

Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of Ageing in Africa in 2001. The year 2000 was an eventful one. From building the capacities of members and partners to creating awareness of ageing issues, we have continued to affirm the rights of older people to independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment and dignity.

One of the most important events of the year was the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and HelpAge International (HAI). This Newsletter highlights the outcomes of the Experts Meeting in Kampala that was organised by HAI and the OAU. The meeting sought to develop a policy framework on ageing to guide OAU Member States as they implement programmes to improve the quality of life of older people in Africa. In this Issue, we highlight some of the key issues discussed at the Experts Meeting.

The need for strategic partnerships as emphasised by the Experts Meeting and other fora organised by HAI highlights the fact that there is still a lot that remains to be done in our efforts to promote respect for older people's rights. Our participation in other international fora becomes critical in the process of forming alliances with key institutions and governments.

We wish all our readers a prosperous 2001.

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Experts concerned over lack of ageing policy



Prof Nana Apte, addressing the plenary session of the Experts Meeting. She made a strong stand in favour of older people's rights.

Experts from Member States of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) have recommended that the needs and rights of older people be protected by appropriate legislation to be integrated into new and existing policies.

The Experts also said that measures to ensure that older people can access their rights should be implemented. They made these recommendations at the close of their meeting held in Kampala, Uganda between 27th November and 1st December 2000.

The meeting, which drafted the Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing to guide OAU Member States to develop national policies on ageing, was jointly organised by the OAU and HelpAge International in collaboration with the Government of Uganda.

More than 100 delegates from 25 OAU Member States: Algeria, Burundi, Botswana, Chad, Angola, Egypt, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho,

Mauritius, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sudan, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, representing the five regions of the continent attended the meeting. Delegates from Switzerland and the United Kingdom were also present. Uganda's second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Internal Affairs, Brigadier Moses Ali, read H.E President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni's speech.

"Research in issues of older persons should form the basis for the development of policy on older people", said Hon Florence Nayiga Sekabira, Uganda's Minister of State in Charge of Disability and Elderly Affairs.

Drawing from the 'International Plan of Action on Ageing' and the 'Global Targets on Ageing for the Year 2001', the meeting considered areas that are both specific to, and appropriate for, the African context. In this connection, it developed a Policy Framework appropriate to the context of the

Geriatric hospital boosted



HelpAge Ghana's Dr Asare receives the donations.

Accra Psychiatric Hospital, the only hospital in Ghana that provides separate facilities for older people recently received a refrigerator, electric stove, chargeable lamps and other items as a result of a donation

made by a generous private donor to HelpAge Ghana.

The hospital has a Female Geriatric ward with a bed capacity of 26 patients. Most of the patients

admitted at the hospital suffer from severe, chronic, physical and mental disorders and have been abandoned by their relatives because they find their mental state offensive, uncomfortable and frightening.

HelpAge Ghana awards volunteers

On 22 February 2000, HelpAge Ghana (HAG) recognised the efforts of 16 volunteers with citations and awards.

The ceremony which attracted 60 volunteers from 20 community based zones was aimed at motivating the volunteers to continue giving their best. It also sought to sustain the interest of the existing volunteers as

well as attract more volunteers to the programme.

The volunteers received fabrics among other items. Citations were read in recognition and appreciation of their care and compassion. The ceremony recognised their contribution towards HAG's goal of adding life to the years of older

people especially the poor and disadvantaged.

Since recruiting and retaining volunteers is difficult, the awards were meant to harness and strengthen their commitment. In a co-ordinating meeting after the ceremony, several volunteers expressed their gratitude for the awards.

Reader's Survey winners picked

We would like to thank everyone who completed and returned the Ageing in Africa Readers Survey questionnaire. We are very pleased with the quality and quantity of the responses. We received questionnaires from 16 different countries. The impressive response is much appreciated and is a true indication of a global dedication to work towards a society for all ages. We will be analysing the responses and will provide feedback in our next issue. We would like to congratulate the following winners. Each will receive a free copy of Ageing and Development report, Learning to Listen and Adding Life to Years. All the other respondents will receive HelpAge International 2001 calender.

1. **Dr. Monica Ferreira**, Centre for Gerontology, UCT Observatory, South Africa.
2. **Ephraim Gathalya**, HelpAge Kenya.
3. **Mrs N. Kalo-Lesa**, Ministry of Community Development, Zambia.
4. **Charles Murethi Wanjue**, CCF Naromoru, Kenya.

International Year of Volunteers 2001

After celebrating the 1999 International Year of Older Persons, another important year, the International Year of Volunteers 2001 is here with us. This year is designed to enhance recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteer service.

For more information, contact AARP International Activities Office NY, 780 Third Avenue, 33rd Floor New York, NY USA email jesmith@aarp.org

New Materials

Ageing Issues in Africa:

A Summary. This 16-page booklet provides summaries of the issues affecting older people in Africa. Issues include Contribution, Education and Media, Employment and Income Security, Family Care, Health, Poverty, Rights, HIV/AIDS, Conflict and Emergencies, Gender, Housing and Living Environments, Food and Nutrition and Social Welfare. The booklet offers suggestions on what can be done.

Ageing Issues in Africa: A Summary



HelpAge
International
Helping Older People Live Better

Building practice into policy: Annual Review 1999/2000. This Review contains news on the activities of HelpAge International worldwide.

The Mark of a Noble Society: Human Rights and Older People. November 2000. This briefing paper by HelpAge International was published to mark the United Nations Human Rights Day on 10 December 2000. It challenges the widespread neglect of older people's rights while arguing that poverty, social exclusion and discriminatory attitudes are setting age limits to human rights.

Rights In action: This document answers questions on human rights and how they relate to older people using case studies.

Rights and older people: This document explores human rights theory and instruments. It gives useful information about available resources.

Travaillant avec et pour les personnes âgées défavorisées dans le but d'améliorer leur qualité de vie: This leaflet explains how to work with older people in order to improve quality of their lives.

For more information, please contact Africa Regional Development Centre.

ARDC participates in the International Council on Social Welfare conference

HelpAge International (HAI) participated in the 29th International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) conference in Cape Town, South Africa, between 23 and 27 October 2000. The conference, which was attended by over 700 people from all over the world, had symposiums, workshops, field visits and social functions. It covered issues on social welfare and social development. HAI and Muthande Society for the Aged in South Africa (MUSA) held a workshop on the Violation of Rights of Older Men and Women in Africa. The conference provided participants with a wide range of stimulating ideas and perspectives and the opportunity to exchange information and experience. Refer to Page 9.

Training of Nutrition Trainers

A Training of Nutrition Trainers Workshop for Francophone Africa will be held in February 2001. The workshop, which will take place in Dakar, Senegal, will bring together nutritionists from academic and research institutions in French speaking Africa. The workshop aims at increasing the understanding of the nutrition issues of older people.

Nutrition Workshop held in Mozambique

HelpAge International held a nutrition training workshop in Maputo, Mozambique from 4th to 8th December 2000. The workshop, which had representatives from seven provinces, attracted 27 participants from Government ministries, NGOs and older people's organisations.

Participants agreed that there was need to include and seek the opinion of older people and empower them to help them achieve their aims.

Drawing Competition for 2001 Launched



NATIONAL
LOTTERY
CHARITIES
BOARD



Judges display winning drawings during last year's competition.

HelpAge International, Africa Regional Development Centre (HAI-ARDC) has launched the second Africa Schools Drawing Competition involving primary and secondary school students up to the age of 18 years old.

The competition seeks to create awareness about ageing and older people among school children. We believe the publicity and information dissemination before and after the competition, will contribute to increased awareness among the public.

There is one theme for drawings for each age group this year namely:

- age group of up to 6 years
-Family support
- age group 7-13 years
-The effect of AIDS on older people
- age group 14-18
-The rights of older people

Lesson plans on each of the issues

have been prepared to help the children understand the themes from which they are going to prepare their drawings.

The competition will be held at two levels. Country level competitions will be led by organisations who will announce, coordinate and publicise in their countries.

These organisations will also send the winning entries to HAI-ARDC. Local prizes are dependent on the capacity of the organisations and will be decided by the organisations. Within each age group, regional level prizes will be given to children and schools of the 1st and 2nd prize-winners.

The prize for the winner and runners-up in each category range between £ 125 and £ 75 respectively. Winning schools will get £ 300 and £ 200 for the first and second levels respectively for each age groups.

For more information, contact the Africa Regional Development Centre.

ISO and IEC want usable products for older people

The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) are calling for the development of standards that promote design that enables the use of products and services by older people.

According to ISO/IEC policy statement, "Addressing the needs of older persons and people with disabilities in standardisation work, ISO/IEC recognises the need to include the requirements of older persons and people with disabilities in all relevant standards production and revision work."

The importance of accessibility was recognised when UN member states signed the UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the UN Principles for Older Persons.

The situation has become more critical with the increasing percentage of older people in the population worldwide. While not all older persons have disabilities, its prevalence is highest amongst this demographic group.

"So that older persons and people with disabilities may participate in society on equal terms, it is necessary to improve the accessibility of products, services and environments," states the policy. "Improved accessibility further enhances the quality of life and reduces discrimination," adds the statement.

ISO and IEC national members are encouraged to make every effort in drafting standards to take into account the needs of older persons and people with disabilities, and to raise awareness and ensure the representation of interests of older people and people with disabilities, as consumers, in the standardisation process.

Concern over lack of ageing policy

traditions, cultural values and socio-economic situation of African countries.

Dr Aziza Suliman Ali, a Sudanese Physician-Cardiologist-Geriatician, called for the establishment of Geriatric wards and centers to provide specialised health services for older people and to act as a base for researchers on different issues in ageing. As poverty ravages Africa leading to limited access to basic needs and health services, OAU Member States were urged to ensure that the rights and needs of older people are comprehensively addressed by implementing poverty reduction programmes specifically targeting the needs of older people.

Professor Sheila Tlou expressed her concern about poverty facing older people in Africa and their lack of resources exacerbated by HIV/AIDS. "HIV is killing the very people who could take care of older people", she regretted.

The Experts resolved that older people's rights to adequate food and nutrition be legally constituted and guaranteed and that older people should have equal access to means of food production and marketing. They also called for the review of legislation on property and land rights, inheritance and social security.

The need for strategic partnerships at all levels, involving individuals, communities, NGOs, the private sector, the media, governments and other civil society groups was stressed, as Member States design and implement of National Policies and Plans of Action on Ageing.

Legislation requiring adult children to provide support for their parents, outlawing the mental and physical abuse of older people and the assurance that older people, especially women, receive equitable treatment from customary and statutory laws was recommended.

The meeting resolved that Member States should protect the rights and needs of older people affected by HIV/AIDS and other epidemics and that more resources should be allocated to support older people caring for those affected by AIDS.

The recommendations of the Experts Meeting, together with the draft Policy Framework and Plan of Action, will be presented to the 24th Ordinary Session of the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission to be held in April 2001. Thereafter, the document will be presented to the 74th Ordinary Session of the OAU Council of Ministers in July 2001, Lusaka, Zambia, for consideration and endorsement. Finally, they will be presented to the 37th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, which will also be held in Lusaka, in July 2001, for adoption.



HelpAge International

Leading global action on ageing

We would like to thank all those who gave us financial support for the Experts Meeting and associated activities prior to and after the Meeting. We are grateful to Department for International Development (UK), World Health Organisation (Africa Regional Office-Zimbabwe), United Nations Trust Fund on Ageing (USA) and the Rockefeller Foundation (USA).

Experts discuss problems facing older people in Africa

Concerned that malnutrition of older people is often ignored, the Experts meeting in Kampala discussed ways to ensure that older people have equal access to means of food production, marketing and adequate food. They also explored means to ensure that older people's rights to adequate food and nutrition are legally constituted and guaranteed.

In Africa, it is often believed that traditional family structures and norms of respect mean that all older people are well supported and that the violation of their rights is not an issue. Experts highlighted the fact that this is not the case. Older people are abused socially, economically and psychologically as a result of society's failure to accord them their basic human rights. Their legal and health rights are neglected

and other basic human rights such as the right to life and liberty, the right to work and the right to freedom from discrimination are violated.

including the right to organise themselves into groups in order to advance their interests.

Older people are typically among the poorest members of society and live far below the poverty line the world over and especially in developing countries. Distancing older people from the mainstream of their societies carries with it impacts which go beyond income and wealth into poor living. Policy development must challenge and overcome the invisible barriers of age prejudice that prevent older people playing a full and valued part in the development of their societies.



Heads together: Ambassador K. Ntambi from Uganda (right) stresses a point to Mr Khalfan (left) from Zanzibar.

The meeting recognised the need to ensure that older people can access all their rights and to protect their rights by appropriate legislation;

Lack of access to a regular income or benefits from social security

UNHCR Policy on Older Refugees endorsed



Counting losses: An older man assesses what used to be his house after the destructive cyclone that pounded parts of Zimbabwe early last year.

Concerned by the high number of older refugees, the United Nations Human Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has developed and endorsed a policy on older refugees.

"UNHCR is currently educating its staff to change their attitudes and identify and support older refugees," said UNHCR Senior Regional Community Services Officer for East, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes, Ms Marie Lobo, at the Experts Meeting in Kampala, Uganda.

Three major problems facing most

refugees, in particular older refugees, are social disintegration, negative social selection and chronic dependency. In the case of older refugees, these problems are compounded by age and their dependency on the family and community during flight.

According to the UNHCR Policy on Older Refugees, older refugees comprise 8.5 per cent of the overall population of concern to UNHCR, and reach up to more than 30 per cent in some cases. The majority of these persons are women.

"Older people have special challenges and constraints in becoming refugees and effective protection and programming must reflect these concerns," states the UNHCR Policy, which was endorsed in March 2000 at the 17th Meeting of the Standing Committee.

In line with the Policy on Older Refugees, several offices worldwide are implementing projects which validate both the needs and contributions of older people in refugee situations.

African Renaissance must include older people

The African Renaissance will not take place without the contribution and active involvement of older people says Ms Yvonne Merafe, Special advisor, to the Hon. Dr Zola Skweyiya, Minister for Social Development in South Africa.

"Older women must be given adequate support for their largely unrecognised contributions to the economy and the well-being of society. Older men must be encouraged to develop the social and emotional capabilities that may have been stunted by the trauma of our history," said Merafe, at the launch of publications arising from the study: Contributions of Older

People to Development held on November 15, 2000 in Braamfontein, South Africa.

Ms Merafe was among policy makers, service providers, donors and older people who attended the breakfast launch. She said that older and younger generations must co-operate in creating a balance between tradition and innovation in the political, cultural and economic arenas.

The research study covered four research sites in three South African provinces namely Gauteng, Northern Province and Kwa Zulu-Natal between April and May

1999. The publications in the form of brochures are dedicated to issues such as health and welfare. They are expected to create awareness on issues that affect older people and enable the government to involve older people in developing and implementing policies that affect them. She congratulated HAI for creating awareness about the rights and needs of older people. "The published reports testify to the proactive and constructive leadership role played by HelpAge International," she said.

Refer to new materials on Page 3 for a list of the new leaflets.

Problems facing older people in Africa

provisions further marginalise older people. The elderly find themselves vulnerable and without any source of social protection. Experts explored the need to eliminate discrimination against older people in accessing employment opportunities and retaining their jobs. They also sought ways of promoting legislation to ensure the establishment and implementation of formal and informal social security systems.

Since changes in the family structure are more pronounced in the developing world than in the developed, socio-economic changes have weakened the strength of this system to provide adequately for its older people. However, the family is still the most important caring institution for older people. Experts discussed the need to increase families' capacity to provide support and change negative attitudes towards older people.

The provision of services under social welfare schemes is covered by pieces of legislation, which specify the groups to benefit, but these often exclude older people. Many existing social welfare programmes are centralised making them inaccessible to those older people who have limited mobility or who are unable to afford the cost of transport from their homes to centres where services are provided. There is need to design, develop, and implement

practical, realistic and appropriate social welfare strategies that include the concerns of older people.

Older people require adequate shelter. However, they are often deprived of decent shelter due to socio-economic changes, superstition and belief. Hardest hit are the landless urban dwellers. Environmental changes and the development of the infrastructure do not take into account the needs of older people. The meeting looked into how public infrastructure can accommodate the needs of older people and how older people can access safe, durable and affordable shelter.

It is generally recognised that historical and socio-cultural domination by men in most societies has continued to have an intergenerational effect on women's access to social, economic and political prosperity. Reforms in the political and economic sectors have however left a majority of older people more vulnerable. Rapidly falling living standards have continued to have a differential impact on older women and men.

The majority of older people in almost every country are women (55 per cent globally), with women to men ratios increasing with age. Policy needs to address the particular vulnerabilities that derive from women's lifetime disadvantages. Mainstreaming ageing into policies

relating to gender also needs to be pursued.

The effects of HIV/AIDS on all sections of the society are immense. A lot has been discussed on the effects of the pandemic on the sexually active age groups. Unfortunately, very little has been done to explore its effects on older people. AIDS has, and will continue to have a huge impact on older people in Africa. Older people play a major role by caring for people affected by HIV/AIDS and then bringing up orphaned grand children. Further more many older people are sexually active, a fact ignored by policy makers.

Experts recommended the national coverage of promotive, preventative, curative and rehabilitative health services, including HIV/AIDS services, designed to meet the needs of older people, especially those in rural areas.

Older people should have access to appropriate educational and training programmes. Unfortunately, older people continue to be excluded in education, training and awareness creation programmes. Quality education services should be expanded and measures taken to reduce disparities.

Currently, the draft Policy Framework and Plan of Action is being finalised. It will soon be available in English, French, Arabic and Portuguese.



Participants of the Experts Meeting. A new commitment towards bettering the lives of Older People in Africa.

Why are policies on older people not given prominence in Africa?

Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding, between the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and HelpAge International (HAI) in March 2000, discussions regarding the policies and legislation on older people have taken centre stage. These discussions culminated in among others, the Experts Meeting in Kampala, Uganda to develop a Policy Framework on Ageing. The meeting produced a Policy Framework and Plan of Action that will eventually be submitted to the Heads of State and Government meeting to be held in Lusaka, Zambia in July 2001. The document is now at the legal division of the OAU.

One of the issues that has consistently come up in discussions with HAI member and partner organisations and older people is the connection between the plight of older people and the absence of policies and legislation on older people through out Africa. As far as we are aware, not even one of the 54 states in Africa has developed comprehensive policies and legislation covering the needs and concerns of older people.

However, credit must be given to those countries that have endeavoured to provide for their older people and continue to seek ways to improve their conditions. We are aware of the efforts of South Africa, which is in the process of reviewing its policies on older people. Mali has for quite some time made sure that older people's concerns are incorporated in a government ministry. Uganda has, in the short period between 1995 and 2000, moved from having a desk for older people located in one of the ministries, to the creation of a department and appointment of a Minister for people with disabilities and older people.

We are aware that there are some countries in Africa that provide pensions to their older people, although in many cases, this is means tested. These include Mauritius, South Africa, Botswana, and

Namibia. We are also aware that there are countries like Mali that have developed policies on older people although we are not aware of these policies being developed into legislation. It is understood that Cameroon developed a policy on older people in the 60s but it has never been implemented. Zimbabwe started the process of formulating legislation on older people in 1993 and despite the



Party Time: A participant joins Acholi dancers during a cocktail party at the end of the Experts Meeting.

commitment of the President, no legislation has been enacted to date.

During the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission held in Namibia in April 1999, representatives of the governments of Malawi and Nigeria questioned the wisdom of allocating resources to older people when younger population groups were in need. This whole scenario begs a question; "Why have policies on older people not been given prominence by governments in Africa?"

At the core of the problem is the negative attitudes that society has towards older people. Despite the growing number of older people

throughout the continent, society still does not consider the older population as worthy of support and protection. Their immense contributions in sustaining families in the face of HIV/AIDS and their increasing involvement in economic activities have not been acknowledged. It is interesting that in almost every country of the continent, there is legislation to cover the interests of children, women, people with disabilities and other groups identified as vulnerable but nothing on older people. To give Zimbabwe as an example, while legislation on older people has not been passed despite the process starting in 1993, quite a number of other bills and legislation have sailed through parliament since then. It is clear that society still regards older people as useless, spent forces and a group of people that is not deserving of the state, private and other resources.

The other reason that has constantly been given in regard to the absence of policies on older people is the lack of resources to support the policies. It is argued that if governments enacted policies on older people, they would have the responsibility to finance the programmes and activities of older people. We wish to argue that the development of such policies and legislation will in fact

create an environment in which other players can contribute to those programmes and activities. It will provide a framework through which the general public, the private and NGO sectors can support the development of older people.

The devolvement of policies and legislation on older people is, therefore, critical and extremely overdue in Africa. It is our hope that the Policy Framework and Plan of Action developed in Kampala will be supported as it passes through the various stages within the OAU. We also hope that it will be embraced and put to use by all governments and other stakeholders in Africa.

Violations of older people's rights: The hidden problem

Contrary to the belief that older people in Africa receive a great deal of respect and care by their family members and community, older people are increasingly subjected to various forms of abuse and neglect. The abuse of older people, though hidden, is a major problem in Africa which needs to be both better understood and addressed.

What is Abuse of older people?

Abuse is defined as the act of prolonged ill treatment of or violence towards someone. Abuse towards older people takes different forms. Physical assault towards them is not uncommon and may lead to death in extreme cases. Psychological abuse also includes insults and threats that affect a person's mental wellbeing. This is the most common type of abuse but the most difficult to detect. Abuse through neglect occurs when the person does not receive adequate or timely care to meet their nutritional, health, hygiene or emotional needs. Sexual abuse is when there is a sexual act against a person's will. It ranges from suggestive words to rape. Older people also suffer from cultural abuse which prevents them from speaking their own language or wearing traditional dresses. When negative stereotypes of older people are maintained, a conducive environment for abuse is created.

How often are older people abused?

It is not easy to quantify the extent of abuse affecting older people in Africa. There is little data and we depend mostly on scanty evidence. Very few countries have data on older populations disaggregated by age and gender. However, despite these gaps in our knowledge, there is a growing body of evidence that elder abuse, including violence against older people, is a significant problem. Older people are abused by their families and by the community as a result of society's negative attitude towards ageing.

Violence in the family and community

Violence against older people in the family or community is understandably

a very sensitive issue and is not usually discussed. Older victims are usually unwilling to report cases of abuse, especially when the perpetrator is a family member – someone who is loved and trusted, and who might also be a carer. Older people who are abused may therefore suffer in silence through fear of being further victimised, isolated or abandoned. Whilst families remain the primary source of support, it is true that these structures are changing and experiencing stress.

and tend to follow a pattern. The victims are often isolated single older women. In societies where widowed women lose property rights, many older women become vulnerable. Folk myths about the characteristics of witches fit those of older women. Red eyes as a result of a lifetime of cooking over a smoky stove with poor quality fuel, or wandering in the night, possibly connected to undiagnosed dementing behaviour, are thought to prove the practice of witchcraft.



Accusations are usually connected to unusual events in local communities such as a sudden death or crop failures. In recent years, deaths from HIV/AIDS have been blamed in some areas on witchcraft. Accusers are often traditional healers, who retain a great deal of informal influence in many communities, especially where modern health facilities are scarce or expensive.

The impact of witchcraft accusations range from being chased away from home to live in exile, to being lynched by a mob. In some countries, older women accused of being

witches are sent away from their families, to live on their own. These older women might not return home and may die away from the families they love.

Witchcraft accusations have very strong currency in many communities, and thus action to combat them is very difficult to initiate.

Raping older women

There has been an increase in the number of reported rape cases of older women in recent years. One of the reasons for this is that some young men infected with HIV have tended to believe having sex with an older woman has the power of cleansing them from the virus.

Many women aged between 75 and 91 have been raped in South Africa in recent years. Even those living in old people's homes have been attacked. A

Due to the decline in their productive value to the household, older people are at great risk. Cases of widows being forcibly removed from the family home occur in many countries. Reports of violence towards older people are alarmingly common. Due to illiteracy and lack of understanding of the legal situation, older people tend to lose the battle for ownership of property. It is becoming very common to read reports of abusive acts committed by close family members such as younger children against older people.

Accusations of witchcraft

Widespread reports of violence directed at older people, especially women, as a result of witchcraft allegations gives particular cause for concern. In a number of countries in Africa, these accusations are common,

Organisational Profile

ELIM HLANGANANI SOCIETY FOR THE CARE OF THE AGED



An older person weaving a mat. Elim's mission is to enable older people live better lives.

In February 1993, a group of 42 older people attending a geriatric clinic at Elim Hospital, Northern Province of South Africa decided to form an organisation of older persons to help them and others live a better life. As a result, Elim Hlanganani Society For The Care of The Aged was born and officially registered as a fundraising organisation in 1996 and as a non-profit organisation in 1999.

It operates in Hlanganani and Southpansberg districts in the northern region of Northern province of the Republic of South Africa. Elim's mission is to enable older people to live better lives. Its vision is to avail home care for older people in its area of operation by 2005.

Organisational Structure

Elim has 686 members who voluntarily pay a yearly subscription. The members elect an Executive Committee and a Management Committee oversees the daily running of the organisation guided by a constitution. Volunteer and paid staff assist them.

Programmes

Home Care:

Trained and trainee volunteer caregivers visit and render services to

bed bound older persons. There are currently 49 caregivers attending to 218 clients and 22 trainees.

Capacity building:

Training is an integral part of the organisation. Elim runs refresher courses for caregivers. It also creates awareness for family members, neighbours, staff and Executive Committee members. Exchange visits with welfare groups doing similar work are also done.

Social and Recreation:

At zone or community level, members meet once or twice a week for dancing, singing, sewing, weaving, knitting and gardening. The 24 zones in the area meet at least three times a year for fundraising, Day of the Aged, and sharing a meal at Christmas.

Advocacy and Lobbying:

Workshops for older persons on rights, responsibilities and duties of older persons are held at zonal level. Older people are trained on how to get their rights responsibly. Elim also lobbies for their rights.

Income generating:

Elim has nine functioning income generating projects. It runs participatory needs assessments with zones to help

them identify and initiate projects to alleviate poverty and to act as fore runners of co-operative societies.

Bread for Thy Neighbour:

This programme helps older persons and their dependant children to go through the winter months by providing them with food, clothing, and blankets. They are also assisted to improve the structures in which they live in.

For more information please contact:
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Elim-Hlanganani helps restore pension

Suspension of pension payment in South Africa's Northern Province led to an advocacy victory by older and disabled people when they took the provincial government to court. Elim-Hlanganani played a key role in the process. The intervention by Elim and Legal Resources Centre led to the restoration of pensions to over 61,000 older people, including 200 Elim Hlanganani members.

The hidden problem

man young enough to be her grandson raped Emily, a 90-year-old widow. The attack has turned what is left of her life into a nightmare. "He destroyed the little dignity I hoped to take with me to my grave", she says in a trembling voice.

In addition, older women are sexually abused by their sons and grandsons in a quiet way. These are taboos and will not be talked about. When you are a mother ... left behind with children who are boys. ... There is one amongst your children ... he wants to sleep with you.....and wants that you must not talk about it You are afraid because you do not have the strength. "He does that thing as he pleases."

Violence does not have to be specifically aimed at older people to have an impact on them. Where community violence is endemic, older people often become its victims because of their greater vulnerability.

How do we stop elder abuse?

Older people throughout the world, particularly in developing regions, are experiencing a large number of problems which, to a very large extent, are caused by the refusal of society to accord them their rights as human beings. This is all in spite of the many International and UN Declarations, Conventions and Charters.

The starting point to address the situation in which older people find themselves may lie in changing society's attitudes about the way we view older people - dependent, unproductive, disabled and worthless. This can be done through the following actions:

- Implement the UN Principles of older persons: We should respect older people's rights to independence, participation, dignity, self fulfillment and care.
- Recognise and address the basic rights and needs of older people.
- Include older people in all the processes which design and shape the destiny of any nation (political, economic, social, cultural, health, developmental, environmental, etc.)
- Develop, enact and implement legislation to address the rights and needs of older people.

- Support organisations and institutions working with older people.
- Draw attention, through every means available especially the media, to the plight of older people and the abuses they are subjected to.

This article is extracted from a paper presented by HelpAge International at the 29th ICSW International Conference on Social Welfare in Cape Town, South Africa in October, 2000. If you need the full version of the paper, contact the ARDC

Advocacy workshop held in Khartoum

The Africa Regional Development Centre held a regional training in advocacy in Khartoum, Sudan between 21-25 January 2001. The workshop equipped participants with skills to enable them advocate on behalf of older people at different levels. The workshop explored how advocacy can be used to influence social policy and decision-making on issues that concern older people. *More information will be given in the next issue of Ageing in Africa.*

Gerontology Journal out

South African Journal of Gerontology (SAJG) Volume 9 Number 2 October 2000 is out. This issue looks at the contribution of research to development. The publication demonstrates that, while some research is being conducted on ageing issues in Africa, it is not being collected and adequately shared. Examples of how research can be put into practice are given through the research and work of HelpAge International.

For subscription details, please get in touch with the publishers at the address below: HSRC/UCT Centre for Gerontology, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Cape Town, Observatory 7925, South Africa.

Nutrition workshop held in Ethiopia

A nutrition workshop was held in Ethiopia between 22nd and 24th November 2000. The workshop hosted by HelpAge International Ethiopia, targeted policy makers and nutritionists who work in emergencies. The issues of ageing, nutrition and emergencies were discussed, as was a proposed model for including older people in emergencies interventions.

Sympathies to...

The family and friends of Mrs Enni Nhamoinesu who died on 6th December 2000. Until her death, she was a Projects Assistant at HelpAge Zimbabwe.

The family and friends of Mr Fifi Hesse, Board Member of HelpAge Ghana, who died on 19th October 2000.

The family and friends of Mr Ambrose Kojo Afful, Coordinator at HelpAge Ghana, who died on 8th November 2000.

Best wishes to...

Aisha Mhally who has left HelpAge International, Tanzania.

Congratulations to...

Joseph Muthoka, Accounts Assistant at Africa Regional Development Centre and Ronnah Mbithe for their wedding held on 2nd December 2000.

Sarah Massengo who joins HelpAge International, London as Programme Officer starting January 2001. She previously worked for HAI in Tanzania.

Quotable Quotes

"I know I am too old to depend upon, but what can I do except try to support them?" An Eighty year-old Tanzanian woman left to care for four orphans after the death of her daughter.

AIDS conference ignores older people

The link between HIV/AIDS and older people has once again been ignored in an international AIDS conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia between 3rd -7th December 2000.

The conference, which attracted about 1500 people, was organised by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa through the African Development Forum (ADF) in partnership with UNAIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, WHO and the World Bank.

"AIDS: the Greatest Leadership Challenge", as the conference was called, failed to link HIV/AIDS and older people and the role of older people in caring for People Living with HIV/AIDS and orphans. However, hope is not lost as the consensus document mentioned older people and AIDS providing an opportunity for the issue to be raised in future meetings.

An older man in Uganda taking care of a child. The role of older people in caring for HIV/AIDS patients and orphans must be recognised.



Forthcoming Events



Training course on ageing to be held in Nairobi

HelpAge International, Africa Regional Development Centre (HAI-ARDC) will hold a training course on ageing issues in Africa in July 2001 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The course is targeted at those working with older people. However, those working with NGOs and the government on social issues will also benefit. The course will also provide new skills and information on ageing issues for those with previous experience.

The five-day introductory course to ageing issues will cover rights of older people, health, care in the family, community and residential homes, conflict, social welfare, income security among others.

The course will combine presentations, demonstrations and discussions.

Participants will also share their experiences. A training manual on ageing will be given to all participants.

Participants are expected to pay for their own travel to Nairobi. The course fee is US\$400 with accommodation and US\$150 without. The later, will also make own arrangements for daily transport to the venue.

The venue is 16 kms from the city-centre. It offers good quality accommodation and is located in extensive grounds with good leisure facilities.

For more information and an application form contact: HelpAge International, Africa Regional Development Centre.

Gerontology Congress for Vancouver

The International Association of Gerontology will hold its 17th World Congress in Vancouver, Canada, July 1-6, 2001. Experts of international recognition in gerontology will share knowledge and information in symposia and plenary sessions. There will be a

strong scientific programme. Symposia, round tables, papers and posters will address issues in research, education, public policy and clinical practice. Also to feature is an exhibition and trade show and several pre and post Congress special interest events.

For more information contact: Congress Secretariat, Gerontology Research Centre, Simon Fraser University at Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 5K3. Fax: (604) 291 5066, E-mail iag_congress@sfu.ca

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