

Access to health systems for older persons in conflict areas



19 JUNE
2025



9:30 EDT
15:30 CEST



ROUNDTABLE SERIES

MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING

*Bridging paths towards strengthening
protection and participation*

With the support of:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Armed conflict continues to have a profound impact on populations worldwide, with older persons among those most acutely affected yet frequently overlooked. In many conflict settings, this group face heightened risks due to physical frailty, mobility limitations, and chronic health conditions. Some remain in areas of active conflict due to inability or unwillingness to flee, while others become displaced, often without access to family or community support. Despite their specific vulnerabilities, the health and protection needs of older persons are insufficiently addressed in humanitarian responses, and they are frequently underrepresented in emergency planning and resource allocation.

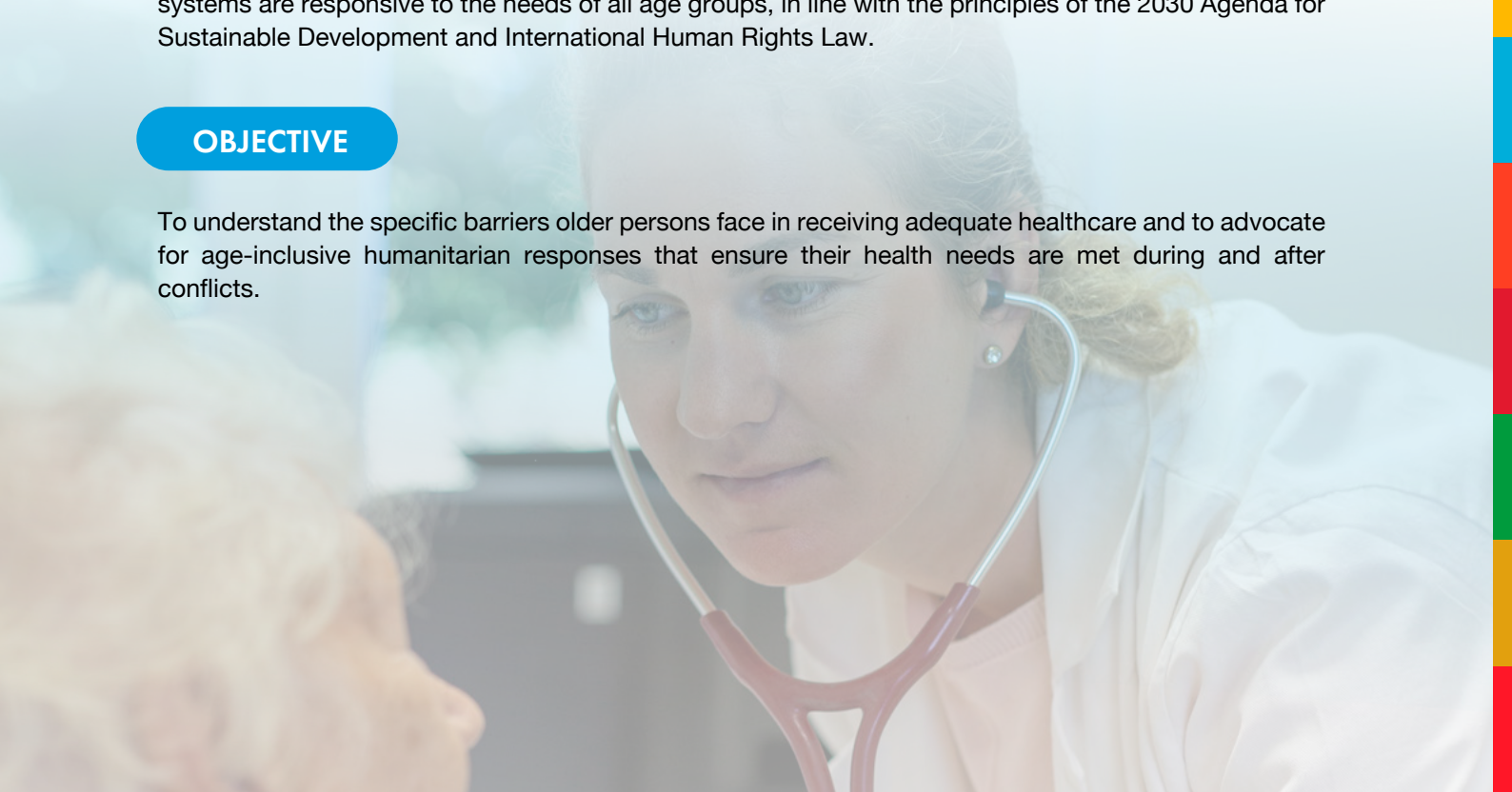
The erosion of health infrastructure in conflict-affected regions significantly impairs the delivery of essential health services. Facilities that remain functional are often stretched beyond capacity and unable to meet the specialized needs of older persons, who may require ongoing treatment for non-communicable diseases, access to mobility and assistive devices, and age-sensitive care. Humanitarian health interventions commonly prioritize acute and reproductive health services, inadvertently excluding the aging population from equitable access to care. Barriers such as insecurity, physical inaccessibility, and social stigma further impede their ability to obtain needed services.

In addition to physical health concerns, older persons in conflict zones frequently endure psychosocial distress linked to displacement, bereavement, loss of livelihoods, and social disintegration. Mental health services, where available, are often not tailored to their needs. Furthermore, older persons are rarely included in data collection and assessment tools, leading to gaps in evidence that hinder targeted interventions. The cumulative effect of these challenges contributes to the marginalization of older populations within health systems during humanitarian crises.

Ensuring equitable access to health services for older persons in conflict-affected contexts is essential for upholding their rights and dignity. It is imperative that humanitarian and development actors adopt an inclusive, age-sensitive, and rights-based approach to health system strengthening and emergency response. This event aims to raise awareness of the specific health challenges faced by older persons in conflict settings, foster dialogue among key stakeholders, and identify strategies to ensure that health systems are responsive to the needs of all age groups, in line with the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and International Human Rights Law.

OBJECTIVE

To understand the specific barriers older persons face in receiving adequate healthcare and to advocate for age-inclusive humanitarian responses that ensure their health needs are met during and after conflicts.



TARGET AUDIENCE

The event is open to different actors interested in ageing and the rights of older persons, including:

- Public sector officials, policy makers and practitioners
- International Organizations
- Civil Society
- National Human Rights Institutions
- Academia
- Private sector This event as well as the upcoming ones from the virtual roundtable series are open and free to All

FORMAT

Online. These events will be celebrated online with the spirit of inclusion to allow participants from different parts of the world to join us.

SPECIAL NOTES

1. Participants who want to receive a certificate of participation need to fulfil the following criteria:
Having participated at least 75% by Zoom (To be measured by the system).
2. You're warmly welcome to send questions or suggestions in advance to sdp@unitar.org
3. After the celebration of each event, those participants who joined them will be receiving the respective video recording together with takeaway messages.

Join us!

Register now

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pJxJqis9T4m2FVoGZ2ehRw

Earn a certificate of participation!

PROGRAM

Welcome Remarks

**Mr. Alex Mejía,**

Director, Division for People and Social Inclusion UNITAR
Head, CICAL Global Network

Moderator

**Ms. Analucía Jácome,**

Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert
Division for People and Social Inclusion UNITAR

Speakers

**Mr. Cherian Mathews**

Chief Executive of HelpAge International

**Dr. Sue Anne Bell**

Associate Professor, University of Michigan School of Nursing

**Mr. Santiago Fiorio Vaesken**

UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Member

**Dr. Sara Ghanem,**

Health and Development Coordinator, UNITAR,
Former Medical Doctor Supervisor, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

Analysis on the Legal Obligations and Responsibilities For Older Persons at International Level

**Dr. Michael Ashley Stein**

Co-founder and Executive Director, Harvard Law School
Project on Disability





Decade of healthy ageing



United Nations

Department of
Economic and
Social Affairs



International
Labour
Organization



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



World Health
Organization



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



With the support of:



WHO Global Network
for Age-Friendly Cities
and Communities



Harvard Law School
Project on Disability



GLOBAL ALLIANCE
INTERNATIONAL LONGEVITY CENTRE
Designing the Future of Ageing

NGO Committee on Ageing
GENEVA

