Empowerment and older people –
enhancing capabilities in an ageing world

‘Promoting peoples empowerment in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and productive and decent work for all’

Expert Group meeting

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Summary

Empowerment in old age requires

- Attitude change towards ageing
- Affirming the rights of older people
- Standard setting to ensure autonomy and dignity in old age
- Positive and enabling policy responses of government
- Age sensitive empowerment measurement and indicators
The numbers story – our future that is here already

Yellow – through UNFPA funding or funding of HelpAge offices/partners

Blue – countries with contacts
What are some of the lessons learned from the past decade?

Emerging clearly from the review are the continuing tensions or conflicting views on key policy issues which need to be made more visible and addressed in the next decade order to move forward.

1. The first is the issue of how population ageing is seen by policy makers and society as a whole: often as either an imminent catastrophe impossible to manage (in fact some suggested calling the upcoming global report on ageing “Aging Tsunami”). And the other extreme that ageing offers more opportunities than challenges with its multi-billion dollar ageing market out there just waiting to be tapped.

Our review of country progress shows that it is somewhere in the middle - that population ageing could become a catastrophe if we don’t act now, but if we do act now, there are multiple opportunities for individuals and societies as a whole.

2. The debate continues over who is responsible for older persons as do concerns over the ability to provide adequate social protection and social security for the growing numbers of older persons. In many countries, the expectation is that the family will take care of its economically dependent older members, but informal support systems for older persons are coming under increasing stress and there is growing consensus that States must develop social protection systems that cover at least the basic needs of all older persons.

This is particularly a concern in those countries where the majority of older persons are employed in the informal sector. The good news is that, according to our review, 80 countries, including 47 low and middle income countries, have set up social pensions, thereby reducing old age and intergenerational poverty.

The review points out that most developing countries need to establish their systems now, when the challenge is less acute, and when the fiscal space available for social policies is increasing, as a consequence of the “demographic dividend”.

3. Finally, how older persons are viewed by society, as DEPENDENT, or as INDEPENDENT and active members of society, needs more discussion.

Within the category of “older persons” there are those who are dependent but the majority are not. Of course this will change as the percentage of people 85 years and over grows, but the point is that there is no uniform group of older persons, and policies in the next decade...
Challenges for the development agenda

Data deficiencies:
- Ageing is the ‘missing dimension’

Ageism:
- Discrimination
- Abuse
- Exclusion

Lack of education:
- Illiteracy
- Indecent working conditions
- Self exclusion

Inadequate safeguards:
- Legal indifference
- Failure to deliver entitlements
Defining and measuring empowerment

Dimensions:
- Personal, Social, Legal, Economic, Physical, Political

Assessment:
- Hearing, Learning, Observing

Opportunity structure:
- Decision making
- Recognising contributions
- Expanding capabilities
Empowerment dimensions for older persons

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Disempowerers</th>
<th>Empowerers</th>
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<td>Physical and mental vulnerability</td>
<td>Age specific policies and budgets</td>
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<td>Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs)</td>
<td>Support for healthy ageing management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes – family, state, community</td>
<td>Incentives; to organise, consult, participate</td>
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<td>Unresponsive service providers</td>
<td>Political participation, use of vote</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bad design; services, housing, facilities</td>
<td>Age friendly design; user consultation</td>
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<td>Legal indifference</td>
<td>Human rights standards</td>
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<td>Poor information</td>
<td>Knowledge of services, entitlements</td>
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<td>Invisibility of ageing in public domains</td>
<td>Action on abuse; capacity to participate</td>
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<td>Poverty and poor health</td>
<td>Income and health security</td>
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<td>Self excluding behaviour; social isolation</td>
<td>Recognised roles in community, family, workplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression, Alzheimer’s, dementia</td>
<td>Support and capacity to advocate for self</td>
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Good practices

The enabling environment
• Role
• Respect
• Recognition
• Attitudes
• Family, community, state

Yellow – through UNFPA funding or funding of HelpAge offices/partners

Blue – countries with contacts
**Policy enablers**

- Health
- Income
- Education
- Investment

Yellow – through UNFPA funding or funding of HelpAge offices/partners

Blue – countries with contacts
Self help, advocacy

- Organisation
- Access to information
- Representation
Age specific policies

- Responsive health services
- Age friendly social services
- Secure pension

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AGEING & EMPOWERMENT – A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE

Role  
Respect  
Recognition

Health services  
Pension  
Legal - Rights  
Social Services

Health  
Income  
Assets  
Education

Older people’s organisations  
Information & Voice  
Representation

Policy  
Government  
Community  
Family  
Service providers

Culture  
Family support  
Attitudes
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Ageing in the Twenty-First Century: a celebration and a challenge

UNFPA and HelpAge International

Launch 1st October 2012
NY, Tokyo, Geneva