

## **Expert Group Meeting on Building Forward Better for Older Persons post COVID-19**

**Virtual meeting, 2-5, March 2021.**

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### **Age friendly cities.**

Urbanization is an unstoppable global trend. Projections of urban population growth by 2050 indicate that the concentration of the urban population will increase by 13 per cent. It will increase from 55 per cent of the world population in 2018 to 68 per cent in 2050.<sup>1</sup>

Populations around the world are rapidly ageing. By 2050, the global population of people aged 60 years and over is expected to reach almost two billion, with the proportion of older people doubling between 2006 and 2050.<sup>2</sup>

The achievements associated with human development such as improved education, nutrition and health systems have contributed to increased life expectancy and reduced mortality rates, with a significant influence on the increase in population ageing. Although life expectancy is increasing globally, this fact has a particular component in regions where the population pyramid is being inverted and narrowing the youth population base.

COVID-19 has exposed the deep inequalities and failures that we already knew existed and were addressed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the promise to leave no one behind. COVID19 affects disproportionately certain people whose vulnerability are higher, including older persons not only because of health but other factors.

COVID 19 is not only a health crisis but also social, economic and security issue.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063 frameworks provides a foundation that can significantly transform and strengthen policies and institutional systems at national and regional levels to achieve wellbeing and dignity of older persons. The two frameworks are anchored by principles of “leave no one behind”, human rights and universality, among others. So far, older people inclusion in sustainable development and COVID-19 response continue to face challenges. Building forward better strategies, provides an opportunity to change this historical trend.

Age friendly cities and communities foster healthy and active ageing. They enable older people to: age safely in a place that is right for them; be free from poverty; continue to develop personally; and to contribute to their communities while retaining autonomy and dignity. Vibrant cities should be

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/development/desa/en/news/population/2018-revision-of-world-urbanization-prospects.html#:~:text=News-.68%25%20of%20the%20world%20population%20projected%20to%20live%20in,areas%20by%202050%2C%20say%20UN&text=Today%2C%2055%25%20of%20the%20world's,increase%20to%2068%25%20by%202050.>

<sup>2</sup> UNDESA. World economic and social survey 2007: Development in an ageing world. United Nations Department of Social and Economic Affairs; 2007.

sustainable and inclusive to ensure no one is left behind. Cities, policies, services, settings and structures should support older people who in particular require supportive and enabling living environments, to compensate for physical and social changes associated with ageing.

Given better environments, better health care and more opportunities older persons are often active change agents not only of their own lives but also in their communities.

Also, healthy ageing populations are no longer a financial cost only, but bring important financial benefits by working late in life, grandparents' volunteering that permits families to be able to work, and having their own economic assets.

### **Age and intersectionality.**

Persons may experience disadvantage in unique ways based on the intersection of age with other aspects of their identity. For instance, certain groups of older persons may face particular barriers arising from the intersection of age with gender, disability, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, culture and language. Elderly women may face more challenges compared to elderly men. Majority of women have indecent work, which then lead to no pension. As these women become older, they become poorer than before. With the intersection of age, they become even more vulnerable, as they have had lack of opportunities and inequalities in their whole life.

Elderly women may particularly suffer because of past customs, practices and traditions when it comes to land, housing and property rights.

### **New Urban Agenda and Older Persons.**

The New Urban Agenda (NUA) represents a shared vision for a better and more sustainable future. If well-planned and well-managed, urbanization can be a powerful tool for sustainable development for both developing and developed countries.

The New Urban Agenda (NUA), includes numerous references to the role, position and agency of older persons in society. It identifies older persons as a group requiring specific attention in urban planning and development, including consultation about preferences and needs in the evolving built environment. The New Urban Agenda, adopted by 193 countries after the October 2016 Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador, has more than 27 significant paragraphs supporting the view of older persons in cities as active members of their communities and as deserving support to be able to make their own decisions over key elements of their lives.

The NUA emphasizes participatory planning and implementation processes, in which older people can engage as definers and agents of change. Elements of the NUA can also help to address major challenges to older persons' quality of life and wellbeing. The New Urban Agenda acts as a tool for achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals to ensure no one is left behind.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> <https://habitat3.org/wp-content/uploads/NUA-English.pdf>

**Building better future post COVID-19.**

This is the time to engage in the strengthened dialogue on how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can help us to build back better. We need a whole of society approach to achieve our shared ambitions. Partnerships between national and local governments promoting technologies and policies with governments are key in taking measures to end the virus and to deal with the health and economic impacts, especially for people disproportionately affected who are vulnerable and have access to fewer resources.

Older persons must be included in the rebuilding process. The pandemic has highlighted the need for accessible digital technologies, accessible formats, and a greater focus on universal design.