

CONTRIBUTION OF FIAPA

Social Inclusion and Participation

Social Inclusion of Older Persons in the political and non-political processes affecting society and their living circumstances do not only provide a sense of empowerment, purpose, accomplishment, and belonging to the community. It is also the ultimate proof that International Human Rights provisions and corollary national and local legal provisions and policies really function.

At FIAPA, we put the older person first and all our programs and action are constructed in dialogue with older persons themselves and that in the context in which they live and function.

Our work to stop abuse of the elderly - especially financial abuse - is participative.

- We have produced campaigns - TV spots - against abuse. Prior to launch, these spots have been visualised by older persons in institutional settings, followed by a dialogue as to what extent the spots respect their dignity. Then, the spots have been revised.
- We now embark to extend campaigns against financial abuse in collaboration with the Universities of the Third Age - using the same participative methods.
- We have produced training kits against financial abuse, consisting in participative workshops with those affected. Only those affected have the lived experience of abuse.

Our work to understand the effects of Covid is participative. In partnership with the Academic world we are surveying older persons in 30 countries.

The results are thought provoking. An image emerge - despite all the fatalities that we honestly deplore - with the older persons not feeling as depressed and isolated and victimised as previously thought.

Older persons, were resilient as they had gone through hardships previously in life. Older persons have taken the time to reflect on life and what they wish to do - as actors - post Covid. They do have dreams and wishes. Older persons have wished not to be helped, but to help the persons that help them and their own children. They are actors and contributors. They do contribute to their communities and societies.

We work - long and short term understand barriers, for older persons and those helping them in a participative fashion. Helping the helpers of older persons - too often neglected - is an important part of our mission.

15 years ago we dialogued with those helping older persons. In one on one interviews - with psychological support- we explored with them what they wish to do once the person they help died - preparing them for the future.

5 years ago, our follow-up showed that 80% had realised their projects.

The barriers we identified were being imposed child care by children and lacking digital skills.

In fact, the helpers of older persons are too neglected, despite legislation to include and how to include them when evaluating the needs of older persons and make decisions concerning the care of older persons.

Sometimes this leads to helpers deciding all. Sometimes it leads to excluding them from important decisions. There has to be balance - negotiated consent - and it has to be made sure that helpers have the capacity - thanks to training and support - to respond in line with declared Human Rights. What we call negotiated consent has to be based on intergenerational understanding and dialogue and professional capacity in the field of care.

In fact older persons should not "receive help". Being part of the aid/care process they both wish and can help the helpers and their children and other children in society. Rather than being brought pictures by school children at visits at retirement homes, older persons have a role in visiting schools and sharing - from their lives stories to the benefits of Covid vaccination.

Older persons are not a weight on society, which is also why we labour to change ageist vocabulary that does not respect rights, again in a collaborative effort with older persons. In the Council of Families and Older Persons of France, we suggested changing words that do not respect the rights of older persons. For instance, from “dependent” to “vulnerable”.

In summary, conventions and laws are declarative and frameworks protecting and supporting Human Rights. They need to be “grass root”, that is based on the older persons and the needs in their contexts and turned into concrete actions to be of use.