GUIDE TO MAINSTREAMING AGEING
IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

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INTRODUCTION

POPULATION AGEING

Most of the world's people can today expect to live into their sixties and beyond. Rising life expectancy is a public health achievement, reflecting success in combatting preventable child and maternal deaths and deaths in older people. When coupled with marked falls in birth rates, increases in life expectancy are leading to significant changes in population structure. Population ageing is occurring fastest in low- and middle-income countries. This has many implications for development programming and presents important opportunities. This is true whether your organisation focuses on health, social, economic or environmental issues.

Population ageing is occuring at the same time as globalisation - with modern influences, and migration to cities and other countries and women in employment. These changes have many implications for the lives of elders, including the need to take on domestic tasks for the family, adjust to urban living, or adjust to living alone.

THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF ELDERS AND COMBATTING DISCRIMINATION

The rapid ageing of populations worldwide is often presented as a problem rather than as an opportunity. For example, there have been many headlines about the 'ageing tsunami' or the 'ageing bomb'.

Elders are often stereotyped as frail, weak, forgetful, disabled, dependent and a burden. Elders are often more vulnerable than other age groups, but in advocating for their rights and needs we must take care not to reinforce negative stereotypes. Discrimination against elders is very common worldwide, and contributes to the difficulties elders face in accessing transport, health care and social welfare services, in employment, and in accessing financial services. Attitudes towards widows vary between different cultures: in some societies widows receive great respect; in others there are negative attitudes.[1]

Many common perceptions about elders are based on outdated stereotypes. Elders represent a powerful resource for society.[2] Elders play critical social, cultural and economic roles in their families and communities.[3] These include caregiving, childrearing, domestic work, volunteering, financial and housing support, and passing on traditional skills and knowledge. Many of these contributions are unpaid, often unrecognised.

Additional years lived in good health provide the chance to pursue new activities, while continuing to make valuable contributions to family and community. The recent *World Report on Ageing and Health*,[4] and a forthcoming *Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health*,[5] call for fundamental shifts in how we think about ageing. Making investments in elders will have valuable social and economic returns, both in terms of the health and wellbeing of elders and in enabling their ongoing participation in society.

Elders should still be afforded all the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments.[6] There is not yet a 'Convention on the Rights of Older People'; however, many international groups are advocating for this.[7] It is important to be aware of any national legislation that protects the rights of elders. For example, Sri Lanka has the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act.

1. Bangari SY, Bangari BY (2014) Attitude towards widow marriage. Indian Journal of Applied Research, 4;3. Available at: http://www.theglobaljournals.com/ijar/file.php?val=March_2014_1394095244_98fb6_171%20Dr.%20Shanta%20Y.%20Bangari.pdf

2. United Nations (2002) Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/Madrid_plan.pdf

3. Holmes W and Joseph J (2011) Social participation and healthy ageing: a neglected, significant protective factor for chronic non communicable conditions, Globalisation and Health, 7.

4. World Health Organization (2015) World Report on Ageing and Health, WHO; Geneva.

5. World Health Organization (2015) Revised Draft Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health, for consideration by the WHO Executive Board. WHO; Geneva. Available at: http://www.who.int/ageing/consultation/en/

6. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women are especially relevant.

7. HelpAge International (n.d.) Towards a convention on the rights of older people. Available at: http://www.helpage.org/what-we-do/rights/towards-a-convention-on-the-rights-of-older-people/

MAINSTREAMING AGEING

Mainstreaming is 'a process of bringing issues that have not received the consideration they deserve to the centre of attention - a tool for focus and inclusion.'[8] Advocacy for mainstreaming gender analysis in development work has been effective: most development project proposals now include a gender analysis in their design and evaluation. However, ageing has not been afforded the same attention in development and there has been little progress in this area, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.[9-12]

In development activities it is important to understand:

• The ways that elders might contribute to activities

• What might be needed to enable elders to benefit from activities

• How the rights, roles and responsibilities of elders might be affected by activities

• How the relationship between generations might be affected by activities

This should be analysed at every stage of the project planning cycle: information gathering and situation analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. It is also important to consider how old age interacts with other factors such as socioeconomic status, occupation, caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

Programming should take a life-course approach which recognises that biological, social and psychological risk and protective factors throughout life influence health and wellbeing in old age. For example: low birth weight predisposes to adult disease, so preventing low birth weight contributes to healthy ageing; providing opportunities to save income throughout working life reduces poverty in old age; and reducing youth smoking rates reduces chronic diseases in old age.

An ageing analysis should seek not only the views of elders, but also of other age groups on how population ageing affects their lives.

This guide outlines a process for analysing ageing in development projects or programs. We hope that this guide will contribute to progress towards equality of participation in society for people of every age, and to equality of access to services in all development projects and programs, not only those explicitly concerned with elders and healthy ageing.

DEFINITION OF MAINSTREAMING AGEING

The United Nations Economic and Social Council defined gender mainstreaming in 1997[13] This definition can be modified to provide a definition for mainstreaming ageing:

Mainstreaming an ageing perspective is the process of assessing the implications for older women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of older people an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that people of all ages benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve equality in relation to age.

8. Venne R (2005) Mainstreaming the concerns of older persons into the social development agenda. Available at: http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/mainstreaming/positionpaper.pdf

9. Beales S (2012) Mainstreaming ageing into the post-2015 process. Policy brief No 2.. HelpAge International. Available at: www.helpage.org/agewatch

10. Jones H (2013) Mainstreaming disability and ageing in water, sanitation and hygiene programmes. A mapping study carried out for WaterAid. Available at: www.wateraid.org

11. United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (2011) Reinforcing social equity: mainstreaming ageing issues in the process of development planning in the ESCWA region. Issue no 4. 5 June 2011. E/ESCWA/SDD/2011/Technical Paper.2

12. Bernd Marin & Asghar Zaidi eds. (2007) Mainstreaming Ageing. European Centre Vienna; Ashgate.

13. United Nations Economic and Social Commission (1997) Coordination of the policies and activities of the specilized agencies and other bodies of the United Nations: Mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system. Available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF

CHECKLIST FOR MAINSTREAMING AGEING IN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

PROJECT OR PROGRAM DESIGN

CONSULTATION AND SITUATION ANALYSIS

- Have you discussed with the donor the idea of mainstreaming ageing as part of the design process?
- How could you include elders in the consultation and information gathering process?
- How are elders represented in the communities in which you work?
- How could you reach older people, including those who may be ill, disabled, or socially isolated?
- Could you include questions about elders and ageing in focus group discussions, surveys and participatory exercises?
- What significant events might have influenced the lives of the current cohort of elders in the setting you are working in? For example, war, epidemics or exposure to occupational hazards.
- Could you include questions for women, men and young people about how population ageing is affecting their lives?

Examples of the impact of population ageing on women, men and young people

- Women and girls may have to stay at home to care for older family members
- Couples may be affected by lack of privacy when living with one or more older family members

PLANNING

- How could elders contribute to the objectives and activities of the project?
- How might the activities affect elders' ability to carry out their roles in their families? For example, as grandparents, caregivers for the ill or disabled, in their domestic work, advisers to youth, and as custodians of traditional skills and knowledge
- How could the activities assist elders to carry out their roles in their families and communities?
- How could the activities promote the health and wellbeing of elders in the community?
- How might the project or program activities affect intergenerational relationships? Consider relationships between elders and younger adults, youth and children
- How might elders be adversely affected as a result of project or program activities?

Examples of elders as a resource

- In seeking to address gender violence, community elders can play an influential role in resolving conflicts and raising awareness that violence is unacceptable
- In seeking to end preventable child deaths, older women can play a critical role supporting mothers during pregnancy, maintaining beneficial cultural traditions during pregnancy and childbirth, caring for newborns and advising and educating younger women on family wellbeing. Older women have a strong influence on the health care seeking behaviours of young women, and on decisions made by fathers and other men
- Elders can be trained and supported as peer health educators
- Elders are well placed to assist middle-aged people to prepare for healthy and active ageing

Examples of how activities might assist elders in their roles

- Small children are often cared for by elders. In an early childhood development program communication materials could be designed to reach elders as well as parents
- In a youth skills building project elders could play a mentoring role

Examples of how activities might promote the health and wellbeing of elders

- Activities could provide opportunities for greater social participation to improve health and wellbeing
- Elders could be invited as guests of honour at meetings or to judge a competition to increase respect for older people
- Microfinance activities could include elders to decrease poverty
- Transport initiatives could include benches at bus stops for elders
- Efforts to reduce the risk of chronic non-communicable diseases could address indoor air pollution which affect elders because they often spend more time indoors, and older women are often exposed to indoor air pollution when cooking for their family
- Social welfare activities could provide information for elders about their entitlements
- Initiatives to provide clean water could address elders' health issues; for example, the back-happy tapstand (below) helps to prevent lower back pain when collecting water

Back-happy tap stand, Burnet Institute

Examples of potential adverse effects for elders

- Infrastructure projects or programs that build new housing or facilities need to take into account that vision impaired elders may then lose their familiar paths and handholds and have more restricted lives. The design of housing and facilities needs to take into account the needs of elders and disabled people
- When roads are built or widened, older pedestrians may be at greater risk of road traffic injuries unless they are educated about safety and safe crossings are provided

IMPLEMENTATION

- How could you involve elders in your project or program activities in ways that might increase their status and respect?
- How could you include elders in your advocacy efforts? Are they able to represent their own views?
- How could your communication materials reach elders? Will elders read and understand the communication materials? Do illustrations or photographs include images of elders?
- How could your communication materials represent elders' diversity and potential to contribute?
- How could you include the issues of elders in your training programs?
- How could you identify opportunities and ideas to assist disabled elders?

Examples of the need to include issues of elders in training

- A high proportion of farming smallholders are elders. Training for agricultural extension officers in rural development projects should include active ageing issues and guidelines for working with elders
- Vision impairment is the most common disability of elders and the greatest proportion of those with vision impairment are elders. Eye health training should include the specific needs of elders with vision impairment

Examples of opportunities to assist disabled elders

- Facilities could be designed to assist older people with a disability. For example, latrines with structures for support or seats and visual aids made from readily available materials

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- Could you disaggregate project or program data by age and gender?
- Do reports from the project or program portray elders in a positive way and avoid stereotyping?
- Have you considered the ethical implications in gathering information through surveys, interviews and focus group discussions with elders?

Ethical and practical guidelines for working with elders

- It is important to respect elders' rights to health and dignity, and recognise their physical and psychological needs, and their family and community responsibilities

  Refer to the information sheet *Ethical and practical guidelines for working with elders*
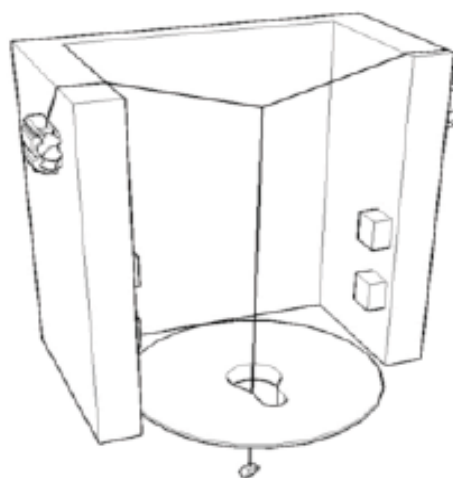
Latrine design with protruding bricks for support, and string for blind user to locate drop-hole[14]

14. Kamban N and Norman R (2013) Inclusive WASH development: Technology adaptations for persons with disabilities. 36th WEDC International Conference, Nakuru, Kenya