Geo-mapping social and spatial barriers to urban service access in older age in Nairobi and Delhi

Final report
March 2020

HelpAge
International

Project information

Geo-mapping social and spatial barriers to urban service access in older age

Final Report, 13 March 2020. Implemented in Kenya and India, scaled up to Mexico City.

Contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Also contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduce inequality within and among countries) and 1 (End poverty in all its forms everywhere).

Lead organisation: HelpAge International
Collaborating organisations: HelpAge India, Karika, Kibera Day Care Centre for the Elderly

Data types and technologies
Digitally collected (mobile and tablet) and geotagged survey data, Excel for data manipulation, aggregation and analysis

Project objective
The objective of this project is to build a community data collection effort among older people in urban Kenya and India to better understand the spatial and social barriers to older residents in accessing urban resources, particularly those living in informal settlements or homeless.

Link to outputs
https://www.helpage.org/download/5e3c4c068b237/

Ageing and place: exploring how cities shape older people's lives
Research methodology

Issue papers:
'How I get to places'
'How I am affected by pollution'
'What makes me lonely and isolated'
'What makes me feel unsafe'
'Why I like to visit local parks'
'What forms of age discrimination I face'
'Which places I visit'
'How homelessness affects my life'
'Where I use a toilet'

Acknowledgment

Final report project summary

The research project sought to better understand the urban experiences of older people in Nairobi and Delhi, through the production of detailed and geotagged peer-to-peer collected data on urban issues. Advocacy training and stakeholder meetings resulted in concrete improvements to communities.

Data methodology and collection
Data was collected from over 1,300 older people across 4 research sites in Nairobi and Delhi. Over 2,300 journeys made by older people were analysed, 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.

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

Outcomes
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 event and processes around urban issues which will have longer term outcomes as global level policies better consider the experiences of older people.

These experiences illustrate how older people, equipped with relevant data and evidence, can act as community advocates, holding stakeholders to account and delivering improvements that benefit older people, and the broader communities they live in.

The research project also 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.

Next steps
The research programme has informed HelpAge's future direction on urban and data work. Research priorities identified by the project include better understanding transportation patterns, behaviours and barriers in older age. Mobility came through in the research findings as a complex and significant component of older people's lives.

The research project revealed the benefits of digital and geotagged data collection, but also the limitations. 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. That project will place older people at the centre of peer-to-peer data collection at the community level, delivering advocacy formatted outputs with minimal human interaction to enable older activists to meet stakeholders with evidence and data at hand.

We are currently proposing a transportation research project to develop and trial a data collection approach in Kampala, Uganda and Kathmandu, Nepal, with potential scale up and roll out to a number of HelpAge project locations.

Specific questions

Have there been any final results or outcomes in which data or methods have allowed data to be produced: faster; more cheaply; at a higher resolution or granularity, or where there was no data before? If yes, please describe.

The project produced data on the experiences of older people living in 4 communities in Delhi and Nairobi. Local authorities and stakeholders had never before had access to data specifically about the exclusion and marginalisation of older people and were able to specifically respond to their priorities as a result. The data collected was geotagged and specific to the research communities and so 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 Trilokpuri and Sangam Vihar 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.

Has the project contributed to the production and/or use of data disaggregated by a) sex b) disability c) age, d) geography (or other)? If yes, please summarise the of types of disaggregations and the context..

All data collected was disaggregated by sex, disability, age and geography/location. From the outset, the research was designed to capture the varied experiences of older people and their complex overlapping identities and characteristics. The value of this was evidenced by the variation in the data seen between gender, age cohorts and location.

These more detailed insights provide an opportunity to respond specifically to the issues and concerns that older women and men, people during different stages of their older age, older people with a disability, and older people living in the different locations.

Has the project contributed to the use and/or production of gender statistics? If yes, please describe.

Data was disaggregated by gender and revealed interesting insights into the different experiences of older men and women, particularly around homelessness, security and loneliness and isolation.

Did you need to address any risks? If yes, what were the risks and how were they managed or mitigated?

The lessons learned section refers in further detail to some of the challenges that were faced during the research implementation. Im summary, these risks included:

Two of the project partners, DataScience and Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team, were unable to deliver their role in the project as expected. They had initially been proposed as supporting the analysis of the data and the visualisation of the data. As the research progressed, it became apparent that Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team did not have the data analysis capacity in-house that was expected. The solution that DataScience was offering also seemed relatively simple and not at the level initially expected.

To mitigate against these issues, HelpAge established new working relationships, namely with AgeUK and their data analytics team, as well as strengthening in-house capacity around data analysis and geotagged data analysis. This enabled the delivery of the

project outputs and also retained new skills and capacity within the organisation.

The overall project was delayed by approximately 2 months and some activities were pushed back. This happened largely as a consequence of unexpected situations on the ground that delayed local partner activities, including national holidays, festivals and political events happening in the project countries.

These were mitigated against by having more regular partner updates, reviewing the timetable and adapting to work around upcoming interruptions and rescheduling some of the work so that the outputs could be delivered by the final project deadline.

Was any program used to convert the raw data into aggregates, if so could you provide details and in general the aggregation details.

The data was manipulated and aggregated using Excel spreadsheets. This included aggregation of a number of indicators where multiple questions had been asked.

These included age data aggregated into cohorts, question around income adequacy aggregated into a poverty indicator, walking distance questions aggregated into a single walking difficulty indicator. The Washington Group Short Set of Questions on Disability were used and aggregated into a single disability indicator as per the question set guidelines. Data from questions around social isolation, mental health and social inclusion were similarly aggregated into 3 indicators respectively. Four questions on different forms of age discrimination were aggregated into a single indicator as to whether an older person had experienced discrimination based on age.

Updates since last report

Training and engagement

Activist training workshops were conducted across all project locations and brought together older people to share the research findings and equip them with the skills and knowledge to develop advocacy strategies and key messages. They were introduced to the concepts of advocacy and methods including how to turn data into engaging advocacy messaging, how to map stakeholders and develop a strategic approach to engaging with them. The training was delivered by HelpAge India in Delhi and HelpAge International in Nairobi.

Following this, a series of meetings were arranged between older people activists and stakeholders in all project locations. These included local government representatives, development corporations and UN bodies. Many of the meetings have already resulted in concrete actions taking place. For example…

- In Delhi, local government and stakeholder representatives conducted inspection visits to the communities and have already implemented repairs to the local water supply, blocked drains that had flooded streets with sewage and improvements to local parks and green spaces.
- In Nairobi, older people have participated in a series of consultations, workshops and strategy development processes involving UN Habitat and Nairobi City County representatives.

Activists Training Workshops

The objectives of the activists training workshops in Delhi and Nairobi were to increase the awareness by activists of the issues older people face in relation to urban development and to empower older activists to design evidence based advocacy messages and activities. The activists were members of the community level organisations and many had carried out the data collection and were strongly motivated by the issues they had come across during that phase of the project.

Activist Training Workshops in Delhi

Workshops took place on the 26th November and 4th December 2019 in Sangam Vihar, and 22nd November and 6th December in Trilokpuri. The workshops had 73 participants in total.

The meetings looked in detail at the findings of the research, specifically looking at the findings around walkability, parks and green spaces, loneliness and isolation, personal safety and exposure to environmental pollution. Attendees then focused on 3 key problems to discuss further and develop potential solution and advocacy asks.

Participants focused on discussing the urban related health problems that older residents face, including exposure to environmental pollution and the lack of access to medication due to costs.

Informal parking was identified as a key issue which makes it difficult for older people to walk along the street. Public transportation was a key issue and the subsequent difficulty older people face in getting around. The availability of clean drinking water was also discussed, and the challenges of accessing drinking water from water tankers in old age.

There were discussions about the quality and maintenance of parks and green spaces, including the success of community ownership. In Sangam Vihar, activists discussed the lack of green spaces or other community facilities.

Participants discussed potential advocacy actions including lobbying members of their local authority and other stakeholders to address these and other issues identified in the research, writing letters to their local representatives and submitting complaints to the Delhi Jal (Water Board) Office and creating a petition.

Activist Training Workshops in Nairobi

The workshop took place in Nairobi in December 2019 and involved 69 participants from a range of local community organisations and other stakeholders. It was also attended by a Nairobi City County urban planning officer who gave a presentation on opportunities for engagement with Nairobi City County activities and urban plans.

The Nairobi City County representative also shared case studies of challenges facing older people, related to health, streets and housing. He discussed the Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan.

A series of recommendations were agreed between the Nairobi City County urban planning officer and older people activists at the meeting, including improved maintenance of parks and green spaces to encourage use by older people, the establishment of an older persons centre and a push for greater sidewalk space in recognition of the high number of trips older people make that involve walking.

The broader findings of the research project were discussed and a session was held which shared guidance around advocacy activities including best practice and the characteristics of successful activism.

Group sessions were then held where participants identified relevant government ministries and community organisations and other stakeholders. Each group also developed a 6 month work plan with planned advocacy activities, a timeline and lead organisations.

The workshop also developed a set of advocacy asks based on the research findings. These specifically covered the research findings around transportation, loneliness and isolation, age based discrimination, personal security and exposure to environmental pollution.

Stakeholder meetings

Stakeholder meetings were arranged to bring older person activists armed with key messages derived from and evidenced by the research, with key stakeholders and relevant decision makers.

Stakeholder Meetings in Delhi

Stakeholder meetings in Sangam Vihar involved older people activists and stakeholders including a ward councillor, a member of the Legislative Assembly, a representative from the South Delhi Municipal Corporation, a representative from the Delhi Jal (Water) Board, as well as a Member of Parliament for East Delhi.

In the meeting with the ward councillor, activists specifically raised the issues of the lack of parks and green spaces in Sangam Vihar, a lack of walking spaces and pavements for older people and the lack of community centres for older people. They also discussed that the local medical dispensaries were poorly equipped and poor maintenance of drains meant regular overflows in the streets. The response was somewhat un-constructive with the councillor claiming issues were either beyond her control or the fault of the opposition party.

When meeting a representative from the Delhi Jal (Water) Board, older people talked about the poor and expensive water supply in

the area. They complained that the water supply was not fit for consumption and that privately supplied alternative sources of drinking water were expensive and left them with little choice. As a result of the meeting, a water tanker was sent to Sangam Vihar the following day to provide free drinking water to older residents, although it remains to be seen whether a more permanent solution is provided.

Activists from Trilokpuri met with the same stakeholders, relevant to their location. With their local councillor, they also discussed poor maintenance of parks and a lack of walking space and pavements for older people due to informal parking and street vendors.

As a result of the meeting, the councillor contacted the East Delhi Municipal Corporation to discuss better maintenance of the parks.

In meeting their local member of the Legislative Assembly, older people from Trilokpuri discussed the poor supply of water, poor maintenance of parks and the difficulty of walking around the community.

As a result of the meeting, the assembly member contacted the Delhi Jal (Water) Board representative for Trilokpuri and the East Delhi Municipal Corporation to discuss how to restore a clean water supply to the community.

Following activists meetings with representatives from the Delhi Jal (Water) Board, a surveyor came to check the pipes and quality of the water in the community. The repair process is ongoing and is expected to take a few months.

Similarly, a meeting between activists and a representative from the East Delhi Municipal Corporation resulted in an inspection visit to

Trilokpuri, which took place at the end of December 2019. The representative visited all the parks and green spaces in the area, along with older people. Within a few days, broken gates were fixed and new grass had been laid down in some of the parks. Parks repairs will continue over the next few months.

A meeting with the South Delhi Municipal Corporation raised the issue of blocked drains in Sangam Vihar which had caused flooding in the streets and meant older people were not able to pass or leave their homes. As a result the municipal corporation cleared the drains and the streets became walkable once again.

Following some successes, the older people activists reported feeling motivated and optimistic that further change is possible if they persist with their activities.

Stakeholder Meetings in Nairobi
Older people activists in Nairobi held a series of meetings with a variety of relevant stakeholders including local elected officials and representatives from UN Habitat.

Representatives from HelpAge International and KARIKA, the local Kenyan older people community organisation attended the UN Habitat Assembly (based in Nairobi) and participated in an expert panel on 'The right to adequate housing in older age".

Meetings were held between older persons associations to agree and establish a Nairobi County Association for Older People, specifically aimed at ensuring the voice of older people is heard in Nairobi County urban decision making processes. 3 meetings of the association have been held to date with advocacy sub groups established around transportation, health, security, land and housing.

Older person representatives participated in a Kenyan government meeting related to the 11th Session of the Open Ended Working Group on Ageing which is discussion the development of a convention on the rights of older people. They contributed their specific perspectives of issues older people face living in cities and urban settings.

A half day meeting was held with 10 representatives from Kibera Sub-County, discussing the issues facing older people in Kibera, specifically housing, health, and personal security. The sub-county representatives reported leaving the meeting with a better understanding of the issues older people face and an awareness of some of the policies that can make a community more supportive of older people. They also gained awareness of national policies designed to give guidance and advice on how to improve the situation of older people.

A similar meeting was held with representatives of Langata Sub-County to sensitise them to the issues facing older people living in Nairobi.

A one day stakeholder engagement meeting with Kibera Deputy District Commissioner and 36 participants discussed the findings of the research. The area senior chief promised to have an older people representative as part of the 'Nyumba Kumi' security initiative and encouraged older people to register with at an adult education centre.

Older person representatives participated in a workshop focusing on the development of inclusive transportation systems, organised by the National Gender and Equality Commission. They discussed initiatives including special traffic lights to benefit those that are visually impaired, building designs and how to change the behaviours of matatu (collective) bus operators (although none had

yet been implemented at the time of writing this report).

HelpAge International in Kenya and local community organisations representing older people continue to conduct meetings with Nairobi City County who have requested technical support on age inclusive urban development. A Nairobi City County planning officer has also recommended the development of a position paper, with the support of HelpAge, to highlight the key issues facing older people for submission to the county assembly.

Scaling up with survey roll out in Mexico City

An additional third location was added to the project with the completion of a shorter, transportation focused survey in Mexico City. 50 older women in one location were surveyed about their use of public transportation. The output from this additional survey revealed insights into the preferences of older women travelling in Mexico City, and the concerns and issues they face. The survey was conducted with support from a local community based organisation that runs a day centre for older people.

Data seed events and participation at the World Urban Forum

At the end of the project, two data seed events were held in Nairobi and Delhi to discuss the potential use of the data and lessons learned as well as the opportunities available to emphasise the importance of including older people in data collection. Findings from the research were shared at the 10th World Urban Forum and led to clear commitments made by representatives from UN Habitat to work on these issues.

Data seed event in Delhi

A data seed event was held in Delhi on the 14th of February 2020 at the HelpAge India offices. In addition to IT and research staff from HelpAge India, the session was attended by representatives from local data and software companies - Icubeswire Technology, Neuronimbus Software and Valle Soft Unlimited Technologies (who have worked with a number of non profit partners including Oxfam India).

The session looked at the current app that HelpAge India has developed (not as part of this project) alongside the data and insights gained from this research project, to understand how the data can be further leveraged to support HelpAge India's work and engagement with older people. The main findings of the research were presented to the participants, sensitising them to the urban specific challenges that older people face, and the kind of data that is available on these issues.

The event included a brainstorming session where participants reflected on the data available and the challenges facing older people, to come up with a number of ideas. These included

- Enhancing an existing HelpAge India app that provides basic information for older people, to include additional functionality including data collection and reporting of the grievances of older people
- Integrate the app with existing public services apps including those from the local municipal authority, policy and health services so that grievances can be lodged and tracked
- Increase engagement between older people, volunteers and youth to address issues facing the community

- Connect older people with each other to organise groups, social events and share knowledge and information
- Sharing information on digital crime prevention (a fear shared by older residents)
- Changes to the design to improve accessibility for older people with visual, hearing and dexterity impairments

The session also discussed the technical and infrastructure requirements to deliver additional functionality and the scalability of any future changes.

HelpAge India and the event representatives will continue discussions on how they can implement some of the ideas generated during the session.

Data seed event in Nairobi

The data seed event in Nairobi was held on the 13th of February 2020 at the HelpAge Kenya offices and focused more on the issue of older people in data collection. Participants included representatives from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), the Office of the Deputy President of Kenya, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Kenyatta University.

Discussions looked at how the Sustainable Development Goals require accurate, timely and accessible data that includes older people. They discussed the inclusive data charter and opportunities to raise the issue of older people in data inclusion including at upcoming conferences.

The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics have a presentation on data sources that include older people. The session discussed the data available and its relevance to the urban issues older people face as highlighted by the research. The session also discussed the use of technology in data collection and the lessons learned from the research project.

As action points, participants agreed to attend upcoming events and processes around data collection and call for the inclusion of older people in data, and to pursue relationships with relevant stakeholders around inclusive data collection.

10th World Urban Forum

HelpAge attended the World Urban Forum in Abu Dhabi, UAE, in February 2020 and attended by local national urban ministries, municipal leaders, and planners. At the event, HelpAge engaged with UN Habitat and shared the findings of the research and the issues older people face living in cities.

HelpAge hosted a side event to share the findings of the research, with speakers from both Nairobi and Delhi. The event was attended by 35 people (a relatively high number given generally low attendance at the conference due to concerns around the coronavirus outbreak). Findings from the research were also shared at the Older Persons Roundtable event.

Discussions with UN Habitat were fruitful and commitments were made by the Chief of the Urban Practices Branch to ensure the inclusion of older people and consideration of their specific situation in future UN Habitat initiatives. UN Habitat commented that the research carried out in Nairobi and Delhi provided an excellent and insightful start into better understanding the issues older people face and that they wanted to continue working with HelpAge International and other stakeholders to strengthen their understanding of these issues and develop practical solutions and guidance.

Following the World Urban Forum, HelpAge is planning to publicly launch the outputs from the project and engage partners and media contacts to generate publicity around the issues older people face in urban contexts. We are also proactively continuing the work and are preparing funding proposals to carry out more in-depth research into the issues raised, and to further develop a custom digital data collection platform that builds on the lessons learned.

Lessons learned

The research project has yielded a number of lessons that are already informing future HelpAge research priorities and data collection and engagement approaches. Learning around peer to peer data collection, analysis of data according to intersecting identities and characteristics, and the utility of geographic data, has all been valuable. Valuable insights into the value of stakeholder engagement and partnerships was also gained.

Learning on data collection and analysis

Digital data collection platform

As a data collection platform, the project used SurveyCTO. The platform was sufficient for completing the task and included all the necessary functionality. However it was somewhat cumbersome to use and did not lend itself well to analysis of the core data or the geographic data. The system is not particularly intuitive to use and we received anecdotal reports of difficulties using the system by older people when they acted as data collectors.

HelpAge is learning from this experience, and other recent digital data collection experiences, and seeking to develop a digital data collection platform specifically designed for use by older people to conduct peer to peer research.

Peer to peer research

The project trained older people as peer to peer researchers in Nairobi. Members of the local community organisations, the peer to peer researchers worked alongside community organisation representatives to survey older people within their own homes.

The older people engaged as researchers spoke about their enthusiasm around becoming activists on these issues, having only now realised the scale of the issues and the shared experiences older people have of urban challenges. This motivated many of the older people participating as peer-to-peer data collectors to also participate in the advocacy training and follow up stakeholder meetings, illustrating how peer-to-peer data collection is functional in establishing a community of enthusiastic advocates around an issue.

Committed to engaging older people, equipping them with the skills to collect data and engage stakeholders, HelpAge will continue to conduct research using a peer to peer participatory approach where possible.

Data disaggregation by overlapping identities and characteristics

A key approach of the research was to collect and disaggregate data according to identity and characteristics including age, gender, and disability. Data could also be disaggregated by homelessness, religion and location. Data was also analysed according to combinations of these identities and characteristics. The analysis revealed exactly why ageing is not a singular homogenous experience, but a complex diverse experience that intersects with other identities and characteristics. However the analysis also struggled to provide confident findings when multiple layers of disaggregation meant the sample size was relatively small. For example, looking only at older women aged 90+ without a disability but struggling financially, left too small a number of survey respondents to be able to continue the analysis. This meant we could not make representative claims, however even with small numbers, we were able to gain interesting illustrative insights about people's experiences.

The lesson from the research is that intersecting identities and characteristics and understanding their impact on older people's experiences is vital. To be able to make statistically significant and representative claims, the analysis demands large sample sizes, however even smaller sample sizes can reveal useful and interesting illustrative insights about older people's experiences.

Mapping

Geographic location information was collected as part of the survey. The collection of this data was very simple and did not incur any additional cost or effort. The geographic information proved to be somewhat useful but also problematic. The information was useful because it allowed us to illustrate that location matters - there are clear differences in the experience of older people between the research sites, for example, results were significantly different between Dagoretti and Kibera in Nairobi. For example, fear of crime or exposure to environmental pollution varied widely between different research sights.

However, when analysing the data for local trends and patterns, some issues arose, largely around sample size and the even distribution of respondents.

For example, data is collected on the difficulty older people have in walking in a research area that is 2 kilometres by 2 kilometres. When analysing the data, the research area is split into a grid of square that is 250m by 250m, so a total of 64 squares. A sample size of 200 survey respondents would only give an average of 3 respondents per square, which is not enough to be able to confidently determine that older people in that square have a particular experience when it comes to walking - however the data still provides illustrative examples of older people's experiences.

Respondents however are not uniformly distributed across the study area, and so in reality, some squares might have 15 respondents, while others only have 1. Those squares with too few respondents then must be discounted as having insufficient data.

But also, it's important to consider whether a large number of respondents in a square that are indicating a certain experience are doing so because that experience is stronger there, or just because there were more respondents living in that particular area, or because the area was over sampled.

It would be possible to overcome this by having much larger sample sizes, calculate the relative number of positive vs negative response in a square as opposed to looking at the absolute number, or using larger square sizes (but this means less granularity in identifying the trends).

As a first attempt to use geographically tagged survey responses for HelpAge, the results are promising yet require careful planning and larger sample sizes if the study aimed to be representative of the population of a given area.

Scope of research

Pre-survey focus groups raised a number of issues that older people face when living in urban environments, from security and environmental pollution to loneliness and isolation. To respond to the gap in knowledge around older people's experiences of living in urban environments in low income contexts, the research intentionally looked at a broad range of issues. This has provided an overall picture of the key issues facing older people, but consequently fails to go into in depth detail on those issues. Future research should now focus on key areas identified and seek to gain a greater depth of understanding of the issues. For example, specific research on

homelessness in older age could better understand the reasons behind destitution in older age and the potential link between poverty and discrimination, in more detail than was possible in this research.

Learning on partnerships

Intended partnerships
Initial partnerships proposed to deliver the research - specifically Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team and DataScience - didn't deliver the project roles initially intended. Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team did not have the geospatial data analysis expertise initially expected. This gap was filled through a new partnership with AgeUK (see below) and through training internal HelpAge staff to gain new skills around GIS (Geographic Information Systems). Similarly, the data visualisations that DataScience were intended to produce, were able to be produced in-house through strengthening internal HelpAge skills and capacity.

Better clarity and understanding of the capacity, skills and role of each partner could have saved some time and effort.

Unexpected collaborations
A new partnership with research and data analysis at AgeUK was established, drawing on shared understandings of ageing and intersectionality in old age. This established relationship is also likely to be used in future research programmes implemented by HelpAge.

The research delivery partnership with HelpAge India worked well and had the significant benefit of HelpAge India specifically stating that they had been sensitised to and made aware of a number of the issues that older people face living in cities, that they were not previously aware of. HelpAge India is one of the largest non profit organisations in India and works across the country with a significant number of older people. Including specific urban issues on their agenda is a significant benefit of the project and of their participation.

In Kenya, the research delivery partnership with Karika worked well in Dagoretti, Nairobi. The local organisation engaged strongly in the work and felt motivated to continue campaigning on these issues beyond the project life. The partner organisation had good community contacts and was able to enable outreach to older people that otherwise may not have been included in the study.

A second partnership was established with Kibera Day Care Centre for the Elderly (KDCCE) to better support data collection in Kibera. KDCCE had strong community links and were able to accompany data collectors and identify older people at home in the community to participate in the survey and focus groups. Similarly to HelpAge India, both Karika and KDDCE reported feeling greater awareness to issues facing older people that they had not previously considered, including housing and transportation issues specifically.

Being flexible and open to new and unplanned partnerships and collaborations brought value to the project and engaging with new partners from the beginning and throughout the project had the significant advantage of those partners gaining greater awareness and understanding of the issues facing older people.

Learning on stakeholder engagement

Older people as accountability activists on behalf of the community
Early results from the stakeholder engagement in all research locations suggests

strong potential for older people to act as activists, engaging with service providers and local municipal authorities and holding them to account. HelpAge will pursue this as a potential strategy for impact at the community level that benefits not only older people and the issues they face, but improving the community for all residents.

Involving stakeholders from the start

The project illustrated how stakeholders that are engaged from the outset benefit from being sensitised and engaged in the project issues. HelpAge India, Kibera Day Care Centre for the Elderly and Karika all reported increased awareness and understanding of the issues older people face in urban contexts, and that this would be considered in their future work.

Other stakeholders - for example UN Habitat and the local municipal bodies and authorities could have benefitted from being involved in the research (including potentially the design of the survey) earlier on.

Immediacy of data output vs lag

It is also apparent that having data and evidence at hand was very valuable in the stakeholder meetings, however there was a delay of many months between collecting the data, and having the data in the hand of older persons activists meeting stakeholders. HelpAge is looking is aiming to develop a peer to peer data collection system that would involve automated data analysis that would cut this delay down to a matter of days, enabling stakeholders to be much more responsive to the issues raised by older people.

Next steps for HelpAge

Digital platform

Building on this research project and the lessons learnt, HelpAge has started developing and seeking funding for a custom designed digital data collection and engagement platform that would equip and enable communities of older people as peer to peer researchers. The platform would be universally accessible by older people, including those with visual, hearing or dexterity limitations. Data analysis would be automated with advocacy friendly outputs ready almost instantly following data collection, and accessible to community organisations on the ground. Many of the lessons learnt in this research project will inform the design and approach to the new data collection platform.

Further research

The research has also identified future research priorities for HelpAge and our work in urban contexts. We will ensure data on intersecting identities and characteristics are collected and that research will look in more depth at particular issues including transportation and mobility, the barriers the movement, and the social consequences of those barriers in older age. We are currently developing a research proposal to look at these areas.