**Call for contributions: Ageism and Age-Discrimination**

**Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons**

**Contribution by UNFPA**

For more than 50 years, UNFPA has been advising governments around the world on how to address demographic change by analysing population dynamics, understanding their implications and developing policy responses that are based on evidence and human rights.

UNFPA’s [Demographic Resilience Programme](https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/publications/demographic-resilience-programme-europe-central-asia) builds on this experience by working to improve the capacity of countries in Europe and Central Asia to develop population and social policies and programmes that respond to demographic change, strengthen human capital and shape a prosperous future. Carried out in partnership with governmental, non-governmental and private-sector stakeholders, the Programme offers a suite of support services that can be tailored to country needs and specifications. It focuses on three priorities: Demographic intelligence, Convening stakeholders and knowledge exchange and Population policy design.

The Programme is carried out in line with the principles of the 1994 [International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action](https://www.unfpa.org/news/explainer-what-icpd-and-why-does-it-matter) which put rights and dignity of individuals, rather than numerical population targets, at the center of population and development policies.

Over the past years an increasing number of countries have turned to UNFPA with requests for assistance regarding issues related to population ageing and recently also regarding the human rights of older persons. In collaboration with partner UN agencies, national statistical offices and academic institutions, UNFPA has been working to counter ageism in statistics. It does so by supporting a more comprehensive collection and analysis of population data, including through its long-standing support to censuses, as well as other methods of data collection. Furthermore, UNFPA supports the efforts of statistical offices to rigorous disaggregation data and works with countries to rethink the life course. Recognizing that older persons are a diverse group of individuals with diverse characteristics and abilities, is an important step towards a rethinking and reframing the concepts of economic dependencies, care and support away from arbitrary and ageist demographic dependency ratios towards a focus on autonomy, independence and participation.

The new [UNFPA Population Data Platform (PDP)](https://sbx1.pdp.unfpa.org/portal/home) includes a geospatial [dashboard on *COVID-19 Population Vulnerability*](https://covid19-map.unfpa.org/)that maps where older persons live and where essential services are located. This is a living tool with the potential to improve data input and analysis by all users including older persons and their organizations.

UNFPA reviewed the last round of data of the [World Values Survey](https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp) to look at ageism in the 58+ countries they cover. Ageism looked very real.  Most respondents reported that they see less value to society from older persons in relation to young adults.  That response was worse in high-income countries. However, there was no difference between the countries with larger or lower number of older persons. Responses from lower income countries where the ratio of older persons is lower, tended to express greater respect for older persons.

During the COVID-19 pandemic UNFPA EECARO initiated [a joint programme on Rights, Health and Dignity of Older Persons](https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/ageing-programme) together with UNECE, WHO/EURO, OHCHR and HelpAge International’s Europe and Middle East Regional Office and in collaboration with the United Nations Regional System Issue Based Coalition on Health and Wellbeing. UNFPA advocates to make sure that older persons are taken into account in all recovery efforts and policy decisions with full respect of their human rights.

Evidence shows that significant relations between generations reduces ageism. Therefore, fostering intergenerational relationships is central to this joint programme that includes challenging ageism as one of its main areas of action through changing the narrative, promoting the human rights of older persons and creating participatory and enabling environments.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brutally exposed ageism in our region as elsewhere in the world. As populations are getting older rapidly, there is a risk that we will continue to see intergenerational conflict and increased perceptions of “generational inequity.”

However, at UNFPA we have seen many examples of intergenerational solidarity. Young and older volunteers have mobilised for each other.

UNFPA’s technical brief [*Implications of COVID-19 for Older Persons: Responding to the Pandemic*](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Older_Persons_and_COVID19_final.pdf)highlighted relevant initiatives underway in offices worldwide. Responding to the rights and needs of older persons is fully in line with one of the accelerators of the UNFPA COVID-19 Global Response Plan, i.e. to leave no one behind. The document underscores UNFPA’s role in supporting the UN COVID-19 response at the country level, under the leadership of the United Nations Resident Coordinator system and the World Health Organization (WHO). UNFPA also supports civil society to advocate for older persons’ participation in the policy arena, and for their voices to be heard in preparedness and response to a crisis in which they are the most affected.

[The regional technical guidance note on older persons for the UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office (APRO) and Asia-Pacific Country Offices](https://vietnam.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Asia%20Pacific%20COVID-19%20Older%20Persons%20Technical%20Brief%20final_clean.pdf) targeted older persons, health workers, and caregivers to enable effective support to each member state and to guide engagement with relevant partners in preparing for and responding to the COVID-19 epidemic. Its recommendations include to promote collective intergenerational solidarity to avoid stigmatization and discrimination against older persons, health workers, and caregivers.

UNFPA in all regions works to empower older persons and promote good intergenerational relations. For example in Iran, on the occasion of the International Day of Older Persons 2020, the State Welfare Organization in collaboration with UNFPA initiated a campaign, encouraging family members, friends, young people at communities, neighbours etc. to contact older persons in their families and communities, including older persons in residential care centers to ensure they received the support they needed. The campaign received great attention at community level. In addition, UNFPA Iran supported the National Document of Older Persons approved in 2020 (see attached file pages 19-20) paving the way for planning and programming to end ageism.

In Vietnam, UNFPA supported under the VNM9P03 project, “Supporting Viet Namese agencies in the provision and use of data on population and development and evidence to

develop and monitor plans, strategies and policies for economic and social development, and sustainable development goals 2017-2021”, the Viet Nam National Committee on Ageing (VNCA) developed a policy report to provide an overall situation analysis on ageing in Viet Nam and recommendations to the Government of Viet Nam on the need for developing a comprehensive national policy to respond to population ageing issues and prepare for a well adaptation of the country in the aged population context. The report [*Towards a comprehenstive national policy for an ageing in Viet Nam*](https://vietnam.unfpa.org/en/publications/towards-comprehenstive-national-policy-ageing-viet-nam) was published in 2019.

We are presenting here a few examples of good practice from EECARO country offices:

**Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH)**

A study found that a network of 17 Healthy Ageing Centres supported by UNFPA in Bosnia and Herzegovina is having a dramatic positive impact on the health, longevity and well-being of older persons. The study was commissioned by UNFPA and the NGO Partnership for Public Health, in cooperation with University College London (UCL). The Partnership for Public Health established the first such centre in Sarajevo in 2011 and new centres are opening at a steady pace with UNFPA support. The vision is to eventually institute one in each municipality of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in other countries in the Balkan region.

The centres provide a place for older persons to gather, socialize and participate in organized courses and activities. Among other results, the study found that Healthy Ageing Centre members are:

* 13 per cent less likely to report that they often feel lonely
* 15 per cent more likely to say they are happy with their friendships
* 28 per cent more likely to say they are happy with their family relationships

Like many other countries in Eastern Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina is experiencing population ageing, with the proportion of older persons in the country increasing from 5 per cent in 1971 to 17 per cent in 2019. Population projections show that this proportion will continue to grow, reaching approximately 37 per cent by 2050, due to low fertility and the emigration of working-age people.

Taking into account the increased risks of older persons to the [COVID-19 pandemic](https://eeca.unfpa.org/en/covid19), a healthy and active older population can participate in public life and greatly contribute to work, their communities and society at large.

**Kazakhstan**

In 2020 UNFPA in Kazakhstan provided technical support to the ministry of labor and social protection on development of the National Plan of Actions on "Active longevity" up to 2025. The document is under the process of consideration and endorsement by the Government.

To provide a baseline and evidence data for monitoring of the implementation of "Active longevity" UNFPA supported a national quantitative and qualitative survey to assess the socio-economic status and needs of older persons (also in light of Covid-19). The survey was conducted by CIOM research agency commissioned by UNFPA. The survey included interviews with 2000 respondents aged 55 and older and with 20 experts from government and CSOs’ representatives. The data gathered was also used to calculate the [Active Ageing Index (AAI)](https://unece.org/population/active-ageing-index) for the first time in Kazakhstan. UNFPA also supported the review of successful international policies on active, healthy and dignified longevity which can be applicable to Kazakhstan and related policy brief.

The analytical report and policy brief, the sociological survey and its findings will be presented to the government to sensitize national stakeholders on ageing issues and foster policy dialogue on the importance of having a demographic policy and formulate adequate programmes targeted to the older population. These documents recognize that Active longevity contributes to the establishment of a positive image of older persons and the eradication of ageism and age-based discrimination in all spheres of life. Its recommendations include: *An active longevity policy involves recognizing the continuing contribution of older people to the development of society. This recognition is based on the affirmation of positive images of ageing and older persons. Overcoming ageism in all its forms and at all stages of human life is the most important prerequisite and, at the same time, the goal of the policy of active longevity. (*See annexed policy brief)

While Kazakhstan is considered a demographically young state at a comparatively early stage of demographic transition, the process is unstoppable. The relative number of the population of Kazakhstan aged 65 years and over was about 8% in 2020, the relative number of 80-year-olds and people over this age - less than 2%. By the middle of this century, the relative number of people aged 65+ years will reach 14%.

**Moldova**

[Creating bonds between generations to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic through development of digital skills of older people](https://gis.unece.org/portal/apps/sites/#/unece-sdg-report-2021/app/7a31318da2b44a14ae3c672ab2c6d15b)

The UNFPA’s [Analysis on the impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons in the Republic of Moldova](https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/publications/analiza-riscurilor-pandemiei-covid-19-asupra-persoanelor-v%C3%A2rstnice-din-republica) showed that 57 per cent of people aged over 55 years surveyed as part of the assessment found it very difficult to cope with self-isolation during COVID-19 pandemic. Access to social and health services hampered by the requirement for older people aged over 63 years to leave their house only in exceptional circumstances, along with limited social contacts, interactions and access to information revealed not only physical isolation, but the fact that older people were socially and digitally isolated.

While 97 per cent of the population of Moldova is covered by a 4G mobile network, Data collected before and during the pandemic indicate that only 34 per cent of people age 60 to 79 in Moldova use the Internet, compared with 82 per cent of those age 15-59.2

To build bridges between generations and reduce the social and digital divide in Moldova, UNFPA established an innovative partnership with the telecommunication company Moldcell and grassroots organizations in mobilizing young people to help older persons in accessing social services during the pandemic while developing older people's digital skills. In addition to the facilitation of the intergenerational dialogue and building stable bridges between young and older members of the community, the [*intergenerational programme*](https://moldova.unfpa.org/ro/news/persoanele-v%C3%A2rstnice-din-10-localit%C4%83%C8%9Bi-vor-primi-telefoane-mobile-%C8%99i-vor-%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C8%9Ba-%C3%AEmpreun%C4%83-cu), led by UNFPA and implemented jointly with Moldcell Foundation, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection and HelpAge International Moldova also engages young volunteers for teaching digital skills to older persons and using donated mobile phones, so that they connect with other members of their community and seek social and medical support during the pandemic. The initiative is implemented under a broader UN Moldova-Moldcell cooperation agreement, meant to facilitate joint actions for the promotion of the Sustainable Development Agenda and investments in SDGs.

According to the 2020 [Generations and Gender Survey](https://moldova.unfpa.org/en/publications/generations-and-gender-programme-project-card), only 5 per cent of respondents over the age of 55 were involved in social or educational activities, compared to EU average of 8.4 per cent. Older people’s isolation may compound the profound negative effects of the pandemic on their health and well-being. UNFPA is working with national and private sector partners for empowering older persons while creating bonds between generations and facilitating intergenerational dialogue.

**Serbia**

[Closing the gap for older people](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/SDG-Report%202021-withcovers.pdf)

While Global SDG Indicators Database shows that in 2017, 92.6 per cent individuals owned a mobile telephone in Serbia (91.9 per cent female and 93.2 per cent male), recent study shows that 43 per cent of older people in Serbia do not use internet at all. Out of those who do use it, 90 per cent do not use services available online.

Rada Djuricin, renowned actress in her last 80s, is leading the way and showcasing how to close the digital divide in Serbia. Within the project of UNFPA and Mikser Organization promoting intergenerational exchange, Rada starred in tutorials for Skype, Viber and Facebook showing older women and men in Serbia how to use most popular platforms to connect with their loved ones, especially during COVID pandemics. Tutorials were widely disseminated online on social media and will be brought closer to older people in clubs and centres for older people across the country. “If I can do it, you can do it”- says Rada.

[Older Persons in the Republic of Serbia and COVID19 pandemic](https://serbia.unfpa.org/en/publications/older-persons-republic-serbia-and-covid19-pandemic)

This report analyses the situation and the quality of life of older persons in Serbia during the epidemic of COVID-19 and especially during the state of emergency in Serbia between 16 March and 6 May 2020. It reviews the available data including from policy measures and quantitative and quality research with the participation of older persons, experts, service providers, independent regulatory bodies and decision-makers. The report focuses on access to services using a rights-based approach and the “leave no one behind” principle. A set of recommendations was developed for public policy makers and civil society. These recommendations should contribute to decreasing the vulnerability of and risks for older persons in future epidemics, emergencies and crises.