

April 8th. 2018
Gaza Strip, Palestine

A Position Paper to the 9th. session in the period 23-26 August 2018 of:
Open Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG), UN, New-York

Ageing has been a challenging issue across the world for decades; either in developing countries or developed ones. The proportion of older persons is growing at a faster rate than the general population. Ex. General Secretary, Mr. Ban Ki-moon stated in his speech to the tenth anniversary of the second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, 2012 “... ***but the social and economic implications of this phenomenon are profound***”. Globally, the critical point facing decision makers is how best to invest this important stratum. Unless state members take whatever appropriate actions towards addressing these needs and challenges, they could not abide to the firm UN’s principles; independence, participation, care, self-esteem, and dignity.

The situation in Palestine in general, and the Gaza Strip in particular has been worsening dramatically than before two decades for external reasons including the repeatedly Israeli aggressions, a 10-years strict blockade, backwardness of funding civic organizations, and USA’s decision to stop funding UNRWA, which supports 70% of refugee population in the Gaza Strip, and for internal factors related to the political split, high rate of poverty, unemployment which raised the rate of dependency on UNRWA to 80% as reported by AIDA on Feb, 8th. 2018 (info@aidajerusalem.org). Noting that the aging population in Palestine is increasing (but still considered a young Society) i.e. 3.4% in 2012 to 4.5% in 2018 and it is expected for increasing after 2020, (PCBS, 2015).

It is very important for member states *to give high priority to the quality and quantity approaches*. In this context, and on its capacity as a representative member of civic NGOs at the **OEWG** and being a very active actor in this field, El-Wedad Society for Community Rehabilitation (**WSCR**) conducted a study (a quantitative approach) on effects of discrimination against older people from psycho-social and health perspectives, 2016. The results of a random sample (44%M-56%F) indicated that 45.3% complaint from abuse and discrimination; 20.2% have the feelings of isolation; 40.1% lack to assistive devices; and 80.4% are rapidly getting anger at homes. On the other hand, two focus groups (a qualitative approach-the voice of people), of 14 older people and 23 main Ministries and NGOs were recently held on January 9th. and April 3rd. , 2018 respectively, to discuss the needs and challenges facing the older people.

From a governmental perspective, and based on the decision of UN General Assembly No. 46/91, MOSA has released the draft strategic plan 2016-2020 for older people in 2016, it has been noticed that MOSA is responsible and committed to establish 5 daily-care centers; one at each governorate in the Gaza strip. The strategic plan relies on “results – based planning” which stands on a situational analysis of the rights of older people in Palestine, 2015.

Main Challenges facing Palestine:

- lacking to human and financial resources to MOSA and civic NGOs.
- Needed legislative actions are postponed due to PLC that has not been functioning since 2007.

- Lacking to national database on Ageing.
- Lacking to a qualitative research on elderly.

Key recommendations:

To address these challenges (gaps), it is very important to focus on (i) supporting PCBS to launch a national data survey to build a comprehensive national database; (ii) supporting active NGOs working for Ageing (WSCR can be considered a local consultant) (iii) supporting WSCR to strength its research unit (iv) motivating the Palestinian Authority to release the official law on Ageing (v) inclusion of rights of older people at the national development plan as well as civic organizations (vi) WSCR suggests to build a bridge between the older people and youth club (volunteers) in order to address the five principles of human rights through launching a group of activities that help to transmit their experiences and sustain the culture and history of homeland. These activities cover four axes; health and primary care, psychosocial, cultural and entertainment, and legal (vii) and finally, it is of high important to building alliance with regional and international bodies for the interest and benefits of issues of older people.

While WSCR feels sorry being not able to participate at this very important event due to the strict-terminal mobility, we wish the coming OEWG's 9th. session the success and constructiveness.

Chairman of Board
Dr. Naim Ghalban