



COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN SESSION 65

15-26 MARCH 2021

TALKING POINTS

FOR OUR MEMBERS WHO MAY HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO SPEAK DURING THE
OFFICIAL MEETING OR ARE ATTENDING SIDE EVENTS
(including to use for putting comments in the chat box of zoom meetings)

Context:

COVID-19 pandemic and multiple protracted conflicts have had a major detrimental impact on older women – many of whom depend on the informal economy for their livelihood; loss of independence due to lockdowns; isolation and ageist policies; increase in care giving burdens; loss of jobs and income; limited or no access to information, to public services and or to needed resources. Domestic violence has increased for all ages but it is difficult to find data on older women who are likely to be the most hidden victims of abuse whether physical, psychological or financial.

Priority theme of CSW65:

- Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Review theme of CSW65:

- Women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development (agreed conclusions of the 60th session)

Talking points:

Effective participation and decision-making in public life and empowerment

- All women regardless of age are entitled to full participation in society. They are already contributors to the workforce, their families and to their communities, and deserve opportunities to participate in public life.

- There should be no age restrictions for older women to be employed or to participate in political or public life, become entrepreneurs, or assume leadership roles.
- Many older women returned to work as healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic – their contribution to saving lives must not be overlooked.
- SDG 5 calls for gender equality and women's empowerment, women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.
- SDG 16 promotes “just, peaceful and inclusive societies.” Include older women in local peacekeeping operations.
- Provide older women with economic opportunities by offering skills based training, financial literacy, access to micro-credit and supporting entrepreneurial efforts
- Recognize that many older women are valuable contributors to society and should not be seen only as recipients of services and benefits.
- Age discrimination creates severe limitations to sustain development and inclusive economic growth.

Violence and Abuse

- Older women as well as younger women suffer from violence, abuse and neglect
- Data collection on violence, abuse and neglect of women must include older women as well.
- We support the African Union's call for a treaty to end violence against all women and girls
- There is emerging concern that violence, abuse and neglect of older people has increased since the outbreak of COVID-19. Actions must be taken to reveal evidence to this hidden problem.
- We must systematically measure and incorporate the value of unpaid work – most of which is performed by older women.

The status and rights of older women

- We have to move away from the representation of older women as being only victims, victims of violence, victims of COVID-19. Older women are strong – most often they are the backbone of their families and their communities.
- Widows of all ages must be provided with dignified legal, economic, civil, and social rights, including land tenure and inheritance rights.

- The right to work includes older women, who are living longer and are capable of working for many years beyond 60 and are not “a drain on society”. Ensure that all women and girls are protected by international labour standards and national labour laws.
- Health care and social protection policies are essential to ensure that older persons can have a minimum income, a home and are able to age in place.
- We must provide affordable, accessible and safe housing as well as social support for the increasing number of older single women living alone or who are homeless.
- We must recognize that older women are professionals, entrepreneurs, farmers, mentors, care-givers, artisans, educators, mothers and grandmothers – they should not be viewed only as recipients or beneficiaries of special care and social protection, but also as active agents of change, making valuable contributions to their families, communities and the national economy.

COVID-19 / Health Care

- We urge support for increase in geriatric knowledge and use of palliative care measures.
- We support PPE and other protections from COVID-19 for older home and health care workers, and acknowledge the role they are playing as essential workers.
- We must acknowledge the contributions made by older women during the current COVID-19 crisis and will continue to make for their families, the workforce, and to their communities.

Anti-ageism:

- Join the WHO campaign to combat ageism – acknowledge and promote positive contributions of older women.

Data

- Data is needed to reveal and highlight the valuable contributions older women have made, currently make in the current COVID-19 crisis and will continue to make for their families and communities.
- Data is needed to better understand the extent that women—and older women in particular—are included or excluded from full participation in society or are subject to discrimination.
- We support UN Women’s Expert Group Meeting recommendation that UN agencies (coordinated by UN Women, multilateral regional organizations, NGOs, and national statistical offices in all member states) monitor a wider range of more comprehensive indicators for all the dimensions of women’s participation and empowerment, and monitor the risks of violence for women in public life.

- We also support compiling more comprehensive metrics from existing global datasets (at national and individual levels) , extending beyond the statistics indicating the percentages of women and men in local and national parliaments.
- Data can show not only the diversity of older women, but also their valuable contribution at all levels of society, from engagement in local communities, associations, organizations to the very top of political leadership.
- Improve disaggregated data collection, analysis and use on the status of older women, including widows. Demographic Household Surveys (DHS) must include women over 49.
- As data is essential in identifying trends and shaping targeted and effective policy responses, we support UNDP's efforts to promote the adoption of an indicator that would track the representativeness of decision making positions in public institutions including the public service – now incorporated as SDG indicator 16.7.1.
- Sex and age disaggregated data is vital for understanding both the drivers and barriers to achieving gender equality in decision-making and tracking the achievement of the SDGs. The data also provides a nuanced picture in terms of intersectionality, since data must be disaggregated by sex, age, disability and population group.

References:

- Expert Group Meeting: Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girl, 5-8 October 2021
- General Recommendation #27 on older women and protection of their human rights (CEDAW).
- General Assembly Resolution 75/152 adopted on 16 December 2020 - “Recognizing the essential contribution that older persons can continue to make to the functioning of societies and towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and Call upon all States and the international community to cooperate, support and participate in the global efforts towards an age-inclusive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Older people's rights are protected in a general sense under existing international human rights law. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights does not include age as a discriminatory practice. Both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR 1966) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights (ICESCR 1966) apply to every person regardless of their age. However, this general protection is not sufficient. Apart from one exception (on migrant workers and their families), international human rights conventions do not recognize age discrimination. Hence, we are supporting the call for a convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

- Reports of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (<https://social.un.org/ageing-working-group/>)

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8 March 2021