

By the year 2050, the population of elderly people aged 60 years and older is expected to rise from 962 million in 2017 to 2 billion (United Nations,2019).Currently, 8.5% of the total global population (617 million) are aged 65 and over (World Health Organization (WHO), 2019). Of this population, two thirds of older people live in low to middle income countries which are prone to disasters (Strong et al., 2015).Older people are susceptible when disaster strikes. For example, when Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, more than half of those who died were over 60 (Harvey, 2013). In Sub Saharan Africa, the population of elderly people is projected to rise from 43 million in 2010 to 67 million by 2025 and 163 million by 2050(WHO,2019).

Research studies conducted in Sub Saharan Africa shows that elderly people form a significant population of those disproportionately affected by conflicts and emergency situations (Ramin&McMichael,2009;Velkoff&Kowal,2009; Charlton &Rose, 2001). In Zimbabwe, several studies concur that the elderly are at an increased risk in the face of emergency and conflict crises (Hutton, 2008; Hampson, 1985; Wilson, Adamchak, Nyanguru& Hampson,1991).

It is against this backdrop that this qualitative study examines the experiences of elderly people in emergency situations in Zimbabwe, with specific reference to the recent Cyclone Idai which ravaged Chimanimani District,Zimbabwe from 15th to 18th March 2019.The paper employs the Do No Harm theoretical framework proposed by Mary Anderson in the 1990's to analyze how humanitarian organizations are addressing the needs of elderly people in Zimbabwe. Through indepth interviews conducted with elderly Cyclone Idai victims between the ages of 60 to 85 years, the paper argues that despite their need for assistance, older people remain invisible to humanitarian aid providers.

As will be shown by the Chimanimani case study, data on the number of older people affected is rarely collected, hence, creating a scarcity of literature and a gap of knowledge that needs to be filled. Older people are rarely consulted in the planning and design of mitigation responses and their skills and knowledge are often ignored. Therefore, the scarcity of data on the elderly people in Zimbabwe, ultimately contributes to the lack of knowledge and skills needed to identify and address older people's needs. All these factors contribute to the neglect of older people.

Therefore, this paper presents an analysis of the experiences of older people in emergency contexts .By so doing, the paper hopes to inform policy and humanitarian efforts focused on strengthening older persons support in humanitarian action (SOSHA).

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