

Neglect, Abuse and Violence of Older Women

New York, 5 - 7 November 2013

Report of the Expert Group Meeting



United Nations

DESA

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Explanatory Notes

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures.

The following abbreviations are used in this document:

AU	African Union
AVOW	Against Violence of Older Women initiative.
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany)
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
DESA	Department of Economic and Social Affairs
DSPD	Division for Social Policy and Development
EU	European Union
HAI	Health Action International
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
OEWG	Open-ended Working Group on Ageing
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women
WEAAD	World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
WHO	World Health Organization

I. Background to the Meeting

1. The Expert Group Meeting on “Neglect, Abuse and Violence of Older Women” was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 5 to 7 November 2013, and was organized by the focal point on ageing, Division for Social Policy and Development (DSPD) of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). The final meeting agenda is attached as Annex I.

2. The meeting was attended by experts from Albania, China SAR-Hong Kong, Kyrgyzstan, Mozambique, Serbia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. Experts also participated from UN WOMEN, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Regional Commissions New York Office, as well as the Statistics Division of DESA.

3. The meeting was convened in the context the General Assembly resolution 67/143 of 2013 entitled “Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing,” which called upon Member States to address cases of neglect, abuse and violence against older persons by designing and implementing more effective prevention strategies and policies.

4. Neglect, abuse and violence were identified as important issues impacting the well being of older persons during the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002. They were reflected in the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA), and older women, in particular, were singled out to “face greater risk of physical and psychological abuse due to discriminatory societal attitudes and the non-realization of the human rights of women.”

5. The Commission on the Status of Women¹ also affirms that violence against women is rooted in historical and structural inequality in power relations between women and men, and occurs in every country. Gender-based violence is a form of discrimination that violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. However, violence and abuse of older women is often not acknowledged or recognized.

6. The focal point on ageing is, therefore, taking steps to assess the current state of knowledge of abuse against older women and to raise awareness and facilitate a public discussion on the societal challenges of and responses to neglect, abuse and violence against older women. Furthermore, the focal point also prepared a non-recurrent publication on neglect, abuse and violence against older women, to review and discuss information and data as well as existing preventive interventions.

7. Today, more Member States are giving attention to the issues of neglect, abuse and violence. The Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG), whose mandate is, inter alia, to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older persons, has

¹ Commission on the Status of Women, 57th session, 4-15 March 2013, *The elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls: Agreed conclusions*, paragraph 10, accessed online http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57_agreed_conclusions_advance_unedited_version_18_March_2013.pdf

repeatedly discussed neglect, abuse and violence against older persons and recognized that tackling elder abuse not only entails identifying normative gaps, but also identifying global knowledge gaps.

8. In 2011, The United Nations General Assembly highlighted abuse of older persons as a global social issue that affects the health and human rights of millions of older persons, which deserves the attention of the international community². Accordingly, the General Assembly officially recognized June 15 as World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD).

II. Opening

9. Ms. Daniela Bas, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development of DESA, opened the meeting by welcoming the experts and thanking them for their participation, which would provide essential inputs to the Division's work on advising interested Governments on addressing abuse, neglect and violence of older women. Ms. Bas noted that after over a decade since the adoption of MIPAA, these issues are still largely unrecognized and therefore, not widely discussed. Ms. Bas further noted that effective national legislation and policies, which are anchored in human rights standards to address the issue, have for the most part not been adopted or remain dispersed, underfunded or insufficiently implemented.

10. Ms. Rosemary Lane, United Nations Focal Point on Ageing of the Division for Social Policy and Development, noted that although older women face a greater risk of abuse and violence due to discriminatory societal attitudes, they have not been mainstreamed into ongoing research and discussions, including recent United Nations campaigns on ending violence against women. Ms. Lane emphasized that the results of the second review and appraisal of the Madrid Plan of Action clearly show that neglect, abuse and violence against older persons is now acknowledged as a major policy issue in all regions, regardless of level of development. She stated that the Division was preparing a publication on "neglect, abuse and violence of older women", and that the draft will serve as a preliminary starting point and a basis for discussion during the meeting.

III. Objective of the Meeting

11. The aim of the expert group meeting was to inform the debate on neglect, abuse and violence against older women from various perspectives by addressing issues related to assessment, as well as approaches to abuse prevention and protection. The meeting offered an important opportunity to frame the debate about neglect, abuse and violence of older women and provide a way forward for the work of the United Nations system by expanding knowledge about the specific situation of older women and the elimination of violence and abuse against them and ensuring their inclusion in ongoing work.

12. In order to achieve this objective, experts discussed definitional challenges, changing perceptions and emerging issues. Participants also focussed their attention on prevalence as well as sources of information and data used for measuring these rates. The meeting offered an important opportunity to identify potential risk factors for neglect, abuse and violence against older women, and to assess existing approaches to prevention and intervention. In conclusion, experts deliberated on suggested means to frame the global debate on neglect, abuse and violence of older women and propose a way forward.

13. It is essential to note that the meeting could not be expected to cover all urgent and relevant issues in regard to assessing and preventing neglect, abuse and violence against older women. The experts group's outcome and report should be considered a stepping stone for future work.

IV. Summary of Debate

A. Definitional challenges, changing perceptions and emerging issues

14. This session was moderated by Ms. Bridget Penhale, School of Nursing Sciences at University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom. The agenda item was discussed on the basis of chapters I and II of the draft DESA/DSPD publication on 'neglect, abuse and violence of older women.' The experts agreed that while elder abuse is not a new issue, extensive research and debate has been somewhat side stepped by policy makers, researchers and civil society. To date, there is no universally agreed upon theoretical framework for defining neglect, abuse and violence of older women. However, three principal dominant frameworks for definitions exist, namely (a) older adult mistreatment as defined by the Toronto Declaration on the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse (WHO, 2002); (b) abuse of vulnerable adults as defined by the US National Research Council in 2003; and (c) intimate partner violence as developed by the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention in 1996.

Box 1: Three key definitions of abuse used in research on older women

Elder abuse is defined as "a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person. It can be of various forms: physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, and financial or simply reflect intentional or unintentional neglect" (Toronto Declaration - WHO, 2002).

Abuse of vulnerable older adults refers to "intentional actions that cause harm or create a serious risk of harm (whether or not harm is intended) to a vulnerable elder by a caregiver or other person who stands in a trust relationship to the elder, or failure by a caregiver to satisfy the elder's basic needs or protect the elder from harm" (US National Research Council, 2003)

Violence against women that "incorporates intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual violence by any perpetrator, and other forms of violence against women, such as physical violence committed by acquaintances or strangers" (Intimate Partner Violence, US Centers for Disease Control)

15. In assessing the definitions, experts agreed that the Toronto Declaration is often not utilised in research because the terms used have not been clearly operationalised, although it should be noted that it was used in the research studies on

abuse of older women conducted in 5 European countries as part of the DAPHNE II Against Violence of Older Women (AVOW) initiative. It is strongly linked to perspectives on active ageing and theories such as social exchange, caregiver stress, cycles of violence, abuser impairment, abuser dependency on the victim, and ecological theories of domestic violence.

16. The definition coined by the National Research Council is most closely linked to the idea of adult protection. It differs from the Toronto Declaration by focusing on the vulnerability of the victim and the behaviours of the abuser, irrespective of intention. The role of care givers is central to this definition, as are links to the issue of neglect. Nevertheless, several issues are not generally covered by this definition such as self-neglect. In this regard, experts noted that feeling unworthy, feelings of guilt, dismissal of physical injuries, anxiety or depression as being 'age-related' are a reflection of ageism and may be hidden drivers of self-neglect and/or mistreatment. However, whether or not national policy frameworks and procedural guidelines include self-neglect as part of the issue of abuse of older persons, varies by country. Participants emphasized that vulnerability and dependency of the older person on an abuser are key contributing factors in the US National Research Council definition. This may exclude intimate partner abuse if older woman victims are widowed or unpartnered. Poverty in old age, issues related to deteriorating health, and added stresses around retirement of spouse/partner abuser or victim could be vulnerability factors that are also not necessarily covered in this definition.

17. The intimate partner violence definition developed by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention was intended to promote consistency in data collection for the public health sector. Experts noted that gender movements have been very slow in addressing the specific situation of older women in general and in addressing intimate partner violence in particular. The intimate partner violence (IPV) framework is not used often in gerontology research on elder abuse because IPV research limits the range of abusers examined to spouse/partners of the victim excluding adult children and grandchildren, formal and informal caregivers, and other relatives, neighbors and friends. This framework also limits the forms of abuse measured to physical, sexual and psychological abuse pertaining to threats of physical or sexual abuse, excluding financial exploitation, neglect, and other forms of psychological abuse such as dismissive, demeaning, and infantilizing treatment. Research, however, strongly suggests that intimate partner violence of older women may be part of a longstanding problem that starts with marriage or pregnancy, and extends beyond to a point where the abuse becomes normalized over time. Victims of a lifetime of intimate partner violence tend to develop coping mechanisms to endure abusive intimate relationships. Other intimate partner violence situations in later life may begin with a new relationship in later life as well as changes in the health or life situation of a spouse/partner who becomes abusive in later life. Experts noted that this definition may include a spouse; a non-formalised marital relationship; current, former, heterosexual and same sex relationships; stalking; non-consensual sexual violence; sexually offensive language; as well as being coerced to behave against ones wishes.

18. Participants highlighted that while sexual violence was once encompassed within the definition of physical violence, it is now seen as a separate element in its own right. Psychological and emotional abuse and violence are also emerging areas of attention and research. The experts further noted that issues of domination and

submission may also be related to the financial abuse of older women, and that isolation of the victim may also be apparent, thus preventing access to the outside world, including via transportation, communication, and non-contact with other family members.

19. Experts from Asia and Africa noted that the above definitions are based on western-centric frameworks, and like the National Research Council definition, possibly adapted from frameworks on violence against children. They raised concerns as to the wider applicability of such frameworks in less developed regions, and noted that abuse means different things in different cultural contexts. These definitions, for example, do not capture key vulnerability factors such as poverty, belief systems such as witchcraft and harmful traditional practices related to widowhood as well as the emerging trends of structural abuse, whereby older women are forced out of their homes and land to make room for urban expansion.

20. Cultural sensitivities and perceptions of intimate and sexual abuse, the right to worship, and HIV-related issues were raised, as well as institutional abuse of older women within care settings. Some experts highlighted that ageism, discrimination and social exclusion, although linked to mistreatment of older women, continue to be missing from existing definitions.

21. The participants emphasized the importance of considering a rights-based approach to defining abuse of older women and took note of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women³ as an important normative framework that is widely recognized and embraced in international law by governments and civil society. The experts took note of the definition of 'violence against women' in this Declaration, which is "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life." The experts also took note of article 2 of the Declaration, which has three sections that describe what is commonly understood as violence against women. These sections divide violence against women into micro-level (family), meso-level (general community), and macro-level (State) elements. The experts also noted General Recommendation 27 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women⁴ (CEDAW) as a good basis for discussing the protection of the human rights of older women.

Box 2: Definition of 'violence against women' in the United Nations

The term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life (article 1, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1994)

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and

³ United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/48/104 (23 February 1994)

⁴ United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women CEDAW/C/GC/27 (16 December 2010)

violence related to exploitation;

- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. (article 2, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1994)

B. Prevalence and sources of information and data

22. This session was moderated by Dr. Therese Zink from the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the University of Minnesota in the United States. The agenda item was discussed on the basis of chapter IV of the draft DESA/DSPD publication on 'neglect, abuse and violence of older women.' Experts agreed that the production of prevalence rates of neglect, abuse and violence depend on which definitions of abuse and violence are used and also on the definition of what is considered as "old age". Experts discussed quantitative research, phone interviews and participatory research as effective sources of data to measure prevalence rates.

23. In Hong Kong (SAR of China), household and community surveys have been used to collect data. While conducting surveys it was found that providing individual older women with concrete examples of what constitutes neglect, abuse and violence tends to increase subjects' understanding of the questions, and aids understanding and leads to an increase in overall prevalence rates in survey groups. Underreporting of cases of neglect, abuse and violence due to insensitive interviewers has also been noted.

24. In Albania, it has been noted that there is a higher abuse prevalence rate among more empowered and educated women who have partners with lower educational attainment levels. This finding was also apparent in an analysis of prevalence data on intimate partner violence from Germany (Stockl et al, 2012).

25. The HelpAge representatives mentioned a multi-country study they undertook under a Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) funded project in Kyrgyzstan, Peru and Mozambique. In the three countries, the same questions were used with the aim of developing an indicator-based system for monitoring older people's human rights and a social survey instrument that could be used as evidence based, on a country by country basis. HelpAge Mozambique succeeded in obtaining more detailed and accurate information through community surveys by using their own community monitors, who are known to the people in the community. This allowed for older women to feel more comfortable talking about issues of violence and abuse. HelpAge found an increase in witchcraft accusations in some areas of the country, in addition to an increase in verbal and physical abuse. It was noted that a number of witchcraft accusations have at their centre conflicts over land and property ownership. HelpAge Mozambique has also had some success in working with the officials from the Department of Older People in the Ministry of Women and Social Action at district, provincial and national levels in data analysis and subsequent meetings with community leaders to discuss the findings.

26. In Kyrgyzstan, HelpAge carried out the survey with the National Statistics Committee. They invited interviewers for a one-day training on how to work with older persons. It was found that financial abuse was the most common form of abuse. The expert from Serbia noted that for research purposes he uses various databases maintained for example, by the police and social welfare departments but continues to advocate for one database.

27. In the United Kingdom prevalence study, which reported in 2007, if an older person has disclosed neglect, abuse or violence during the quantitative survey, a further qualitative interview was offered to obtain more detailed information about the specific incident (O'Keeffe et al, 2007). A common problem with European Union (EU) - wide surveys (DAPHNE study) regarding comparative data is that this is a hard to reach group of people in terms of identification and access, with additional potential difficulties relating to the training of researchers, interviewers etc.. Overall, reliable sources of prevalence in Europe are health-related data based on clinical occurrences of neglect, abuse and violence and qualitative studies.

C. Risk factors for neglect, abuse and violence of older women

28. This session was moderated by Ms. Elsie Yan, Department of Social Work and Administration, University of Hong Kong, China-SAR. The agenda item discussed was based on chapter VI of the draft publication on 'neglect, abuse and violence of older women.' Participants stated that the understanding of risk factors is important for policy formulation, resource allocation and the design of intervention programmes. Different theoretical frameworks emphasise different risk factors. For example, the caregiver stress model focuses on the stress associated with caring for an older person, isolation, and lack of support for the caregiver; social exchange theory addresses how dependency may result in abuse; social learning theory focuses on intergenerational transmission of violence as well as inter-familial violence; and intra-individual dynamics emphasizes substance abuse and life stress of the perpetrators; The ecological model focuses on systemic, cultural and attitudinal factors, such as attitudes that approves of the use of violence, ageism and sexism, cultural values and social systems that disadvantage older females in general.

29. Deliberations on national experiences from various regions resulted in agreement amongst meeting participants that the different considerations and weights given to underlying risk factors result in inconsistency in research findings on violence and abuse of older women. Experts noted that any one single theory may not be sufficient to explain neglect, abuse and violence of older women, given that older women are not a homogeneous group and cultural contexts vary. There are sub-groups of older women who reside in institutional settings while others live alone; some are mentally and physically capable while others are impaired and frail. In addition, the relation between older women with the abuser varies in different settings and contexts.

30. Substance misuse was identified as a serious risk factor for violence against older women. Some experts highlighted that recent research on intimate partner violence amongst older couples increasingly involves substance misuse. Difficulty

faced by older women in coping with violence or in controlling negative feelings of guilt and loneliness could contribute to such abuse.

31. Risk factors for financial abuse of older women were also discussed. This type of abuse includes amongst others: misusing, or using without knowledge or permission money or property; healthcare scams; forging or forcing signatures; power of attorney abuse; misappropriating funds from pensions; reverse mortgage scams as well as identity theft. In a number of African and Asian countries, experts noted that some adult children have a sense of entitlement and see themselves as 'borrowing' from their future inheritance. Experts from Europe noted situations where adult children register their parents in retirement homes to gain control over their affairs, money and property. They also noted occurrences of mental capacity assessment frauds involving family members and care providers; stripping older persons from the right to make their own decisions and be involved in decisions that affect them, with little action taken against alleged perpetrators. Older women, especially widows, are more vulnerable in patriarchal societies. While they may be legally entitled to transfer of property upon the husband's death, in practice however, many widows are subject to customary practices that often deprive them of their rightful inheritance in favour of a male child. In some regions of Africa, this cultural component is stronger than formal government instruments.

32. Meeting participants noted that institutional care facilities also tend to be conducive to financial abuse of older women. These include hospitals, community and residential care homes and nursing homes. Older women residing in these care facilities are vulnerable; often depending upon their abuser who is usually a care provider in a position of trust. Because financial abuse in an institutional setting may be hidden from an older care home resident because saving/financial accounts for care home residents are handled by administrative staff, it may come to light through an institutional audit. A prematurely depleted account of a resident could result in the residence's inability or refusal to continue caring for the resident, a more serious consequence than confusion or embarrassment. The resident would be less likely to report this kind of crime than a care home director or the resident's family. Experts noted that this type of abuse is difficult to combat, mainly because it remains under the radar due to under-reporting. Older women who suffer financial abuse in an institutional setting may feel confused, afraid, or embarrassed by the crime to report it. Experts highlighted some examples where additional challenges to financial abuse of older women in institutional settings exist, namely in nursing homes in China that receive inadequate government funding, as well as in private care home settings in some European countries, where older persons may be over-sedated and confined to their beds.

33. Dementia was highlighted as a prominent yet overlooked risk factor for elder abuse. Older women experiencing forms of dementia such as Alzheimer's Diseases are thought to be at greater risk of abuse and neglect than older women in general. Experts noted that lack of training of caregivers on how to understand and manage possible psychological aggression and physical behaviour of people with dementia, contributes to this type of elder abuse. In institutional settings these patients may be sedated or physically restrained as a safety measure but also for staff convenience. Resident to resident abuse can occur in inadequately staffed dementia units of care homes. The expert from the United States highlighted additional care facility

challenges related to formal, paid caregivers, namely that they are often from immigrant populations, recruited at entry-level positions and are poorly trained, poorly paid, insufficiently staffed and working in over-crowded facilities. These risk factors may contribute to abusive and neglectful behaviors by aides in care homes and institutions that lack adequate staff training and coverage.

34. Experts underscored psychological abuse as the largest category of abuse of older women, and reported that it may be a risk factor in itself for physical violence. Psychological abuse ranges from denigrating or demanding comments to controlling behaviour by the perpetrator, and result in loneliness and isolation of victim. Depression is another hidden risk factor noted by the experts. Older women suffering from low self-esteem tend to feel less worthy and may accept neglect and abuse. Experts stated that older persons in general are insufficiently treated for depression, as mental health treatment may be considered stigmatizing by older women victims.

35. In Africa, poverty was emphasised as risk factor for mistreatment of older women. Against a backdrop of food insecurity and HIV/AIDS, older women are some of the poorest in African countries. These older women have no access to social protection and services, and are therefore prone to neglect. Even when services do exist, older women are often excluded as they are not registered because they are neither able to read nor write. Due to poverty, the traditional extended family care system is being challenged, as it is neither dependable nor sustainable. Another risk factor in Africa is the recent major rural-urban migration affecting families and leaving older women in rural areas vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Experts also discussed HIV and AIDS as a risk factor for abuse and neglect of older women in Africa. Older women are often vulnerable to psychological and emotional abuse, they lack access to information, they do not know how to obtain treatment, they may feel pressured and burdened, and may also be responsible for caring for their orphaned grandchildren.

36. Experts from Asia stated that the growing informal economy and rising unemployment rates impact older women making them vulnerable to poverty, especially those residing in rural areas where there is no access to transportation, water resources are limited and numbers of qualified medical specialists are inadequate. Another challenge confronted by some older women is the increased number of marriages that are not registered in appropriate government facilities, which hinders women's ability to claim property ownership in divorce or widowhood. Addressing these matters in court is both costly and time consuming. Older women or men living alone can be targets for bandits in prisons. Older women in custodial settings such as prisons tend to also be a target for financial abuse and property exploitation. Experts noted that the lack of information about older women in government institutions in Central Asia is itself a risk factor. Older women are invisible and are therefore often absent from national and local development agendas and priorities.

37. In the United States, the expert noted the risk factor faced by the new immigrant populations of older women especially in rural settings; where communicating through their adult children as interpreters makes them feel disempowered and vulnerable. Increasing levels of disabling impairments with

increased age was also highlighted as a risk factor for abuse and violence against older women.

D. Approaches to abuse prevention and protection of older women

38. This session was moderated by Ms. Aparna Mehrotra, Senior Adviser on Coordination and Focal Point for Women in the UN System, and Focal Point on Ageing in UNWOMEN. The agenda item was discussed on the basis of chapter IX of the draft DESA/DSPD publication on 'neglect, abuse and violence of older women.' Experts also deliberated on the importance of a more harmonized and uniform approach to abuse prevention and protection of older women within the United Nations system. They emphasised the importance of mapping out entry-points for integrating older women at risk of abuse in the United Nations International Widows Day, the Secretary-General campaign UNiTE to end violence against women, as well as the Beijing+20 processes. Experts also noted the importance of encouraging work on neglect, abuse and violence of older women through the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

39. Awareness-raising was identified as a main approach to abuse prevention and protection of older women, whether at community level or at the policy-making level. The expert from Africa noted increased challenges to awareness-raising at the national level due to underfunding in the ministries and less prioritization of older people's issues when compared to other age groups. They emphasized the need to avoid information overload and rather provide clear and simple information for decision-makers to act upon. Experts underscored the importance of developing preventive strategies on witchcraft accusations, and highlighted the role of the African Union (AU), perhaps through developing regional guidelines on raising awareness, sensitizing and empowering older women about these issues, in order to facilitate and harmonize government efforts at the national level.

40. In the United Kingdom, an elder abuse awareness campaign launched by the government concentrated attention on the dignity of older people within the health and social care system. This initiative was instigated through the Department of Health in England, and there was also a focus on providing services in a safe environment that is free from all forms of abuse whether physical, psychological, emotional, financial or sexual. The campaign also called for a health service environment free from neglect and ageism.

41. Despite efforts at the national level to promote abuse prevention and protection of older women, experts noted lack of coordination between various initiatives and called for a more targeted approach if change is to be achieved.

42. The role of media was highlighted as crucial to bringing much needed attention to the issue. However, efforts need to be undertaken to address media portrayal of older women through educating them about negative stereotyping and ageist language and images used when addressing issues of older persons. Some participants noted the need to avoid negative language in public awareness related approaches to abuse prevention and protection of older women. Negative portrayals tend to outweigh positive ones and contribute to marginalising older women even

further. The experts also emphasized that in order to better address prevention of abuse of older women, it is central to understand the continuum of abuse across the life cycle of women, while taking into consideration issues of ageism and sexism. They also emphasized the importance of intergenerational solidarity and encouraged the awareness and involvement of the younger generation.

43. Experts further argued that adopting a gender-neutral approach to abuse prevention and protection means older women remain invisible and their needs are not met. They instead called for a women-centred approach to prevention and protection efforts in order to better address the specific needs of older women by appropriate policy provisions and measures.

E. Approaches to interventions and provision of services

44. This session was moderated by Dr. Genc Burazeri from the Department of Population Health at the University of Medicine in Tirana, Albania. The agenda item was discussed on the basis of chapter IX of the draft DESA/DSPD publication on 'neglect, abuse and violence of older women.' In Mozambique the government and civil society collaborate in developing policies and laws and also consult the older people. Institutionally, there is a National Council of Older People (Conselho Nacional de Pessoas Idosas), which is composed of government and civil society representatives whose role is to advise the government on policy issues, and civil society organisations led by the National Forum of Older People (Forum Nacional de Pessoas Idosas), which mainly advocate for the mainstreaming of older people's issues into government policies. There is a National Policy of Older People and the Plan for its Implementation (2006) and a recently adopted national law for the Promotion and Protection of Older People's Rights. HelpAge also works in partnership with national associations working including the government through the Ministry of Women and Social Action to sensitize older persons on their rights, particularly through the use of paralegals, has issued a manual on the prevention of violence against older persons, and has begun the piloting of cash transfers for older persons in one location. Once recent EU funded project concerning raised awareness about violence against older women through exploring the use of theatre, and activities involving youth and older men.

45. Approaches to end violence in Mozambique are led by the civil society organisations, the government or both. HelpAge in coalition with other civil society partners has used its annual Age Demands Action campaign to facilitate meetings between older people representatives and ministers for the discussion of issues which affect older people. In 2013 the Ministry of Women and Social Action held a National Campaign for the Appreciation and Respect of Older People's Rights as also a way to prevent violence against older women among other things. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is now collecting data on the cases of violence against older women through the Offices to Support Women and Children Victims of Violence (Gabinetes de Atendimento Mulheres e Crianças Vítimas de Violência). Older women reported overall progress with regard to neglect, abuse and violence except on the issue of witchcraft and access to land. Similar studies revealed that there was little initial awareness among older women about their rights.

46. In Kyrgyzstan, a project was successfully implemented by Health Action International (HAI) in the four districts of Bishkek city and surrounding villages to reduce abuse against older people and build capacity of neighbourhood inspectors through developing appropriate positive interaction between neighbourhood inspectors and older people's groups on domestic violence against older people. Neighbourhood inspectors including Public Prevention Centres have improved skills and confidence on how to reach out and support public safety of vulnerable older people in their communities.

47. HAI also conducted a survey on elder abuse in Kyrgyzstan in 12 villages across six provinces in 2011-2012, which shows that more than 70 per cent of respondents knew that elder abuse exists in Kyrgyzstan, more than 35 percent reported knowing of cases of elder abuse, 55 per cent of respondents believe that older people's needs often go unmet, and 47 per cent felt that older people are subjected to psychological pressure. In terms of public perception, the top cause of elder abuse was poverty and unemployment, substance misuse, and older people's fragility.

48. A questionnaire on abuse of older persons has been developed and undertaken, which revealed emotional and physical abuse, abandonment and isolation as top issues of concern. In elder abuse cases special crisis centers for violence against women have seen an increased use by older women. There a protection order for the older woman is usually issued and the court for older persons gets involved. Sensitivity campaigns run by HelpAge Kyrgyzstan about the living conditions of older persons and their human rights have been underway in Kyrgyzstan. This includes working to sensitize the police on working with older persons.

49. Reporting elder abuse is mandatory in most States within the United States. While in cases of domestic violence against women there is widespread use of shelters and collaboration with the hospital system, neither of these approaches serve older women well. A pilot project in Florida addressed violence against women in later life through advocating for changes in domestic violence shelter protocols and programs, making them more accessible and suitable for older women domestic violence victims, and cross-training on domestic violence in later life between domestic violence and aging service systems. In New York City, a domestic violence shelter program for older adults was created in a nursing home utilizing nursing home beds for eligible elder abuse victims. The federal Department of Justice published a manual for professionals serving older women victims of abuse in later life. In spite of these and other initiatives to address the needs of older women victims of neglect, abuse and violence in the United States, there have been no widespread organized efforts to do so and significant additional awareness-raising is needed.

50. In Serbia, government-run social welfare centers, the police, the justice system and the health care system deal with elder abuse. However, none of these institutions are coordinated and all have their own but separate databases. Court cases to deal with elder abuse can last 5 or more years. There is a Commissioner for Equality that can follow-up on particular cases, through overseeing implementation of the enforcement of antidiscrimination regulations. This institution functions within the antidiscrimination and rights based framework and identifies and highlights the shortcomings of the system such as access to labour market, provision of services and

credit loans. The police are often patronizing when dealing with elder abuse, and the issue is often treated as a misdemeanour, not a crime and older women are moved to shelters while the abuser remains in the home. An attempt to change the criminal law to make elder abuse an aggravating circumstance did not succeed.

51. In Hong Kong (SAR of China) there is no specific law on elder abuse or abuse of older people that falls. Older persons fall into the category of domestic violence and there is no central register for reporting of elder abuse. In fact, the only mandatory reporting of abuse is for children. Between 15-20 per cent of women in shelters are from older age groups. There are NGO led interventions, but no training for government workers. Some formerly abused older women are trained to become advocates for others. The domestic violence legislation has been amended to include all family members however and also addresses the issue of emotional abuse. In terms of addressing low-level abuse, a programme in Hong Kong attempts to bring together abused and abuser to mediate a solution.

52. There is no mandatory reporting system on elder abuse in the United Kingdom. In some situations, a familial mediation approach to resolve abuse is used, which engages the victim and his/her family to come up with a solution.

V. Key Findings

53. The general debate session, moderated by Ms. Roza Rayapova, HelpAge International, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan, and Dr. Milutin Vracevic, Health and Care Programme, Red Cross, Serbia, highlighted the following key findings.

54. Key findings in definitional challenges, changing perceptions and emerging issues

- There is to date no overarching theoretical framework for describing or discussing the abuse of older women. Existing definitions make certain culturally and socially defined assumptions, and these tend to affect research findings, policy responses and interventions.

- Acknowledging and discussing the effects of the combination of both age and gender stereotypes. Considering an intersectional framework in this context is key in tackling issues of violence against older women

- The term “elder abuse” is in itself limiting because it connotes a particular kind of violence and victimhood.

- When working on specific policies and legislation at the national level, CEDAW could be used as a legal reference to gain traction at the international level, and encourage the production of more shadow reports on abuse of older women using General Recommendation No. 27 from civil society organisations and the CEDAW Committee should agree to hear these presentations.

- A consistent definition is needed to monitor the incidence of elder abuse and examine trends over time. Consistency helps to determine the magnitude of elder abuse and enables comparisons of the problem across locations. This ultimately informs prevention and intervention efforts.

55. Key findings in prevalence and sources of information and data

- There are marked differences in prevalence rates of neglect, abuse and violence across the age groups of older women
- Variations in prevalence rates of across Member States are influenced by the definitions used for "old age" as well as what constitutes "neglect", "abuse" and "violent acts"
- There are different sources of information and data on neglect, abuse and violence including hospitals, clinics, long-term care institutions, social welfare centres, police stations, prisons, crisis centre and others
- Sampling techniques affect to a great extent estimates and data comparability
- Cross-cultural adaptation of survey questionnaires is needed to adapt translated text and undertake differential validation exercises

56. Key findings in risk factors for neglect, abuse and violence of older women

- There are different risk factors for different types of violence. These factors are mutually reinforcing and closely intertwined with social issues
- Different considerations and weights given to underlying risk factors result in inconsistency in research findings on violence and abuse of older women
- Main risk factors identified include disability, dependency, isolation, lack of support for the caregiver or caregiver stress, substance misuse, financial abuse within institutional care facilities, dementia, depression, poverty, rural-urban migration trends, illiteracy and other language barriers

57. Key findings in approaches to abuse prevention and protection of older women

- Awareness raising is a main approach to abuse prevention and protection of older women, whether at community level or at the policy-making level
- Despite efforts at the national level to promote abuse prevention and protection of older women, there is a lack of coordination between various initiatives
- The role of media is crucial to bringing much needed attention to the issue. However, media continue to portray older persons with negative stereotyping and ageist language and imagery
- Adopting a gender-neutral approach to abuse prevention and protection means that older women remain invisible and their needs are not met

58. Key findings in approaches to interventions and provision of services

- Approaches to interventions and provision of services differ considerably among Member States.
- National action plans, specific laws for older persons, promotion of the rights of older persons, media initiatives and awareness raising to sensitise society, establishing crisis centres and domestic violence shelters that have appropriate eligibility criteria and programming for older women, were all mentioned as positive approaches to prevention and intervention.

VI. The Way Forward

59. The concluding session was moderated by Ms. Patricia Brownell, Associate Professor Emerita of Social Service, Fordham University, and Mr. Sydney Machafa from HelpAge International in Maputo, Mozambique.

60. Experts highlighted the need to develop an explicit human rights framework for understanding neglect, abuse and violence against older women. Experts felt this would help to bring together academic research on neglect, abuse and violence against older women with United Nations human rights instruments like Conventions (CEDAW; CEDAW General Recommendation No. 27 on Human rights of Older Women; a possible Convention for the Human Rights of Older Persons; Declarations like the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which could be updated to include specific language on older women; Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing), and better utilise the United Nations system for achieving an explicit goal of eliminating neglect, abuse and violence against older women.

61. Current definitions need to be revisited to bridge the gap between understandings and perspectives. A new definition that makes clear reference to human rights may be needed to address issues that are missing in current definitions. Experts discussed the relevance of articles 1 and 2 of General Assembly resolution 48/104 entitled Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women with regard to a suitable definition of “violence against older women”. Some experts suggested to add language on “political violence”, on “witchcraft”, on “cleansing of widows” and on “cultural and traditional practices that are harmful to older women” to language and terms used in the existing articles. Additional references to address “perpetrators of violence against older women”, “violence in institutional settings” and “non-spousal violence” should also be added to agreed language. The issue of abuse in paragraph 27 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women’s General Recommendation No. 27 on older women and protection of their human rights was also discussed. Experts would like to see more precise language that would refer more specifically to “physical, sexual and financial abuse” instead of referring to abuse in general. In addition, all three key definitions of “abuse” used in the background paper on page 8 were discussed. Experts and participants proposed to add the issues of “property and ownership”; “lack of food, shelter and clothing”; and “deprivation of liberty” to the issue of abuse.

62. Experts recommended better Government-university partnerships to study the phenomenon of neglect, abuse and violence against older women. The representative of the DESA Statistics Division suggested that the experts provide inputs for possible questions to be inserted into the new issue of the UN Statistics Handbook that contains questions and indicators with regard to violence against women including older women in census surveys. In addition, the next issue of the publication, the World’s Women will include a chapter on violence against women, and the Statistics Division representative welcomed research citations on violence against older women for possible inclusion in the chapter. Experts also called for increased funding to collect and analyze disaggregated data. They considered allocating questions on violence against women in censuses versus population and household surveys.

63. Experts called for eliminating harmful traditional practices for older women and widows through increased awareness, and enhanced engagement of non-governmental organisations and paralegals. They also recommended the development of care standards that provide for better transparency in detecting, addressing and preventing abuse of older women in institutional care facilities.

64. Meeting participants also called for a more women-centred approach to prevention and protection efforts in order to better address the specific needs of older women by appropriate policy provisions and measures. They highlighted the role of regional inter-governmental organisations as the AU and EU to accelerate and harmonize national efforts toward prevention and protection.

65. With respect to successful interventions and provision of services, experts recommended connecting data bases on abuse with intervention systems, better understanding the causes of fatality of older people to prevent neglect, abuse and violence of older women, establishing more short and long term options for older women victims of domestic violence, establishing financial exploitation teams to detect and address this form of abuse, incentivise more housing options for single older people to move in with “foster” families or into specialised homes (as opposed to institutions) for older adults, and establish more awareness campaigns, for example on witchcraft because they have proven effective, and ending harmful traditional practices affecting widow. Experts recommended consulting older women on remedies related to witchcraft accusations or harmful traditional widowhood practices before changing laws related to this.

66. Experts also addressed opportunities for dissemination of research on neglect, abuse and violence against older women; identifying points of entry into ongoing dialogues and utilising them strategically; and moving the issue of neglect abuse and violence against older women from a niche to a movement, within the women’s movement looking to the Beijing plus 20 Review and beyond, and within the movement to strengthen human rights for older people.

Annex I: Final Meeting Agenda

Day1: Tuesday, 5 November 2013

- 9:15 – 9:30 Registration of participants
- 9:30 – 10:15 **Opening, Objectives and Organization of Meeting**
Daniela Bas, Director, Division of Social Policy and Development
Rosemary Lane, Focal Point on Ageing, Division for Social Policy and Development
- 10:15 – 12:30 **Session I: Definitional challenges, changing perceptions and emerging issues**
Bridget Penhale, School of Nursing Sciences at University of East Anglia, UK
- 12:30 – 14:00 *Lunch break*
- 14:00 – 15:00 **Session I: continued from this morning**
- 15:00 – 17:00 **Session II: Prevalence and sources of information and data**
Therese Zink, Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of Minnesota, US

Day2: Wednesday, 6 November 2013

- 9:30 – 11:30 **Session III: Risk factors for neglect, abuse and violence of older women**
Elsie Yan, Department of Social Work and Administration, University of Hong Kong, China SAR
- 11:30 – 13:00 **Session IV: Approaches to abuse prevention and protection of older women**
Aparna Mehrotra, Senior Adviser on Coordination and Focal Point for Women in the UN System, and Focal Point on Ageing in UNWOMEN
- 13:00 – 14:30 *Lunch break*
- 14:30 – 17:00 **Session V: Approaches to interventions and provision of services**
Gene Burazeri, Department of Population Health, University of Medicine in Tirana, Albania

Day3: Thursday, 7 November 2013

- 9:30 – 12:30 **Session VI: General Debate**
Roza Rayapova, HelpAge International, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan
Milutin Vracevic, Health and Care Programme, Red Cross, Serbia
- 12:30 – 14:00 *Lunch break*
- 14:00 – 16:00 **Session VII: The way forward**
Patricia Brownell, Fordham University Graduate School of Social Service, New York, US
Sydney Machafa, HelpAge International in Maputo, Mozambique
- 16:00 – 17:00 **Concluding remarks and closing**

Annex II: List of Participants

Experts

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Minneapolis, USA

Ms. Roza Rayapova
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Head of Department of Public Health,
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Ms. Patricia Brownell
Associate Professor Emerita of Social
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Ms. Bridget Penhale
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University of East Anglia
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Mr. Sydney Machafa
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United Nations cont'd

United Nations Regional Commission

OHCHR

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Ms. Charlotte French
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Statistics Division

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Social Affairs Officer
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Ms. Anna Satarova
Team Assistant
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Annex III: List of Documents

The following documents are available online at

<http://undesadspd.org/Ageing/RightsofOlderPersons/EGMonNeglectAbuseandViolenceofOlderWomen.aspx>

1. Background Paper on Neglect Abuse and Violence Against Older Women
2. The World's Women 2010: Trend and Statistics: Chapter 6 on Violence Against Women
3. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women
4. General Recommendation No. 27 on Older Women and Protection of their Human Rights
5. Contribution by RashidaManjoo, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, on Violence and Abuse Against Older Persons in the Public and Private Spheres (2012)
6. Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation
7. UN Economic Commission for Europe Policy Brief on Ageing No 14: Abuse of Older Persons
8. UN Development Account Inter-regional project on Enhancing Capacities to Eradicate Violence Against Women