



COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY -- 1:15 to 2:30PM New York Time

**Addressing Elder Abuse through Health and Poverty Reduction Policies and Programs:
Obstacles and Opportunities**

A VIRTUAL PROGRAM

Chair: Susan B. Somers, President, INPEA

Moderator: Erica Dhar, INPEA UN Representative, SDG Expert

Speakers:

Mary Beth Quaranta Morrissey, PhD, JD, MPH : INPEA Expert: Healthcare and public health law attorney and gerontological health and social work researcher

Suffering of older adults across diverse communities including policy harms to older adults.

Bola Amaike, PhD., Lagos University, Nigeria

Programs/Policies to protect Older Women in Nigeria: Through a Gendered Lens

Isaac Kabelenga, PhD., Univ of Zambia, INPEA National Representative Zambia

Programs/Policies to protect Older Persons in Zambia within Institutions

WHO Representative: (TBA)

Interventions from the floor

This side event focuses on social policies and programs to reduce risk factors for abuse neglect and violence against older men and women in family, community, and conflict situations.

Concept Note:

The global problem of abuse, neglect and violence against older persons and communities calls for examination of the structural vulnerability of older people and the structural violence of policies that have historically marginalized and excluded older people from full participation in society, enjoyment of the society's resources, and human flourishing. Drawing upon theory of syndemics advanced during the COVID pandemic, a more inclusive syndemic framing must take account of the problem of abuse, neglect and violence against older persons including structural ageism and racism. A public health lens helps to deepen understanding of the social and economic determinants of health at the intersectionality of age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, disability, neighborhood, income inequality, and impoverishment that have compounded risk for populations of older people across the globe.

Population ageing is a global megatrend and changing the world in fundamental ways. A gradual and largely irreversible shift towards an older population is already underway in most countries. By 2030, persons aged 60 years or over are projected to globally outnumber youth and double the number of children under five. Globally, babies born in 2022 are expected to live 72.3 years on average, 25 years longer than those born in 1950.

In almost all societies, women live longer than men on average and thus comprise a majority of older persons, especially at the highest ages. In 2021, women outlived men by an average of 5.4 years and accounted for 56 per cent of the global population aged 65 or over. We celebrate extended longevity in many regions of the world as one of humanity's major achievements, however the gap between the countries with the highest and the lowest life expectancy at birth remains wide, at 31.8 years.

Globally, there is little evidence that older people today are in better health than previous generations. Based on WHO global estimates over 20 years (2000 and 2019), life expectancy increased faster than healthy life expectancy for both men and women. At age 60, the gap between life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for men was 4.1 years and for women 5.3 years, in 2000. By 2019, this increased to 4.7 years for men and 6.0 years for women. This reflects an increase in the number of years in ill-health and a widening gap at age 60.

For most countries with available data, income inequality has risen from one 10-year birth cohort to the next at almost all ages in both developed and developing regions. This rise may spur widening disparities in health and life expectancy among future cohorts of older persons.

Lifelong gender disparities make older women poorer. Inequalities between men and women persist into old age. Economically, women's lower levels of formal labor market participation, shorter working lives and lower wages during working years lead to more economic insecurity in later life. As a result of longer life expectancies, older women are also more likely than older men to be widowed, less likely to remarry following widowhood and more likely to live alone, three features that contribute to their economic insecurity, especially by age 80 or beyond. In developed countries with data, higher levels of relative poverty among older persons compared to people of working age are due to greater poverty among older women. In developing countries with data, relative poverty is higher among women than men at all ages.

Family caregiving responsibilities fall largely on women of all ages, and because it is largely

provided without salary and outside the formal job market, does not provide pension or social security in old age. This can affect women in developed countries but is most apt to negatively affect their long-term economic security in developing countries. Overall long-term care work is undervalued, caregivers unsupported, and demand is increasing around the world.: this falls disproportionately on women.

Little is known about violence against older women from an international perspective because until recently prevalence studies on violence against women did not include women over 49 years of age in study samples. This has created a misperception that older women did not experience violence and violence experienced when young no longer affected them.

More recent studies, for example, the prevalence study of violence against older women in the West Balkans and contiguous countries found that women over the age of 65 experienced significant violence in their homes and communities. In addition, those older women who reported experiencing violence as children were significantly more likely to experience violence in late life compared with those who reported no childhood violence. Older women who lived through war as younger women still struggled with violence after this had ended.

The Nigerian government established a national agency to support older people and in particular older women and widows. Headed by Dir. General Emem Omokaro, PhD, a longtime advocate for the rights of older persons who founded an NGO for Older Persons and SDG, Africa, to ensure civil society representation in the African Region in Agenda 2030. In some areas of the country older women and widows are accused of witchcraft and face physical and psychological violence as well as financial exploitation such as land grabbing by their family members and community. These and other harmful practices are targeted for eradication by the national government.

While the **Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW)** makes little mention of older women, in 2010 the Committee for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, under the leadership of Ferdous Ara Begum, approved **General Recommendation No. 27**, which specifically laid out human rights for older women. **The International Plan of Action on Ageing, promulgated in Madrid, Spain in 2002**, also included a section on elder abuse and emphasized the vulnerability of older women. (And health care).

More recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) study recognizing five issues commenced a plan to make elder abuse a global priority.

“This study identifies several inter-related factors that account for the issue's low priority and opportunities for overcoming these challenges. Chief among these opportunities is the UN Decade of Healthy Ageing 2021–2030, a unique 10-year-long policy window to increase the political priority of the prevention of elder abuse.”
(Mitkin, et al 2020)

While these instruments and plans **are non-binding**, they lay the groundwork for a binding instrument on the human rights of older persons.

Questions regarding this virtual event please contact Susan Somers: sbsomers5@aol.com