

#Agency&Dignity

Issue 5
Fall 2025



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



FEATURED

- Age, Gender and Human Rights

♀ OLDER WOMEN'S RIGHTS MATTER

Discover:

- Women in Ageing Asia-Pacific
- Stories of resilience from older women worldwide
- Global shifts on ageing & rights

Does dignity have an expiry date? If not, then the time for bold action is now

Ageing often invokes a deeply emotional response from us—feelings of fear, denial, sadness, joy or respect. Yet everyone knows that ageing is a privilege and that dignity is ageless and the right of all!

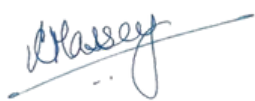
We are proud to share that OHCHR has launched a new series of webinars in partnership with a group of experts renowned in their respective fields. In the first of the series, we explored intersecting inequities globally, with a focus on older women. On the same day, the team also explored with delegates from one Member State how disability, gender and age intersect and compound challenges for older women. During our discussions that day, the figures we delved into were quite telling with regard to the situation of older women.

This issue is a call to amplify the voices of older women and demand the adoption of policies and legislation that recognise both their dignity and contribution to society.

As evidenced throughout this issue, older women are not merely statistically at risk; they are systematically marginalised. Older women stand at the intersection of age, gender, and economic vulnerability. Looking at some basic rights such as adequate housing, social protection or the benefits of development we find that these rights are far too often overlooked, thus jeopardising the dignity and human rights of an entire demographic.

Far too many women face a lifetime of compounded inequalities, globally, women possess significantly fewer legal rights and protections than men—a 2024 World Bank report states that women enjoy only two-thirds of the legal rights that men have! As the international community we are keen to support the life cycle approach to ensure effective rights to all including women—be it in the form of secure housing and social protection, adequate pensions, proper healthcare or meaningful participation—as justice.

We must transition, now, from passive concern to bold, affirmative advocacy and policy action.



Dr. Chitralekha Massey

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Dignity Does Not Age: A Call from Diplomatic Experience and Human Rights Advocacy



Luis Gallegos Chiriboga

**President of GIA Longevity
Former Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the UN**

The adoption by consensus of Resolution 58/13 at the United Nations Human Rights Council on 3 April 2025 marks a turning point in the international protection of the rights of older persons. As a career diplomat and long-time human rights advocate, I welcome this historic event with both deep emotion and renewed determination.

For far too long, older persons have been rendered invisible within international legal frameworks. This normative gap has allowed often unchallenged ageism and systemic discrimination to persist. It has hindered equal access to essential services, full social participation, and the right to autonomy, health, and a life free from violence and abuse. Yet dignity is ageless, and so too must justice be.

At GIA Longevity, we have consistently promoted a rights-based approach to policies related to ageing and longevity. We firmly believe that building a fair, inclusive and sustainable longevity society requires acknowledging the diversity of ageing and ensuring the active participation of older persons in shaping solutions. This resolution is the outcome of tireless efforts by civil society, experts, committed States, and, most importantly, those older persons who raised their voices with courage and dignity.

But this is not the end—it is the beginning. The

drafting of a legally binding international instrument must be grounded in inclusivity, intersectionality, and meaningful representation. It is crucial that older persons and their representative organisations participate fully and effectively in the process—not symbolically, but substantively. The new convention must be informed by lived experience, scientific knowledge, and urgent realities.

History teaches us that transformative human rights instruments emerge from the recognition of a moral debt. Today, we have an opportunity to repay that debt—to those who, having contributed immensely to our societies, deserve not only quality care in later life, but full citizenship, autonomy, and respect as well.

As a Latin American, and as someone who has seen first hand the progress made in our region—especially through the Inter-American Convention on the Protection of the Human Rights of Older Persons—I reaffirm my commitment to this process and offer our regional expertise as a valuable contribution to the global dialogue.

The population of the world is ageing; let this be a signal that it is also maturing and acquiring a deeper understanding of rights, justice, and inclusion for all ages. ■



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Measuring Inequalities: Older Women in Numbers

By 2030



• <https://population.un.org/wpp/>



Loneliness in Later Life:

- Among those 75+, 13% of women report significant loneliness (vs. 5% of men)
- In ages 75–84, loneliness peaks for women up to 16.3%, against men to 5.4%

• <https://bmgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12877-023-04201-9>

Longevity & Health:

- Women live about 5 years longer than men
- Women spend an average of 9 years in poor health
- Disability rates for women (50+) is 16.3% higher than men

Care Needs (EU, 65+):

- 33% of women require support
- 19% of men require support

• <https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi/our-insights/closing-the-womens-health-gap-a-1-trillion-dollar-opportunity-to-improve-lives-and-economies>

• <https://data.unwomen.org/features/caring-carers-recognizing-rights-and-contributions-older-women>



44% of
older women

67% of
older men

Use of the internet (Austria)

• <https://www.theinternational.at/older-men-use-internet-more-than-older-women/>

Only
56 of 116
Countries offer women
universal pension access



In 53 countries,
over 70% of older women
do not own any land

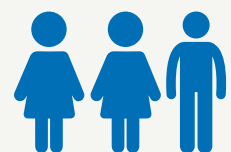
• <https://data.unwomen.org/features/caring-carers-recognizing-rights-and-contributions-older-women>

• <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/investinpeople/what-will-it-take-women-gain-equal-rights-housing-land-and-property>

Hours per day dedicated by
Older Women to unpaid
care and domestic work



Time spent by older women on
unpaid care and domestic work
compared to men



• <https://data.unwomen.org/features/caring-carers-recognizing-rights-and-contributions-older-women>

Older Women's Right to Development

Surya Deva

What is and is not the right to development?

The right to development is perhaps one of the most misunderstood, misinterpreted and polarising human rights. It is often equated with economic development or confused with development itself. Concerns are also raised about the collective nature, wide contours or the value addition of this human right. This short piece seeks to sketch a normatively sound understanding of the right to development. Taking older women as a case study, it also highlights the relevance of the right to development in overcoming various challenges faced by older women in realising their human rights.

The right to development can be traced back to the [Charter of the United Nations](#) (e.g., article 55) as well as the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) (e.g., articles 25 and 28). However, a key moment in the codification of the right to development was the 1986 [Declaration on the Right to Development](#). Article 1 of the Declaration defines the right to development as the right of every human person and all peoples 'to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized.'

The right to development has been reaffirmed in a number of subsequent international instruments and policy documents, such as the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Pact for the Future and the Sevilla Commitment. It is also recognised in regional human rights instruments and certain national constitutions.

Key aspects of the right to development can be deduced from the 1986 Declaration and subsequent international instruments.¹ The right has *two dimensions*: individual and collective. In other words, it is not solely an individual or a collective right; rather, it possesses both dimensions concurrently.

The right to development has *three elements*: every human and all peoples are entitled to (i) participate in, (ii) contribute to and (iii) enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development. This is not merely a passive right to be enjoyed by individuals. Rather, they are expected to have 'active, free and meaningful' participation in decision-making processes.

While the right to development is often associated or equated with economic development, it is a holistic right with *four facets* of development: economic, social, cultural and political. In fact, the aim of 'the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire



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population and of all individuals' can only be realised by pursuing a holistic understanding of the right to development.

The right to development incorporates *five principles*:

Intersectionality	Since many individuals and groups often face multiple layers of discrimination in society, an intersectional approach must be adopted by States and other actors to realise the right to development.
Fair distribution	Benefits of development should be fairly distributed both within and between countries because of the globalised and interconnected nature of economies.
Intergenerational equity	As the right to development cannot be used as a licence to destroy the planet, the principle of intergenerational equity as highlighted in the Rio Declaration is critical.
Self-determination	Considering the history of colonisation and current neo-colonial economic policies and projects, political, economic, social and cultural self-determination remains central to the right to development.
International cooperation	Realising the right to development requires international cooperation—North-South, South-South and triangular—in terms of development assistance, access to technologies and peer learning.

Older and newer challenges

Despite the recognition of the right to development, hundreds of millions of people in all regions of the world cannot reap the benefits of accumulative development. With [only 35 per cent](#) of the SDG targets being on track or only making moderate progress, the commitment to leave no one behind is far from a reality. In this context, the situation of older women has failed to receive adequate attention of UN entities, governments, policy makers and business enterprises.

Older women face multiple challenges in realising their right to development as well as other human rights. Often they do not have access to adequate economic means and resources to sustain a dignified life and may be left out of social security schemes. Older women not only face age- and sex-based discrimination at work, but also experience domestic violence, bullying and neglect within families, as well as sexual harassment and violence in old age homes. Older women's access to health services is also limited, owing to social stigma and patriarchal norms among other things. The disproportionate burden of the care economy on older women is likely to increase with ageing societies and increasingly mobile youth in search of employment opportunities. Climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss will also exacerbate the marginalisation of older women. Older women face challenges in accessing digital technologies and, in turn, basic public services. Moreover, their vulnerability is systematically exploited by online scammers.

Older women face these various challenges in different ways because of multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination. The experiences of older women are shaped by variables such as caste, colour, culture, disability, education, ethnicity, gender identity, indigeneity, language, literacy, religion, marital status, migration, race, rural background and sexual orientation.

Relevance of the right to development

The right to development is one of the most transformative human rights because it challenges power structures and seeks to address all types of discriminations and injustices. This transformative potential of the right to development can be leveraged to address certain of the systematic challenges that older women face in realising their human rights.

The collective dimension of the right to development should enable older women to mobilise support and build solidarity around unique issues that matter to them. The holistic nature of the right to development could be invoked to underscore the importance not only of economic development, but also of social, cultural and political development. Moreover, older women should demand a fair distribution of the benefits of development – their past and continuing contributions to sustaining both families and economies should be adequately valued.

Article 2(3) of the Declaration on the Right to Development stipulates that States have a 'duty to formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals.' The goal of constantly improving the well-being of every individual may only be achieved if a 'full life cycle approach' from cradle to grave is adopted. Doing so will ensure that older women are not left behind in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Moreover, as a repository of cultures and traditional knowledge, older women can play a critical role in operationalising the principle of intergenerational equity to combat the triple planetary crisis of climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss. In other words, older women should be treated as critical torchbearers of sustainable development.

Older women should also demand 'active, free and meaningful' participation in all decision-making concerning development-related policies, programmes and projects. Instead of being seen as powerless victims of discrimination and marginalisation, their agency and autonomy should be enabled and leveraged for the common good. Because of their accumulated wisdom and wealth of experience, older women can offer visionary solutions to ongoing challenges such as conflicts, climate change and collapsing multilateralism. As elders, they can lead a much-needed course correction towards a more inclusive, sustainable and peaceful world. ■

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1. See 'Decoding the Right to Development', <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/tools-and-resources/decoding-right-development>

Fact or Fiction?

Older women are less likely to experience loneliness than older men. → **Fiction!**

Loneliness is more common among older women than older men, and the gap widens with age. A [recent study](#) found that 13% of women over 75 reported significant loneliness, compared to only 5% of men in the same age category. In the category 75–84, the prevalence rose to 16.3% of women versus just 5.4% of men. This highlights how gender and age intersect to increase vulnerability to social isolation.



Older Women and their Right to Adequate Housing

Miloon Kothari



Mr. Miloon Kothari is the first Special Rapporteur on adequate housing with the United Nations Human Rights Council (2000-2008), and co-drafter for the Maastricht Principles on the Human Rights of Future Generations. Mr. Kothari is currently a Visiting Professor at the Geneva Graduate Institute and an Independent Expert on Human Rights and Social Policy based in New Delhi, India and Geneva, Switzerland.

A world where violations of the right to adequate housing are manifold and ever-increasing impacts everyone. Amongst the most strongly impacted are elderly persons, in particular older women. A number of overarching studies by UN Special Rapporteurs, which include analysis based on regional grassroots consultations with women, have focused on a woman's right to adequate housing.¹ This article draws upon these studies as well as subsequent ones on women and adequate housing, focussing in particular on the situation of older women. There exist a range of issues negatively impacting older women's right to housing. Amongst these:

Housing Inadequacy

Inadequate and insecure housing and living conditions have a deleterious effect on older women. A number of issues, such as density and overcrowding, lack of privacy, limited or no provisions for disabled women, unfavourable health conditions including poor sanitation, lack of potable water and air pollution, can lead to the violation of numerous human rights of older women. Those who live in informal settlements and other forms of precarious housing are particularly affected by these issues. The question of housing affordability also has a negative impact on this segment of the population. All these factors can negatively impact both an older woman's physical and psychological health and may result in depression, anxiety as well as post-traumatic stress syndrome, among other psychological disorders. Older women already suffering from heart-related health conditions or diabetes may also have their health condition exacerbated by inadequate and insecure housing and living conditions. International human rights standards or norms that address these issues include: [General Comment no. 4 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural](#)

[Rights; General Comment no. 6 of ICESCR; Principles towards a Housing Strategy; WHO Health Principles of Housing.](#)

Evictions and Displacement

Evictions and displacement are often the result of development projects, armed and ethnic conflict or man-made or natural disasters. For older women, particularly widows, lack of inheritance rights can also be a cause of displacement. Older women who are domestic and/or migrant workers may also be vulnerable to eviction from accommodation provided in the context of their employment, and women living with their husband's family are vulnerable to being evicted should they become widowed, experience domestic violence or divorce. Older women living in precarious conditions, such as indigenous women, Afro-descendants, those belonging to ethnic and religious minorities or from work and descent-based communities, Roma, heads of household, peasants, pastoralists, fisherfolk, homeless or landless women, women living in poverty, or migrants are also prone to being displaced. A range of human rights are impacted by such displacement: the right to health, food, to being guaranteed an adequate livelihood, privacy, security, etc. A number of international human rights standards have highlighted the causes and impacts of displacement on older women; for example, General Recommendations no. [27](#) and [34](#) from the UN CEDAW Committee and [The UN Basic principles and guidelines on development-based evictions and displacement.](#)

Violence

Inadequate and insecure housing or living conditions can lead to an increase in violence against older women. Many of the issues highlighted in the two

themes covered above contribute to an increased incidence of violence. Studies from across the world have focused on this issue. The regional consultation in Asia² held by the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, contributing to his studies on Women and Housing, raised a number of issues: degrading housing and living conditions – which in itself is a form of violence; density; denial of title/equal rights; or homes situated in conflict zones. Women also face violence as a result of a lack of security of tenure or the right to housing ownership or to the control of property.

Such factors can have an impact on such forms of VAW as domestic violence, forced eviction, or living in zones of armed conflict/ethnic conflict. Domestic violence is thus closely linked to being able to make decisions about property/security of tenure. Such factors may play out differently within the context of various forms of violence within the home and involve marital rape, dowry deaths, honour killings, etc. There are also various housing-related factors at play at the community, national and international level that may contribute to VAW, including: evictions, discrimination (on the basis of gender, class, caste, ethnicity, etc.) at the community level; and a lack of laws (personal, family, property laws, etc.) and policies at the municipal or national level.

In assessing different impacts, it is also important for the experiences of particular groups to be reflected (for example: female-headed households, indigenous and tribal women, [homeless](#) and landless women suffering from HIV/AIDS, women with disabilities, rural women living on subsistence farming, women victims of forced eviction or domestic violence, refugees or internally-displaced women, widowed, divorced or separated women, women in conflict or post-conflict situations, women migrant workers, domestic workers, etc.

Conclusion

The above analysis along with supporting references highlight a number of policy and legislative recommendations aimed at addressing violations of the human right to adequate housing as it impacts

women, and older women in particular.³ At the national level, there continues to be a need for States to strengthen national legal and policy frameworks designed to protect women's rights to adequate housing, land and inheritance; to introduce constitutional recognition of the right to adequate housing, non-discrimination and gender equality; and to ensure both at the policy and legislative level, harmonisation between provisions in international human rights standards and religious and customary law and practice related to women's equal rights to housing, land, property and inheritance; to ensure that gender-sensitive housing policies and legislation be developed, taking into account the situations of specific groups of women, such as older women, who are particularly vulnerable to homelessness and other housing rights violations due to multiple forms of discrimination. Specific measures are necessary to eliminate cases of multiple forms of discrimination in housing experienced by the various groups of women in vulnerable situations identified in this article. This includes: ensuring access to affordable services such as water, electricity and heating, as well as health facilities; due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish acts of violence against women given the interlinkages between VAW and adequate housing for women; introducing anti-violence provisions in housing legislation and policies; as well as ensuring that domestic violence laws include provisions to protect women's right to adequate housing.

The first UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing had proposed the following definition of this critical human right: "The human right to adequate housing is the right of every woman, man, youth and child to gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity." Given the range of specific impacts that older women face in the context of the right to adequate housing, it is essential to complete this definition with an important addition: "The human right to adequate housing is the right of every woman, man, older person, youth and child to gain and sustain a safe and secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity." ■

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1. See in particular: SR RAH 2003: [E/CN.4/2003/55](#) SR RAH 2005: [E/CN.4/2005/43](#) SR RAH 2006 [E/CN.4/2006/118](#) and SR RAH 2012 [A/HRC/19/53](#). See also OHCHR, Women and the Right to Adequate Housing at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/WomenHousing_HR.PUB.11.2.pdf
2. See: [Interlinkages between Violence against Women and Women's Right to Adequate Housing](#) [proceedings of the Asia Regional Consultation on "The Interlinkages between violence against Women and Women's Right to Adequate Housing," New Delhi] (Chiang Mai: Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and HLRN - South Asia, 2004) at: https://hlrn.org.in/en-gb/d?resources=interlinkage_vaw_housing
3. For the range of essential elements of the right to adequate housing, and policy issues emerging for women and housing, see: Questionnaire on Women and Housing in Annex iii of Report Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing: <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/4/18>

Is Asia-Pacific Ready to Do Right for its Women — Caring for Them in Old Age?

As Asia-Pacific's population rapidly ages, can its care systems keep up? How will the region's 1.3 billion people over the age of 60¹ access adequate eldercare services and age with dignity? Can Southeast Asia cope with almost three times the number of older persons requiring care in the coming decades?²

Even in ageing, women seem to get the short end of the stick

The majority of the older population, in particular people over 80, are women. And in their later years, women are more prone than men to chronic illnesses, disease and disability. For example, in Indonesia, older women are 12 percent more likely to suffer from hypertension than men.³

Yet because they assume caregiving responsibilities throughout their lives, some women find themselves stranded in their final season of life: in poor health, without adequate finances or care, precisely when they're in the greatest need of both.

Meet Ms Tan, a 72-year-old who lives in Singapore.⁴

"Who will take care of older women like me? Will I have enough money to cover my health expenses?"

These questions keep Ms Tan awake at night. Luckily for her, she can depend on her late husband's savings and two children who live nearby – for now.

Despite dedicating her most productive years to her family, Ms Tan's sacrifices do not guarantee that she will sail through her golden years without a care, enjoying them in good health and with sound finances.

Women are the bedrock of care in the family, yet reciprocal care is far from guaranteed in their later years

In Asia, most long-term care is provided by women, including older women. Older women 60 and above do more unpaid care work than men of any age.⁵ Even in old age, they continue to provide care – for their spouses, grandchildren and other relatives. In Thailand, for instance, a study shows husbands aged 60-69 are mainly cared for by their wives, but the reverse is not the case.⁶

Women often have to fend for themselves in old age; in Ms Tan's case she cared for her sick husband until he passed away five years ago. Many women her age are in similar situations. Ms Tan's fears and



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anxieties increase every year, while her health deteriorates and her medical costs keep rising:

"I have high blood pressure; my joints have become painful in the last two years, I cannot walk for long distances, and worse, I've suffered falls three times in the last year."

I don't have much money. I use my CPF⁷ and my husband's CPF savings. My children help, but they are worried about my growing needs and rising costs. The Singapore government's grants help my children with the costs of caring for me, but I'm not sure if that is enough."

Ms Tan's concerns are not unfounded; women have greater care needs, but seem to be disproportionately affected by care gaps. In Vietnam, for instance, 70 percent of those who experience such gaps are women.⁸

Despite women's healthcare needs in later years, evolving family structures prevent them from being met

Traditionally, Asian women dedicate their lives to

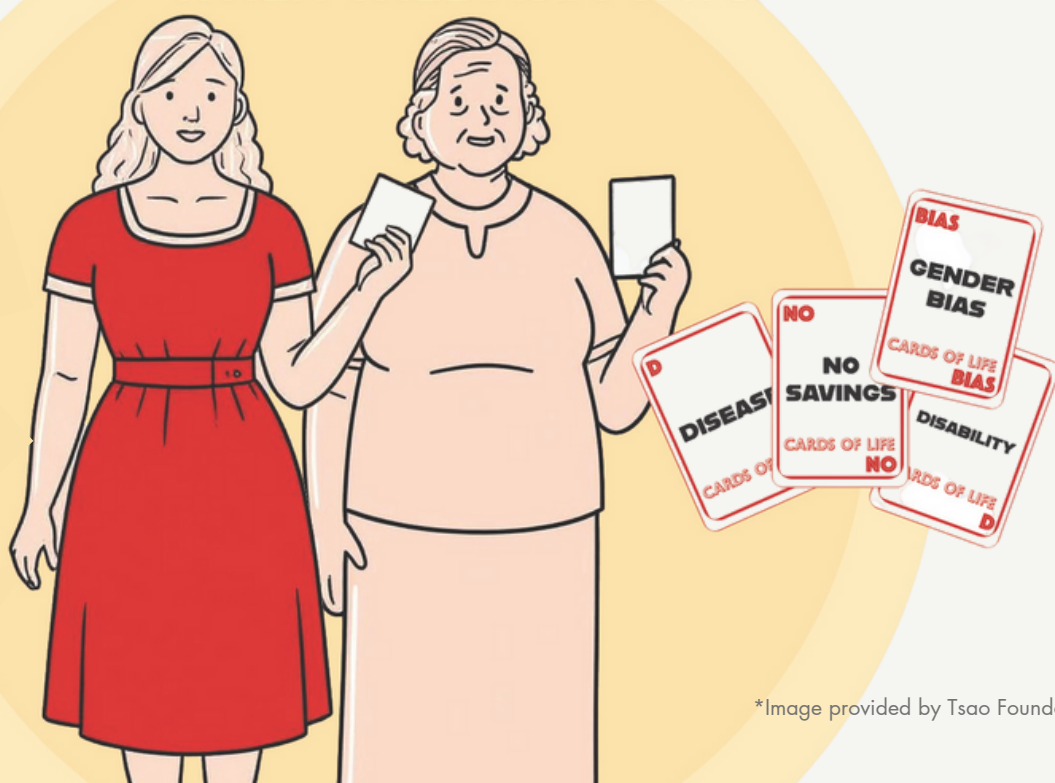
providing unpaid care work—for children, parents and spouses, which leaves them with little time to engage in remunerated work. Together with other gender barriers, such as more difficult access to education, women end up in old age with lower incomes and inadequate savings to support their own care needs. Many older women rely on their children for financial support and care. Yet, as Ms Tan fears, with shrinking family sizes, this may not be sustainable:

"We can't always rely on families as families are getting smaller. I had four brothers and sisters, so we could take turns looking after my parents. I only have two children, so it is harder for them. I am happy my daughter is taking care of me, but I worry about her future. Like me, she may have not have enough savings for her old age and she only has one child to support her. We will have to find others to help."

How can current and future generations of older women age well?

For women like Ms Tan, care and support systems should be more inclusive, recognising the intersectionality of gender, age and disability. Better

Women Get Short End Of The Stick Even In Ageing **WHEN WILL ASIA CATCH UP?**



*Image provided by Tsao Foundation

data must be collected and disaggregated by these categories. More Asian countries should begin to:

- Recognise women's rights and contributions
- Reduce the burden of unpaid care work
- Redistribute the burden of unpaid care by addressing gender-based stereotypes
- Represent older women in policy-making decisions
- Reward older women's care contributions by ensuring their social protection

Several Asia-Pacific countries are leading the way

In Australia, caregivers receive financial support through an allowance that helps to defray caregiving costs. Similarly, caregivers from low-income households in Singapore receive a monthly grant to reduce the financial burden of caregiving.

In Korea, respite care services are available to help reduce stress on families. Through a volunteer-based homecare model, volunteers visit the homes of older persons and perform simple care tasks such as cleaning so that seniors can continue to age in place. Such community-based care systems exist in Japan as well as in Thailand.

Japan and Korea have social insurance-based long-term care systems that make professional care services more affordable and accessible for families,

thereby enabling older women and their families to choose.

Ms Tan hopes that such services will also become available in Singapore:

"My health is getting worse. I need help from bathing to eating. Caring for me is stressful for my children, and eventually, they may need professional help, at affordable prices hopefully."

Fortunately for older women like Ms Tan, there is Singapore's Caregiver Support Action Plan, providing multifaceted support for the physical, financial and mental well-being of caregivers like her daughter, her primary caregiver, who can count on collaborative relationships with and support from healthcare professionals.

It is Ms Tan's wish that in the very near future older people will be able to age with dignity.

"Our governments need to start thinking about these issues now. As women, we provide care throughout our lives, these valuable contributions should be recognised. When the time comes, we should be cared for without any objections or obstacles."

As Asia advances toward super-aged status, investing in inclusive care and support systems is imperative. ■

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HRC 59 Side Events

On 19 June 2025, together with the Permanent Missions of Slovenia and Montenegro, and International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA), OHCHR co-hosted an HRC side event *World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2025: Addressing Abuse of Older Persons in Institutions*. Panelists discussed the challenges and gaps in preventing abuse of older persons in institutional settings and shared good practices taken by Member States. Mr. Michael Camilleri, Chief of Branch, OHCHR, delivered a keynote speech, highlighting the urgent need to address the widespread and often overlooked abuse of older persons, especially in institutional settings, by challenging ageism and closing legal and data gaps.



On 26 June 2025, the Permanent Delegation of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) hosted an HRC side event *Towards Safe and Dignified Ageing: Protecting Older Persons Amidst Demographic and Social Transformations*. Panelists explored the impact of transformations on older persons' safety, autonomy, and well being, while highlighting innovative policy responses undertaken by Member States to promote dignity and resilience in ageing.



Fact or Fiction?

Older women are more likely to face poverty than older men. →

Fact!

Due to lifelong discrimination, women accumulate fewer assets and face lower pension coverage in old age. Globally, only 56 of 116 countries offer women universal pension access. Even in developed regions, 64% of the older poor are older women. By 2050, older women in LMICs will face 15% higher poverty rates while living nearly four years longer than men.



Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Healthy Ageing, Ulaanbaatar



From 19 to 20 June 2025, the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia hosted the Asia Pacific Regional Forum on Healthy Ageing in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. The event brought together policymakers, academics, and civil society organisations in the region to discuss key issues affecting older people, share best practices, and explore legal frameworks that uphold their rights. The forum served as a platform for regional cooperation, knowledge exchange, and advocacy. The forum adopted [the Ulaanbaatar Call to Action on the Rights of Older Persons](#), reinforcing the collective commitment to a future where aging is met with dignity, equality, and respect.

Expert Group Meeting on Population and Development

From 25 to 27 June 2025, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) hosted an Expert Group Meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, to explore recent and future trends in population ageing across the region. The meeting brought together government focal points in the region, civil society representatives, academics, and UN agencies. Participants examined demographic shifts and their social and economic implications, reviewed ESCAP's policy repository and good practices database, and discussed forward-looking strategies for inclusive, age-responsive planning.



World Population Day 2025 in Asia and the Pacific



On 11 July 2025, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) observed World Population Day by holding a virtual event on Demographic Trends and Intergenerational Relations in Asia and the Pacific. This event featured a moderated panel discussion with government representatives, experts and civil society representatives, including a youth representative. Marking the launch of the latest Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Journal (Vol. 32, No. 1, April 2025), the event highlighted its findings and discussed opportunities and challenges associated with rapid demographic change in the region.



INTERSECTING INEQUITIES

AGE, GENDER, AND STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Tuesday, August 19
3 PM (CEST) - 9 AM (ET)

WITH:

- Prof. Attiya Waris, UN Independent Expert on foreign debt
- David London, ACG-Training Management & Consulting
- Dr. Marianna Leite, CESR
- Dimiter Chalev, Chief of Branch, OHCHR
- Paola García Rey, Amnesty International Argentina
- Dr. Maria Ron Balsera, CESR
- Moderator: Reem Alsalem, United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls

CENTER for ECONOMIC and SOCIAL RIGHTS

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Register at
bit.ly/intersecting_

On 19 August 2025, the OHCHR launched its Reframing Ageing webinar series in collaboration with the Centre for Economic and Social Rights (CESR) with the first webinar titled *Intersecting Inequities: Age, Gender, and Structural Violence in Global Contexts*. This event attracted over 150 participants, including UN experts, academics, practitioners, policy makers and representatives from civil society organizations (CSOs).

The focus of the discussion was on gendered dimensions of structural violence associated with negative stereotypes about aging that contribute to a range of overlapping forms of discrimination. The participants highlighted several key issues, including poverty, inadequate healthcare, caregiving responsibilities, and long-standing inequalities in education, employment, and social policies. Regional and historical differences in access to resources and opportunities were also addressed. The participants shared their experiences and lessons learned, emphasizing the urgent need for improved policies which should aim to enhance access to services, promote financial independence, and address systemic inequalities faced by older women.



Nicky Hastie, holding an image of her mother, attended the inquiry in person on Monday
Getty Images

UK Covid Inquiry Opens Hearings on Impact of Pandemic on Older Persons in Care Homes

(30 June 2025) The UK Covid-19 Inquiry began its sixth phase, examining how the pandemic affected care services for older and disabled people. The inquiry heard opening remarks referencing a civil servant's written description of a "generational slaughter within care homes", echoing the experiences of bereaved families. Between March 2020 and January 2022, nearly 46,000 care home residents in England and Wales died with Covid-19. Key issues raised include the discharge of hospital patients into care homes without testing, the use of blanket "do not resuscitate" orders, restricted family visits, inadequate staffing, and lack of protective equipment. Testimonies from families highlighted the emotional toll and lack of dignity in end-of-life care. The hearings, expected to last five weeks, will include voices from bereaved relatives, care workers, disabled persons, and sector representatives, aiming to assess structural shortcomings and draw lessons for future care provision.

Older Workers Face Digital Barriers in NZ Job Market

(14 July 2025) The Post's *Work, Interrupted* series examined how older New Zealanders are being excluded from the job market by digital hiring systems. The article featured accounts from jobseekers over 50, including Jacqueline Freeman, founder of "58 and Unapologetic", who described being repeatedly filtered out by recruitment algorithms not designed with older workers in mind. One-third of New Zealand's workforce is over 50, yet around 125,000 in this age group are seeking employment. Key issues raised include automated CV screening, age discrimination, financial insecurity, and a lack of flexible job options particularly affecting older women, disabled people, and Māori and Pacific workers. Personal testimonies highlighted the emotional toll of being "ghosted" by the job market and dismissed as "too experienced". The article also discussed initiatives such as Seniors@Work and government-led responses, including the Employment Action Plan, aimed at fostering inclusive workplaces and recognising the long-term value older workers bring to the economy.

Rising Heat Waves Threaten Older Adults, UN Report Warns

(10 July 2025) The UN Environment Programme (UNEP) released the *Frontiers 2025 Report*, highlighting escalating climate risks for older persons worldwide. The report warns that heat waves have become more frequent and deadly, with heat-related deaths among those aged 65 and above rising by an estimated 85% since the 1990s. Key concerns include deteriorating air quality, floods in vulnerable urban areas, and heightened health risks for older adults with chronic illnesses or limited mobility. The report also raises alarms about ancient microbes reawakening due to melting glaciers and the remobilization of banned toxic chemicals through floods. Recommended actions include reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving urban planning for resilient and accessible cities, and increasing scientific research. The report further notes the recent UN Human Rights Council resolution to develop a legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons, aiming to protect those most vulnerable to climate change.



Seniors@work founder Ian Fraser says ageism is less prominent than it used to be.
SUPPLIED





Risks Mount for Older Persons and People with Disabilities in Gaza

(15 July 2025) The Global Protection Cluster published an analysis highlighting the risks and barriers faced by persons with disabilities and older persons in Gaza after 20 months of ongoing hostilities. The report noted that over 83% of persons with disabilities have lost access to assistive

devices, and 80% of older persons are without essential medication. Key issues identified include attacks on health infrastructure, disruption of care, limited humanitarian access, and exclusion from aid delivery. Additional risks include exposure to explosive ordnance, psychological distress, and the compounded vulnerabilities faced by women and girls with disabilities and older women. The widespread destruction of services and repeated displacements have increased the vulnerabilities of at-risk groups and exposed them to increasingly dangerous conditions. Despite these challenges, local organizations continue to provide critical support. The analysis calls for unimpeded humanitarian access, inclusive service delivery, and urgent support to organizations serving older persons and persons with disabilities.

UN experts urge Taliban to release older British couple held in underground cells, as their health deteriorates

(21 Jul 2025) UN human rights experts have urgently called for the release and medical treatment of Peter and Barbie Reynolds, an elderly British couple (aged 80 and 75) detained without charge in Afghanistan since February 2025. The couple, long-term residents in the country, were initially held in a maximum-security facility and later in underground cells by the Taliban's General Directorate of Intelligence. Their health has severely declined—Peter suffers from heart and neurological issues, while Barbie is reportedly anaemic and frail. They have had no access to legal representation or adequate medical care. UN experts stress the inhumane and degrading conditions of their detention and urge their immediate transfer to a civilian hospital. The case has been raised with the Taliban and UK authorities, and will continue to be monitored.

Voices of Resilience: Women Over 60 in West Africa

(04 August 2025) A series backed by National Geographic and The Guardian showcases the strength and life stories of older women in West Africa, highlighting widows, oyster-farming leaders, and those defying the cycle of child marriage. These women embody leadership, independence, and community strength across Benin, Togo, Sierra Leone, and the Gambia.



Photograph: Sarjo Baldeh/AWOHOWA/National Geographic Society



Frequent Standing May Boost Heart Health After Menopause

(05 August 2025) A new study from the University of California, San Diego, published in Circulation, reveals that frequent standing throughout the day, or simply incorporating more sit-to-stand movements, can significantly lower blood pressure in postmenopausal women, especially those who are overweight or obese. A powerful reminder that small daily habits can yield big health benefits.

Age-friendly Initiatives



CANADA

The “[Hi Neighbour – Coffee with Seniors](#)” program in Chilliwack, British Columbia, is designed to strengthen local connections and reduce social isolation. In the Sardis neighborhood, where over 45% of residents are over the age of 55, the program offers regular informal gatherings in local coffee shops. Older persons are invited to share a cup of coffee, meet new people, and engage in friendly conversations. These sessions, held every other Saturday in various spots across the community, have become a warm and welcoming space for older persons to feel seen, heard, and valued.

The origins of the program lie in the recognition that many older persons experienced heightened loneliness during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Over time, the initiative has grown beyond coffee meetups. Participants have started their own activities, such as walking groups, creating new opportunities for physical and social engagement.



UGANDA

In Kivu Buka, Uganda, a dedicated [weekly fitness initiative](#) has been empowering older women to tackle hypertension, diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

Operated for around five years by the Gabula Royal Foundation, the program has engaged more than 1,000 participants to date. Beyond physical health benefits, it plays a pivotal role in fostering social bonds, reducing isolation, and promoting mental well-being among older women.

Through low-impact exercises—including walking, stretching, and gentle aerobics—and regular health check-ins, participants not only gain cardiovascular and metabolic benefits, but also build enduring friendships. The initiative creates a safe, inclusive environment where participants encourage one another to stay active and share experiences, significantly enhancing their quality of life.



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