

# A Global Review

- 16 case studies of disasters and conflicts
- Lessons learned
- Practical recommendations

OLDER PERSONS IN EMERGENCIES:  
AN ACTIVE AGEING PERSPECTIVE



# All-Hazards Approach

- Drought (South Africa)
- Flood (Mozambique, Canada: Manitoba and Saguenay)
- Tsunami (Indonesia)
- Earthquakes (Kashmir, Turkey, Japan)
- Hurricanes (Cuba, Jamaica and USA)
- Icestorm (Canada)
- Firestorm (Canada)
- Heatwave (France)
- Industrial Accident (Chernobyl, Ukraine)
- War (Lebanon)

## Data sources

- Official health administrative data (morbidity and mortality)
- Field assessments – humanitarian organizations
- Research with older people, local authorities, service providers
- Reports from international agencies, national and humanitarian NGOs
- Scientific articles
- Popular press

# Older persons died disproportionately

- Indonesia tsunami
- Kobe, Japan earthquake
- France heat wave
- Hurricane Katrina
- Quebec ice storm



# Health and Social Impacts

- Greater dependency on health and social services with age
- Aggravation of pre-existing illness, disability and new health problems
- Loss of vital social and family networks
- Psychological impacts
- Resiliency



# Impact severity varied by income, gender, culture



# Contributions by Seniors

BC firestorm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Backbone of volunteer emergency response</b></li><li>• <b>Provided information, advice , technical skills in recovery stage</b></li></ul>
Chernobyl accident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Facilitated social and economic revitalization of previously evacuated area</b></li><li>• <b>Shared knowledge re. minimizing exposure</b></li></ul>
Cuba hurricanes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Full partners in preparation, response and recovery: education, clean-up, moral support</b></li></ul>
Kobe earthquake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Set up mutual aid and support projects in temporary housing; outreach/peer support</b></li></ul>
Manitoba flood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Volunteer support for cooking, fundraising, sandbagging, in shelters</b></li></ul>
Kashmir earthquake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Established temporary camp mosque</b></li><li>• <b>Organized schooling for children</b></li></ul>

# Recommendations

- Appropriate medications, equipment, assistive aids in emergency health supplies + facilitate access to them
- Continuity of care across settings
- Local registries
- Train emergency, health and social service workers to identify, assess and respond to older persons' needs
- Public education in accessible formats and various communication channels
- Identify and support socially isolated individuals



# Recommendations

- Emergency shelter in familiar locations and close to home community as possible
- Recruit, train and engage retired professionals and volunteers
- Consult older people to identify hazards and resources in communities
- Collect field data disaggregated by age to assess effectiveness of response
- Challenge negative assumptions about needs and capacities of older persons and cultural barriers to accepting assistance

# Recent Working Group Activities

- The Roles and Responsibilities of Health Practitioners
- Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS): Disaster Management
- Workshop for Dementia Care Providers: *"Frailty, Dementia and Disasters: What Health Care Providers Need to Know"*
- Age-Responsive Emergency Management Policy Lens
- Elder Abuse in Emergencies: Literature Review

# Practical Guidelines and Tips

Older people in disasters  
and humanitarian crises:

Guidelines for best practice



- Basic needs
- Mobility
- Health
- Family
- Social
- Economic
- Legal



**HelpAge**  
International  
Leading global action on ageing

[www.helpage.org](http://www.helpage.org)