

# Disasters and diversity: a study of humanitarian financing for older people and children under five



**HelpAge International helps older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.**

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## Introduction

Different people have distinct capacities, vulnerabilities and needs. Consequently, humanitarian crises affect different groups in different ways. It is crucial, therefore, that humanitarian programming is based on a clear understanding of the variant impacts of a crisis on the population. This study quantifies, by looking at funding as a proxy indicator, the degree to which the specific needs of two groups – older people and children under five – are reflected in humanitarian programming.

This report is the most recent chapter of a series of studies published by HelpAge International investigating the link between diversity – the specific needs of different population groups – and humanitarian programming – as captured in strategic planning and resource mobilisation mechanisms. A report published in 2011 in partnership with Handicap International illustrated the degree to which the humanitarian system overlooked the needs of older people and people with disabilities.<sup>1</sup> The study found that just 0.78 per cent of projects submitted to the 2010 and 2011 Consolidated Appeals Process (CAPs) included at least one activity targeting older people (0.3 per cent were funded), while 1.6 per cent of projects included targeted activities for people with disability (0.7 per cent were funded). Where relevant, this study uses the 2011 report as a baseline to identify trends.

The present study adds to the growing body of evidence pointing to a limited connection between diversity and programming. Given the emphasis traditionally put on assistance to children, it was expected that their specific needs would be significantly more represented in projects and better covered by funding. Surprisingly, this was not the case. While people with disability and children under five are both marginally better represented than older people in humanitarian programming, the overall picture for inclusion of diversity issues is poor. The number of projects submitted and the overall level of funding remain very low. Within this small funding envelope, however, and more in line with expectations, projects with activities targeting children under five account for a greater proportion of available resources than projects targeting older people.

### Background

Older people constitute a significant proportion of the global population. Estimates for 2013 show those over 50 account for 21.7 per cent of the population and those over 60, 11.8 per cent.<sup>2</sup> By 2050, the over-60 population will account for 22 per cent, exceeding the numbers of children under 15 for the first time in history. Globally, children under five account for 9 per cent of the total population.

In both cases these figures hide regional differences. In Africa, for example, children under five make up 14.9 per cent of the population while those 60 and over make up 5.6 per cent.<sup>3</sup> If we investigate



**A grandmother and her grandchildren in a camp in DRC, 2012**

further, however, we find that in some contexts of high rural-to-urban migration, levels of HIV/AIDS or conflict, combined with different social and cultural definitions of age, the number of older people may constitute as much as 25 per cent of the population. In northern Uganda in 2009 for example, 65 per cent of internally displaced people (IDPs) remaining in camps were over 60 years of age.

In many cases, the victims of humanitarian crises are considered as a homogenous group, and analysis of the age make-up of a population and how this may affect levels of vulnerability is missing. When differences in age are recognised, the focus is almost exclusively on children, with the needs and capacities of older people often ignored. For example, when sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD) is collected, it is often only available for those under and over five.

Both older people and children under five, however, are highly sensitive to shocks associated with both chronic and sudden-onset humanitarian crises. They both face a range of risks associated with their age, including access to adequate health care and nutritional support. For older people specifically, challenges in terms of mobility, and visual and aural impairment, which impact on their ability to access services, must also be considered. Finally, support to ensure continuation of older people's livelihoods to meet their own needs and those of their dependants is vital.

### Methodology

The 2012 HelpAge humanitarian financing study includes analysis of 2,803 of the 3,048 project proposals submitted to 20 CAP appeals (see Annex 1). In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the project sheets describing the activities agencies would implement were all blank except for the titles; therefore data for DRC is not included in the discussion below.

As with previous studies, data from the UN CAP appeals form the basis of this analysis. The primary tool for data collection was the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) managed by the UN Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). The FTS project sheets were analysed to identify projects that included at least one activity targeting older people or children under five, or both.<sup>4</sup> The FTS captures all information on projects in the CAP; however, reporting on whether a specific project is funded is done on a voluntary basis, either by the donor or the recipient or both. It is recognised that donor funding is not limited to the contributions to the CAP appeals, and hence the study does not provide a full picture. Nevertheless, the study is considered a sufficient proxy indicator for the levels of assistance provided to vulnerable groups.

In contrast to the 2011 study this analysis includes CAP appeals only, as opposed to CAP and Flash appeals – the rationale being that CAP appeals provide a more accurate proxy for the level of humanitarian funding, while the greater rigour involved in the development of CAP appeals allows for more accurate assessments of inclusion of the different needs of the two groups throughout the phases of programme design to be made.

CAP appeals have their foundation in the country-level-developed Humanitarian Action Plan, which is designed to provide an analysis of the humanitarian priorities in a specific context. As such, CAPs play a key role as planning tools for donor support and are signed off by the Resident or Humanitarian Coordinator. Finally, they serve as a basis for funding applications to the UN Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), country-level pooled funds (such as the Common Humanitarian Fund), and other donors.

## Key findings

### Projects targeting older people or children under five

#### Older people

- In 2010 and 2011, 47 projects (0.78 per cent of all projects analysed) included at least one activity targeting older people, and 18 of these were funded (0.3 per cent).
- In 2012, 60 projects (2.1 per cent) included at least one activity targeting older people, and 30 of these (1 per cent) were funded (see annex 1).

The percentage gain between the two studies appears large and the positive trend should be recognised and encouraged. However, the actual increase in activities targeting older people is overall too small to warrant much optimism. With as much as 25 per cent of the population considered old (depending on context, culture and habits) in some emergency situations, the current situation with only 2 per cent of projects targeting older people at least partially is clearly unacceptable. The situation is made even worse by a particularly poor donor response.

#### Children under five

As noted in the Introduction, data concerning children under five were somewhat surprising. The

traditional media interest in the fate of children caught up in emergencies, the prominence of child rights organisations within the humanitarian community and what were thought to be well established humanitarian practices would lead one to believe that response to what is estimated to be approximately 14.9 per cent of the population (in Africa, for example) would be much better represented in humanitarian programming. On the contrary:

- 111 projects (3.9 per cent of all projects analysed in 2012) included at least one activity targeting children under five, and 65 were funded (2.3 per cent).

Although slightly better than the data for older people and people with disability, these numbers further support the idea that humanitarian operations, by and large, are not driven by the specific needs of different population groups.

#### Both groups

Looked at together, therefore, we can see that:

- In 2012, 171 (6.1 per cent) of the 2,803 projects submitted to the CAP included at least one activity targeting older people or children under five, and 95 of these (3.3 per cent) were funded.
- Eight projects included activities that targeted both older people and children under five (0.28 per cent of the total submitted projects). Six of these (0.21 per cent) were funded.

Analysis of the activities included in the 171 projects with activities targeting one of these two groups shows they are often designed to meet the specific needs of various groups, such as those with chronic illness, people with disability or female-headed households.

#### Project design and vulnerable groups

Further evidence of the disconnect between diversity and programming – and, in general, between evidence and operations – becomes apparent by looking at whether or not the needs of older people and children under five were considered during assessments and, if they indeed were, if these were then reflected in programmes.

- 119 projects (4.2 per cent of all CAP projects) included reference to older people in the needs assessment, yet only 17 (14 per cent of projects that included reference to older people in the needs assessment) included one or more activity designed to meet the identified needs.
- Similarly, 46 projects (1.5 per cent) included children under five in the assessment, yet only in seven cases (15 per cent) did this result in activities designed to meet the identified needs, despite the regular availability of detailed SADD on younger affected populations.

The findings for older people are sadly in line with previous analyses. The 2010 Rapid Initial

Assessment for Haiti (RINAH) conducted by ACAPS,<sup>5</sup> for instance, indicated that older people were the most vulnerable group affected by the earthquake. Yet, in 2011, only seven project proposals submitted to the CAP in Haiti included activities that targeted older people, and none were funded, despite five being classified as high priority.



**Older men meeting in Guite, Massaguet District, Hadjer-Lamis Region, Chad, 2012**

### Sector and country-specific findings

In 2012, project proposals including at least one activity targeting older people or children under five were submitted to CAP appeals in all 19 of the countries analysed (excluding DRC as explained above). With regard to the sectors of humanitarian response, the scope of inclusion of older people and children under five appears good, with projects including targeted activities submitted in 10 of the 11 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) sectors.<sup>6</sup> As with the 2011 analysis, however, the overall findings mask stark disparities between the two groups in terms of coverage in both sectors and countries.

### Older people

- 42 project proposals (70 per cent of all older-person-inclusive projects) were submitted in three sectors – food security (22 projects), emergency shelter/NFI (12 projects), and protection (8 projects). No nutrition project included older people.
- Six projects in the health sector targeted older people compared with nine projects in 2011. Only two were funded (0.07 per cent).
- In 2012, **eight country appeals did not include any project in any sectors targeting older people: Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Chad, Djibouti, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.** In the case of Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (which were part of the 2011 West Africa CAP) and Chad, specific needs of older people failed to be reflected for

the second year in a row. Overall, projects including at least one activity targeting older people were put forward in 11 of the 19 countries analysed in 2012. See annex 4.

### Children under five

- 97 projects (62 per cent of all under-five-inclusive projects) were submitted in two sectors: nutrition (69 projects) and health (28 projects). No projects were submitted in camp coordination and camp management, early recovery or shelter/NFI.
- 17 out of 19 countries reviewed included projects with at least one activity targeting children under five. Half the projects were put forward in four countries – Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. **No projects were submitted in Haiti or Yemen.**

### The East Africa food crisis

While most countries with activities targeting older people had between one and five projects, Somalia stands out with 22 (36 per cent of all projects with at least one activity targeting older people). Older people were included in activities of 15 projects submitted in food security, three in protection and two in shelter/NFIs. A number of possible factors likely contribute to this level of inclusion.

Firstly, 34 projects in Somalia specifically report including older people in their activities, not in terms of addressing their needs directly, but rather by consulting them and groups of elders during programme design. Experience from across the humanitarian sector, and HelpAge specifically, shows that when different groups are actively involved in consultation processes and give voice to their specific needs, these are better represented in overall assessments. Ensuring participation in this way can help overcome many of the challenges associated with biases in assessments and should be undertaken as a matter of good practice.

Secondly, during the food crisis, HelpAge seconded an ageing expert to UNHCR to support advocacy and awareness raising around the needs of older people. Technical advice and guidance was provided to partners so they better understood the steps and small programmatic modifications that could be implemented to contribute to inclusion of older people in humanitarian programming. Such recommendations were made across a range of sectors including: protection, health, food security and livelihoods, water and sanitation and shelter. While the inclusion of older people cannot be directly attributed to this work, the overall attempt to raise the profile of older people in the crisis is likely to have played a role.

### **Yemen and South Sudan – growing inclusion of older people**

The 2011 humanitarian financing study conducted by HelpAge and Handicap International showed that CAP appeals in Yemen and South Sudan included no projects targeting older people. However, in 2012 there were more projects targeting older people in Yemen (10 projects) and South Sudan (9) than any other country, excluding Somalia. In both contexts the projects spanned a number of sectors including shelter, health, food security and WASH. As with other countries reviewed in this study, the overall number of projects submitted was still very small. However, the positive trend is encouraging and constitutes an example of better practices worthy of recognition.

### **Funding**

In 2012, a total of US\$5.8bn was contributed by official donors to Consolidated Appeals. Projects that targeted older people, children under five or both, accounted for US\$780.4 million (13 per cent) of overall funding.

Of the total CAP funding:

- US\$59.8 million was allocated to projects with at least one activity targeting older people (1 per cent of overall funding). While this is a notable percentage increase compared with funding allocated to such projects in 2011 (0.13 per cent) the levels are still extremely low.
- US\$712.6 million was allocated to projects targeting children under five (12 per cent).
- US\$7.9 million was allocated to projects including activities which targeted both older people and children under five (0.13 per cent).

While the overall picture of response to older people and children under five looks uniformly poor, in financial terms it is immediately clear that projects inclusive of activities designed to address the needs of children under five have far greater resources to draw on. Using crude averages produced by dividing the total funding by the number of funded projects for these groups, we see that the average project including children under five has a budget of US\$10.9 million compared with US\$1.9 million for older people.

### **Donors**

In 2011 and 2010, a total of 235 bilateral and multilateral donors contributed funds to the CAP Appeals. In 2012 the number rose to 392 donors.<sup>7</sup>

### **Older people**

A total of 18 donors contributed funds to projects including at least one activity targeting older people in 2012. The number rose from five in 2011.

- The European Commission's Humanitarian Aid Department (ECHO) was the largest donor in 2012, providing 27 per cent of funding for older-person-inclusive activities. It is also the only

donor to provide such funding in three consecutive years.

- Switzerland is the only other donor to have provided funding in 2011 and 2012.

All other 2012 donors are new, including the United States, which is now the third-largest donor to projects targeting older people, having provided no such funding in 2010 or 2011. See annex 2.

### **Children under five**

A total of 49 donors committed funding to projects with activities targeting children under five in 2012. Of this 36 per cent was provided by the United States. ECHO is the next largest donor, allocating 11 per cent of the total funding.

### **Appealing agencies**

The number and range of agencies including activities targeting diverse groups is one proxy for the degree to which awareness of the different needs of populations has permeated the humanitarian sector. The findings for both older people and children under five suggest a limited but systematic consideration of these two groups. See annex 3.

- 30 agencies submitted projects with one or more activities targeting older people. Five agencies submitted half of the 60 projects targeting older people in 2012. The top two appealing agencies – IOM and the Danish Refugee Council – submitted 35 per cent of all projects.
- 55 agencies submitted projects with one or more activities targeting children under five. 18 per cent of projects were submitted by two agencies – UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

## **Conclusions**

This study looked at a total of 2,803 projects included in Consolidated Appeals for 2012. Of these, 2,446 made no mention, at any point, of two groups that are likely to make up over one third of the population, and whose needs are distinct from those of other groups. In a number of countries, sometimes for the second year in a row, the needs of older people were completely ignored.

These and other findings of this study further reinforce the image of the humanitarian system as one that, in breach of the humanitarian principle of impartiality,<sup>8</sup> appears incapable of delivering assistance solely according to needs.

The number of programmes that include one or more activities targeting older people or children under five remains very low. Such needs are, in many cases, not even investigated during the assessment phase. Where they are, there is often an overall lack of clarity among partners surrounding how to deliver inclusive programming. Vastly insufficient attention by operational agencies at the design and implementation stages is compounded by a dramatically low and imbalanced response by donors.

It must be stressed again that the findings of this study are based on partial data. It is fully understood that the Financial Tracking System data that provide the basis for it are far from capturing the totality of the spectrum of humanitarian activities. Furthermore, the demand for assistance programmes to be structured and articulated around project activities as required by the mechanisms of Consolidated Appeals, inevitably leads to a loss of “depth” – many programmes may indeed include diversity issues, but this is lost in the project description.

However, the findings are perfectly – and sadly – in line with a growing body of evidence describing humanitarian operations as almost automatic, delivery-based systems assuming the beneficiary population to be homogenous, undifferentiated, and driven by factors other than needs. A recent study by the Feinstein International Center states:

Experienced humanitarian staff tend to base decisions mainly on past experiences, instinct, and assumptions. Even when assessment is viewed as a priority for program planning, agencies often violate their own calls for field-validated assessments as a precursor to intervention...a process where decisions are made without the analysis of evidence may also lead to a pattern of simply justifying whatever is most convenient for the agency or donor. Thus, agencies may fall into a “programmatically inertia” whereby certain types of programs will inevitably be chosen due to individual biases, assumptions, and preferences.<sup>9</sup>

This state of affairs not only constitutes a breach of the humanitarian principle of impartiality, but is also in contradiction with the rights-based approach to humanitarian assistance. It is a major accountability issue vis-à-vis the affected population, and requires immediate attention by the humanitarian community.

## Recommendations

Inevitably, since the situation regarding funding for the specific needs of different population groups appears to have changed only marginally, many of the recommendations resulting from this report mirror those made previously:

- Humanitarian partners must ensure assessments provide accurate data on all vulnerable groups in assessments disaggregated by sex and age for all age groups.
- Project design must be based on analysis of assessment data and existing good practice to ensure humanitarian assistance is accessible by the entire affected population.
- Leadership on the delivery of programming which addresses the different needs of all population groups must be provided by cluster lead agencies, UNOCHA and humanitarian coordinators.

- In line with the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD) principles<sup>10</sup> donors must play a central role in supporting the design and implementation of inclusive programming. Project proposals should include a contextual analysis of demographics and data disaggregated by sex and age. Donors must uphold GHD principle 16, which states that signatories must “promote the use of Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidelines and principles on humanitarian activities”. These include *Humanitarian Action and Older Persons: An essential brief for humanitarian actors*.<sup>11</sup>

However, the scope of the analysis presented has been broadened further by including children under five, and still the main conclusion is that the humanitarian community is incapable – or somewhat unwilling – to deliver needs-based humanitarian programmes.

- HelpAge therefore feels a high-level, strategic, humanitarian community-wide effort is urgently needed to address the impartiality breach.

Reference is made to the conclusions of the Review of Coordination and Funding for Cross-Cutting Issues, commissioned by UNOCHA and finalised in early 2013. The Review identifies five “core” issues (gender, age, disability, HIV/AIDS and mental health) which all are concerned with the specific needs of different individuals in humanitarian crises. These issues are brought together under a conceptually broadened label of diversity, which is now understood, as already stated in this report, to include all the main factors that may determine specific humanitarian needs – age, gender, disability etc.

Furthermore, the Review stresses that respect for diversity in humanitarian programming is a fundamental prerequisite of accountability to affected populations. In this respect, it makes the recommendation to create an accountability support function to be placed under the authority of the Humanitarian Coordinator. It furthermore concludes that it is critical to ensure that humanitarian country teams reflect diversity at all stages of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (coordinated assessments, joint needs analysis, joint planning, resource mobilisation and monitoring).

Such a key recommendation stems from evidence that it is support directly at the point of delivery – where programmes are designed and implemented – much more than additional policies or guidelines that can actually make a difference in humanitarian practices.

HelpAge International expresses support for this way forward, which has already drawn widespread support from Global Clusters Coordinators and will be discussed at the IASC policy level later in 2013. Effectively supporting those who have the responsibility to deliver principled and accountable humanitarian assistance in the field may be a way to finally break out of the impasse in which the humanitarian community seems to have holed itself.

## Annex 1:

Appeal countries analysed in the study including the number of projects with one or more activities targeting older people and children under five

CAP 2012	Number of projects with activities for:		
	Older people	Children under five	Both
Afghanistan	3	9	
Burkina Faso	0	1	
Central African Republic	1	2	
Côte d'Ivoire	0	4	
Chad	0	4	
Djibouti	0	2	
Haiti	1	6	
Kenya	0	13	
Liberia	1	2	
Mali	0	7	
Mauritania	0	4	
Niger	0	6	
occupied Palestinian territory	4	2	1
Philippines	6	5	
Somalia	21	19	1
South Sudan, Republic of	9	10	6
Sudan	2	14	
Yemen	10	0	
Zimbabwe	2	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>8</b>

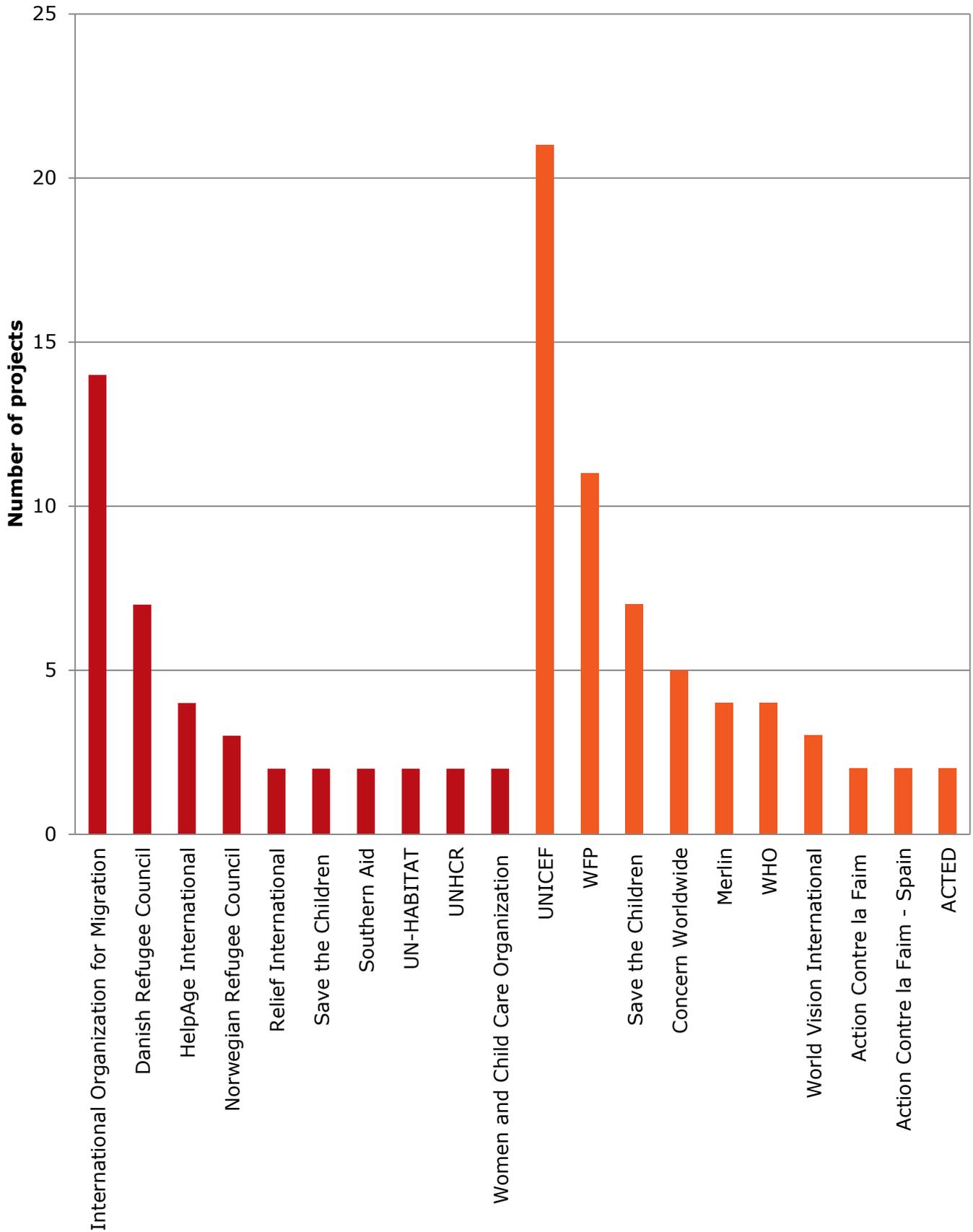
## Annex 2:

Donor funding for projects that include one or more activities targeting older people

Donor	Funding donated to projects targeting older people (US\$)	Percentage of CAP 2012
European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office	16,437,576	0.2788%
Norway	6,393,654	0.1084%
United States	6,181,352	0.1048%
Japan	3,684,109	0.0625%
Sweden	3,020,424	0.0512%
Canada	2,275,698	0.0386%
Switzerland	1,147,844	0.0195%
Germany	664,011	0.0113%
France	657,894	0.0112%
Spain	604,266	0.0102%
Denmark	539,326	0.0091%
Various donors (details not yet provided)	417,605	0.0071%
Arab Gulf Programme for United Nations Development Organizations	95,000	0.0016%
Private (individuals and organisations)	40,848	0.0007% t

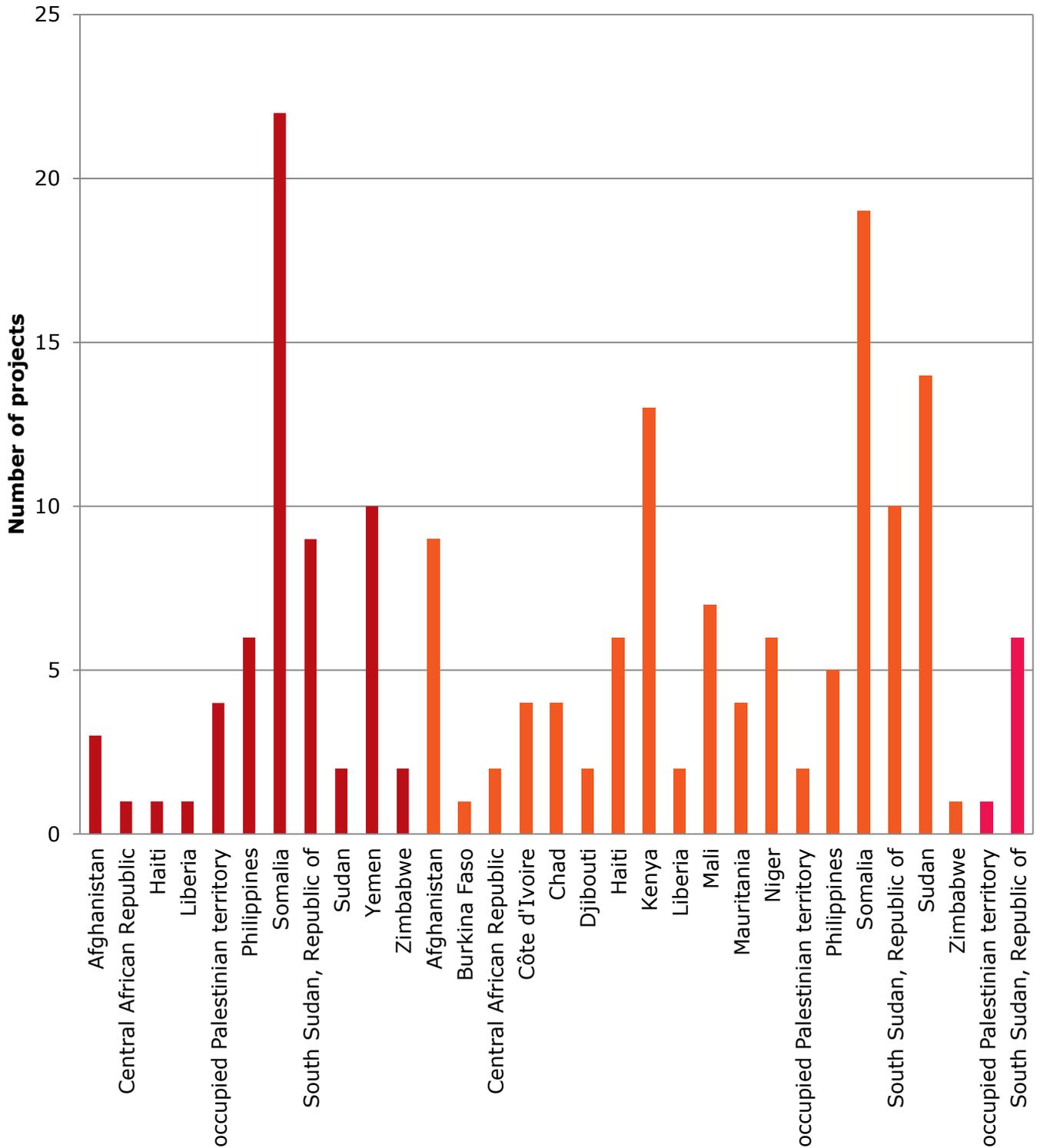
## Annex 3:

### Top 10 appealing agencies per group



## Annex 4:

### Countries in which projects include at least one activity targeting older people and/or children under five



## Endnotes

1. HelpAge International and Handicap International (2012). A study of humanitarian financing for older people and people with disabilities, 2010-2011.
2. All estimations used in this report are produced using data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2011). *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, CD-ROM Edition*.
3. Estimations produced using data from United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2011). *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision, CD-ROM Edition*.
4. Data from the FTS only allows for analysis of project activities that specifically target older people or children under five. Except for cases in which older people have specific needs different from those of the population at large, such as treatment for chronic diseases, HelpAge does not advocate for specific programmatic activities for older people. Rather, small programmatic modifications should be implemented which ensure older people's access to mainstream humanitarian programming. More details and guidelines designed to support this objective can be found here:  
<http://www.helpage.org/resources/practical-guidelines/emergency-guidelines/>
5. ACAPS (2010). Rapid Initial Needs Assessment for Haiti  
<http://www.acaps.org/img/documents/rinah-report-final-rinah-report-feb2010.pdf>
6. In 2012, a new denomination – multi-sector – was used to describe projects which spanned a number of sectors. Only Emergency Telecommunications was not represented.
7. As with previous reports, the analysis does not allow for investigation of all 392 donors. Instead it focuses on the largest multilateral donor to the CAP (ECHO) and bilateral donors that can potentially provide assistance to all CAP countries. This approach results in a number of exclusions including: sector-specific funding, country-level pooled funds, private donors, "carry-over funding" and funding from where donors are not specified.
8. The humanitarian principles are derived from the core principles, which have long guided the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies. Commitment to the principles has also been expressed at an institutional level by many humanitarian organizations. Of particular note is the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief which more than 492 organisations have signed. Also of note is the Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response elaborated by the Sphere Project.  
[https://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples\\_eng\\_June12.pdf](https://ochanet.unocha.org/p/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf)
9. Darcy, J, Stobaugh, Walker, P and Maxwell, D (2012). *The Use of Evidence in Humanitarian Decision Making: ACAPS Operational Learning Paper*. Feinstein International Centre and ACAPS  
<http://www.scribd.com/doc/126202194/The-Use-of-Evidence-in-Humanitarian-Decision-Making-ACAPS-Operational-Learning-Paper#fullscreen>
10. The 23 Principles and Good Practice defined by the group provide both a framework to guide official humanitarian aid and a mechanism for encouraging greater donor accountability. These were drawn up to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of donor action, as well as their accountability to beneficiaries, implementing organisations and domestic constituencies, with regard to the funding, coordination, follow-up and evaluation of such actions. More details on the Good Humanitarian Donorship principles can be found here:  
<http://www.goodhumanitariananddonorship.org/gns/principles-good-practice-ghd/overview.aspx>
11. Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2008). *Humanitarian Action and Older Persons: an essential brief for humanitarian actors*.  
[http://www.who.int/hac/network/interagency/iasc\\_advocacy\\_paper\\_older\\_people\\_en.pdf](http://www.who.int/hac/network/interagency/iasc_advocacy_paper_older_people_en.pdf)