



NORMATIVE INPUT

for the twelfth session of the

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP

for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons

Focus area:

Right to Work and Access to the Labor Market

India has approximately 140 million older persons and a majority of them are in the age group of 60-70. In this age group, most old people are active and want to work for a few more years. However, in the job market, they hardly find any takers, who can offer them suitable jobs due to their age and other limitations.

In rural India, the agriculture sector accounts for more than two-thirds of employment for both elderly men and elderly women. The service sector is the second most important source of employment for the elderly in rural India. Unlike rural India, the service sector provides the predominant share of employment to the urban elderly.

The regular age of retirement from government jobs is 60 years in India. However, in the unorganized/informal sector where a majority of the working population work, there is no fixed retirement age. Every citizen has the right to work over a certain period of time. They cannot be retired from doing their work whether in the private or the public sphere. Unfortunately, older persons do not come under the preview of this constitutional provision and they hardly enjoy the right to work in India. However, in the labor market of the informal sector, primarily, the agriculture sector, older persons have equal access till they are able to work.

Submission by

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(In Special Consultative Status with the ECOSOC at United Nations since 2011)

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Over the past decades' work culture across the sectors has changed remarkably primarily due to the advancement of technology. The majority of older persons are unskilled, and digitally challenged or have lower academic qualifications as compared to younger people. Moreover, ever-increasing unemployment and lack of post-retirement gainful engagement opportunities discourage older persons to realize their right to work in old age. A very low percentage of the elderly workforce are engaged in poorly paid jobs in the informal sector, either as casual workers or as self-employed in low-skilled or unskilled occupations since their access to the labor market is very limited. Inadequate provision of social security for the elderly in India has left the majority without any economic support and they continue to look for employment opportunities in their old age.



Gainful re-employment is an area of great concern, for many older persons. Some want it because they find themselves completely active but retired. Some need it because of their yet uncompleted responsibilities. For many, it is a matter of survival; there are still many more who just want to keep themselves engaged. Indeed it is ironic; that very few people prepare themselves for their life after retirement. In addition, most of them are mentally and physically fit to work for some more years in old age. Earlier most of the retired people didn't like to work after retirement and used to depend on their savings/pension and younger family members for the rest of their life. However, today due to escalating cost of living, longer life span in old age and lack of family support compels them to look for a second career to complete their unfinished responsibilities. Many retired persons who are otherwise financially sound and do not have any of the above responsibilities, find it difficult to pass their time on and seek meaningful engagement because when they have nothing to do, time hangs on them.

In India, no concrete steps have been taken at any level to ensure the access of older persons to the labor market including through physical accessibility, access to information about employment opportunities, training and the provision of appropriate workplace accommodations. However, concerned stakeholders at multiple levels have realized the need to bring older persons into the mainstream by involving them in income-generational activities.

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In the unorganized/informal sector, older persons have equal rights to work and earn their livelihood. Due to the increased longevity share of older persons is also increasing in the labor market.

So far as the job market is concerned, older persons are not treated equally and they have to face a lot of discrimination due to their age. The current retirement age for most government workers in India is 60. Most private companies have aligned their age of superannuation to the Centre and state governments.



Following are the indicative mechanisms for older persons to seek redress for denial of their right to work and access to the labor market

- Conducting Pre and post-retirement training programs for older persons to provide soft skills, digital literacy, communication, and other training for skill enhancement.
- Establishment of Employment Exchange for Old and Retired People at the national level.
- Provisions for encouraging employment of retired elderly in the unorganized service sector by initiating incentives schemes.
- Promoting anti-age discriminatory practices in the labor market
- Create gainful engagement opportunities for the elderly in local govt. schemes/programs

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