

UNHCR inputs on the issues examined at the eleventh session of the General Assembly open-ended working group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

Right to work and access to the labor market

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) would like the distinguished members of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing to consider the following issues and recommendations at the Eleventh Session of the Working Group, to be held in New York from 29 March to 1 April 2021.

Issue 1: Lack of documentation prevents access to the labor market for older persons on the move. According to the findings of a regional assessment on the situation of older persons on the move in the Americas,¹ a large proportion of older persons on the move surveyed were in a situation of great economic vulnerability, with 64% having no monthly income before the pandemic and, among those having income-generating activities during the pandemic, only 15% having a formal employment. Lack of documentation is one of the main barriers to accessing work reported in the region, with 47% of older persons consulted reporting not having any permits or documents.

Issue 2: Access to pension systems and financial services remain low for older persons on the move. While all countries involved in the assessment (with the exception of Honduras) have social pensions (i.e. tax-financed cash transfers that are regularly paid to older persons, regardless of their employment history or social security contributions), these pensions are not available to the vast majority of older persons on the move given the eligibility requirements of citizenship and residence. In addition, 81% of older persons did not have a savings, current or credit account in a financial institution, with a significant difference between men (77%) and women (85%). Disability appears as an additional intersecting factor, with 85% of older persons with a disability not having access to banking services.

Concerning Issue 1, UNHCR would like to highlight the following recommendations:

1. Increase accessibility to mechanisms and routes for regularization and documentation of older persons on the move, especially refugees and asylum seekers in need of international protection.
2. Provide work permits in the framework of regularization, so that older persons on the move can access the formal and decent labor market, contributing to their integration, economic and social wellbeing, activating the economy of the host communities, and protecting them from labor exploitation.

Concerning Issue 2, UNHCR would like to highlight the following recommendations:

3. Adapt National Social Security Systems to the new dynamics of population ageing in correlation with the different human mobility flows and forms of work, specially informal work, so that all older persons can be protected and covered from a perspective of comprehensive and inclusive social protection.
4. Establish mechanisms for the portability of benefits and social benefits acquired in their countries of origin or third countries.

UNHCR, February 2022

¹ UNHCR, 2021 [A claim to dignity: Ageing on the move](#)