

Disaster Risk Reduction in an Ageing World

Recommendations for a Post Hyogo Framework for Action

HelpAge
International

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The world's population is ageing at a staggering and unprecedented rate resulting from improvements in health care and the impact of economic development. Currently, 12.5% of the world's population is over 60. By 2050 this figure will increase to 22%, a great majority of which will be in developing countries where disasters are more likely to occur and the effects are felt more severely. This fact underlines the importance that older people are given special consideration in the post Hyogo Framework for Action.

HelpAge International is calling for:

Greater emphasis on vulnerable groups including older people in the post Hyogo Framework for Action, recognising that they are both affected by disasters and can play key roles in disaster risk reduction.

Older people are particularly vulnerable to and face specific threats from disasters. Their needs are very different from other generations and population groups, such as children. Older age brings reduced mobility and strength, impaired sight and hearing, and greater vulnerability to heat and cold. Minor conditions can quickly become major handicaps that overwhelm a person's ability to cope. For example, they may struggle to travel long distances to obtain food or reach distributions while many frail or housebound older people are often less able or less willing to flee from potential harm. It must be remembered however that older people are not a homogenous group – the needs and vulnerabilities of those aged 60 will be very different to those aged 80 and above.

However, while older people are highly vulnerable to disasters and other shocks and stresses, it is important to recognise their capacities and the contribution they can make to disaster risk reduction. Older people's life experience, traditional, or indigenous knowledge can provide vital information on past climatic events, hazard and disaster impacts. It can also provide key insights to support analysis of a community's vulnerabilities and capacities, or social-environmental relationships. Such information is vital in understanding the nature of disaster vulnerability and central to developing good disaster risk reduction initiatives. Therefore, older people amongst other vulnerable groups must be consulted in planning, adaption and response programmes.

Inclusion of sex and age disaggregated data in the monitoring and reporting of the post Hyogo Framework for Action.

To support understanding of the differing impact of disasters on different population groups including older people, HelpAge calls for the collection of sex and age disaggregated data. Combining such data with a contextual understanding of the position and roles of older people in families and societies can play a crucial role in the context analysis necessary to better understand the potential short and long term impacts of disasters. The inclusion of sex and age disaggregated data in analysis will therefore ensure the differences in vulnerabilities to disasters, and different capacities and roles population groups can play in reducing risk and responding to disasters are understood and integrated into effective disaster preparedness and mitigation measures. Finally, it will allow donors and national governments to effectively allocate budgets to ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met through disaster risk reduction initiatives.

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