

“Who are you to teach us?” Elder Abuse in Kyrgyzstan

Photographs by Malik Alymkulov
HelpAge International

The photos were exhibited on June 15, 2012 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to mark UN World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.



“Сага эмне керек? Биз сени багып атабыз”
“What else do you need? You eat and drink at our expense”



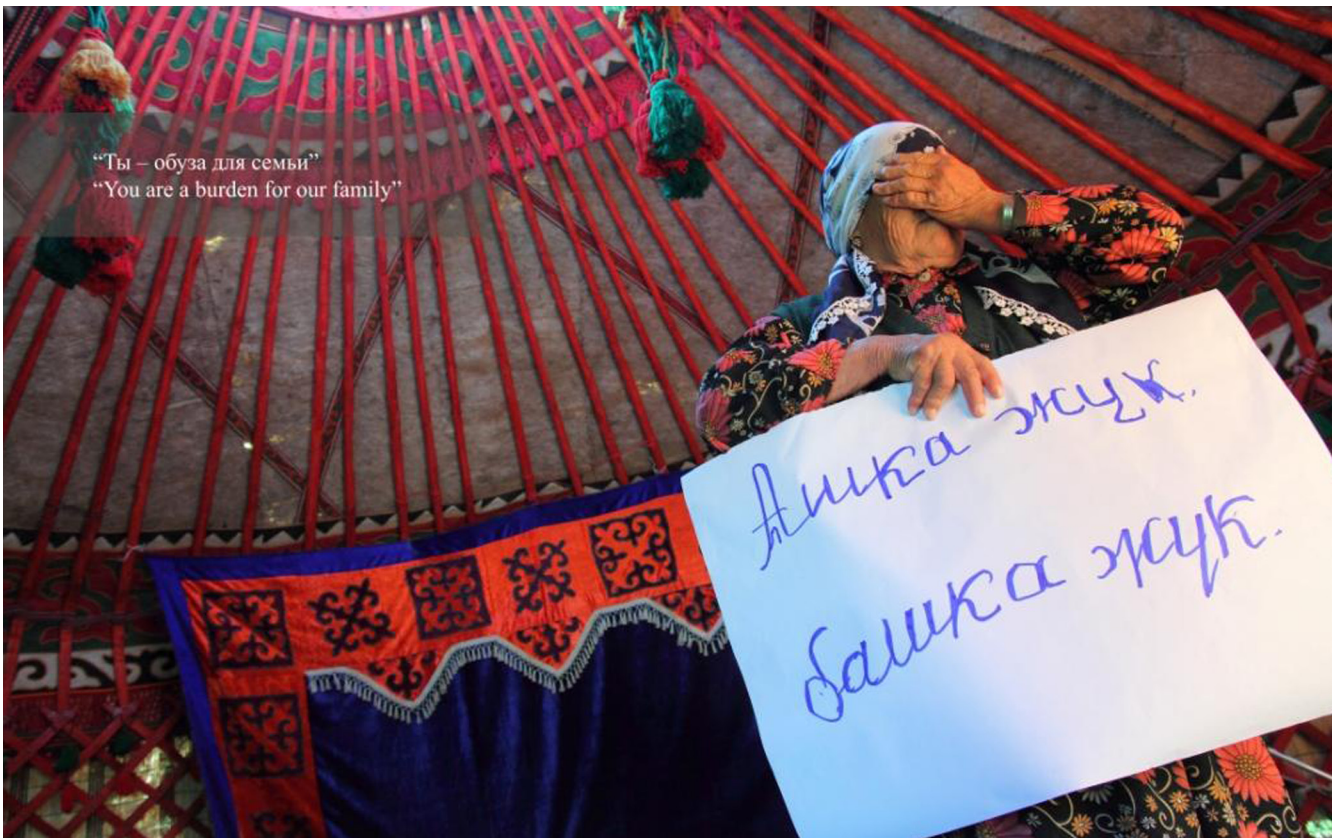
“Что тебе еще
можно
стара я
кара?”

“Сага эмне керек, алжыган кемпир?”
“What do you want, you old crow?”

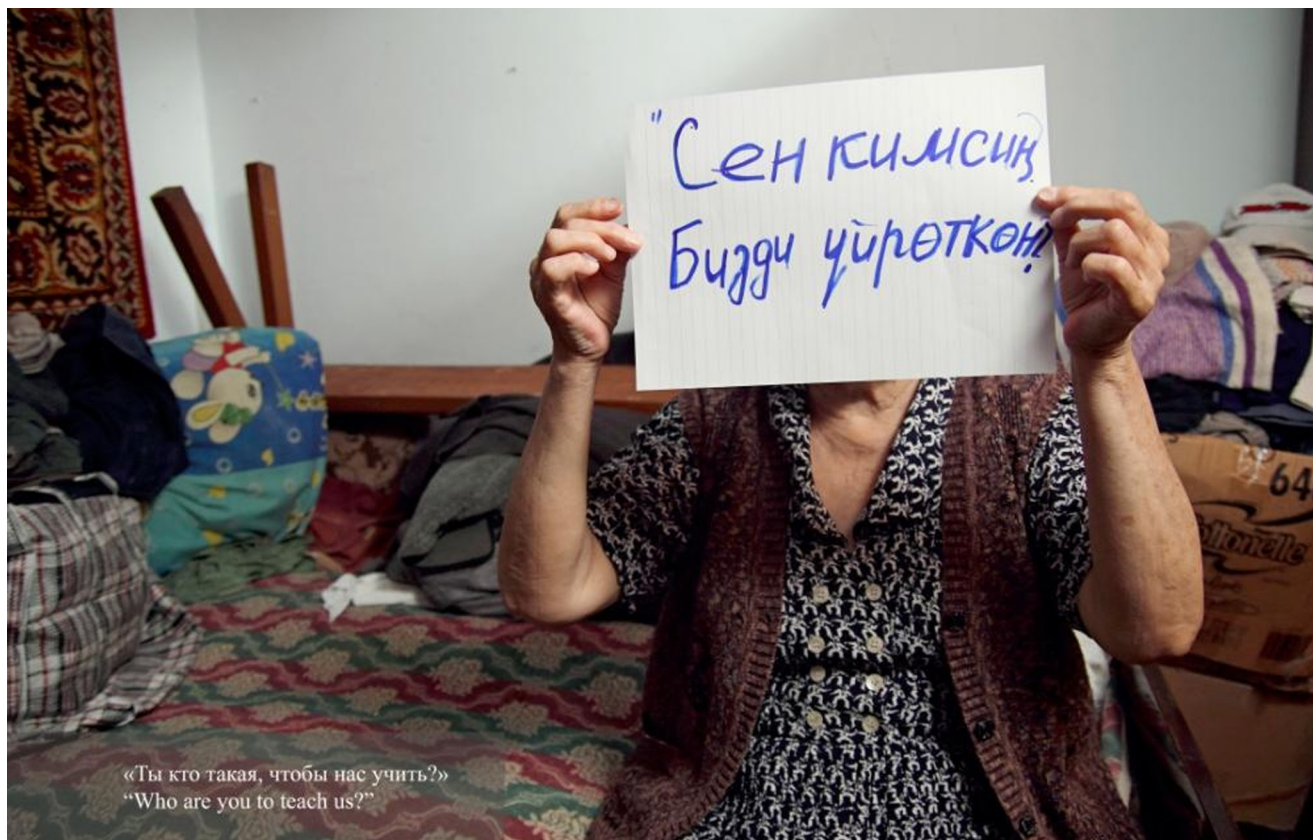


Дай денег,
А, то за себя
не ругаюсь!

“Акчандан бер. Болбосо өзүмө жооп бербейм!”
“Give me money otherwise I can't guarantee what I'll do!”







About the Photos

Eppu Mikkonen-Jeanneret, Social Anthropologist and Regional Director in Central Asia for HelpAge International

There has been a rapid societal change in Kyrgyzstan during the post-Soviet era. Up to 20% of the population has migrated overseas for work as unemployment and the weak economic situation remain serious problems. The latest World Food Programme report is estimating that up to 25% of the population in the country is food insecure due to high food price increases and high levels of poverty - this is a shocking figure that unfortunately compares to many more 'classical' development countries. In short, there is a lot of tension and a lot of families struggle to survive.

What we aimed to do was to document the impact of these tensions on older people. The project interviewed a number of older women and men who told stories of every-day abuse that they encounter at home. The focus is mostly material; they are told they are a financial burden, that they are useless, that they don't contribute. As you see, the context of the abuse is a home, in most cases a lovely well cared for home. This 'normalcy' is what most viewers find so difficult about these pictures - myself included.

Most of the people in the photos are the actual persons presenting the words they hear from their families. In some cases people were not prepared to give their face as well as their words to the project, and in these cases their friends stepped in. So in cases the photo is of a person who does not personally experience abuse but who wants to give his/her face to the cause of a friend. There was an astonishing sense of solidarity among the group working on this piece.

The full set of photos and other galleries from HelpAge International are viewable online.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/agehelps/>

For more information about HelpAge International visit <http://www.helpage.org>