

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2019 Commemoration

Date: 6 June 2019

Location: Conference Rm. 11,

UN HQ NYC

Co-Sponsors: INPEA, NGO Comm on Ageing, NY, DESA and (GoFOP-invited)

Title: Violence, Against Older Women: Time for a Global Unveiling of the Last Taboo

Theme: Access to Justice: Legal, Social and Economic Services for Older Victims of Sexual, Physical and Financial Crimes.

Violence, particularly sexual violence perpetrated against older women and men, physical attacks stemming from accusations of witchcraft and other deep-rooted cultural bias, discrimination and greed, often remain shrouded in the global discourse on Elder Abuse.

Distressingly, two decades after the adoption of the Madrid International Plan of Action (MIPAA) and the Beijing plan of action, analysis of inputs submitted to the 8th OEWGA reveals the gaps remain. Legally binding/effective frameworks for responses such as access to justice and legal remedies, as well as prevention and protection services for older victims of crimes are few to be found.

Recognizing the urgent need to move forward to a binding universal framework the 10 OEWGA identified Access to Justice as an essential thematic area. But, for millions of vulnerable older persons this seems far from their lived reality.

6 June WEAAD2019 UNHQNY Concept Note Supplement

Background

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD), designated as 15 June, was initiated by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) in 2006, and recognised as a United Nations Day by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/66/127 adopted in 2011. The resolution invites all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and individuals to observe this day in an appropriate manner.

Elder abuse remains largely a taboo subject and the gender aspects are too often obscured. In fact, women are more likely than men to experience violence and discrimination throughout their lives. Therefore, it is important to see the abuse of older women in the context of a life course of discrimination, oppression and violence. Although there is not yet an accepted universal definition, "elder abuse" encompasses various types such as physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, financial and neglect. Some studies also include societal abuse. Older women may be at risk of abuse in all societies. Women with disabilities, suffering from dementia or who are care-dependent at home or in

institutional care settings may be especially vulnerable to abuse by a range of perpetrators including family members and caregivers.

Abuse of an older woman by her partner may well constitute intimate partner violence. She may have suffered it throughout her married/partnered life. But older women victims of intimate partner violence mostly fall between the cracks and are generally overlooked by both the women and older people's service systems. Intimate partner violence programmes generally serve women under 50 while geriatric medicine and adult protective services have focused primarily on the frail and most vulnerable. Researchers of violence against women too often exclude older women from their target populations. In fact, older women are also excluded from sexual health education, prevention and interventions strategies regarding HIV/AIDS. Prosecutions of sexual assaults of older women lag far behind; denying justice even in death.

However, despite the similarities of the types of violence a woman may suffer across the life course, there are profound differences of approach as to what kinds of interventions are appropriate and as to the type of services that should be available at different stages of life. An older woman is more likely to die as a result of abuse yet the cause of death in an older person is not scrutinized as carefully as the death of a younger person.

In some societies older widows are subject to especially cruel forms of violence and abandonment. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo, described some of these harmful practices following some country visits. The Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, stated in her first report to the 27th Session of the Human Rights Council that it was essential to fully recognise and respect older women's rights, including the prevention of all forms of violence as well as the abolition of widowhood rites and other harmful traditional practices.

The multiplicity of forms of abuse and violence against older women and the fact that this violence frequently occurs at the intersection of different types of discrimination requires multifaceted strategies. These strategies must include the participation of older women in order to provide services adapted to their needs. The role of older women must also be recognised as instrumental in the fight against harmful practices against girls. Protecting older women's rights and working with them to protect themselves and the young, may prove truly beneficial to all generations.

The event

This side event will present the most extreme, and thus, the least addressed features of elder abuse with other types of interpersonal violence and the specificities of gender-based violence against older women. Policies, programmes, gaps and good practices from various regions will be discussed.

The panel will include speakers composed of NGOs (N Am/Europe, Asia and Africa Regions) UN Agencies (UNDP and DESA) and various Member States are invited.

Jurisprudence Review will include re-evaluation and examination of:

- Key elements on the Protection of the Rights of Older Persons from Violence, Neglect and Abuse based on inputs to the GA Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing – Amal Abou Rafeh, Chief, Programme on Ageing, DESA
- International legal framework on older persons access to justice - OHCHR

Additional participants will come prepared with short interventions to be delivered from the floor to open an interactive debate.

The event will be webcast on UNTV.