

FOOTSTEPS

No.39 JUNE 1999

OLDER PEOPLE 

Ageing and development

by Alison Tarrant

WHEREVER IN THE WORLD a person lives, the process of ageing is likely to raise challenges. Most people wish to remain independent as they grow older and to continue to contribute to their families and communities – but the ageing process may bring difficulties with it. In particular, older people are more likely to face financial insecurity, ill health or disability. In many countries most people move into old age after a lifetime of poverty, poor nutrition and healthcare and, frequently, years of hard physical labour.

People often think that ageing is not an issue in Third World countries because life expectancies are shorter, but this is not true. Currently the majority (61%) of the world's population over 60 years of age lives in Third World countries. This proportion will increase to 70% by 2025. These populations are ageing much faster than they are in industrialised countries. In 1995 the world's population aged over 60 increased by about 1 million people each month. Nearly 80% of this increase took place in the Third World.

The idea that many older people are passive recipients of aid and support is inaccurate. In its work with older people, HelpAge International has found that they are extremely resourceful, frequently undertaking many different activities to provide for themselves. Around the world, most people continue to work well into old age. This contribution usually goes unseen because most of this work is unpaid work in the family or is in the informal sector, so is not recorded.



Photo: Richard Hanson, Tearfund

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FOOTSTEPS

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Footsteps is a quarterly paper, linking health and development workers worldwide. Tearfund, publisher of *Footsteps*, hopes that it will provide the stimulus of new ideas and enthusiasm. It is a way of encouraging Christians of all nations as they work together towards creating wholeness in our communities.

Footsteps is free of charge to individuals working to promote health and development. It is available in English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. Donations are welcomed.

Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

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TEARFUND



CHRISTIAN ACTION WITH THE WORLD'S POOR

Ageing raises particular challenges for women.

Helping older people **without** spending money

- Give up your seat to an older person on a crowded bus or train.
- Let older people into a queue in front of you, if you're waiting in a shop or clinic.
- Invite them to join in celebrations or cook a little extra food and share with an older person.
- If you can sew, help repair their clothes or help with other practical repairs or cleaning.
- Help with their heavy work, like carrying water or shopping or working in their gardens or fields.
- Together, a community could repair their homes or even build them new ones.
- Help them with reading and filling in bills and forms.
- Young people could visit older people and talk with them.
- A lot of older people have led very interesting lives. School children could interview them and write down their histories.
- Be aware of lonely older people and visit them. Include all older people in the life of the community.

Adapted from *Ageways 49*

Two of the issues most commonly mentioned by older people as being of great importance to them are financial security and good health. In many of the world's poorer countries very few older people receive any kind of pension and those who do receive a pension may often find it inadequate for even the most basic needs. Where pensions are not available or are insufficient, older people either have to rely on the support of their family or community, or they have to work to bring in their own income. The traditional security of family support for older family members may be lacking if

their children have moved away to work in cities or other countries, if children have died from AIDS or if government initiatives have relocated family members to other parts of the country.

Good health is of vital importance to older people, not only because this generally improves the quality of life, but because it enables people to continue to work and contribute to their communities. However, older people who need healthcare may find it very difficult to obtain, particularly if they live in rural areas. There may be very limited health facilities available, and what care does exist may well be beyond the reach of older people – either because they cannot afford to pay for it, or because they are unable to travel to it. It is also common for older people to assume that many conditions associated with ageing are an inevitable part of growing old and that there is nothing which can be done. In fact many of these conditions – such as cataracts – are treatable.

Through experience of working with older people around the world, HelpAge International has found that the most effective way of supporting older people is to work with them on projects they have identified as meeting their needs. These are usually community based initiatives. In Sri Lanka, for example, a minibus was stocked with primary healthcare equipment and basic drugs and now visits communities in plantation



Photo: Tearfund

areas, where older people previously had no access to healthcare. In Manila in the Philippines, older people are training to become community health workers, providing basic healthcare and education for other older people in their area. In Uganda, an older women's group used a grant to purchase some pigs. The pigs are breeding and the income the women gain from them is being shared among the group members who use it to help pay for school fees for their grandchildren (in this area, many children have lost one or both parents to AIDS) and to buy basic foodstuffs. A fund has also been established to help meet the cost of some of the house repairs for the poorest members of the group.

Women are important in our ageing world. In nearly every country in the world women outlive men, so more older people are female. Ageing also raises particular challenges for women. In many places girls and women receive less education, have fewer work opportunities and receive less healthcare and nutrition than boys and men. This affects their health, economic status and earning potential in later life. Older women may also have particular health problems as a result of repeated pregnancies and childbirth earlier in their lives.

Women are much more likely to live alone in later life than men. In many places women are likely to marry men who are older than themselves, and are less likely than men to marry again if they are widowed or divorced. As well as the social and emotional impact of living alone, older women are more likely to live in poverty, as it can be much more

difficult for a woman on her own to earn a living, especially if she lacks family support. Our experiences in credit schemes with older people have shown that older women are generally an excellent credit risk, establishing small businesses which are at least as successful, and often more so, than those established by men.

1999 is the UN International Year of Older Persons. This offers a special opportunity for us all to

look beyond the typical view of their needs and instead to value their knowledge, resourcefulness and experience and to include them in work which will benefit not only themselves, but also the wider community.

Alison Tarrant is the Communications Officer at the Secretariat of HelpAge International, a global network of organisations working with and for older people: 67-74 Saffron Hill, London, EC1N 8QX, UK.



FROM THE EDITOR

I AM FORTUNATE to have clear memories of all four of my grandparents and even of two of my great grandparents. I had a very special relationship with one of my grandmothers, who died at the age of 95. Until a couple of years before her death, she was a wonderful source of wisdom and memories. I gained a great deal from her example. During recent research visits to Uganda and Ghana, I met many older people in the numerous farmer groups visited, who often reminded me of my Granny. They had the same interest in life and in other people, the same concern to be involved and help out. Many now found farming difficult but were still valued in the group as they cared for the younger children of other members, gave advice and counsel, prepared food or sold produce in the market. They often spoke of how much it meant to them to belong to their groups, knowing that if they were sick other members would care for them and how all the members would come to their funerals – something that brought them great comfort. Groups with members of varying ages were a powerful reminder both of the important role older people have to play and also of how much such involvement meant to older people.

This issue draws out many aspects of growing old with the opportunity to hear the views of a number of older people directly. Older people have much to share and contribute, though some also need particular practical or medical support as they age.

This year the world celebrates the International Year of Older Persons. There are many ways you could celebrate this in your area. Suggestions include organising a visit, a dance, competitions of various kinds, quiz, concert, exhibition or a party for older people.

Footsteps 40 will celebrate our tenth anniversary with news of what you, our readers, are doing with the information received in your copies. Future issues will cover the management of natural resources and training.

Isabel Carter

One of the illustrations from *Adding Health to Years* by Gill Garrett, reviewed on page 14.



The changing needs of older people

A SOUTH AFRICAN EXPERIENCE

by Val Kadalie

'In an African setting it is quite unusual to have a home for the elderly.' While this is very true in the rest of Africa, the South African situation has many differences concerning the care of older people.

Historical perspective

South Africa is a young and rapidly changing democracy. Before 1994 there were huge inequalities in every area of life among our different population groups. Living arrangements vary widely for older South Africans. One of the main differences is that among wealthy groups, older people prefer to live independently while poorer families tend to have several generations living together.

Apartheid policies have left a legacy of great inequality, although things are slowly improving. Some examples of this inequality are:

- Before 1994, the government provided little in the way of either funding for residential care or pensions to elderly black people. Many older black people lived in great poverty, and this often continues today.
- Over twenty times (10.5%) as many older white people live in residential care as elderly blacks (0.5%), (though many would say that this reflects poorly on white society).
- South Africa has no compulsory pension system. Few older black people receive a pension, though the majority of white people do. For those without a pension on retirement, the State provides a social grant provided the person passes a means test. Most older South Africans, of whom 90% are black, depend on this grant of about US \$80 per month.

- Black pensioners often support unemployed family members and grandchildren. It is not unusual to find 7–9 persons dependent on an old person's monthly State grant.
- In traditional society, children are the most important source of support for their elders, with 90% of older black people living with children.

Looking ahead

The problem of poverty in old age is a very real one. The South African economy will not be able to support increasing numbers of older people, so the priority will be the very poorest. Many others are at risk of falling through the safety net.

The number of older persons is likely to increase from the present 2 million to over 3 million over the next twelve years, with the most rapid increase being of females, 85 years and older.

Traditional family care networks facing the strain of rapid urbanisation and post-apartheid challenges are often under immense strain. They may have few, if any, resources to help provide special care for older people, particularly the very frail or demented.

However, only 5% of all older persons are seriously ill or very frail. Old people make up a huge pool of potential which is little used in our country.

Light, colour, noise

The GH Starck Centre in Cape Town opened its doors in 1982 as a miracle of answered prayers against the above background and the effects of forced removals of whole communities under the Group Areas Act. It was made possible by the foresight and generosity of the late George Henry Starck, originally from the UK, but who had settled in South Africa.

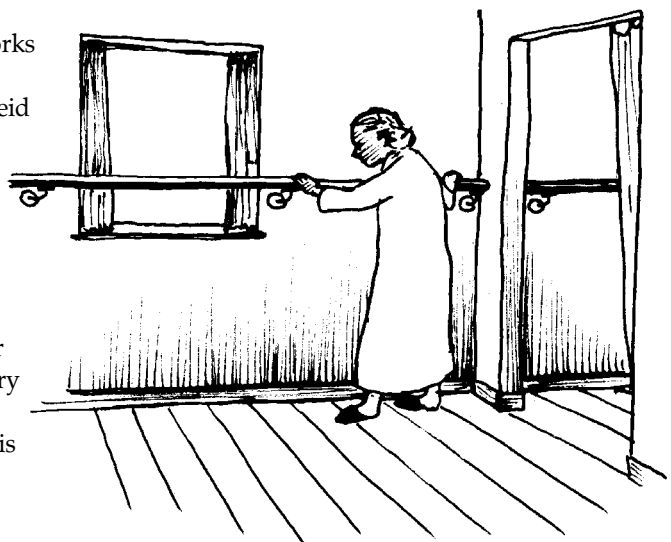
We are registered for 52 resident older persons. We run on a family system with residents in family units with about ten people in each. Each family unit has a housemother who lives with them and is responsible for them. Housemothers are ordinary people from the community who are trained here in all aspects of caring for older people. Medical care is the responsibility of trained nursing staff.

Our centre is welcoming and full of light, colour, noise and choices. Old age homes can easily become isolated from the community. However, we believe that our residents must never become passive recipients of care but should be informed and involved in community issues.

Choices

We have begun many events which have brought great joy and excitement into the lives of many hundreds of older people, both here and in other centres.

Annual Olympiatrics This combines the words 'olympics' and 'geriatrics' and is a fun sports day for people aged 60 years and over. Events range from a spectacular march, fun races and relay sprints involving 45–50 teams of elders from various old age homes and clubs. Special



events for the very frail run alongside track events for the more able aged.

As a result of this event, the government has now set up a national programme of sport and recreation for older people.

Holiday exchanges During this annual event we literally swap beds with residents in other old age homes for twelve days. This has been a wonderful way to expose rural elderly to life in the city and vice versa. It has led to deep friendships and resulted in three marriages over the years!

Usually about 80–90 older people take part each year. Each home commits itself to providing a full programme of activities and visits to places of interest, both for their own residents and their visiting guests during the 'holiday' period.

Cooking competition Older people in homes are rarely able to continue traditional cooking skills, so we challenge other old age homes to a cooking competition each year. Residents are invited to provide favourite recipes of dishes they used to prepare for their families. Twelve of these are then selected by a cookery expert. The competition takes place before a panel of judges. We finish by eating the dishes prepared by our old residents. These are of a very high standard. A popular family magazine publishes these recipes.

Church-related activities Our old age home is a 'church home' to many in our community. A Sunday School serves the children, while youth meetings, Bible study/prayer groups, drug counselling and meetings for women all draw the community into our home constantly. This prevents isolation from the wider community.

Community care workers We have trained a group of people from the community to help us with caring for older people living at home, those recovering from strokes and as extra help for our own staff at our centre. This community work is mostly voluntary, though we do pay for the times when they work here. We provide the professional support, supervision, practical resources and ongoing training that they need.

Stroke rehabilitation The nearby hospital is understaffed and under great pressure.



Photo: Tearfund

Older people should be informed and involved in community issues.

They are unable to provide adequate healthcare for our older people.

Because of this, we run a very happy and active stroke club. About 40–45 people who have survived a stroke come each week. Most are older people but, because of the need, we also take younger people with strokes. We raise our own funding to provide trained therapists. The club is largely staffed with volunteers who are God's gift to us.

Day and respite care We provide day care for older people so that their carers at home can continue working to support their families. In addition, respite care for weekends or up to four weeks is available to provide times of rest for carers who may often be elderly themselves.

Social responsibility projects Housemothers encourage their 'families' to work together to raise funds during the year for charities of their choice. This helps to remind residents that they are still of value in their old age. It gives them a great sense of self worth to contribute to the lives of others.

HIV/AIDS Our old age home is also a resource for people with HIV/AIDS. Emergency relief care is provided for those in desperate need while alternative care is found. We have had the privilege to minister in a practical way to many adults and children.

Activities with children Some local schools have adopted our centre. We have a collection of very old objects and crafts which prompt fascinating discussion with the children about life, times and methods in years gone by. Children are also very involved in activities like our Olympiatrics, both as volunteers and as team supporters.

Further life and learning

We recognise the importance of helping older people to stay with their own families and communities for as long as possible, but the reality of life in our country today is that support services are just not there for the great majority of our old people. Though the generosity of GH Starck in setting up this home may not be available elsewhere, the attitudes and activities can certainly be repeated anywhere.

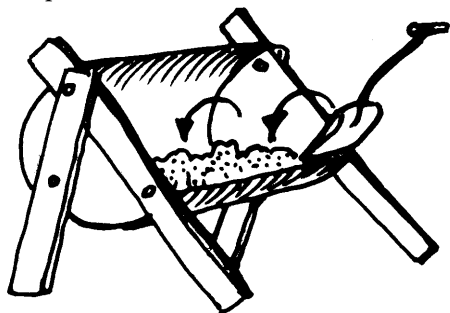
It is our conviction that Christ promises abundant life even into advanced old age. When admission to our home becomes necessary for any older person, we want that time not to be one of despair and hopelessness but a positive opportunity for continued choices, life and learning.

Val Kadalie is a highly qualified geriatric nurse who has been Matron of the GH Starck Centre for the Cape Town City Mission for 17 years. PO Box 36091, Glosderry 7702, South Africa.



Cement mixer

MIXING LARGE AMOUNTS of concrete or mortar by hand on the ground is back-breaking work. Mixing in a wheel barrow is better but the barrow is not an ideal shape for turning over the mix with a shovel. This is my suggestion which is simple to make.



Cut a 40 gallon oil drum in half lengthways and use four planks of wood with six nuts and bolts to hold it all together. Empty by tipping onto the ground or into a barrow. Let us know if it proves successful.

Rod Mill
Sancton Drawing Services
High Street, Sancton
YO4 3QT
UK

Tricycle for the disabled

I WAS VERY INTERESTED in the letter mentioning a tricycle designed for disabled people. Many years ago I was involved in similar manufacture in Zambia. After 15 years of production, I felt that the real challenge was to set these enterprises up on a commercial basis. Wherever there is a modest market for these products it may be possible to do this. A commercial enterprise is more likely to lead to continuing production than charitable efforts.

D J Buchanan
The British Council
58 Whitworth Street, Manchester
M1 6BB
UK



Mysterious goat disease

ON A RECENT VISIT to a project in Orissa, India, local people told us that their goats were dying of a mysterious disease which rotted away their flesh. Through various contacts we learned that this disease was probably caused by the goats eating poisonous leaves such as ragwort or oleander which cause liver damage and make the skin very sensitive to sunlight. The people were new to goat husbandry. They kept the goats penned up, bringing them fodder. When left to wander, goats will rarely eat anything that might harm them. However, if leaves are collected and mixed together it seems that they may well eat poisonous leaves.

We thought this information might be useful to others new to goat husbandry. Be careful to make sure that all fodder provided is safe for animals to eat. Better still, grow your own recommended fodder plants.

David and Shirley Todd
8 Hall Close, Mottram
Cheshire, SK14 6LJ
UK

Keeping goats away

We planted many young trees last year. Around them we planted a circle of sunnhemp (*Crotalaria ochroleuca*) with a double purpose. First, the sunnhemp provided shade, shelter and nitrogen to the young trees. Secondly, during the long dry season the goats of the village roam around in search of food. They did not like the hard, dry straw of the sunnhemp around the young trees which were thus kept safe from their appetites.

Sister Elisabeth van Grieken
Kalilo Catholic Church
PO Box 10434, Chingola
Zambia

EDITOR:

Trial packs of seeds from: ECHO, 17430 Durrance Road, North Fort Myers, FL 33917-2239, USA.

Encouraging women's groups

In the Catholic Mission of Ngaoundaye, Central African Republic, an Italian volunteer, Céleste, began to work towards forming women's groups in 1993. The first two years were spent making contacts, getting to know each other, and discovering how to organise a lasting group. Céleste worked with a local colleague, Rohané, and wherever women showed an interest they set up training on the role of committee members – such as president, secretary or treasurer.

From 1995 onwards, the groups worked out their aims and rules and then chose activities. Some training was available from Céleste and Rohané in making beauty lotions, soap, jam, cassava flour production (*gari*) and batik. Several groups wanted to set up small shops. Others regularly made lotions. Four of them wanted to have a flour mill to simplify daily life. Two of them cultivated a community field.

The groups soon noticed that any economic activity – especially the village shop – demanded very accurate accounting, which was beyond their skills. Almost all of them wanted to be given literacy teaching. A young man followed the government training in functional literacy teaching. He passed on his knowledge to ten volunteer monitors who began classes with groups in 1997–8.

Two groups had considered opening a restaurant, but their husbands opposed this as they did not want them to be away from home in the evenings. Another group had bought nuts at harvest time to sell when prices rose. This was a complete fiasco because the group had not yet learned to work together well and tried this scheme too early.

The women have learnt to think before acting. It is not enough to have a good idea for the activity to succeed. One group with a flour mill voluntarily paid the transport costs for their literacy teaching monitor – a real sign of progress.

Sent in by Chantal Gaudin. Rohané Anne-Marie and Céleste Manenti are animators working with the Catholic Mission of Ngaoundaye.

Castor oil

I AM A REGULAR READER who finds *Footsteps* stimulating and helpful. I found the information on moringa and neem very useful. Because of this, I am writing to ask for information about a plant called the castor oil seed plant. This is a large fast growing shrub with leaves similar to pawpaw. The seeds look like bugs with spotted skins and grow on seed heads with spiky coverings. Are there any uses for this plant that readers can share?

D Ishenge
PO Box 684
Makurdi
Benue State
Nigeria



EDITOR:

This large shrub is found in many parts of the tropics. The seeds are rich in oil and can be gathered when ripe from the large upright flower heads. However the seeds contain a **deadly poison** which is fatal to both humans and animals and **must never be swallowed**. The hard outer seed coat is removed and then the oil can be extracted with an oil press. The cake is again very poisonous. The pure oil has an unpleasant smell but several important uses. In very small doses it is used to treat constipation. It is very useful in engineering, mixing with paints and for making soap but because of its poisonous nature it may be better to use other oilseeds!

New disease

HAVE OTHER READERS in West Africa noticed a disease affecting the trees *Parkia clappertonia* and *Prosopis africana* which is very noticeable in this area? The trees begin to lose their leaves on certain branches, these branches die and gradually the whole tree dies.

If we do not find out the cause and possible cure it will be very serious. The beans from both trees are nutritious and used in every household in a fermented form to flavour soups and stews and are also sold as a cash crop.

Sister Hilary Claffey
Holy Rosary Convent
PO Box 824, Makurdi
Benue State
Nigeria

Fungal infections

RECENTLY international scientists at a conference in Vienna discussed the increase in fungal infections within women in Uganda, and found no answer. Those attending lacked experience of rural Africa! I believe there is only one answer – the family towel. Many families have only one towel which all members of the family share. These are washed in cold water. If one member of the family has a fungal infection, the fungus settles into the towel and infects everybody else. Women who visit rural relatives may return with an infection causing discharge and itching in their vagina. Their husbands may think they have been unfaithful and beat them, not understanding the real reason.

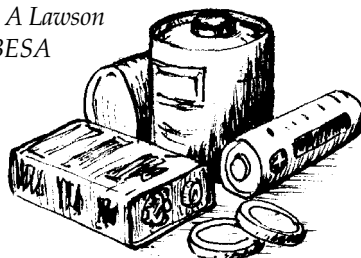
The answer? Treat the infection with medical help. If possible, use different towels or cloths for each family member. Heat towels to nearly boiling temperature regularly or use a strong medicated soap to kill the fungus.

Siegfried Gerber
Kenya

Dangerous compost

FARMERS HAVE OFTEN ASKED me if it is safe to use compost made from town waste. Their concerns are always about the risk of diseases. My own worries are about the numerous batteries from torches, radios, watches etc. These small 'bombs' are rarely noticed and yet are full of poisonous chemicals which slowly leak out as they rot. No-one seems to have found a safe way of extracting them from waste and disposing of them safely. My feeling is that it is better to avoid using compost from town waste.

Dr George A Lawson
CAAK/JUBESA
BP 1515
Lome
Togo



EDITOR:

Dr Lawson raises serious concerns. The only recommended advice for disposing of batteries is to bury them in deep pits. As he points out, it is probably better to avoid town compost for vegetable production. It could be used for growing trees. If you make your own compost you will have confidence in knowing that it is completely safe.

Building bridges

OUR ORGANISATION has 11 members who are all committed to sharing knowledge, love and practical help with those in need. We think of our work in terms of bridges: bridges in agriculture, evangelism or carpentry, for example. Bridges have to link the strong with the weak.

To really understand the needs of the poor, you need to visit their homes. Only there will you meet the disabled, the HIV-afflicted, the drunkards and the lonely who are out of sight elsewhere. When people lack many basic resources it can be very complicated to eradicate poverty. We share Christ's message of love and build bridges through practical action. We would like to hear from other similar groups around the world.

7 Golden Lampstands
PO Box 364
Kampala
Uganda

Jubilee 2000 update

Many *Footsteps* readers have been enthusiastically collecting signatures for the Jubilee 2000 petition. This will be presented to world leaders at the next G8 Summit in Cologne, June 1999. So far around 3 million signatures have been collected from 124 countries.

A pile of forms, some with thumbprints, came from the entire population of a village in Mexico, with an official certification by the Chief of Police. Another group of forms included the signatures of the President and the entire Cabinet of the Government of Guyana.

In addition to the official petition forms, an amazing variety of forms designed by individuals or groups are received, including an individually designed form in Swahili from Tanzania.

Petition forms in a number of languages are available from Jubilee 2000 Coalition, PO Box 100, London, SE1 7RT, UK.

E-mail: bwitstandley@jubilee2000uk.org

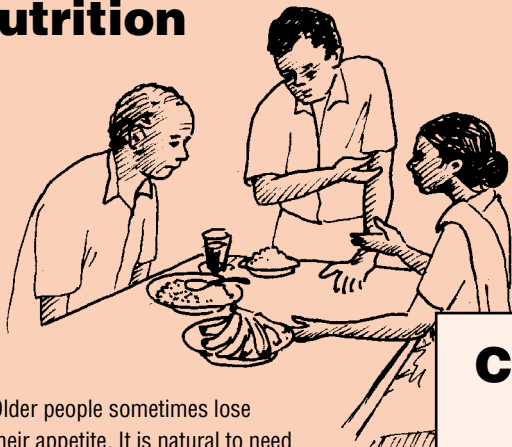


Caring for older people at home

SOME OLDER PEOPLE remain in good health well into their 70s and 80s. Others may find their physical or mental health becomes less good as they grow older. Older people should be included as important members of the family, regardless of their health.



Nutrition



Older people sometimes lose their appetite. It is natural to need less food as the body becomes less active. Provide a balanced nutritious diet to stay healthy. Older people may prefer to eat a small amount several times a day instead of one or two larger meals.

Caring for older relatives is one way to return some of the love family members have received while they were growing up. Most importantly, let older people know they are still loved and respected.

Caring for a bedridden person

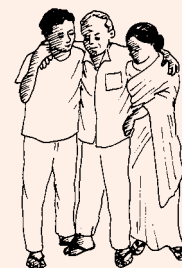


Someone who is too sick to get up will need special attention. Staying in bed for a long time weakens the body. Make sure they have a room with plenty of fresh air and light. Bathe them every day using a basin and cloth. Turn them several times a day to prevent bed sores.



Dirty or wet clothes and sheets irritate the skin and may cause infections. If a bedridden person cannot fully control their bladder or bowel movements:

- Place a piece of plastic covered by a soft cloth around the middle of the bed and change the cloth when wet.
- Always have a bedpan next to the bed and encourage them to use this frequently.
- Tie a towel on, which can be changed when soiled.

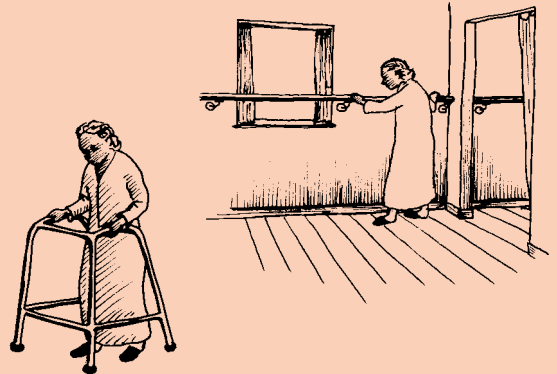


Whenever possible, help them to sit and walk as soon as possible.

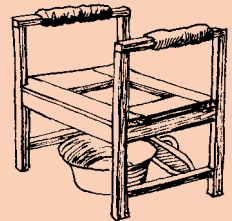
This information was taken from the very helpful booklet produced by staff at Yayasan Kesehatan GNIM, Tomohan, on the island of Sulawesi, Indonesia, together with Studio Driya Media and World Neighbours. The booklet is reviewed on page 14.

Preventing accidents

Some people begin to lose their sense of balance as they grow older. They may fall more often and injure themselves. Older bones are more easily broken. Build rails beside steps or along the sides of rooms. Think of ways to help them walk around more easily.



Bars to hold on to in the bathroom can help prevent falls. A pot or bedpan that is close to the bed should be provided for those who have trouble walking or seeing, so that they do not have to go far to use the toilet.



Skin problems



The skin of older people is usually thinner and drier and can become very itchy. Fresh coconut oil or Vaseline can help. Ordinary soap may be too harsh and baby soap could be used instead.

Dying



Some very old people do not want to take medicine or go to hospital when they become ill. They say they are ready to 'go back to God'. This wish should be respected and discussed with the health worker or doctor.

It is never easy to care for a relative who is dying. The family should not be afraid to discuss death in a caring and sensitive way and to give some thought to making arrangements following the death of very ill relatives.

Deafness

When speaking to someone who has trouble hearing, speaking clearly and facing the person will improve communication.



Experiences of older people

HERE we gather together interviews with a selection of older people in various countries. They share their thoughts on the differing ways older people are treated today and their hopes and fears for the future.

Yourma Bawule – a widow from Ghana

Yourma Bawule is 65 and lives alone near Wa, NW Ghana. Her three children have moved away from their home area. Yourma commented that older people used to be treated with respect and dignity. 'When a child handed something to an older person, they went down on their knees and remained there until asked to leave. The art of courtesy is now dead. Today's young people think they know better than the old.'

'There used to be a lot of food so older people could be generous. They would cook communally and share with younger people, giving them a sense of belonging and the gratitude of the younger people. Now generosity is only valued in terms of cash. I do not see any hope for the future. Many people are becoming poorer and poorer. Every day people are dying. Older people have stopped teaching the young out of frustration. Nothing can ever be like it was before.'

Contributed by Augustina Benlu

Retired Archbishop Silvanus Wani of Uganda

I met Archbishop Silvanus shortly after his retirement, riding his bicycle along a rural road. With no pension, he had come home to the northwest after living in comparative luxury in the capital, Kampala. Such treatment might have caused lesser men to feel resentment, but not Silvanus! He had his eyes on his Master and always put his own needs low down in his priorities. He considered this life was a pilgrimage, with a wonderful future ahead in heaven. In his retirement, he continued to do what he'd always done as Archbishop – preaching the gospel, teaching and encouraging everyone he met, particularly children and young people. He took Jesus at his word and followed him wholeheartedly to the end. He died last year.

Contributed by Joy Grindley, ex AIM, Uganda

Pascal Akouegnon – a farmer from Benin

Pascal used to be a farmer and hunter. He founded the village of Atchakpa where he still lives in Save, Benin, West Africa. When asked if older people were now treated differently he replied 'Yes, certainly. In the good old days, particular attention was given to old men, especially in traditional Africa where they were considered as 'living libraries of knowledge'. Today our fast-changing world means that old people are seen as puzzling objects and people try to get rid of them as early as possible. People do not use our wisdom or our experience any more.'

'I fear that our future rests on weak, even fragile, foundations. Future generations will probably be without any points of reference if we are not careful. My hopes for the future lie above all in the families who are educating their children to have respect for old people. Some families still do this in Africa. These are the rays of hope for tomorrow.'

Contributed by Appolinaire Gbaguidi, Benin



Photos: Tearfund

Margarita – a Spanish woman living in Chile

'Life for older people is different today, because there used to be a lot more respect towards the elders. Parents are now even called nicknames by their children. Today old people may be listened to, but they are often treated without formality and sometimes made to feel left out. Youngsters are eager for knowledge of the way we used to live and want to know if it was better then. Our wisdom and experiences are 'well used' as they keep asking questions about the past.

In the future I hope that the standard of living will improve for all people, and that there will be less violence and delinquency so we can all live in safety. I have no fears for the future. My life has always been dedicated to religion, looking after youngsters in hostels. I do not fear death, as I know that it will be the way to see the Lord's light.'

Contributed by Solange Angel, Chile

Veronika – living alone in Moldova

Veronika is 61 and lives in Ialoveni. She worked in a wine factory until her retirement. She remembers that her grandparents didn't have many possessions but that they lived better than she lives today. Her parents lost their land to collective farms and their children have never received it back.

The age of retirement has risen in Moldova. Many pensioners lost their pensions when the state systems collapsed in 1990. Veronika feels that older people now receive nothing of value from the state. She has just received her tiny pension for March 1998, ten months late.

Veronika sadly does not have children of her own, but her nieces and nephews come to ask her advice. She feels she is well used in her extended family and community. She used to work hard to solve her own problems. Now no-one helps her and no-one is interested. Veronika has no hope for the future. When she thinks of the future she only thinks of bad things. As there is nobody to care for her, she hopes that God will help her to stay healthy.

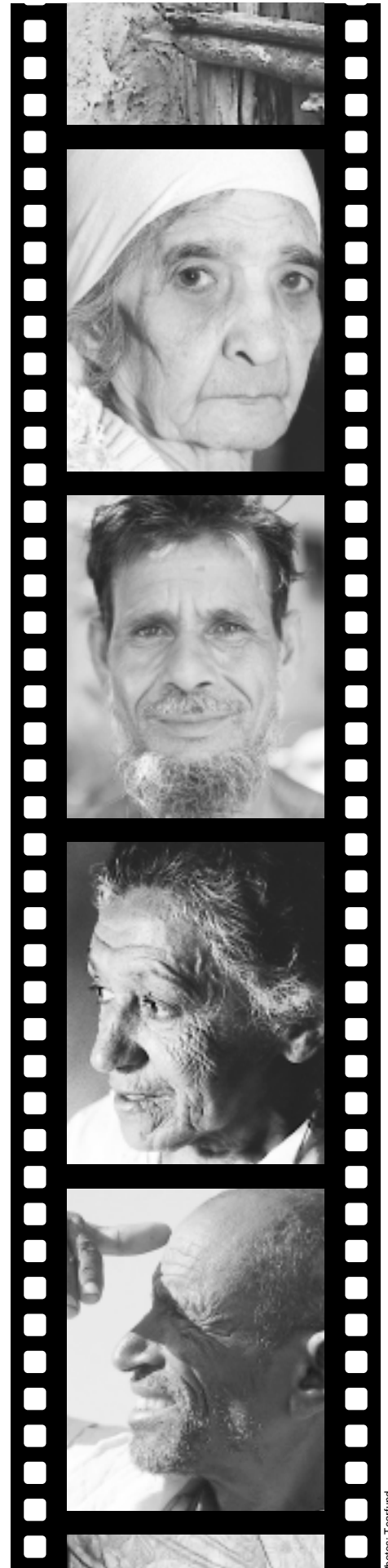
From Stephen Brown, Mediterranean and Central Asia Team, Tearfund

Elizabeth Guillebaud, UK – still working at 84

'My husband and I retired in 1986, having worked for over 40 years in Rwanda in both education and Bible translation. When we heard of the terrible genocide in 1994 in which several of our friends were killed, and saw so many people going to help who did not know the language, the culture or the Lord we wondered if we should return as we knew all three! On my 80th birthday I read of the call of Moses, aged 80, and we felt God was indeed calling us back. We returned for a year to help in listening to and counselling those who had lost so many loved ones. On our return to the UK my husband became ill and he died in November 1996. I decided to return to Uganda with my daughter in January 1997.

As a widow, I felt that I would be able to help the many widows and orphans. With the help of two other widows, we started a widows' meeting for Bible teaching and to share problems and pray for each other. The numbers soon grew to 400 and we had to divide the meetings. Many have found that Jesus is the answer to their loneliness. They help each other in practical ways – even building houses for those in greatest need. They contribute weekly funds with which they buy rolls of material to sew a uniform dress and have found that this gives them status. I hope to continue this work as long as my health remains good.

I remember my own grandmother knitting by the fire. Older people today who have financial security can have a much fuller life, travelling and active in all sorts of ways. Here in Africa, my experience is well used, whereas in England I would not have been expected to contribute much. My fears for the future are of a stroke or other illness which would make me more of a burden than a blessing here in Byumba. My hopes for the future can best be expressed in the words of Philippians chapter 3:13-14.'



Photos: Tearfund

Mara Kallé – ex Chief of Cheddra, Chad

Mara Kallé is 81 and was Chief of Cheddra, an important trading centre in N Chad, for 58 years from 1928 to 1996. He was the first person to go to school in his village. 'I followed my elders to learn from them.' As the oldest son, he replaced his father as village chief when he died.

'My grandparents lived happy lives. They taught us about history. As the village was not so large then, they controlled everybody and corrected those people who did not follow the traditions. In those days old people were treated much better than now. Each family appointed a child or a particular person to look after each old person in the family. In my family, we made sure our grandfather's bedroom was clean and took turns to meet his needs.

But nowadays compare the situation of one of my neighbours, old Saleh. He's an older man who is left to himself. Nobody looks after him, and so he is forced to beg and people think he is mad because he is so talkative. I fear that putting old people aside, as is the case with Saleh, means that young people lack advisors.

My experience and wisdom are still of some use in the village and certainly my advice on religious matters is followed. I am afraid, however, that young people follow other cultures without thinking about it, especially those of white people (Westerners), and they give up helping those who are in need. I am also afraid that young people are turning away from God. I would like our government to help old people a little.'

Contributed by Ngoniri Gos in Chad

Cécilie Siboniyo – a refugee in Burundi

Cécilie Siboniyo is aged 80 and lives in Buraniro Refugee camp, Butaganzwa-Kayanza, Burundi. 'In the past children were well educated, better than nowadays. Children's education was not just a family affair, but neighbours contributed to their discipline. That is why there was a Burundian saying, *'Umwana n'uw'igihugu'* ('A child enriches the whole neighbourhood'). Children respected their elders and helped them in practical matters. Children were taught to have great respect for visitors, to whom one owed a warm welcome. Generally, there was an enviable social harmony.'

Cécilie certainly has fears for the future. 'The bad behaviour of certain young people and the disease and damage caused by immorality and lack of discipline are frightening. Today it is not easy to educate children and young people have many distractions. They often do not take their parents' advice seriously if they think their ideas are out of date.'

However, she has hope for the future because the authorities have become aware of the importance of an education with cultural values. The media are beginning to point the finger at the problems, in order to bring young people back into line.

Contributed by Claire Britton and Désiré Munezero, Tearfund Burundi

Abtwahi Al Hajj aged 77 in Ngozi, Burundi

'In the past, children's responsibilities extended to looking after old people. When a grandfather was in need, his grandchildren helped him. The family did everything they could to take him for healthcare. They worked as a community to plough his fields. School education has now reduced the amount of work children do within the family. They prefer their parents to cook for them so they have more time for studying. Respect and assistance to old people have diminished. Some young people who have completed their studies rarely visit their grandparents.'

These attitudes make him fear for the future. Young people are losing more and more the notion of the extended family and some are becoming addicted to alcohol. This leads to bad habits, a loss of cultural values and delinquency among many school leavers who are not prepared for country life.

Contributed by Claire Britton and Désiré Munezero, Tearfund Burundi



Jamkhed Women's Group, India

'In the old days women were confined to their home and fields and had little contact with neighbours. There were many feuds within families and not much real love between people. Husbands would control the money and usually waste a lot on drink and gambling. The different castes and religions had no contact with each other.

There is more respect now between elders and youngsters. Mothers and daughters-in-law get on better. There is also a lot more freedom to meet people outside the home, including people of different castes and religions. Women tend to manage the finances instead of men and do a better job of it!

The women feel their wisdom is now much better used than in the past. They have very few fears for the future, except during election time because of pressure from different political parties. In the future they hope there will be more girls' education and for girls to be empowered in all of India, not just the area round Jamkhed. They would like to see women becoming involved in politics and becoming judges, because only women understand other women's suffering and problems. They also hope for better sanitation and disease control and the freedom to travel.

Contributed by Anthony Titley, Asia Team, Tearfund

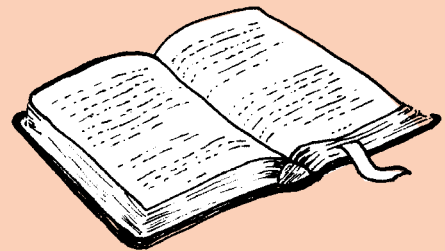


Photos: Tearfund

BIBLE STUDY

The wisdom of old and young

by Revd Tim Oakley



AS WE GROW OLDER, some of our activities may stop but new opportunities of love and living may also open up, as may awareness of past weakness. Whatever our age, God is there for us, and always will be.

Read Isaiah 46:3-4

At a time of crisis, God reminds the nation of Israel, through Isaiah, that he was there when their nation began, and also when each individual person was conceived and born. Whatever troubles we have in life, who else but God can carry us through life, from birth until our hairs are grey?

Read Proverbs 23:22-25

The whole book of Proverbs is a message from a father to his young son. He is passing on advice collected and tested by wise people, so that his son may follow them. He wants him to grow up fearing God. You might take time to read the whole book and compare these sayings with your own traditional ones.

• *Do we listen to our parents and bring them joy?*

Read 1 Kings 12:1-20

King David's son, Solomon, began his reign as a God-fearing king. However, by the end of his reign he had become a harsh ruler. As his son took over as king, everyone was worried. So they sent Jeroboam to ask the new king this question: 'Rehoboam, will you be as hard on us as Solomon was, or will you be more sensible?' Rehoboam turned for advice to two different groups – the old and the young. He chose to reject the

advice of his elders, with the result that Israel was split into two groups that were never reunited during Old Testament times.

Many older people have great wisdom about life, their faith, history, or perhaps traditional practices (such as the use of medicinal herbs) from which we might all benefit. Seek first the wisdom of the elders, while they are able to give it.

• *Why did Rehoboam take the wrong advice?*

• *Do you listen to those older than you?*

Read Job 32

As Job suffers greatly, his three older friends listen and then give their advice. Unfortunately, they are of no help, because they get it wrong! A young man called Elihu eventually speaks up, with more understanding. Sometimes younger people see things more clearly. As our world changes so fast, particularly in the areas of science, computers and communications, there may often be times when we also need to listen to the young.

• *Do you listen to those younger than you?*

• *When should we listen to the advice of younger people?*

We should not fear change as we grow older. We have the company of both older and younger people and above all the company of our Creator, Lord and Saviour to help us meet all of life's changes.

Tim Oakley has many years experience of theological training by extension in Kenya.

HelpAge

INTERNATIONAL

Learning to Listen: Counselling Skills for Helpers of Older People

by Maggie Comley

Published 1996

ISBN 1 872590 30 6

A workbook designed to enable helpers of older people to develop counselling skills for their work. Much of the book contains training exercises for individuals or groups, to enable helpers to learn and practise counselling skills. The book costs £7.95 (US \$14) including postage.

Guide to Setting Up Community Services for Elderly People

by Sandra Watts

This guide is written for groups in developing countries who are hoping to provide services for older people. It is a practical guide which sets out the questions that need to be answered before planning such a service. It is available in English and Spanish and is available free of charge.

Better Nutrition for Older People

by Suraiya Ismail and Mary Manandhar

This manual is based on a five-year research programme examining older people's nutritional needs and contains much useful information on ways to improve nutrition and measure nutritional status in older people. This costs £9 (US \$15) including postage.

Adding Health to Years

by Gill Garrett

Published 1993

ISBN 1 872590 10 1

This is the first handbook on older people's health, aimed specifically for use in Third World countries. It contains very practical information on all aspects of healthcare for older people and also includes chapters on nutrition, incontinence, mental health, pain control and care of the dying. It is well illustrated and written in clear, understandable language. It contains 160 pages and is available in English and Spanish. It costs £3 or US \$6 including postage for developing countries and £9.55 or US \$18 for developed countries.

Ageways: Practical Agecare for Development

This quarterly magazine is sent free of charge to people and organisations involved in working with older people in developing countries (£18 or US \$35 a year elsewhere). It is full of practical ideas for those involved in caring for older people. It is available in English, Spanish and Hindi.



All these resources obtainable from:

HelpAge International Publications
67-74 Saffron Hill
London
EC1N 8QX
UK

Fax: +44 171 404 7203
E-mail: hai@helpage.org

Caring for the Elderly at Home

Pages 8-9 are based on material from this useful booklet, which provides simple guidelines to help families in dealing with the common health problems of elderly people. It covers subjects such as preventing accidents, exercise, nutrition, illnesses, dying and caring for a bedridden person at home. It is available in English for US \$4 plus postage from:

World Neighbours
4127 NW 122 Street, Oklahoma City
OK 73120-8869
USA

E-mail: order@wn.org

Order the Indonesian version for R4,000 plus postage from:

Studio Driya Media
Jl Rajamantri Tengah IV #12
Bandung 40264
West Java
Indonesia

E-mail: ybm-sdm@indo.net.id

Print World

This Indian publishing group have a number of publications concerning the environment, including environmental geography, wildlife management, conservation and forest law which may be of interest to wildlife and forest rangers. Contact:

Print World
81/3 (1st floor) North Malaka
Allahabad, UP, India - 211001
E-mail: printworld@vsnl.com



OASIS Counselling Centre

Oasis offer a number of very worthwhile seminars and training courses both in Kenya and elsewhere. In 1999 these include training for Youth Counsellors (8-14 August), Counsellors (5-25 September) and a Youth Seminar (1-3 December). Please contact OASIS for further information:

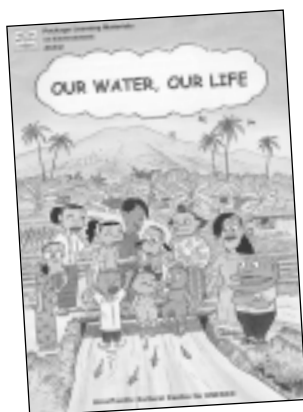
Michael Muthuiya
OASIS
PO Box 76117
Nairobi
Kenya
E-mail: oasiscc@maf.org

Hospice Care Kenya

This UK charity supports the hospice movement in Kenya. Hospices provide care and support for patients whose diseases will not respond to curative treatment.

There are three hospices in Kenya – in Nairobi, Nyeri and Eldoret. The difficulties of poverty, poor housing and travelling on rough roads cause great hardship for those who are terminally ill. Hospice services can bring comfort to those who otherwise would suffer unspeakably, putting 'life into their days, and not just days into their life'. In Kenya, care is provided through out-patient services, day and home care. For anyone interested in further information about how to provide hospice care, contact:

Gwyn Sloan
Hospice Care Kenya
PO Box 759
Bristol
BS99 2ZF
UK



PLANET 1 Package Learning Materials on Environment

This package produced by ACCU is the first in a planned series of post literacy materials about the environment. The materials aim both to encourage new literates and to teach useful information about the environment. The package contains a video, an attractive poster and a booklet – all about Mina and her village, whose water source becomes polluted, causing sickness; and their response to the pollution. Please contact ACCU for more information:

Literacy Promotion Division, ACCU
6 Fukuromachi Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo 162-8484
Japan
E-mail: literacy@accu.org.jp

Medical equipment from ECHO

ECHO provides a variety of equipment kits and instrument sets for medical care. Kits are available for health clinics, midwives and first aid. Instrument sets are available for operating theatres, out-patient departments or maternity units. For example, the minor surgery set (illustrated) costs £240. Producing collections of equipment in this way helps medical staff to choose cost-effective equipment which will meet their needs. However, though the sets are normally supplied complete, particular items can be selected to meet limited budgets.



ECHO has 30 years of experience in providing low cost and appropriate medical equipment and drugs for clinics and hospitals world-wide. For further information contact:

June Vincent (sales), ECHO, Ullswater Crescent, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR5 2HR, UK.

Fax: +44 181 668 0751

E-mail: cs@echohealth.org.uk



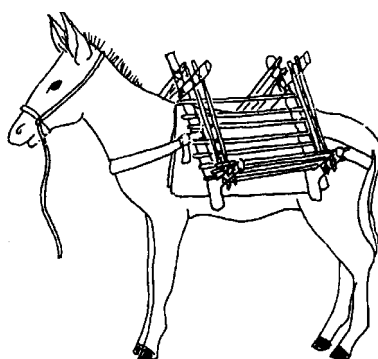
Photo: ECHO

Donkeys for Development

by Peta Jones

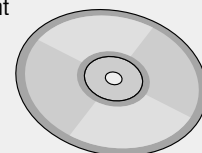
This is a very practical book providing extensive information about the care of donkeys and combining recent research with traditional knowledge. Donkey power is of great value to smallholders for transport and ploughing. Dr Jones is a great enthusiast with considerable experience in working with donkeys. The book is well written and illustrated, with chapters on the uses of donkeys, husbandry, life cycle, diseases, equipment and training. It has 168 pages and costs US \$7 (R25). Order from:

Donkey Power
PO Box 414
Louis Trichardt 920
South Africa
E-mail: jeanc@contech.co.za



Free CD-ROM library

Humanity Development Library have compiled a library of 800 books and 430 newsletters onto a CD-ROM disc. The subjects



covered include sustainable agriculture, forestry, literacy, environment, water, sanitation, health, nutrition and building. You can search for subjects or read the contents of individual books and newsletters. The library is easy to use and provides a huge amount of information.

You will need a computer using Windows 3.1 or higher, with a minimum requirement of 486 - 66MHz, 8MB RAM and 2 speed CD-ROM drive. If you have access to a computer but no CD-ROM drive, it would be worth obtaining one just for the use of this library!

We will send a FREE copy to any *Footsteps* reader able to use this library. If you are based in the First World, and can afford to pay, please send a cheque for £5 (US \$8) made out to *Tearfund*. French and Spanish versions will soon be available.

Please write to the *Footsteps* office, giving details of how you will use the library:

PO Box 200, Bridgnorth, WV16 4WQ, UK

Facing the Millennium Bug

by Alison Corfield and Peter Ewins



AS 31 DECEMBER 1999 APPROACHES it is becoming clear that there is a serious world-wide problem with the way dates are stored in computers and computer systems. All equipment that uses a 'chip processor' may go wrong on 1 January 2000.

What is the Millennium Bug?

In the 1960s the costs of producing computers and computer programmes were high and it was realised valuable space could be saved by using two numbers instead of four to represent the year – for example '63' instead of '1963'. However, they were not looking forward to the year 2000. This will appear as '00', causing many systems to interpret this as 1900 and either stop working or work incorrectly. This system of writing dates is stored in microchips (tiny electronic components) which are also used in many other kinds of equipment – such as telephone and power systems, lifts, videos, fire alarms and generators. In other words, all kinds of essential equipment which we may depend upon.

What will happen on 1 January 2000?

If computers or software stop working there are many possible consequences. Information stored in computers may either be unavailable or incorrect. Power

supplies and transport may be affected. Large organisations may be unable to pay their employees. Bank accounts may be affected.

What can we do about it?

There are four things you can do to try and avoid problems.

■ **Be aware of the problem.** Make sure others are too – particularly organisations that you work with or obtain supplies from and both local and national government. Make sure that everyone in your organisation is included in assessing the likely impact.

■ **Consider what equipment you are using.** List all the equipment you are using and consider what will be affected. New computers and software should be 'Year 2000 compliant' – in other words, these should not be affected – but this is not always the case, so do ask for guarantees.

■ **Consider your risk.** Find out all you can about how to make sure your own equipment can be corrected – from manufacturers, suppliers, recommended consultants or government officials. There are testing programmes available which may help you to make the necessary changes yourself. Otherwise, get help to change any computers, software, video and any other electrical equipment which may be affected.

■ **Take sensible precautions.** If you are responsible for ordering any kind of materials for your organisation, such as medicines, seed etc, make sure you have good stocks before 1 January 2000. Get a copy of bank statements on 31

December 1999. Have sensible supplies of money and food and, if possible, avoid travelling in case there are a few days of confusion. Make paper copies of important information and back up your data. If you depend on electricity supplies, for example, consider making alternative arrangements.

The sooner the better

Begin making preparations as soon as possible. The better prepared organisations and individuals are, the less likely there are to be serious problems. However, a recent World Bank survey found that only one in six Third World countries were taking practical action.

By taking action now, everyone will be able to enjoy the celebrations as the year 2000 begins.

Contacts on the Internet

<http://year2000.dci.com>

<http://support.intel.com/support/year2000>

www.year2000.com

www.ans2000.com

www.worldbank.org/y2k

www.ibm.com/year2000

www.microsoft.com/uk/year2000

And the UN provides contacts in each country...

www.un.org/members/yr2000/meeting/delegate.htm

Alison Corfield is head of Information Technology with VSO. Peter Ewins acts as a consultant for Tearfund for issues concerning the Millennium Bug.



Photo: Sally Lancaster, VSO

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