

Humanitarian Response

About 350 million people are affected by humanitarian crises every year. The victims of these crises are not a homogeneous group; there are different levels of vulnerability that should be taken into account. Older people, as one of the vulnerable groups, tend to be among those worst affected. However, very little attention is paid to the needs of older persons in emergency situations.

Older women and men in humanitarian crises face risks associated with age and related to adequate health care and nutritional support, mobility issues or visual and aural impairment. They may not have access to essential medication either. Older people prioritise health, food and shelter as their main needs in emergencies. Health is an essential issue in an emergency situation, especially if people have a chronic disease, as many older people have. The response provided in these cases is fundamental for survival. For that reason we must ensure that the humanitarian system responds to the specific needs of older people, including the appropriate health services and guarantying physical accessibility.

There is a false perception that older people will be looked after by specialist agencies or organisations in crisis situations. A [study](#) by HelpAge International of humanitarian financing (2010) showed that out of 1,912 projects in 12 humanitarian crises, just eighteen had any activities specifically aimed at older people, and only 5 of these received funding through UN CAP or Flash Appeals. In 2010 and 2011 in 21 countries, mainly in Africa, there were no projects with activities targeting older people in any sector ([HelpAge International, 2012](#)).

One of the main recommendations to get an effective needs-based humanitarian response is a good needs assessment, collecting detailed data properly (sex- and age-disaggregated data) and taking into account the specific needs of different sectors of the population. Each specific need should have a planned intervention based on the data collected and the needs assessment.

Click [here](#) to read more from HelpAge International about humanitarian response and older people.