



ROUNDTABLE SERIES


MAINSTREAMING KNOWLEDGE ON AGEING

TAKEAWAYS



ACCESS TO POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: Ageing with dignity through democratic societies

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This document has been prepared by the Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR, Ms. Analucía Jácome, Senior Project Leader and Human Rights Expert, Mr. Rafael Padilla, SDP team, and Mr. Israel Ledesma, Graphic Designer. We hope you enjoy it!

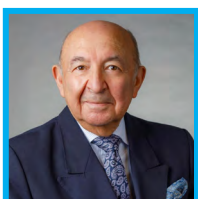
MODERATOR



Mr. Alex Mejia

Director, Division for People and Social Inclusion
UNITAR

KEYNOTE SPEAKER



H.E. Amb. Luis Benigno Gallegos Chiriboga

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Ecuador
UNITAR's Chair of the Board of Trustees
President of the Global Initiative on Ageing Foundation, GIA

“Older persons shall be the main actors of their own destinies, including through political participation.”

1. Dynamics can change even under the same legal framework. While some authorities may focus on public policies and other initiatives for the effective participation of older persons, others have preferred to prioritize other issues disregarding the significant opinion and potential of this group.
2. Decision-making should be centred on human rights. One of the core aspects of their effective promotion and protection is political and public participation at different levels. Its absence deters the rule of law, democratic governance, social inclusion, and economic development, and implies political repression while triggering a wide range of problems against peace and security.
3. Learning about some implications of the political participation of older persons in parliaments, as well as the impact of the work of parliamentarians in the lives of older persons, is important to raise awareness about a more vital, healthy, and meaningful ageing process.

HIGHLIGHTS ON UNITAR AND GIA

About UNITAR. The Institute is a United Nations autonomous body with the mission of developing the individual, institutional and organizational 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 organizations, and the private sector for organizing this Virtual Roundtable Series.

About The Global Initiative on Ageing Foundation. GIA is focused on 4 pillars: Multilateral Affairs, Public Policies, Capacity Building as well as Advocacy and Action. It works on an articulated strategy to address ageing issues from different perspectives, including human rights, labor, health, education, and science, towards the adoption of an International Convention on the rights of older persons as an ulterior objective.



Focus: Sharing knowledge from experience as parliamentarian



Hon. Antonio Augusto Eduardo Namburete

Member of Parliament of Mozambique, Vice-President of the African Parliamentarian Network Against Corruption (APNAC)

“Participation happens where citizens can decide on who should represent them or they can be elected without discrimination.”

1. It is important that people express their views and opinion to make sure that their elected representatives understand and respond to their needs and concerns.
2. In order to ensure that older persons enjoy their political and public participation rights at local and national levels, there should be a quota system settled by laws. They should have seats in the consultative bodies where policies and strategies are decided; furthermore, they should actively participate through their organizations of retirees or through the labor unions.
3. Older persons should be encouraged to use social media to make their voice heard. For example, Facebook is a very instrumental tool that could be used to interact with political candidates and leaders. This kind of tools can also serve to raise awareness and mobilize communities about the situation and contribution of older persons.
4. Older persons can engage in mentoring of younger politicians. Likewise, initiatives to encourage institutions to provide internships for older persons in the area, according to their physical conditions, could be valuable. This kind of initiatives can help them to feel alive and actively participate in different processes.
5. Continuing education and training programs for older persons could be helpful to keep them active. Thus, they can be updated to start or continue actively participating in political processes, related to different issues.
6. We see a trend that people are growing older, and our societies tend to neglect older persons, their views, knowledge and experiences. If their experience is passed to younger generations, it can be very beneficial for society as a whole.

HIGHLIGHTS ON MOZAMBIQUE’S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THE PARTICIPATION OF OLDER PERSONS

Mozambique has not yet formally accepted the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. However, the country has ratified various crucial human rights agreements at both international and regional levels. Numerous policies, tools, and initiatives are in effect in Mozambique to safeguard the rights of older persons, such as the National Policy for Older People, the Basic Social Subsidy Programme, and the proposed Law on the Advancement and Safeguarding of Older People’s Rights.

There is a survey on these resources that underscores the State’s endeavors and obstacles in safeguarding and advancing the rights of older persons. Both, women and men, disclosed that they usually face age-based discrimination; nevertheless, they expressed their active engagement in political and community spheres.





IMPORTANT

Being old and physically weak does not necessarily mean losing the ability to reason. Being an older person means that you have gone through all the stages of life, so you have some knowledge that should be maximized in the sense that we put it to the service of our community.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Political participation can take different forms, from voting for representatives or political parties to standing for elections; from working on political campaigns to participating in protests or strikes; from writing letters to the representatives or signing petitions to mobilizing the community on a common agenda.

USEFUL SOURCES

- Older people's lives at risk: Addressing the crisis in Mozambique | [Link](#)
- The rights of older people in Mozambique | [Link](#)



Focus: Sharing knowledge from experience as parliamentarian



Hon. Sirpa Pietikainen

Member of the European Parliament Intergroup

“Active Ageing, Intergenerational Solidarity and Family Policies”, Finland

“Age itself doesn’t prevent the political participation.”

1. There has been hidden discrimination against older persons in different forms, including in political participation. There might be diseases that have an impact on human lives but age itself doesn't. In this regard, it is important to enable and ensure the engagement and representation of older persons in decision-making processes.
2. Usually, young people are sitting in decision making positions, planning of digitalization, equipment, services, etc. Regarding elections, there is a change of generation in politics. If someone is 65, 70, close to 80 or beyond, he or she is considered too old.
3. Good societies are formed by diverse people, including older persons; mainstreaming knowledge on ageing is a good step towards this goal. Likewise, it would be suitable a campaign to have a proportional number of older persons represented in elections; a similar campaign that EU have done for getting adequate numbers of women with a proportional amount of different age groups in different decision-making processes.
4. For improving participation processes, it is important to study different needs of older persons, by considering different challenges such as visibility, hearing, touching, mobility, as well as neurogenerative diseases.
5. In this regard, the Think Tank of the European Parliament prepared a study on ageing policies by focusing on access to services in different Member States. It focuses on five areas: economic activity, social participation, health and well-being, long-term care, and supportive environments including housing, transportation, and securing financial independence. It presents the challenges and trends in achieving active ageing policy goals in those areas, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

HIGHLIGHTS ON FINLAND'S EFFORTS TO PROMOTE THE PARTICIPATION OF OLDER PERSONS

Finland has begun seeking new ways to respond to the needs for care and support of older persons with declined functional ability. Producing more innovatively and effectively services for them will likely slow down the increase in social and health care costs in the coming years.

The Finish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health sets out the policy concerning ageing in its strategy, in legislation, quality recommendations, programmes and projects. The aim of the ageing policy is to promote older person's functional ability, independent living, and active participation in society.





DID YOU KNOW?

The European Parliament considers that all people have the right to good quality and accessible treatment that is tailored for their needs and their wishes. In this regard, older persons can have tailor services, including through digitalization and planning with different people.

USEFUL SOURCES

- Think Tank of the European Parliament | [Link](#)
- Quality recommendation to guarantee a good quality of life and improved services for older persons 2020–2023: The Aim is an Age-friendly Finland | [Link](#)
- National Programme on Ageing 2030: For an age-competent Finland | [Link](#)



Focus: Addressing the hidden discrimination older persons face and advocating for inclusive strategies and considerations in policy planning and digitalization



Dr. Firas Alhadithoi

Executive Director, Global Organization
of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC)

“Hidden discrimination that older persons face and advocate for inclusive strategies and considerations in policy planning and digitalization.”

1. Older persons represent an important segment of our societies to whom we owe a lot. They are an increasingly significant force that deserves to be recognized by society, whether politically, economically, or socially. For the future, this means to continuously integrate and empower older persons; in particular, by removing the barriers and obstacles that exclude or discriminate them.
2. In this context, it is essential to underline the negative impact of corruption on society in general, as it compromises the equity of institutions and the State's ability to provide relevant services, such as judicial services and participation. Corruption in the rule of law system weakens accountability structures and fosters a culture of impunity.
3. In the specific case of older persons, the main issue linked to their vulnerability in modern societies is financial abuse, which can be defined as any fraudulent behaviour that goes against their best interest and informed consent to take advantage of their finances.
4. That is why it is important to criminalize the financial exploitation of older persons and encourage law enforcement agencies to combat cases of economic crimes. Another solution is to take political measures to enable older persons to participate in decision-making processes and to integrate their perspective in judicial resolutions, whether by developing organization to represent their interests, or by facilitating their integration into legislative and judicial institution.
5. In addition to protecting older persons from corruption, we should learn not only to respect their wisdom, but also to use it as a guiding force in political decision-making. This group needs to be actively involved in shaping our political landscape in order to develop a corruption free society.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE GLOBAL ORGANIZATION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AGAINST CORRUPTION (GOPAC)

GOPAC aims to achieve accountability and transparency through effective anti-corruption mechanisms and inclusive participation and cooperation between parliamentarians, government, and civil society. They are current or former legislators or legislators who have been denied their right to take office. Their collaboration is non-partisan. GOPAC's programming model uses Global Task Forces (GTF) to promote agendas identified by membership through a regionally representative group of parliamentarians that champion each topic. GOPAC is the only international network of parliamentarians focused solely on combating corruption. Its members represent more than 50 countries in all regions of the world.

GOPAC

GLOBAL ORGANIZATION OF PARLIAMENTARIANS AGAINST CORRUPTION
ORGANISATION MONDIALE DE PARLEMENTAIRES CONTRE LA CORRUPTION
المنظمة العالمية للبرلمانيين ضد الفساد





DON'T FORGET!

The mechanisms of financial exploitation can take various forms, such as theft, lending, force gifts, deception, or denial of the legal solutions that can be offered in this context, together with the lack of strengthening specific legislation aimed at prohibiting the most obvious deceptive practices.

USEFUL SOURCES

Learn more about GOPAC's work and understanding of the synergy between older persons, women, and political participation through their PoSOP Global Task Force and Women in Parliaments links here:

[Link 1](#) | [Link 2](#)



Focus: The negative impact of corruption on society and the need to protect older persons from corruption



Ms. Silvia Perel-Levin
INPEA, ILC GA,
& Geneva NGO Committee on Ageing

“We should never forget that older persons also need to enjoy their civil and political rights.”

1. When we talk about the human rights of older persons, many immediately refer to the social, economic, and cultural rights, by immediately focusing on social protection and care support.
2. We must not equal age with wisdom because not everybody is wise, not everybody has all the capacities, but at the same time, not all older persons are frail. We don't call them elderly, we call them older persons, or we refer to them as persons. We must not to categorize them as one group of people with similar characteristics. The right to political participation with any ability should extend to the end of our lives and again, not to equal, ignore their politicians with age.
3. Older women are much less active and visible in politics than older men because they have also lived a life course perspective of discrimination or lack of access to political activity.

Regarding engaging older persons towards their participation, including in consultative bodies, they can feel very comfortable in having opinions and being consulted on issues that relate to their children, grandchildren, their country or countries, to the world. In this regard, States should have more participatory processes that go beyond the topics that directly affect older persons.

4. We all know and accept that everybody talks about older persons playing multiple roles and contributing to societies and communities; however, some people have referred to this issue from a paternalistic way which is not adequately or formally acknowledged. The contributions of this group are not always recognized; for example, unequal treatment on job matters, including informal and not remunerated jobs as well as unfair payments, compared to other persons for the same job.
5. A UN Convention on the Human Rights of older persons will guide governments to have a human rights-based approach to include this group in all aspects of life, including in social political life.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR THE PREVENTION OF ELDER ABUSE (INPEA)

The NGO Committee on Ageing encompasses civil society organizations with an interest on older persons and population ageing. Its members participate at the Headquarters of the United Nations (Geneva, New York, and Vienna;) while each Committee specializes in the processes that are based in its respective location, there is interaction and collaboration among them on many topics and initiatives across the United Nations.



NGO Committee on Ageing
GENEVA





GOOD PRACTICES

- There are countries and governments in Europe, including, Ireland, Austria, and Switzerland where senior councils exist and participate in legislative and policy processes. However, many of these senior councils where the participation of older persons is a reality are generally limited to the issues that directly affect older persons. ***We should not limit older persons to be only consulted on the topics that relate to them!***

- When we participate in our community, political activities, protest, etc, where at times, hundreds of thousands of people come together, high rates of intergenerational activity and interactions take place. All types of persons are able to attend these demonstrations, including different people with different age, gender, background, and disabilities. This is a good example of political participation by older persons.

In going out of social isolation and going through active socialization processes with persons of all ages, political participation has a great impact on people beyond the contribution to the community or the society.

- The Knitting Nanas, an Australian political activism group, is a good example of a group of older women who are part of the movement against climate change, fracking, and gas extraction in their country. After being severely discriminated by the younger people, expecting the older women to make tea for them, they decided to participate politically – they want to make an impact.

- They created their group against all odds, prejudices, and stereotypes of what older women and grandmothers are supposed to be – knitting grandmothers that are able to take it to the extreme. They started blocking roads, performing road sit-ins, meeting and expressing their views, eventually becoming a national movement with a great deal of respect.

That these older women are not just meeting, that they are actually powerful activists in an important topic such as climate change, is proof that political participation by older persons is a reality.

TO BEAR IN MIND

Ageism is a root source of the barriers that older persons face when they try to exercise their human rights.

USEFUL SOURCES

- Public Information on the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse here: <http://www.inpea.net/>

- INPEA Instruments and definitions can be found here: [Link](#)



Focus: The experience of Georgia in age-related barriers in politics



Ms. Nino Shalamberidze
Ombudsman Office of Georgia

“In order to effectively realize the electoral rights of older persons, it is important for them to access the existing legislative and institutional spaces to make appropriate changes.”

1. In Georgia, older persons are exposed to negative attitudes and ageism in access to health care, employment, while facing increasing barriers to their political participation by becoming more dependent than others and losing some or all their personal autonomy. The public defender discusses these problems and provides the reasonable recommendations to the State. Nevertheless, the State fails to take effective measures to improve the well-being of older persons.
2. The level of representation of older persons in the legislative authority is substantial in Georgia; however, the same cannot be said for local self-governments where they are largely excluded for participation in the policy-making process.
3. Regarding the access to political participation by older persons, the State should ensure that older persons living in rural areas have adequate access to social health and other basic services like economic opportunities to participate in political and public life as well as being part in decision-making frameworks related to the agricultural sector.
4. Political parties should promote the visibility of older persons in their ranks. This will contribute to the involvement of this group in their activities as well as the development of appropriate accessibility formats for the public. Furthermore, the State must ensure information and physical accessibility for the effective use of active and passive electoral rights.
5. The paramount concern arises in light of these challenges and issues. Even with the absence of a mandatory regulatory mechanism compromising these matters, they should be reflected in legislation. That's why the Public Defender's Office, and the Public Defender himself, lends its support to a new international and legally binding instrument concerning the human rights of older persons.

HIGHLIGHTS ON THE OMBUDSMAN'S OFFICE OF GEORGIA

The Public Defender of Georgia is a constitutional institution, which supervises the protection of human rights and freedoms within its jurisdiction on the territory of Georgia. It identifies the violations of human rights and contributes to the restoration of the violated rights and freedoms.

The Public Defender's Office is an active member of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institution's working group on ageing and chair the European Network of National Human Rights Institution's Co-Group on the Human Rights of Older Persons.





INTERESTING

Through international cooperation schemes, the Ombudsman's Office carries out training programs on the situation and human rights of older persons for its staff.

From the 28th to the 29th of March, 2023, an awareness-raising training was held. It was focused on the rights situation of older persons, legal regulation of care institutions and issues related to the monitoring methodology were discussed during the training. Experts reviewed local and international standards and practices. The training took place in the discussion mode, with active participation of the participants for the employees of the Public Defender's Office.

USEFUL SOURCES

More about this can be found here:

Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia
[Link 1](#) | [Link 2](#)



Focus: Analysis about the legal gaps on access to political participation for older persons



Dr. Michael Ashley Stein

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

“People need to be valued. Everyone should vote as part of democracy.”

1. As reference, in the context of the upcoming presidential elections in the United States of America, sometimes the media’s use and misuse ageing issues. President Biden in age 80 is portrayed as being too old who is stumbling and bumbling. It is very telling the ways that age can be misconstrued as far as ability.
2. Looking internationally at the work that’s being done on decision making and legal capacity, it is in its strongest form arising from Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, but its overlap to the community of older persons is significant.
3. It is important to remember, regardless of our political predilections, that it is not making the best choice or making the correct choice – whatever that is – that is an issue, but rather the ability to express one will’s, imperfect as it is. If one wishes to vote for a nationalist or someone who is anti-human rights – we may find that objectionable, but if they wish to vote for that individual and can express their will and preference, they should do so.
4. States must come up with positive measures to enable the ability to get to the polls and to have access to them. Perhaps by supporting decision-making as far as describing who the candidates are, or having the same accommodations to some extent, as certain groups of persons with disabilities, voting with tactile ballots or based upon the photos of the individuals, etc. It very much comes down to electoral commissions being both educated, sensitive, and wise as to how to include the population so that they can vote.
5. We need to remember the gender implications, both because women statistically live longer than men, and women statistically are politically repressed and excluded more often than men. A lot of it has to do with what we may perhaps call male dominance and hierarchy.

For indigenous peoples and other minorities who may not be at the forefront of political power and may therefore not have the ability to force the facilitation to participate, to vote, and to stand as candidates.

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.



Harvard Law School
Project on Disability



Some people with dementia, Alzheimer, or those who are simply presumed to not be able to express their will – without empirical evidence, just based upon the stigma of having a certain age – are prevented from voting in various countries around the world. Sometimes it comes through a formal legal device such as a constitutional provision that says if a judge decides you're not mentally capable of voting, then you're precluded from it. Sometimes it's done through a sneaky subset of devices.

Therefore, we must remember that we need to facilitate and include different groups intersectional even across older persons groups.



DID YOU KNOW?

A positive thing that the U.S.A. did on the statutory level is called the Help America Vote Act, HAVA, and it is something that extends both to older persons and to persons with disabilities, noting that there's an empirical overlap between the demographics and the membership of these two groups. The idea with HAVA was to reach individuals who may not be able to make it to the polling places because they are in congregate care living in isolation or in medical facilities. Why? Because they are valued, and everyone should vote in a democracy.

HAVA is not legally enforceable; therefore, there is no standing ability to go into court and challenge those who are not complying with the Act, either as a private citizen or even as a State attorney general. There is no ability to do that.

USEFUL SOURCES

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities | [Link](#)





Decade of healthy ageing



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