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Age Discrimination must stop says HelpAge International

On 10 December 2014, Human Rights Day, HelpAge International is marking the occasion with a renewed call for governments to challenge the wide range of human rights violations experienced every day by many older women and men.

“Discrimination against men and women on account of their older age is one of the last remaining forms of prejudice to be tackled on a global basis,” said Toby Porter, Chief Executive at HelpAge International. “This has to change and a new UN convention on the rights of older people is the way to challenge age discrimination.”

“International human rights conventions prohibit and make discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability,migrant worker status and being a child, both morally and legally unacceptable. The same cannot be said for discrimination on the basis of older age,” he said. “Age discrimination must stop.”

Margaret Kabango, 71, a campaigner from Uganda with Age Demands Action, a growing movement fighting for a fairer world for older people in over 60 countries, provided examples of discrimination.

“Older people are accused of being witches, we get pushed aside in queues and we often don’t get the health treatment we need because we’re told that the symptoms are just a sign of old age,” she said.

Margaret, along with others fromAge Demands Action, will be writing to governments asking them to make concrete proposals on how to better protect older people’s rights, at the next session of the UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, set up to explore how to better protect older people’s rights. These governmentproposals will be presented to the UN General Assembly next September.

“Existing human rights standards and mechanisms have failed to protect people’s rights in older age and a new UN convention on the rights of older people is necessary to rectify this,” said Bridget Sleap, Senior Rights Policy Adviser at HelpAge International.

“We are at a critical point in the process towards such a convention. Now is the time for governments to outline what the content of a new convention should be,” she said.

This year’s slogan, **Human Rights 365,**encompasses the idea that every day is Human Rights Day.

“We need to be given time to get onto a bus, get into a car, and learn how to cope with things like diabetes,” said Margaret.t

Earlier this year, the **United Nations Human Rights Council** appointed Ms Rosita Kornfeld-Matte (Chile) as the Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons helping us to deepen our understanding of the human rights challenges facing older people and how these rights can be better protected. This appointment was established by Human Rights Council resolution 24/20.Ms Kornfeld-Matte’s first official visit was to Slovenia.

older

HelpAge International has a number of innovative projects and initiatives to combat age discrimination and to ensure a fairer society in which older people can flourish. In Mozambique, HelpAge has developed activities to address the issue of elder violence:

* **Theatre of the Abused:** Based on the Theatre of the Oppressed, interactive plays drawn from local experiences and performed in schools, at festivals and campaign meetings to lobby Government and Parliamentarians. At the end of the play the audience is invited to say what should happen next.
* **Volunteer paralegals** trained and recruited to educate people on human rights and older people's rights and to support people to resolve conflict or to seek redress.
* **Photo exhibitions** of older women who have experienced abuse chronicling their stories of accusations of witchcraft, theft, abandonment by their families, physical abuse from family members, expulsion from their homes and abuse by health staff.

**-ENDS-**

**Notes to editors**

1. Available for interview:

* Toby Porter, Chief Executive Officer, HelpAge International
* Bridget Sleap, Senior Rights Policy Adviser at HelpAge International.

Age Demands Action for Rights ([**http://bit.ly/L0agUu**](http://bit.ly/L0agUu)): now in its seventh year, this global grassroots campaign is calling for a UN convention on the rights of older people. With a combination of political influencing, public awareness and petition signatures, older people are progressing towards a new convention.

Sign the ADA petition for a new UN convention on the rights of older people here: ([**http://bit.ly/pSpask**](http://bit.ly/pSpask))

*Older people have the right to protection from all forms of violence and abuse as well as from all forms of discrimination. However, the human rights obligation on governments to protect people from elder abuse is not explicitly articulated in existing international human rights law. A patchwork of national legislation, policies, strategies and plans that differ from country to country undermines the universality of human rights and every woman and man's right to freedom from violence and abuse throughout every stage of their lives. For this reason, the adoption of such universal standards within a new UN convention on the rights of older people would provide every government with guidance on how to improve their domestic legislation and practice, including around elder abuse, so that it is in line with international human rights standards.*

**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.

**Contact:**Sarah Gillam at HelpAge International's office in London on +44 (0) 20 7148 7623 mobile: +44 (0) 7713 567624 or email [sarah.gillam@helpage.org](mailto:sarah.gillam@helpage.org) or Beth Howgate [beth.howgate@helpage.org](mailto:beth.howgate@helpage.org)