# Leaving no-one Behind – The Sustainable Development Goals and Global Ageing

**A discussion paper for HelpAge International**

## Introduction

At the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030.[[1]](#footnote-1) The SDGs foresee a world that by 2030 has achieved zero poverty, where all people can live in dignity throughout their lives, free from poverty, exclusion, violence and discrimination.

These ideals connect directly to HelpAge’s 2020 Strategy, with its own vision of a world in which all older people can lead dignified, healthy and secure lives. This paper aims to show how far the SDGs, with their central concept of ‘leaving no-one behind’, are reflected in the key objectives of the HelpAge network; itis intended to be a resource for members & partners in developing their advocacy and influencing relating to the SDGs.

The SDGs will have a major impact on development thinking and practice in the years to 2030, so it’s important to know how well they have addressed issues important for ageing and older people. To make sure that older people are not left behind, data will have to be better collected and analysed, their voices will need to be heard in policy making and implementation, and discriminatory practices which exclude them from earning a living, getting entitlements (such as pensions and health care) and ignore elder abuse will have to be challenged and changed. How far do the SDGs meet these requirements?

In the preparatory process for the SDG summit, ageing was mentioned as a global trend and challenge to which the post-2015 agenda should respond. This has been only partially reflected in the final 2030 Agenda document, and we should understand that, while we can see the impacts for older people throughout the Sustainable Development Goals, these may not necessarily be recognised by the wider development community.

**‘Leave no-one behind’ – a key theme of the SDGs**

The pledge that no one will be left behind, and the endeavour to reach the most disadvantaged (those ‘furthest behind’) first, are key concepts for HelpAge, providing us with the opportunity to ensure the inclusion of all older people in the 2030 development agenda. The idea that ‘no goal should be met unless it is met for everyone’ is well established in the rhetoric around the new goals. This means ensuring that every individual achieves all the rights and opportunities contained within the SDGs.

It is less clear what this will mean in practice. For example, some agencies (including DFID) acknowledge the need first of all to establish who is being left behind, where they are and why they are excluded. For this DFID say that it will be necessary to strengthen the collection and use of disaggregated data, and to build evidence of what works with the most disadvantaged groups.

Another key area which has been identified in ensuring no-one is left behind is empowerment. The voices of the most disadvantaged must be heard, whether it is in the design and delivery of policy and programme changes, or in holding governments and service providers to account. At the same time there is a strong focus on the need to challenge negative social norms, and to reform discriminatory laws and institutions.

Finally, while economic growth remains firmly on the SDG agenda, the ‘leave no-one behind’ agenda requires that this should be inclusive of everybody, especially the most disadvantaged. The same is true for political institutions and systems, and for social protection, basic services, and infrastructure, all of which should be made accessible to everybody. The central objective of halving extreme poverty was achieved well ahead of the 2015 deadline. It is important to recognise that this achievement has benefited many older people, but many more may still be ‘left behind’.

The following SDGs are key to the concerns of the HelpAge global network:

1. Poverty - End poverty in all its forms everywhere

2. Food - End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

3. Health - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

4. Education - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

5. Women - Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

10. Reduce inequality within and among countries

11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions.

**HelpAge Goal 1 - I have the income I need**

**What the SDGs say**

## SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day.

Target 1.2: By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

Target 1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

The Indicators identified to measure these Targets both specifically highlight that they should be disaggregated by age.

Social protection is also included in other SDGs, including SDG5 on gender equality (target 5.4) and SDG 10 on reduced inequalities (target 10.4).

### HelpAge’s Position

* **Social protection supported under the SDGs must be rights-based, universal and support older people.**
* **Old age pensions are a key component of lifelong social protection.**

### Old age income security should not simply target older people in isolation but support them as part of their families and communities.

The aim of SDG 1, to “end poverty in all its forms everywhere”, makes this arguably the headline goal, and experience from implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) suggests that this goal will gain particular attention. We welcome the implicit inclusion of ageing in the first two targets and their indicators, which both specify that they should be disaggregated by age, and the fact that social protection (as a core part of ensuring older people “have the income they need”) also appears prominently under this goal. Its inclusion in a number of goals also highlights the fact that social protection contributes to a wider range of outcomes, not only poverty but health, employment, reduced hunger, decent work, peace and justice.

Social protection was absent from the MDGs, so its recognition under SDG1 on poverty signals a significant shift in understanding of how social protection contributes to poverty reduction. Reference to social protection floors also provides an entry point for our strategic focus on pensions, since these are the standard for rights-based social protection, and are at the core of the HelpAge mission. Reference to social protection floors also gives an opportunity to discuss pensions at national level where governments are aiming to establish social protection schemes addressing a range of risks, (raising a family, unemployment, disability, old age etc.), throughout the life course - the definition of a social protection floor. Social protection floors also emphasise the principle of universality, because where equality is the starting point, the need for comprehensive rather than residual schemes is clear. Old age pensions are a key component of social protection, and have commonly been a first step to a wider system.

The inclusion of social protection under the goal on inequality is also positive. Where inequality is the starting point for debate around social protection, the need for comprehensive systems (rather than residual schemes) is more obvious. However, the wording of Target 1.3 suggests that the focus should be on “the poor and vulnerable”, which could contradict the spirit of social protection floors by putting the focus on a “safety net” approach. We challenge the idea that social protection is about helping a small, residual group of poor people. For HelpAge, social protection is about sharing risk between the vast majority of the population who are left behind, those who are poor or highly vulnerable to poverty.

Social protection also needs to be addressed in the wider context of income security and economic opportunities for older people. The SDGs, while they recognise the need to address income inequality and commit to support youth employment and women’s empowerment, ignore the livelihood strategies, as well as the productive capacities and potential of other age groups, including older people. Yet Targets such as 2.2, to double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers by 2030, will not be achieved without addressing the support needs of the growing proportion of smallholder who are older people.

**HelpAge Goal 2 - I enjoy the best possible health and care, wellbeing and dignity**

**What the SDGs say**

SDG 3 - ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Target 3.3 By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases

Target 3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being

Target 3.8 Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all

Target 3.c Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States

Target 5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

**HelpAge’s position**

* **We welcome the inclusion of a specific goal of ensuring healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages.**
* **We strongly support the ambition to achieve universal health coverage (UHC), access to quality health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines for all.**
* **Indicators to monitor UHC must track both access and financial risk protection elements and be inclusive of people of all ages.**
* **The concept of ‘premature mortality’ (dying before the age of 70), infringes older people’s rights. We will continue to campaign against this discriminatory target, emphasising that the indicator linked to this target has had the upper age limit of 70 removed.**
* **We welcome the inclusion of older people in the target to end malnutrition. Indicators must include older people as well as girls and younger women.**
* **Responsibility for older people’s care must be shared between families, professional providers and governments, with the latter prioritising development of systems of care.**

We welcome the much broader approach to health in the SDGs than the MDGs, and in particular the inclusion of a specific goal (SDG 3) focussed on health, to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. The wide range of targets addressing the spectrum of diseases and the systems and infrastructure needed to ensure health and wellbeing also mark a step forward. While we strongly support the inclusion of a target on NCDs, its focus on reducing “premature mortality”, (dying before the age of 70), poses a challenge for the inclusion of older people. Older people are also affected by communicable diseases, including HIV. Target 3.3 is inclusive of people of all ages, but the single SDG indicator for HIV focusses on new infections, risking the exclusion of treatment, care and support, all crucial services for older people who have been living with HIV and taking ART for many years.

The focus on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) in the SDGs provides an opportunity to address a range of barriers to accessing health and care services faced by older people. However, UHC will not be achieved for older people if efforts are guided by the target’s two indicators. The first tracks access to services including treatment for hypertension and diabetes, two key health concerns for older people. But the surveys to capture this information are only conducted with people up to age 49 or 64 and would not track whether coverage is universal. The second indicator looks at the number of people covered by health insurance or a public health system. It does not measure out-of-pocket payments or catastrophic expenses and could result in older people being left behind.

Health and care systems in LMICs are failing to adequately meet the increasingly complex health and social care needs of people as they age. The target on the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce offers an opportunity to address this, but training on older people’s health would be one of a number of competing priorities and the indicator for this target will not track health worker training. In many LMICs, care systems do not yet exist and care for older people is provided by other older people (particularly older women), families and communities. Target 5.4 on recognising and valuing unpaid care, including through social protection policies, should support greater recognition of the role of older people in the provision of care. The target includes the promotion of shared responsibility within the family and household but not with governments. This risks care responsibilities continuing to fall on families and communities, rather than emphasising that governments should also prioritise the development of care systems.

**HelpAge Goal 3 - I am safe and secure, free from all forms of discrimination, violence and abuse**

**What the SDGs say**

Freedom from discrimination is addressed in a number of the SDGs:

SDG 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.

10.3 Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.

SDG 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.

**HelpAge’s position**

* **Implementation of the SDGs must recognise different forms of violence and abuse, from financial and economic to sexual and physical, or neglect, a range of perpetrators (including family members) and the victimisation of both older women and men.**
* **Violence against women must be addressed for all women throughout their lives.**
* **Laws, policies or practices that discriminate on the basis of age (such as mandatory retirement ages or upper age limits to healthcare treatment) must be abolished.**
* **Data collection, prevention and support services, and justice systems must address all forms of violence which targets older people.**

Steps taken to achieve the SDGs on inequalities could contribute to HelpAge’s goal that all older people are free from discrimination, if the complex nature of discrimination in older age is recognised and taken seriously. This is a major task, since ageism[[2]](#footnote-2) continues to be unrecognised, ignored or condoned, and often treated differently from other forms of discrimination. Age discrimination can be complex. Older people may be discriminated against for different reasons, for example because of their age, their sex, their marital status. They may also be uniquely subjected to multiple discrimination; older widows for example, may experience discrimination based on their sex, age and marital status.

In many legal systems discrimination on the basis of age, sex or race are outlawed whereas some forms of discrimination are within the law, particularly in employment and in access to services, such as health care and financial services. As we grow older, the cumulative impact of years of discrimination can build up to have a much greater impact.

Action on the SDGs to address age discrimination would mean, for example, ensuring that laws and policies do not discriminate against women (such as some pensions policies), and abolishing laws, policies or practices that discriminate on the basis of age (such as upper age limits to healthcare treatment). Or it could be by revising laws or policies that exclude older people, (for example domestic violence legislation or humanitarian response programmes).

The SDGs have some relevance to HelpAge’s goal relating to discrimination, violence and abuse. For example, we say that issues such as violence against women have to be addressed throughout life, and that there should be a focus on the violence to which older people are subjected in the private and the public sphere (at home and in community or care settings), as well as structural violence, and on harmful practices such as those related to witchcraft.

These issues could be addressed through the SDGs, but there are limitations. For example, SDG 5.2 calls for elimination of violence against all women and girls, but the two main data sources[[3]](#footnote-3) are not available for every country, and are age-limited. The SDGs will only contribute to our goal if data collection, prevention and support services, and reform of the justice system address all forms of violence and target older people.

Implementation of the SDGs must also recognise different forms of abuse, ranging from financial and economic to sexual and physical, or simple neglect. There may be a range of perpetrators, from adult children, including women, to fraudsters. Victims may be men as well as women. Ageism can also intersect with gender-based violence, ageism being a primary driver. The SDG process must also understand how to balance individual rights to make decisions about their lives with the right to protection from violence and abuse.

**HelpAge Goal 4: My voice is heard**

**What the SDGs say**

Voice is addressed in a number of SDG targets:

SDG 5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

SDG 10.2 By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status

Develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels

16.7 Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision making at all levels

**HelpAge’s position:**

* **Accountability mechanisms must be accessible for all, and special measures are needed to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable and marginalised older citizens are heard.**
* **We are disappointed that the SDGs do not help to achieve the HelpAge network’s goal of a new convention on the rights of older people, and will continue to campaign for it outside the SDG process.**

Negotiations on the SDG framework promised a more participatory and inclusive set of goals, and participation, inclusion, and responsive, representative and accountable institutions feature in a number of SDG goals. However an examination of the goals with their indicators gives little sense that the SDGs are more participatory in nature than the MDGs. We believe that “voice” is about redressing power imbalances within societies and strengthening older people’s capacity to express their views, leading to greater inclusion in decision-making and influence over government policy priorities. Helping older people understand that they have human rights and responsibilities is fundamental in strengthening their voices. However, the conventional instruments of voice and empowerment – information and communication – are often out of reach for older people, particularly older women.

Furthermore, enabling older people to analyse their problems and become advocates for their rights is only one side of strengthening voice. Duty bearers need to know about older people’s rights and the exclusions they experience. Accountability mechanisms for civil society and government to interact are necessary, and should be accessible for older citizens.

That is why we are disappointed that the SDGs do not better address accountability processes for marginalised groups such as older people. For example indicator 5.5.1 (proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments) relates to formal posts in parliament, government, public institutions or businesses, which are out of reach for the large majority of older women, with no route provided to strengthen their participation. Nor do these indicators tell us anything about the quality of participation, which can result in tokenistic gestures or quotas.

The indicators also say little about inclusion and participation processes, critical for strengthening voice and accountability. Neither goals nor indicators go far enough in reflecting the ideas proposed in the interactive discussions held in the run-up to the SDG summit. Finally, and crucially from HelpAge’s perspective, the SDGs, while offering an additional layer of protection for existing conventions (such as those on disability and children’s rights), give no help to the achievement of our goal for a new convention on the rights of older people. The HelpAge network will continue to campaign with our partners, emphasising that a new convention would strengthen the delivery of the SDGs for older people.

**Disaster Risk Reduction, Resilience and Humanitarian Response**

**What the SDGs say**

Whilst there is no single SDG addressing humanitarian aid or DRR, a number of the SDGs cover relevant topics.

SDG 1 on poverty, with target 1.5 on resilience of the poor to climate-related extreme events and other shocks and disasters, including environmental. No explicit reference to older people or age.

SDG 2 on zero hunger includes target2.2 on ending malnutrition, specifically including older people, as well as target 2.4 on ensuring sustainable food production systems and resilient agricultural practices that strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change, extreme weather, drought, flooding and other disasters.

SDG3 on health and well-being includes target 3.4 on reducing premature mortality from NCDs by one third and promoting mental health and well-being.[[4]](#footnote-4)

SDG 5 on gender and equality has target5.2 to eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls.

SDG 13 on climate action has several targets on strengthening human resilience and adaptive capacity to climate–related hazards and natural disasters, as well as institutional capacity, policies and measures. There are no references to older people.

**HelpAge’s position**

* **The design and implementation of adaptive, sustainable and resilience-based strategies must reflect the rapid demographic transition to an ageing world**
* **HelpAge is disappointed that the inclusive approach of the Sendai Framework has not translated into the human resilience targets of the SDGs, and we will campaign for older people and ageing to be included in its implementation**
* **Targets on ending malnutrition, supporting NCDs and mental health and tackling violence against women, must take into account humanitarian situations**
* **We must highlight the incidence and address the causes of violence against older people in conflict situations**

The SDGs are aimed at supporting longer term global sustainable development and are not intended to act as a humanitarian framework. However, they are partly about reducing risk and increasing resilience. It would strengthen local coping capacities, reduce the impact of emergencies and levels of need, support national institutions to respond better to emergencies and build national and international awareness, knowledge and capacity on ageing with potential positive consequences for humanitarian response.

The SDG framework should reflect the protection of people of all ages from disaster and increasing risks, treating it as an issue of rights. The SDG framework commits to ensuring consistency with international law rules and commitments, including international humanitarian law and principles, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. Humanitarian crises and complex emergencies are referred to, containing the pledge to ‘leave no-one behind’, also a key objective of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and a firm commitment within the Sendai Framework, specifically identifying the inclusion of older people as a key stakeholder. While no single SDG addresses either humanitarian aid or wider disaster management, some goals and targets are relevant, but even these do not relate directly to the humanitarian and DRR objectives of the HelpAge network. Both the SDGs and the approach of the HelpAge network aim to mainstream risk and disasters in wider development efforts. For example, ending malnutrition, tackling NCDs, mental health and violence against women all link to protection and risk reduction. However we need to commit to put these principles into practice, both within the SDG framework and in our own actions.

Most of the SDGs relating to DRR, resilience and humanitarian response do not refer specifically to older people, and challenges remain in ensuring age-inclusive implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. A number of SDGs and targets relevant to emergencies are institutional in nature. Achieving them should support reductions in disaster losses and in humanitarian need and more effective responses, in line with the objectives of the WHS and the Sendai Framework. This would support our objectives indirectly through positive impacts on the environments in which we are responding. Despite the breadth and reach of the HelpAge network, our collective capacity to engage on these broader issues is relatively limited, but we can support advocacy by wider coalitions focusing on these issues where possible.

# Urbanisation and older people

**What the SDGs say**

SDG 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

SDG 11.2 By 2030, provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons.

SDG 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

SDG 11.7 By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities.

### HelpAge’s position

### Ensuring that older people have a say in urban planning initiatives is vital to the achievement of the commitment to leave no one behind.

* **Urban planning should support the creation of spaces and communities that are welcoming, walkable, dense and mixed use, well maintained and designed and that feel safe and secure at all times**
* **Safe, affordable and accessible public transport and non-motorised forms of travel such as walking and cycling are essential to the inclusion of older urban populations**
* **Livelihood opportunities available to older people in cities, particularly informal street based activities should be protected and promoted**
* **The inclusion of older people in all city level disaster resilience and response planning and support to older displaced people is essential**
* **Efforts to reduce air pollution, and to change poor diets and sedentary lifestyles that lead to higher rates of NCDs should be urban public health priorities**

With nearly two out of three older people globally living in cities, and almost 300 million older people in cities in LAMICs, urbanisation has consequences for older people in terms of health, income security, resilience and collective social action to achieve political and social change. The SDGs call for inclusive urbanisation for all; this should enable older persons to have access to safe and affordable public transport, and enjoy secure, inclusive and accessible public spaces. To achieve this they must be able to participate in planning and decision making.

Poverty in urban areas is complex and under-represented and assumptions around improved access to services and livelihood opportunities are often misguided. Ensuring the delivery of the ‘Leave No One Behind’ agenda requires us to continue to emphasise the importance of cities that are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable for all people as they age.

Practical implementation of SDG 11 has been partly addressed by the New Urban Agenda (NUA) agreed at the Habitat III conference (October 2016). With 27 references to ageing and older people (as a result of advocacy activities supported by HelpAge), the NUA strongly argues for the inclusion of older people in all stages of planning and decision making and demands age- and gender- responsive actions. It also highlights a number of policies and perspectives that more broadly protect and promote rights in older age in urban environments. However, both the NUA and the SDGs have serious gaps in relation to older people. For example, we are disappointed at the lack of attention paid by both the SDGs and the NUA to the impact of non-communicable disease in urban areas and the failure to highlight the impact of air pollution on health and mortality, an issue of particular concern for older people in cities. Furthermore, given the reality of poverty for many older city-dwellers, the limited livelihood opportunities available to older people in cities, particularly informal street based activities, need to be better recognised and supported both by the SDGs and the NUA.

Alongside national governments, the NUA recognises the key role of local and city level governments in implementing change. Urban populations have greater political capital and influence to bring about progressive change that can then eventually lead to progress at the national level and the collective action potential of older urban populations should be harnessed.

**Data that is fit for purpose**

**What the SDGs say**

SDG 17 Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

Target 17.18 By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts.

**HelpAge’s Position**

* **Data gaps must be addressed in order to measure the impact of the SDGs for older people**
* **Upper age limits which exclude older people should be removed from international surveys**
* **Action is needed both with national and international agencies to influence the design, collection and collation of survey data**
* **Data should, as a minimum, be disaggregated by age, gender, disability and location**
* **We must stimulate wider debate on the assumptions used in measuring household and old age poverty.**

Data systems are not fit for purpose in today’s ageing world. Data on older people is either not collected, or where it does exist it is not fully analysed, reported or utilised, leading to serious gaps in information for policy and planning. It also means that we are not making best use of the data infrastructure that already exists in the HelpAge network.

The SDGs have been accompanied by a call for a “data revolution”, recognising that concerted action is needed at all levels of the data system from collection to utilisation, and from all stakeholders, to improve the quality and range of data. The scale of the challenge of better data on ageing and older people is immense.

Age needs to be taken into account as a cross -cutting issue in all goals and targets. In practice, while the SDGs incorporate 22 targets which either directly name older people as a group (e.g. 2.2, 11.7) or indirectly include them by referencing “all people”, “all ages or “universal”, only 8 indicators call for disaggregation by age. The likelihood is that these 8 indicators will also be disaggregated by gender, but just 3 of the 8 will be disaggregated by disability. Furthermore, it is not clear what the level of age disaggregation will be for the 8 indicators in question – will it be a single group aged 60 plus or disaggregation by single year or in age groups? This is a critical issue since the needs of people at different points in later life vary enormously and decision-makers need to plan to meet the needs of ageing populations in all their diversity.

**Data on Poverty and the SDGs**

There are also methodological issues with the measures of poverty referenced in the SDGs, of which the most fundamental is that measurement is based on the use of household income and expenditure surveys. Household surveys tell us whether older people live in poor or non-poor households but not whether, as individuals, they receive their fair share of income in a given household. An additional challenge is that there has been limited discussion, let alone consensus, on the assumptions that should be used to measure old age poverty in low and middle income countries. As a result, there are numerous examples where analysis has drawn conclusions about older people being less poor than the rest of the population. Even where these results have later been disproved the outcome is often that older people’s social protection is given a lower priority in policy making.

**Conclusion**

HelpAge broadly welcomes the more universal, inclusive approach taken by the SDGs in comparison to the Millennium Development Goals. References to ending poverty and ensuring health for people of all ages, as well as support to a lifelong approach to learning, are positive developments. We are however disappointed that the overall approach of the SDGs continues to marginalise ageing and older people. In particular, the failure to recognise the need for a UN convention means that the rights of older people, unlike those of women, children and people with disabilities, will remain unprotected in the implementation of the Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Furthermore, the promise in the targets is not always reflected in the ambition of the indicators, which for the most part fail to recognise issues concerning ageing and older people. In some cases (for example, upper age limits for data disaggregation, or the concept of “premature mortality”), the SDGs continue to discriminate against older people. Also, as noted above, the measurement of poverty in old age remains highly contentious. So we must wait to see how far the measurement of progress against the SDGs is inclusive of ageing and older people. As the HelpAge network we commit to work together in ensuring that the vision of leaving no-one behind is realised for all older people.

1. <http://un.org/sustainable-development/development-agenda> is the link to the main SDG document, and <http://unstats.un.org/sdgs/iaeg-sdgs/> is the link to the related indicators. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. negative stereotypes and attitudes towards older age and older people [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. National surveys and Demographic Health Surveys. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See above p.7 for HelpAge’s position on this target. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)