



Substantive Input

For the 14th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing

Focus Area

“ACCESSIBILITY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND HABITAT (TRANSPORT, HOUSING AND ACCESS)”

Empowering Older Americans: Ensuring Accessible Infrastructure and Rights

In the United States, the recognition and protection of older persons' rights to accessibility have been fundamental aspects of legal provisions and policy frameworks. The nation has made strides in ensuring that seniors have access to essential services, transportation, housing, and infrastructure. However, challenges persist, and there remains room for improvement in addressing barriers and promoting inclusivity for older adults.

National Legal Provisions and Policy Frameworks

The USA has a robust legal framework aimed at recognizing and safeguarding the rights of older persons to accessibility. The Older Americans Act (OAA) of 1965 stands as a cornerstone, providing a comprehensive approach to addressing the diverse needs of seniors. Under the OAA, programs such as transportation services, elder abuse prevention, and supportive services for independent living are mandated, emphasizing the importance of accessibility for older adults.



Additionally, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ensures accessibility for people with disabilities, including older individuals. This legislation prohibits discrimination and requires public accommodations, transportation services, and facilities to be accessible to individuals with disabilities, thereby indirectly benefiting seniors.

Agewell Foundation USA, Inc.

(Accredited with The Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing at United Nations since 2019)

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Status of Older Persons' Friendly Infrastructure

Despite legal frameworks promoting accessibility, challenges persist in ensuring infrastructure is elderly-friendly. Infrastructure often lacks adequate signage, ramps, or elevators, hindering older adults' mobility. While some cities have made progress in creating age-friendly environments, disparities remain across regions, with countryside areas facing greater challenges due to limited resources.

Transport Facilities and Benefits for Senior Citizens

Transportation plays a crucial role in seniors' independence and access to essential services. Many municipalities offer discounted or free transit services for older adults, facilitating mobility. However, gaps exist in countryside areas where public transportation options are limited. Moreover, transportation services must address specific needs such as door-to-door assistance and accommodating mobility devices to truly serve older adults effectively.



Housing for Elderly and Old Age Homes

Access to adequate housing is integral to older adults' well-being and autonomy. While some seniors choose to reside in age-restricted communities or assisted living facilities, others prefer to age in place. Affordable housing options tailored to seniors' needs, such as single-floor living and accessibility features, are essential. Additionally, ensuring protection against housing discrimination based on age is crucial to upholding seniors' rights.

Rights to Access the Physical Environment

Older adults have the right to access public spaces, including buildings, roads, and recreational areas. However, accessibility barriers persist, ranging from uneven sidewalks to inaccessible public

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buildings. Green spaces and recreational facilities should be designed with seniors' needs in mind, promoting physical activity and social engagement.

Challenges and Barriers

Despite legal protections, seniors face numerous challenges in realizing their right to accessibility. Ageism and stereotypes contribute to marginalization, impacting seniors' access to services and opportunities. Physical barriers in infrastructure, coupled with limited financial resources, exacerbate these challenges, particularly for vulnerable populations.

Measures to Eliminate Ageism

Efforts to combat ageism and promote inclusivity are underway, encompassing education, advocacy, and policy initiatives. Public awareness campaigns challenge ageist stereotypes, while organizations advocate for age-friendly policies and practices. Intergenerational programs foster understanding and respect between generations, promoting a culture of inclusivity and mutual support.

Mechanisms for Seeking Redress

Seniors have avenues to address violations of their rights to accessibility and infrastructure. Complaints can be lodged with relevant agencies, such as the Department of Justice or local human rights commissions. Legal advocacy organizations also offer support and representation to seniors facing discrimination or denial of their rights.

In conclusion, while progress has been made in recognizing and promoting older persons' rights to accessibility in the USA, challenges persist. Addressing infrastructure barriers, combating ageism, and ensuring inclusive policies are essential steps towards creating a society where seniors can age with dignity and autonomy. By prioritizing accessibility and inclusivity, we can empower older Americans to live fulfilling and independent lives.

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