Data Innovation Fund Case Study

Geomapping Barriers to Urban Service Access in Older Age

Summary:

In 2019, HelpAge conducted research with 1,310 older urban residents and sought to better understand their experiences in Nairobi and Delhi, through the production of detailed and geotagged peer-to-peer collected data on issues like location, mobility, and inequality.

Over 2,300 journeys made by older people were analyzed, and over 300,000 data points were collected in total. Data analysis included disaggregation by a number of intersecting identities and characteristics, including age, gender, and disability. Findings from the research were presented in 9 issue papers covering topics from sanitation and green spaces to public transportation.

Groups of older people were trained in using the project data to develop key advocacy messages and asks. These elderly activists then met with a number of local authorities, political representatives, and other stakeholders to discuss their key issues.

As a result of the meetings between groups of older person activists and stakeholders, actions were carried out including drainage unblocking to clear flooded streets and renovation works at local parks in Delhi. In Nairobi, older people

participated in UN-Habitat and SDG events and processes around urban issues. These issues will have long term outcomes as global level policies better consider the experiences of older people.

At a Glance:

SDGs: 1- No Poverty, 10 - Reduced Inequalities, 11- Sustainable Cities & Communities

Project Objective: To build a community data collection effort among older people in urban Kenya and India to better understand their spatial and social barriers in accessing urban resources, particularly those living in informal settlements or homeless.

Geography: Kenya, India

Technologies: Digitally collected (mobile and tablet) and geotagged survey data; Excel for data manipulation, aggregation, and analysis.

Data Innovation:

The project produced data on the experiences of older people. Local authorities and stakeholders had never before had access to data specifically about the exclusion and the marginalization of older people and were able to specifically respond to their priorities as a result.

The data collected were geotagged and specific to the researched communities and provided high-resolution data on these locations. The value of this was evidenced by the variation in data collected between the research sites, which city-wide level data collection would have missed.

For example, there were different levels of loneliness and isolation between two locations in Delhi, possibly linked to the relative abundance and scarcity of green spaces between both sites. It was this granularity that enabled local

stakeholders to respond to highly specific concerns that older people had in their own communities.

Place: where we live affects our experience of older age.

Mobility: barriers restrict how we move around the city as we age.

Inequality: cities further marginalise those already excluded from spaces, services and society in older age.

Lessons Learned:
- Some of the tools were cumbersome to use and did not lend itself well to the analysis of the core data or the geographic data.
- The analysis revealed that aging is not a singular homogenous experience, but a complex diverse experience that intersects with other identities and characteristics.
- The geographic information proved to be somewhat useful but also problematic, largely around sample size and the even distribution of respondents.
- Future work should focus on gaining a greater depth of understanding of key issues than was possible. For example, homelessness in older ages could be linked to poverty and discrimination.
- Stakeholder engagement suggests strong potential for older people to act as activists and hold local authorities accountable.
- Having evidence-based data was valuable in stakeholder meetings.

Results:
When equipped with relevant data and evidence, older people can act as community advocates and hold stakeholders accountable. This project delivered a better understanding of the issues facing older people in cities. Insights were disseminated during the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi in February 2020.

A smaller follow-up study focusing on transportation and older women was carried out in Mexico City with a shorter, revised, and transport-focused survey as part of this project, representing scaling up from the original proposal.
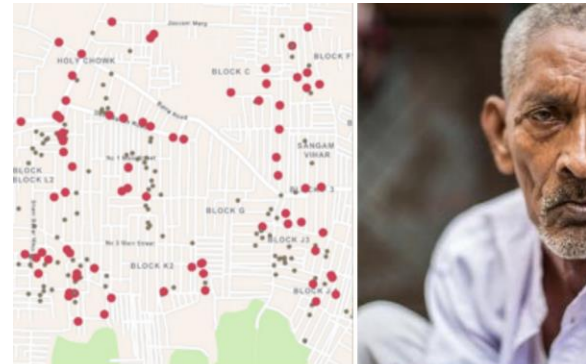
• Location of older people who felt lonely and isolated
• Location of older people who didn't feel lonely and isolated

The research project revealed the benefits of digital and geotagged data collection, but also the limitations. Mobility came through in the research findings as a complex and significant component of older people's lives. The project has informed the development of a future HelpAge initiative to develop a custom data collection platform specifically designed to be used by older people.

References:
HelpAge International: Home
Download the research here.