

## **Eighth Session of Open-ended Working Group on Ageing**

### ***UNDP Input (11 May 2017)***

Preparing for an ageing population is vital to achieving the integrated 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and fulfilling its pledge to leave no one behind. To ensure progress towards implementing the 2030 Agenda, it is essential to prepare for the economic and social transformations associated with population ageing, which cuts across several interrelated goals including poverty eradication, food security, good health, gender equality, resilient infrastructure and inclusive communities.

Population ageing provides significant opportunities for sustainable development which are associated with the active participation of older generations in the labour market and society at large. In view of their experience, knowledge and skills, older persons are important actors in communities, making key contributions to economic development, unpaid care work, political participation and social capital. With the growing proportion of older persons in the global population, there is greater acknowledgement of the importance of ageing and recognition of the rights of older persons, as evidenced by a number of international mechanisms such as the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing.

Yet, many older persons have not benefitted systematically from development gains and they continue to be overlooked by development policy and discourse. A major challenge is discrimination on the grounds of age which is still widespread around the world and undermines the rights of older persons and their contributions to society. Inequalities in income, access to education, health and decent employment across the life cycle expose many older persons to poverty in old age, which is further exacerbated by limitations on social security entitlements. Older women tend to be more marginalised and disadvantaged than older men, with evidence showing higher rates of poverty among older women in both developed and developing countries.

Abuse of older persons—physical, emotional or financial—is another key concern for all countries, which has so far received modest attention in policies and research. For example, most studies of violence against women set an upper age limit for data collection at age 49 years. All these challenges are obscured by gaps in data on older persons, which risks excluding them from basic services to which older persons are entitled.

A fundamental policy and attitudinal shift on ageing is needed to promote the contributions of older persons to society. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects of ageing, policies should promote older persons and their agency as a solution to many development challenges. The process of reaching out to older persons and overcoming discrimination requires an integrated and multifaceted approach, including enforcement of anti-discrimination legislation, addressing more effectively the neglect, violence and abuse of older persons, and articulating in a compelling manner the gains for society if older persons are included in the development process.

UNDP acknowledges the importance of a life-course approach to ageing and calls for protecting and promoting the rights of older persons in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It affirms that while it is essential to address the exclusion and vulnerability of—and intersectional discrimination against—many older persons, it is even more important to go beyond treating older persons as a vulnerable group and recognize them as active agents of societal development.