SGA Position Paper to HLPF 2024

Count older people in to ensure SDG implementation

SUMMARY

Accomplishing HLPF's 2024 theme requires the active contribution of older women and men, in line with the 17 SDGS and the 2030 Agenda call for 'societies for all ages'.

The present and future include people of all ages. Population ageing projections forecast increased longevity, especially amongst women, with the percentage of the global population aged 65 and above to rise from 10 per cent in 2022 to 16% in 2050.

An intergenerational, life course approach is needed that promotes the rights of older people and is inclusive of their voice and agency. Social Protection Floors (SPFs) have proven impact on intergenerational poverty and are essential for younger generations now and in the future.

The pursuit and advancement of the principle of intergenerational solidarity would ensure that the rights of people of all ages are protected and promoted at all times to secure a life of dignity across the broad diversity of the world's population. This would further ensure that older people are recognized as rights holders, including the Right to Development (MIPAA 2002), and realize the transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda to Leave No One Behind.

However, progress on the HLPF 2024 focus SDGs does not inspire confidence:

a. SDG1 Is seriously off track. Inequalities of income, education, and opportunity in earlier years result in extreme poverty in older ages, worsened by lack of social protection systems and failure to implement SPFs.
b. SDG 2 specifies ending malnutrition amongst older persons. However, reports including from HelpAge International in 2023, indicate that older people globally risk starvation and extreme poverty due to rising costs of food and farming.

c. Under SDG 13, older people with disabilities and older women are especially affected by climate-related disasters but are not included in climate responses, preparedness, and prevention. Ageism, poverty, neglect, abuse, and social exclusion ignore the experience and resilience of older people, pushing them to the periphery.
d. The peace, justice and strong institutions envisaged in SDG16 fade against unpunished violence against older people including killing older women on false accusations of witchcraft in parts of Africa.
e. The SDG 17 commitment of age as a cross-cutting issue in the implementation of all goals and targets remains largely unattained despite ongoing efforts of the Titchfield Group on Ageing.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEMBER STATES:

1. Include sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD) to identify gaps and propose solutions on issues related to ageing.
2. Include the voice and agency of older people in the development agenda.
3. Urgently establish financial and technical measures to deliver Goal 1 Target 3.
4. Ensure institutions promoting peace, justice, and equality address ongoing violence against older people particularly women.
5. End malnutrition and food insecurity in old age with targeted agricultural incentives, secure pensions and intergenerational skill sharing using a life course approach.
6. Ensure participation, inclusion, and leadership of older people in climate action, resilience, adaptation and response.
7. Invest in age-disaggregated data across all age groups.

SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Target 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day.
Target 1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
Target 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

"***If you don't have money, you die.***"
Key informant, Tanga, Tanzania, 5 July 2022[1]

The aim of SDG 1 to 'end poverty in all its forms everywhere' is fundamental to the achievement of Agenda 2030 and each of its 17 goals. The SGA notes and welcomes the fact that the indicators to measure the first targets of Goal 1 specifically emphasize that they should be disaggregated by age, and that older persons are explicitly included in the third target's 'social protection for all' objective, including social protection floors, by 2030.

Growing old presents a significant, additional risk of becoming or remaining poor. In the words of the 2002 Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing 'where poverty is endemic, persons who survive a lifetime of poverty often face an old age of deepening poverty'[2]. Given global agreement to measure progress on each SDG goal and its targets, and the wording of target 1.2, it is disappointing and concerning that in 2024, accurate estimates of poverty in old age are still limited by the lack of an international, harmonized database of poverty rates disaggregated by age.

However, some regional and national figures are relevant. In 2021 OECD estimated that on average 14.1% of individuals aged over 65 live in relative income poverty.[3] Surveys and research conducted by HelpAge International in 2022 and 2023 across a range of global south countries indicate that the impact of inflation and escalating prices of food, fuel, fertilisers, transport, medicines and healthcare, combined with restricted access to financial services and inadequate social protection systems, are putting older people at significant risk of deepening poverty. [4] UNDESA recognises that poverty increases with age, that older women are most at risk, and that they constitute the largest percentage of the 'oldest old' in all regions. Older women often live the longest of all without means of support, often performing primary caring roles for others, both older and younger. The numbers of the "oldest-old" (over 80 years of age) in the

global south is growing even faster than the numbers of older persons overall, being projected to more than triple to 434 million by 2050, where two out of three oldest-old persons will live.[5]

Successive surveys at national regional and global level point out that poverty in old age is exacerbated by lifelong social inequality, and the absence of social security guarantees from childhood, adolescence and midlife. The conditions caused by natural and man-made humanitarian crises, war and conflict, migration, displacement and the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic, with its disproportionate impact on older persons, have highlighted the interconnected challenges faced by older persons. Income security in old age depends on the availability of and access to secure and affordable publicly provided social services, including healthcare and long term care. Equitable access and utilization of healthcare services can reduce the catastrophic out-of-pocket healthcare expenses and costs that come with the care needs of both older persons and their dependants.[6]

Poverty in old age must be tackled with life course policies which embrace economic and social support in childhood through to old age, and which recognise older people as economic and civil rights holders, especially in times of crisis, and as agents of development. Pensions are a life course policy as they are have been shown to provide resources and support to children and young people, and have already been cited as a key 'poverty reduction strategy' by a range of member States. They both support the livelihood strategies and productive capacity of older people, which can in turn be invested in community and family, and are in investment in future generations.

SGA welcomes the specific recognition of social protection under SDG1 as it signals understanding of how universal social protection contributes to social and economic security for older people in our increasingly uncertain world.[7] The inclusion of social protection in SDG 1 also makes clear that its implementation contributes to the wider range of Agenda 2030 outcomes, not only poverty eradication but access to health, education, gender equity, employment, reduced hunger, decent work, peace and justice and a renewed social contract between citizen and state. This is especially important for older people, whose contributions and living conditions are still too often overlooked. The agreement of Member States to a package of benefits that support people at different stages of their lives is underpinned by various human rights instruments and puts emphasis on universality, rather than means tested schemes which allocate social protection in terms of a residual safety net for the very poorest. Social protection is about sharing risk across societies as a whole, rather than focusing limited resources only on the very poorest people.

However, while old age pensions are a key component of social protection, and have commonly been a first step to a wider system, there is still a long way to go before universal coverage can be achieved.

The specific reference to social protection floors in Target 1.3, defined as a set of social security guarantees in ILO Recommendation 202 that provide basic income security and access to healthcare across the life cycle, [8] is also a strategic entry point for a renewed global focus on pensions. While 67 per cent of older people receive a pension globally, in most low-income countries fewer than 20 per cent do. In Sub-Saharan Africa, only 22 per cent of older people receive a pension and large coverage gaps remain in Southern Asia (23 per cent) and the Arab States (27 per cent). Pensions are crucial for poverty reduction and human development at all ages, especially in the post COVID-19 era, and in countries and regions beset by humanitarian and civil conflict. It is unacceptable that growing old without any form of income security is a grim reality for most people, and especially older women, in Low and Middle Income countries (LMICs). 20 per cent pension coverage in low-income countries (just 3% in Malawi) is a clear violation of the human right to income security and dignity in older age, but it also means that societies are not making the most of increased life expectancy.

Universal social pensions are particularly important in countries where high levels of informal work currently limit the scope for expanding coverage of contributory pensions.
Global experiences and research demonstrate that universal social pensions are affordable even in low-income countries, and even relatively modest transfer levels have significant impacts.[9]

Global recognition and support for the rights and productive capacities of older people, which are still too often ignored and sidelined by policy makers, is needed now. SDG programmes should be expanded to address income inequality, risk management and employment and education in older age along with efforts to support children, youth and women's empowerment. Failure to do this would be shortsighted and counterproductive. As the world ages necessary investment in the economic and social wellbeing of older persons must not be crowded out by equally necessary investment in children and in adolescents. Global poverty eradication can only be achieved with targeted rights-based investments through all stages of life. Good living in all phases of a persons's life includes accessible and affordable health and care services, decent and affordable housing, an attractive and healthy living environment with good transport services, education infrastructure close to home, adequate cultural and educational opportunities and openings for political and social participation.

Recommendations:

1. Invest now in all-age inclusive programmes to tackle inequalities of income, education, participation and opportunity.
2. Put in place universal social protection systems and extend and universalise SPFs in all countries with financial and technical investment and support.
3. Ensure sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data (SADDD) are in place to identify gaps and propose solutions on issues related to ageing with an international harmonized database of poverty rates disaggregated by age.

SDG 2: Zero Hunger

2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons.

2.3 By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

"We have to beg in order to eat and provide food for our children." Older woman, focus group participant, Sheikh Othman, Yemen, 6 November 2022[10]

To date minimal attention has been paid to the nutrition, malnutrition, and food security needs and the agricultural contributions of older persons, despite the specific references to them in SDG 2 targets. This is particularly true in the global south. It is a glaring omission given increased longevity in all regions and countries.

Malnutrition among older persons is associated with both short term and long term negative health outcomes.[11] The estimates of older adults experiencing malnutrition available from the USA and UK range from 1 in 10 to 1 in 6, and the surveys that exist in LICs and MICs also point to systemic hunger and malnutrition in older age. However, despite generalised acceptance that malnutrition in older adults occurs, and the existence of a range of tools to measure it[12] Target 2.2 is still not systematically measured for older adults. Clearly, therefore, there is a requirement for harmonised data collection on Target 2.2 to properly inform policy and programme efforts to aid decision makers to achieve SDG 2.

Within the humanitarian sector, the use of comprehensive UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on the inclusion of older people in humanitarian action could shift the way they are included in humanitarian response. Such guidelines should be developed in close consultation with older people, along with their representative organizations and other relevant humanitarian actors. It is important that more evidence is available for the proper identification and measurement of older people's malnutrition in humanitarian settings.

There are currently no “gold standard” diagnostic criteria for malnutrition in older adults, despite them being among those most at risk in emergencies. The UN, NGOs, donors and researchers should agree on core nutrition assessment tools and criteria covering the multidimensional approach needed to properly address the complexity of malnutrition and malnutrition risk amongst older people in humanitarian crises.[13]

Across all regions, the proportion of older people living in rural areas is increasing alongside a decline in the proportion of younger people. The proportion of older farmers, already high, is significant and growing. According to HelpAge International in 2014, the average proportion of agricultural holders over the age of 55 was 26.8 per cent in Africa, 28.5 per cent in Asia, 44.7% in the Caribbean and 29.8% in Latin America.[14] While older farmers are clearly significant in the food supply chain, evidence is that the risk of malnutrition for them is current and real, posing major challenges to individuals, their families and health and care arrangements. Despite evidence that older farmers can adapt well to changing environments[15] with targeted investments in food production practices and access to markets, the current failure to support older farmers results in declining living standards and poor nutritional options and food insecurity on the continent.

For older people this situation, already dire, has been made catastrophic by the Covid 19 pandemic. Research conducted by HelpAge International in its 2022 report ‘Things have just gotten worse’ details how multiple and interconnected crises impact negatively on nutrition of older persons. Food Consumption Scores and Dietary Diversity Scores carried out in in Ethiopia, Malawi and Tanzania showed how older women in particular registered especially low indicators with quantitative data indicating how, as food and fuel prices soared, food consumption amongst older people in these countries declined compared to the previous six months. In Ethiopia, 87 per cent of older people said that the diversity and quantity of food available to them and their households had declined due to the crisis, with 77 per cent of older people in Malawi and 64 per cent in Tanzania reporting the same. Survey findings in 10 countries revealed that older people were struggling to eat food of sufficient quality and quantity to satisfy their needs[16].

Coping strategies, including skipping meals, less expensive food, begging and selling assets for food, have detrimental effects on older people’s nutritional and health status and can often lead to ill health and greater risk of illness and make them less resilient to future crises.[17] Even though small-scale localised programmes may exist to address malnutrition and food insecurity for some older persons they are limited compared to the needs of the wider population. There is one example in Malawi of a programme which provides refuge, housing, and sustenance for displaced older persons of southern Malawi and which has a small-scale agricultural vegetable project, established at the urging of the residents, to address hunger, to provide some income,

to improve health outcomes, and to improve life satisfaction among some of the most desperately poor older persons in Malawi. It is referred to as a "Beacon of hope for the elderly". But small- scale programmes such as these do no more than scratch the surface of the endemic failure to support older populations to realise their right to safe and nutritious food.

In sum three issues stand out. In the first place, universal social protection floors are required to deliver income security and affordable and accessible health and social care to older persons experiencing food insecurity and malnutrition. Second, targeted support to older farmers – access to credit, to education, to market opportunities, to new technologies – is necessary given their essential and increasing role in food production. Exposure to modern food production methods requires intergenerational partnerships as well as culturally relevant educational opportunities. In many instances, technological advancements in food production can be conveyed through education and partnerships, leading to alleviating poverty and improved health outcomes. Third, measurement of malnutrition amongst older adults is possible - we have the tools - but is not yet being done. Without these actions SDG 2 will not be achieved.

Recommendations:

1. Acknowledge and act on the growing phenomenon of malnourished and hungry older persons in all regions by putting in place social protection floors to support income security and access to health.
2. End malnutrition and food insecurity for older farmers with targeted agricultural incentives and intergenerational skill sharing using a life course approach.
3. Put in place harmonized malnutrition measurement tools using best practice including in humanitarian contexts.

SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts:

13.1: "Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries"

13.2 : "Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning"

13.3 : "Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning"

"Climate change is a problem area with its own scientific language and dominant wisdoms that have in the past acted as a barrier to understanding and involvement of the public, development and disaster communities" [18]

Climate change is a major concern and motive for action for older persons worldwide, due to the direct impact of climate-related disasters on older people's wellbeing, and because older persons are deeply worried about the future of the planet in general and in particular for following generations.[19]

The specific vulnerability of older persons to climate-related disasters is illustrated by the heat wave in British Columbia, Canada in 2021. The majority (80%) of the deaths were people aged 65 and over, most of whom were poor and isolated. This finding is in line with a report by the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) that concludes that older persons with disabilities and older women are among those most affected by climate-related harms including vector-borne diseases, heat stress and the increasing frequency and intensity of sudden- and slow-onset disasters.[20]

At the same time, older generations play an important role in fighting for more climate justice. This is illustrated by the activism of the "Grannies for the Future" networks in many countries around the world.[21] [22] In April 2024 the European Court ruled in favour of a groundbreaking case brought by 'Grannies of Switzerland' that inaction on climate change by Switzerland was a violation of human rights.[23] The impact of climate-related disasters on younger generations is a reason for older persons around the world to demonstrate to those responsible to step up their efforts to combat climate change.

Older persons' knowledge, experience and resilience is key in raising awareness about climate change and stepping up efforts to adapt to and mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. Interviews with older people have illustrated the gap between traditional and scientific knowledge and related practice. Older people have therefore on innumerable occasions voiced their frustration at not being included in climate related dialogues, at not being supported with scientific knowledge, as this can limit their understanding of what is happening, what may happen in the future, what the causes of weather changes are and what they can offer in terms of insight and practical action to adapt. It is clearly important to collect evidence and conduct research with older people in a range of climate-affected countries and communities, both to explore appropriate adaptive measures and to understand the nature of enhanced risks caused by weather and climate-related changes.

Older farmers, fisherfolk and agricultural workers are key actors to support and inform mitigation responses to climate hazards, and should also be recipients of information and early warning measures to climate related disasters. Older peoples' knowledge of adaptive practices and climate related hazards from past experience can and should be built into climate change education.[24]

It is, therefore, disappointing that despite the relevance of the targets of SDG13 to people in older age and their contributions to achieving the targets, older persons are still often not included in climate responses, preparedness, and prevention, nor their voices and experience included in climate related discussions. Widespread ageism, poverty, neglect, abuse, and social exclusion mean that the experience and resilience of older people are ignored and that they are pushed to the periphery.

It is, therefore, very important to ensure the participation, inclusion, and leadership of older people in climate action, resilience, adaptation and response. Member States and the UN system have an important role to play in fostering meaningful the participation of older persons and their representative organizations at all levels. Furthermore, the human rights of older persons have to be fully taken into account and a life-course approach adopted in working towards the achievement of the targets to guarantee that no one is left behind.

In combating climate change, intergenerational dialogues are key to developing mutual understanding, defining a common action agenda and taking advantage of the diversity of skills and experiences, with common aim of achieving climate change adaptation, mitigation and the conservation of nature. Practical examples include establishing accessible telephone hotlines for disaster relief and building age-friendly transitional housing, as the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda in the Philippines. Opening cool community spaces, like churches, during hot summer

days, is one easy solution to mitigate the impact of heat waves. While national strategies or action plans must ensure older persons are considered, it is at the local level, e.g. city administrations, that smart strategies should be developed to protect climate and ecosystems while at the same time mitigating the health and social impacts of climate change.

"The weather has changed completely. There used to be a lot more rain previously but now it is dry. The weather started changing about 30 years ago."
Abdulla Alli, 99 years old, Bubluk, Ethiopia[25]

Recommendations

1. Ensure the inclusion of older people, including those with disabilities and older women, who are especially affected by climate-related disasters, in climate research and mitigation and preparedness, and prevention.
2. Ensure and give visibility to the participation, inclusion, and leadership of older people in climate action, resilience, adaptation and response.
3. Ensure that older people are supported with targeted education and information on climate issues to enable their informed action on adaptation and climate leadership.

SDG 16: Promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies

16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

16.3 Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice.

16.9 By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration.

16.10 Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

'A witness said: "As he was pulled outside, Dieudonne (aged 60) said, 'My sons, look at me. I am old and blind. I was just on the way to the camp to look for food. Why kill me?' The Seleka did not respond, they just shot him in the chest." (Central African Republic)[26]

Older people in all countries face increasing risks of abuse and violence. The intersection of age with other factors of discrimination increases the risk of abuse. Ageist stereotypes, compounded by other forms of bias and prejudice, lead to situations of increased vulnerability for older persons already experiencing intersectional and multiple forms of discrimination on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity, disability, migration, displacement status, indigenous status, sexual orientation and gender identity, among others.

Action on SDG 16 with regard to older persons includes that of their access to justice, freedom from poverty, dignity and security in the home, and their full participation in the formulation of policy and programmes that affect them, including that of peace building. It is equally important to be aware of and respect age inclusive guidelines on humanitarian assistance to ensure inclusion and seek out older women and men who may be afraid to seek assistance. Attention also needs to be given to prevention and protection from computer and mobile phone scams in older age, and in enabling older people to acquire the digital skills necessary to protect themselves from such abuse.

The WHO reports that around 1 in 6 people 60 years and older have experienced some form of abuse in community settings, while rates in institutional settings, such as nursing homes and long-term care facilities, are higher still, with 2 in 3 staff reporting that they have committed abuse in the past year.[27] The 2023 report of the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons, Claudia Mahler, reports that 'violence against and abuse and neglect of older persons are pervasive around the world', with increases in violence against older persons due to ongoing crises such as the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic,

armed conflicts and climate change, economic setbacks, which put more strain on support structures worldwide, which in turn 'may put more older persons at risk of suffering from violent acts'.[28]

A 2022 report by Human Rights Watch details violence and abuse perpetrated against older people in 14 countries[29] engulfed in conflict. It makes chilling reading, detailing the atrocities suffered and arguing that, because of the heightened risk they may face, older people require special attention by UN agencies and peacekeeping missions, aid organizations, governments, and others who have the ability to aid and offer protection to people in conflict situations and in humanitarian responses to older people displaced by conflict. Yet this is not happening on a systematic basis.

It is urgent that action is taken to protect older women and men from violence. The HRW Report makes specific recommendations, including that all parties to armed conflict should protect and prevent abuses against older people and facilitate humanitarian assistance to older people in need, and that states should end impunity for crimes against older people and ensure their access to justice. Recommendations from the Independent Expert include the following: 'States should adopt comprehensive legislation or revise their existing legislation to ensure that they effectively address all forms of abuse of older persons (physical, psychological, emotional, financial and sexual, as well as neglect), recognizing multiple and intersectional factors and additional structural factors. Furthermore, effective mechanisms should be created to fully implement and monitor these laws.'

Older women, who are widowed and facing violence and land grabbing due to harmful traditional practices, often do not want to speak out. This fear is exacerbated in conflict zones, where they may fear that they may lose their ancestral homes and the few assets they have if they were to leave. Widows who have no legal documentation of birth or of marriage have no protection from loss of homes and assets. Women whose husbands disappeared while in conflict zones or while working in other countries need to have legal means to get support and resources. Evidence of the financial, physical and mental abuse faced by widows, including accusations of being 'witches' is still sparse, but it is clear that legal and judicial institutions still fail them.[30]

In general, data on the violence experienced by older women are wanting, as most gender-based surveys stop still at age 49 – and thereby miss out on a significant and increasing population and result in ignorance about what is happening in older age. Qualitative surveys that exist [31] indicate that older women's experiences of violence may be interlinked with their victimization at different stages of the life-course and that the dynamics of ageing may shape experiences of violence, such as provision of care to a dependent partner, which may influence

decisions to disclose or report abuse. Older women are also more likely to experience violence from other family members, including children, and from carers, which causes shame and embarrassment.[32] Overall, however the qualitative and quantitative evidence concerning violence against older women is limited. A better understanding of these differing patterns and dynamics is needed to ensure appropriate policy or programmatic responses to violence against older women and appropriate service development and provision for them.

Representative participation is a critically important aspect of human rights. It necessarily requires the inclusion of all generations, including older persons, to determine the necessary policy steps for the future generations of older persons, who will make up more than a quarter of the world by 2050. The wisdom, experience, role in their communities and creativity of older persons can and should be effectively used in policy making, peace negotiations and legislative decision making. The current crises of refugees, war, the rise of xenophobia and authoritarianism, increasing inequality and intergenerational poverty require the input and accumulated skills of older persons.

In order to realise Target 16.3 'Promote the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all', a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons is required to guarantee that older persons retain their rights as they age and can claim them when their rights are violated.

Recommendations

1. Take action on unpunished violence against older people including killing older women on false accusations of witchcraft in parts of Africa and Asia.
2. Include the voice and agency of older people in the peace and justice and development agenda and ensure their rights are recognized through a Convention on the Rights of Older People
3. Ensure documentation exists of birth and marriage of all older people
4. Ensure that the experience of all women after the age of 49 till death is included in all data efforts to track and act on gender violence.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

17.16.1 Number of countries reporting progress in multi-stakeholder development effectiveness monitoring frameworks that 'support the achievement of the sustainable development goals.'

17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing states, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

.

"The exclusion of older persons from surveys and national censuses affects the ability to understand the extent to which they are able to participate in society and enjoy their human rights on an equal basis with others."

Claudia Mahler[33]

The SDGs are a far reaching, visionary and comprehensive set of goals and plan of action, yet there is no focus on older persons, nor clear guidance on how to monitor progress for this growing subpopulation. Overall data systems are not fit for purpose in today's ageing world. Data on older people is either not collected, or where it does exist, is not fully analysed, reported or utilised, leading to serious gaps in information for policy and planning. The SDGs have been accompanied by a call for a 'data revolution', recognising that concerted action is needed at all levels of the data system from collection to utilisation, and from all stakeholders, to improve the quality and range of data. The scale of the challenge of better data on ageing and older people is immense.[34]

Age needs to be taken into account as a cross-cutting issue in all goals and targets. In practice, while the SDGs incorporate 22 targets which either directly name older people as a group or indirectly include them by referencing 'all people', 'all ages' or 'universal', only eight indicators call for disaggregation by age. As a result the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda do not sufficiently take into account the needs and circumstances of older people. Data collection and analysis for all goals and targets requires inclusion of older persons and greater disaggregation, that is, not grouping all older persons in one category, such as 60 and older. Currently in many countries, there is little or no data on the living situation of older people and even in regional statistical bodies data stop in the mid 70s. The available data base used to underpin and measure the success of the Sustainable Development Goals, is insufficient and needs to be improved with harmonised data across all ages, collected at 5 or 10 year intervals.

The recent report 'Making older persons visible in the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets' from the World Health Organization[35] is a clarion call and roadmap for national statistical offices to plan for current and future impacts on population ageing. The report and its recommendations detail best practice and reinforce the urgency of ensuring that a foundation for proper policy and programs regarding older persons exists. The cohort of older persons is increasing in all countries and all regions. Ignoring this megatrend inhibits effective development for every nation.

At this midpoint time for Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, it is urgent to renew the commitment to "leave no one behind." Overcoming barriers to inclusion and visibility – in this case of older persons – is at the centre of the vision of 'Leave No One Behind' and therefore older persons must be included. Specifically, Goal 17 mandates that sustainable development goal indicators should be disaggregated, where relevant, by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability and geographic location or other characteristics in accordance with the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

Data disaggregation and strengthening of National Statistical Offices to use standardised tools to collect, analyse and use life course data is one barrier which can and should be overcome. The collection of satisfactory data on older persons will identify gaps, challenges and opportunities to better inform new initiatives that aim to improve the lives of older persons. Improved data will also enable governments and international bodies to monitor the impact of these initiatives. As reflected in this detailed report, there is a concerted effort among a subset of National Statistical Offices to establish collaborative standards and recommendations to ensure that the well-being of older persons is routinely included in data collection and disaggregation efforts.

These efforts have been encouraged and supported by the Titchfield Group on Ageing statistics, created at the forty-ninth session of the United Nations Statistical Commission (UNSC) in March 2018. The purpose of the group is to contribute to establishing international standards and methods for the compilation of statistics and data on the major dimensions of ageing and age-disaggregated data across the life cycle, and to collaborate with United Nations (UN) bodies and other organizations concerned with specific aspects of ageing and age statistics.[36] 'The overall objective of the Titchfield Group is to develop standardized tools and methods for producing both data disaggregated by age and ageing-related data, and encourage countries to do so, by playing a leading role in the development and communication of new standards and methodologies. The City Group will also address existing issues and deficits in data on ageing'.[37]

To achieve the goal of disaggregated data with respect to older persons, partnerships with older persons, civil society, decision makers in government, and across multiple sectors are needed for the design and implementation of community programmes. These sectors encompass all aspects of the goals and include finance, health care, transport, environment, housing, long term care, social protection, labour, information, and communication, and others with participation and the realization of human rights at the centre.

Action on target 17.16.1 is another vital means to ensure issues of older persons are clearly visible in tracking and reporting on the implementation of the SDGs. The process of seeking and sharing information for the Voluntary National Reviews and Voluntary Local Reviews which now take place regularly for discussion in country and reporting and peer review at the High Level Political Forum, should include specific attention to the concerns and wellbeing of older persons, along with other population groups. It is disappointing that only a minority of countries include issues of older persons. SGA analysis over the years of the inclusion of older persons in VNRs shows that progress on issues affercting older persons is poor, even though numbers of older persons are increasing in all countries, and the steps needed to realise their economic, health and social rights are clear.

Recommendations

1. Invest in and strengthen National Statistical Offices and the ongoing efforts of the Titchfield Group on Ageing.

2. Include sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data (SADDD) in national and local reviews of SDG programmes to identify gaps and propose solutions on issues related to ageing.

3. Invest in age-disaggregated data across all age groups.

.

REFERENCES

[1] HelpAge International 'Things have gotten worse' 2022/23
[2] MIPAA para 45
[3] https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/d76e4fad-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/d76e4fad-en
[4] https://www.helpage.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Things-have-just-gotten-worse_Report.pdf
[5] https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/PovertyIssuePaperAgeing.pdf
[6] ibid
[7] ibid
[8] https://www.ilo.org/resource/ilo-social-protection-floors-recommendation-2012-no-202
[9] https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2021/02/Florian-Juergens_paper.pdf
[10] HelpAge International 'Things have just gotten worse' 2022/3
https://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/what-to-know-about-malnutrition-in-older-adults
[1212] https://www.bapen.org.uk/pdfs/must/must_full.pdf
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0261561424000827
[13] See https://www.nutritioncluster.net/sites/nutritioncluster.com/files/2020-03/Nutrition%20HRtips.pdf
[14] https://www.helpage.org/silo/files/the-ageing-of-rural-populations-evidence-on-older-farmers-in-low-and-middleincome-countries.pdf
[15] https://www.ageing.ox.ac.uk/download/209
[16] https://www.helpage.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Things-have-just-gotten-worse_Report.pdf
[17] ibid
[18] Schipper L and Pelling M, Disaster risk, climate change and international development: scope for, and challenges to, integration, Oxford Disasters, 30:1, p.19-38, 2006
[19] https://www.bagso.de/fileadmin/user_upload/bagso/06
[20] https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/a78226-human-rights-older-persons-context-climate-change-induced
[21] https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/omas-future
[22] https://www.1000grandmothers.com/
[23] https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-68768598
[24] https://www.helpage.org/silo/files/witness-to-climate-change-learning-from-older-peoples-experience.pdf
[25] ibid
[26] Human Rights Watch 2022 'No one is Spared'
[27] https://www.decadeofhealthyageing.org/topics-initiatives/other-topics/abuse-of-older-people#:~:text=Around%201%20in%206%20people,abuse%20in%20the%20past%20year
[28] A/HRC/54/26 https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g23/152/56/pdf/g2315256.pdf?token=4joV2cOZgYJb9bgexB&fe=true
[29] https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2022/02/global_olderpeople0222_web.pdf
[30] See' Widows Speak Out': dossier of evidence for CEDAW, Widows for Peace though Democracy
https://www.widowsforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/DOSSIER%20-%20Discrimination%20against%20widows%202020.pdf
[31] Violence against older women: A systematic review of qualitative literature; Meyer et al 202
[32] Ageing in the 21st Century; a celebration and a challenge UNFPA HelpAge International 2012 https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Ageing%20report.pdf
[33]https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2020/10/expert-flagrant-lack-data-older-persons-impacts-their-human-rights#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20exclusion%20of%20older%20persons,and%20poverty%20remain%20key%20concerns.
[34] https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/2021-dha-docs/decade-connection-series-agenda2030.pdf
[35] https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/376154/9789240090248-eng.pdf?sequence=1
[36] https://unstats.un.org/unsd/methodology/citygroups/Titchfield.cshtml
[37] ibid