

HELPAge INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE
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PEG: World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

Older people say that they are being subjected to abuse and discrimination because of their age, according to a report by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP).

Today, (15 June) Age Demands Action campaigners in 40 countries, will bring attention to elder abuse and the importance of a new UN convention on the rights of older people and follow up with their governments to attend the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing in July.

“Older people repeatedly say that they are considered useless, incompetent and a drain on resources by their families and by society, as well as being subjected to abuse,” said Bridget Sleep, Senior Rights Policy Adviser at HelpAge International.

“Not enough is being done to stop this abuse and protect the rights of older people,” said Sleep, who wrote the GAROP report on behalf of the alliance.

The report by GAROP entitled [‘In Our Own Words’](#) is based on consultations with older people across 50 countries who were asked how they feel they are discriminated against in older age.

The report revealed elder abuse occurs in different settings. A resident from a nursing home in Serbia said, **“In the home they terrorise us, they take all our money, they don’t give us allowances and they constantly threaten we’ll be kicked out if we don’t behave.”**¹

HelpAge International works to challenge discrimination and violence against older people. Much of this work is done in East Africa where there are a significant number of cases of elder abuse.

Nzingo, 67, from Kenya has suffered from elder abuse at the hands of a relative, which also resulted in the death of her 90-year-old mother.

“The man slashed me on my head and I immediately fainted. I used the money I had saved from my business to pay for my hospital bills. I still don’t know what was the cause or reason for that kind of brutality,” said Nzingo, whose attacker was arrested but later released on bail.

“I am very scared. I don’t sleep well. When I hear any noise I am alarmed. In my dreams I see that person following me,” she said.

¹ GAROP, In Our Own Words, p.3

Despite these kinds of cases, older people's right to be free from violence and abuse is not currently protected under international law. There is also inadequate research into elder abuse, which makes tackling the problem even more difficult.

"The Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014 shows elder abuse is the least surveyed of the different types of violence in low-income countries²," said Sleep.

The [report](#), by the World Health Organization and UN agencies, reveals that of the 133 countries surveyed, two thirds do not have adult protective services in place to support older people subjected to elder abuse³ despite the growing global population of older people.

The number of older people vulnerable to elder abuse is predicted to rise with a growing global population of older people. Currently, there are more than 895 million people aged 60 and over, representing 12% of the global population. By 2030, this is projected to rise to 1.3 billion or 16%.⁴

"A UN convention would take us a step closer to ensuring human rights are for everyone, at every stage of our lives," said Sleep.

Follow the conversation on twitter with #WEAAD2015 or show your support by tweeting:

This #WEAAD2015, @helpage and older campaigners everywhere are calling for an end to #elderabuse. Join us & RT! <http://bit.ly/L0agUu>

- ENDS -

Notes to Editors

Box folder with materials for journalists

<https://helpage.box.com/s/cz4wx1kh5348m712eztfwy5wbbijfgg>

Available for Interview:

Bridget Sleep, Senior Rights Policy Adviser at HelpAge International

Age Demands Action for Rights

This year 40 countries will be taking part in the Age Demands Action for Rights campaign. As we get older our rights do not change, despite this, international human rights law does not currently address the specific human rights violations that people experience in old age.

Examples of activities on the day

Serbia: 15,000 people will be attending their 'Third Age Fair' which will discuss the importance of putting older people's rights on the human rights agenda.

Bangladesh: Traditional street theatre will be used to raise awareness around elder abuse issues.

² Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014, p.23

³ Global Status Report p.41

⁴ UNDESA

Russia: Two of our campaign partners are organising events and over 1,000 older people will take part. A flash mob of over 200 older people will also take place.

Sign the ADA petition for a new UN convention on the rights of older people here:
<http://www.helpage.org/get-involved/sign-the-ada-petition/>

The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing is a UN working group that meets in New York. It was established by a resolution at the 2010 General Assembly. The OEWG's main purpose is to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older people.
<http://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/>

In Our Own Words: What Older People Say About Discrimination and Human Rights in Older Age by *The Global Alliance on the Rights of Older People*

<http://www.rightsofolderpeople.org/new-garop-report-in-our-own-words/>

GAROP member organisations carried out a consultation to hear from older people on how they were discriminated against and how this affects their human rights. Over 2000 people from 50 countries took part.

The Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/status_report/2014/report/report/en/

The Global Status Report on Violence Prevention 2014 reflects data from 133 countries and is the first report of its kind to assess national efforts to address interpersonal violence, including elder abuse. It is jointly published by the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

About HelpAge International

HelpAge International helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives. Our work is strengthened through our global network of like-minded organisations – the only one of its kind in the world.

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