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**HelpAge International Submission on Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Capacity Building**

10th Working Session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, 2019

**Introduction**

Older people must be part of the growing discussion on their human rights. To this end, in November 2018 HelpAge International consulted 348 older women and 191 older men across 23 countries[[1]](#footnote-1) on the rights to be discussed at the 10th Session of the UN OEWG. This submission presents the issues they raised and uses their own words. Participants were self-selecting, so their responses are not a representative sample of older people.

**Question 2: Challenges in access**

In the consultation older people said they wanted to learn how to use different types of technology, how to earn a living, how to manage their finances and understand their pension. They wanted to learn about their own health and healthcare services, exercise and nutrition, their human rights, politics and the law. Some wanted to learn leadership, advocacy and campaigning skills; others how to run an organisation. Some said they needed skills to raise their grandchildren. Others wanted creative and recreational skills to enjoy life more.

Without these skills, knowledge and information, older people felt excluded and dependent. With them, they felt independent and part of society.

‘My son taught me how to use my phone and Google. I really like it! When a question pops into my mind, I just type it in and get loads of answers!’ 65-year-old woman, Jordan

Despite this, many participants said they did not know where they could go to acquire the skills, knowledge and information they needed or wanted, or had never tried to do so.

‘Where we live in our community we haven’t even tried to get support. We simply don’t know where to go and who to approach.’ Group discussion, Sudan

Participants said negative attitudes and stereotypes encountered by older people, and internalised by older people themselves, can prevent them from acquiring new skills, knowledge and information.

‘A year back I was completely illiterate. I couldn’t even write my name. Luckily, I got an opportunity to take a basic literacy class. At that time, villagers laughed at me and teased me due to my age.’81-year-old woman, Nepal

**Question 3: Adaptability**

Older people identified a number of ways in which learning had not been adapted to meet their needs and preferences.

‘There are no established resource centres with materials relevant for older people.’ Group discussion, Tanzania

Others said they did not have enough money, the learning centre was too far away, and they could not afford, or there was no, transport.

‘The cost of training is a limiting factor as it would compete for your meagre resources with the cost of looking after grandchildren or children still under your care.’ 77-year-old man, Zambia

**Question 4: Equality and non-discrimination**

A number of participants said opportunities to learn were not available to them because of their older age or other characteristics.

‘There are many places you can go for training in clothes design, but they’re only for young people.’ 80-year-old woman, Myanmar

‘I want to learn skills and acquire knowledge but unfortunately there are no vocational centres or accelerated learning programme classes for older people.’ 60-year-old man, Sudan

‘I do not know if there are any painting courses for people with disabilities in Moldova.’ 75-year-old man, Moldova

**International Legal framework**

The right to education has not been specifically applied to the life-course or to lifelong learning and education in older age within the international human rights framework. These recommendations on what the right to lifelong learning and education should look like are informed by older people’s experience as reported in this consultation**.**

**Older people have the right to education and lifelong learning on an equal basis with others and without discrimination, so they can live dignified, autonomous and independent lives, fulfil their aspirations, build their skills and capacities, develop their full human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth, and fully participate in society.**

The right shall cover all forms of learning and education, including but not limited to tertiary education, vocational training and retraining, digital education, adult education, informal, recreational and community-based education, lifelong learning programmes, and skills training in literacy, numeracy and technological competencies.

**Non-discrimination and equality**

* All older people have the right to equal access to opportunities for all forms of learning and levels of education without discrimination based on age or any other grounds.
* Older people have the right to equal access to digital learning and education platforms without discrimination on the basis of age or any other grounds.
* Older people have the right to benefit from scholarships and other educational or study grants on an equal basis with others.
* States should take steps to eliminate negative ageist stereotypes and prejudices about older people’s ability to learn.

**Accessibility**

* Older people have the right to affordable education and lifelong learning opportunities that fit their needs, preferences, skills, motivations and diverse identities.
* Older people have the right to education and lifelong learning opportunities in settings that are accessible to them, including in their communities and in care and support settings.

**Availability**

* Older people have the right to equal access to opportunities for education and lifelong learning available to the general public and to learning opportunities adapted to their specific needs, preferences, skills, motivations and diverse identities.

**Acceptability**

* Older people have the right to access, and be involved in the development and design of, appropriate and acceptable education and lifelong learning opportunities that are adapted to their needs, preferences, skills, motivations and diverse identities including, but not limited to, design of and training in new technologies, so they can develop their full human potential, personality, creativity, talents and sense of dignity and self-worth.
* Older people have the right to learning and educational materials in an accessible and acceptable format.

**Accountability, remedies and redress**

* Older people have the right to accountability mechanisms that provide for complaints and appeals, and for remedies and redress when their right to education and lifelong learning is violated.
* Safeguards must be in place to protect against breaches of the right to education and lifelong learning, including breaches of privacy and security of data on digital and online learning platforms.

A full report of the consultation findings will be submitted to the OEWG in advance of the 10th Session. For further information contact Bridget Sleap, HelpAge International [bsleap@helpage.org](mailto:bsleap@helpage.org)

1. Argentina, Cambodia, Denmark, Finland, Jordan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lesotho, Mauritius, Moldova, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Serbia, Slovenia, South Africa, Sudan, Tajikistan, Tanzania, Ukraine, Zambia [↑](#footnote-ref-1)