
Written Statement Submitted by the International Federation on Ageing (IFA)**13th Session of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing****3-6 April 2023**

The International Federation on Ageing (IFA) is an international non-governmental organization whose membership base comprises of government, civil society, industry, academia, and individuals who are committed to driving the agenda on the world's ageing populations globally. The IFA appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement at the 13th Session of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing towards the focus area: social inclusion.

Understanding social inclusion as being a gateway to accessing other human rights — as outlined in Conventions such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment — Member States are obligated to ensure that older adults experience social inclusion when they live both in the community and in long-term care settings.^{1,2,3}

Inclusion within the community reflects a recognition of inherent dignity of older adults. As individuals age their need for inclusion and interaction with others remains, yet all too often age and impairments more prevalent amongst older adults may be used to justify exclusion from the community.⁴ While capacity to contribute to the community is by no means a determinant of the right to be socially included, older adults can be a valuable resource for community reflection and development when they are provided with a platform to participate within the community. Aligned with the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing, age-friendly environments facilitate inclusion and dignity for older adults.⁵ It is critical that efforts towards social inclusion are cognizant of the various access needs (including but beyond the physical environment) of older adults and recognize that age is but one element of an individual's identity.

In addition to moral rationales for the social inclusion of older adults, social inclusion also has beneficial physiological impacts. Evidence shows that when individuals are engaged in cognitively stimulating activities such as engaging with others, in conjunction with other brain health activities, their risk of

¹ United Nations. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [Internet]. 2006. Available from: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm>

² United Nations. Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment [Internet]. Dec 10, 1984. Available from: [Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/1984/12/10/1984-torture-convention.html)

³ United Nations. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [Internet]. Dec 16, 1966. Available from: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/ceschr.pdf>

⁴ World Health Organization. Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2023 Feb 2]. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/rest/bitstreams/1481486/retrieve>

⁵ United Nations. Leaving No One Behind in an Ageing World: World Social Report 2023 [Internet]. 2023 [cited 2023 Jan 30]. Available from: <http://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2023/01/2023wsr-fullreport.pdf>

cognitive decline decreases.⁶ Cardiovascular benefits are also seen when individuals are included in social activities. Inclusion is as much a health issue as a social issue.^{7,8,9}

A convention on the rights of older adults would outline and protect the rights of older adults in our ageing world and provide guidance to signatory states regarding their obligations to older adults. The International Federation on Ageing urges UN Member States to commit to holding each other accountable to including older adults within their communities by supporting the creation of such a convention.

⁶ Global Council on Brain Health. How to Sustain Brain Healthy Behaviours: Applying Lessons of Public Health and Science to Drive Change [Internet]. 2022 [cited 2023 Jan 25]. Available from: <https://www.aarp.org/health/brain-health/global-council-on-brain-health/behavior-change/>

⁷ Begen FM, Turner-Cobb JM. Benefits of belonging: Experimental manipulation of social inclusion to enhance psychological and physiological health parameters. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/088704462014991734> [Internet]. 2014 May 4 [cited 2023 Jan 30];30(5):568–82. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08870446.2014.991734>

⁸ Bass EC, Stednitz SJ, Simonson K, Shen T, Gahtan E. Physiological stress reactivity and empathy following social exclusion: A test of the defensive emotional analgesia hypothesis. <https://doi.org/10.1080/174709192014929533> [Internet]. 2014 [cited 2023 Jan 30];9(5):504–13. Available from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17470919.2014.929533>

⁹ Kothgassner OD, Goreis A, Glenk LM, Kafka JX, Beutl L, Kryspin-Exner I, et al. Virtual and real-life ostracism and its impact on a subsequent acute stressor. *Physiol Behav.* 2021 Jan 1;228:113205.