Illuminating Displacement in the 'Twilight Years': Locating and Conceptualising Older Refugees in Advocacy Efforts in the United Kingdom

Group Research Paper

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by

Jenny Reid Austin, Justin Dubois, Sara Gonzalez, and Ratna Mathai-Luke

Refugee Studies Centre

Department of International Development

University of Oxford

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ACRONYMS and GLOSSARY

ACE	Age Concern England
ECRE	European Council on Refugees and Exiles
FMR	Forced Migration Review
GAA	Global Action on Aging
HAI	HelpAge International
HtA	Help the Aged
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
OIA	The Oxford Institute of Ageing
ORP	Older Refugees Programme
RCO	Refugee Community Organisation
REF	Race Equality Foundation
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

'**Older**' – This is the term used by all the organisations we interviewed (other terms, such as 'elderly' are understood to have negative connotations). We have chosen to leave 'older' undefined addressing the issue in our analysis. (See page 14 of our report.)

'**Refugees**' are defined in this paper as those who fall under the 1951 Convention for the Status Relating to Refugees. However, for the purpose of this paper, we shall not distinguish between refugees and asylum seekers although we acknowledge that remaining in the UK on a temporary basis may present separate difficulties that are beyond the scope of this research project.

'**Older refugees'** are, in this paper, defined as those who have fled their country of origin and are either in emergency or camp settings, or have resettled. Older refugees may have sought refuge in their old age, or may have aged in a host country.

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to the July 2002 issue of *Forced Migration Review*—the most widely read publication on forced migration in the world—the editors noted that their 'call for papers on older refugees and IDPs…produced hardly any response at all' whereas their call for papers on younger refugees and IDPs had 'produced a flood of offers of articles' (Couldrey and Morris 2002: 2). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has acknowledged that while there is much publicised focus on refugee women and children, there are very rarely any projects undertaken that are aimed exclusively toward older refugees. Our study aims to better understand this gap and highlight the main challenges in advocating for older refugees—a demographic that fails to illicit adequate interest.

Older refugees constitute approximately six percent of the total world population of concern to UNHCR (UNHCR 2006: Table 11). However, they may represent up to 30 percent in some situations, and of these, most are women (UN Department of Public Information 2002). In the United Kingdom, they are estimated to comprise three percent of asylum seekers and refugees (ACE 2007). Older refugees are an unseen demographic, bearing the burden of many stigmatised labels.

In the last decade the concerns over older persons have increasingly entered the international sphere.[i] The United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared 1999

to be the International Year of Older Persons. UNHCR[ii] endorsed this move by declaring its policy on older refugees, adopted in 2000. In 2002, the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) was adopted.[iii] The plan urged 'changes in attitudes, policies and practices at all levels in all sectors' in developing and developed countries (United Nations 2002: 7).

The International Year of Older Persons also led to developments in policy areas related to advocacy for older refugees, categorised as 'Building awareness' and 'Strengthening participatory service delivery' (UNHCR 2000: 231-232). Although advocacy efforts utilise diverse strategies and have varied purposes, they are all undertaken, to a certain extent, 'in order to secure enhanced rights and entitlements' (Henderson and Pochin 2001: 1). Advocacy, as understood in our paper, involves determining the needs of a particular group or cause and developing strategies for those needs to be met, and 'uses the tools of representation, negotiation and persuasion in order to bring about a beneficial change in the partner's life' (Henderson and Pochin 2001: 1).

This exploratory paper addresses advocacy efforts in the United Kingdom for older refugees. Through our conversations with advocates, we have tried to map out the conceptual and practical problems of advancing the interests of a group that are perceived to possess inherent limitations. Older refugees have only recently been highlighted as a group of interest and thus far studies about them have often gone no further than service provision. We have attempted to articulate the challenges that relate to advocacy for older refugees as an 'invisible' group.

METHODOLOGY

Our group began this research project through internet-based research of organisations in the United Kingdom and abroad that do advocacy, research and programming for refugees and older persons. We successfully contacted one of the two organisations engaged in a two-year research programme about older refugees in the United Kingdom—the 'Older Refugees Programme'—which was the only initiative we found directed specifically towards older refugees in the country. We also felt it would be helpful to speak to research institutions—as we were initially unfamiliar with our topic—as well as to older people's organisations in order to familiarise ourselves with their programme work and methods of advocacy. Thus, through the snowball effect, and by initiating contact with other organisations, we conducted interviews with seven organisations[iv]: two research institutions (The Oxford Institute on Ageing (OIA) and the Race Equality Foundation (REF)); four older persons' organisations (Age Concern England (ACE), Global Action on Aging (GAA), Help the Aged (HtA) and HelpAge International (HAI)); and one refugee-serving organisation (UNHCR). We also researched existing articles, policy statements, UN declarations and reports on older refugees and minority older people. This literature served as a foundational backdrop for our interviews.

Given the exploratory nature of our project, a significant lack of information available on older refugees, and the four group members' lack of familiarity with the subject, we chose the semi-structured interview as our method of inquiry. We felt this method allowed for more open-ended, non-direct questions that would

permit us to gather a broad range of descriptive information (McQueen and Knussen 2002: 36) needed for our study—from individuals actually engaged in advocacy efforts. Furthermore, it allocated a highly participatory and expressive role to the interviewee, creating a comfortable space conducive to a conversation (Kvale 1996: 125). Thus, we structured our questionnaire as a guide[v] rather than an interview schedule, listing areas to be covered while leaving the exact wording to the interviewer (Newell 1995: 97) in order to allow each interviewee to share their distinct knowledge.

All but one of our interviews were conducted by two interviewers. Notwithstanding the logistics of gathering the entire group for an interview, we felt that more than two interviewers might be overwhelming for the interviewee, and that two note-takers ensured more accurate transcripts. The two interviewers met beforehand to discuss the organisation's mandate and what questions were more relevant or appropriate to that particular interview. Where possible, we conducted face-to-face interviews, but due to financial constraints or distance, we conducted some interviews over the telephone.

We decided not to present a written consent form as we thought that the formality of it could create discomfort in the interview atmosphere, especially where the interview was conducted face-to-face. To foster a relaxed interview environment, we also decided not to audio-record the interviews. Although Whyte remarks that an 'interviewer who takes notes cannot give full attention to the informant' (1982: 118), we felt it was the best method by which we could record the information in an approachable setting. At the beginning of each

interview, we explained how our project originated, and the objectives of our research. We also explained that we would send our typewritten notes taken during the interview to the interviewees for comments, and that any matters relating to confidentiality could be raised at any time. During the interview, both interviewers took notes, which were later written up and compared, and a final version of the interview transcript was produced. It was then sent to the interviewee for comments, clarifications and edits, and to the rest of the group for discussion.[vi] At times, the notes used within the research group were accompanied by comments and impressions of the interview, as well as important issues that had emerged.

This semi-structured interview format was particularly important to our early interviews due to the limited amount of existing data and our own limited knowledge about older refugees in the United Kingdom. Our initial interviews allowed us to think about how challenges differ between advocating for older refugees in camp settings or emergency situations, and permanent resettlement, in the case of older refugees in the United Kingdom. Our interview questions evolved as we increasingly sought to engage the organisations in issues of representation and exclusion. This simultaneously had to do with our greater understanding of the challenges faced in advocating for older refugees, and with the sequence and nature of the organisations with whom we spoke. The sequence of the interviews shaped our inquiry greatly because we only interviewed one partner of the aforementioned 'Older Refugees Programme' in the second half of our interview period, after we had done considerable research and began formulating our findings. Thus, as Richards and Richards note, our

data collection and data analysis did not follow clear sequential stages, but rather, 'analysis commence[d] with the process of data acquisition, and continue[d] to the end of the project' (1994: 149) which meant that the later interviews allowed us to better frame our findings. The different nature of the organisations interviewed allowed us to approach our inquiry in a more holistic manner.

ETHICS

Although our group shares the concern of highlighting the plight and needs of older refugees, it should be made explicit that this project has been undertaken to both explore the subject and reflect on the research process as part of an academic requirement. Moreover, as Pottier points out, the 'outside researcher' is a 'socially determined being, an actor who, no matter how sympathetic to the cause…also has prejudices, aspirations and privileges to defend' (Pottier 1997: 206). This reflects 'the fact that research can 'be co-opted from 'above' as well as 'below'' (Kvale 1996: 118).

One bias of this project is that the choice of topic implies that our roles coincide with those of our respondents, as advocates for older refugees in a very broad sense. This is in itself a contested position for a researcher in which to find herself (see Armstrong and Bennett 2002; Hastrup and Elsass 1990; and Scheper-Hughes 1995). As Barnes (1967) noted, 'the group or institution being studied is now seen to be embedded in a network of social relations of which the observer is an integral if reluctant part' (cited in Pottier 1997: 206).

The shape of this inquiry raises ethical concerns. Firstly, its content is limited insofar as it creates a 'category of older refugees'. We have tried to mitigate this consequence by dedicating a part of our analysis to the quandary implicit in creating a new social construct. Still, speaking of 'older refugees' entails a process of 'othering'. Moreover, the greatest limitation of this research is the absence of older refugees' voices. The immediate reasons for not interviewing older

refugees follow from logistical constraints, such as language/interpretation, and finances. Physically locating older refugees and finding representatives who speak to common concerns is also problematic because we share the belief that 'there is no single, authentic, indigenous voice or reality that the researcher can discover and present to the world' (Wilson 1993, cited in Pottier 1997: 207). These considerations have significantly directed our exploration toward ways in which advocates themselves understand challenges to representing older refugees. Nevertheless, their voices are not entirely lost, as the organisations we spoke to work closely with older refugees and attempt to reflect their concerns.

In relation to methodology, Kvale notes that 'an interview inquiry is a moral enterprise' (1996: 109). The decision to use semi-structured interviews, as well as the choice to take notes brings with it advantages whose limits must be acknowledged. All interviews are faced with similar ethical issues, namely informed consent, confidentiality, and accurate representation. We attempted to address issues of consent by sending our interview transcripts to the participants for editing. In this paper, we kept sensitive statements anonymous at the request of some interviewees; in these cases, there is no citation provided. In relation to accurate representation, despite our best efforts to conduct and transcribe the interviews in good faith, we recognise that our backgrounds, culture, age and gender effectively filter the result (see Caplan 1988; Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996: 238).

Our study is exploratory in nature and does not have the same asymmetry of power that may be present during professional interviews (Kvale 1996: 20) or

interviews with ‘vulnerable groups’. In fact, we feel that the dynamic was reversed in our case because we were students interviewing specialists, which may have influenced responses.

We informed the participants that we would share the final paper with them, not only because we felt they would like to see the outcome of their time investment, but also because they have a stake in this under-researched topic.

ANALYSIS

As mentioned in our Methodology section, our exposure to an increasing amount of information on older refugees resulted in our analysis being an ongoing process, also reflected in the evolution of our questions. To better organise this analysis, each member of the group isolated recurring themes in interviews, background literature and policy papers. Using these themes, we created a table identifying the main challenges, principal strategies, how 'older' is portrayed, and why older refugees are invisible. We found that some interview sections could overlap categories. We compared what was in each category and subsequently, with the support of background literature, identified some common factors linking each of our themes. The common thread that brings together the different themes is that advocacy efforts for older refugees are characterised by numerous tensions. As the field of advocating for older refugees is relatively recent in the United Kingdom, the advocacy organisations we interviewed are in the process of strategising the advocacy process to best navigate these tensions.

Advocacy organisations have the challenge of working in an institutional environment that generally does not take into account the ways in which older refugees straddle two different categories. Our interviews with advocacy organisations indicate two fundamental ideas that make this environment problematic: older refugees have needs distinct from those of older people in general, and the needs of refugees who grow old in the host country are distinct from those who enter the country in their old age (ACE 2007; and OIA 2006). We

found that upon arrival in the United Kingdom, there are the immediate problems of registration, access, healthcare, housing, income, employability, language and cultural differences to be overcome by both older and younger refugees. However, older refugees have geriatric concerns that they share with older people in the host population. As with many older people, particularly those in the minority and ethnic communities in the United Kingdom, older refugees are often not aware of their rights and entitlements (ACE 2007).

When determining policy and services for older refugees, agencies tend to emphasise needs to which older refugees themselves attribute less importance (UNHCR 2000: 232). This is the case because:

> it is easier to turn to professionals working with older people to get the information needed….This applies even more to older migrants and refugees as questioning their individual needs and preferences takes time, requires interpreters and thus makes a representative study rather costly. (ECRE and Asylkoordination Österreich 2002: 12)

Our interviews reveal that this omission of the older refugees' voice has negative consequences by creating situations in which older people's needs are 'contained rather than met' (REF 2007). This containment is based on two assumptions. First is the supposition that family and community networks are providing for their needs. The second assumption is that older refugees' specific needs can be met within the existing institutional framework, namely through service provision for older persons on the one hand, and for refugees on the other.

The advocates with whom we spoke are working against this background scenario in which older refugees entering the country are dealt with separately as older people, and as refugees. As older people, their assumed needs are

perceived in relation to their age and are therefore simply contained because they do not address their unique needs as older refugees. Therein lies the tension: they have problems common to older people and refugees, as well as those distinct from both of these groups. The organisations we have spoken to are attempting to remedy this institutional failure by pointing to their particular needs.

A major obstacle that emerged for the organisations we interviewed was the significant paucity of data and research on older refugees, which weakens advocacy and perpetuates the invisibility of this demographic. Three main reasons were highlighted to explain difficulties in pursuing advocacy efforts for an invisible group: older refugees being a small demographic; lack of data; and assumptions about older refugees' conditions.

Perhaps the greatest challenge is invisibility due to the small size of the population. Drawing upon the example of black and minority ethnic people, the Race Equality Foundation shared with us that 'the starting point is the numbers. Once the numbers started to grow, the agencies have started to focus on the groups and provide services' (REF 2007). Numbers of older refugees will grow in the long-term, as 'most refugees will age in exile' (ECRE and Asylkoordination Österreich 2002:10).

In addition, large organisations do not always disaggregate data according to gender and age; older refugees tend to be placed in the 'vulnerable' category along with refugee women, children and youth. Consequently, basic

information regarding their location and circumstances is lacking. HelpAge International stated: 'Older people tend to be invisible….Because they tend not to be counted' (HAI 2006). And, as two organisations revealed, they must often rely on anecdotal evidence because they do not have the resources or capacity to gather hard evidence, and 'we have to work with estimates, and for this reason, everything we do is kind of soft'. Advocacy must be based on sound evidence and reliable data because facts and figures are in essence the 'bottom line' that compels decision-makers to act.

A research paper for UNHCR argues that gaining statistical information is very difficult because data is primarily gathered from host governments' statistics whose capacities and interests may affect the transparency of data (Crisp 1999: 12-15). UNHCR, at the country level itself, does not have a standard data gathering method across countries (Crisp 1999: 15). Our interview with UNHCR however, revealed that there has been a shift in prioritising older refugees. One example is that in 2007, UNHCR plans to seek earmarked funding for older refugees in a meeting with the Standing Committee (UNHCR 2007). The second example is the improvement upon their statistical function in which now 'there is specific data on the whole refugee community, but this data is not used' (UNHCR 2007). It was suggested that the reasons for not utilising this disaggregated data were due to older refugees not being at the forefront of people's minds.

Closely related to the lack of data are institutional assumptions that refugees 'age in place' (UNHCR 2000: 234), and if their presence *is* recognised, that family or

community networks will provide for their needs. Interestingly, this assumption is the case in both the emergency context and in the United Kingdom.

HelpAge International's 2000 report highlights that while agencies aim to target the most vulnerable populations, they often do not consider older refugees among the most vulnerable. Importantly, this implies that '[a]gencies' priorities, assumptions and delivery systems can limit or impede older people's access to humanitarian assistance' (HelpAge International 2000: 2). Wells argues that while the majority of international NGOs 'were keen to emphasise that older people are not excluded from their programmes, they also acknowledged that they are not directly targeted' (Wells 2005: 8). In the United Kingdom, Age Concern England indicates, older refugees 'don't even tend to organise themselves in their own ethnic communities, because they have a relatively limited network of contacts' and 'they are reluctant to mix with people outside their community, but also with other age groups' (ACE 2007). Even when humanitarian organisations are prepared to help all segments of affected populations, there is a 'lack of refugee consultative and self-help structures' whereby 'older refugees in need may be completely over-looked and uncared for. Only the voices of the most vocal and active refugees are heard' (UNHCR 1998: 5).

A further challenge to data collection and advocacy efforts is that there is no consensus between organisations and agencies on the definition of what constitutes 'older'. UNHCR and UN bodies use age 60 and over, but other organisations may define older as age 50 or when physical manifestations of age

begin to appear, such as frailty or even having grey hair. Various organisations define older differently for service delivery or legal entitlements. Some organisations find articulating an age definition problematic, indicating that firstly, age is not necessarily a number but a process; and secondly, a rigid age definition could exclude those who would otherwise fall into the category of 'older'.

For refugees in particular, research indicates that ageing must be contextualised. The Refugee Council indicates that there is a 'likelihood that refugees may become physically and/or mentally frail at an earlier chronological age due to experiences in their country of origin, en route to the UK or after arrival' (Connelly et al 2006: 4). Similarly, UNHCR recognises for resettlement purposes that a flexible age limit is sensible (ECRE and Asylkoordination Österreich 2002: 7).

The lack of consensus among organisations on what constitutes older age could contribute to the fundamental challenges of advocacy for this demographic. At the same time, not taking into account the various factors that go into how age is defined could very well impair grounded advocacy efforts. This is a tension that can compromise the shared agenda among advocacy organisations for proper data collection and an evidence-based strategy. Advocacy organisations not only have to surmount the challenge of engaging in effectual campaigns for better provisions for older refugees without the proper data to support their appeals, they must also push for a more comprehensive and disaggregated data collection.

There is an inherent paradox in the advocacy efforts in that they can be characterised 'by sometimes contradictory or conflicting principles, such as protection and empowerment or control and autonomy' (Cambridge and Williams 2004: 97). All of our interviewees acknowledged that it was a challenge to work within the parameters of this paradox. UNHCR stated that there are gaps between how older refugees may be represented and the actual reality of their circumstances (UNHCR 2007). Help the Aged said that there is a difficulty in finding a balance between 'the emotive element [to get people interested in the issue] and wanting people to be [portrayed as] dignified' (HtA 2007). The policy division of one organisation interviewed expressed discomfort about the nature of the images used by their communications and development departments, illustrating the prevalence of the paradox.

While a paradox between vulnerability and empowerment is acknowledged, some of the organisations proposed ways of reframing the issue. Examples include concentrating on an individual's story—as opposed to representing an entire group—and demonstrating how assistance could enhance that individual's life (HtA 2007); focusing on the strengths of individuals (UNHCR 2007); or portraying older refugees as a result of their circumstances rather than simply being older (HAI 2007). However, those who favour alternative approaches to representing older refugees as exceedingly vulnerable do not deny that this group has considerable needs. Nor do these alternative methods contradict the status quo of appealing to the emotive element of the advocacy's target group—whether policy makers, donors or the general public—in order to

raise awareness or funds. Rather, the suggestions point to a need to alter the image of vulnerability by moving away from portraying older refugees as weak, needy and unproductive.

It is important to note that older refugees are faced with a double label. On the one hand, there are the stigmas attached to the 'refugee' label—which 'both stereotypes and institutionalises a status' and 'establishes, through legal and policy making, highly politicised interpretations' (Zetter 1988: 1). On the other hand, the 'older' label has a negative connotation: 'Older people are seen as a burden, somewhat useless members of society. The issue is not 'sexy' enough' (GAA 2006). HelpAge International further explains: 'There is a breakdown of the extended family and less emphasis is on the value of an intergenerational household' (HAI 2006; see also Cuddy, Norton and Fiske 2005). One organisation highlighted that while children and youth could also be seen as dependent and unproductive, there is a societal investment in their future. Advocacy organisations for older persons and older refugees seem to be faced with society's value judgement—the verdict places older persons near the bottom. David sums this up well: 'We have been wrongly taught that old age is a condition of loss, a time to quit….old age is not a defeat, but a victory; not a punishment, but a privilege' (2001: 130).

General policy guidelines such as MIPAA recommend recognising older people as actors and decision makers by deliberately including them in outreach programmes. A HelpAge International report stresses that 'if invisibility, exclusion and powerlessness are common themes emerging from the experience

of older people, then consultation, inclusion and empowerment through partnership have emerged as the primary indicators of best practice' (2000: 2). In the United Kingdom, organisations acknowledge that this demographic is of growing political and social significance but also point out that within the older population there are those whose voices remain unheard: 'Older people are a very powerful lobby. But it is difficult to hear the voices of people that are outside the national pensioners' forum and that are not affiliated with the organisations through which Help the Aged works' (HtA 2007).

In an effort to reflect and meet the needs of older refugees, some organisations in the United Kingdom speak of an integrated approach, which is perhaps best understood through what the Oxford Institute for Ageing describes as a 'food chain' or 'ripple effect': 'if the older persons in the host population are given more attention and their needs and capabilities become an issue, subgroups such as older refugees can piggyback and also be more visible in the political arena' (OIA 2006). It is becoming evident for organisations that older refugees must be integrated into their advocacy activities, especially because most refugees will age in the country where they find protection (ECRE and Asylkoordination Österreich 2002: 10).

A case in point is the 'Older Refugees Programme' (ORP), a two-year partnership initiative between Age Concern England and the Refugee Council,[vii] which deliberates exclusively on the needs and challenges of older refugees as a distinct group. The ORP 'is meant to create a body of knowledge that reflects older refugees' needs as articulated by themselves. A good practice model will be

based on this phase and will be applied to influence in policy' (ACE 2007). The ORP depends on partnerships with smaller organisations and refugee community organisations (RCOs) that will, in the long term, continue the work of the initiative.

The ORP is a partnership that brings together the expertise of two large British organisations with mandates that serve refugees on the one hand, and older persons on the other. It also builds upon the expertise of several smaller organisations and RCOs who utilise a grassroots approach in working with refugees. This joint venture enables a means by which to address the lack of data to navigate better service provision and greater visibility through advocacy.

An integrated approach nevertheless presents its own difficulties. We found that organisations are ambivalent about creating a new 'older refugee' category, as the ORP arguably does. The 'older refugee' label seems to suggest that when one speaks of this group, one speaks of a particular set of challenges—but these challenges do not actually translate in different settings, in reality. For example, in emergency contexts, agencies emphasise: 'Older people are more likely to be aid givers than receivers' (HelpAge International 2000: 12), which is not necessarily the case once settled in a stable environment. There is a conflict between emphasising specific needs and gathering data on older refugees, and conceptualising the group as distinct from other refugees and older persons. One organisation conceded that 'there is a conflict within and between organisations: some have the opinion that there shouldn't be a separate policy statement on older refugees; others say it's a key issue…it's a bit awkward'. This challenge is

also mirrored in UNHCR's approach to older refugees: 'While the elderly clearly have special problems, there is little to be gained from establishing yet another separate refugee category with a distinct set of guidelines and interventions' (UNHCR 1998: 114).

In order to integrate older refugees and to 'mainstream' them in their mandates, organisations first have to identify their specific needs. It is a difficulty that advocacy groups are aware keenly of:

> It is important not to disaggregate older refugees as a group. If you do, you fall into the trap of getting a lump category while you are missing something which is specific of the larger group—a cross-generational issue. A challenge for advocating for older refugees is not to create a new social construct, which in the end is not helpful at all for what you are trying to achieve. (HtA 2007)

In some respects, the duality of highlighting this group, while also including it holistically with older people and refugees, is a contentious, albeit necessary, process.

CONCLUSION

Advocacy efforts for older refugees in the United Kingdom are characterised by tensions. These tensions must be in part understood as products of the institutional framework in which advocacy organisations operate. They are both dependent on, and part of, established institutions, which may be slow to adapt to meet new challenges. Notwithstanding these limitations stemming from the institutional environment, organisations advocating for older refugees in the United Kingdom are faced with challenges that are particular to this demographic group.

Older refugees have specific needs that cannot be met by efforts explicitly directed towards either older persons on the one hand, or refugees on the other. The lack of available data not only perpetuates their invisibility, but also induces advocacy organisations to make assumptions concerning older refugees' needs. As a result, they are obliged to devote a share of their own advocacy efforts towards promoting data collection.

The findings of an exploratory study like ours have limitations in both scope and depth. In particular, the time and resources at our disposal, as well as limited access to organisations, have to be taken into account. As our research methods and the nature of the study have shaped our results, we caution against extending our conclusions to a wider context. Rather, our analysis may be a good point of reference for an in-depth study of advocacy for older refugees.

An observation for future research is the possibility of highlighting and contrasting the organisations' different approaches to advocacy. Furthermore,

this inquiry would be better informed by interviews with a wider range of actors, such as donors, policy makers and the general public, which would allow for a better understanding of the constraints of the institutional framework in which they operate. As previously mentioned, the principal limitation of our study is the manifest absence of older refugees themselves. It is our belief that further study on advocacy efforts for older refugees should seek to directly involve them as principal agents. It would then be possible to measure whether advocacy efforts are having a significant impact on older refugees' needs.

The focus on older refugees as a distinct category is relatively recent. The advocacy organisations we interviewed recognise the need to better understand the challenges discussed in this paper and develop appropriate strategies. This implies navigating the existing frameworks in order to best provide for this 'invisible' group. In so doing they are faced with the emergence of a new category. By illuminating 'older refugees', they must negotiate to what extent they institutionalise the label. This is particularly relevant to our project, as by focusing our research on older refugees, we ourselves face the prospect of contributing to this institutionalisation.

[i] The issues of ageing and older persons first came to global attention in 1982 at the World Assembly on Ageing in Vienna.
[ii] In 1999, then UNHCR High Commissioner Sadako Ogata stated, "Older refugees have been invisible for too long", which, cited by various organisations serving older refugees, was a call to action. (See UNHCR 2000)
[iii] More than 150 States have signed on to MIPAA thus far, per our interview with HelpAge International (HAI 2006).
[iv] See Appendix B
[v] See Appendix A
[vi] We indicated to our interviewees that comments returned to us would be used, and if we received no feedback, we understood implicitly that they had no comments or edits to add to their interviews.
[vii] ORP also involves Age Concern London and the Association of Greater London Older Women, and is funded by the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales.

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INTERVIEWS

AGE CONCERN ENGLAND (2007) Interview took place in London on 20 January 2007. A second interview took place on 2 March 2007 in Oxford.

GLOBAL ACTING ON AGING (2006) Interview took place over the telephone with GAA in New York on 19 December 2006.

HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL (2006) Interview took place in London on 20 November 2006.

HELP THE AGED (2007) Interview took place at Help the Aged in London on 30 January 2007.

THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNCHR) (2007) Interview took place over the telephone with UNHCR in Geneva on 12 February 2007.

THE OXFORD INSTITUTE OF AGEING UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD (2006) Interview took place in Oxford on 5 December 2006.

RACE EQUALITY FOUNDATION (2007) Interview took place over the telephone with REF in London on 23 February 2007.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWS

What is the proper term that we should be using for 'older people'? What age constitutes 'older'?

What are the particular difficulties in advocating for/with older refugees/older persons? (For refugee-serving organisations: Are those difficulties similar for refugees in general?)

How much of older people's advocacy comes from older refugees/older people themselves?

What are the challenges in doing research about and/or with older refugees and/or older persons?

How are older refugees/older persons portrayed?

Are older refugees/older people perceived differently now than they were in the last decade? Is there a change in approach to older refugees/older persons – e.g., in policy, as well as in the public perception?

Do you have any thoughts on how 'elders' have been revered in other cultures? What do you think accounts for the invisibility and lack of interest here in the United Kingdom?

Has there been an evolution in what is being advocated for older refugees/older persons? Was there a catalyst that sparked interest or action on the issue of older refugees/older persons?

Has there been a shift in emphasis of how to bring older people to the agenda?

Where does your organisation get its data upon which to base its advocacy?

Why are older refugees/older persons invisible? Why are they more difficult to seek funding for?

What are the formal networks that older refugees can access? What are the main issues for older migrants?

Is it difficult to engage NGOs in work for older refugees or older people?

Has there been a shift in emphasis of how to bring older refugees/older people to the agenda?

What are the challenges for engaging/supporting older people in self-advocacy? How does an organisation work to engage refugees?

How can we measure effectiveness or success of advocacy for older refugees/older persons? Do you think it's possible?

APPENDIX B: ORGANISATIONS INTERVIEWED

Age Concern England
Astral House
1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER
United Kingdom
www.ageconcern.org.uk

The Mission of Age Concern England mission is to promote the well-being of all older people and to help make later life a fulfilling and enjoyable experience. Our underlying principles are: Ageism is unacceptable: we are against all forms of unfair discrimination, and challenge unfair treatment on grounds of age; All people have the right to make decisions about their lives: we help older people to discover and exercise these rights; People less able to help themselves should be offered support: we seek to support older people to live their lives with dignity; and Diversity is valued in all that we do: we recognise the diversity of older people and their different needs, choices, cultures and values. Age Concern England's Corporate priorities for 2007 – 2010 include: Preventing poverty and maximising income in retirement; Promoting age equality and enabling older people to make full contributions to our economy, society and neighbourhoods; Maximising healthy life expectancy and promoting health, independence and wellbeing for all older people; Achieving greater social inclusion of the most disadvantaged older people and challenging the causes of exclusion; Achieving a step change in effectiveness and efficiency, in which a crucial element will be a greater focus on older people as customers and contributors to all that we do.

Our interview with Age Concern England took place at ACE in London on 20 January 2007. A second interview with an ACE staff member occurred in Oxford on 2 March 2007.

Global Acting on Aging
777 United Nations Plaza, Suite 6J
New York, NY 11017
United States
www.globalaging.org

Global Action on Aging (GAA), based in New York at the United Nations, reports on older people's needs and potential within the global economy. It advocates by, with and for older persons worldwide. GAA carries out research on critical emerging topics and publishes the results on its website, one of the largest in the aging field. GAA staff and interns research aging policy and programmes, both in the US and worldwide: income support, health access, and human rights. GAA posts materials in all six UN official languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, and Spanish. It monitors United Nations activity on aging through the "Aging Watch at the UN" web-section and documents the situation of older persons caught in armed conflict. Global Action on Aging, a non-profit organisation with special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, was founded in 1994.

Our interview with Global Action on Aging took place over the telephone on 19 December 2006.

HelpAge International
1st floor, York House
207-221 Pentonville Road
London N1 9UZ
United Kingdom
www.helpage.org

HelpAge International is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with, and for, disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a lasting improvement in the quality of their lives. HelpAge International does this by supporting practical programmes, giving a voice to older people, and influencing policy at local, national and international levels. HAI's mission for 2003-2007 is to put the issue of ageing at the centre of development policy and practice. HAI's focuses on four main areas: social protection and livelihoods, HIV/AIDS, rights, and emergencies. The HelpAge International network was established in 1983 by five agencies in Canada, Colombia, India, Kenya and the UK. The network now consists of more than 70 affiliate organisations in 50 countries, and a secretariat. Most of HAI's activities are carried out in partnership with community-based organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). HelpAge International also works closely with academic institutions, local and national governments, and international agencies. Together, these link with hundreds more organisations across the globe, working to improve the lives of older people.

Our interview with HelpAge International took place in London at HAI on 20 November 2006.

Help the Aged
207-221 Pentonville Road
London N1 9UZ
United Kingdom
www.helptheaged.org.uk

Help the Aged is an international charity fighting to free disadvantaged older people from poverty, isolation and neglect. Help the Aged campaigns for change in government policy, undertakes research into the needs of older people and provides local services in communities across the UK and overseas. Help the Aged's mission is to work for disadvantaged older people in the UK and around the world. HtA researches their needs, campaigns for their social and political rights, and provides services which alleviate hardship today and prevent deprivation tomorrow. Help the Aged has national offices in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland whose role is to manage its campaigns and services within the context of their own national or regional environment.

Our interview with Help the Aged took place in London at HtA on 30 January 2007.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR)
Case Postale 2500
CH-1211
Genève 2 Dépôt
Switzerland
www.unhcr.ch

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established on December 14, 1950 by the United Nations General Assembly. The agency is mandated to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of refugees. It strives to ensure that everyone can exercise the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another State, with the option to return home voluntarily, integrate locally or to resettle in a third country.

Our interview with UNHCR took place over the telephone on 12 February 2007.

The Oxford Institute of Ageing
University of Oxford
Manor Road Building
Manor Road
Oxford OX1 3UQ
United Kingdom
www.ageing.ox.ac.uk

The Oxford Institute of Ageing addresses ageing at a global, societal and individual level. Research is currently undertaken in Europe, Asia, Africa and Central and South America. Research themes include Work (Economic Security, Work and Retirement), Family (Families, Communities and Intergenerational Relationships), Health (Longevity, Health and Biodemography), and Education (Technology, Education and Life Long Learning).

Our interview with the Oxford Institute of Ageing took place in Oxford at OIA on 5 December 2006.

Race Equality Foundation
Unit 35 Kings Exchange
Tileyard Rd
London N7 9AH
United Kingdom
www.reu.org.uk

The Race Equality Foundation promotes race equality in social support (what families and friends do for each other) and social care (what 'workers' do for people who need support). The Foundation does this by exploring what is

known about discrimination and disadvantage. The Foundation develops interventions that will overcome barriers and promote equality. The Race Equality Foundation disseminates good practice through training, conferences and written material.

Our interview with the Race Equality Foundation took place over the telephone on 23 February 2007.