

Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary - Loreto Generalate

Written Statement on the Human Rights of Older People

The Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary-Loreto Generalate, a faith-based non-governmental organization (NGOs), works with and among the most vulnerable and marginalized populations of society in over 40 countries across the world. We have been in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 2015.

We know that "Virtually every country in the world is experiencing growth in the size and proportion of older persons in their population". (United Nations Population Division's Report on World Population Ageing 2019). We live longer but achieving a meaningful quality of life for all is an ongoing challenge.

Basic Social Protection Floors

Appropriate services must be in place to protect older people's rights. Basic social protection floors are instrumental in achieving the minimum rights to social security and health. Adequate pensions, health care in general, home care, residential care, are all essential. We need to raise attention to the challenges of the growing population of older persons, especially older women who do not have adequate private savings due to social expectations in relation to their career and work life.

Older people express the need for pensions to keep up with rising prices and the cost of living in general. Rising prices force them to reduce the use of energy and purchase healthy food, leading to high levels of frustration as they make their voices heard.

We support the call to all governments from civil society and faith-based organizations, trade unions and members of the Global Coalition for Social Protection Floors, to create a Global Fund for Social Protection. (see <https://www.socialprotectionfloorscoalition.org/>)

Access to Technology

In addition to access to basic necessities, older people are overpowered by the changes taking place with the use of technology to replace humans and call out for a more humane treatment. While technology has driven a variety of societal, medical, and technical trends which have become an integral part of people's daily lives, there are still challenges that need to be considered and addressed for seniors using technology. Apart from learning to use technology for personal communication, they are faced by numerous impediments when it comes to using it to deal with institutions where humans have been replaced by technology. A more humane approach would help on the part of public institutions and Banks, for example.

Many individuals require support to retain their autonomy and independence and to remain fully integrated in society. They need affordable and accessible assistive technology and they need to be able to use it within their community. Why have a wheelchair, for example, if the infrastructure of the building does not offer the possibility of using it? This is a basic requirement to allow older persons to participate in the community. This is just one of the impediments to social connections for older adults, many of whom are already at risk of loneliness and social isolation.

Safety

Older people need to feel safe in the home or care facility. In addition to knowing that they have adequate pension, health care and support, they need to know that they are safe physically and emotionally. Violence, abuse, and neglect of older people and in particular, women are already a global phenomenon and must be addressed. Older women are still vulnerable to partner violence in addition to that of caregivers. Ignoring attention and services that should be provided to women as they get older adds to the accumulation of different forms of discrimination perpetrated against them.

Disaggregated Data

Most governments rely on data and evidence in creating social policies. One of the most urgent needs to ensure government policy addresses the needs of older persons is access to disaggregated data on age, including gender, which can be analyzed and applied to programs beyond the age of 49. Older people, and especially older women need and deserve the focus of national, local and global policies and practice.

We believe it is critical that the human rights of older persons are protected not only for a meaningful quality of life for them but for all of us, and recommend that the United Nations and member states:

- To introduce and implement a national social protection floors that ensure all people, including older and people with disability are supported to a quality of life that is meaningful and allows full participation and contribution to society.
- Ensure that older people have access to new technology and are provided education to understand and use these technologies effectively.
- Introduce laws that ensure that homes, buildings and other infrastructures cater for the needs of people, including older people and others with limited mobility, and allows them free access to these places.
- Introduce and effectively implement laws that will protect older people from physical and emotional harm in their homes and care facilities. We cannot allow another pandemic or disaster to disproportionately affect any vulnerable group.
- Ensure that all data collection in UN and government agencies are disaggregated by age and all genders so that all people are included in any government program and policies.