

**WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT
HIGH LEVEL LEADERS' ROUNDTABLE 6
*Natural Disasters and Climate Change – managing
risks and crises differently***



HelpAge International statement
Delivered by Toby Porter, CEO, HelpAge International

We all must face the fact that the world is ageing rapidly. Some of the states represented here are among the fastest ageing countries on earth. Within five years, adults aged 60 and over will outnumber children aged under 5.¹ By 2050, there will be more people in the world aged over 60 than all children under 14.² Populations are ageing fastest in low and middle income countries where the human impact of disasters tends to be greatest.³

HelpAge International and its global network are proud to endorse the five core commitments of this Roundtable. We must also recognise that older men and women are amongst the people at highest risk in disasters. When the earthquake and tsunami struck Japan in 2011, 56% of all those who died were aged 65 and over, although only 23% of the baseline population was in this age group.⁴ In Nepal, 29% of those who died in last year's earthquake were aged over 60, yet older people are only 8% of the population.⁵

Yet despite the growing number of older people affected by disasters and the disproportionate risk they face, older people still tend to be neglected in disaster preparedness and disaster response.⁶ The Synthesis Report on the consultation process for this World Humanitarian Summit makes a very clear call: "Correct the neglect of older people",⁷ it said.

I note in the programme of side-events, we have 15 side-events explicitly mentioning youth, younger people and children. This is a very good thing. However there are no side-events mentioning older people and this is a cause for concern and an indicator of neglect.

¹ UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) Population Division, *World population prospects: the 2015 revision*, DVD edition, 2015

² UNDESA, 2015

³ UNDESA, 2015

⁴ HelpAge International, *Displacement and older people: the case of the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami of 2011*, London, HelpAge International, 2013

⁵ Ministry of Home Affairs, Nepal, 2015. <http://apps.geoportal.icimod.org/ndrrip/profile?id=Country&Lang=en>. (13 April 2016)

⁶ World Humanitarian Summit secretariat, *Restoring humanity: Synthesis of the Consultation Process for the World Humanitarian Summit*, New York, United Nations, 2015, <http://synthesisreport.worldhumanitarianissummit.org> (19 April 2016)

⁷ World Humanitarian Summit secretariat, 2015

So what needs to change? We must commit to end the invisibility of older people by:

- Collecting and using data that is properly disaggregated by age (including older age groups) and engaging with older people themselves to take their views into account
- Equipping all humanitarian staff at national, regional and international levels with the knowledge and skills they need to identify and respond to the needs of older people.
- Supporting governmental and cluster coordination bodies to provide strong leadership on addressing the needs of the most vulnerable.
- Including older people in donors' priorities in the allocation of funding. We already have good tools such as age and gender markers and they must be put into practise and made to work for all age groups.

HelpAge International commits to these key actions through the *Inclusion Charter*. We developed this Charter with national and international organisations working with all vulnerable groups. It sets out the necessary steps to ensure inclusive response for the most vulnerable, be they children or older people, women or people with disabilities. We call on all those engaged in disaster response to endorse the Inclusion Charter at www.inclusioncharter.org.

HelpAge International promotes the wellbeing and inclusion of older women and men, and reduces poverty and discrimination in later life.



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