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MAINSTREAMING GENDER & AGEING IN THE SDGS: LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

REPORT: side event during the High Level Political Forum
1:15 to 2:30 pm, July 13
UN Conference Room 8

Co-sponsors: This event was co-sponsored by UNDP, the US Mission to the UN, the Permanent Mission of Japan to the UN, and the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the UN

Background

Ageing is increasingly becoming a core theme for gender-responsive development. Women aged 50 and above represent nearly one-quarter (23.6%) of women around the world, while the number of people aged 60 and above is expected to reach 1.4 billion in 2030 and 2 billion in 2050. Despite their demographic significance, these women have been typically unrecognized by international development programmes, policy, and discourse—not only within the UN system, but also in foreign assistance led by Member States. With its promise to “leave no one behind”, the Post-2015 agenda now marks an unprecedented opportunity to include ageing populations in future actions for sustainable development. In addition to the emphasis on marginalized groups, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) directly address the concerns of older women, including: targets that lift historic age-caps on data collection for gender-based violence (Goal 5); specifying the right to health “for all at all ages” (Goal 3); promoting “lifelong” learning (Goal 6); encouraging the development of sustainable, inclusive, and accessible urban environments, including for older persons (Goal 11); and, on reducing all forms of violence, including physical, psychological, or sexual violence, among all persons, regardless of age (Goal 16).

An environmental scan of gender projects across the UN system reveals that the limited involvement of older women is framed within the social protection/vulnerable population lens. While older women are systemically discriminated against through combined age and gender disparities, addressing this vulnerability is important; however, moving forward, development policies and programmes will need to recognize older women as agents of change through projects to enable livelihoods and economic empowerment, increasing women’s leadership and political participation, and training older women to be responders for their communities in the wake of natural disasters, conflicts, or other emergencies.

Purpose

Given the SDG commitment to leave no one behind, as well as the specific targets requiring data collection inclusive of older women (e.g. through indicators measuring GBV among women ages 15 *and older*), it will be important to enhance capacities at the country level to integrate ageing within gender and development programmes and policies. This side event explored policy options and shared best practices from Member States that include older women in development programmes and national projects, and featured the

perspective of civil society in working directly with older persons to bring their voices to government policymakers.

Audience: Delegates attending the HLPF, and UN agency leadership and technical staff charged with gender, ageing, and SDG implementation. The event was at maximum capacity, with approximately 100 persons in attendance.

Programme:

- Chair: Sarah Poole, Deputy Directory, UNDP Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (BPPS)
 - Ms. Poole provided an overview of UNDP’s work on SDG implementation with highlights of projects involving older women from the field, and framed the discussion as an opportunity to hear from Member States who are ahead of the curve in addressing ageing.

- Remarks:
 - Mateo Estrémé, Deputy Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations and Chair of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing of the General Assembly
 - Mr. Estrémé spoke of the need for increased prioritization across the UN system of the needs of older persons and his work to do so as chair of the Open-Ended Working Group.
 - Ambassador Yoshifumi Okamura, Deputy Permanent Representative of Japan to the UN
 - Ambassador Okamura spoke of Japan’s experience as the world “oldest” society in developing policies for ageing, and of their current coordination with Thailand to support older women caregivers.
 - H.E. Koki Muli Grignon, Deputy Permanent Representative of Kenya to the UN
 - Ambassador Grignon spoke of the impact of the collapse of traditional family and community structures on older persons caused by rural to urban migration in Kenya and the region.
 - Minister-Counsel Stefanie Amadeo, U.S. Mission
 - Ms. Amadeo expressed support for UNDP’s hosting of a secondee from the US Government to look at policy development for older persons, and spoke of new developments in U.S. policy to encourage greater investments in criminal justice system responses to elder abuse.
 - Sylvia Beales, Director of Strategies Alliances, HelpAge International & Co-Chair, UN Stakeholder Group on Ageing
 - Ms. Beales spoke of the need for data to be inclusive of older persons—in particular, older women—and that achieving the SDGs will require revising data collection systems with age cut-offs of 49 for women on key issues such as GBV.

- Closing Remarks: Thomas Gass, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs
 - ASG Gass spoke of the importance of the UN system as a convenor for Member States to share insights on key policy questions for development, such as ageing, and expressed commitment towards working with UN colleagues to improve coordination on this topic as it is central to the SDGs.