

United Nations General Assembly Open-ended Working Group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons Eleventh working session New York, 29th March – 1st April 2021

Priority Theme: Right to Work and Access to the Labour Market

***Statement submitted by “Fondation pour un Centre pour le Développement Socio-Eco-Nomique (Centre for Socio-Eco-Nomic Development, CSEND)”, Geneva ; an ECOSOC accredited NGO in special consultative status
www.csend.org***

***Facilitation of inter-generational cooperation through digital learning and practice
(487 words)***

In order to achieve inclusive digitalisation, intergenerational cooperation is required, i.e., from collaboration between the young digital natives and the older digital illiterates; and between young digital adopters and older left behinds. Intergenerational cooperation requires enabling conditions that consist of facilitators who can help bridge the gap between young and older workers, neighbours, citizens and collaborating mechanisms and platforms.

A large percentage of the older population are either low on digital literacy, or low on psychological security to be connected online to different support services of daily necessity, such as ordering food online, e-banking or reading up on the updates and guidelines on COVID. Older persons when living alone or staying in social care homes are cut off from their families and other social networks and pay a higher toll for their isolation. Digital literacy would help them be connect to essential goods, services and to be connect to social networks.

Facilitators could help transfer digital skills to the digital illiterate persons in both directions that is from younger generations to older generations, as well as older generations to younger workers. Policies and procedures should be put in place to promote intergenerational collaboration especially in rapidly

ageing societies to create a health care bonus. Therefore governments should establish mixed-aged working teams to improve productivity in the work place; provide an environment that promotes and fosters intergenerational teamwork encourages and implements mentoring programs between members of different age; and implements training activities that promote intergenerational understanding and cooperative work force teams. .

Digital literacy and related skills can only be developed through experience and practice. Learning by traditional instruction will not be sufficient to acquire mastery of the basic IT programmes and build the confidence in user application. Hence, facilitation and coaching would be an effective pedagogy to help the IT illiterate person acquire IT competence and ease to use IT technology.

Intergenerational collaboration should be used to increase the participation rate in IT activities of all age groups through universal digital literacy programmes.

Implementation of a rights-based and inclusive IT policy could be made possible through the intermediary of different community groups through voluntary engagements such as volunteering groups of students providing *accompanying programmes* for the elders or for children where parental guidance in IT literacy is not available.

Public awareness programmes should be organised by the authorities to encourage the more privileged groups of digital literates to contribute to the promotion of digital literacy for all age groups. This should be part of the enabling drivers for an effective ecosystem to eliminate digital inequality.

Without active intervention to mitigate this exclusion, digital illiterate persons remain deprived and locked in a “poverty” trap. CSEND is therefore calling for immediate policies and investment to eliminate this digital inequality by calling for digital literacy training and provisions of community centres where connectivity and PCs are made available to the residents and where facilitators can help close the gap.