support for older people is changing. Families will continue to be at the forefront of the interactions of older people, and the glue of love will always be present, but the dynamics of this relation will change. So, the purpose of this conference is to see how communities and State can relate and support families and households with older people in the future.

There are many questions and still few answers. For this conference we have grouped the topics in three streams: Income security, long term care and social inclusion. I hope that our joint deliberation and exchange will lead to our better understanding of the changes needed and the ways forward.

One final word: at the core of the conference are older people themselves, independent, active persons who are not objects of decisions made by others, but who have the right to be active participants in any solution proposed.

Eduardo Klien
Regional Director
Asia-Pacific Region

Network members' exchange and learning about effective fundraising

► Regional

Funding is one of the crucial factors for the sustainability of operations in many businesses, including civil society organisations in the development sector. With changes in the funding scenario, CSOs cannot rely solely on traditional donors but have to seek new opportunities and adjust their strategies of resource development.

To equip network members in the Asia and Pacific region with the skills and knowledge to be more effective in resource development, HelpAge Asia Pacific Regional Office (APRO) held a workshop on resources development in Chiang Mai on 15–17 May, which was attended by 19 participants from 14 organisations.

The workshop was co-facilitated by Jerry Clewett, Regional Resource Development Manager, and Cecilia Rose, Programme Development and Funding Officer from Age International. Bijay Mishra and Ashima Saini from HelpAge India were key resource persons who shared the experiences of HelpAge India in developing the organisation through corporate fundraising and individual donations. The sessions covered a range of topics from developing a fundraising strategy, approaching and engaging with different types of donors, to effective fundraising communication.

The feedback from network members following the workshop was generally very positive. Whilst all sessions were highly appreciated, those covering corporate fundraising, fundraising from individuals, donor engagement, and developing a fundraising strategy were found to be especially useful. Participants made it clear that they have a hunger to further develop their fundraising capacity, and APRO will be seeking effective ways to make this a reality. Network members asked HelpAge to bring institutional funding opportunities to their attention, and they appreciated the forthcoming 'Knowledge Platform' of HelpAge International, which will include accessible fundraising resources. The fundraising context of each member country is very different, so whilst noting that strategies will vary, it was very encouraging to see that members are willing to share their knowledge, skills and experiences with each other.



Fostering relationships with HelpAge network members: meetings in Nepal and Thailand

► Regional

On 14–17 August 2018, Kate Wedgwood, Director of Network, Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns and Baralee Meesukh, Regional Head of Network Development visited Kathmandu, Nepal to introduce themselves and meet the three HelpAge network members in the country. They are the National Senior Citizens Federation (NASCIF), Ageing Nepal and Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN). These three network members are all experienced with extensive knowledge, and are enthusiastic about working together. HelpAge staff also look forward to working together to ensure that age-related issues are well recognised by policy makers, donors and other key stakeholders in the country.

Later, another meeting was held in Thailand on 20 August. Representatives from the four Thai network members, namely the Faculty of Nursing at Chiang



Mai University, the Senior Citizens' Council of Thailand (SCCT), the Foundation for Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV) and forOldy gathered in Chiang Mai. This was the first time that Thai network members had officially met and they had an opportunity to share their work with one another and to discuss possible collaborations. Long-term care and older people's associations (OPAs) are the two cross-cutting issues on which all network members can work together in the future.



A more concrete plan will be discussed in the next meeting. A civil-society-led ageing platform in Thailand was also discussed in this meeting, with strong support from both HelpAge and the network members. This type of platform extends its membership to all organisations working on ageing issues, mostly at the national level. It creates an opportunity for members to share information and work together to push forward a common agenda and advocacy messages.

Long-term care systems: training course and workshop



► Regional

While most older people will remain independent, globally, the number of older people with a significant loss of physical and mental capacity which requires assistance from others is forecast to quadruple by 2050.

Currently almost all care support is provided by families, but this is not a sustainable or adequate solution as complex care needs, such as advanced dementia and multiple non-communicable diseases, become more common and the



supply of family carers diminishes. Organised national long-term care (LTC) systems are a key missing ingredient to ensure the availability, accessibility, acceptability and quality of care support. Key elements of an LTC system include governance and coordination; adequate and accessible LTC services; sufficient quantity and quality of human resources; and a financing system which ensures affordability for all in need and protects against the risk of catastrophic LTC costs.

Without such systems in place, the risk is quite high: the suffering of older people with care needs, including abuse and neglect; financial strain and poorer health for family carers; people pulled out of the

paid workforce to provide family care and unwieldy healthcare costs. Women will continue to be particularly affected as they provide the majority of care.

HelpAge International hosted a training course and workshop on long-term care systems from 25–28 September 2018 for 25 participants comprising leadership and health/care specialists from seven offices of HelpAge International and five HelpAge global network members across 11 countries.

The workshop provided participants with a greater understanding of LTC and LTC systems and resulted in the development of draft action plans for work on LTC by offices/organisations. These included improvements to current LTC service provision, advocacy towards national LTC systems, and plans for integrated care pilots. Feedback from participants will contribute to the HelpAge Vision 2030 strategy development process as we work to understand the role that civil society and HelpAge International in particular can play in developing LTC systems.

Literacy for older people in Nepal

“Whenever I was called to sign my name, I used to get embarrassed when I asked for a fingerprint pad instead. Once I was in dire need of money to build a house but my bank loan was rejected just because I was unable to write my name. I was cursing myself but thankfully, the Basic Literacy Class for Older Persons (BLC) came to me as a savior. Now, things are different, I can read and write”– Kanchhi Gautam, 73.

There are 119 other older women like Mrs. Gautam who are attending the BLC run by Ageing Nepal. Now, most of them can write their name. Ageing Nepal piloted the “Basic Literacy Class for Older Persons” in 2016 for the first time. Now, there are four groups of older women, 30 in each, attending the classes. Ageing Nepal has also developed a book for older people in Devnagari under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Helen Abadzi, from the University of Texas at Arlington. The book was designed by conducting research and considering the cognitive capability of older people.

Due to the traditional social taboo on girls’ education and a limited number of academic institutions, illiteracy among the 14+ age group in 1952 was 90 per cent

for males and 99.4 per cent for females (1952–54 census) in Nepal. Consequently, the majority of today’s older people are illiterate.

Today, people who are illiterate are discriminated against, particularly older people. As a result, they are more prone to elder abuse and they are also compelled to suffer from loneliness and its consequences for their physical and mental health. In spite of that, no existing educational policies or programmes in

Nepal have targeted education for older people.

Now, we can see a silver lining to this dark cloud as Goal 4 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) targets quality education for all and also the 10th Session of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) has set the theme of “Education, life-long learning, skills and capacity-building”. We support this positive change to ensure education and life-long learning for the older people of Nepal.



Ageing Nepal

Celebration of Indonesia’s national day of older people

Indonesia’s National Day of Older People is celebrated annually on 29 May. This year the commemorative event was held in Yogyakarta on 5 July 2018, and more than 5,000 older people from across the country were invited, including the YAKKUM Emergency Unit (YEU), as HelpAge’s partner in Indonesia, and 20 members of intergenerational groups from six villages in Yogyakarta. The event took place in Yogyakarta since that province has the highest number of older people, as well as the highest life expectancy among all the provinces of Indonesia.

Under the theme “When Older People Prosper, Society is Happy”, the event showcased an intergenerational traditional dance and older people demonstrating a disaster simulation, followed by the submission of an Academic Paper for the Amendment of Law Number 13 Year 1998 on Older

People’s Welfare by the Minister of Social Affairs and the Minister of Human Development and Culture to the eighth commission of the Indonesian House of Representatives.

The event offered a good incentive to evaluate current policy so that it is relevant to the challenges affecting older people today. It highlighted their contribution to society and strengthened support for older people to carry out their roles, whether in promoting local development or sharing values and wisdom with the younger generations.

YEU has been participating in the discussion about amending the law since May 2018. During the consultation, YEU provided two key inputs. The first was the need to synchronize the law of Older People with the law concerning village funds, since one way to empower older



YAKKUM Emergency Unit

people is through proposed programmes in the village supported by the Village Fund. The other input related to the initiative to establish and strengthen the role of intergenerational groups as a support system, particularly for dependent older people.

Through posters on intergenerational groups’ activities and displays of local handmade products, members had a chance to share more about the income-generation model for older people’s empowerment when the ministers visited YEU’s booth. At this event there were also free medical check-ups and assistive devices for older people such as reading glasses, crutches and wheelchairs.

An inspiring Asian journey



*In May 2018, HelpAge Asia Pacific Regional Office welcomed **Bert Maerten** as Regional Head of Programmes. To get started, he made many consecutive journeys to visit the HelpAge team, network members and programme partners in different countries across Asia. Below is the diary of his journey.*

► Regional

Over the past three months, I have had the opportunity to visit HelpAge's programmes, partners, network members and team in Bangladesh, Myanmar, Pakistan and Vietnam. It was truly inspiring to see the energy and commitment of partners and our country teams, as well as observing the impact on the wellbeing of older people. To hear about the life-changing impact of a small loan and a new income generating activity; to hear how older women claimed their voice on key issues within their community and, together, sought redress against police brutality; and to see the absolutely energising joy of singing and dancing in the regular meetings of the Intergenerational Self-Help Clubs (ISHCs).

Our ability to work in partnership is absolutely vital to bring lasting change on a large scale. Our strong partnership with the Department of Social Welfare in Myanmar, for example, was instrumental in getting a universal social pension piloted and it has now expanded, both in terms of eligibility and entitlement. Working with and alongside our network partners is critical to improve public policy and ensure implementation. The creation of national platforms on ageing or task forces on inclusion have great potential, but are often also challenging and hard work.

As the majority of older persons are women and since different forms of gender discrimination accumulate and intersect as women grow older, how we address gender in our work is of great importance. In some of our contexts, like Sindh province in Pakistan, gender inequality is deeply entrenched. How do we seek to improve gender equality within that context? What are we learning in terms of what works well, and what does not? Fostering such regular, critical



Bert joined group exercises and a monthly meeting of an Intergenerational Self-Help Club in Vietnam.

Age Friendly Space in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.



Justin Derbyshire, Eduardo Klien and Bert Maerten, along with Ajeeba Aslam and HelpAge team in Pakistan, visited older people's associations in Sindh and Peshawar.

inquiry, with our partners and community organisations, is critical. As a regional office we will seek to encourage such learning and sharing of experiences.

Visiting the work in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazaar left me with a profound impression. I was inspired by the impact of the Age Friendly Spaces and the hard work of our partners, RIC and YPSA, but I was also shaken by the hardships and suffering that people – young and old – went through. This is a protracted crisis that requires long-term planning. We will undertake an evaluation of our response there in the coming weeks with a view to outlining our future strategy.

In every country, the strength and vitality of older people's associations shines through. The simplicity and sophistica-

tion of the model in Vietnam is striking, which contributes to its success, durability and the ability to scale up or down. There is much to learn, however, from the variation in approaches across the Asia region, and the achievements and struggles these bring.

Finally, nearly every conversation – whether it is with policy makers in the capital or local community leaders in a remote district – touch on the issue of the role of family, community, the state and private sector as we adapt to rapid population ageing. The richness of perspectives, but also tensions and contradictions, will no doubt generate some fascinating debates at the upcoming HelpAge Asia-Pacific Regional Conference.

Exclusive Interviews

Leila Joudane resumed her duties as UNFPA Representative in the Islamic Republic of Iran on 28 January 2017. Prior to this assignment, she was the UNFPA Assistant Representative in Tunisia from 2007 to 2016. From 2002 to 2006, she served as Deputy Director of the Strategic Planning Department of the National Institute of Family and Population Department of the Ministry of Health of Tunisia.



Please tell us about the current situation of older people and population ageing in Iran. How have the demographic configuration and family dynamics changed over the past 10 years?

Iran is among the countries where fertility has declined sharply, in our case from about 7 children per woman in the 1980s to 2.01 in 2016. Given this fertility decline, and the large post-revolution baby-boom generation, and despite its current young-age structure, Iran will experience rapid population ageing in the next three decades.

It's predicted that the number and proportion of older persons (60 years and over) will increase sharply from 7.4 million (9.3 per cent of the current total population) in 2016 to nearly 30 million in 2050, constituting one third of Iran's population. Older women will outnumber older men significantly.

Although the majority of older Iranian people are living with their family members (81 per cent as per the 2011 census), the number of older persons who are living without a spouse or any family member has increased during recent decades. According to the latest report by the Statistical Center of Iran, nearly 50 per cent of older women are living in households without a spouse, and the majority of them are the heads of households and among the three lowest income deciles.

The average household size is also getting smaller in Iran (from 5.2 persons in 1990 to 3.3 in 2016). Nuclear families with fewer members are on the rise, and obviously there will be fewer family members to support older people in the future. This will be a major challenge, particularly in a country like Iran where families are still the main source of support for older persons.

There is a significant gender gap in the literacy rate among older people in Iran. Only 24 per cent of older women and 48 per cent of older men are literate. By contrast, the literacy rate of the current young and middle-aged population is very high; therefore in the future the elderly population of the country will be comprised of people with a higher level of literacy and education, and with less of a gender gap. This would create opportunities for older persons, particularly older women, to be more active in society, since higher education is closely related to higher income, lower social vulnerability and greater social engagement.

What challenges does the country face as the population is ageing – at the household level up to the national level?

Population ageing is a consequence of development, a mark of success. People now live longer and have the chance to contribute to their societies more than ever in history. This is an exciting situation with various opportunities, but we should not forget that serious challenges will appear if there is no adaptation to this population transition. This adaptation should take the form of reform in social policies, which cannot be achieved without accurate data and knowledge about the status of older persons and the implications of population ageing. The lack of laws and legislation to protect older persons is another challenge—not just in Iran but in the vast majority of

countries that have begun to experience this demographic shift.

Among other challenges, income security, participation and social inclusion as well as the health and care of older persons, especially women, who are usually left behind, are issues that need immediate action.

How can stakeholders in Iran respond to the implications of ageing? What mechanisms could be used to protect older persons?

The government of Iran has taken positive steps so far to respond to population ageing. The National Council of Older People has been established, for example, which provides institutional infrastructure for coordination, advocacy and policy dialogue in this area.

However, to more effectively address the needs of older persons, especially older women, significant reform in socio-economic and health policies is required, placing an emphasis on this population group. Promoting effective inter-sectoral collaboration, proposing protective laws and legislation as well as advocating effectively for active and healthy ageing are all actions that would ensure that older persons, especially women, will be protected, and will not be left behind. Such laws and legislation should also protect older women against any type of harm and violence.

Pension funds and social security organizations should be ready to serve the growing number of older persons, and they need to provide adequate financial and human resources. In the absence of universal pension coverage for older persons in Iran, and low pension coverage in general (near 40 per cent based on unofficial sources), the poverty rate could increase, which would put older persons in a fragile situation.



Ultimately, a life-cycle approach and investment in the current youth and working-age population is absolutely necessary to ensure truly effective responses to the implications of population ageing. This will help both in the near future and the long-term in mitigating risks and responding to the needs of older persons.

UNFPA and the Government of Iran will co-host the upcoming HelpAge Asia-Pacific Regional Conference. How do you feel about it and what is your expectation for this conference?

This is the first international conference on the topic of population ageing in Iran,

and I am confident that it will bring great exposure for the country and its proactive approach to population ageing issues. There will be plenty of opportunities for Iranian experts and policy-makers to share their knowledge and experiences, while benefiting from presentations by high-level, international academics and specialists.

The event has received considerable attention from various countries throughout the Asia-Pacific region. We expect more than 120 international participants, including high-level officials, academics, experts, representatives of NGOs and the private sector. This shows the commitment of the international community to the issue of population

ageing. More importantly, the conference can pave the way for UNFPA and the government to strengthen our existing partnership, and to mobilize resources to better respond to the implications of population ageing.

I am confident that the conference will provide a fertile ground for more comprehensive, national and multi-sectoral policies in which the comprehensive needs and rights of older persons are met, and also pave the way to introduce laws to protect older persons, especially older women, against any type of violence or other harms.



John Beard is Director of the Department of Ageing and Life Course with the World Health Organization (WHO) in Geneva. He was a lead editor and writer of the first *World report on ageing and health*, coeditor of the 2014 Lancet series on Ageing and is a past chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on an Ageing. He remains actively involved in several large international research projects, with a particular interest in the influence of the physical, social and economic environments on health.

We understand that you will retire soon from the WHO. How will you feel being categorised as a “retiree”?

I don't think there is such a category. I will be leaving WHO and I'll be leaving because of a discriminatory mandatory retirement age policy. But just because I'm leaving WHO, I don't anticipate falling into a different category of life. I will just start doing different things – exactly what they are I'm not quite sure yet. But in fact, it's interesting with the experience I've had to take some time and think what or how I want to reinvent myself, after WHO and at this stage in my life.

Related to this, how is the concept of “old age” evolving? How should societies approach this rapid change in demographic configuration?

I think we need to move away from the traditional idea of old age and this ties in with what I was talking about as

concerns retirement. I don't think it happens that one night you go to bed at midnight and suddenly fall into a different category and become an older or a retired person. I think life is a continuum and presents different challenges at different times and we need to adapt to them. The first thing is to understand that there's no such thing as an older person as a stereotype that society has created. Now as we get older, we tend to experience various biological changes that present challenges, and we need to look at what we can do to minimise those challenges, to help people retain the highest possible capacity that they can.

But what also happens is, because we categorise people as older, society then imposes a roll on them. We need to break down social attitudes so that we're not imposing anything on older people, but rather providing them with the personal and the social resources that enable them to live the lives that they want to live, to do the things that they value and lead

lives of meaning and dignity. The starting point is that we need to think about how we can develop the abilities of older people, both their personal abilities and the environmental support that enable them to achieve their goals.

Historically, how would you describe the role that families have played in the long-term care of older people, particularly in Asia?

It is different in different parts of the world, but in most places, families are central to the provision of long-term care. In some places they do that quite well; in others, families are just left without any support or any guidance. For example in Africa, we know that about 20 per cent of older people don't have any family, so it's impossible for the family to play a role.

Families are central to long-term care, but they are also an excuse that governments sometimes use for not contributing themselves to the needs of people who require social care. What we have been

encouraging is for governments to steward systems that bring together families with different mechanisms of government support, whether that be in terms of providing training, respite care and broader community support like the older people's associations that HelpAge encourages, or even in providing direct financial support to families to provide that care. So I think that families are important, but in the past have often been left unsupported and we need to think of better ways of moving forward for the 21st century.

Is that role sustainable for the future? What are the trends causing a rethink in how societies approach long-term care in old age?

It's neither sustainable nor equitable because when we say family, it's often code for women, and that means women who can't be in the workforce and build their own financial security or it means girls who can't go to school. We have to understand the impact that providing care has on family members and also ultimately on socioeconomic development. So there's a real intersection between gender issues and ageing issues. If we're going to really address pressing gender concerns, we also need to consider the whole issue of providing care: who does that, and how they're supported to do that. If we continue just to think of families as women, not only does it limit female possibilities in society, but we're also missing out on the possibility of creating new economies. Personally, I think we can create a care economy that's actually good for older people, good for families, and good for governments.

Another point is that we now have better technology, very simple things that can help older people get where they want to go or connect with other family members. For example, my four-year-old son knows his grandma largely through video conferencing. New technology can also enable families to have much better access to information so they know the issues they're dealing with. For example, if they're dealing with a case of dementia, some of the symptoms can be difficult to deal with, and just accessing the experiences of others and learning some practical ideas on how to manage those things can really ease the burden on caregivers. I think that side of technology is very important. I also believe that initiatives like older people's associations create a very different model of how we can draw on social resources to help fill the gap.



Wang Jing/HelpAge International

Many people argue that we need stronger systems of home- and community-based care. What do you think are the drivers for expanding such services in the future? How would you hope to see the role of communities, governments and the private sector evolve?

We've tried to emphasise that long-term care is not a question of government or family. There are all sorts of other people who already contribute and I think that the community is in between the two and also very important, but we can't expect communities to participate without support and guidance. So what we need is clear leadership to capitalise support for those sorts of initiatives, as well as more practical support in terms of resourcing, financing, information and other things that can help make care systems successful.

Many governments seem fearful about the implications of population ageing. What are the challenges and opportunities for building political will for long-term care systems in Asia? Are you hopeful?

Yes, I am hopeful. But I think we tend to start in the wrong place. One thing that seems to get political attention is a good scare, creating the fear that a tsunami of older people is going to make governments go broke. It's a good way of getting political attention, but unfortunately if we do that, it's very hard to transform the discourse into one where governments are looking at ageing as a more of an opportunity than as a threat. I think what we need to do is convince governments through appropriate investment. Ageing is a natural trend that they need to adapt to. The countries that adapt the quickest

will actually have a competitive advantage over those that don't. Adapting to a positive perspective of ageing can strengthen socioeconomic development. It's not about old versus young and we've got a choice of investing in either young people or old people. It's actually trying to create a cohesive and equitable society for all, and in doing that they'll create societies which thrive and where socioeconomic development occurs rapidly.

To repeat, if we start by scaring people about ageing, it's hard to then change the dialogue. We are trying, and I get a lot of positive feedback from governments, particularly in Asia. But I think many people still hold an outdated view of ageing – that it's a problem and that we need to take action to minimise the problem rather than seeing it as an opportunity that we need to invest in to maximise the opportunity.



forOlder

Eva Sabdono is Executive Director of Yayasan Emong Lansia, Indonesia. She has developed an international reputation for her passion to improve care conditions for older Indonesians. She is an active member of the Women's International Club, ASEAN Women's Association, Alzheimer's Indonesia and the Indonesia Gerontology Association, to name but a few.



How do you perceive the effects of changing family structure on older people and communities in Indonesia?

Indonesia, like most societies across Asia, is experiencing a shift from an extended family structure to a nuclear family, due to demographic changes. The reduced family structures do not have too big an impact on the socio-economic condition of the older persons due to the prevalence of spiritual beliefs and Indonesia's culture of mutual support (gotong royong). This culture is still strong in the way that families and communities care for their older parents or neighbours, especially in rural areas..

Older persons in Indonesia in general prefer to be independent, and most often they do not want to ask for help from their children or the community. They take care not only of themselves, but also of members of their immediate family, whether they are living in an extended family household, just with their spouse or even when living alone. They prefer to live in their own home and familiar surroundings as long as possible. It is only when they become ill, frail, experience non-communicable diseases, or are unable to perform activities of daily living by themselves, that they become dependent on others.



Peter Carton/HelpAge International

How can older people themselves, as well as their family and communities, prepare to handle the challenges of population ageing?

The challenges and implications of ageing have been considered in the development agenda of our government, researchers and the community at large for the last two decades, especially since the Year of Older Persons in 1999, followed by the Global Commitment on Ageing made in the Madrid International Plan on Ageing, and WHO's recommendations on healthy ageing, active ageing, and an age-friendly environment. There has been a shift from thinking that older persons are always dependent to a belief that older persons can and should be active participants in the development of their own wellbeing and in the wellbeing of their families and their communities.

Is there room for the private sector to address those challenges and how?

It is now understood by all stakeholders concerned, including the private sector, that efforts to improve the quality of life of older persons in a sustainable way should be comprehensive and adopt the basic rights approach. The private sector has a big role in meeting the needs of older persons through the provision of an age-friendly environment, age-friendly housing, age-friendly transportation, information on health trends and social contacts for older people as well as the development of age-friendly food consumption, bearing in mind the challenges faced when people grow older.

How would you expect communities and the government to support older people to lead an autonomous and independent life?

Being old is not synonymous with being lonely or sick. Being an older person myself, I realize that our lifestyle while we were under-fives, growing up as teenagers, becoming adults and receiving education and guidance from our parents,

teachers and the social environment while growing up, all have a big impact on our physical and mental health when we reach old age. It is true that as an older person we have to adapt to a new life situation, create new contacts and networks and, most important, continue participating in social, cultural and physical activities to reduce illness and maintain our functional ability. Age is just a number, and self-determination as well as doing one's best to stay healthy and active really pays off in later life.

You have been involved in the development of several national policies related to population ageing. What do you find pleasing and what is missing in those policies?

Being involved for more than 20 years with advocating on ageing issues, campaigning for better policies and programmes with the government, I am glad to say that Indonesia has made a lot of progress in developing and implementing policies and programmes to improve the quality of life of older persons, not just for the underprivileged but for everyone. In 2014, Indonesia launched the Universal Health Care Program, and in 2015 it launched the National Social Security Program for all workers, both formal and non-formal.

The 2019–2024 National Strategy on the Wellbeing of Older Persons, still under process, is a coordinative guideline for all related stakeholders in facing the challenges and implications of ageing. It shows the serious commitment of our government to provide policies and programmes that will improve the quality of life of its citizens throughout the course of life, with benefits for people of all ages.

What is still missing is a legal binding document to ensure the implementations of all policies and programmes in a sustainable way. A UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons ratified by our government is badly needed.

Giang Thanh Long is Associate Professor and Director of the Institute of Public Policy and Management (IPPM), National Economics University and Senior Researcher at the Institute of Social and Medical Studies (ISMS) in Hanoi. His research interests include the economics of ageing and health protection for older people, using actuarial and micro-simulation techniques to provide evidence-based policy studies.



How would you describe the historical relationship between older people and their families, especially as concerns ensuring income security and material wellbeing?

As the majority of older people, especially in developing Asia, are not covered by any social security system and their own income depends on natural disaster-prone agricultural activities, they rely on the support of their families, particularly their children. Statistics in a number of Asian countries show that about 60 per cent of older people's income comes from their own work and their children's support.

In regard to wellbeing, families are traditionally a source of mutual support – both physically and mentally – between older people and their children and (great) grandchildren. Such support is also meaningful in coping with income and health risks for older people.

How do you see these past dynamics of income security evolving in the future, with demographic change? Can older people continue to rely on the family for income security?

As fertility rates have been declining all over Asia and living arrangements between generations have been changing, the proportion of older people living in multi-generational households has reduced, while the proportion of those living alone, living with a spouse, and

living in skip-generation families has increased. This means that direct risk-sharing patterns between older people and their families have been reduced. It does not mean, however, that older people do not have the mutual support of their families. Statistics show that many older people still have their children living nearby – in the same village or commune – and mutual material support (cash and/or in-kind) as well as emotional support, such as by phone, letter and email, is still strong.

Along with reforms in social security systems in many countries, I think that income sources for older people will have to be diversified and improved, and as such older people will be less dependent on their families for income security.

What can be done to ensure that older people will not be over-reliant on the family as household situations change?

For this, we should distinguish between older people today and the older people tomorrow – the current younger generations. For the former, as many of them are not covered by a social security system, they must rely on income support from their families. To reduce this dependency, the government should play a greater role in providing partial or full income support to its current older population via cash transfer programmes. Various countries in the developing world have provided persuasive evidence on the positive impacts of programmes on poverty reduction, healthcare services, and providing more independence to older people.

For the latter, along with their own preparations to secure a better income, the government should provide adequate and accessible education, health and vocational training services. As long as these younger generations have sufficient

income along with additional savings, they will not need to rely on either their families or the government.

How would you describe the role of the community in strengthening income security in old age in the future? How can communities contribute to improving older people's lives and their livelihoods?

Communities always play a crucial role in providing income sources and health and social care for older people. This is particularly true for older people living in poor settings. Together, older people and their communities can mobilise sufficient resources for maintaining and developing their livelihoods. They also provide mutual support – material, physical, and mental – to each other. Inter-generational self-help clubs (ISHCs), which were initiated by HelpAge International, are an excellent example of such a community role.

What is the role of governments in expanding pension coverage, especially for Lower- and Middle-Income Countries in Asia, as families change?

As mentioned above, due to the low coverage of pensions and social security benefits and a heavy reliance on family support, older people are at risk of low and unstable income. In such a situation, governments obviously play an important role in providing income security – partially or fully – for older people. They can provide cash transfers to poor and vulnerable older people, and they can also support those who can generate income by various productive activities. Ensuring non-discrimination against older people working would help them to secure income by themselves.



Lydia Humphrey/Age International

Life stories

Guri Devi, a symbol of graceful and empowered ageing

► India

Guri Devi is an 83-year-old widow living in Gadna village, Baap block, Jodhpur district. She has five sons and four daughters. Her husband died 15 years ago, so she raised all nine children on her own. Her four daughters married and moved out but her sons are settled with their spouses in their separate houses. The assets and land were equally distributed amongst the sons and now she lives alone in her old house, which made her feel very sad and lonely. Although her sons lived close to her, she was still dependent on them for daily meals and care. However, life took a happy turn for Guri Devi in the form of much-needed support from a local NGO, Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS), which has been working for the welfare of older people in Jodhpur district with the support of HelpAge India.

HelpAge along with the implementing agency GRAVIS helped her to set up a horticulture unit in her backyard in September 2017. This unit is now giving her the opportunity to earn her own living and to stay constructively engaged. It also supports her nutritional requirements. GRAVIS also helped her acquire a widow's pension of 500 Indian rupees (US\$7) per month and provided her with 20 saplings. She can now sell and eat the farm produce. The unit is in her name, which gives her a sense of ownership. Guri Devi is all praise for the support given by GRAVIS and HelpAge International, which has transformed her life. She said, "After I started my own horticulture unit, my sons who never had time to talk to me, now find time for me. This intervention has helped me regain respect and love from my family, which was completely missing".



Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS)

Kaanchhi Sunar makes money from small support

► Nepal

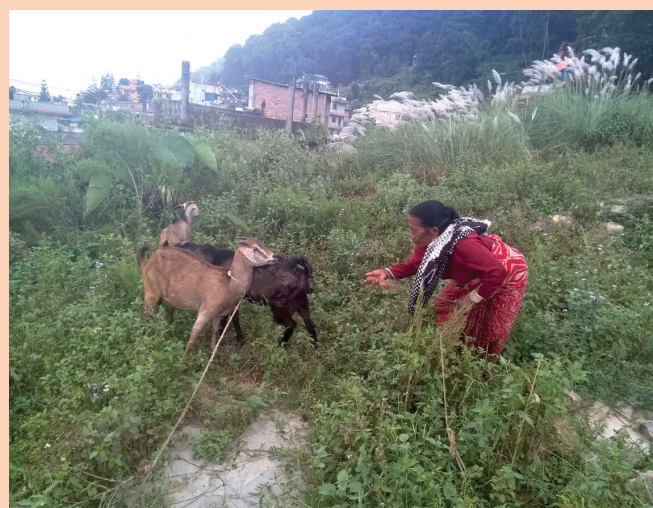
70-year-old Kaanchhi Sunar of Goldhunga, Kathmandu had nobody around to talk to, although she lived with her extended family. Her grandson was her only company, not only in the house, but also in her life. She inherited a small piece of land after her husband passed away, and she wanted to make good use of the land, but she had not been able to find any small income-generating activities to suit her. With no income of her own, she took a loan every year to make ends meet. Then the 2015 earthquake changed her life entirely, rendering her homeless.

Sunar signed up for an income-generating programme run by the Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN), a national organisation in Nepal running different types of elderly-related advocacy and action programmes for the last 18 years. The Nepal Earthquake Recovery Project (NERP) was being run in partnership with HelpAge International-NEPAN in 2016–2017, covering Goldhunga, where Kanchhi lived, and offering training courses like vegetable farming, goat keeping, pickle and candle making and incense-stick making.

After a three-day training in goat keeping, she received 9,000 Nepalese rupees (US\$90). With this money, Kanchhi, after consultation with family members, decided to buy a pregnant female goat. Her female goat gave birth to two baby goats. She dedicated herself to tending the baby goats. She also joined an older people's association (OPA) formed

in her municipality. Now she deposits 100 rupees (US\$1) monthly in the group saving funds (GSF). She has also taken out a loan at a minimum interest rate to give additional support to her business.

After one year, she sold two goats for 50,000 rupees, and said "My pocket is full of money and my heart is full of happiness. I bought some jewels and clothes for my grandson. My business supports my family, and I will continue it till my death."



Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN)

Promoting gender equality through Intergenerational Self-Help Clubs (ISHCs) in Vietnam

In order to raise awareness about gender equality and the rights of older people, in particular of older women, through activities of the ISHCs, the Vietnam Association of the Elderly (VAE) has implemented a project titled “Promoting Gender Equality for Women in Thanh Hoa Province” sponsored by the Embassy of the Czech Republic. The project’s main activities are: 1) Publishing training documents on gender equality and promoting gender equality through ISHC activities; 2) Providing training for AE leaders and the boards of 5 ISHCs in Thanh Hoa; 3) Organising a seminar and a field trip to one ISHC in Thanh Hoa.

In collaboration with the Association of the Elderly of Thanh Hoa Province, the VAE held a two-day training course on “Gender equality and promoting gender equality through ISHC activities” in Thanh Hoa Province on 29–30 August 2018. Attending the training course were Mr. Lukas Musil, Deputy Permanent Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Vietnam; board members of 5 ISHCs, members of Associations of the Elderly and Womens’ Association leaders in Thanh Hoa province.



Vietnam Association of the Elderly (VAE)

At this training course, participants learned about gender equality issues; laws and policies related to gender equality; gender equality in Vietnam; methods of promoting gender equality in ISHCs and in the community.

Mr. Doan Nhu Long (69 years old), Chairman of Quang Phu Commune People’s Committee and head of ISHC V047, Village 1, said: “In the coming months we are determined to innovate action programmes that address gender equality in order to enhance the role of women in helping them contribute to local development”.

Mr. Lukas said “In all countries, older people should know what their rights are to contribute to the development of society. We are very pleased to announce that Thanh Hoa is one of three provinces in Vietnam where projects from the Transition Fund of the Czech Republic are being implemented through the VAE”.

In fact, the purpose of gender equality is not just to liberate women, but also to liberate men, because when men are overvalued and women are undervalued, not only women, but also men, are affected. So this project contributes to developing the resources of our entire society, with deep significance for everyone.

Renewed thrust for convention on the rights of older people

Older campaigners in Asia and across the world are calling on governments to support a new convention on the rights of older people. In 2010, a UN working group, the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG), was set up to discuss gaps in the protection of older people’s rights. It has met nine times and has firmly established that the international human rights system fails to adequately protect the rights of older people.

Each year, the UN holds a session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) where older people can raise their voices on topics that concern them. This year, Cambodian older people and HelpAge Cambodia are proud to have a representative to participate in this important event.

HelpAge Cambodia, in collaboration with HelpAge International, secured the nomination of Ou Vanda, a 62-year-old, former Deputy Director of Battambang Provincial Health Department, to join the 9th Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG) in New York on 23–26 July 2018. HelpAge provided technical support in preparing her speech at the session, which focused on two key areas of rights: autonomy and independence, and long-term care and palliative care.

At the event, Vanda talked about older people’s experience of autonomy and independence. She told the OEWG, “I am an older person. I want to make my own decisions in every aspect of my life. And I also believe all older people want to make their own decisions without any fear of or interference by others, particularly their families. Most older people, including me, want to have freedom and are strongly motivated to do what we wish.”

“Thus,” she said, “we need a Convention on Older People Rights.”

Vanda has been involved with HelpAge Cambodia in establishing an older people’s association (OPA) in the city of Battambang. With her passion and dedicated effort, she is one of many active and competent women leaders who have gained the trust of their village members and who has contributed a lot towards supporting older people.



HelpAge International

International Day of Older Persons

Activists unite in a call for a convention on older people's rights.

The International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) on 1 October is a timely reminder that we all want to live in a fair and just society that treats everyone as equals.

This equality is important to older people. As an older woman in Nepal said, 'Equality is similar treatment to all, especially by our family members.'¹

Despite this, we live in a world where we are often discriminated against and denied our rights when we are older because of negative attitudes and stereotypes about older people and older age. This ageism affects older people everywhere, including in countries where there is a strong rhetoric around respect for elders. As an older person in Malaysia said, 'Those [older people] who are without income and dependent are often ill-treated and sidelined by family and society.'²

A new UN convention on the rights of older people is necessary to provide that protection and ensure the fair and just society we all want to live in, a society where we can enjoy our rights in older age on an equal basis with others.

Support for a new UN convention is growing, including among Asian states, and in July 2018 the OEWG began discussing the rights that could be included in a future convention.

Now is the time for older people, civil society, national human rights institutions and states from across Asia to participate in this process to make sure the discussion and a future UN convention respond to the reality of older people's lives across the region.

That is why older campaigners are calling on governments in Asia to begin preparing for the next OEWG in 2019. Throughout October 2018, at the time of the International Day of Older Persons, campaigners are lobbying their governments to support a convention by committing to attend the next OEWG, engaging in discussions on the content of the document, and publicly expressing their support.

This call comes as the world gears up to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in December. While there is much to celebrate, there is much more work to do to protect older people's rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not recognise the type of discrimination that older people face. There have been efforts to protect older people's rights in the meantime, such as the UN Principles on the Rights of Older People and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, but, unlike a convention, these are not legally binding.

ADA

Age Demands Action

On the International Day of Older Persons, older activists in Asia joined campaigners in 28 countries around the world to highlight the need for a convention and also to recognise the impact older women and men have had in pushing for change by directly lobbying decision-makers and raising public awareness on the lack of recognition of older people's rights.

HelpAge International highlighted older campaigners' key achievements, including their tireless campaigning for a convention, through more than 20 interviews conducted around the world. Please go to the HelpAge website to read their stories³.



Example of what we did in Asia on IDOP:

- India: A march and demonstration in Jaisalmer, Badmer, Jodhpur, Rajasthan.
- Mongolia: A tripartite meeting between older people's associations, the representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia on the autonomy and rights of older people.
- Nepal: A march of 1,000 people took place in Kathmandu to celebrate older human rights campaigners.
- Sri Lanka: Older people walked 120km from Colombo to Galle over six days with more than 2,000 older people taking part.
- Thailand: A seminar with representatives from government sectors and stakeholders discussing recommendations on human rights and older people's rights and the prevention of abuse.
- The Philippines: the Coalition of Services of the Elderly hosted the annual Sampung Ulirang Nakatatanda awards, in which ten unsung older campaigners were given trophies for their outstanding achievements.
- Vietnam: A press conference on the ageing population in Vietnam.

1. HelpAge International, *Entitled to the same rights: What older women say about their rights to non-discrimination and equality, and to freedom from violence, abuse and neglect*, 2017

2. Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People, *In Our Own Words: What older people say about discrimination and human rights in older age*, 2015

3. www.helpage.org/untoldstories

Right to social protection: Older people in the Philippines

There are eight million older people in the Philippines but many of them lack awareness of policies that can protect them and give them additional privileges. One of the rights they should be claiming as they age is social protection. Although there are different social protection programmes present in the country, they are not enough to cover the majority of older people in the population. Inability to access the right information is one of the reasons why they fail to avail themselves of services and programmes specific to their sector.

To address this issue, the Coalition of Services of the Elderly (COSE) is implementing three projects aimed at enhancing or strengthening Social Protection Programs through older persons' engagement. One is funded by the BMZ (The Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany) and implemented in Labo and San Lorenzo in Camarines Norte, Sagay and La Castellana in Negros Occidental, Maramag and Malaybalay in Bukidnon, and Valenzuela City in the National Capital Region. The second is funded by Caritas Germany and is implemented in Daanbantayan and Medellin in Cebu, and the third is funded by Voice and is implemented in the municipalities of Arayat in Pampanga, and Calumpit and Hagonoy in Bulacan. One of the objectives of these projects is to increase public and government awareness in covered municipalities on the social protection programmes, rights, and entitlements of older persons.

The participation of older persons is crucial in achieving this objective, as they know and experience personally the practices and challenges in relevant



Member of the Confederation of Older Persons Associations of the Philippines (COPAP) together with a member of COSE staff discussing Elder Abuse at the DWWW 774 AM Station (a national radio station) in Metro Manila.

Older Persons volunteers, COSE staff (in middle) and radio station anchor in front during the radio programme at the DWBL 91.9 Bright FM in San Fernando, Pampanga.

matters. We therefore emphasise the importance of older persons becoming voices for their own sector, especially those who are meek, poor, most vulnerable and most disadvantaged. Through this project, information about older persons and ageing is disseminated not only in print, but also in radio broadcasts. There they are taught how to write and report news or stories on the happenings in their communities and organizations.

What they have learned is tested when they become part of COSE's national and local radio programme as anchors and reporters. Every second and fourth Saturday of the month, they become spokespersons for their fellow older persons and talk about their issues and concerns, and narrate the real-life stories of many older persons who wish to live securely and with dignity.

Among the issues tackled are social pension, elder abuse, updates on national advocacies and campaigns. This method of presentation does not just inform the

public, but also increases confidence among volunteers.

Mr. Rizal Balatbat, 72 years old, a volunteer radio anchor said, "Honestly, I never dreamed of nor imagined myself as part of a radio programme, but here I am now, discussing issues and concerns, and the programmes and services of older persons through radio. This is a new experience for me, and I'm glad to be part of the programme."

In this way, older persons are becoming more aware and engaged in their issues and concerns. They become independent monitors and lobbyists of their own rights and privileges. This practice has also led to an increasing number of people asking about their issues and concerns either through text or social media; older persons are becoming more active in social media; and older persons feel that they are important and can make a great contribution to older persons in the country.

HelpAge India brings relief to communities affected by Kerala floods



Nearly 400 people have died and thousands have been displaced by terrible flooding in the Indian state of Kerala. HelpAge India is providing much needed medical aid and relief kits to the 3 most affected districts.

You can make a considerable difference in the lives of these survivors by deciding to support their on-ground action.

Please donate today. No amount is too small.
www.helpageindia.org

Electronic cash transfers–Myanmar’s new delivery mechanism for social protection

HelpAge International has worked closely with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) of the Government of Myanmar in the design of social protection systems. Since 2014, we have provided technical assistance, developing studies on the affordability of social protection services, the criteria and registration of eligible recipients, and the means of delivery. This collaboration led to the roll-out of the first government-funded National Social Pension Scheme in 2017. This scheme was initially for all people aged 90 and over. However, since its implementation HelpAge has been advocating for a reduction in the national pension age. On 1 October 2018, the Union Minister announced the expansion of the scheme by reducing the eligibility age to 85 years old.

The potential increase in those eligible for the National Social Pension Scheme has led to questions over its delivery. At

present, the delivery mechanism used is manual - physical cash delivered by hand. The Department of Social Welfare, which is in charge of the National Social Pension Programme, relies heavily on the General Administration Department (GAD) and ward or village tract administrators to complete these cash transfers. This requires a lot of resources in order to physically deliver payments to recipients' houses or other disbursement points across the country. This presents a challenge that is only going to intensify as the National Social Pension Programme reaches many more people.

In Myanmar, the number of people using the internet has risen quickly, leading to increased interest from mobile payment providers to enter the market. A study conducted recently by global payment technology company Visa¹ shows that despite the fact that cash remains the most commonly used form of payment in

Myanmar, there's a strong appetite for electronic payments which would provide significant benefits to consumers, merchants and the economy. With support from the government in terms of infrastructure and telecommunications and the development of private sector services, electronic payment could become a choice in the

next few years.

Taking those trends into consideration, we commissioned the Oxford Policy Management to conduct an options assessment for electronic cash transfer delivery.² Various payment mechanisms in Myanmar were studied and recommendations confirmed that adopting e-payments for social cash transfers would be a promising way to deliver payments to beneficiaries. Though transitioning from manual cash payments to e-payments would present several challenges for social programmes, they would also provide more flexibility, speed and reduced costs. E-payments would also limit leakages in the system and promote transparency.

A mix of manual and e-payments from multiple service providers is likely to be the most effective model in the short to medium term, while e-payments seem promising in the long run for social protection programmes. Ultimately, whatever delivery methods are chosen, our goal is to ensure that nobody is left out of the social pension system.



Older person making thumb stamping in the cash receipt book.

1. Majority of Myanmar People Want Access to Banking and Cashless Payment Methods (Myanmar Business Today, 14 August 2018)

2. <http://ageingasia.org/electronic-delivery-social-cash-transfers-myanmar-options-assessment/>

Upcoming Events

Community Driven Development (CDD) training 19–23 November 2018, Hanoi, Vietnam

Community Driven Development (CDD) is a one-week capacity building programme with field visits to foster sustainable community driven development. This training is an opportunity for development practitioners, change agents and community members to understand various approaches to community organisations and to develop the proper tools and abilities to put knowledge into practice.

The course is offered by HelpAge International, Vietnam Country Office, who have over 10 years experience in community driven development and capacity building of development practitioners at national and international levels.

This expertise will be shared and transferred to participants using a participatory approach, case studies and group focused learning, including field visits to demonstrate how the concepts are applied to achieve sustainable results.

For more information about the training, please contact: Ms Tran Bich Thuy, thuytb@helpagevn.org

Resources

Publications



Missing Millions: How older people with disabilities are excluded from humanitarian response
HelpAge International



Transforming Gender Relations in an Ageing World
HelpAge International



Electronic delivery of social cash transfers in Myanmar: options assessment
HelpAge Myanmar Country Office



Older people in emergencies: falling through the cracks of emergency responses
Overseas Development Institute



The State of the Art of Dementia Research: New frontiers
Alzheimer's Disease International

This World Alzheimer Report 2018 brings together 21 of the global leading lights in all areas of dementia research. The report tackles some of the complex questions surrounding dementia research. It looks at the hopes and frustrations and asks why there have been no major medical treatment breakthroughs for over 20 years.

Blogs

Consider inequalities across the life course to improve older women's lives (<https://bit.ly/2QLVZ1R>)
Professor Ann Stewart, University of Warwick

HelpAge India brings relief to communities affected by Kerala floods (<https://bit.ly/2ppteT>)
Sonali Sharma, HelpAge India

How FOPDEV's Buddy HomeCare is bringing generations together in Thailand (<https://bit.ly/2x9G04M>)
Janevit Wisongsongkram, Foundation For Older Persons' Development (FOPDEV)

Videos

End the exclusion of older people with disabilities in emergency responses (<https://bit.ly/2MNj3tS>)
Older people tell us what the right to autonomy and independence means to them (<https://bit.ly/2xt7qn3>)

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In addition, we welcome articles for consideration. Please send articles at any time to:

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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.

Connect aims to highlight issues of ageing and the rights of older people in Asia Pacific as well as share experiences of the network working with and for older people.

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