

United Nations International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP)

1st October 2020, New York

The 2020 theme was: **“Pandemics: Do they change how we address age and ageing?”**

The year 2020 marks the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations and the 30th Anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons (UNIDOP). This year has also seen the emergence of COVID-19, which has caused an upheaval across the world. Considering the higher risks confronted by older persons during the outbreak of pandemics such as COVID-19, the event addressed the need to target policy and programmatic interventions towards raising awareness of their differential needs and stressed the contributions of older persons to their own health as well as the multiple roles they play in the preparedness and response phases in current and future pandemics.

Globally, **the population of people over 60 is set to outnumber youth and children under the age of 10 by 2030.**

The global population over age 65 is set to more than double over the next three decades.

A panel discussion featured speakers representing the UN system, Member States, academia and civil society. The event was co-organized by the NGO Committee on Ageing (New York) and DESA (Department of Economic and Social Affairs) , and co-sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations , in collaboration with the Group of Friends of Older Persons.

The objectives of UNIDOP are to:

- Inform participants about the strategic objectives for the Decade of Healthy Ageing
- Raise awareness of the special health needs of older persons and their contributions to their own health and to the functioning of the societies in which they live.
- Increase awareness and appreciation of the role of the health care workforce in maintaining and improving the health of older persons, with special attention to the nursing profession.
- Present proposals for reducing the health disparities between older persons in the developed and developing countries, so as to **“Leave no one behind”**
- Increase understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on older persons and its impact on health care policy, planning, and attitudes.

The International Association of Gerontology and Geriatrics was also holding a companion event held virtually on the same day.

From the report of a Foreign Policy virtual dialogue in partnership with AARP (American Association of Retired Persons):

Outbreaks in long-term care (LTC) facilities expose chronic deficiencies: in nursing homes, staffing shortages, lack of adequate staff training, and gaps in the implementation of infection-control protocols have been documented across facilities, and together these factors create conditions ripe for infection and spread.

Pandemic exposes ageism and discrimination: as acute resources shortages prompt hospitals and officials around the world to develop guidelines for health care delivery, the failure to explicitly prohibit triaging based on age or disability has put older adults and those with chronic conditions or disabilities at greater risk in many of the plans.

Instances of abuse and violence against older adults on the rise: a synthesis analysis of 52 studies incorporating 28 countries around the world found that **1 in 6 older adults (over 141 million people) were already subject to some form of abuse, including neglect and psychological, financial, physical, and/or sexual abuse.**

Isolation is exacerbated by COVID-19, underscoring need for digital connectivity: meaningful communication between family caregivers and nursing home residents is essential, because family caregivers are the most important source of practical and emotional support for older adults with chronic, disabling, or other serious health conditions.

COVID-19 is threatening economic welfare: 68% of people above retirement age receive a pension globally but that number is less than 20% in most low-income countries

Aging trends make human rights protections urgent for all countries: currently, there are over 700 million persons over 65 globally

Human rights for older adults is a global imperative: analysis has shown that countries that are able to leverage the aging trend, including by prioritizing investments in community social infrastructure, economic and technological engagement, and health care and wellness, will be better positioned to withstand the pressures and harness the benefits and, critically , meet the needs of older adults.

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