
Contribution of the International Federation on Ageing to the 14th Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing: Normative content on the right to social inclusion

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As fundamentally social beings, social inclusion across the life course is essential in maintaining the health and function of both individuals and societies. Older persons' inclusion within digital and physical communities reflects a recognition of their inherent dignity. As individuals age, their need for inclusion and interaction with others remains, yet all too often age and impairments more prevalent amongst older adults may be used to justify exclusion from the community.(1) Furthermore, the human rights of older persons enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) often remain invisible in international human rights law due to a lack of recognition of the impact of ageism and there being no explicit legal prohibition of age-based discrimination. (2)

Understanding social inclusion as a gateway to accessing other human rights — as outlined in conventions such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment — Member States are obligated to ensure that older adults experience social inclusion when they live both in the community and in long-term care settings.(3–5) As outlined in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the social inclusion of all citizens is interdependent on combating inequality within and among countries, preserving the planet, creating sustainable economic growth, and empowering marginalized groups.(6)

Key normative elements of a right specific to older people's social inclusion ought to include considerations of:

- i. The inherent dignity of older persons and how this is the basis of their right to social inclusion
- ii. How older persons' identities intersect and impact their experiences of social inclusion.
- iii. How physical and digital environments facilitate or create barriers to social inclusion.
- iv. The ways in which older people are vulnerable to the consequences of ageism.
- v. The obligations of states to support intergenerational connection.

A convention on the rights of older adults would outline and protect the rights of older adults in our ageing world and provide guidance to signatory states regarding their obligations to older adults. The International Federation on Ageing urges UN Member States to commit to holding each other accountable to including older adults within their communities by supporting the creation of such a convention.

References

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