

**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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***Older people are  
speaking out***

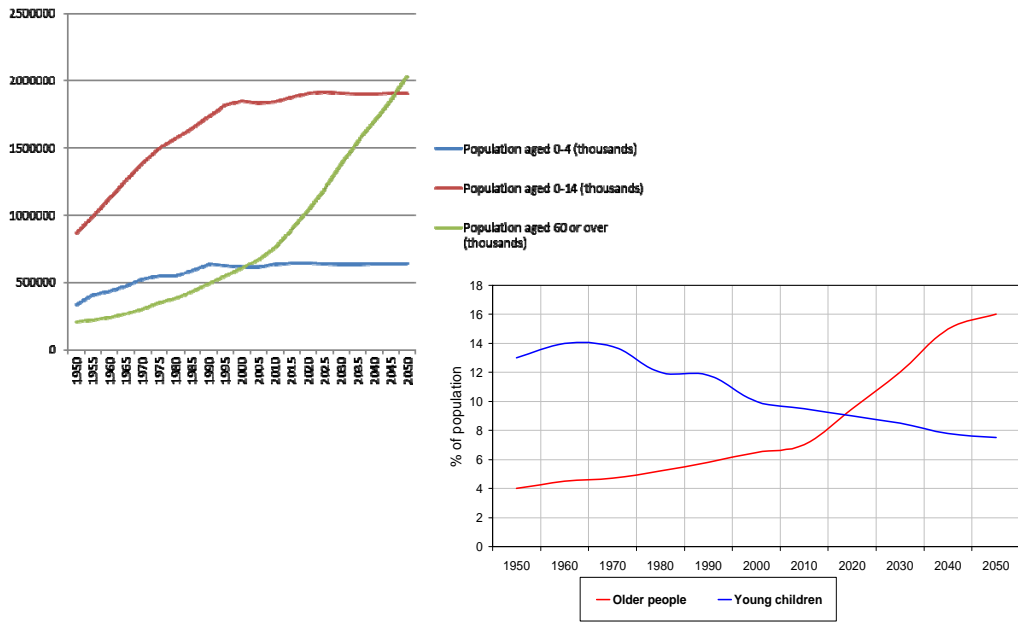
***we're listening***

## 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

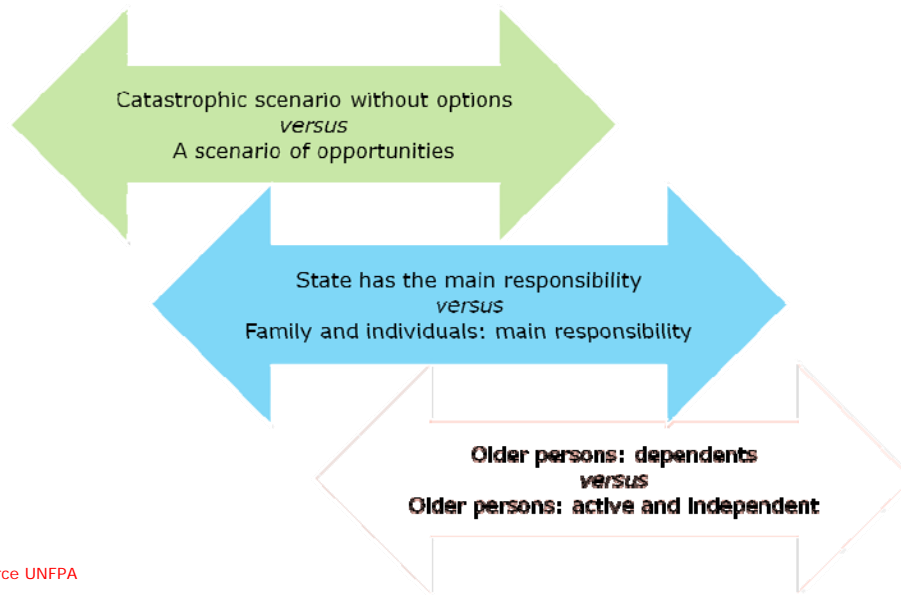
# The numbers story – our future that is here already



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

Blue – countries with contacts

## Global policy challenges on ageing



Source UNFPA

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

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

## Good practices

### The enabling environment

- Role
- Respect
- Recognition
- Attitudes
- Family, community, state



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## Policy enablers

- Health
- Income
- Education
- Investment



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## Self help, advocacy

- Organisation
- Access to information
- Representation



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### **Age specific policies**

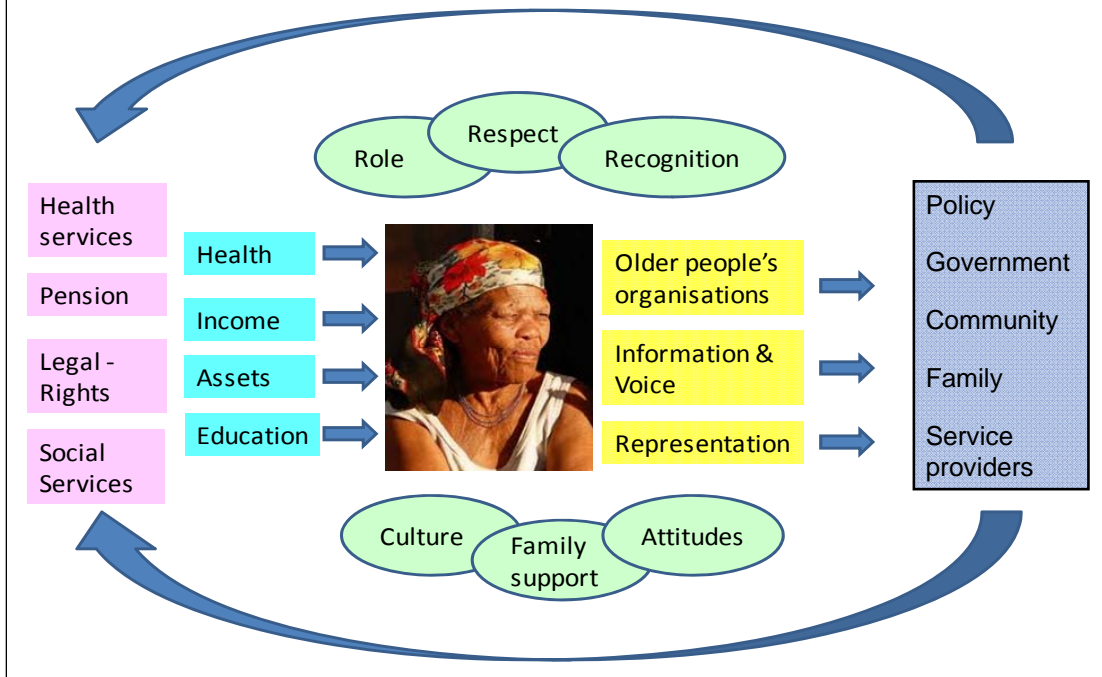
- Responsive health services
- Age friendly social services
- Secure pension



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# AGEING & EMPOWERMENT – A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE



September 21, 2012

**Ageing in the Twenty-First Century: a celebration and a challenge**



**UNFPA and HelpAge International**

**Launch 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012  
NY, Tokyo, Geneva**

