Older people's inclusion in the SDGs is essential to leave no one behind

At the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a promise to 'leave no one behind' and to reach the furthest behind first. This entails ensuring that every individual, including every older person, is included in development efforts.

By 2030, one in six of us will be over 60. Population ageing is one of the most significant dimensions of global demographic change, yet older people continue to face discrimination and exclusion as a result of their age, gender, disability or other characteristics. Societies must adapt their policies and services to respond to the changing age structure of their populations if they are to deliver the promises of the SDGs.

Governments must adopt age-friendly policies that realise older people's rights and tackle ageism, so everyone benefits equally from the SDGs.

Age-disaggregated data are essential for inclusion and accountability

Older men and women – often overlooked – must be counted and included in statistical systems, and at all stages of data collection, analysis and use.

Governments must remove age caps in data collection; ensure data is disaggregated and reported at a minimum by age, gender, disability and location; and support the Titchfield City Group on Ageing.

Find out more at:

www.helpage.org

SDG1: End poverty in older age and ensure social protection for all

In low-income countries, less than 20 per cent of older people receive a pension, although it is one of the most effective ways to reduce old age poverty.

Governments must adopt universal social pension schemes that are of an adequate level to provide income security for all people as they grow older.

SDG3: Enable healthy ageing, wellbeing and access to health and care services

As people age, their health, care and support needs become increasingly complex and require integrated and people-centred responses.

Governments must increase spending on health and care services that respond to the needs of an ageing population, as part of their efforts to achieve universal health coverage, and ensure that national health policies and information systems include people of all ages.

SDG4: Promote lifelong learning

Older people need opportunities to build their skills to cope with changes they face in older age, participate fully in society, and live meaningful lives.

Governments must end age discrimination when it comes to access to learning opportunities for older people and ensure inclusive and equitable access to education for people of all ages.

SDG5: Ensure gender equality

Gender inequalities in older age result from ageism combined with the multiple disadvantages experienced by women across the life course due to unequal gender relations.

Governments must combat gender inequalities across the life course and empower older women to participate in decision making processes, prevent violence and adopt policies and programmes that address the rights of older women.

SDG8: Promote decent work for people of all ages

Many older men and women would like to continue working past fixed retirement ages but are deterred by age discrimination and ageist attitudes in the workplace.

Governments must take a stand against ageism and discrimination, promote accessible workplaces and adopt flexible retirement policies that enable older workers to continue working as long as they wish.

SDG10: Reduce inequalities and end discrimination in later life

The negative effects of inequalities accumulate throughout the years and can have a disproportionate impact on people as they grow older, particularly on women. These disadvantages are exacerbated in older age due to ageism and age discrimination.

Governments must empower older people to participate fully in society, including through universal social protection and health care policies that reduce inequalities. We call on leaders to combat ageism, reform age-discriminatory laws and practices, and adopt a new UN convention on the rights of older people.

SDG11: Build inclusive and accessible cities and communities

A life-course approach to urban planning that includes older people in decision-making and urban design is essential to realise their right and that of people with disabilities to autonomy and independence.

Governments must invest in safe, affordable and accessible housing and public transport that enhances interaction across generations. Older people must be included in disaster resilience and response planning and support.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS