



# REPORT

## MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING



*Bridging paths towards strengthening protection and participation*

With the support of:



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# I. PARTNERS/ACRONYMS

<b>UNITAR</b>	The United Nations Institute for Training and Research
<b>UNDESA</b>	The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNFPA</b>	The United Nations Population Fund
<b>IOM</b>	The International Organization for Migration
<b>UNWOMEN</b>	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization  WHO Global Network for Age-friendly cities and Communities
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
<b>ITU</b>	The International Telecommunication Union
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization  The Group of Friends of the Human Rights of Older Persons UN Geneva
<b>CIFAL Global Network</b>	International Training Centers for Authorities and Leaders
<b>HPOD</b>	Harvard Law School Project on Disability
<b>INPEA</b>	The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuses
<b>ILC Global Alliance</b>	International Longevity Centre Global Alliance
<b>GIA Longevity</b>	Global Initiative on Ageing Foundation  NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva



## II. FOREWORD



The year 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the United Nations. This milestone is a moment to reflect on decades of collective efforts in pursuit of peace, development and human dignity.

As we move forward, a profound demographic shift driven by global population ageing stands among the central challenges of our time. Today, 1.2 billion people worldwide are aged 60 years and above, more than double the number 30 years ago. By 2050, this number is expected to reach 2.1 billion.

Older persons face intersectional challenges of being ignored and marginalised, across economies, health, social, legal, and environmental dimensions. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive action to support the rights, dignity, and well-being of older persons.

In April 2025, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted the Resolution [A/HRC/RES/58/13](#), establishing an intergovernmental working group to draft a legally binding international instrument focused on the human rights of older persons. This historic decision marks

a significant step toward international recognition of the rights of older persons, and the establishment of mechanisms to ensure effective protection.

Building on this momentum, UNITAR convened the fourth year of its Virtual Roundtable Series on “Mainstreaming Knowledge on Ageing” since its launch in 2022, with five successful online webinars from May to November 2025. The series, launched in 2022, serves as a valuable platform for dialogue and exchange on the realities and rights of older persons.

The series has evolved each year to address different aspects of ageing and human rights. The first Roundtable Series focused on assessing the overall state of ageing and human rights; the second explored access to justice, employment, political participation, healthcare, social support, and cultural activities; and the third year examined quality of life of older persons.

In 2025, the series, which convened nearly 1100 participants, concentrated on advancing the human rights of older persons amid intersecting global crises, with discussions

covering employment rights, healthcare access, technology, legal protections, and food security during times of stability and conflict.

As part of this report, UNITAR has included “Takeaway” documents for each session, highlighting key insights and adding relevant online resources, such as reports, studies, resolutions, and instruments, as supplementary information.

Video recordings of the sessions are also available on UNITAR YouTube channel, Participants who joined us at least 75% of the time, received Certificates of Participation.

UNITAR is proud to organise the series through its Division for People and Social Development and its CIFAL Global Network, in partnership with UNDESA, UNFPA, IOM, UNWOMEN, UNHCR, WHO, OHCHR, ITU, ILO, the Group of Friends of the Human Rights of Older Persons UN Geneva, the Global Initiative on Ageing Foundation, the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuses, the International Longevity Centre, the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva, and the Harvard Law School Project on Disability.

We are honored by the acknowledgement of this initiative in the Report of Secretary-General to the General Assembly GA A/80/147, on the 14th of July 2025.

Older persons must continue to be included and play an active role in society. Their rights must be upheld, and their dignity must endure. The knowledge, experience, and wisdom of older persons remain essential in responding to complex and evolving societal challenges and do not diminish with age. They are entitled to full protection and realisation of their rights, and their contributions to society must be consistently acknowledged, valued, and respected.

To do this requires clarity, sustained commitment, and collective action. Listening, learning, understanding, and collaboration are essential to building a society in which all individuals can live with dignity, ensuring that no one is left behind.

UNITAR remains committed to empowering stakeholders through transformative learning and mainstreaming ageing across its learning and capacity development efforts, in contribution to the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing and the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan, to advance on the human rights of older persons.

We hope you enjoy this report and look forward to welcoming your participation in our upcoming series in the year ahead

Stay tuned!



**Ms. Michelle Gyles-McDonnough**  
UN Assistant Secretary-General  
Executive Director, UNITAR

# RESULTS 2022-2025



**115**  
SPEAKERS

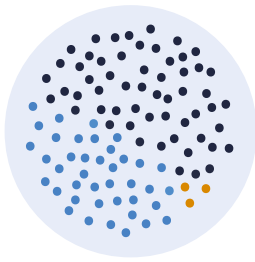


**361**  
PERSONS PARTICIPATED  
IN THE 5 EVENTS  
OF THE 2025 SERIES



**1,012**  
INDIVIDUALS  
RECEIVED A  
CERTIFICATE OF  
PARTICIPATION  
FROM 2022  
TO 2025

## BY GENDER

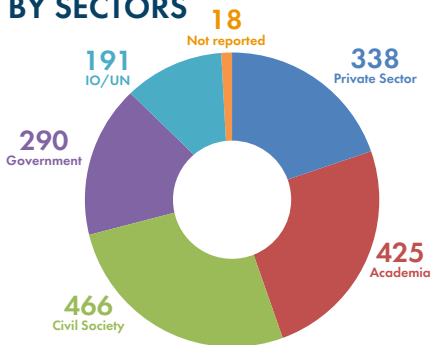


**894**  
Female  
**720**  
Male  
**114**  
Prefer not  
to specify

## BY REGION



## BY SECTORS



## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE SERIES “MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING”



1. Sharing suggestions, including on the topics to be covered in the series next year.
2. Participating as speakers or recommending profiles.
3. Sharing information within your networks about the series. Considering in-kind or financial contributions to develop
4. learning tools based on the series, interpretation or translation services, or related initiatives. As you know, UNITAR is a donor based funded UN entity, so any support in this regard will be more than welcome.
5. Raising awareness and using knowledge about the sensitivities around ageing and the human rights of older persons.
6. Placing this important topic as one of the priorities in your agendas!

## III. OVERVIEW ON THE WHOLE SERIES

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Virtual Roundtable Series “Mainstreaming Knowledge on Ageing” began in 2022, bringing together partners and participants to assess the state of ageing and the human rights of older persons in its first year. The second year focused on access to justice, labour markets, political participation, healthcare, social services, and cultural and leisure activities. Last year, the series addressed the quality of life for older persons. In 2025, the series provided an opportunity to learn on advancing the human rights of older persons in times of converging crises. The discussions addressed critical issues affecting older persons, including their right to work, healthcare, technology, legal protection, and food security in times of peace and war.

The human rights of older persons and frontier issues, such as the demographic worldwide scenario, gender, human mobility, digital divide, and climate change, remained at the heart of our discussions.

In our series, we considered national, regional, and international standards, as well as public policies, programmes, and other initiatives as key learning elements. In the same vein, we envisaged that heightening awareness of ICT/digital accessibility implementation from design was relevant to better understand how older persons can benefit from digital products and services as means to actively participate in political, cultural, and socio economic activities. By involving diverse stakeholders as co-sponsors, experts, speakers, and attendees, the series sought to enhance discussions and build stronger synergies towards achieving our common goal.

In this endeavour, UNITAR and its International Training Centres for Authorities and Leaders -CIFAL Global Network-, UNDESA, UNFPA, IOM, UNWOMEN, UNHCR, WHO, OHCHR, ITU and ILO; together with the Group of Friends of the Human Rights of Older Persons UN Geneva; the Global Initiative on Ageing Foundation, GIA; the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuses; the International Longevity Centre; and the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva; and the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, have joined efforts to put together this initiative as a contribution to inclusive learning in the framework of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing.



## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Fostering knowledge on the impact of including older persons in the implementation of standards and the work of diverse mechanisms.
2. Learning from some good practices and challenges, including laws, policies, and strategies on accessibility issues, from different stakeholders.
3. Identifying existing initiatives and possible ways to improve the protection and participation of older persons in times of converging crises.
4. Recognizing possible synergies for strengthening partnership to advance the human rights of older persons.

## TARGET AUDIENCE

The events were 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 were open and free to All.

Each event presented a specific focus.

## FORMAT

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



1

NO POVERTY

2

ZERO HUNGER

3

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

4

QUALITY EDUCATION

5

GENDER EQUALITY

6

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

7

AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY

8

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

9

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10

REDUCED INEQUALITIES

11

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

12

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION

13

CLIMATE ACTION

14

LIFE BELOW WATER

15

LIFE ON LAND

16

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

17

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

# IV. TAKEAWAYS

Under the guidance of Mr. Alex Mejía, Director, Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR, the following takeaways have been prepared by Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, Ms. Zhuoqing Cao and Ms. Sara Louedi, SDP team, and Mr. Israel Ledesma, Graphic Designer. We hope you enjoy it!

## Key focus of each event



## FIRST EVENT

# “The right to work for older Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless persons”

## BACKGROUND

The right to work is a fundamental human right, crucial for ensuring economic independence, dignity, and social participation. However, older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons often face compounded barriers that severely limit their ability to exercise this right. Beyond the already complex challenges of migration and displacement, these individuals encounter systemic ageism, restrictive labor market regulations, limited legal recognition, and inadequate access to social protection systems. These factors together create significant obstacles, preventing older displaced persons from achieving meaningful employment and fully contributing to their host societies.

Ageism, in particular, remains a pervasive barrier. Older individuals are frequently perceived as less adaptable, less productive, or technologically outdated, leading to exclusionary hiring practices. When combined with migration status or lack of nationality, this discrimination is often intensified. Furthermore, legal and administrative hurdles—including lack of work authorization, recognition of prior qualifications, and language barriers—create a situation where older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons are pushed into informal, precarious, and exploitative forms of employment, undermining both their rights and their well-being.

Addressing these challenges is not only a matter of upholding international human rights standards but is also crucial for promoting the economic, social, and cultural inclusion of these groups. Facilitating access to fair work opportunities allows older displaced individuals to regain autonomy, contribute their skills and experience to their communities, and strengthen social cohesion. Ensuring the right to work also reduces vulnerabilities associated with poverty, marginalization, and dependency on limited public resources, while actively combating age-related stereotypes and discrimination.

This event seeks to deepen understanding of why the effective promotion and protection of the right to work for older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons is essential. It will highlight how targeted policies and inclusive labour practices can enhance economic security, preserve dignity, foster social inclusion, and recognize the valuable contributions of older people within society. By addressing these barriers, we can take important steps toward building more just, equitable, and resilient communities for all.

# 1<sup>ST</sup> TAKEAWAYS

## The Right to Work for Older Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons



 **14** MAY 2025

 **9:30 EDT**  
**15:30 CEST**



ROUNDTABLE SERIES

### MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING

*Bridging paths towards strengthening protection and participation*



This document has been prepared by the **Division for People and Social Development at UNITAR**, Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, Ms. Zhuoqing Cao and Ms. Begoña Santaella Gómez, SDP Team.

We hope you enjoy it!



## MODERATOR

**Mr. Alex Mejia**

Director, Division for People and Social Development  
UNITAR



## COORDINATOR

**Ms. Analucía Jácome**

Senior Coordinator of the Series  
UNITAR



## WELCOME REMARKS



### Dr. Ebru Canan-Sokullu

Associate Director of CIFAL Global Network and  
Deputy Director for Resource Mobilisation, UNITAR

***“Effective protection and promotion of the right to work for older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons requires a multi-faceted approach, demanding enhanced knowledge and skills across various sectors.”***

- 1 UNITAR’s virtual roundtable series represents a crucial opportunity for capacity-building among diverse stakeholders working to uphold the rights of older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons. By bringing together public sector officials, international organisations, civil society, and other stakeholders, we can foster a shared understanding and develop evidence-based strategies.
- 2 A key focus is addressing systemic ageism and discriminatory practices that prevent older persons from accessing decent work. This involves training on age-sensitive labour policies, promoting inclusive hiring practices, raising awareness within communities, and equipping stakeholders to navigate legal and administrative hurdles such as work authorisation and qualification recognition.
- 3 Capacity-building will also empower older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons through language training, vocational skills, and information on their rights and available services. This enables them to advocate for themselves, access fair employment opportunities, and fully participate in their host societies.
- 4 This roundtable series further aims to build a sustainable network of professionals committed to advancing the rights of older persons in vulnerable situations. By sharing knowledge, fostering collaboration, and developing practical solutions, we can collectively promote economic independence, dignity, social inclusion, and active participation for these groups, contributing to more just and equitable societies for all.
- 5 Let us reaffirm our commitment to upholding the right to work for all, regardless of age or legal status. Together, we can create a more inclusive and equitable world where older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons work and live with dignity and purpose.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON UNITAR

UNITAR is a United Nations autonomous body with the mission of developing the individual, institutional and organisational capacities of countries and other UN stakeholders through high quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision-making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges.

In this regard, the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing has triggered UNITAR’s interest in approaching other UN entities, as well as States, academia, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector for organising this Virtual Roundtable Series.



## SPEAKERS

# Focus: Protecting the Right to Work for Older Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons in Multilateral Frameworks



## H.E. Amb. Luis Gallegos

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ecuador  
President of the Board of Trustees of WID, Nippon Foundation,  
and GIA Longevity

*“Upholding the right to work for older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons is a matter of justice and social cohesion.”*

- 1 For older persons who have experienced displacement, loss of home, and stripping away of legal identity, the right to work is not merely an economic concern, but a matter of dignity, belonging, and social inclusion. The economic and social inclusion of older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons can strengthen social cohesion, contribute to community resilience, and counter harmful stereotypes about ageing and migration.
- 2 Systemic ageism, restrictive labour markets, and inaccessible legal pathways deprive older persons of the right to work. They bear the dual burden of age-related discrimination and barriers linked to migration status or statelessness, compounded by stereotypes about their adaptability, productivity, and technological capacity.
- 3 To move forward, we should focus on several key actions. First, promote inclusive labour policies that dismantle ageist and xenophobic practices. Second, strengthen social protection systems, including expanding pension access, healthcare services, and community-based support, with consideration for the legal and migration statuses of older displaced persons. Thirdly, foster intergenerational dialogue and advocacy, and involve older persons in peacebuilding, civic life, and community leadership.
- 4 Ensuring the right to work for older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons is a matter of justice and of upholding the values upon which our multilateral system is founded. By safeguarding their right to work, we affirm their dignity, enhance community resilience, and contribute to building a better society for all.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE GLOBAL INITIATIVE ON AGEING AND LONGEVITY

GIA Longevity is the first global, cross sectoral partnership addressing the ageing and longevity ecosystem. Its mission is to design a new society that empowers everyone to thrive throughout their longer lives. It drives awareness of ageing and longevity and igniting aligned action towards a world built for longevity. By working together with UN agencies, business leaders, governments and society, it is shaping a world where every person is included, respected, valued and cared for throughout their lifespan.





## DID YOU KNOW?

In April 2025, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution to develop a binding international instrument on the rights of older persons. This milestone, alongside existing frameworks like the Global Compact on Refugees, the Humanitarian Inclusion Standards for Older People and People with Disabilities, and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, offers a foundation for advancing meaningful improvement and action.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Around the world, we are witnessing unprecedented levels of forced displacement and protracted statelessness. By June 2024, over 122.6 million people have been forcibly displaced due to conflict, persecution, and violence. Older refugees now represent around 4% of the overall population of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and by 2050, the number of people over 60 will exceed those under 12. Older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons constitute a uniquely vulnerable group, facing compounded challenges where age, displacement, legal invisibility, and social exclusion intersect.

## REMEMBER

The right to work, as enshrined in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirms every individual's entitlement to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, Mid-Year Trends 2024 | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, Safeguarding Individuals: Older Persons | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the resolution A/HRC/58/L.24/Rev.1 adopted by the Human Rights Council, establishing a new intergovernmental working group to draft an international legally binding instrument (UN convention) on the human rights of older persons | [Link](#)



# Focus: Dignity, Work, and the Rights of Older Persons in a Changing World



**Dr. Chitralekha Marie Massey**

Chief of Section, Rights of Older Persons  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

*“Lacking the right to work undermines the foundation for a dignified life.”*

- 1 From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) onwards, human rights can be summarised in one word: “dignity”. All human rights are indivisible, interdependent, and universal. The lived experiences of individuals are shaped by their circumstances within households, communities, and countries, determined by factors such as income, inequality, and discrimination.
- 2 Within the special procedures of the international human rights framework, a Special Rapporteur on the rights of migrants examines issues affecting stateless persons, asylum seekers, and others. Although the UDHR affirms equality and human dignity for all, more than 80 years later these remain aspirational goals. Initiatives like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Summit for the Future, and the Pact for the Future strive to address inequality, yet significant challenges persist.
- 3 At the regional level, human rights instruments such as the European Social Charter, African Charter, and American Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights safeguard the right to work. Notably, General Comment No. 18 from the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights reaffirms the fundamental nature of the right to work for a dignified life.
- 4 Ageing is inevitable, and people age in different ways, shaped by their environments, opportunities, and resources. The challenge lies in creating societies where both those who need support and those who can provide it are recognised as equal contributors to society.
- 5 The UN General Assembly’s adoption of the resolution to develop a legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons marks significant progress. Now, collective action is needed to ensure marginalised issues are integrated fully into this framework. This is a pivotal moment, and the broad support for this resolution reflects both the possibility and responsibility to make older persons’ rights an explicit and important part of international law.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) strives to ensure that older persons are given space and weight in the human rights agenda. Together with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, OHCHR supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing as its secretariat. OHCHR supports the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, and the work of UN human rights mechanisms and national human rights institutions to monitor and provide guidance for the promotion and protection of human rights of older persons.





## SHARING PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Dr. Chitrlekha Marie Massey shared three personal experiences with refugees and older persons.

In a refugee camp on the Thailand-Myanmar border:

“As a very young person working on the Thailand-Myanmar border, it was my first time staying away from home. We slept on the ground with a thin ground sheet and were lucky enough to have our own mosquito nets.

I remember watching the camp gates open as aid trucks came in with salt, bread, and rice. Then everything came to a standstill. That was a very confusing moment, realising that for everyone sitting there, the highlight of the day was simply the arrival of that truck with food.

When darkness fell, even a basic human need like going to the toilet became difficult. You stepped out of your tent and walked halfway across. It was dark. It was scary. This was me as a young person with a flashlight and a friend next to me. My question today is: What happens if you're old, infirm, and alone?

In Bamiyan, Afghanistan:

“Bamiyan is the place where everybody talks about the statues of Buddha. But when I went there, I saw a different thing. All the caves in the mountains were home to people who had been internally displaced from within the country.

These were communities that had faced discrimination and violence. Some had been forced out of their homes by occupation. Among them were older persons who rarely left the caves because it was too difficult to climb up and down the hill, as well as children who had limited opportunity to attend school.

In Fiji:

“We experienced firsthand the displacement caused by climate change and its impact on the mental health of the entire population, specifically on the older persons, who were leaving behind a lifetime of memories. Cemeteries that had held generations of their families were submerged under seawater.





## THE CASE OF VEREIN KLIMASENIORINNEN SCHWEIZ V. SWITZERLAND

On April 9, 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) issued this landmark judgment, marking its first major decision on climate change issues. The case was brought by a group of older women, who claimed that Switzerland's failure to adequately address climate change violated their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The Court ruled in favour of the applicant, finding that Switzerland breached its obligations by failing to implement adequate measures to combat climate change, thereby violating the applicants' right to respect for private and family life (Article 8 of the Convention). Furthermore, the Court determined that Switzerland's inadequate handling of the applicants' legal challenge amounted to a violation of their right of access to a court (Article 6 of the Convention).

The case of Verein Klima Seniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland stands as a powerful example of older persons driving transformative change when given the opportunity.

## DID YOU KNOW?

According to UNHCR data, in 2023, an estimated 55% of refugees reside in countries where access to formal employment remains restricted or non-existent in practice. Longevity is a success story of our times, achieved through advances in medicine, infrastructure, and food security. However, it comes with new challenges. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), around 1 in 10 older people experience loneliness, and 1 in 4 are socially isolated. These conditions directly impact life expectancy and increase vulnerability to violence, abuse, neglect, financial fraud, and barriers to healthcare.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Pact for the Future, Global Digital Compact and Declaration on Future Generations | [Link](#)
- European Social Charter | [Link](#)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights | [Link](#)
- Find more about the right to work enshrined under Article 6 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on General Comment No. 18 | [Link](#)
- Read more about the case Verein Klimaseniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland | [Link](#)



# Focus: Older Persons in Situations of Forced Displacement and Statelessness



**Mr. Ricardo Pla Cordero**

Protection Officer - Ageing and Disability Inclusion,  
Division of international Protection / Community Based  
Protection Unit, UNHCR

*“The care agenda cannot be transformed into a tool against older persons. It must be a joint agenda where we together ask for equal access to care and support opportunities that are dignified.”*

- 1 Displacement brings a series of challenges for older persons, beginning with their separation from community support networks. Unlike younger refugees in today's digital world, many older persons lack digital skills and access to devices, leaving them isolated in unfamiliar environments. This digital divide heightens their risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation.
- 2 Further risks arise from loss of prescribed medication and assistive devices. For older persons under forced displacement, regaining access to essential healthcare support becomes difficult, often leading to a deterioration in health. Beyond physical well-being, many older persons experience depression and lose interest in their surroundings, resulting in severe psychosocial consequences.
- 3 Documentation also remains a persistent barrier. Many older persons never held travel documents or formal identification in their home countries. Without proof of identity, they become invisible to systems designed to support them, blocking access to healthcare, legal protection, financial support, and crucial employment opportunities.
- 4 At a social level, the perception of older persons as burdens is widespread. UNHCR livelihoods surveys reveal that unpaid care responsibilities, such as childcare, cooking, cleaning, and elder care, are major obstacles to employment for displaced women. A more equitable and shared responsibility among families, communities, and states would help ease family burdens while upholding the rights of older persons as active contributors to their communities.
- 5 Addressing the challenges faced by older persons requires reliable, disaggregated data. Without it, older persons remain invisible in planning, policy, and service delivery. Although some states and agencies have improved refugee registration systems, data disaggregated by age, gender, and disability remains incomplete and inconsistently shared. Likewise, regularisation and documentation also play a crucial role in guaranteeing older persons' rights and protections from work permits to pensions.
- 6 Finally, addressing these issues requires investment in protection services, inclusive livelihoods programmes, and advocacy. Targeted case management for older persons, cash assistance, community-based projects, and intergenerational initiatives have shown promising results. At the international level, we must leverage frameworks such as the Refugee Convention, the Global Compact on Refugees, and multi-stakeholder pledges on economic inclusion and social protection. These tools provide critical advocacy opportunities to ensure older persons enjoy equal rights and dignity in displacement contexts.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

The Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a global organisation dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. It delivers life-saving aid and protection in emergencies, advocate for improved asylum laws and systems so displaced people can access their rights, and help find long-term solutions so they can return home once safe to do so or build a future in a new country. During displacement, older persons can be particularly at risk of abuse and neglect. UNHCR works to support and protect older persons on the move, enabling access to basic services as they recover and rebuild after a crisis.





## CURIOUS FACT

According to the UNHCR's findings from a regional assessment of Central America and the Andean regions, a large proportion of older persons on the move were in a situation of great economic vulnerability, with 64% having no monthly income prior to the pandemic. Very few or no pensions are received, and access to work is limited by the conditions of the labour market, the lack of documentation, and discrimination, mainly due to age and mobility.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is a framework for more predictable and equitable responsibility-sharing, recognising that a sustainable solution to refugee situations cannot be achieved without international cooperation and collaboration. It provides a blueprint for governments, international organisations, and other stakeholders to ensure that host communities receive the support they need and that refugees can lead productive lives.

Its four key objectives are to:

- Ease the pressures on host countries
- Enhance refugee self-reliance
- Expand access to third-country solutions
- Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity

## USEFUL SOURCES

- UNHCR, A Claim to Dignity: Ageing on the Move | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, Global Survey on Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Report | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, The Global Compact on Refugees | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, Multistakeholder Pledge: Economic inclusion and Social Protection | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, UNHCR's Policy on Older Refugees, 19 April 2000 (Annex II of the Draft Report of the Seventeenth Meeting of the Standing Committee [29 February - 2 March 2000]) | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity Accountability 2018 | [Link](#)
- UNHCR, Working with Older Persons in Forced Displacement | [Link](#)



# Focus: Ensuring Dignity, Protection, and Decent Work for Older Persons on the Move



**Mr. Alejandro Bonilla**

Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva)  
President of the Association of Former International Public Officials for Development (Greycells)

***“Older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons are not invisible. They are our neighbours, caregivers, shopkeepers, and founders of communities, who deserve recognition, protection, and inclusion legally, economically, and socially.”***

- 1 Older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons have historically remained under-recognised. Policies must acknowledge both their potential contributions and vulnerabilities. Migration and seeking refuge are never just about arrival; they also carry deep implications for countries of origin. Violence, discrimination, and lack of economic opportunities drive people to move. Consequences like family separation and weakened communities must be addressed if we are to break harmful cycles. This diversity must be reflected in policy-making, as a one-size-fits-all approach is ineffective, inefficient, and unjust.
- 2 Many older persons arrived young and aged abroad. They spent decades contributing to host countries, paying taxes, raising families, and working in essential sectors. Yet, as they grow older, lose work capacity, or no longer meet legal requirements, they are often pressured to return to countries they no longer know, where they lack rights, pensions, or support networks. A life-course perspective must be integrated into labour and social protection systems. Rights should not disappear with age or unemployment.
- 3 Work alone is not enough; what people need is decent work. This includes fair pay, safe working conditions, access to social protection, and most importantly, voice and representation. Decent work also means the right to age in dignity, with access to healthcare, income, and freedom from discrimination. Diverse typologies that account for education, access to protection, and likelihood of return are key to identifying support gaps. Many older persons contribute for years to host countries but are later excluded due to legal or administrative barriers. Social protection should follow people throughout their lives and across borders.
- 4 Another important issue is temporality. Some migrate for work, others settle long-term, and many age in place as their legal and social ties weaken. Pensions and entitlements are often not portable, leaving older persons with gaps in coverage both in their countries of origin and host countries. Ensuring cross-border continuity of rights is essential for dignified work and ageing. Migration also takes a toll at home. Families are separated, older persons are left without caregivers, and communities lose skilled and caring individuals. Ignoring the root causes of displacement, including poverty, conflict, and inequality, means overlooking half the picture.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE WORK OF NGO COMMITTEE ON AGEING

The NGO Committee on Ageing is affiliated with the Conference of Non-governmental Organisations (CONGO) and works to raise world awareness of the opportunities and challenges of global ageing. Throughout the year, the Committee works to promote the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), which contains many suggestions for actions that benefit older persons.



- 5 Therefore, two urgent priorities stand out. First, we need better, disaggregated data. Policymakers cannot make informed decisions without reliable evidence. Second, we must raise basic policy literacy around older persons' rights among decision-makers in parliaments, ministries, municipalities, and civil society.
- 6 Above all, we must commit to building systems that never cast people aside once they are no longer considered productive. Dignity should not expire with age, nor with a change in migration, refugee, or stateless status. Many of these concerns will hopefully be addressed in the forthcoming legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons adopted by the Human Rights Council. There is still much work ahead, and it must be multidimensional.



## REMEMBER

Ibero-American Multilateral Agreement on Social Security is an instrument for coordinating the Social Security legislation on pensions of the different Ibero-American countries. It aims to guarantee the rights of migrant workers and their families to a contributory old-age, disability or survivors' pension within a common area, the Ibero-American Community, formed by 22 countries from Latin America and the European Union.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Ibero-American Multilateral Social Security Agreement | [Link](#)
- The Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging (MIPAA) | [Link](#)

## IMPORTANT

Even where policies exist, they often fall short in practice. Legal residency and work rights can be difficult to maintain, especially for older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons navigating complex, unfamiliar systems. Access to essential services and employment is frequently obstructed by administrative bureaucracy, language barriers, lack of legal literacy, and fear of discrimination. Moreover, older migrants and refugees are too often perceived as burdens in local labour markets.

Overcoming these challenges requires more than legal frameworks. It demands public awareness campaigns to counter harmful stereotypes, and an inclusive and age-sensitive service.



# Focus: Gaps and Opportunities in the International Legal Framework Protecting the Right to Work for Older Persons



**Mr. Hezzy Smith**

Director of Advocacy Initiatives  
Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD)

*“International instruments more often mention older persons in relation to social protection or access to basic services than economic contribution or labour rights. This omission reflects lingering stereotypes of older persons as dependents rather than active contributors.”*

- 1 We are facing a global convergence of challenges: increased migration, longer lifespans, climate change, rising armed conflicts, and political and economic instability. These trends underscore the urgent need to protect the rights of older migrants, refugees, and stateless persons, specifically their right to work.
- 2 The right to work is a fundamental human right recognised in multiple international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These instruments extend work guarantees to older persons and vulnerable groups such as migrants, refugees, and stateless individuals. However, the intersection of age and displacement creates unique challenges in realising this right.
- 3 The 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) prohibits age discrimination but lacks practical enforcement mechanisms. Article 77 allows for individual communication only if at least 10 states declare acceptance, a threshold not yet met. Moreover, the CMW is poorly ratified, particularly among major migrant-receiving countries in the Global North.
- 4 By contrast, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) enjoys nearly universal ratification, with over 100 states ratifying its Optional Protocol, allowing individual complaints. Other instruments like the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) recognise the right to work and prohibit discrimination, as noted in its General Comment No. 18.
- 5 The Global Compact on Refugees makes specific commitments to promote decent work for older persons and persons with disabilities, while the Global Compact for Migration, though similar in scope, does not.
- 6 The case of *Sherlock v. Australia* exposes gaps in current protections and shows the potential role of a new international treaty on the rights of older persons. Such a treaty could provide explicit protections and enforcement mechanisms for older migrants and refugees facing employment barriers. It's important to acknowledge the pressing need for legal frameworks that affirm and operationalise the right to work for older persons in all their diversity, and in all their roles as rights holders, contributors, and agents of change.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE HARVARD LAW SCHOOL PROJECT ON DISABILITY

HPOD has demonstrated a steadfast dedication to empowering civil society and other actors by fostering knowledgeable and discerning advocacy for Human Rights. Their endeavours encompass a range of activities, including the provision of comprehensive human rights training and education, the facilitation of international law and policy development, the promotion of inclusive practices in development, the dissemination of technical assistance pertaining to strategic litigation, and the cultivation of innovative perspectives regarding the capabilities of persons with disabilities and their entitlement to human rights.





## THE CASE OF SHERLOCK V. AUSTRALIA

The case of *Sherlock v. Australia*, heard before the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD Committee), involved a 36-year-old Irish woman with multiple sclerosis, who worked as a senior sales executive at Oracle.

Her application for a skilled migrant visa to Australia was denied because Australian immigration authorities determined that the anticipated healthcare costs associated with her condition would exceed their “significant cost threshold”, which was around 35,000 Australian dollars over four years.

Authorities also failed to consider her personal income, ability to pay privately, or the existing bilateral healthcare agreement between Australia and Ireland designed to share such costs for migrants. Compounding this, Australia applied a “hypothetical person test,” assessing her against an average migrant profile rather than acknowledging her individual circumstances, professional contributions, or capacity to cover her expenses.

The CRPD Committee found that this decision violated the Convention’s prohibition against discrimination based on disability in employment and migration contexts. The provision was applied exclusively to persons with disabilities and failed to account for her means to cover costs independently. The Committee concluded that this amounted to indirect discrimination and placed Australia in breach of its treaty obligations.

Although the applicant in this case was not an older person, it is easy to imagine a similar scenario affecting a skilled older migrant whose anticipated healthcare or social care costs exceed a government’s arbitrary threshold. As ageing populations place pressure on national budgets, such restrictive practices could increasingly target older persons, either explicitly by age or indirectly through financial and healthcare eligibility criteria.

The *Sherlock* case reminds us of a basic principle: human rights are only as effective as the enforcement mechanisms behind it. While several international instruments address the rights of older migrants and refugees, few provide avenues for individuals to directly enforce those rights, as the CRPD provides for persons with disabilities.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) | [Link](#)
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (CMW) | [Link](#)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) | [Link](#)
- Read the full text of the case *Sherlock v. Australia* | [Link](#)



## SECOND EVENT

# “Access to Health Systems for Older Persons in Conflict Areas”

## BACKGROUND

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.

# 2<sup>ND</sup> TAKEAWAYS

## Access to Health Aystems 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*



This document has been prepared by the **Division for People and Social Development at UNITAR**, Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, and Ms. Zhuoqing Cao, SDP Team.

We hope you enjoy it!



## MODERATOR

**Mr. Alex Mejía**

Director, Division for People and Social Development  
UNITAR



## COORDINATOR

**Ms. Analucía Jácome**

Senior Coordinator of the Series  
UNITAR



## SPEAKERS

# Focus: Protecting and Empowering Older Persons in Crisis Situations



**Mr. Cherian Mathews**

Chief Executive of HelpAge International

*“It is important to remember that older persons are not just recipients of assistance, they can also be powerful agents of change during crises.”*

- 1 Older persons are often overlooked in contexts of conflict, disaster, and displacement. In Ukraine, for example, data from 2022 indicated that one in three people affected by the conflict needed humanitarian assistance. Yet the needs of older persons frequently remain unaddressed. One of the most critical challenges we face when working with older persons is the lack of disaggregated data by age, gender, and disability. This absence hinders both investment and action targeted at this vulnerable group.
- 2 Many older persons live with chronic non-communicable diseases, lowered immunity, and an increased risk of communicable diseases. Mobility limitations, often worsened by the lack of mobility aids, further isolate older persons. They struggle with nutritional deficiencies and face barriers to accessing health services.
- 3 These challenges converge around three fundamental issues. First, isolation and living arrangements often make it difficult for older persons to be reached. Second, ageist attitudes present a significant barrier, not only to the wider community but also among healthcare workers and caregivers. Third, there is a lack of participation and involvement of older persons in the design of health support.
- 4 It is essential to identify and remove barriers that prevent older persons from accessing services and participating in decisions that affect their lives. Humanitarian responses must be inclusive, actively engaging older persons as valued members of affected communities.
- 5 To move from neglect to inclusion, several priorities must be addressed. First, improve the systematic collection and use of disaggregated data by gender, age, and disability. Second, design health services that are accessible, age-responsive, and sensitive to the specific needs of older persons. Third, ensure the meaningful participation of older persons in emergency health planning and implementation. Fourth, expand community health teams and home-based care services for individuals who are unable to access conventional facilities, and integrate palliative care into humanitarian health strategies. Finally, healthcare professionals must be equipped with the competencies and resources necessary to deliver compassionate, competent, and age-appropriate care.
- 6 In conclusion, it is vital to understand that older persons are not simply beneficiaries of humanitarian aid; they are active participants and change-makers who can help expand access to care and improve health systems during crises.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL

HelpAge International is a global non-profit organisation that works to improve the lives of older persons around the world. They work through the HelpAge global network, an alliance of organisations committed to the wellbeing, dignity and voice of older persons.

Its mission is to promote the rights and well-being of older persons, and to help them live dignified and fulfilling lives. They address the challenges faced by older persons, such as poverty, social isolation, and discrimination. They also advocate for policies and programmes that support the rights of older persons and provide support to local organisations and communities working with older persons





## IMPORTANT

According to findings from the HelpAge International report “Out of Sight, Out of Mind”, the situation of older persons in humanitarian contexts remains deeply concerning.

Among the older persons interviewed for the report, 69% stated they did not know how to provide their opinion or file a complaint about the services being provided to them, while 77% reported that no other humanitarian agency had asked them about the services they were receiving. Alarmingly, only three of the needs overviews and humanitarian response plans for the 11 countries covered by the report included data specifically on older persons. In terms of coping capacity, 27% of older persons said they could not cope at all, and only 19% felt able to manage without support.

The findings also underscore how these challenges are even more pronounced for older women. Among them, 58% live alone, 56% are responsible for caring for others, 56% have no access to healthcare, 58% lack access to food, and 58% live without income. Additionally, 30% of older women said they could not cope at all, compared to 23% of older men, highlighting the gendered disparities in resilience and support within humanitarian settings.

## DID YOU KNOW?

There are over 1 billion people aged 60 and above worldwide, and this number is increasing rapidly. In 2020, approximately 12.3% of the population living in fragile countries were aged 50 and over. This proportion is expected to rise to 19.2% by 2050.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- HelpAge International, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind: The inclusion and use of data on older persons in the humanitarian programme cycle” | [Link](#)
- Learn more about HelpAge International | [Link](#)



# Focus: Centering Older Persons in a Changing World of Conflict and Climate Challenges



**Dr. Sue Anne Bell**

Associate Professor, University of Michigan School of Nursing

*“Older persons are not passive victims of crises. They challenge stereotypes, demonstrating resilience, wisdom, and leadership.”*

- 1 Climate change and conflict increasingly intersect to disproportionately affect the health, safety, and dignity of older persons worldwide. It is essential to give greater attention to developing policies that empower, support, and centre older persons in conflict and crisis settings, ensuring they can lead dignified lives.
- 2 Crises are intensifying across nearly every region, driven by conflict and climate-related disasters that displace millions, including a growing number of older persons. Overwhelmed or inaccessible healthcare systems increase the risks for individuals living with chronic conditions or disabilities. Despite these clear vulnerabilities, older persons remain routinely overlooked in global humanitarian efforts, resulting in critical gaps in protection, healthcare, and psychosocial support.
- 3 Climate-related exposures such as extreme heat, air pollution, and natural disasters cascade through systems including housing, healthcare, and emergency response. These disruptions are amplified during crises, particularly for older persons who may have existing health vulnerabilities. Additionally, frailty and mobility limitations hinder evacuation, while cognitive impairments may affect comprehension of emergency instructions. Economic insecurity often prevents older persons from relocating, rebuilding, or accessing medications.
- 4 Social isolation further compounds these risks, leaving older persons at greater risk of being overlooked during evacuations and relief operations. Studies consistently show that older persons often possess greater emotional regulation, empathy, and capacity for meaning-making during difficult times. Their lived experience and legacy are invaluable resources, offering insight into effective emergency planning and community resilience.
- 5 A particularly urgent area for attention is the management of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). In disaster response contexts, it is not acute injuries but exacerbations of chronic conditions that dominate clinical care. Ensuring consistent, uninterrupted access to healthcare services for older adults is therefore vital, yet remains one of the greatest challenges in emergency settings.
- 6 Nutrition represents another critical aspect of crisis response. For example, following Hurricane Maria, shelters distributed shelf-stable meals high in fat, salt, and sugar, which are unsuitable for many older persons with chronic conditions. The alarming rise in NCDs globally demands that emergency preparedness plans prioritise not only access to healthcare but also appropriate nutrition and health maintenance resources.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN SCHOOL OF NURSING

The University of Michigan School of Nursing aims to advance health for all by educating and developing nurses and other professionals as leaders, generating and applying knowledge, and serving individuals, communities, and populations. The School attaches importance to the health needs of an ageing population, integrating gerontological nursing practices and research into its academic programmes and community initiatives.



- 7 In conclusion, ageing considerations must be systematically integrated into policies for climate resilience and emergency preparedness. Older persons hold vital community knowledge and adaptive skills essential for effective response and recovery. Their voices must be included, not merely as beneficiaries of care, but as active participants in planning, leadership, and advocacy.



## IMPORTANT

A study led by researchers from the University of Michigan School of Nursing examined long-term cancer survival outcomes among individuals impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

The study found that cancer patients exposed to the disaster experienced significantly higher mortality rates compared to demographically similar patients outside the disaster zone.

Critically, the increased mortality was not attributed to the immediate effects of the hurricane itself, but to sustained disruptions in routine care and daily life. This finding underscores the vital importance of safeguarding consistent healthcare access for those with chronic illnesses during and after crises.

## REMEMBER

Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) claimed at least 43 million lives in 2021. Strikingly, 73% of these deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries — the very regions most severely affected by conflict and climate crises. This stark reality underscores the urgent need for integrated, context-sensitive health strategies in the face of overlapping global challenges.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Global Humanitarian Overview 2025 | [Link](#)
- World Health Organisation (WHO), Noncommunicable Diseases Surveillance, Monitoring and Reporting | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the University of Michigan School of Nursing | [Link](#)



# Focus: Enforcing the Right to Health for Older Persons in Armed Conflict and Post-Conflict Recovery



**Mr. Santiago Fiorio Vaesken**

Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)

*“The lack of access to health services is a recurring and urgent issue faced by older persons in armed conflicts.”*

- 1 The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has received numerous reports highlighting a notably higher prevalence of chronic diseases among older persons, including diabetes, hypertension and arthritis. Unfortunately, these needs are often unmet due to overstretched health systems in conflict zones. Older persons require long-term care, regular medication, and consistent follow-up. However, these services are frequently disrupted, particularly in conflict zones, where difficulties in reaching healthcare facilities are especially acute.
- 2 Mobility and displacement pose another serious concern. Due to physical limitations or emotional attachment to their homes, older persons often remain behind in dangerous areas during conflict. Moreover, shelters and displacement camps are rarely designed with the specific needs of older persons in mind.
- 3 Mental health and social isolation are also critical concerns. Exposure to violence, loss of family members, and forced displacement generate trauma that persists even in post-conflict situations. Older persons are often excluded from data collection, resulting in their invisibility in humanitarian planning and emergency responses.
- 4 Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which guarantees the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, remains fully applicable during armed conflicts. States have an obligation to give special attention to vulnerable and marginalised groups, explicitly including older persons, even in emergencies. Under no circumstances should the right to health be arbitrarily suspended.
- 5 States shall fulfill their human rights obligations in both national and international armed conflicts, consistent with international law and the Geneva Conventions, which mandate the provision of medical services to populations, the protection of healthcare personnel and facilities, and the facilitation of humanitarian aid. Occupying powers also bear specific responsibilities under extraterritorial obligations.
- 6 Finally, these obligations extend beyond conflict to the post-conflict recovery period. Recovery processes must actively include populations in situations of vulnerability, as post-conflict environments often endure longer than active conflicts themselves.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE UN COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is the body of 18 independent experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights by its State parties. The Covenant enshrines economic, social and cultural rights such as the rights to adequate food, adequate housing, education, health, social security, water and sanitation, and work. The Committee seeks to develop a constructive dialogue with State parties, determine whether the Covenant’s norms are being applied, and assess how the implementation and enforcement of the Covenant could be improved so all people can enjoy these rights in full.





## DID YOU KNOW?

In the armed conflict in western South Kivu, Congo, many older persons died due to the lack of access to insulin, dialysis, and even basic food supplies.

## TO BEAR IN MIND

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) is currently drafting a new General Comment to formally interpret the right to health of older persons in both conflict and post-conflict contexts.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights | [Link](#)
- General Comment No. 24 (2017) on State Obligations in the Context of Business Activities | [Link](#)
- The Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the work of CESCR | [Link](#)



# Focus: Breaking Barriers to Healthcare for Older Persons in Crisis Contexts



**Dr. Sara Ghanem**

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

*“Older persons must be integrated into the initial design phase of humanitarian planning and throughout all subsequent stages.”*

- 1 The barriers faced by older persons in vulnerable contexts can be broadly categorised into three groups: health system-related barriers, older persons-related barriers, and barriers encountered during transit.
- 2 First, health system-related barriers primarily include challenges with physical access and mobility. In conflict zones, health facilities often lack the capacity and infrastructure designed for older persons, such as wheelchair accessibility or adequate mobility support. Language barriers are also prevalent, as health workers often do not speak the local languages of affected populations. Health systems are typically overstretched, with insufficient medical staff and limited community outreach to raise awareness about available services. Medical supplies for chronic diseases are frequently insufficient.
- 3 Second, older persons face additional barriers related to their circumstances. Many lose their family support systems during displacement and may not fully understand the severity of their conditions or be aware of available services. Other challenges include loss of medical records, histories, and medications, especially chronic medications like those for diabetes or hypertension, which complicate timely and appropriate treatment. Mental health challenges and psychological stress further compound these difficulties.
- 4 Third, with regard to transit, healthcare facilities are often distant and difficult for older persons to reach due to challenging terrain and a lack of transportation. Older individuals frequently experience stigmatisation and discrimination, particularly those with communicable diseases such as HIV, as well as those with non-communicable chronic conditions. This leads to social isolation and reduced communication capacity, making access to healthcare even harder.
- 5 To address these complex challenges, a multi-stakeholder approach is essential. Establishing strong communication channels and referral systems among various actors in the field can significantly improve access to healthcare for older persons. Solid systems must be developed to coordinate efforts efficiently and effectively.
- 6 Mobile clinics and community-based outreach should be provided promptly in conflict areas. Continuity of care must be ensured by guaranteeing access to medications for chronic diseases at all locations. Lastly, efforts must be made to dismantle stigma and discrimination within healthcare systems and communities worldwide.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON UNITAR

UNITAR is a United Nations autonomous body with the mission of developing the individual, institutional and organisational capacities of countries and other UN stakeholders through high-quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision-making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges. In this regard, the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing has triggered UNITAR's interest in approaching other UN entities, as well as States, academia, non-governmental organisations, and the private sector for organising this Virtual Roundtable Series.



## CASE STUDIES

The first case involves a 75-year-old South Sudanese woman who only spoke the local language of Dinka. The clinic had no interpreters for her language. She arrived disoriented, with difficulty recognising place and time, and was carried by a stranger due to a lack of wheelchair availability. She had no medical records or medications. Her vital signs were unstable, with dangerously high blood sugar. Fortunately, insulin was available for emergencies, but she required referral to a tertiary hospital for stabilisation and further investigation. The referral process was complicated by language barriers and inadequate infrastructure, resulting in significant delays. Moreover, local tertiary hospitals were at full capacity, forcing a search for alternative facilities. This case illustrates the time-consuming and complex nature of delivering appropriate care in such settings.

The second case involved a person living with HIV and cardiac disease who fled their home country without medicines. They are presented with low back pain, leg weakness, and numbness. After examination, lumbar herniation surgery was required. Unfortunately, stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV, perpetrated even by healthcare workers, made referral and treatment difficult. Access to HIV and cardiac medications was severely limited, and the patient remained on conservative treatment for months. This highlights the challenges posed by stigma and healthcare system deficiencies.

## TO BEAR IN MIND

Multiple humanitarian actors often have specific operational scopes, which leads to gaps and discontinuity in healthcare. For instance, a survivor of sexual violence might need specialised care but simultaneously suffer from chronic diseases like hypertension or diabetes that remain unaddressed. This situation reflects a lack of comprehensive and continuous care, highlighting the weak coordination among actors in conflict zones.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Learn more about Médecins Sans Frontières | [Link](#)
- UNAIDS: HIV-related Stigma and Discrimination in Health-Care Settings | [Link](#)



# Focus: Addressing the Rights and Challenges of Older Persons in Humanitarian Crises



**Dr. Michael Ashley Stein**

Co-founder and Executive Director of the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, Visiting Professor at Harvard Law School

*“Older persons are a diverse group. Some are autonomous yet isolated, while others serve as caregivers within their families.”*

- 1 In today’s world, forced mobility results not only from conflict but also from climate disasters and other crises. These factors are not explicitly addressed in current legal frameworks, highlighting the urgent need to emphasise them to ensure the full spectrum of rights for older persons, including those with disabilities. A complex issue in vulnerable contexts is the abandonment of older persons. However, many older persons choose to stay behind due to personal preference, lack of alternatives, or strong emotional ties to their homes.
- 2 Stigma against older persons remains widespread, often rooted in economic perceptions that label them as less “viable” contributors. This bias extends across many marginalised groups. In practice, healthcare workers frequently prioritise children or patients with fewer complexities, adopting a utilitarian approach that overlooks the specific needs of older persons who require accommodations and ongoing support.
- 3 Another major gap is the lack of co-design in humanitarian responses. Older persons are rarely consulted or involved in the planning and implementation of programs affecting them. To date, there are no widely recognised toolkits created specifically for or with older persons that articulate their needs and facilitate collaborative solutions.
- 4 The intersection of climate change, disaster, and conflict is overwhelming and extensive. While physical impacts receive considerable attention, the less visible psychological effects on older persons are often neglected despite extensive data and anecdotal evidence. There is an urgent need for clear guidance to operationalise effective psychological and social support on the ground.
- 5 Humanitarian aid workers and human rights advocates are heroic, often working long hours under extreme stress. However, without proper guidance, they tend to prioritise fewer complex cases, unintentionally marginalising older persons further.
- 6 Finally, abuse and exploitation arising from forced displacement due to conflict and climate crises are often overlooked. Even the most autonomous and resilient older individuals can find themselves in desperate situations, dependent on others for survival, making them highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE HARVARD LAW SCHOOL PROJECT ON DISABILITY

The Harvard Law School Project on Disability has demonstrated a steadfast dedication to empowering civil society and other actors by fostering knowledgeable and discerning advocacy for Human Rights. Their endeavours encompass a range of activities, including the provision of comprehensive human rights training and education, the facilitation of international law and policy development, the promotion of inclusive practices in development, the dissemination of technical assistance pertaining to strategic litigation, and the cultivation of innovative perspectives regarding the capabilities of persons with disabilities and their entitlement to human rights.





### DID YOU KNOW?

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted significant vulnerabilities among older populations. In the United States, at least 20% of reported deaths occurred in nursing facilities housing older adults, though this figure may be underestimated due to deaths being recorded as age-related.

### USEFUL SOURCES

- Learn more about Zero Project which calls for papers and best practices on local responses to climate change, disasters, and humanitarian relief. | [Link](#)

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Many older persons live in “sandwich generation” households, where children reside with grandparents while the middle generation struggles to make ends meet. During conflict and disaster, these households face multiple challenges, including loss of assistive technologies, caregivers, medical supplies, and crucial documents such as medical records and identification papers. The lack of proper documentation poses significant administrative barriers for displaced older persons seeking asylum or access to services.



## THIRD EVENT

# “The Right to Science and Access to Technologies for Older Persons”

## BACKGROUND

Scientific and technological advancements are transforming every aspect of modern life, from healthcare innovations and artificial intelligence to digital communications and smart infrastructure.

While these developments hold immense potential to improve the quality of life, older persons often face systemic barriers that prevent them from fully exercising their right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, as recognized in international human rights law.

Barriers include limited digital literacy, inadequate access to devices and connectivity, and age-related challenges in adapting to rapidly evolving tools. Socioeconomic disparities, inaccessible design, and ageism in technology deployment further compound the problem. Without intentional inclusion, older persons risk being left behind in an increasingly digital society, excluded from opportunities for lifelong learning, telemedicine, online participation, and social connectivity.

Ensuring equitable access to scientific advancements and digital technologies is not only a matter of innovation policy but a matter of rights, dignity, and intergenerational solidarity. In this regard, this roundtable will bring together experts, policymakers, civil society, and older persons themselves to discuss pathways for inclusion, identify existing gaps, and promote concrete strategies that bridge the digital divide.

# 3<sup>RD</sup> TAKEAWAYS

## The Right to Science and Access to Technologies for Older Persons



 **10** SEPTEMBER  
2025

 **9:30 EDT**  
**15:30 CEST**



ROUNDTABLE SERIES

## MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING

*Bridging paths towards strengthening protection and participation*



This document has been prepared by the **Division for People and Social Development at UNITAR**, Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, Ms. Zhuoqing Cao and Ms. Sara Louedi, SDP Team.

We hope you enjoy it!



## MODERATOR

**Dr. Ebru Canan-Sokullu**

Associate Director of CIFAL Network and  
Deputy Director for Resource Mobilisation, UNITAR



## COORDINATOR

**Ms. Analucía Jácome**

Senior Coordinator of the Series  
UNITAR



## SPEAKERS

# Focus: Advancing Digital Inclusion for Older Persons through Age-Friendly ICTs



**Dr. Loly Gaitan**

Programme Officer, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

***“The right to science and technology is not an abstract principle. It’s all about dignity, participation, and equal opportunity, ensuring that older persons who have a growing share of our societies are not left behind in this rapidly evolving digital world.”***

- 1 Older persons face distinct challenges in accessing digital technologies, often linked with age, disabilities, and isolation. Addressing these barriers requires effective policies, strategies, and programmes that ensure meaningful digital inclusion.
- 2 ITU works to guarantee that all individuals, regardless of age, gender, disability, or other circumstances, can access and utilise digital technologies. Its efforts for older persons focus on three main priorities: accessibility, affordability, and relevance and skills.
- 3 Accessibility involves designing technologies with older persons in mind, integrating user-friendly interfaces and compatibility with assistive tools such as hearing aids and screen readers. Affordability ensures devices and connectivity are economically accessible. Relevance and skills emphasize tailored training and lifelong learning, enabling older persons to navigate digital tools confidently. ITU develops international standards to embed these principles into Information and Communication Technology (ICT) design.
- 4 For capacity building, ITU has issued guidelines for age-friendly digital products and services. It published its first major report on aging and ICTs, “Aging in the Digital World: From Vulnerable to Valuable”. In addition, ITU offers self-paced courses, such as “ICTs for Better Aging and Livelihood in the Digital Landscape”, available in multiple languages. Its technical work through standardization activities has promoted recommendations on accessibility requirements, including font size, contrast, and voice guidance.
- 5 For partnerships, collaboration underpins ITU’s work, involving governments, industry, civil society, academia, and UN partners such as the World Health Organization. Current projects include research on artificial intelligence and aging in the Asia-Pacific region.
- 6 While progress through partnerships is evident, challenges remain. Fostering intergenerational approaches strengthens solidarity and connects younger and older generations, building inclusive and digitally empowered societies.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE WORK OF ITU

ITU is fully committed to contributing to the success of the UN Decade on Healthy Ageing, by raising awareness, developing guidelines on policies and strategy advice, sharing good practices, and strengthening capacity to ITU members on how to use the ICTs to develop innovative solutions that have economic and social benefits and thus, help them to turn this challenge into a great opportunity.

Over 75 ITU-D tools and resources are available to support ITU members and stakeholders’ efforts in implementation process to achieve digital inclusion of all people at national, regional and global levels.





## REMEMBER

In many countries, older persons already represent a significant and growing proportion of the population. Yet they remain at high risk of digital exclusion, limiting their ability to fully participate in digital societies, economies, and environments. Barriers include the affordability of devices and services, the lack of age-friendly ICT design, limited opportunities for digital literacy, and concerns about online safety. These obstacles continue to prevent many older persons from fully benefiting from digital transformation.

## IMPORTANT FIGURES

By 2050, the world population is estimated to reach 9 billion, with one in six people globally over the age of 65. Approximately two-thirds of the global population will need Accessible ICTs to participate in digital societies, economics and environments.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- ITU Report: “Ageing in a Digital World - From Vulnerable to Valuable”, available in English, Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, French, Russian | [Link](#)
- ITU Self-Paced Online Course: “ICTs for Better Ageing and Livelihood in the Digital Landscape”, available in English, Spanish, French | [Link](#)
- Learn more about ITU’s resources on ICT/digital accessibility | [Link](#)



# Focus: Bridging the Digital Divide in Ageing Through the Private Sector



**Ms. Yiren Zhou**

Programme Manager of the Elderly Care Programme “Blue Vest Initiative”, Sustainability Department, Ant Group

*“We believe that assisting older persons today is akin to supporting future versions of ourselves.”*

- 1 China, home to the largest population of older persons aged 60 and above, is also one of the most digitally advanced countries, where mobile payments, online services, and smart technologies are ubiquitous. Amid this unique intersection of rapid digitalization and an ageing population, older persons in China remain at risk of digital exclusion.
- 2 The Blue Vest Initiative, launched by Ant Group in September 2020 in collaboration with diverse sectors of society, is a community-based volunteer programme providing digital literacy support and empowerment for older persons. It seeks to bridge the digital divide, raise awareness about fraud prevention and healthy living, and enhance the well-being of older persons. This initiative applies three core principles to address the digital divide.
- 3 Firstly, accessibility and usability. Product teams are engaged to develop age-friendly modes in apps, including larger fonts, simplified functions, and AI-powered healthcare applications offering health consultation and appointment scheduling.
- 4 Secondly, education and capacity building. Volunteers are trained not only in digital skills but also in empathy and patience towards older persons. Volunteers come from all walks of life and provide tailored assistance with local dialects and short instructional videos, building on both digital literacy and digital confidence. A communication platform is established to allow volunteers to share their experiences and good practices.
- 5 Thirdly, dignity and social inclusion. Older persons are empowered to perform daily activities independently, while the silver-age volunteer team promotes peer learning and opportunities to showcase their capabilities. This not only strengthens older persons’ social engagement but also reduces social exclusion and alleviates loneliness.
- 6 Overall, upholding the right to technology requires both inclusive technology design and community support. Let us commit not just to creating technology, but also creating a support system that ensures everyone, regardless of age, can claim their right to science and build a digital world that is not only smart but also inclusive and kind.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE BLUE VEST INITIATIVE OF ANT GROUP

The Blue Vest Initiative is a social-good project launched in 2020 by Ant Group to help older persons overcome the digital divide. By combining technology with personalized support, it empowers older persons with essential digital skills, fraud prevention knowledge, and access to health information, boosting their confidence, independence, and quality of life.

Leveraging Ant Group’s technological expertise, the initiative simplifies everyday digital tools in areas like communication, mobile payments, and healthcare. At the same time, it brings people together through a growing network of volunteers who offer patient, face-to-face guidance. This human-centred approach helps older adults not only adapt to the digital world but thrive in it.





## INTERESTING PRACTICE

The Blue Vest Initiative exemplifies a human-centred network dedicated to digital inclusion for older persons. Volunteers from all walks of life operate across urban and rural areas, offering nonprofit educational outreach and personalised support directly to older persons. These volunteers include professional social workers, students, retirees, lawyers, police officers, tech experts, and so on. They assist older persons with essential tasks such as health management, communication with family, and electronic payments. A silver-age volunteer team has also been established, encouraging older persons to learn digital skills from each other, and creating opportunities for them to showcase their capacities.

Beyond teaching technology, the initiative fosters a sense of participation and accomplishment for older persons, ensuring they are not left behind. Ultimately, it highlights that supporting older persons in the digital world today is an investment in building inclusive, empowered communities for the future.

## DID YOU KNOW?

According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China, over 310 million people in China were aged 60 and above as of 2024, representing a significant and growing demographic. Despite living in one of the most digitally advanced societies, many older persons face barriers to accessing and effectively using technology. Challenges include limited digital literacy, concerns about online fraud, and the lack of age-friendly design in digital platforms. More importantly, digital exclusion not only reduces access to essential services but also increases social isolation and limits participation in economic and social activities.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- The State Council of the People's Republic of China, "China Accelerates Elderly Care Reforms As Population Ages" | [Link](#)
- WHO, Ageing and Health in China | [Link](#)
- Learn more about Ant Group's Blue Vest Initiative | [Link](#)



# Focus: Digital Inclusive Design for Older Persons with Disabilities



**Dr. Jutta Treviranus**

Director of the Inclusive Design Research Centre,  
Ontario College of Art and Design (OCAD) University

*“When we design our systems with people who are struggling, our systems will work for us when we inevitably find ourselves struggling.”*

- 1 Disability intersects with every other marginalized group, and this is also the case in systems intended to serve people who are aging. They experience the compounding barriers of ageism, ableism, and inaccessible design. Older persons with disabilities are the heterogeneous outliers in a world designed for the majority or the average.
- 2 AI is a powerful tool that enhances accuracy, consistency, and efficiency. However, it also functions as an infrastructure of statistical discrimination. This is particularly concerning when AI is used to match, label, optimise, calculate, analyse people at scale, propagating discrimination faster and more efficiently. Systems intended to remove bias rely on statistical reasoning, leaving outliers underrepresented in testing and decision thresholds.
- 3 Older persons with disabilities are especially vulnerable to data abuse and misuse, lacking adequate privacy protections. Many are forced to barter their privacy for essential services. Beyond privacy, we need safeguards against data abuse, with full transparency on how data is collected and used.
- 4 In response, Canada has developed the Accessible and Equitable AI Standard under the Accessible Canada Act. The first principle is “nothing without us because everything is about us.” This framework ensures that people experience equitable benefits from AI systems, avoid inequitable harms, retain rights and freedoms due to the use of AI systems, and are given agency and respect in their interactions with AI systems.
- 5 In conclusion, the intelligence that works with the edge of our human scatterplot can better adapt to change, respond to the unexpected, detect risks, transfer knowledge to new contexts, fostering greater dynamic resilience and longevity. It will reduce disparities and may hold the key to our collective survival.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON INCLUSIVE DESIGN RESEARCH CENTRE AT OCAD UNIVERSITY

The Centre serves as the nexus of a growing global community that proactively works to ensure that our digitally transformed and globally connected society is designed inclusively. It aims to identify risks and catalyze opportunities for equitable inclusion when new technical systems and associated practices emerge. The Centre promotes inclusion in a full complement of activities, including growing inclusive design and development practices, creating open-source tools that others can use and contribute to, teaching the theory and practice of inclusive design, helping to develop policies, regulations, guidelines and standards that support inclusion, and providing services that support individuals in finding systems that match their needs.





## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

- **The Human Starburst of Needs**

A three-dimensional multivariate scatter plot provides a useful way to explain what people need to thrive. The needs of any given population resemble a starburst, referred to as the human starburst. Like normal distribution, 80% of the needs are clustered in the middle, occupying 20% of the space, while the remaining 20% of needs are scattered at the periphery, occupying the other 80% of the space. Data points at the centre are close together, indicating they are more alike. Data points at the periphery are farther apart, reflecting they are more different from each other.

- **Exclusion of Marginalised Groups in Standardised Design**

Due to economies of scale and conventions such as the 80/20 rule, most designs cater for the middle. However, designs become less effective at the edges and may fail for those at the jagged periphery. This pattern is amplified, accelerated, and automated in the pervasive deployment of AI, rippling across designs, products, knowledge, education, systems of employment, and democracy. In such systems, the critical needs of those at the margins are outweighed by the trivial needs of the majority.

- **Innovation from the Edge**

The one certainty we face is death and disability. At some point, we will all experience disability, either personally or through someone we love. We all have needs at the jagged edge. Importantly, innovation is found at the edge, not at the complacent middle. People at the margins are the first to detect the weak signals of the crisis, offering society the chance to prepare. If we consider the hugely diverse margins, we leave room for change and growth when the unexpected happens.

## TO BEAR IN MIND

Older persons with disabilities are highly vulnerable to privacy breaches due to their uniqueness and risk of re-identification. They are also susceptible to data abuse and misuse. For example, health apps expose users to surveillance and manipulation through advertisements and push notifications. AI often homogenizes, providing advice for the average and predicting the most popular responses, which can work worse for those furthest from the average.

Connectivity, sustainability, and dependency costs are additional concerns. Large language models prioritize plausibility over truth, appearing most confident when repeating stereotypes, influenced by biased and stigmatized data on disability and ageing.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Accessibility Standards Canada | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the Inclusive Design Research Centre at OCAD University | [Link](#)
- Explore Inclusive Design Research Centre's Inclusive AI Initiative "We Count" | [Link](#)



# Focus: Digital Inclusion as the Pathway to Longevity



**Ms. Silvia Neira**

Vice President, Global Initiative on Ageing and Longevity (GIA Longevity)

*“Inclusion is not charity but justice. When older persons are connected, we don’t just add years to life, we add life to years.”*

- 1 Science and technology are engines of progress, but progress only matters if it is shared. That's why we must recognize access to technology and science as a fundamental right for older persons, a right that protects dignity, connection, and opportunity. Scientific and technological inclusion is the key for economic, social, and health care integration, and for adaptation to the new reality that we are currently living in.
- 2 Technology is an important tool for inclusion and longevity. When used thoughtfully, it can bridge divides and empower older persons. Partnerships across the private sector, public sector, and civil society are essential to adapt technology to meet the needs of older persons, ensuring equitable access, usability, and meaningful engagement.
- 3 Collaborations with technology partners aim to design labor marketplaces and digital platforms that enable older adults to transition back to work and develop new skills. Science and technology are not neutral; they either widen inequalities or help close them. The choice is clear: either all persons remain locked out, isolated, and invisible, or they are given the right to connect, learn, and contribute through tools that are accessible, affordable, and designed with them in mind.
- 4 The evidence is compelling. Digital engagement reduces the risk of cognitive decline, sustains independence, and saves lives. Beyond statistics, it enhances meaning, purpose, and joy. Let's make sure older persons everywhere can claim the rightful share of the scientific and technological advantages, shaping a world with inclusion and accessibility.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON HELPAGE INTERNATIONAL

GIA Longevity is the first global, cross sectoral partnership addressing the ageing and longevity ecosystem. Its mission is to design a new society that empowers everyone to thrive throughout their longer lives. It drives awareness of ageing and longevity and igniting aligned action towards a world built for longevity. By working together with UN agencies, business leaders, governments and society, it is shaping a world where every person is included, respected, valued and cared for throughout their lifespan.





### IMPORTANT

Isolation is a silent killer. Isolation isn't just unpleasant, it is dangerous. Research indicates that people who are socially isolated have a 32% higher risk of dying early. Today, isolation isn't just being alone in a room; it is being cut off from the digital world, which means digital exclusion results in social exclusion. For EU citizens, only 28% of people aged 65-74 possessed at least basic digital skills compared to 70% of younger adults aged 16-24. This gap highlights the barriers many older persons face in accessing digital technologies and participating fully in society.

### GOOD PRACTICES

- GIA Longevity has partnered with Merck Healthcare/EMD Serono to develop 10 courses for caregivers to support and empower the work they do.
- GIA Longevity has partnered with Uber to advance mobility solutions for ageing populations, adapting the application for seniors to enable safe and autonomous city mobility.

### USEFUL SOURCES

- Explore the Statistics of "Skills for the Digital Age" from European Union | [Link](#)
- Learn more about GIA Longevity | [Link](#)
- Discover GIA Longevity's online courses | [Link](#)



## FOURTH EVENT

# “Accountability and Redress in Cases of Intersectional Discrimination Against Older Persons”

## BACKGROUND

Accountability and redress are essential pillars in upholding the rights and dignity of older persons, who are highly exposed to intersectional discrimination that can deepen their vulnerability. They experience ageism as well as discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion or belief, as well as other identity or background factors. In today’s increasingly digital world, the lack of knowledge and access to technologies further exacerbates these inequalities, often excluding older persons from essential services, information, and opportunities. These intersecting inequalities compound their vulnerability, making it harder for them to access justice, healthcare, employment, or social participation, among other challenges. Recognizing these complex realities is the first step toward ensuring that every older person is treated with fairness, respect, and equality.

When systems fail to hold perpetrators or institutions accountable, intersectional discrimination against older persons becomes normalized and invisible. In this regard, effective accountability mechanisms, including transparent investigations, fair legal processes, and accessible complaint systems, affirm that their rights are not optional but fundamental. They send a clear message that society values every stage of life and that no one should be marginalized because multiple aspects of their identity, including limited digital literacy, intersect to place them at a disadvantage.

Redress is not only about justice after harm; it is also about restoring dignity, rebuilding trust, and preventing future violations. Providing remedies, whether legal, social, or financial, empowers older persons to reclaim agency over their lives and strengthens the social fabric that connects generations. Ensuring accountability and redress in cases of intersectional discrimination is, ultimately, an expression of shared humanity: it demonstrates a collective commitment to equity, empathy, and the full inclusion of all people, regardless of age or identity or digital ability.

# 4<sup>TH</sup> TAKEAWAYS

## Accountability and Redress in Cases of Intersectional Discrimination Against Older Persons



 **16** OCTOBER  
2025

 **9:30 EDT**  
**15:30 CEST**



ROUNDTABLE SERIES

## MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING

*Bridging paths towards strengthening  
protection and participation*



This document has been prepared by the **Division for People and Social Development at UNITAR**, Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, Ms. Zhuoqing Cao and Ms. Sara Louedi, SDP Team.

We hope you enjoy it!



### MODERATOR

**Mr. Alex Mejía**  
 Director, Division for People and Social Development  
 UNITAR



### COORDINATOR

**Ms. Analucía Jácome**  
 Senior Coordinator of the Series  
 UNITAR



**SPEAKERS**

# Focus: The Role of ICTs in Promoting Access to Justice for Older Persons



**Ms. Roxana Widmer-Iliescu**  
 Head, Digital Inclusion Service,  
 International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

*“Together, we must strive to ensure a just, inclusive, and accessible world for older persons, where their rights are upheld, their voices are heard, and their dignity is respected.”*

- 1 Older persons often face overlapping discrimination based on age, gender, disability, and socio-economic status, compounded by gaps in legal frameworks, limited awareness, and restricted access to information and communication. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) can play a transformative role in promoting inclusion, legal access, and advocacy, by bridging gaps through affordable internet, appropriate digital devices, and accessible services, applications, and content.
- 2 ICTs can enhance access to justice, transparency, and accountability where traditional mechanisms fall short, while also providing new avenues for seeking redress. Digital technologies are not merely tools for inclusion but also means of empowerment, capable of improving quality of life and directly addressing the needs of older persons.
- 3 Firstly, bridging the digital divide begins with ensuring physical and equitable access to digital information and technologies. Older persons often face barriers due to affordability, lack of accessible devices, or insufficient digital literacy. Ensuring affordable internet and devices, alongside training programmes that enhance digital skills and awareness of digital rights, enables safe and equitable participation in the digital environment. Intergenerational support and targeted literacy initiatives further strengthen inclusion.
- 4 Secondly, accessible legal frameworks and e-justice platforms are vital for protecting and advancing the rights of older persons. Geographic and financial barriers often hinder their access to legal services. ICTs can bridge this gap through digital legal platforms, allowing older persons to file complaints, seek advice, and access legal resources online. It is important that governments develop and provide e-legal services, investing in user-friendly systems with features tailored to older persons. These efforts should be complemented by public awareness campaigns to ensure that older persons know how and where to access such services.
- 5 Thirdly, accountability and transparency are essential for enabling older persons to hold institutions responsible. ICTs can enhance transparency through digital reporting platforms that allow safe reporting of abuse or discrimination, track responses, and gather data to identify systemic issues. Combined with data analytics and monitoring, these tools enable governments and NGOs to assess the incidence of intersectional discrimination and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and redress mechanisms.

**HIGHLIGHTS ON ITU**

ITU is fully committed to contributing to the success of the UN Decade on Healthy Ageing, by raising awareness, developing guidelines on policies and strategy advice, sharing good practices, and strengthening capacity to ITU members on how to use the ICTs to develop innovative solutions that have economic and social benefits and thus, help them to turn this challenge into a great opportunity.

Over 75 ITU-D tools and resources are available to support ITU members and stakeholders’ efforts in implementation process to achieve digital inclusion of all people at national, regional and global levels.



- 6 Lastly, empowering older persons requires strengthening advocacy to reinforce legal frameworks and raise awareness of their rights, including those connected to ICTs. As human rights increasingly have a digital component, lack of access to technology can hinder their exercise. Addressing older persons' rights today means considering the digital space where essential activities, such as healthcare appointments, financial transactions, and civic participation are conducted. Social media campaigns and digital tools are therefore crucial for raising awareness of intersectional discrimination and promoting policy change.
- 7 As we look ahead, it is vital that our collaboration prioritises ICT-based solutions that empower older persons and uses technology as a catalyst for more inclusive and equitable legal and social systems.



## DID YOU KNOW?

ICTs are not just tools for legal redress but also for amplifying the voices of older persons globally. Through digital advocacy, we can create wide-reaching campaigns that foster greater public engagement and inspire meaningful policy change.

Promoting such advocacy requires empowering marginalised groups to use digital tools effectively. Recognising the transformative potential of ICTs in tackling intersectional discrimination against older persons allows societies to take concrete steps towards inclusiveness. Strengthening digital literacy, creating accessible legal and e-governance platforms, and leveraging technology for transparency, participation, and advocacy are key pathways to ensuring that older persons are no longer excluded by multiple forms of discrimination.

## IMPORTANT FIGURE

By 2050, the proportion of the world's population aged 60 and over is expected to reach 22%.

## REMEMBER

To ensure affordable internet and devices, top-down and bottom-up support are needed. Governments are encouraged to adopt strategies that address the financial challenges faced by older persons, such as including them as beneficiaries of Universal Service Funds, or designing national affordability schemes and subsidy mechanisms to guarantee equitable access to technology.

The ITU has a long-standing history of promoting digital inclusion and building digital literacy among older persons. Through initiatives such as e-government and e-health services, digital legal aid platforms, and intergenerational learning programmes, ITU helps bridge the gap between generations and ensures that technology serves everyone everywhere.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Learn more about ITU Development Digital Inclusion | [Link](#)
- Learn more about ITU Resources & Activities on Ageing in a Digital World | [Link](#)



# Focus: Assistive Technology as an Essential Enabler for Older Persons



**Ms. Kylie Shae OAM**

Team Lead, Access to Medical Devices and Assistive Technology,  
World Health Organization (WHO)

***“Timely access to appropriate and affordable assistive technologies, products and services is fundamental for older persons to live independently, fully participate in society, and retain their autonomy.”***

- 1 Access to assistive technology is essential for older persons, not only because it supports their independence, participation, and dignity, but also because it is a fundamental human right and a core component of universal health coverage. However, significant barriers persist, such as limited service provision specifically targeting older persons, insufficient training among health and social care providers to identify and respond to their needs, lack of integration into national policy frameworks, funding gaps, and issues of acceptability from the perspective of older persons themselves.
- 2 Often, older persons are not meaningfully involved in the design or decision-making processes for assistive products, resulting in solutions that fail to meet their needs effectively. To address these challenges, the Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE) has developed the WHO-GATE 5P Framework, which outlines a comprehensive strategy for improving access to assistive technology for everyone. The framework emphasises the need for coordinated action across five pillars: People, Policy, Products, Provision, Personnel.
- 3 Placing “People” at the centre ensures that older persons and their families are actively engaged in every stage of research, design, development, service delivery, policy-making, and monitoring. This approach increases the acceptability and effectiveness of products and services, counters stigma and ageist stereotypes, and addresses the specific challenges faced by older women, rural populations, and those in humanitarian crises.
- 4 “Policy” serves as the foundation for sustainable access. Legal frameworks must recognise the right to assistive technology, establish sustainable financing mechanisms, and integrate ICT and assistive solutions into health and social care systems. International frameworks and national action plans, accompanied by adequate budgeting, are necessary to ensure equitable access for all.
- 5 The “Products” pillar focuses on designing assistive technologies that respond to the preferences and lived experiences of older persons. Strong supply chains and integration into primary and community healthcare are crucial to making products both affordable and accessible, particularly in rural or remote communities.
- 6 When considering “Provision”, an age-friendly, person-centered, and coordinated care model shall be incorporated, including timely identification of need and access to assistive technology.
- 7 Strengthening “Personnel” involves building the skills and capacities of health and social care providers, including frontline workers and assistive technology specialists. Training should be adapted to the realities of diverse and rural communities, with ongoing evaluation to ensure that equipment meets changing needs.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON WHO

WHO collaborates with Member States, UN agencies, and stakeholders across sectors to promote healthy ageing globally. Healthy ageing is defined as developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age. Guided by the Global Strategy and Action Plan on Ageing and Health (2016–2020) and the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021–2030), WHO focuses on four areas: (1) changing attitudes and behaviours towards age and ageing; (2) ensuring communities foster the abilities of older people; (3) delivering person-centred integrated care and primary health services responsive to older people; and (4) providing access to long-term care for older people who need it.

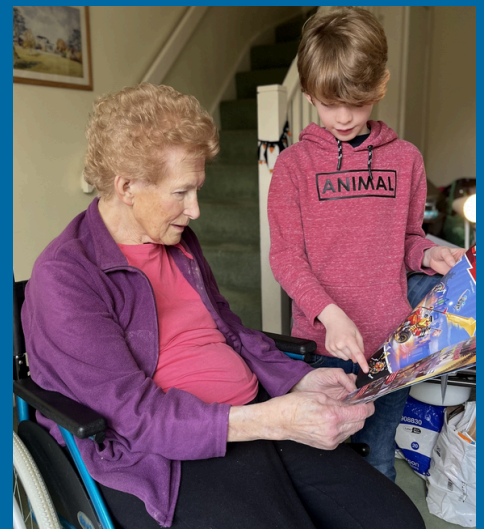


Photo Source: World Health Organization



- 8 In conclusion, equitable access to assistive technology is vital to upholding the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of older persons worldwide. By integrating service delivery, building a skilled workforce, establishing supportive policy environments, ensuring meaningful user involvement, and fostering person-centred innovation in products, societies can ensure that older persons are empowered to live independently, participate fully, and thrive in all aspects of life.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Assistive technology is the application of organised knowledge and skills related to assistive products, including systems and services. Assistive products refer to a wide range of devices that are specially designed or readily available and that support individuals with any form of functional impairment of any age.

For older persons, such products include items commonly used in daily life, such as walking aids, wheelchairs, hearing aids, vision devices, and increasingly, digital and smart solutions that facilitate communication, mobility, and access to essential services.

## IMPORTANT

Assistive technology serves a diverse population. Some older persons are experienced users whose needs evolve as they age, requiring modifications to existing equipment or entirely new devices. For example, a long-term wheelchair user may begin to require a hearing aid or other sensory devices. These devices often need to be interoperable, complementing one another to meet multiple, evolving functional requirements. Others may be first-time users, for whom the experience of adopting assistive technology can be unfamiliar or even confronting. Ensuring timely access to suitable, affordable products and services is therefore critical to supporting both groups.

The health dimension of assistive technology is particularly significant. For instance, WHO data indicates that 62% of people with hearing loss globally are over 50 years old, yet hearing loss often remains unaddressed. Maintaining hearing ability has clear links to cognitive health and reduced risk of dementia, highlighting that gaps in access to hearing aids have direct implications for older persons' independence, social participation, and overall wellbeing.

## CURIOUS FACT

According to WHO's Global Report on Assistive Technology, more than 2.5 billion people currently require one or more assistive products, a number projected to rise to over 3.5 billion by 2050 as the world's population continues to age. Among them, at least 2 in 3 people aged 60 and over need at least one assistive product, with that need often increasing to multiple products as they age.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE) is a WHO initiative that brings together people who share the GATE vision: a world where assistive technology is universally accessible to everyone, everywhere.

The GATE Community comprises over 2,500 members from 135 countries, including assistive technology users, policymakers, service providers, donors, educators, advocates, manufacturers, and researchers. The diversity of membership is a strength, as it provides rich discussions and helps generate effective solutions to complex challenges.

WHO-GATE 5P Framework offers a comprehensive strategy for improving access to assistive technology for everyone, including older persons.



## USEFUL SOURCES

- WHO and UNICEF, Global Report on Assistive Technology (2022) | [Link](#)
- Learn more about WHO GATE | [Link](#)
- Learn more about WHO's work on ageing | [Link](#)



# Focus: Educational Gerontology as an Empowering Tool to Combat Ageism



**Dr. Jie Li**

Professor, Institute of Educational Law,  
East China University of Political Science and Law (ECUPL)

*“Investing in educational gerontology is not merely about addressing a social problem; it is about paving a broad avenue towards dignity and well-being for our shared future.”*

- 1 Intersectional discrimination against older persons forms an invisible web that stretches across families, public spaces, and institutions. What we witness today is no longer a series of individual acts, but a reflection of a wider systemic breakdown of the entire supporting system.
- 2 The law, as a hard constraint, plays a vital yet limited role. It is indispensable for punishing extreme acts and setting social baselines, but is also inherently reactive and defensive. Legal mechanisms cannot easily address everyday microaggressions, implicit bias, or silent indifference. To rely solely on punishment is to prune the branches while leaving the roots of discrimination embedded in the soil of society. While the law defines boundaries, it cannot by itself transform attitudes. The more profound and lasting solution lies in education.
- 3 Educational gerontology provides a proactive and fundamental tool for empowerment. By disseminating scientific knowledge on ageing and fostering intergenerational empathy, it challenges stereotypes and cultivates a culture of respect. This inside-out process aims to reshape societal consciousness, turning respect for older adults from a legal requirement into an ingrained moral instinct and shared cultural value.
- 4 The core value of educational gerontology lies in empowerment and prevention. It not only protects older adults but also empowers everyone who is ageing. This transformation moves governance from a passive "dare not discriminate", driven by legal deterrence, to an active "choose not to discriminate", rooted in cultural consciousness and empathy. This transformation provides fertile ground for law to take effect, shifting governance from institutional constraint to societal consensus.
- 5 To achieve this transformation, education shall operate across three dimensions: empowering older persons, professionals, and the general public. For older persons, it means fostering positive attitudes towards ageing and viewing later life as a stage of continued learning and contribution. For professionals such as caregivers and social workers, it entails moving beyond procedural competence toward empathy and humanistic care. For the public, it involves cultivating knowledge, attitudes, and skills that counter bias and fear. Together, these dimensions transform the cultural foundations of ageism and prepare society to embrace ageing with dignity and inclusion.
- 6 Through this systematic educational empowerment, we ultimately aspire to build a genuine age-friendly learning society. In this society, older persons are respected as sages and vibrant participants; every service interaction is infused with professionalism and warmth; and the younger generation no longer fears growing old, recognizing it as a new life stage with adequate support and inherent dignity.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE EAST CHINA UNIVERSITY OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND LAW

The East China University of Political Science and Law (ECUPL), founded in 1952 and located in Shanghai, is among the first higher educational institutions established by the People's Republic of China specializing in legal and political science education. ECUPL is committed to nurturing inter-disciplinary law professionals with in-demand skills and innovative minds by leveraging its advantages in legal studies and through cross-disciplinary integration.

The discipline of law of ECUPL has continuously ranked top 10 among about 700 such disciplines in China. Actively promoting international cooperation, ECUPL has established partnerships with over 214 universities and academic institutions across 48 countries and regions, as well as with 9 regional and international organisations. It has established the Sino-American Research Centre on an Ageing Population in partnership with John Marshall Law School.



華東政法大學  
East China University of Political Science and Law



## TO BEAR IN MIND

According to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, older persons should have access to social and legal services to enhance their autonomy, protection, and care. In practice, however, many older persons continue to experience abuse in community settings, whether physical, psychological, or financial.

From an international law perspective, protections against discrimination and violence are enshrined in human rights instruments. Article 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled, without any discrimination, to equal protection of the law.

Similarly, Article 13 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities obliges States Parties to ensure effective access to justice for persons with disabilities on an equal basis with others. This includes the provision of procedural and age-appropriate accommodations to facilitate their effective participation, both directly and indirectly, in all legal proceedings, including as witnesses, at investigative and other preliminary stages.

## REMEMBER

Educational gerontology explores the intersection between education and ageing, focusing on how the learning process evolves in later life. It seeks to design and refine educational approaches that support healthy ageing, enhance lifelong learning opportunities for older persons, and foster the development of inclusive, age-friendly communities.

Educational gerontology serves as a proactive and fundamental approach to empowerment. It focuses not on post-hoc remediation but on addressing the challenges at their roots. By promoting a scientific understanding of ageing, it dismantles stereotypes, and by fostering intergenerational empathy, it nurtures a culture of respect.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Older Adult Learning and Active Ageing: Bridging Self-actualisation and Emancipation (2021) | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the East China University of Political Science and Law | [Link](#)



# Focus: Reframing Ageing and Combating Ageism through Evidence and Narrative



**Dr. Reuben Ng**

Assistant Professor, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy,  
National University of Singapore (NUS)

*“Ageism is the most experienced discrimination in the world – and yet, the least talked about.”*

- 1 The demographic scale of ageing is unprecedented. By 2050, 2.1 billion people worldwide will be aged 60 and over. This demographic shift will profoundly affect social systems, governance, pensions, labour markets, and healthcare. Countries such as Singapore illustrate the rapidity of this change, projected to become super-aged in half the time it took Japan, compressing decades of demographic transition into just a few years.
- 2 Ageism is widespread yet under-recognised. Global survey data covering 140 countries reveal that 1 in 10 people report experiencing age discrimination, more than discrimination based on gender or skin colour. Despite its prevalence, ageism remains far less visible in public discourse: on social media, racism appears 60 times more frequently and sexism appears 24 times more than ageism. This discrepancy underscores the urgent need to bring age-related discrimination into the public spotlight.
- 3 Language significantly shapes societal perceptions of older persons. An analysis of English-language texts over the past 200 years demonstrates that terms such as “senior citizen” or “elderly” attract increasingly negative stereotypes, whereas framing older persons through family roles (e.g., “grandparent”) or professional roles (e.g., “doctor,” “teacher”) generates more positive perceptions. This highlights the potential of language and framing as tools to influence social attitudes and challenge ageist stereotypes.
- 4 Ageist perceptions are socially constructed and have evolved over time. Between 1810 and 1880, older persons were often portrayed as heroes and romantics. Over the past 50 years, however, ageing has been increasingly medicalised, with attention focused on conditions such as dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. This over-medicalisation has shifted narratives from recognising older adults’ contributions and resilience to emphasising vulnerability.
- 5 Positive storytelling can powerfully counter stereotypes. Depicting ageing solely through the lens of limitation narrows societal perceptions of older persons. By highlighting their resilience, professional achievements, and active participation in family and community life, alongside appropriate health coverage, we can foster a more balanced and human understanding of ageing, promoting strength, agency, and contribution.
- 6 Evidence and communication must work hand in hand to drive change. Data reveal where discrimination occurs, but progress depends on using that knowledge to shape inclusive policies, workplace practices, and public narratives. When research insights are translated into concrete action through media, education, and policy design, societies can move beyond awareness to genuine inclusion, ensuring that older adults are valued and visible across all areas of life.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

Founded in 1905, the National University of Singapore (NUS) is globally recognised for its excellence in education, research, and innovation, nurturing generations of leaders across diverse sectors in Singapore and beyond. The Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy plays a distinctive role in shaping Asia’s policy and leadership landscape through impactful research and informed public discourse. In the field of ageing, NUS has established leading research institutes and centres dedicated to exploring the biological, social, and environmental determinants of healthy ageing. These centres develop interventions and technologies that help older persons remain active, independent, and engaged for as long as possible.



## IMPORTANT FIGURES

The world's population aged 60 and above will reach 2.1 billion by 2050, reshaping economies and social systems at an unprecedented pace.

In a global survey covering 140 countries, 1 in 10 people reported experiencing age discrimination, a rate higher than for gender or racial bias.

Analysis of 200 years of written English reveals a marked increase in negative language about ageing, underscoring how cultural narratives can perpetuate stereotypes.

## DID YOU KNOW?

The term "ageism" was coined in 1969 by Robert Butler, a Pulitzer Prize-winning gerontologist. He defined ageism as "a process of systematic stereotyping and discrimination against people because they are old", likening it to two other forms of bigotry: sexism and racism.

## TO BEAR IN MIND

Ageism is the most experienced but least discussed form of discrimination globally. Real change comes from recognising older adults as capable, resilient, and active contributors to society, not just as vulnerable or dependent.

By combining robust evidence, positive storytelling, and role-focused framing, we can reshape perceptions and social attitudes, empower older adults, and create inclusive families, workplaces, and communities where they are fully seen and valued.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Reuben Ng, Jeremy W Lim-Soh, Ageism Linked to Culture, Not Demographics: Evidence From an 8-Billion-Word Corpus Across 20 Countries (2021) | [Link](#)
- Reuben Ng, Nicole Indran, Reframing Ageing during COVID 19: Familial Role-based Framing of Older Adults Linked to Decreased Ageism (2022) | [Link](#)
- Learn more about NUS | [Link](#)



# Focus: Protecting Older Workers and Promoting Inclusion through Policy and Social Engagement



**Dr. Jody Heymann**

Founding Director, WORLD Policy Analysis Centre  
Distinguished Professor of Public Health,  
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

*“Inclusion isn’t about goodwill. It’s about rights, enforcement, and the chance to contribute across the life course.”*

- 1 Work matters across the life course. Employment is not just about income, but it affects health, social connections, purpose, and engagement in our communities. Many older persons want to continue working, and many need to do so. Yet widespread age discrimination continues to restrict opportunities and participation, limiting the contributions and well-being of older persons globally.
- 2 Misconceptions about older workers persist, but evidence contradicts them. Studies across various professions show that older persons maintain high productivity; while their pace may be slower in some tasks, their accuracy often surpasses that of younger colleagues, resulting in comparable overall output. Similarly, older workers can learn new technologies effectively when given appropriate training, challenging stereotypes that they are “too old” to adapt.
- 3 Legal protections against workplace age discrimination exist in much of the world, but are uneven. In many countries, employers are not required to implement preventive measures, and protections against retaliation for reporting discrimination are rare. In one-third of countries, discrimination remains legally permissible.
- 4 Intersectional gaps exacerbate vulnerability. Older adults who also belong to marginalised groups (including those with disabilities, immigrants, and gender minorities) face significantly higher risks of discrimination. Laws that combine protections across multiple identities are few, leaving these populations especially exposed to exclusion.
- 5 We need systems that facilitate engagement and participation. From parental leave policies that include grandparents to accessible ICT and assistive technologies, inclusion depends on structural choices. Moving away from being seen as dependents to being seen as contributors is possible when societies design policies that empower older adults to care, connect, and contribute, redefining what it means to age actively. That’s how we change attitudes, by living full, connected lives.
- 6 Norms and policies must evolve together. Legal prohibitions alone are insufficient; social attitudes and structural barriers also need transformation. When older adults can fully participate in work, families, and communities, they are recognised for their contributions and capacities rather than being reduced to stereotypes. Combining enforcement of rights, supportive policies, and societal recognition is essential to achieve meaningful inclusion and challenge pervasive biases.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE WORK OF WORLD POLICY ANALYSIS CENTRE

The WORLD Policy Analysis Centre engages in a rigorous research process to gather and transform massive quantities of legal and policy data into the quantifiable, accessible, user-friendly resources found on this website, including interactive maps, tables, and downloadable datasets. WORLD has developed more than 2500 indicators of key aspects of laws and policies that matter to equality, human health, and development. Through partnerships with organisations around the globe, WORLD aims to translate its global policy data into community- and country-level improvements.





### DID YOU KNOW?

Around 65% of countries prohibit age discrimination in the workplace, compared to 35% of countries still allowing age-based discrimination.

Protections addressing intersectional discrimination on the grounds of age combined with disability, migration status, or sexual and gender identity remain significantly less common.

Productivity studies show older persons perform as effectively as younger workers.

### FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Societies thrive when people of all ages can contribute. Achieving age equality means going beyond awareness to build systems that protect, empower, and include. When legal frameworks, workplace policies, and social norms align, age is no longer a barrier and older adults are recognised as essential contributors to families, communities, and the economy.

### USEFUL SOURCES

- WORDL Policy Analysis Centre, Workplace Discrimination Database | [Link](#)
- Learn more about WORLD Policy Analysis Centre | [Link](#)
- Learn more about UCLA Fielding School of Public Health | [Link](#)



## FIFTH EVENT

# “Increased Demographics, Urbanism and the Right to Food for Older Persons”

## BACKGROUND

“By 2030, 1 in 6 people in the world will be aged 60 years or over. At this time the share of the population aged 60 years and over will increase from 1 billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion. By 2050, the world’s population of people aged 60 years and older will double (2.1 billion). The number of persons aged 80 years or older is expected to triple between 2020 and 2050 to reach 426 million.”<sup>1</sup>

Increased demographics and urbanism intersect with the right to food for older persons by shaping how to grow and access adequate, nutritious, and affordable food within rapidly changing urban environments.

The world’s population is ageing at an unprecedented rate, with the number of older persons projected to surpass that of younger populations in many regions by mid-century. This demographic shift is not merely a statistic, it represents a profound social transformation that challenges how societies organise resources, infrastructure, and rights. As more people live longer, ensuring their well-being and dignity becomes a central concern. Older persons are not a burden but a valuable segment of society whose experience, knowledge, and contributions strengthen communities. Recognizing their rights, particularly in relation to food security, is essential to upholding the principles of equality and human rights for all generations.

Urbanisation further complicates this dynamic, as cities expand rapidly and resources become increasingly strained. While urban areas can offer better access to services, they often fail to meet the specific needs of older persons, especially those living on fixed incomes or in marginalized neighbourhoods. Likewise, limited access to affordable, nutritious food, inadequate transportation, and unsafe living conditions can exacerbate isolation and malnutrition among older populations. Sustainable urban planning must therefore integrate age-friendly principles, ensuring that food systems, public spaces, and social services are inclusive and accessible to people of all ages. Building such environments benefits not only older residents but also creates more resilient and equitable cities for everyone.


The right to food is a fundamental human right that does not diminish with age. Yet many older persons face barriers that prevent them from enjoying this right fully, ranging from economic insecurity and rising food prices to physical or social limitations that restrict access to healthy meals. Policymakers, communities, and families must work together to promote food justice and nutritional security for older persons. This means supporting local food initiatives, ensuring access to social protection programmes, and recognising that adequate nutrition is vital to maintaining health, independence, and dignity in later life. Addressing the intersection of demographic change, urbanism, and the right to food is not just about caring for the elderly — it is about building societies that value and protect all stages of life.

# 5<sup>TH</sup> TAKEAWAYS

## Increased Demographics, Urbanism and the Right to Food for Older Persons



 **13** NOVEMBER  
2025

 **9:30 EDT**  
**15:30 CEST**



ROUNDTABLE SERIES

## MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING

*Bridging paths towards strengthening protection and participation*



This document has been prepared by the **Division for People and Social Development at UNITAR**, Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, and Ms. Zhuoqing Cao, SDP Team.

We hope you enjoy it!



## MODERATOR

**Mr. Alex Mejía**

Director, Division for People and Social Development  
UNITAR



## COORDINATOR

**Ms. Analucía Jácome**

Senior Coordinator of the Series  
UNITAR



## WELCOME REMARKS

**Mr. Alex Mejia**

Director, Division for People and Social Development  
UNITAR

*“The right to food is a fundamental human right that does not diminish with age.”*

- 1 Today marks the 20th event of UNITAR’s Virtual Roundtable Series on “Mainstreaming Knowledge on Ageing” since its launch in 2022. More than 100 speakers have generously contributed their time, effort, and expertise in the series, for which we remain deeply grateful. Over 1,700 beneficiaries from various regions and sectors have taken part in these sessions. The continued engagement, constructive feedback, and motivation from the participants inspire our efforts and encourage us to advance further in this shared undertaking.
- 2 This initiative is part of a broader effort to promote and protect the human rights of older persons effectively. UNITAR acknowledges the valuable contributions of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, as well as relevant UN entities, non-governmental organisations, and the academic community, particularly Harvard University.
- 3 Today’s topic responds to two major global transformations: rapid population ageing and accelerated urbanisation. By 2030, 1 in 6 people worldwide will be 60 years or older. Meanwhile, cities continue to expand, and more than half of the world’s population, representing over 4 billion people, now live in urban areas. These trends place increasing pressure on food systems, infrastructure, health and education services, and other essential public goods, while also heightening vulnerabilities in the standard of living of older persons.
- 4 However, urban environments often fail to meet the specific needs of older persons, particularly those living on fixed incomes or in marginalised or underserved neighbourhoods. Older persons face limited access to affordable and nutritious food, accessible transportation, and safe living conditions. While notable progress has been made globally in ensuring access to food for younger populations, equal attention must be given to older persons, including through ensuring appropriate nutritional value.
- 5 The UN remains concerned about barriers such as economic insecurity, rising food prices, and physical or social limitations that impede access to nutritious food for older persons. Ensuring this right is essential to advancing the Decade of Healthy Ageing. Today’s event presents an opportunity to reflect on these challenges, to hear from experts, and to discuss potential ways forward. We hope that all participants will join us in contributing to progress in this area!

## HIGHLIGHTS ON UNITAR

UNITAR is a United Nations autonomous body with the mission of developing the individual, institutional and organisational capacities of countries and other UN stakeholders through high quality learning solutions and related knowledge products and services to enhance decision-making and to support country-level action for overcoming global challenges.

UNITAR through its Division for People and Social Development and its CIFAL Global Network, together with UNDESA, UNFPA, IOM, UNWOMEN, UNHCR, OHCHR, ITU, ILO, and WHO with its Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, as well as the Group of Friends of the Human Rights of Older Persons, composed of States represented by their Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva, the Global Initiative on Ageing and Longevity (GIA Longevity), the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuses, the International Longevity Centre, the NGO Committee on Ageing Geneva, and the Harvard Law School Project on Disability, have joined efforts to put together this initiative as a contribution to inclusive learning in the framework of the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing and the implementation of the Madrid Action Plan.



## SPEAKERS

# Focus: Supporting Older Persons in Agri-Food Systems



**Mr. Dominique Burgeon**

Director, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Liaison Office with the UN in Geneva

***“All people, whatever their age or wherever they are, have the right to access enough nutritious and safe food to satisfy their health, dietary, and cultural requirements in dignity.”***

- 1 Malnutrition persists across all socio-economic classes and age groups. The statistics on food insecurity and malnutrition underscore the urgent need to uphold the right to adequate food for all, particularly for vulnerable populations. Among them, older persons are not a homogeneous group. Many have experienced lifelong poverty, hunger, marginalisation, and exclusion, often without reliable access to social security. For these individuals, hardship continues in later life, compounded by ageism, which frequently renders them invisible in policies and programmes.
- 2 As a UN specialised agency with the right to food at the core of its mandate, FAO drives action to end hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. Older persons are repositories of traditional knowledge and wisdom, contributing decades of experience to community building, social cohesion, and agri-food systems. Despite their contributions and reliance on these systems for livelihoods, many older persons continue to face poverty and vulnerability.
- 3 Rapid urbanisation and migration to cities can erode traditional support networks in rural areas. While urban growth can provide opportunities, such as access to state services, transportation, and social networks, it can also exacerbate vulnerabilities, including those affecting food security and nutrition for older persons.
- 4 Many older persons, particularly women, lack access to social protection, pensions, or other forms of support. This situation undermines their livelihoods, heightens food insecurity, and forces them to continue working under precarious and physically demanding conditions. Urbanisation that does not consider the rights and needs of older persons risks deepening their fragility.
- 5 Therefore, targeted strategies are essential to ensure that older persons are identified, included, and actively engaged. This includes improving the collection, analysis, and use of age- and sex-disaggregated data, assessing national legislation and policies for alignment with the right to adequate food, and ensuring protection against age-based discrimination.
- 6 Efforts must also evaluate the coverage and adequacy of social protection, care services, and food assistance, while providing training, advisory services, and productive resources adapted to older persons' capacities. Recognising that older persons' physical abilities differ from younger workers, it is crucial to ensure they can continue to contribute meaningfully to agri-food systems and broader community development.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON FAO

FAO is a specialised agency of the UN that leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Its goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

With 195 members, FAO works in over 130 countries worldwide. FAO is committed to supporting older person's rights and inclusion in development processes.





## IMPORTANT FIGURE

According to Report “The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025”, a flagship publication produced by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, the world remains significantly behind in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 (SDG 2) on zero hunger.

In 2024, an estimated 31.9% of population (2.6 billion) in the world were unable to afford a healthy diet. Between 638 and 720 million people, representing 7.8% and 8.8% of the global population, faced hunger.

Furthermore, in 2024, about 32% of people living in rural areas were moderately or severely food insecure, compared with approximately 28.6% in peri-urban areas and 23.9% in urban areas.

## MARK THE YEAR

The UN General Assembly has declared 2026 as the “International Year of the Woman Farmer”, recognising the strength and knowledge of women in agriculture. This observance provides an opportunity to promote women’s access to productive resources, technology, training, and markets, and to ensure their full participation in decision-making.

## FAO IN ACTION

FAO supports members in upholding the right to adequate food, social security, and equality by promoting inclusive, rights-based policies and legislation in food and agriculture. This includes strengthening social protection systems in agriculture, expanding rural pension schemes, and enabling all people to live in dignity, even in times of crisis.

FAO also promotes social inclusion in agri-food systems, working with partnerships to make the right to food a reality for everyone. Efforts include raising awareness among local governments, supporting sustainable local food systems, promoting agroecology, and developing local food action plans that meet the needs of older persons.

## DID YOU KNOW?

In October 2025, the Committee on World Food Security adopted policy recommendations on urban and peri-urban food systems to strengthen food security and nutrition in the context of urbanisation and rural transformation. The recommendations are designed to support the progressive realisation of the right to food and underscore the importance of policies that are consistent with internationally agreed human rights instruments.

They emphasise the principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, transparency, human dignity, empowerment, and the rule of law. Governments are urged to implement people-centred policies that address all forms of inequality and ensure equitable access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food for all.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025--Addressing High Food Price Inflation for Food Security and Nutrition (2025) | [Link](#)
- Committee on World Food Security, 53rd Session Report “Making a Difference in Food Security and Nutrition” (2025) | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the International Year of the Woman Farmer 2026 | [Link](#)
- Learn more about FAO | [Link](#)



# Focus: Safeguarding the Right to Food and Combating Neglect and Abuse of Older Persons



**Ms. Silvia Perel-Levin**

Vice-Chair, the NGO Committee on Ageing in Geneva,  
Representative of the International Network for the Prevention of  
Elder Abuse (INPEA) and the International Longevity Centre Global  
Alliance (ILC GA)

***“Neglect or abuse of older persons that leads to hunger, malnutrition, or denial of food directly violates the right to food, as well as the rights to health, life, and all other rights.”***

- 1 The neglect of older persons has a direct and severe impact on their right to food and constitutes a profound breach of human rights. Older persons consistently perceive elder abuse, violence, and neglect as infringements upon their fundamental rights.
- 2 Neglect, including self-neglect, may be intentional or unintentional, but it often results in preventable malnutrition, serious health issues, and even death. All forms of neglect are interconnected and often lead to malnutrition. Neglect increases frailty, worsens chronic conditions such as diabetes or hypertension, and heightens the risk of stroke and infection. It weakens immune system, delays wound healing, and results in longer hospital stays. Nutritional deficiencies may also mimic dementia, causing confusion and dependency.
- 3 When older persons' nutritional needs are ignored, survival is threatened and dignity is eroded. Structural neglect and discrimination, including inadequate funding for care, ageism in food distribution programs, and exclusion from social protection systems, create systemic barriers that undermine these dimensions and lead to widespread food insecurity and social and economic abuse.
- 4 The right to food encompasses three key dimensions: availability, accessibility, and adequacy. Availability means that sufficient food is produced and procured. Accessibility ensures that older persons have the physical and economic means to obtain food. Adequacy guarantees that food is nutritious, safe, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the unique needs of older persons.
- 5 States have the duty to respect, protect, and fulfill the right to food. Respect means abstaining from interfering with access to adequate food. Protection requires preventing third parties, such as institutions, caregivers, or families, from denying food. Fulfillment entails proactive measures, including nutrition programs and systematic monitoring of care facilities. Failure to uphold these duties constitutes institutional neglect.
- 6 Addressing these challenges requires concrete action. Mandatory training for nursing and medical staff is essential, as many receive minimal instruction in geriatrics or in understanding the legal duty to provide adequate nutrition and care. Legal frameworks must clearly define neglect, including failure to provide adequate nutrition, and ensure appropriate civil and criminal penalties. Nutrition must be integrated into screening, assessment, and all services delivered to older persons to safeguard their rights and well-being.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE NGO COMMITTEE ON AGEING

The NGO Committee on Ageing works to raise world awareness of the opportunities and challenges of global ageing. The Committee advocates within the United Nations community to further integrate ageing in UN policies and programmes and encourages member states to include ageing needs in social and economic policy considerations. The goal of the Committee is to further the United Nations mission of building a society for all ages.



## DID YOU KNOW?

Neglect and abuse of older persons may occur in physical, emotional, or financial forms.

Physical neglect occurs when an older person is denied adequate access to food. This includes failing to provide regular meals, offering food of poor quality, spoiled food, or food unsuitable for specific dietary needs, such as for those with swallowing difficulties. Physical neglect can also arise when a person cannot access groceries or prepared meals due to mobility limitations and lack of assistance. Such neglect may be intentional, used as punishment, control, or discrimination, or unintentional, resulting from poor training, understaffing, or lack of resources.

Emotional neglect involves social isolation and lack of support, which can profoundly affect an older person's desire and ability to eat. Mealtimes are social experiences, and when feeding is rushed, impersonal, or culturally insensitive, it can lead to depression, anxiety, loss of appetite, and diminished dignity. Deliberately withholding food, forcing rapid eating, or ridiculing those with eating difficulties constitutes both psychological and physical abuse and violates human dignity and autonomy.

Financial neglect refers to the denial of economic access to food. This may include misusing funds intended for food, deliberately withholding money needed to purchase food, or restricting an older person's access to resources, often by caregivers or family members.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Despite their rights, older persons remain largely invisible in discussions on state obligations. Social protection systems frequently overlook the dietary and nutritional needs associated with ageing, while food assistance programmes are often underfunded or poorly adapted for persons with disabilities or chronic illness.

A dedicated UN Convention has proven to be an effective mechanism for promoting and ensuring the full realisation of older persons' rights. The adoption by consensus of Human Rights Council Resolution 58/13, establishing an open-ended intergovernmental working group to elaborate a legally binding instrument, marks a significant milestone.

Its success reflects strong collaboration and the meaningful participation of civil society and older persons. Their continued engagement in the working group will be vital. Only a convention that incorporates the voices of older persons will achieve real and lasting impact.

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/58/13 | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the NGO Committee on Ageing in Geneva | [Link](#)



# Focus: Intersectional Barriers to the Right to Food for Older Persons



**Dr. Chitralekha Marie Massey**

Chief of Section, Rights of Older Persons,  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

*“Human rights are like oxygen. You don’t see it, but you breathe it, and you can’t live without it.”*

- Human rights are interdependent and indivisible. The right to food is a foundational element of human experience and is closely connected with the right to life, health, education, and employment. Across the life course, these connections determine whether individuals can live with dignity. Yet despite decades of efforts, the world is still far from achieving zero hunger, especially for the vulnerable groups such as older persons.
- As urbanisation accelerates and population ages worldwide, questions about access to food become pressing. Social protection frameworks have prioritised people who were aged, infirm, disabled or destitute, recognising that vulnerability matters in determining access to basic rights. They also revealed how age-related vulnerabilities intersect with other forms of disadvantage, shaping who is most at risk of food insecurity in rapidly changing urban contexts.
- Patterns of ageism and discrimination rarely occur alone. They intersect and compound, often intensifying marginalisation. Ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation all interact with age to shape lived experience. These overlapping barriers directly affect the ability to exercise the right to adequate food.
- Food insecurity among older persons is also influenced by structural weaknesses. Sanctions, austerity policies, under-resourced public systems and fragmented support networks can erode people’s ability to secure food consistently and with dignity. While the international community continues its efforts toward a legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons, structural gaps remain significant. Strengthening policies, addressing data gaps and expanding evidence-based decision making are essential steps for meaningful progress.
- As public services increasingly move online, including social protection systems, food assistance schemes and essential health services, the digital divide becomes a major determinant of rights realisation. Older persons who lack digital access or literacy are at greater risk of exclusion from services intended to support them. The fast expansion of artificial intelligence in administrative processes may widen this divide if inclusive design and safeguards are not prioritised. Ensuring digital accessibility has become inseparable from ensuring the right to food.
- The right to food remains one of the most fundamental human rights, essential and central to human dignity. Yet in a world capable of reaching the far side of the moon, it is deeply concerning that many people still cannot access adequate food. Meeting this challenge requires addressing the full range of interconnected barriers identified above. Doing so is both possible and imperative.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE OHCHR

The OHCHR strives to ensure that older persons are given space and weight in the human rights agenda. Together with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, OHCHR supports the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing as its secretariat. OHCHR supports the mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, and the work of UN human rights mechanisms and national human rights institutions to monitor and provide guidance for the promotion and protection of human rights of older persons.





### THE CASE OF PEOPLE'S UNION FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES V. UNION OF INDIA & ORS

In 2001, the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) filed a petition before the Supreme Court of India, drawing attention to incidents of starvation deaths in Rajasthan despite the presence of substantial government grain reserves and numerous food distribution schemes. PUCL contended that the government’s failure to release these grain stocks and to effectively implement food programmes constituted a violation of the constitutional right to life, which the Court affirmed encompasses the right to food.

The Court issued a series of binding orders directing the government to operationalise the Famine Code, ensure the functioning of food schemes, and provide mid-day meals in schools. The litigation prompted nationwide reforms of the public food distribution system and ultimately contributed to the creation of India’s National Food Security Act.

The case is widely regarded as the first explicit legal recognition of the right to food in India and a defining moment in global right-to-food jurisprudence. The PUCL case illustrates the importance of culturally and contextually specific approaches, linking the right to food with local economic empowerment.

### USEFUL SOURCES

- Read more about the case of People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India & Ors (2001) | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the OHCHR | [Link](#)



# Focus: Legal Standards and States Obligations of the Right to Food



**Mr. Hezzy Smith**

Director of Advocacy Initiatives,  
Harvard Law School Project on Disability (HPOD)

*“It’s noteworthy how the international legal framework can contribute to promoting states’ adherence to their threefold duties of respecting, protecting, and fulfilling the basic human right to food for all.”*

- 1 The gaps between intentions and actions, whether interpersonal or between state actors, are particularly visible in the right to food. These gaps present opportunities for applying legal tools and advancing legal advocacy. Law plays a critical role in bridging the divide between promises and implementation.
- 2 The threefold framework of duty to respect, protect, and fulfill, is a foundational element of international human rights law, particularly regarding the right to food. The legal scholarship and advocacy surrounding the right to food offer lessons that can be applied more broadly across other sectors.
- 3 A key legal instrument on the right to food remains Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which obliges states to recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food, clothing, and housing. States must take appropriate steps to ensure the realisation of this right, and the minimum standard requires freedom from hunger. The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights’ General Comment No. 12 clarifies that states’ legal obligations include ensuring that the food is available, accessible, adequate, sustainable, and culturally acceptable.
- 4 National and regional courts have applied international human rights law to protect the right to food effectively, demonstrating the potential of the law to transform commitments into tangible outcomes. In the case of Social and Economic Rights Action Centre v. Nigeria, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights applied the African Charter and recognised the right to food, drawing on relevant international human rights frameworks. This demonstrates that even in the absence of an explicit right to food, international legal frameworks provide tools to hold states accountable for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling this right.
- 5 While international human rights law alone cannot solve all challenges related to food security, it provides an important signalling and galvanising function for both state and civil society actors. The law serves as a necessary waypoint in translating lofty ideals into concrete practice. There remain significant gaps between the promise of international law and the lived experiences of those most in need, particularly older persons, marginalised communities, and those affected by intersecting vulnerabilities such as poverty, displacement, and discrimination.
- 6 In conclusion, the right to food represents a fundamental human right and a crucial aspect of human dignity. Legal frameworks, advocacy, and strategic use of the threefold duties, including respect, protect, and fulfill, provide essential mechanisms to address gaps in implementation, advance accountability, and ensure that the commitments of international law are realised on the ground.

## HIGHLIGHTS ON THE HARVARD LAW SCHOOL PROJECT ON DISABILITY

Harvard Law School Project on Disability has demonstrated a steadfast dedication to empowering civil society and other actors by fostering knowledgeable and discerning advocacy for human rights. Their endeavours encompass a range of activities, including the provision of comprehensive human rights training and education, the facilitation of international law and policy development, the promotion of inclusive practices in development, the dissemination of technical assistance pertaining to strategic litigation, and the cultivation of innovative perspectives regarding the capabilities of persons with disabilities and their entitlement to human rights.



## QUOTES

“It is paradoxical, but hardly surprising, that the right to food has been endorsed more often and with greater unanimity and urgency than most other human rights, while at the same time being violated more comprehensively and systematically than probably any other right.” — Philip Alston, former UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (2014-2020)

“It brings together...the various pathways through which the right to food migrated from the conference rooms of international summits, where it is referred to as part of the final declarations as useless in practice as generous in intent, to the courthouses.” — Olivier De Schutter, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights (2020-present)

## USEFUL SOURCES

- Report on the Right to Adequate Food as a Human Right submitted by Asbjørn Eide, UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Food as a Human Right, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1987/23 | [Link](#)
- General Comment No. 12 on the Right to Adequate Food, E/C.12/1999/5 | [Link](#)
- Learn more about the case of Social and Economic Rights Action Centre v. Nigeria (2001) | [Link](#)
- International Development Law Organization (IDLO), Realising the Right to Food: Legal Strategies and Approaches (2015) | [Link](#)

## TO BEAR IN MIND

The right to food is recognised in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. It provides that:

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realisation of this right, recognising to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.

The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognising the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger, shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:

- (a) To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilisation of natural resources;
- (b) Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need.”



**CLOSING REMARKS**



**H.E. Amb. Luis Gallegos**

President of the Board of Trustees of WID, Nippon Foundation, and GIA Longevity, Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ecuador

***“When older persons are included, societies grow wiser; when their experiences are valued, communities grow stronger; and when their rights are protected, humanity itself grows more just.”***

- 1 This year has been marked by uncertainty and transformation, yet also by wisdom, action, and hope. The world's ageing population is not only a matter of statistics, but it also represents a transformation in how societies must organise and mobilise their resources, cities, and systems of care. Over the past few months, UNITAR's Virtual Roundtable Series "Mainstreaming Knowledge on Ageing" has shed light on the challenges and opportunities that come with an ageing global population, reaffirming our shared responsibility to ensure that the rights and dignity of older persons remain at the heart of our policies and collective action.
- 2 Through five thematic virtual roundtables, we explored critical issues affecting older persons, including their rights to work, healthcare, technology, legal protection, and food security in times of peace and crisis. We engaged 24 experts across the UN system, governments, academia, civil society, and the private sector, fostering meaningful discussions and strengthening collaboration towards our common goal. The previous four events of this year alone reached 306 participants, with 172 certificates of participation awarded. Since its launch in 2022, the series has benefited over 1,700 individuals worldwide over the past 4 years.
- 3 Beyond these numbers lies a deeper commitment: a global community united by the conviction that ageing is a shared human experience, central to justice, inclusion, and sustainable development. With this vision and purpose, no one is left behind and older persons are recognised as contributors to shared progress and social cohesion. By examining national, regional, and international standards, policies, and initiatives, we have deepened our understanding of accessibility and inclusion, as well as the ways in which older persons can actively participate in social, political, and economic life.
- 4 The series has advanced dialogue on integrating ageing perspectives into governance, strengthening partnerships, and reinforcing global commitment to an inclusive, age-friendly society. The insights gained will guide future policies that respect the dignity and autonomy of people at every stage of life, ensuring continued momentum.
- 5 The UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons remains a beacon of hope for a world where older persons can live with autonomy, security, and purpose. Let us continue to raise awareness, strengthen policies and laws, and drive the growth of the silver economy, ensuring that no one is left behind. It is the actions we take now that define our commitment to a rapidly ageing world. Together, let us transform our resolution into action, solidarity into policy, and ageing into a celebration of life itself. We look forward to welcoming all of you to next year's series!

**HIGHLIGHTS ON GIA LONGEVITY**

GIA Longevity is the first global, cross sectoral partnership addressing the ageing and longevity ecosystem. Its mission is to design a new society that empowers everyone to thrive throughout their longer lives. It drives awareness of ageing and longevity and igniting aligned action towards a world built for longevity. By working together with UN agencies, business leaders, governments and society, it is shaping a world where every person is included, respected, valued and cared for throughout their lifespan.



# You can find all the videos of the series **HERE:**

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQR8YH-YtQS9wxqOw4udFejL5q5SMMowD>

The image shows a screenshot of a YouTube playlist page. On the left, there is a vertical card for the playlist titled "Mainstreaming Knowledge on Ageing" by the "UNITAR Division for People and Social Inclusion". The card includes a play button and indicates it contains 25 episodes, last updated on Dec 18, 2023. The main area of the page displays a list of 7 video thumbnails with their titles, view counts, and upload dates. The videos are:

1. **Human Rights of Older Persons and Frontier Issues** (151 views - 3 years ago, 1:31:11)
2. **Two worlds, same goal: Ongoing efforts at the UNGA and the HRC** (70 views - 3 years ago, 1:48:43)
3. **Experience of Malaga, Spain. 3rd. Event. From engagement to practice.** (19 views - 3 years ago, 8:17)
4. **From engagement to action for the protection and participation of older persons** (34 views - 3 years ago, 1:30:47)
5. **Voices from the ground Advocacy and action for protection and participation of older persons** (59 views - 3 years ago, 1:01:19)
6. **UN in the field: Strengthening protection and participation of older persons** (53 views - 3 years ago, 1:29:21)
7. **2nd. Round. Access to justice for older persons: Effective and participative systems** (101 views - 2 years ago, 1:35:41)



# Decade of healthy ageing



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