Ageing and the SDGs

Key messages to ensure age-inclusive policies

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

HelpAge International

HelpAge supports the Sustainable Development Goals

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Simon Rawles/Age International

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

This guide supports HelpAge staff and network members in using Agenda 2030 to advance older people's rights and inclusion in development policy and practice. It explains how global development must meet older people's needs and rights if it is to be sustainable and provides key arguments to make this case with policy makers.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the world's plan to end poverty, reduce inequalities and tackle climate change. Inclusion is at the heart of this agenda, with a key pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first.

These ideals align with HelpAge's vision for 2030 of a world where every older person leads a dignified, healthy and secure life.

2020 marks the beginning of the decade of action to deliver on the SDGs. It also marks the launch of HelpAge's new ten-year strategy, which strives to ensure that by 2030 millions of older people will enjoy a better quality of life through improved wellbeing, enhanced dignity and greater voice.

The 2030 Agenda gives HelpAge International and its network members and partners the opportunity to engage directly with governments on key issues for the wellbeing, dignity and voice of older people – be it secure incomes, healthcare for all, or an end to ageism – and to raise awareness of ageing within development debates. HelpAge believes that the SDGs will not be reached unless they address the needs and rights of each and every person – including those of older people.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared global plan to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity by 2030. It includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), linked to 169 targets and several indicators, which must be adapted by each country to their national contexts (see Annex 1 for a list of the SDGs and their related targets).

Measuring and reporting on progress towards the SDGs is voluntary, through Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), presented to a High-Level Political Forum convened by the UN every year. To date, 142 countries have reported on their progress. While 85 per cent of these reports have included some reference to ageing,[1] very few countries have included references to substantive policies on ageing and older people in their VNRs.

How can the SDGs advance older people's advocacy?

There are four key ways in which the SDGs are driving older people's inclusion and rights:

1. They are influencing how governments, donors and civil society think about development.
2. National development plans and other policies are being reviewed to align with the SDGs – a trend with the potential to transform advocacy for older people's inclusion and make ageing and older people a key part of discussions on development priorities for all countries.
3. Systems being put in place to deliver the SDGs (e.g. for health and care, social protection, etc) must be adaptable to changing population structures if they are to be effective and sustainable, making it vital for governments to respond to and prepare for population ageing.
4. Global ageing and growing inequality are two megatrends that must be addressed together. This requires a life-course approach to policy making that reduces the inequalities that build up as people age (especially for women) and unlocks the potential of millions of older people to continue playing a full part in society.

"The relevance and significance of the SDGs for older persons cannot be underestimated. Civil society organisations representing older persons are critical partners in ensuring that the voices of older people are heard at all levels of government as plans are put in place to implement the SDGs and progress is reviewed."

Amal Rafeh, Chief of the UN Programme on Ageing

Jonas Wresch/Age International

SDGs as a driver of older people's inclusion: the evidence

The SDGs are changing the priorities of governments, multilateral agencies, donors and civil society.

For example, governments now want to know how the policy changes proposed by organisations such as HelpAge will help them achieve the SDGs, while donors want to be sure that projects align with the SDGs. The SDGs have also helped to create a growing focus on those at risk of being 'left behind', which often includes older people.

Example of impact: *In 2016, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs launched 'Voice' – an innovative new grant facility, grounded in the SDGs, to amplify the voices of the most marginalised. Older people were included as a key target group for the fund.*

SDG implementation is creating new spaces for debate on equality, sustainability and inclusion at the highest levels.

These spaces include SDG coordination units, cross-government working groups, and parliamentary committees. Responses to the SDGs are often led by the Prime Minister's office, a minister or senior civil servant, so positioning ageing as a key consideration in SDG planning may provide an opportunity to access higher level officials.

Example of impact: *The Government of Pakistan acted swiftly when Agenda 2030 got underway to ensure that Pakistan was prepared to implement the SDGs. Pakistan's parliament adopted the SDGs as the national development agenda, set up federal and provincial SDG units, and recruited SDG focal persons at all levels of government.*

The SDGs are opening up opportunities for new partnerships and alliances.

Never before have so many actors been involved in a social development agenda. Forging new alliances to amplify our messages and feed in the perspectives of older people will be key to ensuring they are not left behind.

Example of impact: *In Rwanda, network member NSINDAGIZA worked with other civil society organisations to identify forms of inequalities and discrimination experienced by different groups, and together these organisations created the Rwanda Leave No One Behind Network. The Network presented its mapping to key decision makers and opened doors for organisations like NSINDAGIZA to access key contacts in government. NSINDAGIZA was invited to join the Civil Society Human Rights Forum and the government's social protection technical working group. It works through the Leave No One Behind Network to represent marginalised groups in SDG conversations in Rwanda.*

The SDGs and the commitment to 'leave no one behind' are placing social development at the heart of national development planning.

Many governments rely on civil society's support to ensure different stakeholders are catered for in government plans, so this trend is creating an opportunity to integrate ageing and older people into development planning at the national level.

Example of impact: *In its VNR report[2] the Nigerian government reported that its SDG implementation framework prioritises the principle of 'leaving no one behind' and it has dedicated an entire section of the Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan 2017–2020 to setting out policies and programmes to enhance social inclusion with the aim of ensuring that no one is left behind.*

The SDGs are a powerful advocacy tool as governments will report on progress at the global stage.

Countries' feedback on their SDG progress inevitably addresses issues concerning older people or age, thus providing a concrete opportunity to advocate for older people. Connecting your ongoing work to the SDGs can add further weight to your advocacy.

Example of impact: *In Rwanda, network member NSINDAGIZA worked through the Rwanda Leave No One Behind Network to advocate for a National Policy for the Rights of Older Persons, which is now at validation stage. They also helped ensure issues of ageing and older people were included in Rwanda's VNR, presented at the 2019 High Level Political Forum.*

The SDGs are driving a discussion on more and better data.

Agenda 2030 has catalysed a global conversation on the need to improve data quality and disaggregation to assess progress. This provides opportunities, including through working directly with national statistical offices, to address serious gaps in data collection, analysis and use when it comes to ageing and older people. Many of the global indicators directly call for disaggregation by age (see Annex 2).

Example of impact: *The UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) recognised that data systems are failing older people and that better data are needed to ensure equitable programme delivery. Age disaggregation is now a core part of DFID's Data Disaggregation Action Plan.[3] The UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) has also been a strong partner with DFID and HelpAge in supporting the creation of the Titchfield City Group on Ageing Statistics and Age Disaggregated Data, which involves several national statistical offices and UN agencies.*

The SDGs, human rights, and the need for a UN convention on the rights of older people

The 17 SDGs aim to realise the human rights of all, grounded in human rights standards and international human rights law.

Agenda 2030 is a voluntary framework. Voluntary National Reviews work as a political peer pressure tool but are not mandatory. Human rights treaties, on the other hand, are legally binding, which means states are required to report on their implementation. The Danish Institute for Human Rights has mapped the SDGs against existing human rights instruments and found that over 90 per cent of the SDGs are grounded in existing human rights standards. Therefore, linking your SDGs advocacy to existing obligations under human rights treaties can be an effective way to increase pressure for action at national level.

In the case of older people, however, international human rights mechanisms are still inadequate. While the universal right to equality and non-discrimination is guaranteed by the main human rights instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, age discrimination is not specifically prohibited in international human rights treaties except for that on migrant workers. With no international human rights standards specifically on the rights of older people, states have no incentive, obligation or guidance on how to change age-discriminatory laws, making it harder for them to meet the SDGs for older people. This makes the need for a new UN convention on the rights of older people even more pressing to ensure older people are not excluded from development processes. Advocacy on the SDGs and for a UN convention are complementary activities.

Arguing your case: how to get older people included in the SDGs

Placing older people at the heart of the SDGs: key messages

The SDGs include three explicit references to older people (SDG2, target 2.2 on hunger and nutrition, and SDG11, targets 11.2 and 11.7 on sustainable cities). They also contain a commitment to disaggregate data by age under several indicators (see Annex 2). Throughout the SDGs there is also use of inclusive language that refers to 'all', people of 'all ages', and 'all women and girls'.

The SDGs cover several areas of policy and practice that are relevant to older people and connect with many of our HelpAge Network priorities, providing clear entry points for advocacy. The main messages and relevant SDGs that affect older people are listed in this section. (A more detailed analysis of how well the SDGs cover key issues for older people can be found in the HelpAge discussion paper *Agenda 2030: The Sustainable Development Goals and Global Ageing*.)

Older people's inclusion in development is essential if we are to 'leave no one behind'

The SDGs promise to 'leave no one behind', reach the furthest behind first, 'end poverty and hunger in all their forms and dimensions', and 'ensure that all human beings can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment'. Achieving this means ensuring that every individual – including every older person – benefits from the rights and opportunities enshrined in the SDGs.[4] Older populations include some who will be furthest behind – such as those who are housebound or caught in humanitarian emergencies – and these people must be included in SDG efforts by every member state.

Preparing for ageing populations is vital if development is to be effective and sustainable

The share of older people in the wider population is increasing faster than all younger age groups. The over-65s now outnumber children under five[5] and by 2050 one in six people will be aged over 65. Anticipating this demographic shift and enacting policies to adapt to an ageing population is essential to achieving the SDGs and the promise to leave no one behind. Governments should implement policies to capitalise on opportunities of population ageing, while addressing the needs, rights and preferences of men and women throughout their life course.

Older people's voices are as key to SDG implementation as any other population group

Governments have committed to ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making mechanisms (SDG16) and to use follow-up and review mechanisms that are open and inclusive of all people, with a particular focus on those furthest behind.[6]

The right to participation is a guarantee against social exclusion and gives older people the opportunity to help shape more inclusive policies and to continue to actively contribute to society. SDG implementation by governments must address physical, information and institutional barriers to older people's participation and ensure the voices of all marginalised people, including older people and people with disabilities, are heard.

Age-disaggregated data are essential for inclusion and accountability

Agenda 2030 includes a commitment to gathering more and better data to measure progress and ensure no one is left behind. This creates an important opportunity to highlight the gaps in data on older people. Good quality, timely data are key to inform inclusive policy and programme design and to map interventions that work to improve the lives of the most marginalised. Multilateral agencies, governments and national statistical offices must ensure that:

- Older people are included at all stages of data collection, analysis and use.
- SDG targets and indicators systematically include people over 60 years of age and that data are disaggregated in five-year bands, as a minimum.
- Age caps are removed from international surveys.
- Statistics frameworks take a life-course approach, providing more nuanced data on ageing.
- Data are disaggregated by age, gender, disability and location, and that age-specific results are published.
- Discussions and outputs of the Titchfield City Group on Ageing are proactively supported, disseminated and used.

Ben Small/HelpAge International

Targeting selected SDGs to advance older people's rights and inclusion

The SDGs require an integrated approach to implementation to ensure consistency between different policy areas. While we should regard the SDGs as a holistic framework, HelpAge has its own priority areas of work, recently reviewed through a thorough consultation under the *HelpAge International 2030 Strategy*.[7] This section therefore highlights the SDGs most closely linked to the areas of work of the HelpAge Network and includes recommendations for specific government actions to ensure these particular SDGs are inclusive of older people and advance their wellbeing, dignity and voice. However, this does not mean the other goals are not relevant to our work. Network members should reflect on their national context, identify which policy areas are most relevant to that context, and tailor all messages to ensure their recommendations resonate with policy makers.

SDG1: End poverty and ensure social protection

How does this goal link to ageing and older people?

SDG1 commits to ending poverty in all its forms everywhere and it is often referred to as the SDGs' headline goal. Older people are implicitly included in the first two targets and their related indicators (**Target 1.1** to eradicate extreme poverty and **Target 1.2** to reduce poverty according to national definitions) as both specify that progress to achieving the targets must be age-disaggregated.

Social Protection is also included in SDG1, with a call for nationally appropriate social protection floors (**Target 1.3**). Social protection floors that guarantee income security and healthcare throughout the life course are widely recognised as one of the most effective measures to tackle poverty and inequality, and to invest in human development.[8] Universal social pensions are increasingly seen as a necessary component of social protection floors.[9]

What are the main issues this goal can help address for older people?

With an ageing global population, universal social pensions represent the most effective way to provide income security for all people as they grow older. Despite this pressing need, pension systems currently do not provide adequate coverage for most of the world's older people and often fail to produce equal outcomes for women and men.[10] Less than 20 per cent of older people receive a pension in low-income countries, with women less likely to receive it than men.[11] Even when older people do get a pension, it can be extremely low and fall short of human rights standards for dignity.[12]

How can governments use this goal to improve the lives of older people?

When asking governments to deliver **SDG1** and implement age-inclusive social protection systems, we should ensure they consider the following elements:

- Social protection and social security schemes should not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, disability or any other grounds.
- Social pensions should be universal to effectively reach all older people, including those living in poverty. Poverty-targeted pensions attempt to select older people on the basis of household-level indicators of income and wealth, which often do not reflect individual older people's wellbeing and can therefore exclude older people from the income they need.
- Non-contributory, tax-financed social pensions should be prioritised to expand coverage and reduce gender gaps. A focus on extending contributory schemes, while important, fails to provide an alternative for women who are not considered 'workers' at all when they engage in unpaid, unrecognised care and domestic work.
- Social pensions should be of adequate levels in order to guarantee income security for older people. The adequacy also needs to be maintained over time through indexation to ensure benefit levels are adjusted in line with inflation.

SDG3: Healthy lives and wellbeing for all at all ages

How does this goal link to ageing and older people?

Health is one area where HelpAge has a particularly strong entry point as SDG3 calls for healthy lives and wellbeing *for all at all ages*. The overall approach to health is broad and there is a strong focus on achieving universal health coverage (**Target 3.8**), which provides a critical opportunity to meet the right of all people to the highest standard of physical and mental health.

What are the main issues this goal can help address for older people?

As people age, their health, care and support needs become increasingly complex. This requires an integrated, rights-based and people-centred approach that includes available, accessible, acceptable and quality health services, and long-term care and support. Universal Health Coverage (UHC) is essential for ensuring all people, everywhere, can access quality health and care services without the risk of financial hardship. Nevertheless, progress on UHC remains unequal and limited. Lack of accessible facilities, prohibitive costs, discrimination and ageism[13] by health workers are just some of the barriers faced by older people in seeking appropriate responses to their health and care needs.

Addressing communicable (**Target 3.3**) and non-communicable (**Target 3.4**) diseases is also covered by SDG3, and is relevant to older people. The global pattern of disease has been shifting over recent years towards non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which have a disproportionate impact on people in older age. It was estimated that in 2011, people aged 60 and over accounted for 75 per cent of deaths from NCDs in low- and middle-income countries. As people age, they are also more likely to experience more than one chronic condition at the same time. Yet **Target 3.4** focuses on 'premature mortality', defined as dying before the age of 70. This goes against the universal human right to health, and against the goal of healthy life and wellbeing for all at all ages. This language is discriminatory, leads to the exclusion of older age groups, and should be discontinued.

How can governments use this goal to improve the lives of older people?

When asking governments to deliver **SDG3** through truly universal health and care systems for all ages we should ensure they:

- Adopt indicators and policies on NCDs that are inclusive of people of all ages. This means NCD strategies must include treatment, management, care, rehabilitation and palliation services for people of all ages affected by NCDs, while continuing to invest in prevention across the life course (**Target 3.4**).
- Include older age groups in data collection and avoid a focus on 'premature mortality' which is discriminatory and leads to the exclusion of older age groups in targets and indicators.[14]
- Invest in age-inclusive UHC and the building blocks needed to deliver this, including:
  - Service delivery that is person-centred and not focused on single diseases in isolation from other factors (e.g. other diseases a person may have, or the level of poverty or exclusion they may be facing).
  - Health workforces that have the skills to respond to the needs of ageing populations.
  - Health information systems that are not age-capped.
  - Access to essential medicines for conditions common in old age, and to assistive devices and technologies.
  - Services that are free at point of access for people of all ages.
  - The right to health included in national law, with ageing and older people's health and care needs explicitly included in national health policies.

SDG4: Inclusive education and lifelong learning opportunities for all

How does this goal link to ageing and older people?

Inclusive and equitable education and *lifelong learning* opportunities *for all* are the aims of SDG4. It contains several age-inclusive targets, such as equal access *for all women and men* to affordable technical, vocational and tertiary education (**Target 4.3**); adult technical and vocational skills for employment, including ICT (**Target 4.4**); and to adult numeracy and literacy (**Target 4.6**).

What are the main issues this goal can help address for older people?

The right to education covers all forms of learning and education, from basic literacy and numeracy to tertiary education, vocational training and retraining, digital education, adult education, informal, recreational and community-based education, lifelong learning programmes, and skills training in literacy, numeracy and technology.

These are critical to enable everyone – including older people – to live dignified, autonomous and independent lives, fulfil their aspirations, build their skills and capacities, develop their full human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and fully participate in society.

How can governments use this goal to improve the lives of older people?

When asking governments to implement **SDG4** in a way that respects older people's right to education and lifelong learning, we should advocate that they:

- Ensure older people have the right of equal access to opportunities for all forms of learning (including digital learning) and levels of education without discrimination based on age or any other grounds.
- Allow older people to benefit from scholarships and other educational or study grants on an equal basis with others.
- Take measures to eliminate ageist stereotypes and prejudices about older people's ability to learn and develop at all stages of life.
- Ensure older people have the right to affordable education and lifelong learning opportunities that fit their needs, preferences, skills, motivations and diverse identities.
- Ensure older people have the right to learning and educational materials in an accessible and acceptable format.

SDG5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

How does this goal link to ageing and older people?

Gender equality is a major SDG focus and there are gender-related targets throughout the framework, as well as the dedicated SDG5 on gender equality and empowerment of *all women and girls*. SDG5 includes targets on gender-based discrimination, violence against women, unpaid care work, land rights, sexual health and women's leadership.

Despite the welcome use of age-inclusive language, SDG5 lacks a coherent, life-course gender perspective. Gender inequalities in older age result from the multiple disadvantages and discrimination that women experience throughout their lives due to gender norms and unequal gender relations, such as differences in education opportunities, lower wages than males, their responsibility to do a disproportionate amount of unpaid work (recognised by **Target 5.4**) and lack of voice.

What are the main issues this goal can help address for older people?

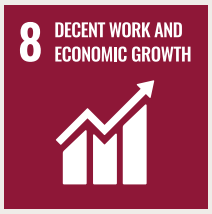
The health focus of the SDGs is often on the early and reproductive stages for girls and women[15] and not on health in later life.[16] To ensure that older women are not denied their rights, such as access to health services (including sexual and reproductive services), policies must be inclusive of all ages and data must be collected and disaggregated across the life course, with upper age caps removed. In this regard, **SDG indicator 5.6.1** (which focuses on the proportion of women aged 15–49 who make their own decisions on sexual relations and reproductive care) is discriminatory and should be expanded to cover all ages.

Gender-based violence is covered in **Target 5.2** to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls (and there are targets in **SDG16** that aim to reduce all forms of violence everywhere). However, data sources under this target are not available for every country and are often limited to those aged 15–49 years. Interpersonal and sexual violence do not stop at 50, so data must cover all ages.

How can governments use this goal to improve the lives of older people?

When asking governments to ensure gender equality throughout the life course and to implement **SDG5** in a way that is inclusive of older women, we should make sure they:

- Adopt holistic, person-centred and long-term sexual and reproductive healthcare policies that respond to women's needs at all stages of their lives.
- Support the empowerment of older women (particularly those from marginalised groups such as widows or those who face overlapping forms of discrimination due to their ethnicity, race or other status), to be represented at all levels in the design, implementation and evaluation of programmes, policies and services, especially in decision-making processes.
- Remove upper age caps on data collection, especially in relation to health, including sexual and reproductive services, and violence against women.
- Ensure SDG reporting, global violence surveys, humanitarian data-collection tools and analysis all include women over the age of 49.



SDG8: Economic growth and decent work for all

How does this goal link to ageing and older people?

Inclusive and sustainable economic growth and decent work *for all,* including access to financial services (**Target 8.3**), are the focus of SDG8. Many older men and women contribute to the economy and often wish to continue working past retirement age, as employment can be crucial for their economic security and enable them to maintain autonomous and independent lives. Decent work can also give older people a sense of purpose and reduce their isolation.

What are the main issues this goal can help address for older people?

Ageism and age discrimination in employment affect older people in many ways, from recruitment to employment regulations, to mandatory retirement ages or age-restrictive policies in access to financial services. In this respect, **Target 8.3**, to promote decent job creation and encourage small and medium-size enterprises through access to financial services, requires governments to ensure older people do not face age-restrictive policies that limit their access to credit and loans.

Another challenge for older persons' equal participation in the labour market is the need to balance paid work with care and support for children, spouses and other relatives. A study by the Overseas Development Institute has revealed that women tend to spend more than double the time in unpaid activities than men.[17] This is often on top of paid work older women take up to support their households, much of which is informal or precarious.[18] This scenario reflects systemic inequalities women face throughout their life course. Supporting older women's income security through comprehensive social protection and ensuring they have access to decent work is therefore critical to achieving SDG8.

How can governments use this goal to improve the lives of older people?

When asking governments to implement **SDG8** in a way that enables older people to contribute to the economy and society more broadly, we should advocate for them to:

- Enact and enforce national and global anti-age discrimination legislation and review age-related anomalies in existing equality legislation.
- Address policies and legislation that discriminate against older people in the workplace, including recruitment, career advancement and compulsory retirement policies.
- Challenge age-discriminatory policies, laws and practices on access to goods and services, such as microcredit, loans, financial services or insurance policies.
- Provide access to financing, loans and training to older people to support their entrepreneurial and business activities.
- Provide older people with access to minimum income support through universal non-contributory social pensions and by recognising women's unpaid care work when calculating contributory pensions.
- Ensure flexible or gradual retirement schemes and flexible working conditions are available to older workers on an equal basis with others.
- Ensure older people have physical access to workplaces and reasonable accommodation for their particular needs and abilities.
- Adopt programmes to promote the hiring of older people and ensure they have access to training and other career-development opportunities.

SDG10: Reduce inequalities

How does this goal link to ageing and older people?

The SDGs are underpinned by human rights and reflect a growing understanding of the need to tackle overlapping forms of inequalities if we are to end poverty. SDG10 aims to reduce inequality and includes targets to empower and promote inclusion of all, irrespective of age (**Target 10.2**) and to eliminate discriminatory laws, policies and practices (**Target 10.3**).

Older people are recognised within Agenda 2030 as a specific group at risk of being left behind who must be empowered. This is very welcome as the effects of inequalities in education, health, employment and income accumulate throughout the years and can have a disproportionate impact on people as they grow older, particularly on women.

What are the main issues this goal can help address for older people?

Government action can reduce inequalities (for example by providing universal social protection systems) or increase them (such as through policies that restrict access to services for older people). Therefore, if governments are serious about tackling inequalities, they must identify who is being left behind, adopt public policies that address the needs of different population groups, and mitigate the impacts of overlapping inequalities and discrimination.

Governments can also reduce inequalities by confronting ageism, a key driver of social, political and economic discrimination in older age. Ageist attitudes stereotype, discriminate against and exclude older persons. Age discrimination is often present in legislation or public policies, such as mandatory retirement ages or policies that stipulate age caps on access to other goods and services. Such discrimination must be challenged in line with **Target 10.3**.

While rights to equality and non-discrimination are universal, the absence of explicit references to age in human rights instruments as a prohibited basis for discrimination makes it harder to hold governments to account around SDG10 in relation to older people.

A UN convention on the rights of older people is long overdue to address ageism and inequalities in old age. Such an instrument would provide a definitive, universal position that age discrimination is morally and legally unacceptable. It would also make clear older people's rights, and government responsibilities to uphold those rights.

How can governments use this goal to improve the lives of older people?

When asking governments to implement **SDG10** to reduce inequalities and end discrimination against older people, we should advocate for them to:

- Ensure all people across the life course have age, disability and gender-equitable social protection through the universal implementation of Target 1.3 on social protection floors and other measures.
- Provide affordable, high quality, person-centred and accessible social services, including universal health coverage with long term care and support services, for all older persons.
- Ensure meaningful participation of older persons in all planning and decision-making processes, including through information on rights and entitlements.
- Actively combat ageism and reform discriminatory laws, policies and practices on the basis of age (Target 10.3).
- Adopt a UN convention on the rights of older people.

SDG11: Inclusive and sustainable cities and communities

How does this goal link to ageing and older people?

SDG11 aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. It includes targets with specific commitments for older people around access to safe and affordable public transport (**Target 11.2**) and accessible, green and public spaces (**Target 11.7**). The goal also includes targets to improve housing and basic services *for all* (**Target 11.1**) and to make decision making more participatory (**Target 11.3**).

What are the main issues this goal can help address for older people?

The number of older people living in cities is increasing rapidly and a life-course approach to urban planning is central to addressing their needs and achieving SDG11. Older people can be vulnerable to discrimination in urban settings and are often excluded from access to housing, basic services, public spaces and infrastructure – including transport.[19]

Delivering SDG11 requires building social and physical infrastructure that enhances social interaction, including across generations, and promotes the rights of all to live in dignity. Such an approach is key to leaving no one behind.

While the SDGs are not a humanitarian framework, they were agreed in the context of increased awareness that humanitarian crises may reverse much of the development progress made in recent years. The framework includes several targets on disaster risk reduction that align with the UN's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, which aims to prevent new and reduce existing disaster risks. **Target 11.5** focuses on reducing the number of deaths and people affected by disasters, particularly the poor and people in vulnerable situations, while **Target 11.b** aims to increase the number of cities and settlements implementing holistic disaster management.

How can governments use this goal to improve the lives of older people?

For **SDG11** to be inclusive of older people, we should ensure governments:

- Prioritise investment in safe, affordable and accessible housing and public transport that enhances social interaction across generations, respecting and promoting the rights of older persons and persons with disabilities to autonomy and independence.
- Use WHO's 'age-friendly cities' methodology, together with the principles of 'universal design' (which creates environments that can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability). This will benefit all generations, and respect the rights and enhance the unique contributions of older persons.
- Encourage the participation of older persons and persons with disabilities in urban planning initiatives and decision making.
- Include older persons and persons with disabilities in all city-level disaster resilience and response planning and support (Target 11.5).

Further reading

About Agenda 2030

Danish Institute for Human Rights, *The human rights guide to the SDGs,* http://sdg.humanrights.dk/ (1 January 2020)

United Nations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld (1 January 2020)

United Nations, *Global indicator framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,* https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/indicators/Global%20Indicator%20Framework%20after%202019%20refinement_Eng.pdf (1 January 2020)

Ageing and the SDGs

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Annex 1: references to older people in Agenda 2030

The SDGs contain a number of references to older people. There are some direct references to older people and age within the agreed text of the goals and targets, and indicators that directly reference age disaggregation. There are further references within the text of the Agenda 2030 resolution.

Direct references to older people and age in targets and goals

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 2.2
By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons

Goal 3
Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

Target 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

Target 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

Target 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

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

Direct references in the resolution

Paragraph 23
People who are vulnerable must be empowered. Those whose needs are reflected in the Agenda include all children, youth, persons with disabilities (of whom more than 80% live in poverty), people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants

Paragraph 25
All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society

Paragraph 74(g)
Follow-up and review processes] will be rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts

Annex 2: priority SDG indicators for older persons

Healthy ageing

Priority indicators:

Indicator 3.3.1
Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations

Indicator 3.4.1
Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease

Indicator 3.4.2
Suicide mortality rate

Indicator 3.8.1
Coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population)

Indicator 3.8.2
Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income

Indicator 3.b.3
Proportion of health facilities that have a core set of relevant essential medicines available and affordable on a sustainable basis

Indicator 3.c.1
Health worker density and distribution

Note the absence of an indicator to measure target 2.2 to eliminate malnutrition among older adults

Income security

Priority indicators:

Indicator 1.1.1
Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)

Indicator 1.2.1
Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age

Indicator 1.2.2
Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

Indicator 1.3.1
Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable

Indicator 2.3.2
Average income of small-scale food producers, by sex and indigenous status

Indicator 5.a.1
(a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure

Indicator 8.3.1
Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex

Indicator 8.5.1
Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities

Indicator 8.5.2
Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

Indicator 10.2.1
Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

Indicator 10.4.1
Labour share of GDP, comprising wages and social protection transfers

Freedom from violence, abuse and neglect

Priority indicators:

Indicator 1.5.1
Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population

Indicator 5.2.1
Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age

Indicator 5.2.2
Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence

Indicator 11.7.2
Proportion of persons victim of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months

Indicator 16.1.3
Proportion of population subjected to physical, psychological or sexual violence in the previous 12 months

Indicator 16.1.4
Proportion of population that feel safe walking alone around the area they live

Indicator 16.3.1
Proportion of victims of violence in the previous 12 months who reported their victimization to competent authorities or other officially recognized conflict resolution mechanisms

Lifelong learning

Priority indicators:

Indicator 4.3.1
Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

Indicator 4.4.1
Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

Indicator 4.5.1
Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated

A society for all ages

Indicator 5.4.1
Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location

Indicator 11.2.1
Proportion of population that has convenient access to public transport, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

Indicator 11.7.1
Average share of the built-up area of cities that is open space for public use for all, by sex, age and persons with disabilities

Indicator 16.6.2
Proportion of population satisfied with their last experience of public services

Age inclusive systems

Indicator 10.3.1
Proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law

Indicator 16.7.2
Proportion of population who believe decision making is inclusive and responsive, by sex, age, disability and population group

Note lack of an indicator for 16.9 measuring legal identity for adults

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12. *"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control."* Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25

13. "*Ageism is the stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age; ageism can take many forms, including prejudicial attitudes, discriminatory practices, or institutional policies and practices that perpetuate stereotypical beliefs."* (WHO 2019)

14. For example, the WHO Global Action Plan on NCDs has a mortality target for people aged 30–70 and STEPS surveys, a common source of NCDs data, only survey people up to the age of 64

15. "For example, the indicators for SDG3 are not sufficiently age or gender sensitive: the indicator for malnutrition is restricted to girls and younger women; for HIV it relates to new infections and is not inclusive of large numbers of older women with HIV. While there are two indicators for universal health coverage, one excludes women aged 50 and over (men 55 or 60 and over), and the other excludes all over 69. Across the total 22 targets potentially inclusive of older people only 8 indicators are disaggregated by age and probably by gender". Stewart A and Lander J, *Transforming gender relations in an ageing world. A policy discussion paper,* HelpAge International, 2018

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ISBN 978-1-910743-67-6