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Women Deliver

From the 16-19 May 2016 the fourth Women Deliver conference was held in the Bella Centre Copenhagen. A first for HelpAge the conference was attended by FerdousAra Begum, with the support of the Fred Hollows Foundation.

Women Deliver conferences are world-renowned meetings focused on the health, rights, and wellbeing of girls and women. It is a high profile event attended by more than 5000 experts including politicians, ministers, academics, Heads of UN bodies and women and girls from all over the world. 200 scholarships are awarded to persons under 30 years of age, and 30 are available for those over 30.

The year 2016 was the occasion to highlight women's contributions from the perspective of the SDGs and its implementation strategy. In fact The Women Deliver 2016 Conference was one of the first major global conferences following the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This was highlighted by Gro Harlem Bruntland, former Prime Minister of Norway and former Director General of WHO in the opening ceremony, attended by Ferdous.

*Having no mention of the strength and role of older women as Change Makers in the nation building process, this was highlighted by the partnering of The Fred Hollows Foundation, the Burnet Institute and Helpage International in their delivery of a side event called '**Older Women Deliver too, a life course approach to women and children's health**'. In fact this side event was the only event in the four day programme of the conference at Copenhagen dedicated to the issues and rights of older women. Ferdous was one of the four panellists.*

The objectives of the event were to:

- Highlight the specific contributions of older women to advancing women's and children's health,
- Present case studies highlighting barriers that impede access to health and social care by older women, and explore the impact this has on families and the health of younger women and children,
- Share innovative ways for overcoming inequities and discrimination for older women.
- Explore ways in which a life course approach to women's and children's health, which includes older women, can be adopted in the implementation of the SDGs,
- Promote the formation of a new global partnership which works to ensure the rights and health of older women are included in a life course perspective to advancing women's and children's health.

Moderated by LyricThompson of the ICRW (International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), the opening address was given by Dr.Manfred Huber Coordinator , Healthy Ageing, Disability and Long term care of WHO, Regional office of Europe. The first speaker was Dr. Wendy Homes, Technical Director, The better Vision, Healthy Ageing Programme, Sri Lanka. She highlighted the discrimination aspects that older women face as they age, their health and human rights issues, and the importance and vitality of elders clubs. Ms Christina Gruenewald,

technical Adviser for Nutrition and Health, World Vision Germany was the 2nd speaker, and spoke about the research and practice being developed in Sierra Leone, focussing on how grand mothers are working to promote the optimal nutrition and care of pregnant and lactating mothers and their newborns. Christina was followed by Prof. Dr CikuMathenge, Medical Advisor Africa, the Fred Hollows Foundation, and Consultant Ophthalmologist, Rwanda. She spoke movingly on the intersect between disability and age, how older women in Africa are affected by vision impairment and how low cost cataract operation can bring back life to the older female in Africa of benefit to herself, the family and the wider community.

Ferdous was the last speaker. As most of the issues related to older women's rights and their contribution were raised by the previous speakers Ferdous stressed the way forward, how we can make our governments accountable to protect the human rights of older women under the time bound State obligations which are in built in different International human rights Norms, such as SDGs, CEDAW Convention, GR 27 of CEDAW etc. Ferdous spoke about Esther Wamera of Kenya, a true example of an older women as a change maker and older leader. She spoke of the need for timely action to implement the life course approach in national planning and programmes, where our emotion, heart and commitment will be, and the need for a proper strategy to achieve the sustainable development goals towards an inclusive society where ageing women could have a dignified life.