

## Guiding questions for defining the normative content of the issues examined at the twelfth session

### Focus Area 1: Contribution of older persons to sustainable development

#### Definition

1. (What is WHO doing to support countries around) the key human rights relating to older persons' participation and, therefore, their contribution to sustainable development defined in national legislations? If definitions are not available, how should such rights be defined considering relevant existing national, regional, and international legal frameworks?

Older people must be heard, seen and meaningfully engaged in developing, implementing and monitoring policies, programmes and research related to sustainable development defined in national legislations.

For over a Decade WHO has been supporting Member States in the development of age-friendly environments<sup>1</sup>, whose framework places older people at the center of the decision-making process, from local to national levels, and highlights several domains of action needed to secure the rights of older people (e.g., labour, housing, transport, information and communication, health and social care). National and local age-friendly cities and communities programmes can also serve as mechanisms through which the contribution of older people to sustainable development is secured and maximized.

The Global Campaign to Combat Ageism, coordinated by WHO in partnership with other stakeholders, supports Member States to combat ageism (defined as the stereotyping (how we think), prejudice (how we feel) and discrimination (how we act) directed towards ourselves or others on the basis of age). Ageism against older people is widespread, extremely damaging to physical and mental health and has serious economic costs for individuals and societies. Ageism is prevalent across a broad range of institutions including health and social care, the workplace, the media, the legal system, and the political system).

The UN Global Report on Ageism recommends implementation of three strategies to address ageism: Policies and laws (at local, national and international level), educational and intergenerational contact interventions. WHO encourages and supports countries to modify or repeal existing laws or policies which permit age discrimination or implement policies and laws with adequate legal and material scope to prohibit age discrimination and to foster the equal rights of all persons regardless of their age. Educational activities can foster empathy and dispel misconceptions about age and ageing at all levels and in all types of education. WHO is developing training on ageism that can be integrated across curricula including health and social care. WHO is also leading on the development of a Guide on Connecting Generations, which will be launched in 2023 and can support the development of intergenerational activities and projects that can improve contact between different age groups in ways that can reduce intergroup prejudice and stereotypes. A range of advocacy related materials are available to support stakeholders raise awareness and generate evidence-based action to combat ageism.

Voice, participation and meaningful engagement of older people is central to implementing the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing (2021 – 2030). WHO is working with the Inter-Agency

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/age-friendly-environments>

Group on Ageing and other stakeholders to define voice and meaningful engagement and agree on a framework to operationalize these concepts within the Decade activities. WHO has also been working to extend opportunities to older people to raise their voices and meaningfully engage and influence discussions and decisions that relate to their health and well-being for example through a participatory video project in 3 countries <https://www.decadeofhealthyageing.org/find-knowledge/voices>.

## Scope of the rights

2. Please provide references to (WHO normative guidance and support for) existing national legal standards relating to older persons' contribution to sustainable development on normative elements such as:

- a) right to equality and prohibition of all forms of discrimination against older persons on the basis of age, alone or combined with other grounds, in the context of sustainable development.
- b) elimination of all forms of ageism and age discrimination from sustainable development laws, frameworks, programs, policies, and practices;
- c) right to freedom of expression, including freedom to seek, receive and impart information;
- d) right of peaceful assembly;
- e) right to freedom of association;
- f) right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives;
- g) right to development, including older persons as active participants and beneficiaries of development;
- h) active, free and meaningful participation of older persons and their representative organizations in all matters related to sustainable development, including in political processes;
- i) access to prompt remedies and redress when older persons' above mentioned rights are violated.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021-2030 Advocacy Brief, developed in partnership with the WHO secretariat and 20 members of the Inter-Agency Group on Ageing [Decade of Healthy Ageing Connection Series No. 2 - Agenda 2030 \(who.int\)](#), provides guidance to UN agencies and country teams on making older people visible in the SDG agenda and indicators as well as on developing, implementing and monitoring common country assessments and UN sustainable development cooperation frameworks.

Collective action by many stakeholders is needed to ensure national legal standards relate to older persons' contribution to sustainable development on normative elements. These include older people and their organizations, mayors and other elected municipal leaders, indigenous leaders, young people's and women's associations and community development groups and networks.

Such collaboration can result in appropriate infrastructure, identification of barriers and solutions for healthy ageing, including during crises. Existing partnerships include the WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities <sup>2</sup> and the WHO Global Health Observatory's dementia-friendly initiative <sup>3</sup>. Age-friendly cities and communities are key to enabling people to live long, healthy lives, fulfilling the abovementioned rights, from the right to equality to the right to development or the rights to health, education and clean, healthy, and sustainable environment. WHO

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<sup>2</sup> WHO Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities: <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/who-network/>

<sup>3</sup> Dementia-friendly initiatives. Global dementia observatory. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2021 (<https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/topics/topic-details/GHO/dementiafriendly-initiatives>).

guidance on age-friendly cities and communities, successfully tested across a number of communities globally, advocates for and provides a concrete framework through which older people can contribute to sustainable development, including by influencing legislation and legal standards related to their own rights.

WHO also supports member states to provide all health and care services (i.e., promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care) without financial burden and age-based discrimination, for example by providing a repository of health and long-term care interventions linked to healthy ageing (i.e., UHC compendium). Health and care workers should assess the older person's care needs in a holistic manner. This requires the participation of the older person (and caregivers) in the decision-making process, explaining the options and limitations of interventions in respect of their priorities and preferences.

### **State obligations**

3. What measures and special considerations should be undertaken by the State to respect, protect and fulfil the above-mentioned rights to ensure older persons' contribution to sustainable development?

- [note: not sure whether this is applicable, directed to States]

### **Implementation**

4. What are the good practices and main challenges faced by (WHO in support to) countries in the adoption and implementation of the above-mentioned normative framework to ensure older persons' contribution to sustainable development?

Strengthening the meaningful engagement of older people through the establishment of age-friendly cities and communities initiatives is a good practice to support the adoption and implementation of the normative framework to ensure older persons' contribution to sustainable development. WHO supports member states in the development of age-friendly cities and communities which will help create the conditions for older people to self-organize, identify issues that are relevant for them, plan and act to improve their living environments – from the micro- to the macro-level – home, communities and the broader society. A global database of local examples is available to inspire and support other municipalities to take action <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/afp/>.

Main challenges observed in the development of age-friendly cities and communities initiatives include the absence or weak presence of healthy ageing in the political agenda, limited resources, and unfamiliarity or resistance to people-centered, multi-sectoral approaches. New WHO guidance on developing National Age-friendly City and Community Programmes, which addresses these challenges, will be released in 2023.

Another main challenge is a lack of age-disaggregated data and analysis, that is critical to inform policies and programmes for older people. WHO has developed the [ageing data portal](#), that brings together data, disaggregated by sex and age, on available global indicators relevant to monitoring the health and well-being of older persons. This information helps to strengthen the visibility of older people, and inform actions to improve health and well-being across countries, in line with global, regional, and national commitments.

Finally, another aspect to potentially consider is the limited attention to the diverse needs and priorities of older people both within society and in care systems. Without proper recognition of such heterogeneity, it will be difficult to receive adequate support in the re-orientation of systems towards person-centered models. Implementation of the Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) approach can help broader health and social care systems effectively respond to the diverse and complex needs of older people. WHO has developed the ICOPE Implementation Framework for policy makers and programme managers to concretely assess and measure the capacity of services and systems to deliver person centered integrated care at the community level <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241515993> . Clinical Guidelines are also available for primary care workers <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241550109> .