



A. Introduction

The United Nations Population Fund-UNFPA is an international development agency that works on population and development, sexual and reproductive health, and gender. In the area of ageing populations, UNFPA supports public policy and promotes policy dialogue to respond to the challenges posed by the social, health, and economic consequences of ageing populations – and to meet the needs of older persons, with particular emphasis on the poor, especially women.

The Academy¹ was created to promote practical approaches to human rights and humanitarian law as well as to strengthen links between human rights organizations, practitioners, and educators worldwide. The Academy's programs, partnerships, research and scholarly endeavors were designed and implemented to enhance the culture and prominence of human rights and humanitarian law around the world. The initiatives have included, inter alia, empowering training for scholars, practitioners, and students interested in the international human rights systems and laws, in particular via the Program of Advanced Studies on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. The Academy developed a number of research and scholarly projects to address the human rights concerns and challenges of vulnerable groups and the victims of human rights violations.

The objective of this joint contribution is to provide input for the report by the UN Secretary General on the implementation of Resolution 65/182 on the situation of the rights of older persons in all regions. The content of the contribution provides for summarized findings on legislation, policies and programmes issued by states to protect, promote and fulfil the rights of older persons at national levels in five regions: Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Arab countries, Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The themes include age discrimination, elder abuse, health and long-term care, and empowerment of older women.

The summarized findings included in this document have for the most part resulted from a research project implemented in 2009 – 2010 based on the partnership agreement between UNFPA and the Academy. The objective of the research has been to develop a Handbook with a comparative analysis of the global and regional human rights systems regarding the rights of older persons, as well as examples of good practices at national levels.

B. National Standards and Practices

1. Equality and Non-discrimination based on Age

Africa

Equality and non-discrimination have been reflected in the legal entrenchment of the rights of older persons and state obligations to protect, promote and fulfill rights of older

¹ The Academy Co-directors Claudia Martin and Diego Rodriguez Pinzón coordinated the research and compilation of the examples of good practices with Vladislav Michalčík, LL.M., Research Scholar-in-Residence.

persons in Africa. As a result, a number of constitutions of African countries expressly recognized the principles equality and non-discrimination against older person, albeit in various terms and depth.

Uganda - The Constitutionⁱ provides for equality and non discrimination including based on age. Article 32 also calls for affirmative action in that regards empowers the Parliament to enact laws that would give full effect to the provisions on affirmative action. Further, Objective VII of the National Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy provides that the state shall promote the welfare of the aged.

Kenya - The Constitutionⁱⁱ in its Article 57 provides that the state shall take measures to ensure the rights of older persons to fully participate in affairs of society, to pursue their personal development, to live in dignity and respect and to be free from abuse, and to receive reasonable care and support from their families and state.

Rwanda - The Constitutionⁱⁱⁱ in its Article 14 makes it mandatory for the state to take all measures within the limits of its capacity for the welfare of vulnerable groups, including the elderly.

Eritrea - The Constitution^{iv} in its Article 14 prohibits discrimination on grounds of age and further mandates the National Assembly to enact laws that will eliminate inequalities within the Eritrean Society.

South Africa – The Constitution^v in Article 9 prohibits direct and indirect discrimination against any person, including based on age.

Angola - the Constitution^{vi} in Article 47 mandates the state to adopt the measures necessary to ensure the care for older persons.

Cameroon - The Constitution^{vii} calls upon the state to protect the rights of the elderly.

Benin - The Constitution^{viii} in its Article 26 calls upon the state to provide the care to the aged.

Cape Verde - The Constitution^{ix} in Article 72 (1) provides the elderly with the right to special protection from their family, society and the state, including the priority in private and public life attendance, special treatment and care as well as conditions necessary to avoid their marginalization. Article 72 (2) further provides that the state, in cooperation with the private entities and the disabled or the elderly associations, shall promote a national policy to gradually (a) guarantee to the elderly and the disabled the economic, social and cultural conditions which should allow them to participate in the social life; (b) sensitize the community with regards to the concerns of the disabled and the elderly, as well as for the need to avoid their isolation and social marginalization. It further requires the state foment and support the creation of associations of the disabled and the elderly.

Somalia - The Constitution^x in Article 31 (4) creates an obligation upon children who have attained the age of majority to look after their parents when they are unable to provide for themselves.

Mozambique - The Constitution^{xi} in its Article 124 broadly provides for special protection of the elderly by their families, society and state, and spells out the measures and actions to be taken with regards to housing, living in the community, treatment in private and public institutions, as well as economic, political and social integration.

Europe

Most EU member states as well as countries in the Balkans and other parts of Eastern Europe have attempted to entrench at constitutional or legislative levels the principle of non-discrimination based on age, albeit in various forms and thematic laws. The EU member states in particular have followed the principles of the applicable directives that focused on non-discrimination, which has accelerated the process of enactment of legislation against age

discrimination as well. The institution of Ombudsman has also been instrumental in addressing the age discrimination.

Czech Republic – The constitutional framework is set forth in Articles 1 and 3 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms,^{xii} which guarantees the enjoyment of fundamental rights and freedoms without regard to, inter alia, persons of ‘other status’. The age discrimination specifically is prohibited by the Antidiscrimination Act (2009) and an employee discriminated because of his/her age may find remedy on the basis of either the Employment Act^{xiii} or the Civil Code. The Employment Act prohibits age discrimination by employers against job-seekers but can also be applied in the related labor relations.^{xiv}

Slovenia - The Constitution^{xv} ensures the prohibition of discrimination and the principle of equality, in particular as Article 14 establishes that everyone is guaranteed equal human rights and fundamental freedoms irrespective of, inter alia, social status, disability, or any other personal circumstance. Further, the Act Implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment^{xvi} establishes the bases and premises to ensure the equal treatment of all persons in the exercise of their rights and fundamental freedoms.

United Kingdom - the Human Rights Act (1998) incorporates the ECHR jurisprudence into UK law and thus provides valuable protection in some contexts against discrimination and acts as a quite effective substitute for a constitutional bill of rights. The UK courts have also recognized the existence of a general principle of equality and non-discrimination in the common law, when the Employment Equality Regulations became law in 2006. The Employment Equality Regulations outlaw both direct and indirect forms of discrimination in employment against people of all ages.^{xvii}

Poland – The Constitution includes special protective provisions to ensure special health care to specific groups, including persons of advanced age. Article 113 of the Labour Code states that any discrimination, direct or indirect, in employment, especially based upon, inter alia, age and disability is prohibited.^{xviii}

Romania - The Constitution in its Article 4 states that the country shall function as common and indivisible homeland for all its citizens, irrespective of, inter alia, social origin.

The Constitutional Court held that although the Constitution does not explicitly include age as a prohibited basis of discrimination, the enumeration therein is indicative rather than exclusive.^{xix} Further, the Labor Code^{xx} in Article 5 states that any direct or indirect discrimination towards an employee, on grounds of, inter alia, age is prohibited. In order to enforce the normative act regarding prevention and sanctioning of all forms of discrimination,^{xxi} the National Council to Combat Discrimination approved the National Strategy to implement measures to prevent and combat discrimination (2007 – 2013).^{xxii}

Greece – Legislative Act 3304/2005 is the main statutory instrument to address addressing any kind of discrimination, in accordance with the EU Directives 2000/43/ EC and 2000/78/EC. Act 3304/2005, that also promulgate the protection of the principle of equal treatment regardless of age. Pursuant to Article 4 of the Act, age discrimination provisions apply to all in public and private sectors.

Further, in accordance with Article 11 of the Act, different treatment on the basis of age shall not constitute discrimination, if they are objectively and reasonably justified by a legitimate aim, including legitimate employment policy, labor market and vocational training objectives, and if the means of achieving that aim are appropriate and necessary. The Act also established three institutions to protect the principle of equal treatment, including the Ombudsman, which can also investigate possible violations of the principle of equal treatment, the Equal Treatment Committee which monitors the private sector and its effort to limit the discrimination on the grounds of age, and the Labour Inspectorate as a public service which promotes the principle of equal treatment in the private sector and can impose fines to punish violations

Latin American and the Caribbean

A vast majority of countries in the region guarantee to all persons in their constitutional texts the right to equality and non-discrimination. Even though 'age' is not specifically listed as a specific ground of discrimination, these constitutional frameworks very often prohibit discrimination in law^{xxiii} or in practice by any persons or public authority. These provisions very often refer to the prohibition of discrimination 'in effect'.^{xxiv} Further, a few countries included 'age' in the constitutional provisions among the prohibited specific grounds of discrimination.^{xxv} In addition to these provisions, some countries also enclosed in their constitutional texts special clauses ensuring equal treatment to older persons.^{xxvi}

The governmental bodies and institutions have also adopted regulations and plans of action to tackle discrimination against and mistreatment of older persons. For instance, the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism in *Argentina*, established by the executive order, has a competence to develop policies and implement initiatives focused on older persons and developed educational campaigns on non-discriminatory practices to that effect.^{xxvii} Further, the Ministry of Social Development of Argentina issued a resolution in 2007 that established the responsibility of the state to develop policies against discrimination and mistreatment of older persons.^{xxviii} In *Mexico* the government endorsed special protection of health and social services for older persons in the National Human Rights Plan (2008-2012), including the principles of gender equality and non-discrimination.^{xxix}

Asia and the Pacific

Many countries in the region have already incorporated protection against age discrimination as a fundamental human right in their respective constitutions. While most of the countries in Asia and the Pacific accept the issues of equality and non-discrimination regarding "age" as a "human rights" issue, few countries view it as a matter of "employment policy".

Nepal – The Interim Constitution (1997)^{xxx} guarantees the right to equality and non-discrimination under Article 13, which also includes the aged and disabled among the groups to whose benefit the state can adopt special provisions that are not to be deemed discriminatory. In *Gangabhadur Pradhan vs. Yamunabhadur Pradhan*,^{xxxi} the Supreme Court of Nepal held that this special provision of positive discrimination did not lead to any positive measure by the government to advance the welfare of the elderly, and directed the government to take appropriate actions to formulate a law regarding the protection and welfare of senior citizens. This led to the adoption of the Senior Citizens Act (2006)^{xxxii} that protects the social security of senior citizens.

China - The Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly (1996),^{xxxiii} was adopted to protect the lawful rights and interests of elderly persons; and Article 4 forbids discrimination against the elderly.

Vietnam – The Law on the Elderly (2010)^{xxxiv} prohibits discriminating against the elderly in Article 9(1).

Japan - According to the Act on the Stabilization of Employment of Older Persons, it is unlawful for companies to stipulate retirement before the age of 60;^{xxxv} and according to the Employment Measure Act - in recruitment and hiring, firms must deal equitably with all workers - irrespective of age.^{xxxvi}

Taiwan - According to the Employment Services Act (2007), employers cannot discriminate against jobseekers on the basis of age.^{xxxvii}

Australia - The Age Discrimination Act (2004)^{xxxviii} prohibits age discrimination in the areas of work, education, services and facilities, accommodation, as well as the

administration of Commonwealth laws and programs and requests for information. There are also complementary state legislative acts, which prohibit age discrimination - some were in effect even prior to the federal legislation.^{xxxix}

New Zealand - The Human Rights Act (1993) included age as one of the prohibited grounds of discrimination. The right to freedom from discrimination is further enshrined under the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act (1990).^{xl}

Arab Countries

With few exceptions, the rights to equality and non-discrimination in Arab countries are also entrenched in the constitutions. These rights have recently been complemented by national plans of action for the elderly - reflecting a higher awareness, at the official level, of the special needs and rights of the ageing.

The constitutions in Algeria, Egypt, and Tunisia^{xli} stipulate that all citizens are equal before the law and prohibit discrimination. The National Plans of Action in Morocco, Tunisia,^{xlii} Egypt,^{xliii} and Turkey^{xliv} set the legal and policy framework of equality necessary for a comprehensive approach to elderly rights. The Moroccan National Strategy/Plan of Action (2008-2012) focuses on income, health, residence, and preserving the dignity of older people; a ministerial committee was set up to implement this plan.^{xlv} Tunisia has taken a step further and complemented its national plan of action with another one for active ageing: “*Society for All Ages*” (2010),^{xlvi} which aims to promote the rights and needs of older persons as an integral part of the needs of society as a whole.^{xlvii}

2. Prevention and Protection of the Victims of Elder Abuse

Africa

Studies in Africa have shown that some older persons have been victims of abuse, usually by the communities in which they live; and thus, measures adopted by the governments usually include prevention strategies that are to be implemented in the community environment as well.^{xlviii}

Uganda – The public authorities supported a program that focused on paralegals to support older people's inheritance rights; the paralegals helped to address cases of land rights, marginalization, and domestic violence.^{xlix}

Nigeria – The National Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights focused on access to justice for older persons, including training of service providers on best practices in outreach to older persons.^l

Europe

Elder abuse is often addressed by legislation on domestic violence. In some countries, there are laws to impose temporary restraining orders for perpetrators of domestic violence. A number of legislative acts included provisions sensitive to the specific vulnerabilities of older people in various environments where they can be subject to the elder abuse.^{li}

Austria – The Austrian Protection against Violence Act (1997) included elder abuse in its scope, except for in situations of family care.^{lii}

The Czech Republic - The Act on Domestic Violence stated that police can banish the aggressor from the person's home after repeated incidents, including the immediate prohibition of entry into the residence. Prevention of elder abuse in institutions is formulated within the standards of social care, and the punishment of perpetrators is established in the criminal code.^{liii}

Ireland – The Constitution establishes special protection measures in favour of the weaker sectors of the community, including the aged. A number of laws include protective measures that can benefit elderly victims, although there is no specific legislation in that regard. The laws include: the Domestic Violence Act (1996), Wards of Court (1871), Enduring Power of Attorney, Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act (1993), Non-fatal Offences against the Persons Act (1997), Safety and Protection Orders, Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act (2001), and the independent inspection of nursing homes under the Health Act (2007).

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA), established by the Health Act, is responsible for the inspection of nursing homes and standards of care. Section VIII of the HIQA standards addresses abuse and requires that adults in nursing homes be protected from abuse while nursing home workers be trained in this regard.

The Netherlands – The law enables a mechanism to impose temporary restraining orders against perpetrators of domestic violence by public authorities, including municipalities. A special law in the area of health allows clients in care institutions to complain about their treatment and authorities have a duty to investigate. Furthermore, the Social Support Act is aimed at improving the provision of services to its citizens, and gives municipalities and local institutions greater responsibility for the care and welfare of citizens, including the area of domestic violence against the elderly.

Slovenia - The Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2008) includes elder abuse as a specific violation. Article 3 applies to instances where a person does not provide due care for the family member in need due to old age. Further, Article 4 provides for special care and assistance to victims among older and disabled persons. Finally, Article 193 of the Penal Code^{liv} stipulates that whoever seriously breaches family legal obligations by leaving a member of his family who depends on him in dire straits, shall be sentenced to imprisonment for up to two years.^{lv}

Latin America and the Caribbean

In a number of countries in the region, national institutions with adjudicative powers, including constitutional levels, issued rulings that penalized harmful practices and mistreatment of older persons. In *Argentina*, the National Civil Chamber of Appeals (NCCA) has repeatedly ruled that the elderly deserve special protection against the risk of abuse when they are in a situation of physical and mental vulnerability, particularly when they are suffering from a disease that greatly diminishes their mental capacity.^{lvi} In *Costa Rica*, the Constitutional Chamber ruled in a number of cases that dealt with older persons as the victims of abuse, ordering the immediate adoption of protective measures.^{lvii} In *Colombia*, the Constitutional Court analyzed the impact of displacement on certain subgroups, including the elderly; and ruled that they are entitled to special protection with regards to the right to adequate housing and, in specific circumstances, cannot be evicted from a home they occupy illegally.^{lviii}

In addition to the decisions mentioned, some other countries have adopted special provisions to prevent and punish elder abuse. For example, *Chile* introduced modifications of the Domestic Violence Act, the Act on Family Courts, and the Criminal Code in order to establish special protection for the victims of elder abuse.^{lix} In *Costa Rica*, the Inclusive Law on Older Persons (1999) established benefits and rights for persons over 65 years of age, and criminal penalties for the perpetrators of mistreatment.^{lx} In *Bolivia*, Article 68-2 of the Constitution (2009) prohibits “all forms of abuse, neglect, violence and discrimination against older persons.”^{lxi}

Finally, countries in the region have conducted special studies and consultations with older persons, in order to better understand and determine the causes of the abuses, to help in adopting future recommendations for action. In *Brazil*, the Ministry of Health recommended the creation of an integrated network of institutions to provide special attention to the elderly when they have undergone some form of mistreatment, which would also promote best practices of care for the victims.^{lxii} In *Uruguay*, the Ministry of Public Health, under the National Program for Elderly, conducted studies including the Society of Geriatrics and Gerontology, and the Collaboration Centre for the Elderly, with the objective of gathering data on the abuses against the elderly.^{lxiii}

In *Mexico*, the Geriatric Clinic of the National Institute of Medical Sciences and Nutrition – Salvador Zubiran, provide special training courses for health care providers on how to identify and diagnose victims of mistreatment or abuse.^{lxiv} Other institutions, such as the Council for the Care and Prevention of Violence have developed particular measures against elder abuse that focus on raising awareness through education and training. A list of institutions, including the Directorate for Prevention and Treatment of Family Violence, the Center of Domestic Violence, the Service Units and Family Violence Prevention, and the Risk Care Center provide health care and social services to the victims of elder abuse, as well as participate in prevention activities.^{lxv}

Chile, in accordance with Law 19.828/2002, established the National Senior Service to ensure and promote awareness of the rights of older persons, which also includes the integrated protection system, conferences on elderly empowerment, and other initiatives related to care services and housing improvement.^{lxvi} In *Ecuador*, the Ministry of Social Welfare has initiated cooperation agreements with various law schools in order to provide free legal assistance to elderly victims of abuse, to complement the work of the Ombudsman's Office, who also receives complaints from victims of elder mistreatment.^{lxvii}

In *Peru* the government adopted the National Human Rights Plan (2006-2010) that includes provisions on "Eradication of Violence, Strengthening of Citizenship and Public Safety", that establishes the commitment to regulate and promote the respect of the rights of older persons, with special emphasis on combating violence against older persons.^{lxviii}

Asia and the Pacific

Some national legal systems stipulate punishment for the perpetrators of elder abuse. There are also both private and public care service centres for the ageing that have nowhere to live, which is of particular importance to the victims of elder abuse.

Nepal - The Senior Citizens Act, 2063^{lxix} established various safeguards and protective clauses to deal with elder abuse. Section 8 of the Act established the prohibition to forcing senior citizens to beg, or become monks or hermits. A special central welfare committee^{lxx} has also been set up under the Act that should formulate and review policies and plans for the protection and welfare of senior citizens. The Act also provides for the establishment of a District Senior Citizen Welfare Committee^{lxxi} to keep records of the senior citizens in the district and their living conditions.

Further, Section 26^{lxxii} establishes criminal sanctions in case of abuse of senior citizens by employees of care centers and others.^{lxxiii} In cases of abandoned senior citizens, Section 21 of the Act imposes a duty on the citizens of Nepal to inform a nearby care or service centre, police, or the local authority. An ordinance of the Nepal Police also establishes that any emergency calls from senior citizens to the police are to be given priority.^{lxxiv}

India - The Indian legislation on elders stipulates that if anyone responsible for a senior citizen abandons him/her, the person shall be punishable with imprisonment for up to three months, or a fine up to five thousand rupees, or both.^{lxxv}

China - The Law of the People's Republic of China on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly forbids mistreatment of the elderly.^{lxxvi} The Chinese courts have sentenced a Shanghai man to 18 months in prison for refusing to care for his 83-year-old mother and abandoning her in a public city square in December, 2008.^{lxxvii}

Article 46 of the Act stipulates that whoever insults the elderly in public, using violence or other means, shall be punished in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Regulations on Administrative Penalties for Public Security. If the case constitutes a crime, his criminal responsibility shall be pursued according to law as well.

Japan - The Japan Elder Abuse Prevention Centre was set up in 1996 to offer a volunteer-operated telephone counseling service, among other services, to the victims of elder abuse.^{lxxviii}

Vietnam - Article 9 of the Law on the Elderly^{lxxix} prohibits various acts against the ageing, including mistreatment, insulting, hurting, persecuting, discriminating, forcing to work, inciting or abetting others into doing illegal acts against elders, taking care of elders for self-seeking interests, retaliating against elders, and intimidating elder sympathizers.

Arab Countries

The rights and needs of older persons as victims of elder abuse have been recognized in some cases in the Arab countries. Among the programmes that recognize elder abuse as a problem are programmes that help protect older persons, including victims of elder abuse, and integrate them back into society. These programs serve as a model of cooperation between the government and civil society to provide protection to the most vulnerable older persons. Other features are laws that hold adult children responsible for the wellbeing of their ageing parents. This unique model highlights the social stigma associated with placing parents in nursing and old age homes.

Tunisia - The Tunisian Elderly Protection Law (1994)^{lxxx} outlines the services to be provided to older persons, and regulates the institutions that provide care for the elderly. The law was complemented by a series of regulations and decrees addressing the requirements for elderly institutions, and their rights and duties.

The Ageing with Dignity Programme, provided by the Association for the Protection of the Elderly, focuses on the psychological challenges of the elderly, with a focus on depression, particularly among abandoned or mistreated older persons. In addition to psychosocial services, the Programme offers health care and training in active-life skills.^{lxxxi} The Alternative Family Programme,^{lxxxii} supported by the Tunisian government, provides for alternative families to care for older persons. Each alternative family receives a monthly allowance to help them meet the needs of the older person they are caring for.^{lxxxiii}

Algeria - The Algerian Elderly Protection Law (2010)^{lxxxiv} provides various levels of protection for the elderly, and stipulates that anyone who abandons their elderly parents or exposes the elderly to any risk is subject to imprisonment for up to six months, and fines.

3. Access to Quality Long-term Care and Health Services, including Sexual and Reproductive Health

Africa

In Africa, access to quality health care for the elderly is mainly provided for by national health policies, and to smaller extent national policies on older persons, national constitutions, and health sector strategic plans.

Uganda

The country has a National Policy on Older persons that recognizes ill health as one of the biggest challenges faced by older persons, affecting their capacity to engage in income generating activities.^{lxxxv} Uganda is also among the African countries in which HIV and AIDS disproportionately affect older persons, compared to other regions. For example, *the Uganda Reach the Aged Association* not only advocates for the inclusion and mainstreaming of older persons' issues in HIV and AIDS policies, but also trains community members to provide home based care to households that take care of older persons suffering from the diseases.^{lxxxvi} These support initiatives mirror the provision of the Uganda HIV/AIDS National Strategy Plan 2006 – 2010, which identified this group of caregivers among key recipients of social support services.^{lxxxvii}

Kenya

The country's policy framework on ageing includes the National Policy on Older Persons and Ageing^{lxxxviii} that provides for targeted health services for older persons in Kenya. The Policy envisions the delivery of services to be decentralized at the district level, especially decision-making and resource allocation, with the aim of fostering the participation of older persons. The Policy, which was adopted by parliament in November 2009,^{lxxxix} outlined the framework for mainstreaming the needs and concerns of older persons, and facilitating their integration in the national development process. The Policy also focused on the establishment of legal and administrative frameworks to protect and promote the rights of older persons, poverty, and sustainable development, including the health of older persons.

Additionally, the Draft National Policy on Human Rights in Kenya was formulated in the spirit of implementing the country's human rights obligations;^{xc} it included the response to the Vienna Programmed of Action,^{xcii} which called on States "[to] consider the desirability of drawing up national action plan[s] identifying steps [to] improve the promotion and protection of human rights".^{xcii}

In 2004, Kenya established the National Commission on Gender and Development with the mission to coordinate, implement, and facilitate gender mainstreaming in national development. The Commission operates as a semi-autonomous government agency in the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Development.^{xciii} Although it is not an elderly rights institution, *per se*, the Commission has a critical impetus in protecting and promoting the rights of older women. In addition, the Ministry's mandate is to, *inter alia*, formulate social development policies, coordinate gender mainstreaming in national development, and ensure the social welfare of vulnerable groups.

Nigeria

Nigeria's development programming and human rights plans contribute to the advancement of the right to health for elderly persons. For instance, the Nigerian National Action Plan for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights provides for accessible and more affordable health services to older persons.^{xciv} The Draft National Empowerment and Development Strategy II (2008-2011) and the Annual Initiative of the Ministry of Woman Affairs and Social Development represent other examples of Nigerian initiatives with the objective to accommodate the needs of the elderly.

South Africa

The country's legal framework stems from the Act on Older Persons, No. 13, (2006) that represents the cornerstone of the provision of services to older persons, as well as the implementation of the International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Act promotes the well-being and security of older persons in South Africa, and shifts the emphasis from institutional care to community-based care to ensure that older persons remain in their community environment for as long as possible.^{xcv}

Other examples of frameworks supporting care for the ageing in South Africa include intergenerational approaches and new directions for service delivery to tackle poverty and

strengthen the livelihoods of the elderly.^{xcvi} For example, there is the ‘Bread for the neighbour’ programme, in which children are encouraged to provide care for older people by taking bread to their elderly neighbours before school every day.^{xcvii} Moreover, recognizing that networking and partnerships are the keys to rendering comprehensive services to the elderly, nongovernmental and religious organisations provide community-based services to the elderly in most South African townships, often subsidised by government.^{xcviii} Another initiative is ‘Grandmothers Against Poverty and AIDS’ that educates grandmothers in three-day workshops about the disease of AIDS, as well as life skills such as: food gardening, developing a will, dealing with bereavement, and training in human rights.^{xcix}

A number of countries in Africa recognised that regular cash transfers to older persons offer cost-effective means to reducing poverty and enabling the ageing to realise their human rights by enabling access to related services, including health care.^c Therefore, countries such as Mozambique, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have listed older persons as one of the vulnerable groups among beneficiaries of their cash transfer programs.^{ci}

Europe

In Europe, most governments have adopted laws and strategic plans to ensure equality to all age groups in health care institutions. National health care plans advocate for integrated health care for the elderly, insurance coverage, and home care to ensure that people may remain independent in their homes in their old age.^{cii}

Austria

Examples of good practice include integrated healthcare systems with provincial health platforms in place, alongside greater coordination between the federal state, provinces, and social units at local levels.^{ciii} The related health insurance scheme functions as a one-stop financing system with joint control and outpatient centres, with needs-oriented healthcare available to vulnerable groups, including older persons in rural areas, and incentives for participating in family-doctor programmes.^{civ}

France

The country provides free universal health coverage that enables beneficiaries, including older persons, access to a wide range of services, medicines, and health products such as: eyeglasses, dental prosthetics, and hearing aids. This insurance coverage complements other existing insurance plans and helps to remedy negative consequences of the fact that many poor people, including older persons, still forego medical treatment despite the fact that public health insurance is in place. Additionally, tax credits are available to persons that cannot reach their own complementary insurance in France.^{cv}

United Kingdom

In 2001, the United Kingdom launched its National Service Framework for Older People with a series of highest-priority areas including cancer, coronary heart disease, mental health, diabetes, and renal services.^{cvi} The implementation of the framework by the National Health Service department is based on a set of principles, including that services and care be provided regardless of age, on the basis of clinical need alone. Hence, social services cannot use age as eligibility criteria, or other policies that restrict access to available services.^{cvii} The framework also requires local authorities to scrutinize age-related policies in health and social care, and the report of any discrimination.^{cviii} Additionally, the United Kingdom’s Department of Health website serves as cooperation and networking tool for implementing units to post and share examples of best practices. In 2000, the country also raised the upper age limit for breast cancer screening from 65 years old to 70 years, on the basis of accumulated evidence on the efficiency of screening at the higher age.^{cix}

Italy

The country's National Health Plan for 2003-2005 strongly advocated for integrated care, sufficient insurance coverage, and support to home care. The health care system of Italy guarantees equal access to all citizens, regardless of age or other characteristics. While health care is covered by the state at the national level, it is the private and civil society sectors that heavily participate in the delivery of services thorough supplemental regional or municipal financing arrangements.^{cx}

Poland

Poland has a mandatory contribution-based health insurance system governed by a National Sickness Fund, which covers all Polish citizens with no limitations with regards to age. Recent changes in the Welfare Act specifically recognized the importance of guaranteeing adequate insurance coverage to the elderly. Recent reforms have also focused heavily on the development of long-term care facilities and developing the cadres of skilled long-term care professionals.^{cxⁱ}

Czech Republic

The citizens are guaranteed equal rights to health insurance access through sickness funds. The system's services are provided in accordance with the prevalent administrative division of health and social budgets, with high levels of decentralization of social care, and involvement of the voluntary sector to ensure adequate care to the elderly at the local level in the Czech Republic.^{cxⁱⁱ}

Croatia

At the policy level, the 2008-2011 Program of the Government of the Republic of Croatia envisioned that palliative care and hospice would be integrated into the Croatian health care system through a network and referral centres.^{cxⁱⁱⁱ} The notion of "palliative care", and its impact on the right of elderly persons to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, was entrenched in the country's legal framework by the Health Protection Act (2003).^{cx^{iv}} The Act envisioned the creation of an Institution for Palliative Care, which would function as a network of health services with an interdisciplinary approach, making possible home visits by doctors, nurses, physical therapists, and social workers specialized in palliative care, with the additional function of a palliative care clinic and day care centre.^{cx^v}

Since about ninety per cent of terminal patients prefer to spend their last days at home surrounded by relatives, skilled assistance to families is necessary. The Croatian authorities have recognized this need; and thus designed the plan to establish a public institution that would provide outpatient services, including the Palliative Care Centre within the Community Health Centre, as well as mobile palliative teams.^{cx^{vi}}

Latin America and the Caribbean

Most countries in the region have adopted laws, decrees, and plans of action to establish health centers and care programs designed for older persons. For example, in Costa Rica a special instrument recognizes the right of older persons to a life of dignity, including: safe and adaptable living conditions, suitable environments, immediate hospital care, emergency services, and rehabilitation clinics.^{cx^{vii}}

In El Salvador, a special decree enumerates the rights of older persons, together with the right to receive timely and effective medical care, including geriatrics and gerontology.^{cx^{viii}} In Chile the Ministry of Health issued a decree to promote the long term care services for older persons, and special care to maintain their biological and mental health.^{cx^{ix}} Additionally, both Bolivia and Guatemala have National Plans for Human Rights which call for free medical care for older people,^{cx^x} alongside the creation of specialized care and health services for older people.^{cx^{xi}}

Several regulations, policies, and national programmes have been adopted in the Latin American and Caribbean region in order to promote the well-being of older persons, which

often stem from constitutional texts that contain provisions on health and well being for all citizens, and some of them specifically on older persons. Accordingly, some constitutional texts established the obligations of duty-bearers to protect and assist senior citizens and promote their integration into an active community life.^{cxxii}

A number of Latin American and Caribbean countries have opted to promote health and well-being in thematic legislative texts that regulate matters of nutrition, health, as well as allowances for families.^{cxxiii} Other countries, under the direction of Ministries of Health, have developed and adopted programs that are aimed at the promotion of the health and well-being of older persons.^{cxxiv}

Asia and the Pacific

The countries in the Asia Pacific region have recognized the rights of elders at various levels by devising special programs and facilitating access to services, including health and long-term care. A number of countries in the region prioritize family care for elders in their homes. The elderly are increasingly gaining a higher priority in health institutions that set up special departments or wards available specifically to them.

China

At the legislative level, China has adopted a special Act as an enforceable legal instrument to ensure the rights of older persons, combining provisions on family support and state responsibility through social welfare.^{cxxv} The Act also regulates a basic health insurance system for Chinese citizens, and provides subsidies on health insurance for people over sixty-years old that are from low-income families.^{cxxvi} The principles entrenched in the legal framework also require that adult children pay for elder parents' medical expenses if the parents are unable to do so.^{cxxvii} In general, China's public authorities provide for medical insurance systems to meet elderly persons' basic medical needs.^{cxxviii} If an elderly person suffers from an illness and neither he nor his supporters can pay, the local government may provide appropriate aid, and solicit help from the community.^{cxxix} Chinese law also requires medical institutions to give priority medical treatment to people over seventy years old.^{cxxx}

Furthermore, the Standard of Social Welfare Institution for the Elderly, published by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, complements the legal framework, and regulates the overall operation of the institutions providing social welfare and services for the elderly in China. The standards also specify the type of institutions that are authorized to provide such services, for instance Nursing Homes or Centers of Service for the Elderly, and set the standards for the services provided in the areas of catering, caring, illness recovery, and psychological treatment.^{cxxxi} Moreover, the Standard of the Professional Elderly Treatment Technicians, published by the Ministry, regulates overall qualification requirements for certified technicians in the area of treatment for the elderly.^{cxxxii}

India

The country's National Policy on Older Persons includes provisions that establish support by the Indian government to health care services provided to older persons. The Indian government passed central legislation, the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act (2007), which provides a framework for: welfare, security, and protection to senior citizens. The Act includes a list of initiatives and services, such as the establishment of long-term care homes, as well as conditions for and support to medical services for senior citizens. In terms of funding, the state government is expected to ensure that the hospitals provide beds and separate waiting systems for all senior citizens, facilities for the treatment of chronic, terminal, and degenerative diseases, and ensure that geriatric patients in every district hospital are treated by a medical officer with experience in geriatric care. Finally, the Act provides for the expansion of the research of chronic elderly diseases and ageing.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has implemented a number of initiatives focusing on older persons in India, even beyond its human rights monitoring mandate. In fact, the NHRC directly engages public stakeholders and NGOs, whose specialists often provide lectures on health ageing, domestic injuries, alternative medicines, diabetes, as well as mobile health camps for older persons.^{cxxxiii} NHRC has also recently constituted a Core Group on the Protection and Welfare of Elderly Persons, established to review existing laws, policies, and other initiative from a human rights perspective in the states and regions.^{cxxxiv}

Philippines

In 2010, the country adopted the Philippine Plan of Action for Senior Citizens that pledged to replicate the good practices in geriatric care implemented by the general hospital in the capital, and established similar geriatric clinics in other regions in need of medical services for the elderly.^{cxxxv} A related Law requires the local authorities to keep records of health monitoring and management of services provided to the elders, disseminate information about common health care, provide guidance to the elderly in disease prevention and treatment, and co-ordinate with higher medical authorities for periodic health checkups of the elderly.^{cxxxvi} In the Greater Manila Area, community organizers initiated a network of voluntary health workers to assist local gerontologists and help monitor the health of their elderly neighbours.^{cxxxvii}

Australia

The country has adopted multiple sectoral laws, but landmark provisions are included in the Aged Care Act that provide for a comprehensive framework of the care of the elderly, promotes affordable high quality of care, and aims to protect their health and well-being.^{cxxxviii} The list of standards stipulated by the Act include requirements and regulations of the quality of the services, eligibility and accountability of care givers, funding, charges, and the procedures and jurisdictions of the authorities to deal with violations of the rights of the elderly in care.^{cxxxix}

Nepal

Nepal's legal and institutional frameworks operate in accordance with the principles of local culture that affirm, as the preferred form of elderly care, the family environment. A section of the recent act establishes that the organizations in the area of health care must give priority to senior citizens,^{cxli} and that selected institutions shall provide a 50 per cent discount to senior citizens.^{cxlii} Finally, the Act also provides for the establishment and operation of care centres or day service centres, in particular for elders that are abandoned, or in cases where a family is unable to provide quality care for them.

Nepal's National Reproductive Health Strategy recognises reproductive health as a human right, and includes the elderly in its scope. Related programs are comprised of services for STI/HIV, uterine, cervical, and breast cancer, family planning, safe motherhood, and the care of newborns.^{cxlii} An example of cooperation between an international development agency and local capacities in the area of reproductive health of the elderly is a joint initiative of the Non-Formal Education Centre and UNFPA that was implemented in 2004.^{cxliii}

Cambodia

The country's National Poverty Reduction Strategies for 2003-2005 specifically took into account the elderly as one of the most vulnerable groups in Cambodia. At the executive level, the government of Cambodia also promotes health care for ageing persons by establishing the National Committee for the World Health Day of Older People.^{cxliv} The main function of the Committee has been to tackle the challenges of elderly health care through a multi disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach in cooperation with specialized Ministries, including: the Ministry of Health, the Ministries of Social Affairs and Youth

Rehabilitation, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Veterans, and the Ministry of Education.^{cxlv} Furthermore, the Ministry of Health adopted a National Policy on the Health Care for the Elderly and Disabled People with the aim to promote healthy ageing and improve the health of elderly and disabled persons in Cambodia.^{cxlvi}

Japan

Japan's parliament adopted an Act on the prevention of elderly abuse and support of elderly caregivers, which established the government's responsibility to provide protection to elderly persons victims of abuse, as well as support caregivers in the prevention of elderly abuse.^{cxlvii} A separate legislative instrument includes provisions on guaranteed medical care for elderly persons in Japan, including: medical services, treatment, and promotion of regular health checkups of elderly persons. Based on the social solidarity principle, this instrument also aims to spread the financial burden of the costs of guaranteed care, and states that the promotion of welfare of the elderly was a key objective in moving towards the improved general health of the country.^{cxlviii} Recently adopted modifications of the application of the provisions on medical care aim to curb medical expenditures by increasing the size of co-payments by elderly patients, while at the same time promoting a healthy life style and well-being.^{cxlix} Finally, the Act for the Welfare of the Aged aims to clarify principles of medical care and services in order to maintain both the mental and physical health of the elderly.^{cl} Japan's institutional frameworks includes the Ageing Society Policy Council of Japan, which is an advisory body within the Cabinet office that primarily works on drafts of general principles of the initiatives and policies regarding challenges of ageing society. The Council also coordinates the administrative agencies that are in charge of the implementation of the policies, and facilitates policy dialogue regarding the ageing society at a national level.^{cli}

Sri Lanka

The country's constitutional framework includes a section on Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties that establishes the state's responsibility for equitable and moral social order through the full realization of fundamental rights; including an adequate standard of living for all citizens along with medical care.^{cliii} At the legislative level, the Protection of the Rights of Elders Act provides for the establishment of a National Council for Elders that, among other functions, is supposed to introduce and implement special health insurance benefits schemes for elders, and encourage the establishment of welfare and day care centres in Sri Lanka.^{cliii} The Act also established the duty of adult children to provide care to their ageing parents in accordance with their needs, including an option to pay a caretaker, or an organization to provide care.^{cliv}

At the institutional level, the Department of Social Services introduced a system of special identification cards for people over sixty-five years of age in order to expedite access to social and medical services in Sri Lankan hospitals.^{clv} Furthermore, the Division of Youth, Elderly, Disabled and Displaced Persons, established within the Ministry of Health, designed the Active Aging Program that includes community health care, mobile clinics for cataract surgery, as well as special training for medical personnel in Sri Lanka.^{clvi} The Ministry also created a directorate specifically tasked to focus on all phases of delivery of health care services to the elderly.^{clvii} A landmark policy instrument, the National Health Plan, called for the establishment of special community health nurses that provide nursing services at home, as well as train family members and volunteers in care for the elderly.^{clviii}

Arab Countries

The universities in the Arab region have played an important role in improving access to healthcare through pro bono services as well as by advancing scholarship on the standards and quality of service. Good examples of the promotion and guarantee of the right to health range from constitutional provisions, as in the case of Egypt, to specific policies targeting

impoverished older persons, implemented by Tunisia. Efforts to reach the more vulnerable ageing persons, and to provide them with basic long-term healthcare services, led governmental and nongovernmental bodies to establish clinics in rural areas, and send healthcare providers to villages and remote towns. Most of the efforts focused on the elderly have been designed by governments as comprehensive initiatives that include care services, as well as social and financial protection systems.

In the majority of Arab countries, the governments bear the responsibility to provide health care and health security to the elderly, which is established by law. For instance, the Iraqi constitution establishes the government's responsibility to guarantee social and health security of Iraqis in their old age.^{clix} At the legislative level, Jordanian law No. 47(2008) on Public Health, provides that the Ministry of Health is the institution in charge of the oversight of health services provided to older people.^{clx} Similarly, the Egyptian Constitution stipulates the government's obligation to provide health insurance for the elderly.^{clxi} In Tunisia, as part of the public policy to ensure equal access to health care services, impoverished older persons are entitled to free health care through public facilities.^{clxii} Tunisia also provides specialized rehabilitation and treatment centres funded by the government, providing much needed rehabilitation and physical therapy services to older persons for little or no fees.^{clxiii} Likewise, the government of Kuwait implements a health program for the care of the elderly at home, where they receive health services free of charge.^{clxiv}

There are numerous examples of care provided by trained staff and volunteers of non-governmental organizations. As a part of the Tunisian governmental policy to support the elderly, and facilitate their access to social and medical services within their home environment, the Tunisian Union of Social Solidarity dispatches mobile teams of doctors, paramedics, and social workers to rural areas to assist senior citizens by providing free services.^{clxv} In Egypt, Regular Medical Caravans provide free medical consultation and services - including surgeries - at homes in rural areas.^{clxvi} Experts from the ranks of trained medical professions, which are otherwise part of the advanced level of health-care services, also help to build up the capacity of competent civil society groups that provide services to the elderly. For instance, the Elderly Health and Social Care Center – Hilwan University, provides additional free or inexpensive health services to the elderly, and also contributes to the advancement of geriatric medicine.^{clxvii}

Pro bono medical services are provided by major medical schools in Egypt, which focus on older persons, in particular the poor elderly. This initiative offers opportunities for the medical and academic communities to improve their practical knowledge, as well as engage society through soliciting donations and support for elderly care; and thus, also raise public awareness of the needs of older persons.^{clxviii} Another program, "Loving by Caring" provides training to young professionals that work with older persons and attend to their special medical needs.^{clxix} The elderly in the Occupied Palestinian Territories also rely heavily on civil society efforts for the provision of medical services.^{clxx} In Algeria, the professionals in geriatric medical services recommended the establishment of Geriatric Day Care Centers, especially in rural areas, so that the elderly can receive the health care they need without being removed from their home environment, as this impediment could otherwise worsen their conditions.^{clxxi}

4. Empowerment of Older Women

Africa

Older women are among the most vulnerable groups in the African region, in particular with regards to inheritance, ownership of property, illiteracy, and elder abuse in the

form of witchcraft.^{clxxii} The following interventions by African countries have been adopted to address the situation of older women at national levels.

Burkina Faso – The Ministry of Social Action and National Solidarity, in cooperation with global NGOs, have provided support to victims of witchcraft, including the effort to reintegrate them in their families. Within a similar cooperative network, police and refugee centers contributed to the collection of data on human rights violations of women.^{clxxiii}

Uganda – The National Policy on Older Persons recognized the need to strive towards the realization of gender equality, via gender responsive social protection, equal treatment, and social inclusion.^{clxxiv} The Gender Policy emphasized the necessity to track information about gender equality in Uganda, on the grounds of age.^{clxxv}

Kenya – The Report on the implementation of the National Policy on Ageing underlined the urgency of the necessity to raise awareness of the needs of the ageing, and advocate for the empowerment of older man and women through economic activities, capacity building, and sustainable development programs.^{clxxvi}

Europe

The European initiatives and programmes have been designed to reflect the contribution of different skills of older women and men to society. The policy tends to reflect the notion that economic and social Europe is interdependent, including the contribution of the informal sectors of economy.^{clxxvii}

Lithuania - The Elderly Woman's Activity Centre (EWAC) implemented a project that focused on further education for unemployed elderly women, including training in computer literacy and skills. EWAC also teamed up with Kaunas University of Technology to implement a project entitled 'Integration of Vulnerable Elderly Women into the Labour market', that was designed to benefit older women thorough additional capacity building and research activities.^{clxxviii}

Poland - The Council of Women Association cooperated with local governments in Poland in order to empower elderly women in the rural areas. The cooperation focused on reducing social exclusion and creating opportunities for elderly women in rural regions to participate in activities that are related to their living environment, and the enhancement of their social skills.^{clxxix}

Serbia – An informally organized group of older women in rural areas around Lastavica, Surcin, and Pancevo opened a network of support centers that provide medical support, counseling, and legal services to refugees. The center also organizes social, educational, and employment activities.^{clxxx}

Latin America and the Caribbean

The examples of activities in the Latin American and Caribbean region include programmes that focus on the links between social participation and the health of older women. A few countries also regulate issues related to older women in their laws and national policies.

Panama – The Law on Equal Opportunity for Women supports gender equality, and includes a specific section on older women, which provides for mechanisms to be used by the State to ensure their welfare.^{clxxxi}

Argentina – A study from the Psychology Department at the National University of Mar de Plata examined the linkages between social participation and well-being of older women, including the identification of the most vulnerable women. The study concluded that older women should maintain an active lifestyle and social relations, as they positively affect their health and well-being.^{clxxxii}

Mexico – A nation-wide study analyzed the concept of ageing and the reduction of opportunities for older women to generate income and thus secure access to health services, leisure, food, and special care. The study suggested the creation of government actions in favor of women in order to support their life-long development.^{clxxxiii}

Venezuela - A study on women's networks affirmed that these social activities are crucial to ensure the inclusion of the elderly in cultural and leisure activities, as well as in promoting solid family relationships. It further found that older women in Venezuela take an active role in improving the quality of life of other elderly persons in general.^{clxxxiv}

Colombia - The National Policy on Aging (2007-2019) included provisions on further actions that should be taken by the state, society, and family to ensure the well-being of older women in Colombia.^{clxxxv} Similar policies on aging have been developed by *Chile*^{clxxxvi} and *Uruguay*.^{clxxxvii}

Asia and the Pacific

The empowerment of older women has been addressed for the most part by civil society organizations in Asia and the Pacific. For instance, in *Kyrgyzstan*, the ‘Adopt a Babushka Foundation’ program sponsors older women (“babushka” means grandmother) through periodic donations and transfers. Sponsors are also encouraged to connect with their babushkas, in an effort at intergenerational interaction. The older women then receive the equivalent of monthly allowance in order to supplement their pensions, which also help them with their utilities and medical expenses. Another component includes caregivers who come to the older women’s homes to perform various supportive activities; including: reading, running errands, and providing general psychosocial support.^{clxxxviii} Similarly, ‘Yrys (Prosperity)—Older Women’s Role in Easing Ethnic Tensions’, represents an example of a joint project by HelpAge International and the Adopt a Babushka Foundation, that was established to train older women to work with media, conduct surveys, and network with other groups. After the training concluded, older women set up local self-help groups called “Yrys,” which focus on easing tensions between the different ethnic groups, where older women leverage their status as mothers to mitigate and prevent local conflicts.^{clxxxix}

Arab Countries

In the Arab region, few initiatives to benefit older women have been implemented by civil society. In *Mauritania*, The Grandmother Project in Nouakchott (2007)^{cx} represents an example of cooperation between foreign organizations and local women at the grassroots level. The project empowers grandmothers to participate in nutrition education activities in urban slums of Nouakchott, and in southern Mauritania. The project also enhances the intergenerational interaction and transfer of knowledge and experience from older women to younger women.^{cxci} In *Djibouti*, the Community Assessment on Household Roles and Practices Related to Nutrition (2007)^{cxcii} is another effort implemented jointly by the Grandmother Project, UNICEF, and the Ministry of Health to identify key actors in household nutrition and better understand their roles and influence leading to the design of a community grandmother-inclusive nutrition strategy.

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