

14 January 2015

Dear Friends,

I want to wish you all a very happy New Year.

As a truly global network of organisations working with and for older people, I am confident we will continue to strengthen our collective influence and impact in 2015. I shared the Board-approved final version of our new 2020 Strategy earlier this week, and all of us in the Secretariat of HelpAge International sincerely look forward to working with you all during this new year, and indeed over this entire new 5 year Strategy period.

I am very proud of what we achieved together as the HelpAge Global Network in 2014, on top of all the individual achievements of your own organisations. The ones that stand out for me are:



1 October 2014: Building a blast with the world's older people

On 1 October 2014, we launched for the second time the Global AgeWatch Index (GAWI) alongside the global Age Demands Action campaign, which saw older people campaigning for their rights in more than 60 countries around the world. More than 90,000 campaigners of all ages across the globe took to the streets to demand better policies, better services, and better lives for older people.

Due to a strong and coordinated effort by the HelpAge network, we achieved 1,653 media hits in 115 countries; and in more than 40 countries HelpAge offices and Affiliates organised events to discuss the Index with key stakeholders. One of the ways we all agreed the second year of GAWI improved significantly on the first was the much greater visibility and participation of Affiliates, notably in the co-authoring and branding of the country report cards, and many launch events.

Stronger in emergencies and disaster risk reduction

Over the course of 2014, we further strengthened our work on emergencies including fundraising effectively across the network. The ambition of our humanitarian response is growing all the time, as it is our hope to see across the network a moral community of older people in donor countries reaching out to those who have been victims of conflict and natural disaster.

HelpAge International and/or network members started new humanitarian health programmes in Lebanon for older refugees from Syria, nutrition intervention for older adults suffering from severe acute malnutrition in South Sudan, and we have supported the development of Age International's innovative partnership with a youth organisation in Sierra Leone to slow the spread of Ebola in their communities. In long-running crises such as Colombia, Haiti and

Myanmar we have shown strong external funding performance. I was particularly proud to accompany Barry Rand, the then AARP Chief Executive, and Tom Wright, his counterpart from Age UK, on a visit to Haiti to see the incredible impact that the support their organisations and supporters had made possible after the devastating earthquake in January 2010.

Tom Wright and I were in Lebanon last week, and I will share some images and some video from my visit there within the next week.

On 13 October, International Day for Disaster Reduction, HelpAge and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) issued a joint call for greater involvement of older people in disaster management efforts worldwide. This year the focus of IDDR was on older people; the importance of acknowledging them as a resource for resilience; and ensure that they can take part in resilience building.

Landmark achievements on the road towards a convention

We saw two remarkable achievements in 2014 on the road to a UN convention on the rights of older people, which of course is a goal and a campaign that has very wide support and participation across the network. The appointment of Ms Rosa Kornfeld-Matte as the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of the human rights of all older persons; and the adoption by the UN at the end of November of a resolution to continue the work of the UN Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) in 2015.

Member States have been asked to submit proposals on how to better protect older people's rights. These will be presented to the UN General Assembly later this year.

Sustainable Development Goals for people of all ages

In 2014, we made great progress towards ensuring the sustainable development framework will include the world's rapidly growing number of older people. Many of you have contributed to the achievements by engaging at key points in the process with your governments. Only a network can work in this way, linking advocacy at the UN in New York and visits to Member State offices with parallel activities at country level by your staff and supporters.

The key achievement of all our efforts was undoubtedly the inclusion of ageing in the outcome document of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development Goals, which was published in July. The second highlight was the even stronger inclusion of ageing in the Secretary General's synthesis report, which was published in December 2014. We are not there yet, but there are real grounds for optimism that our collective work with UN and key Member States has started to decisively shift attitudes towards older people and the importance of involving them in global and national development processes and programmes.

2015 will be an even more crucial year for this post 2015 work, as UN member states embark on the final negotiations towards agreeing a new framework of Sustainable Development Goals. Let's work together to ensure ageing is included!

Securing incomes for the world's older people

A series of great achievements throughout the year have been accomplished in our work to enable older men and women to have secure incomes. With HelpAge Deutschland we organised the 'Thanks, Otto!' conference in Germany which marked 125 years since the world's first public pension was introduced. The event brought together a number of key thinkers on the topic including from government, civil society and academia.

Furthermore, we are now advising the government of Myanmar on social protection in a major new programme of work. HelpAge and Age International jointly hosted a study tour to the UK by government officials from Myanmar. And finally, more than 40 leaders from across Latin America took part in a roundtable in Bogota on financial inclusion for older people.

2015: New Year, New Strategy

On April 1st, HelpAge International will formally transition from one strategy period to the new one. As I wrote earlier this week, I am confident, this will take us to the next level in the ambition and impact we can have working together as a global network.

2015: A year of opportunities!

2015 is full of great opportunities to influence global, regional and national agendas. It will of course bring great challenges too.

The world is as divided and volatile as it has been for many years, a key theme of next week's World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos next week, which I will attend on behalf of HelpAge International.

We will all need the wisdom and experience of the world's older people more than ever.

Every good wish to you and your organisations in 2015.



Toby Porter