

14th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing Guiding questions for the focus area on participation in public life and decision-making processes

1. What are the national and local legal provisions and policy frameworks in your country that guarantee the right to participate in public life and decision-making processes?

According to Article 9 of the Egyptian constitution, “The State ensures equal opportunity for all citizens without discrimination”. Therefore, the participation of older persons in public life and decision-making processes should be guaranteed. Nevertheless, older persons face many challenges on the ground due to some health conditions or suffering from chronic diseases, which could hinder them from participating in public life. Consequently, extra-legal measures should be taken to guarantee the enjoyment and protection of their rights.

In light of the Egyptian constitution, the Egyptian parliament approved in February 2024 a law for the protection of elderly rights. The law facilitates the elderly’s communications with governmental and non-governmental agencies, through specific measures. The law confirms providing and facilitating ways for the elderly to participate in the processes of candidacy and voting in elections and expressing opinions in referendums of various types. Besides the right to seek assistance, when necessary, from companions or assistants chosen by the elderly person.

Some older persons themselves have already established Non-Governmental Organizations to protect and promote the rights of older persons. These NGOs managed to encourage the elderly to participate in public life and get training programs on human rights, public participation and life skills. They also organize amusing and social activities that enhance social communication for the elderly. NGOs make awareness-raising campaigns on the rights of older persons. If there are any complaints related to elderly rights, they refer it to the National Council for Human Rights to examine complaints concerning the protection of human rights, refer them to the competent bodies and follow-up with them, advise the parties concerned with the matter of the legal procedures to be followed and assist them in such regard, or settle such complaints with the relevant bodies.

2. What steps have been taken to ensure participation in public life and decision-making processes without discrimination?

Participation of the elderly in public life and the decision-making process without discrimination contributes to the promotion of their mental and psychological health. Participation in public life ensures their self-appreciation and keeps them active and energetic. One of the main target results of the Egyptian National Human Rights Strategy is to promote and protect the rights of older persons and enable them to participate in public life by enhancing their involvement in drafting their policies, organizing an annual societal dialogue to: identify gaps, areas of interest, and means of appropriate interaction with the elderly issues, and enhancing their access to education and participation in cultural life. The Ministry of Social Solidarity (MOSS) keeps its efforts to achieve this target in collaboration with governmental and non-governmental agencies.

In 2017, the Higher Committee for Elderly Care was formed based on The Minister of Social Solidarity's Decree No. 432 dated 12/9/2017. It is headed by MOSS with the membership of representatives from all relevant parties. It aims to:

- Develop an integrated plan for the care of the elderly in Egypt.
- Development and review of laws and legislations concerned with the elderly.
- Synchronization of programs provided to different entities.
- Design of programs to capitalize on the potential of the elderly in the development of society.
- Establishment of a database of all services relating to the elderly.

The number of elderly clubs has reached 191 clubs throughout the governorates, a group of activities are practised and events are held to encourage the participation of older persons in public life. The number of its beneficiaries has reached 56000.

In 2019, the "Elderly Companion" project was launched by the Ministry of Social Solidarity to provide home-based care for the elderly as an alternative to care centres, through training and qualifying young calibres to become elderly companions. The project is a great step to support the elderly and enable them to actively participate in public life and maintain social cohesion and family unity. The project has been applied in four governorates, 51 elderly companions were trained and 40% of were hired.

To guarantee the right to political participation of older persons in the election process. The Egyptian National Election Authority has indicated some measures to facilitate the participation of the elderly in the electoral process.

As an act of appreciation, the government has assigned some older persons as consultants, experts and honourable members in different governmental agencies to benefit from their experience, which has a good impact on the role of older persons in public life.

3. What data and research are available regarding older persons' participation in public life and decision-making processes?

The main sources of the data are the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS), and the Ministry of Social Solidarity, for example. Older persons participate in the electoral process equally to every citizen. Almost 56000 old persons are members of the 191 elderly clubs across Egypt. In 2020, the number of employed elderly people reached about 1.2 million, representing 13.4% of the total elderly, which indicates their participation in public life and workforce.

The illiteracy rate is an indicator that affects the participation in public life. According to the statistics the illiteracy rate among the elderly reached 53.2% in 2022 (39.6% of the total elderly males, and 67.9% of the total elderly females).

4. What are the challenges and barriers that older persons face regarding participation in public life and decision-making processes?

The illiteracy rate is a real challenge in Egypt among the elderly, especially females. The weak level of awareness of the rights of the elderly. There is a need to enhance the participation of the elderly in public life and in drafting their policies. Procedures related to legal protection to services provided to the elderly are complicated.

5. What judicial and non-judicial mechanisms are in place for older persons to complain and seek redress when their right to participate in public life and decision-making processes is violated?

The Egyptian Cabinet unified governmental complaints system, as well as the National Council for Human Rights complaints system. Besides, regular judicial mechanisms.

According to the Egyptian law of elderly, the competent ministry is committed to providing a hotline to report any risks that threaten the security, safety, dignity, and lives of the elderly, whether the person reporting is the elderly person himself or someone else, while taking all guarantees to quickly respond to the complaint and inform the competent authorities