

## Substantive input



13th session of the UN General Assembly's  
Open Ended Working Group on Ageing  
for the purpose of strengthening the protection  
of the human rights of older persons

### Focus area 2: **Social Inclusion**

What a joy to see Social Inclusion as the choice of study, a subject often forgotten or neglected. This choice, so important for everyone, at whatever age, is even more important during periods of "frailty".

In Old Age one is in search of meaning, of deepening reflection, and of feeling oneself to be on a meaningful journey of which social inclusion is one of the major elements.

Joining one's "last family" is an essential link to make, somewhat like forming part of a rope team with others on the same journey. Just as the child who needs to first fit into a family and then to socialize in school, the man and the woman whose life course is nearing its end, need to anchor themselves in the context of meaningful encounters.



### **Meaningful dialogue**

When the initial family is still there, the members support their loved ones along the path, and everyone knows how vitally important their helping hand and kind regard are. However, all too often the tight circle has disappeared for various reasons (mourning, estrangement, etc.) and the old person stands alone and has to reconstruct a livable environment. The various housing solutions that are available tend to favor material support and medical care, both essential, but fall short of providing meaningful dialogue and an opportunity to form new relationships.



There is no "good" life without the existence of lasting bonds of mutual attachment, and this is a vital need for everyone.

How can we promote and create this warm environment, how can we reach this goal? Nurturing relationships, finding meaning to our participation is a desirable ultimate goal.

## **Walking together**

The extended hand of the "Other", the brother or sister who recognizes us, welcomes us, seeks our presence, our thoughts ...



It is essential to exist for someone, to count for someone who anticipates meeting us every morning ... walking together is priceless and helps us look forward to another day...

Often accommodation and the care necessary for our condition is provided, but what is forgotten is the most fundamental, the accompaniment, the sharing of the path during which the "old person" will be able to draw the meaning of the singular walk to the end-of-life.

Unfortunately, the old person does not often have the chance to experience himself as "love partner" or even a friend. "The child is a seeker of love", says Ruffo, and we are potential "participants" of this privileged relationship.

How can we organize a supportive environment to accompany people on their journey to the end of life?

What plan can be imagined to perpetuate the feeling of continuity, of belonging to "humanity" as a whole?

How can we respond to this emerging and pressing spiritual aspiration?

## “Nothing for us, without us”



“Old people” in the second stage of their retirement are, consciously or unconsciously, pioneers, centenarian apprentices striving to bring meaning and usefulness (and well-being) to their longer lives.

The ignorance of this aspiration and of the elderly in general, is the first obstacle to overcome. Those who speak for us, decide for us – the "experts", the politicians... - are essentially unaware of who we are.

This is why we claim the right to be present and associated in all instances and institutions taking decisions that concern us!... “Nothing for us, without us”.

The sooner we involve the elderly, the sooner we can mitigate the scourges they encounter on their way to the end of life – boredom, loneliness and helplessness.