

The logo for HelpAge International features the word "HelpAge" in white, bold, sans-serif font on a red rectangular background. Below it, the word "International" is written in white, sans-serif font on an orange rectangular background that is slightly offset to the right.

International

HelpAge International

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Chapeau

By 2030, 1.4 billion people will be aged 60 and over. Yet the majority of countries globally remain unprepared for population ageing and meeting the needs and rights of older people. This is especially true in low-and middle-income countries where over 70% of older people live.

Today, [142 million older people globally are unable to meet their basic needs](#), while ageism; age discrimination; and a lack of age, gender, and disability responsive policies, laws, systems, services and communities, mean they are unable to enjoy their fundamental human rights. This was brutally highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic when, despite being among the groups most at risk, older people were and continue to be left behind in responses. It is also witnessed in ongoing humanitarian emergencies emanating from conflict and/or climate, including in the Sahel region, Central Africa, the Horn of Africa, Ukraine, and the Middle East.

Their exclusion in the push towards development means that older people as a significant section of the population will not participate effectively in the development agenda. This will skew the “people component” which is envisaged as necessary for the achievement of development in the SDG blueprint: [Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) (2030 Agenda).

The Pact of the Future must recognize and strengthen existing global commitments for older people that are reflected in the Political Declaration of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) as well as all other regional agreements on ageing.

We recall the UN Resolution on the Decade of Healthy Ageing A/RES/75/131, which in its preamble:-

Reaffirms the right of every human being, without distinction of any kind, to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and emphasizes that health is a foundation for accelerating progress of all three dimensions of sustainable development.

Chapter I. Sustainable development and financing for development

The Sustainable Development Goals recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

The inclusion of older people is envisaged in the framing of Agenda 2030 that seeks to “to end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions, and to ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment”.

We reaffirm the Political Declaration on the High-Level Meeting (HLM) on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) to strengthen national efforts, international cooperation, and global solidarity at the highest political level to advance the adequate, sustainable, effective, and efficient health financing and investments to strengthen quality, people-centered, sustainable, and resilient health systems and to accelerate the achievement of universal health coverage by 2030.

We recommend therefore: -

1. That there is policy coherence to consider population ageing for sustainable development across the multiple policies and frameworks on sustainable development and further in the reviews of these policies, their responsiveness to ageing population demographics to be considered in their review
2. That the importance of health and wellbeing of populations from a life course perspective as fundamental to sustainable development is recognized and considered in financing for development. This would ensure the prioritization of age responsive health systems strengthening to withstand future shocks such as the COVID 19 pandemic.
3. That ageing is included in the ongoing holistic review of the global financial architecture reform agenda including formulas for unlocking new financing on climate and other aspects of the SDGs to fund our people and planetary goals.

Chapter II. International peace and security

The world continues to experience crises, shocks and stressors that destabilize international peace and security and result in economic crises with devastating effects especially in lower- and middle-income countries (LMIC). According to the UN World Economic Situations and Prospects Report (WESP) 2023 that was launched in January 2023, a series of severe and mutually reinforcing shocks means that the world output growth is projected to decelerate from an estimated 3.0 per cent in 2022 to 1.9 per cent in 2023, marking one of the lowest growth rates in recent decades.¹

In humanitarian crises resulting from various causes such as conflicts and natural disasters, older people face unique challenges especially where these result in displacements. A World Health Organization report² notes that between 1994 and 2003, over 225 million people globally were affected each year by natural disasters. During the same period, these disasters claimed an average of 58 000 lives annually. Based on data reported in the World Refugee Survey 2007, an average of 12 million people worldwide were refugees or asylum seekers each year from 1998 to 2006. The United Nations Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) has

¹[World Economic Situation and Prospects 2023 | UN DESA Publications](#) p5 the shocks of COVID 19, the war in Ukraine have resulted in adverse impact on global markets and trade, surging domestic price inflation, debt tightening, as well as the climate emergency and protracted instability in some countries — battered the world economy in 2022, with most of these factors still at play in 2023.

² [Older Persons in Emergencies An Active Ageing Perspective](#)

estimated that at least 10% of refugees are over 60 years of age. These disasters challenge the access of older people to housing, land and property rights, pension, and affordable healthcare. When displaced, older people and particularly older women may be more at risk of violence and abuse than younger people. Additionally, they face challenges in accessing necessary aid, and experience displacement related difficulties.

The analysis above provides a glimpse of the complexities around economic inequalities and vulnerabilities that older people and particularly older women face in global crises in developed and developing countries. International migration is a multidimensional reality of major relevance for the development of origin, transit and destination countries that must be addressed in a coherent, comprehensive, and balanced manner with full respect for human rights of all the population sectors experiencing the crisis.

We therefore recommend: -

4. That the rights of older people in the international peace and security processes is recognized in line with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) which encompasses the human rights of older people.
5. That all peace and security processes explicitly prohibit ageism and age-based discrimination and are informed by sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD) to ensure that older people are included in all aspects of the global peace and security agenda.

Chapter III. Science, technology and innovation and digital cooperation

We fully identify with Article 6 of the Political Declaration of the MIPAA which states that:-

“ The modern world has unprecedented wealth and technological capacity and has presented extraordinary opportunities: to empower men and women to reach old age in better health and with more fully realized well-being; to seek the full inclusion and participation of older persons in societies; to enable older persons to contribute more effectively to their communities and to the development of their societies; and to steadily improve care and support for older persons as they need it. We recognize that concerted action is required to transform the opportunities and the quality of life of men and women as they age and to ensure the sustainability of their support systems, thus building the foundation for a society for all ages. When ageing is embraced as an achievement, the reliance on human skills, experiences and resources of the higher age groups is naturally recognized as an asset in the growth of mature, fully integrated, humane societies.”

Under the Agenda 2030 ‘Leaving no one behind’ also means leaving no one offline. Digital inclusion is now fundamental for social inclusion and increasingly necessary to access a wide range of public services. Yet older people, and particularly older women or those living with disabilities, do not have equal access to the digital world.

To promote older people’s digital inclusion, duty-bearers must provide key enablers such as access to digital learning and regulate for ethical and safe digital environments that enable older people in all their diversity to thrive and live in dignity. In the Global Digital Compact, it is important to create norms and set frameworks that support age-friendly design of digital

services, and ageism-free development of AI and frontier technologies. For those who cannot connect digitally it is essential that they can continue to access all public services in-person. There is need to ensure that innovative capacity, connectivity, and access to technology considers the rights and needs of older people.

We recommend therefore that:

6. The development, access, cost and use of information and communications technology infrastructure is fully age inclusive taking into account the full diversity of the world's population.

Chapter IV. Youth and future generations

We reiterate the framing in the Political Declaration of the MIPAA and urge that needs of both older and younger [generations] are considered, and mutually responsive relationships encouraged between generations." We affirm the consideration of "intergenerational solidarity is widely understood as social cohesion between generations." Of course, children and youth lack the experience of growing old and we therefore encourage mutually responsive relationships between generations.

The current children and young people will be the older people mentioned in the statistics above forecasting of population ageing. It is therefore important that they address the issues affecting older people to pre-empt that issues that are likely to affect them in the future as older people.

We therefore recommend: -

7. That, at all times, the data informing the global development agenda is disaggregated by age in addition to all other variables, to allow for effective and forecasting of, and response to the changing social and economic needs of the global population based on realistic demographic age profiles.

Chapter V. Transforming global governance.

Population ageing is one of the biggest social transformations in the 21st century and the social contract must be at the heart of transforming global governance. Generations and peoples in all their diversity and origins must live together in peace and be supported by the framework of social civil and economic rights which are currently threatened by climate change, war, inequalities, populism, xenophobia, racism, disablism and ageism. Ageism, gender discrimination and inequality must be addressed along the life course.

Social security systems must adapt to an ageing population and respond to the issues of unpaid labor of women around the world who spend more time providing care to their children and families, building wealth for younger generations while minimizing the opportunities and ability to build their own wealth along the life course into older ages.

Lack of pensions owing to the predominantly informal forms of work and gender inequalities in accessing labor markets have made this crisis even harder for older women. This reduces

the likelihood of older women to receive pensions as compared to men³ as discussed in the HelpAge report.

Putting financial and technical effort into ensuring the right of all persons from the cradle to the grave to social protection and to social protection floors is key to the social contract. As is participation, recognizing and supporting contributions across the life course and the affirmation of human rights for all - including the human rights of older persons.

It is therefore important that all countries adapt to the rights and needs of older persons in the formulation and development of health and social services, in the provision of social protection, and the development of cities, housing, educational opportunities and transportation.

We recommend therefore: -

8. That the full diversity of the population must be reflected in the disaggregation of data in terms of age, race, ethnic belonging, physical ability, income levels, rural or urban domicile. This is important to ensure that the resources are properly allocated to the rightful population sectors and accounted for in the monitoring processes including the reviews of the SDGs and the Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) in the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

³ [Things-have-just-gotten-worse_Report.pdf](#) at p.5