

Dear Sir/Madam,

As an accredited stakeholder, HelpAge International is pleased to provide comments on behalf of 24 civil society members of the HelpAge Global Network and the Stakeholder Group on Ageing. Please find our general comments and specific paper comments below. With 59%¹ of older people living in urban areas and the proportion of city residents aged 60 or over projected to increase to 21% by 2050², it is vital that Habitat III reflects this reality by considering the impact of urban policies and perspectives on the protection and promotion of rights throughout our lives and into our older age.

These comments have been prepared with and endorsed by a number of civil society members of the HelpAge Global Network and the Stakeholder Group on Ageing.

- HelpAge International Global Network
 - Age Action Ireland – AAI Ireland
 - Age International UK
 - Diagonal Asociación Civil Argentina
 - Dobroe Delo – Regional Public Foundation Assistance for the Elderly Russia
 - Faculty of Medicine, University of Baghdad Iraq
 - Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti – GRAVIS India
 - HelpAge España Spain
 - HelpAge India India
 - International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse – INPEA Global
 - PRO Global Sweden
 - Red Cross of Serbia Serbia
 - RIC Resource Integration Centre Bangladesh
 - Saidia Wazee Karagwe – SAWAKA Tanzania
 - Senior Citizens Association of Zambia Zambia
 - Southern Africa Regional Age Network – SARAN S Africa
 - Uganda Reach the Aged Association – URRRA Uganda
 - Union for Senior Services – Valli Finland
 - Universidad Isalud Argentina
 - Vietnam Association of the Elderly Vietnam

- The Stakeholder Group on Ageing
 - AARP International USA
 - FIA Foundation UK
 - Geneva NGO Committee on Ageing Global
 - International Federation on Ageing Global
 - International Longevity Centre Canada Canada

Contact: Sion Jones, HelpAge International, sjones@helpage.org

¹ Data from the UN URPAS (Urban and Rural Population by Age and Sex) database based on people aged 65 or over.

² Data from “Active Ageing a Policy Framework in Response to the Longevity Framework”. Rio de Janeiro, International Longevity Centre Brazil, 2015.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Inclusive cities: Signatories welcome the call for inclusive cities that recognize the primacy of the rights and wellbeing of residents over private economic interests and the overwhelming commodification of the city. As an increasing number of people grow old in an urban environment, cities must respond with policies and approaches that protect and promote our rights throughout our life course including into older age. This requires an awareness of the demographic trends impacting cities including the reality of rapidly ageing urban populations. A social perspective on streets, public spaces, housing and infrastructure, demands that we create supportive and inclusive environments and communities that encourage healthy living, social and intergenerational interaction, access to a diversity of flexible income generating opportunities and build resilience to climate change and emergencies.

Collective rights to the city: The overwhelming privatisation, marketisation and commodification of public space undermines collective rights to the city to the detriment of those who are already marginalised due to poverty or discrimination based on their gender, age, ethnic origin, sexuality, disability or other characteristics. The devaluation of older people's livelihoods and participation in the informal economy further marginalises our voices from decision making.

The city as a social construct: The conceptualisation of the city as not only a physical space, but a social construct that locates individuals in a particular context is welcomed. Ageist attitudes and systematic forms of discrimination act to marginalise our participation, devalue our presence and challenge our right to the city as both a physical and social space as we grow older.

Hostile spaces: As discussed in the papers, cities are often hostile to older people and those living with disabilities, particularly when using public transportation and inhabiting public space. The solution to this challenge must go beyond simply providing physical access to these spaces but must also challenge those rules and norms that prioritise private economic interests, encourage the flow of pollution generating traffic and risk our safety and security. Reprioritising our streets and public spaces to protect and promote the rights of all residents throughout their lives, whether they be children, people living with disabilities, older people or adults in or out of work, requires a redefinition of the purpose of the city.

Participation: To deliver these changes to our cities, full participation and inclusion in local decision making throughout our lives is vital. The reality of rapidly ageing urban populations further supports the need for the meaningful participation of older people in decision making to ensure that our cities protect and promote all of our rights throughout our lives and into our older age. A failure by local authorities and stakeholders to make inclusive and accountable decisions has led to cities dominated by private economic interests, pollution generating traffic, poorly managed and disruptive regeneration programmes and inhospitable urban spaces and streets. City residents face multiple forms of intersecting discriminations, the impacts of which accumulate in older age, and so our cities, through local government, policy makers, planners and stakeholders must play a positive role in protecting and promoting our rights.

PAPER SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Paper 1 - The Right to the City and Cities for All

- The call for the right to the city to be at the heart of the New Urban Agenda is welcomed. The city, through its physical and social attributes determined by local government, policy makers and planners, is active in protecting and promoting our rights as urban residents, but too often privileges the wealthy, the physically able and those participating in the formal economy. Recognising the reality of rapidly ageing populations, the need for our cities to protect and promote our rights throughout our lives and into older age is increasingly imperative. As we grow older, we face both social and systemic ageist discrimination that compounds the accumulated impacts of a lifetime of intersecting forms of discrimination based on our gender, economic status, ethnic background, sexuality, disability and other characteristics. Our cities become less and less hospitable as income generating opportunities are reduced, our social networks are disrupted by unaccountable redevelopment, and our pollution and traffic dominated streets and spaces discourage healthy lifestyles and work to entrench social isolation.
- The recognition that social and informal physical structures in slums and informal communities are functional as support mechanisms for our wellbeing is particularly relevant in older age. Flexible livelihood opportunities and the ability to extend the size of a home are increasingly relevant as our urban populations age and older people, with little or no access to social protection, require age appropriate livelihood opportunities and flexible home and family arrangements to ensure wellbeing.
- Limited access to leisure, sports and recreation facilities for all ages is a concern, particularly in areas of urban poverty. Growing old in a city requires access to these resources not only in city centres, but in the communities and neighbourhoods in which we live our daily lives. The function of such facilities, particularly in our older age, in improving our health status and resilience and combating social isolation should be highlighted more prominently.
- The call for planning policies that deter urban sprawl is supported and the negative consequences of poor walkability, sparse availability of public transport and lower levels of social interaction on our wellbeing in older age should be highlighted.
- In addition to a gender 'lens' on urban planning policies, similar consideration to age is required to ensure our rights are protected and promoted throughout our lives. To support this, data should not only be disaggregated by sex but also by age (as are the recently agreed Sustainable Development Goals) in order to ensure decision makers have the information they require.
- The call for greater protection against eviction and issues of land and property ownership, in particular for women, children and older people, should recognize the disruption to social networks and health and care arrangements that this can cause.
- A specific call to provide appropriate and affordable housing options for older people should be included so that we can all grow old with a choice of where we live as we age, close to existing social networks and established livelihood opportunities.
- In addition to recognising the role of public spaces in fostering social cohesion more broadly, the paper should also reflect their role in encouraging social and intergenerational interaction, combating social isolation, particularly in older age.
- The call for the development of specific employment policies for young people should also reflect ageing populations and the reality that, particularly in informal sectors of the economy, improved protection and provision of livelihood opportunities for older people are vital for their income security and wellbeing.

- The call to reduce air pollution significantly is supported, recognising the leading causes of pollution related deaths are heart disease and stroke, making the issue increasingly pertinent as our urban populations age.
- We request the use of 'older people' instead of 'the elderly' which implies a misleadingly homogenous and distinctly separate group with singular needs and concerns. We will all grow old and carry with us a lifetime of experiences and accumulated impacts of intersecting forms of discrimination meaning our lives become more diverse and varied as we age, not less. A city that successfully responds to an ageing population is one that supports the diversity of lived experiences in older age, promoting and protecting the full range of rights.

Paper 2: Socio-Cultural Urban Framework

- The challenges section fails to recognise the impact of rapidly ageing urban populations. Already 59% of people aged over 65 live in urban centres, and this figure is projected to increase. We are living longer and increasingly choosing to grow old in the city. In order to ensure our rights are protected and promoted throughout our lives and into older age, when we often face ageist discrimination and the cumulative impacts of intersecting forms of discrimination throughout our lives, city governments, policy makers, planners and stakeholders must recognise their active role in this process and adapt to ensure inclusion.
- The call for policies and systems designed to support everyone, not just the wealthiest or those perceived to be most economically active, is supported.
- Signatories support the call for older peoples' participation in planning and decision making, recognising that inclusive participation must be a key strand for Habitat III to successfully deliver inclusive cities for all.
- The role of public spaces and inclusive cities and streets in protecting and promoting our rights in older age should be recognised. Social and intergenerational interaction, space for physical activity and opportunities for informal livelihood activities are only some of the important ways in which public spaces and inclusive streets support wellbeing in older age.

Paper 6: Urban Spatial Strategies

- The population and human settlements scenarios should both refer to global and urban population ageing recognising that ignoring this reality risks deepening the inequalities we face as we grow older. Urban population ageing should be recognised as a key demographic trend alongside migration and other trends such as climate change. Recognising the ever increasing number of urban residents living longer and growing older in their communities is vital for ensuring policies and perspectives respond to this reality and challenge the privilege enjoyed by others that mean our security and wellbeing is eroded as we grow older in a city.
- The call to ensure public and green spaces are designed to ensure ease of access for older people and others should go beyond simply looking at access but also look at the social ownership of streets and public spaces which are often dominated by private vehicles and hostile to pedestrians throughout our life course. Streets and public spaces should be designed at the human level, minimising congestion and pollutant generating private vehicles, prioritising walkability, public transportation, physical security and informal social interaction as a means of promoting better health, income generating opportunities and reducing social isolation in a rapidly ageing urban population. Similarly, a greater emphasis on appropriate density is required to minimise private vehicle use and promote communities with inclusive and accessible services for all within walking distance (recognise that at different times in our lives, our gait speed and ability to walk unaided can change) and public space that is active and socially attractive.

- The call to conserve the history and culture of the existing urban fabric in a socially responsible way when upgrading slums should recognise that the informal intergenerational living arrangements and age appropriate income generating opportunities often seen in informal environments are particularly relevant to providing security and improving wellbeing in older age.

Paper 9: Urban Services and Technology

- Signatories support the position that car-based transportation should be dramatically downscaled as necessary for the creation of hospitable and community enhancing spaces. In addition to recognising the impacts of traffic and congestion on competitiveness and travel time to work, the paper should more strongly reflect the human and social cost of car dominated environments that discourage residents, particularly those often marginalised and without private vehicles, from enjoying and participating in safe and welcoming street and community life.
- Car dependency and dominance needs to be challenged by city governments and planners with the priority being affordable and accessible public transportation and streets and public spaces that are designed at the human level, encouraging social interaction, active lifestyles and providing opportunities for flexible small scale income opportunities - particularly relevant to our security and wellbeing in older age with ageing urban populations making this call ever more relevant.
- Signatories support the promotion of active travel (walking, cycling), particularly within a context of ageing urban populations and the consequent benefits to health, mobility and social interaction.
- Dense urban settlements which provide access to sustainable public and private services, alongside publicly owned and accessible green and public spaces, are supported. The role of these spaces in supporting attractive and inclusive communities should be highlighted, particularly for those who are often marginalised including older people, and can benefit from more active lifestyles, cleaner air and opportunities for social and inter generational interaction.
- The call for a 'social perspective' when assessing the cost and benefits of policies or infrastructure should recognise demographic and other trends including rapid urban population ageing, migration, climate change etc.
- In addition to engaging with stakeholders and the public on mobility decisions, accountability mechanisms should be built into transportation projects so that users who face discrimination have an effective route to redress their grievances.
- The paper fails to reference SDG 3.6, and could further incorporate SDG 11.2. Taken together, these targets are crucial to providing safe, sustainable transport and a healthy environment. We encourage the inclusion of the following language in Policy Paper 9 and the New Urban Agenda: "The implementation SDG 3.6 is critical to protecting vulnerable populations such as women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons who suffer disproportionately from road traffic injuries."
- Local government should be encouraged to prioritize road safety by supporting initiatives to create safe streets for all, focusing on disproportionately affected populations such as women, children, people with disabilities and older people. At the International Level the paper should call for support to develop the capacities of local and national governments to improve road safety and protect disproportionately affected people such as women, children, people with disabilities and older people, and advance the five pillars of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety.

Paper 10: Housing Policies

- With regards to accessibility to services, the call for community driven approaches to upgrading neighbourhoods need to be explicitly fully inclusive of the most marginalised to ensure the multiple ways in which less formal socio-economic arrangements and relationships support security and wellbeing in older age are recognised and disruption minimised.
- Consideration should be given to making homes suitable for habitation throughout our lifetimes and into our older age, adapting accordingly to changes to our physical, mental and cognitive functioning and capacity to enable us to age in place without needing to disrupt our social networks and other relationships by moving to find the care and support we need.
- Signatories welcome with regards to habitability, the inclusion of older people alongside migrants, people with disabilities, those living with HIV, youth and LGBT people as often living in particularly precarious housing situations, often as the result of the accumulation of intersecting forms of discrimination over the life course.
- Considering housing affordability, a recognition of financial insecurity in older age should be mentioned. Many older people do not receive a pension³, face discrimination when trying to earn an income and apply for financial products such as mortgages, making their housing situation particularly precarious. Affordable housing that takes into consideration this reality is necessary to ensure our right to housing is protected throughout our life.
- With regards to security of tenure, the detrimental impact of tenure insecurity and forced evictions throughout our lives and particularly in older age should be highlighted, potentially weakening social networks leading to social isolation and disrupting home and community based health and care arrangements.

³ Further information about pension coverage and adequacy can be found by visiting www.pension-watch.net.