OLDER PEOPLE IN SITUATIONS OF MIGRATION IN AFRICA

The Untold Migration Story

POLICY PAPER

Older people in Africa are involved in all aspects of the migration chain: they are voluntary or forced migrants themselves, they shape the migration experience of others by funding youth migration and being involved in the decision-making process, they also benefit from remittances. Yet, they remain invisible in migration policy, as well as aid and development planning. This briefing tells the untold story of older people in the migration ecosystem in Africa. It highlights the importance of including older people in migration policies and practice – whether they are left behind, on the move, or returning to their country of origin. It identifies the key challenges facing this generation, explores policy options and calls for more thorough research to improve understanding of the capabilities and needs of older people in situations of migration in Africa.

1. Context | Older People

The World's population is rapidly ageing with the relative increase in the older population most noticeable in the developing world.[i] 12.3% people in the world were aged 60+ in 2015. This percentage is expected to go up to 21.5% in 2050. Similarly, the number of countries with high-ageing and hyper-ageing populations is also on the rise; implying that the number of older people are increasing in the world. The ageing population in Europe is part of the migration conversation now – with migration filling an important demographic gap – yet few mention older people in Africa. Why are they left out of the migration conversation? While numbers grow, globalisation and a changing world order has redistributed the burden of economic responsibility and social support across ages; previously the purview of the working age. Economically, on the other side of a major financial crisis, retirement ages have increased as more and more people over the age of 60 have had to continue working. Socially, nuclearisation of families especially in urban centres and migrating youth have weakened the ties between generations of a family.[ii] Loss of social status and livelihoods are only a few of the issues that face the older people of the world whose children have migrated, who have decided or were forced to migrate themselves.

Africa's population is ageing much more quickly;[iii] by 2050, the number of people over 60 living in Africa will increase from just under 50 million to just under 200 million. This unprecedented demographic shift is having profound implications for society, influencing people's social, economic and political lives. Older men and women throughout Africa make vital contributions to their families and communities. Across the continent, 52% of men and 32.6% of women aged 65 years continue to work across the formal and informal sectors[iv]. Older women tend to live longer than older men,[v] continuing their domestic and farming roles. Increasing numbers of older women whose adult children have migrated in search of work or have died as a result of HIV and AIDS are bringing up grandchildren too. Despite this indispensable contribution, many older people in Africa continue to experience deepening poverty, discrimination, violence and abuse, and are unable to access entitlements that are theirs by right.

World's Older people Population

Changing Economic, Social & Cultural Circumstance

Africa's Older people Population

2. Snapshots: Older People in Situations of Migration

Africa is characterised by '*complex population movements including refugees, asylum-seekers, economic migrants, victims of trafficking, smuggled migrants, unaccompanied minors and other migrants[vi]*', as well as rural-urban migrants, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). To better capture the experiences of older people in situations of migration in Africa, it is fundamental to acknowledge that local context, legal status and gender have significant impacts on the agency and the migration experiences of older people.

This section provides a snapshot to the circumstances of older people in 5 key situations of migration; a) older people shaping voluntary migration decisions, b) older people left behind, c) older people in forced displacement, d) older people in diaspora, and e) older people returning to shed light on this heterogenous and invisible generation.

1. The role of older people in shaping the voluntary migration experience

For many, to migrate is to escape poverty and seek better economic opportunities. This poverty-alleviation rationale also includes a strong commitment to support family members who are left or choose to stay behind through a steady remittance, especially middle-aged and older parents.[vii] Emigration as a student is accepted and even encouraged by many older people because they regard education as a means of self-improvement for the individual and the family.[viii] Reasons of economic deprivation and insecurity combine to often urge older people to send one or two youngsters in the family abroad. The Living Standard Measurement Survey of Ghana, Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Nigeria conducted for the Africa Migration Project found that larger household size increases the probability that a household member emigrates and remains abroad.

In this situation, those who migrate are supported financially or emotionally by older people who are left behind. Research conducted in Moldova suggests that the migration decision is likely to be made with consideration not only of individual benefits but also of family-level obligations; individuals with ageing parents may plan their potential migration projects in conjunction with their siblings. Indeed, only very few older people individuals with multiple children were 'left behind' by migration. When the option to negotiate between or among potential migrants arises, families tend to do so in such a way to ensure that ageing parents will have at least one child in the country[ix]. Although findings to this research cannot be directly applied to the African context, anecdotal evidence in Ethiopia shows that older people sell their property to fund the migration of family members, as an investment for future remittances[x].

However, in some cases, older people are excluded by the decision-making process. For instance, in Somaliland, recent migration decisions are individual affairs and young people often leave without informing their families[xi].

1. Older people fueling decisions

2. Older people left behind

At the onset of a crisis, older people are often left behind when the rest of their community is displaced. Reasons for this are wide ranging and include[xii]: physical incapacity of many older persons to move, whether real or perceived by their family; homeland ties: they may feel particularly tied to their home and lands; ridden out: they may have resisted pre-emptive disaster evacuations and thus experienced and managed similar situations before – that is, 'ridden out' previous disasters; starting elsewhere: the prospect of starting again elsewhere may be too overwhelming for an older person and the feeling that it is important for someone to remain at home to secure their assets.

Those who stay behind are perhaps the most invisible and unsupported group, despite being vulnerable to the ongoing crises. Older people who stay behind may be subject to violence, intimidation or secondary impacts of natural hazards, such as aftershocks or rising flood waters. In Darfur, for example, older people who did not leave were terrorised and then killed by Janjaweed militia.[xiii] Furthermore, those who do not leave their area of origin often lose assistance and support mechanisms they rely on. The age- and sex-selective nature of emigration puts particular pressure on older women left behind, for they bear the burdens of looking after the family, the house and the land.[xiv]

The impact of migration on the older people left behind is based on the fundamental fact that African migrants do not sever relations with their kinsfolk when they leave home.[xv] Their fate is closely tied to those who do move.

Likewise, in the case of voluntary migration, when the aspirations of the young and those who have migrated abroad in search for greater economic opportunities are not met, it has the potential to have a devastating impact on those left behind, dependent on those who have migrated.

3. Older people in forced displacement

Migration can either be voluntary or involuntary and both present challenges to the older people. Strong feelings of uselessness among older people as a result of their physical incapacity, lack of strength and loss of traditional roles in the household and community can be felt by both who have moved voluntarily and involuntarily. For those who are forced to flee their homes, the vulnerabilities and threats of exploitation increase manifold. Basic services, safety, health and well-being are compromised in a context where all support systems are in suspense. Mental health issues arising out of displacement amongst the older people are not even documented, such is the nature of their invisibility plight, and few adapted services are available for them. As an example, in a study conducted by HelpAge, for many older people care of the dead was a significant concern, as well as the terms of moving the bones of relatives who had died in the camps back to their home. They themselves were eager to return to their land before they died.[xvi]These are issues that often go unnoticed, but pose concern to the wellbeing of the older people.

For those who are heads of households in camps and locations of transit, the burden of responsibility to provide for the family in a new environment with poor livelihoods and income generating options is immense. Often, the older people are left behind in camps along with grandchildren to continue to receive the aid provided, while the younger, more able bodied parents move to the next country or to an urban centre to provide money to the family[xvii].

Displacement often brings about devastating loss of social status for older people, with the huge contribution they normally make to society being ignored. This is particularly apparent in the case of their support role vis-à-vis children. Older persons in the developing world tend to work into their late seventies, whether in formal or informal employment. As with younger generations, the lack of employment brought about through displacement can be extremely demoralising. In an extreme example, in Lira district of northern Uganda, in the absence of an alternative strategy to support older people's needs, the local government declared Fridays begging days for older persons living in IDP camps. Yet older people do really suffer from the transition from a rural to an urban environment that is often associated with displacement. Many of the skills they have may not appear relevant in the new situation, and aid agencies rarely consider them as part of programme planning for livelihood work – a form of age-related discrimination, even if unintentional.[xviii]

Additionally, those in displacement suffer latent effects of the exploitation that they faced when they were young. Of the thousands of people who were displaced during the Rwanda genocide, untold numbers of women were raped by soldiers infected with the AIDS virus. As a result, many women of all ages in Rwanda today are dealing simultaneously with the trauma of rape and the virus. Exact numbers of older women infected by the virus are not known. Older women caring for victims of AIDS and for grandchildren left behind when parents were killed require humanitarian support, legal protection and development aid.[xix]

Within the older people, older people heads of households with families to support, those with reduced mobility and women can be particularly vulnerable. Fear of violence, theft or other abuses during transit, or in a new country, can itself reduce mobility and independence for people of all ages but women and older women are particularly affected.[xx]

4. Older people in Diaspora

Refugee and migrant communities are not a homogenous group and with many different needs it is easy to lose the needs of a specific cohort within the population.[xxi] It also remains difficult to communicate the needs of a cohort to a host population that is still largely ignorant of the generic needs of the whole 'migrant' population.

The older people play an important role in upholding the ties with home countries and often ensure that ways of life and cultures of countries of origin have a strong voice in transit and destination countries. They often act as support networks for younger and newly incoming migrants through societies and gatherings that they organise around a religious festival or social event.

4. Older people in diaspora

5. Older people returning

5. Return and the Older people

Returns whether of the older people themselves or of children who have migrated is yet another potential element of the older people migration trajectory. Returns can be voluntary, assisted or forced. Returns from Kenya to Somalia for instance include older people in a context of on-going insurgency and lack of basic services. If the older people had been left behind, failing health or other considerations can often prompt those who have migrated to return to their countries of origin, which in the context of Somalia count as unsafe settings. In such context, then older people are both actors and drivers of the migration of their children. While returns may be assisted, does the assistance also take into account the vulnerabilities of the older people? The *Persons with Specific Needs (PWSN)[1]* categorization used by the humanitarian community identifies the older people as a category with special needs and requiring an adapted response. But when it comes to service delivery, or the presence of older people care and support mechanisms in locations of return, a wide gap remains.

It is very common to find that older people as displaced experience their condition as a "freezing" of their existence expressed by feelings of solitude, confusion, fear and pain and by symptoms of mental illness, of lack of direction and a life plan, of becoming uncommunicative, unhappy and excluded.[xxii]

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[1] "Persons with Specific Needs" (PWSN) face heightened protection risks because of specific needs. They are divided into subcategories by the UNHCR. Categories that relate to older people include: ER ("Older person at risk"), ER-NF ("Single older person"), ER-MC ("Older person with children"), and ER-FR ("Older person unable to care for self"). See UNHCR guidelines: Guidance on the Use of Standardised Specific Needs Codes and Identifying People with Specific Needs.

3. Opportunities and Risks for Older People in Situations of Migration

Older men and women throughout Africa make significant social and economic contributions to their families and communities, whether in everyday life or in situations of emergencies. Yet, risks must be addressed to unlock their developmental potential, keeping in mind the gender disparities facing older women that make them more invisible and less autonomous.

An unprecedented 65.3 million people around the world have been forced from home.[xxiii] Among them are nearly 21.3 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.[xxiv] 34,000 people are forcibly displaced every day. The number of people over the age of 60 who have been displaced is hard to quantify; the risks that they face nevertheless are not limited to those moving but also those who have been left behind. Exclusion and discrimination, erosion of family and traditional support systems, lack of access to information and documentation and deprived access to basic services whether in being left behind, in displacement or as diaspora are only some of the daunting challenges faced by older people.[xxv]

It is virtually impossible to say just how many older people are vulnerable due to migration is a manifestation of the first of such risks – **invisibility**. Often already marginalised before a crisis, older people are usually not factored into assessments of need and fall between the cracks of registration systems.[xxvi]While some include them within the extremely vulnerable individuals (EVI) categories or 'persons with special needs' planning for them remains neglected. Facing physical and mobility constraints that make leaving difficult, they are reluctant to leave the house, land and livestock which are their principal assets[xxvii], and slowly fall into invisibility.

Contrary to common belief, often older people in displacement cannot count on a safety network, as they find themselves marginalised – and at times **excluded** – by their own families and communities in a situation of competition for scarce resources.[xxviii] People of ethnic minorities or indigenous groups frequently suffer marginalisation because they face linguistic barriers and are without the support of younger family members more likely acquainted with the dominant language.[xxix]

The negligence of governments and the international community to include and address older people as equal citizens in times of displacement has serious consequences for the ability of older people to exercise their rights. This negligence stems from the lack of awareness and the inability of the agencies to understand the specific challenges faced by older people. This is related to the extent to which older people's rights are respected, prior to the emergency, by the community, by the family and indeed by themselves. Poverty and social exclusion play an important role in determining older people's ability to exercise their rights.[xxx] The severity of neglect often increases when the older people are exposed to vulnerabilities through migration. Those who are sick, immobile or unable to look after themselves tend to particularly suffer neglect. In contexts of forced displacement, services for healthcare, trauma counselling and post-traumatic stress disorder are rarely provided for older people in emergency-affected populations.

RISK 1: INVISIBILITY

RISK 2: EXCLUSION

RISK 3: DISCRIMINATION

RISK 4 NEGLECT

4. Understanding the ecosystem and connecting the dots

**Recognising the link between children, youth on the move and older people**

While children and youth have held the focus of policy makers, older people have remained invisible and neglected, despite continuing contributions to labour markets, decision making and families. Yet - the movement of children and youth is inextricably linked to the older people in their families and communities. Research and enquiry into the dynamics of children and youth migrating must also include an element of the older people as part of that **migration ecosystem.** All major data sources, including the ILO or World Bank, currently club together everyone over the age of 60, 62 or 64 depending on the data set one is looking at. Age disaggregated should include not just children/youth but also **60 and above**, further be separated into age cohorts. Older people experience life, wellbeing, displacement and migration, differently based on their age cohort. For the purpose of this paper, we use "60 and above" to describe older people, but further research should distinguish between the different age cohorts beyond 60. Older people deserve for their needs and contributions to be captured and recognised more contextually.

Understanding the missing pieces of a migration ECOSYSTEM

The migration spectrum in any context is complex and includes many unknown variables. The cause and effect of these has multifaceted reverberations for many unrecognised actors in the spectrum. As long as policy makers do not understand and are able to visualise the overall ecosystem, for instance - the actors around the migration of youth - all responses to migration will be incomplete. For example, research conducted by Samuel Hall in Somalia found that youth do not tell their parents / older people about the migration plans as they know the older people will dissuade them or disapprove. Can they be tapped into as a source for support? The voices of the older people matter, but go largely unheard due to a lack of inclusion. How can they have a bigger impact? They have a role to also protect those on the move, they are the wise, the knowledgeable, the experienced. How can they become partners in this? This must drive policy makers to invest in more nuanced research into the role of the older people in migrating circumstances.

Migration a lifeline

For older people, even voluntary migration often contains elements of compulsion and signals a desire for better opportunities for their families and generations to come. Many continue to make investments in their home countries by building houses and maintaining links with their communities even after they have left. The world today however is at a stage where many migrations happen involuntarily, suddenly and often lead to a further erosion of safety, security and well-being, albeit away from immediate physical danger. The sacrifices made by older people who either watch their children move or have to move themselves, often shouldering the responsibility of entire families in old age are immense when seen against the attention given to them.
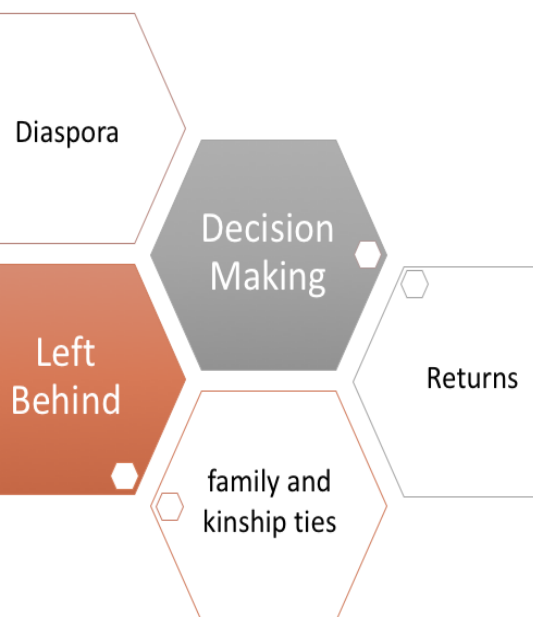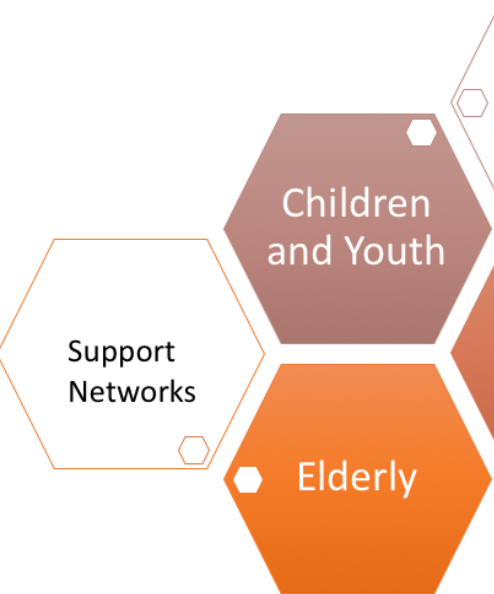
5. Policy on Older people in Migration

Any discussion on policy must be underpinned by one on fundamental rights. To age is a universal and personal experience. Legally, older people enjoy the same rights as the rest of the population. In practice, however, older people often fail to benefit from the human rights provisions currently in place.

Globally, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) is the first global agreement which commits governments to including ageing in all social and economic development policies, including poverty reduction programmes. Under 'Priority direction I: Older persons and development', issue 3 is focused on 'Rural development, migration and urbanization'.

However, this instrument is non-binding and implementation is far from satisfactory. Older people's rights are all too often denied or side lined, especially in emergency situations[xxxi]. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement clearly state that no discrimination of any kind, including age, should influence the delivery of relief operations and they make explicit mention of '*the older people as entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition, and to treatment which takes into account their special needs*'.[xxxii] The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights applies to older persons as much as to anyone else. Older people are covered under international humanitarian law, and the Geneva conventions (1949) make specific mention of them. However, they do not figure as a 'vulnerable' group in the additional protocols (1977), and thus they do not receive special attention, unlike women, children and the disabled. [xxxiii]

A protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of older people has already been adopted in January 2016 and is currently undergoing ratification by member states. It outlines governments' specific human rights obligations to older people and, once ratified, will require them to introduce legislation and policies to protect rights in older age.

In 2012, only seven countries had adopted national policies on ageing while three, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa, had assigned budgets.[xxxiv] Eight had established special organisations or included ageing in a ministry. Increasingly, countries are working on social protection policies mainly in the form of social pensions or cash transfers, for example, Tanzania and Kenya.[xxxv] Some, such as South Africa and Mozambique, have specifically recognised older people's issues in health and HIV and AIDS policies.

There is however a sustainability gap between the longer lives and the evolution of policies that capture these great changes, policies that would protect and empower older men and women. As a consequence, population ageing presents a greater challenge for policymakers in many countries worldwide.[xxxvi] The UN has been concerned about ageing since the first world Assembly on Ageing in Vienna in 1982 where it adopted the Plan of Action on Ageing. In 1991 the UN drew up a set of Principles for Older Persons to which a number of governments have signed up.

RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE

The UN also designated 1999 as the international year for older persons. However, the Principles are not yet legally binding and true commitment from member states to implement them has been slow[xxxvii]. The new, more comprehensive post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognise the central importance of older men and women to the ideals of sustainable development. Particularly relevant is goal 3, which reads "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages". Meanwhile, the fact that the SDGs make a broader commitment that "all indicators should be disaggregated by age" brings great promise too. Likewise, the Inclusion Charter on including specific vulnerabilities in emergency response[xxxviii], as well as the Grand Bargain to humanitarian funding launched at the World Humanitarian Summit[xxxix], specifically mentions older persons as a vulnerable group.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Ensuring older women are not left behind. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which ran to 2015, gave an exclusive place to women in their standalone goals on maternal mortality and a goal on gender equality and female empowerment. These goals contributed towards almost halving the maternal mortality ratio over the last 20 years. However, the development discourse until now seems to have given minimal attention to women beyond reproductive age.

The SDGs provide unparalleled opportunities to place gender back on the emerging ageing and development agenda. The pledges of the SDGs that "no one will be left behind" and "to reach the furthest behind first" reaffirm human development approach of United Nations Development Programme, and the active and healthy ageing principles of the World Health Organization. They advocate for older people to lead a life they value and enable them to realise their potential as human beings, for their own wellbeing, as well as for the prosperity of countries in which they live.

Beyond the SDGs, at the regional level, the African Union, UNECA and HelpAge have undertaken initiatives to recognise the older people as a key demographic to look at when it comes to migration.

REGIONAL INITIATIVES

African Union. AU has recently organised the [High-level Symposium on Demographic Dividend and Africa's Development on 20th June 2016](). It is currently developing a Road Map on Demographic Dividend, but the focus seems to be on young people. The Executive Council of the African Union adopted two policy documents on migration in 2006 that specifically mention the older people in the context of migration:

★ [African Common Position on Migration and Development]() which incorporates the older people as a cross-cutting issue; and
★ [Migration Policy Framework]() which also makes special mention of migration and the older people.

Additionally, the [AU Framework on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons]() (Kampala Convention) also mentions the older people.

The recommendations made within these documents include:

1. Ensure the protection of the rights of older people migrants.
2. Ensure that the needs of older people migrants are met at the time of migration and at the time of resettlement.
3. Ensure that older people migrants receive adequate quality and quantity of health care and other social services.

4. Protect the entitlements of older people migrants including pensions and other provisions.
5. Ensure that programmes relating to training and resettlement take into account the needs of older people in terms of re-uniting them with their families.

Other recent and relevant policy documents adopted by the AU such as the <u>Joint Africa-EU Declaration on Migration and Development</u>, the <u>Joint Africa-EU Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings</u> and the <u>Labour Migration Governance for Integration and Development in Africa</u> – make no mention specific to older people.

AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing: A partnership between HelpAge International – Africa Development Centre and the then OAU and African Union, produced the AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing in Africa approved in Durban, South Africa in July 2002. AU <u>continues working with HelpAge</u> to promote the rights of the older people.

UNECA. UNECA is building a strategy/action points on migration. This is still currently under development but presents an opportunity to bring together regional processes on older people and migration towards a common goal.

IGAD. The Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) leads the Regional Consultative Process on migration (<u>IGAD-RCP</u>). According to the 2016 <u>Samuel Hall/ReDSS</u> report, the forthcoming IGAD Forced Displacement and Mixed Migration Secretariat holds much hope for advocacy and dialogue on durable solutions within the region.

ReDSS Regional Solutions Secretariat, created in March 2014 with the aim of maintaining a focused momentum and stakeholder engagement towards durable solutions for displaced and displacement, has initiated the <u>Solutions Framework</u> that includes a list of indicators that provides an assessment of durable solutions for each country based on set milestones. This however does not make any mention of the older people.

Progress has been made, but due to a fairly small proportion of older people, governments are viewing young people as the engine for growth and not recognising fully the contributions made by older people. More progress can be achieved through regional and national frameworks and programmes. But this depends on plans being appropriately rolled out, well-resourced and adequately managed, informed by what works and with political will behind them.

"The stereotype that older people are immobile no longer holds true. People migrate at old age for different reasons. Though non-economic factors dominate older people migration, economic factors could also prompt older people migration like their non-older people counterparts. The determinants and consequences of older people migration need to be understood properly in order to cater for their needs and aspirations. Generally, older people are negatively affected by their uprooting from their environment. As a result, their physical, health, and economic well-being are compromised". – African Union

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6. Way forward

A critical challenge facing humanitarian and development agencies is the lack of reliable data concerning actual numbers, location and make-up of the displaced population, disaggregated across all age groups. Studies on children and youth call for disaggregation of data by age and gender[xl], but age disaggregation should include older people beyond the age of 60, to improve programming in line with their capabilities and needs.

Although estimates exist suggesting older people now make up between 10-30% of displaced people, we need specific information on where they are, how many of them there are, their gender, ethnicity, socio-economic and employment status, and the conditions in which they live, to ensure that older people are visible. This can only be achieved through wide consultation with affected populations and interagency co-operation.[xli]

Secondly, when it comes to prioritising, humanitarian and development agencies also make choices, performing a form of 'triage' in which the needs of older people are considered of less importance than, for example, those of women and children.[xlii] During displacement itself, the support that older people receive from governments and international or national organisations can be minimal or non-existent as it is frequently merged into programmes targeting displaced people as one homogeneous group. This results in assistance programmes which are not adapted for and/or are inaccessible to older people. For instance, while the known consequences of displacement on the health of the general population can be devastating, an almost exclusive focus on communicable diseases misses the fact that much excess morbidity and mortality among older people result from exacerbation of existing non-infectious conditions such as hypertension, diabetes and cancer[xliii].

There is also often a mismatch between humanitarian and development agencies' ideas of what older people need in emergencies and what older people themselves see as most important. Older people ranked their most acute problems in descending order as income, access to health services, shelter, food and nutrition, and isolation/separation from families. Aid agencies, on the other hand, identified older people's main problem as food and nutrition, followed by isolation/separation and access to health services, making almost no mention of income issues[xliv].

RETHINKING THE ROLE OF THE OLDER PEOPLE IN DISPLACEMENT SITUATIONS

International humanitarian and development agencies demonstrate only limited recognition of the practical and material contribution older people are making[1]. The knowledge, skills and capacities of IDPs can, and in fact do, support relief efforts. HelpAge International research in Rwanda found that older people played important roles in community conflict resolution and reconciliation, in leadership of community self-help groups and with their families as carers of grandchildren and property. Similarly, older persons' self-help groups in Sudan, supported by HelpAge, provide a valuable service to the community, through identifying vulnerable older people and distributing relief aid. Unfortunately, assumptions and societal stereotypes that portray old people as a burden are exacerbated in times of emergency.

As the ageing dimension of displacement becomes ever more relevant, development and humanitarian agencies, local and national governments and human rights organisations need to pay much greater attention to the needs and rights of older persons at all stages of the voluntary migration or forced displacement cycle.

Recommendations

Include older people in needs assessments, planning and programmes, stressing the importance of looking across generations at support mechanisms in families and among neighbours or communities. Put into action, data collected on vulnerable groups, namely Persons with Specific Needs (PSWN) categories into planning and implementation. When displacement occurs or in situations of protractedness, the need to involve older people is of equal importance.

Advocate and raise awareness with other national and international NGOs, UN agencies and government bodies on the rights and specific needs of the older people. Highlight the contributions made by the older people to families and communities in situations of vulnerability.

Engage agencies that do not specialise in working with older people to become more aware of their needs, and either address them within their own programmes or identify them to more specialised agencies such as HelpAge.

Explore and investigate what comprises a migration "ecosystem" of youth migrating and the place of the older people in it, for better assistance towards those who may be left behind, in displacement or returning. They can act as support systems as well as find themselves in need of care. Further localised research is needed to investigate how older people cope with natural disaster, on-going poverty and migration, looking specifically at their capabilities and needs, and at the ties they maintain with those who have left.

Support vulnerable older people, both during the emergency relief phase and in subsequent rehabilitation programmes and ensure that the older person's family is also included. HelpAge has learned from experience that singling out older people can cause resentment in hard-pressed communities, and may expose them to abuse. Generally speaking, if the older person, is supported to contribute more effectively within their family, assistance is likely to be welcomed and their status improved.

Protect IDPs upon relocation or return and provide compensation for the losses they have incurred. It is fundamental that human rights legislation is applied equally to all persons and that the discrimination faced by older people, often as a result of the negative stereotypes of old age, is addressed in a way that guarantees equal access to assistance, opportunity and development for all.

Bridge the gap between international laws and regulations on paper and their implementation through concrete domestic action to comply with them; and between humanitarian relief and development assistance and long-term sustainable peace and development for a society of all ages.

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