

## Importance of Care and Protection for Older People in Jordan



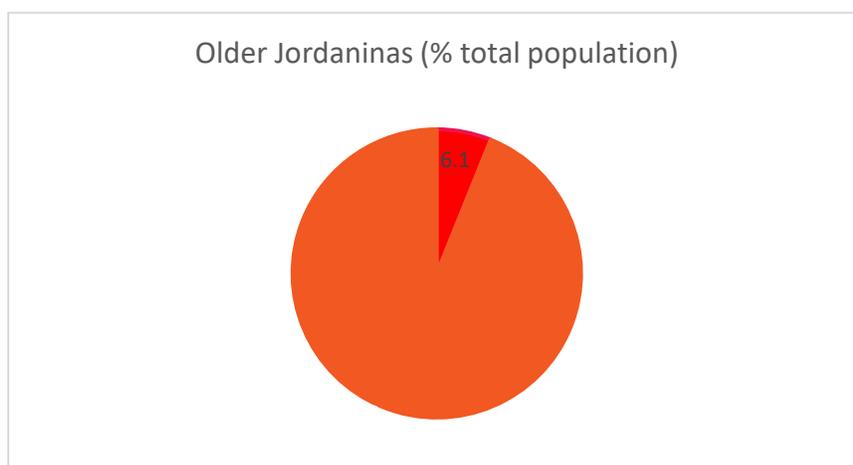
### General Background

Older people are important members of any society and therefore have the right to live in dignity in later life. Moreover, older people possess the skills, knowledge and experience to continue to contribute effectively to society, given the fact that the predicted increase in the number of older people in the coming decades is considered a valuable resource for all societies.

Positive aging is a term used to describe the process of maintaining a positive attitude in older age. It includes psychological and health aspects, continuing to participate in society, and ensuring a safe source of income. <sup>1</sup>

According to the standards of the United Nations and the World Health Organization, an older person is universally defined as someone who has reached the age of 60. In some developed world countries, old age starts at the chronological age of 65. In Jordan, the definition of the United Nations is considered appropriate and is consistent with local legislation, national strategies and implementation plans.

The number of older men and women (60+ years) in Jordan is 405101, of whom 201172 are women, or 49.6%. Older Jordanians constitute 6.1% of the total Jordanian population<sup>2</sup>, noting that there are currently more than 700 million people over the age of 60, and by 2050, the number will grow to become 2 billion, meaning that more than 20 percent of the world's population will be aged 60 years old or more. The increase in the number of older people will be the largest and fastest growing in the developing world, which requires an appropriate response to this number in order to meet older people's needs and respond to the challenges they face, as the number of people aged 60 or more will exceed that of the children by 2050<sup>3</sup>.



<sup>1</sup> Australian Psychological Society, [https://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/ageing/](https://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/ageing/)

<sup>2</sup>Results of the 2015 Population and Housing Census in Jordan

<sup>3</sup>United Nations website for older persons: <https://www.un.org/ar/events/olderpersonsday/>

By referring to the outcomes of the focus group sessions and advocacy exercises carried out by HelpAge International in Zarqa and Amman for a group of older men and women, we find that they have highlighted the many needs of older people in Jordan, and the importance of developing and creating day centers in older people's gathering places, and developing their approaches and supporting them in specific activities and awareness workshops based on their real needs, as well as the importance of supporting older people who are retired and want to work and be productive in creating appropriate opportunities to ensure that this stage of their life is a productive one, thus helping to reduce risks of psychological and socioeconomic issues for them and their families. These recommendations are supported by the sessions implemented by the National Council for Family Affairs (NCFA), which recommend increasing the number of activities organized by day centers for older people in all governorates across the Kingdom, and activating their role in care and empowerment and providing a safe and productive space for older people, which includes increasing their participation in the society.

The importance of preparing this policy brief comes with the endeavors of the Jordanian Ministry of Health to achieve a universal health coverage through joint efforts with the World Health Organization, in order to affirm the right of older people to guarantee health care and promote their efficiency and productivity at this stage of their life, whether through taking preventive measures from an early age or in terms of care, health services, psychosocial support, and retirement and housing services provision for older people.

## Well-being of Older People

A secure and stable income in retirement is an essential element for older people so that they can have a positive attitude towards life and live comfortably. Lack of income can have negative effects on older people's health and ability to carry out activities as active members of society. Good health and positive relationships in childhood, in addition to healthy lifestyle and the availability of appropriate health and social services across different age groups are positive determinants that will certainly lead to the likelihood of people enjoying good health in older age<sup>4</sup>. The World Health Organization expressed the concept of the health of the elderly, that:

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<sup>4</sup>The National Jordanian Strategy for Senior Citizens (2018-2022), the National Council for Family Affairs.

“The changes that constitute and influence ageing are complex. At a biological level, the gradual accumulation of a wide variety of molecular and cellular damage leads to a gradual decrease in physiological reserves, an increased risk of many diseases and a general decline in capacity. But these changes are neither linear nor consistent, and they are only loosely associated with age in years.”

Thus, while some 70-year-olds may enjoy good physical and mental functioning, others may be frail or require significant support to meet their basic needs. Beyond these biological losses, “older age” frequently involves other significant changes. These include shifts in roles and social positions. An although some of these changes may be driven by adaptations to loss, others reflect ongoing psychological development in older age that may be associated with the development of new, viewpoints and many interrelated social contexts.

Members of any society agree that older people have the right to receive support and encouragement to enable them to be self-reliant, enjoy wellbeing with their families and live in dignity. The factors affecting older people’s ability to access services and participate in the community are not only limited to health status and available income, but they also include the transportation availability and the ability to access the necessary services.

Investing in services and programs for older people aims to transform this age group from being considered a drain on resources to having a role in building human, social, economic and environmental capital. In fact, “older people’s right to be free from violence, abuse and neglect is not well protected by international human rights law, and images of violence, abuse and neglect come in many forms; older people may lack income and adequate health care and suffer from insecurity ill-treatment<sup>5</sup>.

It is worth mentioning Jordan's position in the Global AgeWatch index, which measures the level of social and economic well-being of older people; it came lowest in the ranking in general and more evident in places of defect within its position in the four disaggregated indicators; it ranked second lowest in the Seniors' Capabilities domain, including employment and educational attainment, in addition to a low ranking in the health domain, which includes psychological and mental health of older people in Jordan. This explains the attempts to contribute to the development of a

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<sup>5</sup> Regional Director, HelpAge International

universal health coverage in Jordan, which starts at an early age and takes a preventive human rights form rather than a rapid response or an emotional response.

### International, regional and national efforts to support older people

Internationally; The first world assembly on aging was held in 1982 in Vienna, which adopted the recommendations and the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging, which was endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in a meeting of delegates from 124 countries, declaring the ninth decade of the twentieth century the decade of the elderly, and in 1983 the World Health Organization adopted the slogan "Let us add life to the years we live" and requested its regional offices in the different areas to submit their comprehensive practical plans in order set this slogan into action. International understanding of the basic needs crucial to the well-being of older persons has been further strengthened as a result of the adoption of the United Nations Principles for Older Persons in 1991 and the Global Goals on Aging in 2001, adopted in 1992, the Declaration on Aging 1992 and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Aging 2020.

The International Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) on Ageing was established in 2010 by the United Nations General Assembly, with the aim of focusing on the rights of older people in connection with international covenants and conventions, and looking for development gaps and ways to bridge them, in order to develop an international instrument that supports the rights of older persons internationally.

With the launch of "Global AgeWatch Index" in 2013, it became possible to monitor the progress and measure the achievements of work done to promote the rights of older people. The index measures the quality of life and well-being of older people through four domains: income, health, capability (education and employment), and enabling environment.

Regionally, members of the Arab Social Ministerial Council have agreed recently to adopt the strategy presented by the Republic of Tunisia regarding older people and to forward it to The Arab Economic and Social Development Summit in Beirut 2019, so that the components of the strategy plan would include developing legislation and services for health and social care for older people, and ways for providing shelter for older people within their households, and training families to care for these older

people, as “from a rights-based perspective, rather than a care perspective.”<sup>6</sup> The strategy was recently adopted at the Arab League Summit that was held in Tunisia in March this year.

The Executive Office of the Council of Ministers of Social Affairs in the GCC takes a leading position in supporting the rights of older people, and has recently published a new study on the legal protection of older people.

In Jordan, there is a clear interest, at all levels, in issues concerning older people, by governmental, non-governmental or international organizations, such as the measures taken by the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Health, as well as efforts made by the National Council for Family Affairs at the policy level; developing a national strategy for senior citizens and an implementation plan for the years 2018-2022. Similarly, there is the Jordan 2025 “National Vision and Strategy”, and the Comprehensive National Plan for human rights of 2016-2025, in addition to the work done by the National Center for Human Rights in monitoring care homes, the civil society organizations, such as the Jordanian Women Solidarity Institute, the NAYA Network for Arab Youth Activities, as well as activities carried out by international organizations to serve this group, such as HelpAge International and GIZ.

With the Syrian refugee crisis and the resulting changes in various aspects of life, old age group has been given great importance by national and international institutions and organizations with the objective of providing better services to this age group.

At the coordination and networking level, the National Council for Family Affairs formed the National Committee to follow up on the implementation of the National Strategy for Senior Citizens in 2012 in pursuance of a decision taken by the Cabinet, which includes representatives from different institutions concerned with all aspects of ageing and older persons.

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<sup>6</sup> Tariq Al Nabulsi, Director of the Development and Social Policy Department at the League of Arab States, and Technical Secretariat of Arab Social Ministerial Council

In 2016, the Jordanian government directed the creation of a fund to support older people in Jordan, and thus a committee was formed for the preparation of instructions for the fund by the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Finance, the General Budget Department, and the National Council for Family Affairs.

During 2017, the Jordanian Civil Alliance for the Rights of Older Persons was established for a safe, active and productive aging free from gender inequality, discrimination, violence, abuse and neglect, all as part of the Global Age Demands Action - ADA campaign, which includes 43 other partners in 35 countries around the world, in order to shed light on the various experiences related to abuse faced by older men and women in their societies, homes and daily lives. Founding members of the alliance are 15 civil society institutions with a number of government agencies concerned with the protection and promotion of the rights of older people, in addition to 25 individuals interested in older men and women's issues.

The government has also directed, in 2016, measures to be taken to supply clinics in older people's care homes with doctors, nurses, nutritionists, psychologists, and social workers, twice a week, in a special program sought by all health directorates in all the governorates in which these homes are located, i.e. (10) care homes, six of which are run by the voluntary sector, and four are owned by the private sector.

## Challenges Facing Older People

Older people experience a number of barriers to their inclusion in health systems and services. Discrimination in the form of ageism is common, including among health workers, who may fail to consult older people on their care and restrict or deny access to interventions on the basis of age. Other barriers include poor physical accessibility of services, lack of outreach to communities, poverty and prohibitive costs, lower health literacy and less access to health information. In many low- and middle-income countries, health workers are inadequately prepared

to respond to health challenges common in older age, and there is a lack of medical and gerontological training in the care of older people<sup>7</sup>.

Health systems have failed to keep pace with the interlinked global transitions: a demographic transition and an epidemiological transition. Moreover, on the website for the National Center for Human Rights, under "the Rights of Older Persons" in the Observatory for the Rights Of The Most Vulnerable, and in the analytical study of the situation of older people, prepared by the National Council for Family Affairs during 2017, and based on data from the Ministry of Interior, the Analysis of Older Persons' Complaints from across the governorates of the Kingdom during 2016 showed that there were about (787) complaints, which varied between verbal and/or physical abuse against older people. The percentage of complainants represented about 0.1% of the census.

Looking at Jordan's position on the Global AgeWatch global index, we find that it ranks low (85 out of 96), at 85 overall, and in detail, it performs best in the enabling environment domain (32), with above regional values in two of four indicators. The satisfaction of older people with safety (90%) is the highest in the region, while it ranks moderately in the income security domain (58), with a low poverty rate among older people (4.6%) and GNI per capita (US\$11,200) above regional average (US\$10,237).

However, pension coverage (42.2%) is below regional average (49%). It ranks low in the health domain (67), with below regional average value on life expectancy at 60 (19). Jordan ranks second lowest overall in the capability domain (95), with low educational attainment among older people (30.1%) and employment rate (22.5%) relative to the Index averages (45% and 56% respectively).

For example, the mandatory retirement age in America and Australia is 61, and 69 in Japan, regardless of the gender, but in India, "the average age of two-thirds of the population is 35 years or below, so these young working citizens seek to retire at a young age, 45 to 50", while in order to be eligible for an old-age pension in Jordan, the retirement age must be 60 years for men and 55 for women, with at least 180 of

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<sup>7</sup>HelpAge International, 2018. In-depth Analysis: The right to health for older people, the right to be counted. Prepared by HelpAge International and supported by a grant from AARP

contribution. This, according to experts, depends on the person's planning for retirement at an early age, to minimize retirement liabilities.

This raises the question about the level of awareness among Jordanian families of retirement planning, so that we can ensure a safer, more independent and productive stage of life that would have positive social effects on all family members. It is worth mentioning a study that was conducted by the National Council for Family Affairs, which has drawn attention to the increased number of women who remain unmarried and grow old while providing care for their parents, which although indicates the level of sacrifice made for the sake of their parents, it conceals a suffering women choose not to speak about .



## Legislations Governing the Rights of Older People

In Chapter 2 of the Jordanian constitution on the rights and duties of Jordanians, particularly in Article 6, 5<sup>th</sup> clause, it is stated that "The law shall protect motherhood, childhood and the old-aged; and shall avail care for the youngsters and those with disabilities and protect them against abuse and exploitation." Moreover, the United Nations calls for exploring all possible ways and means to support the full and effective participation of older men and women, taking into consideration their rights, needs and requirements, and connecting and empowering all older men and women in order to achieve the goals of the sustainable development and the Madrid Plan of Action on Aging. And although the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights does not contain any explicit reference to the rights of older persons, although article 9 dealing with "the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance", implicitly recognizes the right to old-age benefits.

Most of the Jordanian legislation, such as the Code of Civil Status, the Penal Code, and the Social Security Law among others recognize the rights of older people, however, among the demands of the National Strategy for Senior Citizens was the need for a law that protects the rights of senior citizens and includes all pertinent rights.

On the other hand, care homes and private day centers for older men and women are licensed in accordance with the Residential Care Home Licensing Regulations for 2014, and the Older Persons' Day Centers Licensing Regulations for 2014, but there are no specific items on the development of these homes or the regular monitoring of their work. Regulations for these homes and day centers, however, remain inconsistent and do not clearly fulfil the United Nations principles for older persons that were adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1991.

While some local civil societies work with the support of organizations working globally in this sector; advocacy and lobbying for the rights of older people - even though efforts need further development, mainstreaming and relating to reality - the Jordanian Women Solidarity Institute - SIGI called for: "The protection of this age group, although included in a number of international conventions and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International

Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, most of them, in addition to other human rights conventions, do not give discrimination on the basis of age any legal considerations, and do not provide comprehensive or systematic protection for older men and women, which only increases the “normative gap” and the “implementation gap” as expressed in the paper “Supporting the Rights of Older Persons - Towards a UN convention on the rights of older people” issued by a large number of relevant international organizations.

This stresses the importance of working to harmonize legislations governing the rights of older people with the five United Nations principles for older people that were adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1991, so that those legislations guarantee the independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment and dignity of older men and women.

## Recommendations

The recommendations of this concept paper intersect with the recommendations of the National Jordanian Strategy for Senior Citizens (2018-2020), which list a set of recommendations within the three strategic directives that closely align with the four disaggregated indicators of the Global AgeWatch Index, after combining two indicators from the previous strategy into one within the third directive. We present these directives for your information as follows:

- First Directive: Senior Citizens and Development
- Second Directive: Healthcare for Senior Citizens
- Third Directive: Physical Environment to Support Senior Citizens

While the recommendations of this paper were formulated in view of practical means and political procedures to ensure the rights of older men older women, the paper indirectly classified the recommendations based on either: person(s) concerned with the implementation of these recommendations, which may be directed to government policies, civil society organizations, or the private sector in Jordan, or based on the four assessment domains in the AgeWatch Global Index. There are recommendations corresponding to these disaggregated indicators: income, health, capability (education and employment), and enabling environment.

## **Recommendations based on the evaluation of the national strategy**

The paper recommends emphasizing the role of the National Committee in Following-up of the work of the National Strategy for Senior Citizens, which was developed in 2012 by a decision issued by the Cabinet, whose members include representatives of the Cabinet's key partners and entities concerned with all issues related to and affecting older persons.

The Committee usually lists the main achievements that have been made for the benefit of older people in terms of legislations, regulations, institutional procedures, monitoring of population, health, social and educational statistical data related to older people through the databases available at the Department of Statistics and the concerned authorities. Consequently, the paper recommends that this takes place during a national conference held annually in the presence of a group of older people invited from all governorates, and that the conference is held periodically, giving older people the chance to be involved in the formulation of recommendations and corrective measures for the following year, all as part of the strategy.

It is recommended that it be covered by the media in a way that ensures that the information reaches all those concerned, using appropriate, new and effective media tools, such as infographics, charts, etc.

## **Recommendations based on lessons learned from international experience**

1. Activating the role of the National Committee in following up on the implementation of the National Strategy Senior Citizens, which was developed in 2012 by a decision issued by the Cabinet, whose members include representatives of the Cabinet's key partners and entities concerned with all issues related to and affecting older persons.
2. Holding an annual national conference in which a group of older people from all governorates of the Kingdom are invited, so that the conference is held periodically, giving older people a chance to be involved in the formulation of recommendations and corrective measures for the following year, all as part of the strategy.

3. Mobilizing media support to ensure that information reaches all those concerned, using appropriate, new and effective media tools, such as infographics, charts, etc.
4. Drawing from the experiences and efforts of Arab and foreign in ensuring the rights of older people, especially those who ranked high on the Global AgeWatch Index, such as the special efforts in establishing age-friendly cities similar to those of other developed countries, increasing budgets allocated for the safeguarding of older men and women's rights, establishing associations for older people, organizing annual exhibitions for selling handcrafts and products made by older people, in addition to improving public services. The Public Transport Authority of China has established the first bus line for older people and called it "respect and love for older people", which cover 28 roads and routes and is designed in a modern way so that older people can ride more comfortably and safely. It should be noted that part of that is achieved through the activation of the role of the Liaison Office for Arab Countries in the Social Security Corporation in accessing studies and information on developing investment work within the institution's services in special projects to serve older men and women, then broadening that to include experiences of foreign countries as well.

## **General Recommendations**

1. Investing in international efforts and interests in a way that is reflected genuinely in the development of the situation of older people in Jordan, including international days, external financing in this issue, and encouraging the private sector and the civil society sector to work in this field. Noting that Jordan and the rest of the world celebrate the International Day of Older Persons, which falls on October 1, under resolution No. 106/45 of the United Nations General Assembly on December 14, 1990. Additionally, it is noteworthy that the world celebrates the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day on 15/6, under resolution No. (127/66) of the United Nations General Assembly on December 19, 2011, in order to raise awareness on the consequences and effects of abuse on older men and women, and to express complete rejection of any kind of ill-treatment or abuse they may be exposed to.

2. Completing the task of including all older people in an income security system after the age of 60, in a way that will positively affect their lives and the lives of those around them. The percentage of older people enrolled in the national pension system, according to the legislation in force has reached about 75% according to the analytical report of the Jordanian national strategy for older people (٢٠١٣-٢٠٠٩).
3. Activating the role of the “older persons department” in the Family Protection Directorate of the Ministry of Social Development, and offering special training to its employees and engaging them in external trainings and workshops in countries that ranked highest on the Global AgeWatch Index. The paper also recommends building a close partnership between the older persons department in the Ministry of Social Development and the Pension Administration / Services Unit within the Social Security Corporation, and the concerned department in the Ministry of Health, noting that there is currently no department designated for older persons, but other health departments in the Ministry may be converted into one, as it is crucial to establish such department. This recommendation is detailed below.
4. Allocating a department within the Ministry of Health for the care of older people’s health, due to the physical, psychological, mental and social health considerations related to this age group, and providing health tools other than those allocated by the health departments within the Ministry’s organizational structure, in response to the local needs and the sustainable development goals, especially the 3rd goal: Good health and wellbeing, and in alignment with the WHO strategy 2016 to focus on the enjoyment of health by older men and women, in terms of physical, psychological, mental and social health.
5. Adopting a national policy by the Higher Population Council in cooperation with the relevant ministries for promoting awareness among citizens at the ages of 30, 45, and 60 within their places of work / residences, which includes planning from an early age for aspects specific to these age groups, i.e. health care, commitment to old people's funds, securing an income / job appropriate for that age group, making it a national requirement to adopt awareness-raising topics that are age-appropriate to achieve social and economic well-being in later life, as is the case with dealing with the demographic opportunity that depends on the proportion of youth labor force.

6. Encouraging older men and women to form socio-political societies that advocate for their rights and ensure a better and healthier life for them, by ensuring their social participation within a developmental context, yielding national growth. This requires establishing or increasing the number of day centers for older men and women in the villages and cities of Jordan, and developing specific regulations that conform to the five United Nations principle for older persons.
7. Developing a multi-sectoral system for measuring and evaluating efforts made to ensure the social and economic well-being of older people, drawing on the experiences of international organizations working in this sector.

## References

1. United Nations Principles for Older Persons, the United Nations website.
2. The National Jordanian Strategy for Senior Citizens (2013-2018) and (2018-2020), the National Council for Family Affairs.
3. Analytical report for evaluating the National Jordanian Strategy for Senior Citizens (2009-2013), the National Council for Family Affairs.
4. Website: Global AgeWatch Index for the Social and Economic well-being of older persons <http://globalagewatch.org/>
5. The Global strategy and action plan on ageing and health – World Health Organization (WHO), entitled: “Multi-sectoral action for a life course approach to healthy ageing
6. Focus group discussions sessions and advocacy trainings carried out with older men and women in the governorates of Amman and Zarqa, 2019.
7. Situation analysis of the reality of older persons in Jordan – Analytical comparative study, publications of the National Council for Family Affairs, 2017.
8. Regulations for licensing residential care homes for older people, 2014, Ministry of Social Development.
9. Regulations for licensing day centers for older people, 2014
10. Protection Against Domestic Violence (Law No. 6, 2008)

## Appendix

United Nations Principles for Older Persons, adopted by General Assembly resolution 46/91 of 16 December 1991:

## Independence

1. Older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care through the provision of income, family and community support and self-help.
2. Older persons should have the opportunity to work or to have access to other income-generating opportunities.
3. Older persons should be able to participate in determining when and at what pace withdrawal from the labor force takes place.
4. Older persons should have access to appropriate educational and training programs.
5. Older persons should be able to live in environments that are safe and adaptable to personal preferences and changing capacities.
6. Older persons should be able to reside at home for as long as possible.

## Participation

7. Older persons should remain integrated in society, participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.
8. Older persons should be able to seek and develop opportunities for service to the community and to serve as volunteers in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities.
9. Older persons should be able to form movements or associations of older persons.

## Care

10. Older persons should benefit from family and community care and protection in accordance with each society's system of cultural values.
11. Older persons should have access to health care to help them to maintain or regain the optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well-being and to prevent or delay the onset of illness.
12. Older persons should have access to social and legal services to enhance their autonomy, protection and care.
13. Older persons should be able to utilize appropriate levels of institutional care providing protection, rehabilitation and social and mental stimulation in a humane and secure environment.
14. Older persons should be able to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms when residing in any shelter, care or treatment facility, including full respect for their dignity, beliefs, needs and privacy and for the right to make decisions about their care and the quality of their lives.

## Self-fulfilment

15. Older persons should be able to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential.

16.Older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

#### Dignity

17.Older persons should be able to live in dignity and security and be free of exploitation and physical or mental abuse.

18.Older persons should be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, disability or other status, and be valued independently of their economic contribution.

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**HelpAge International is a global network of organizations promoting the right of all older people to lead dignified, healthy and secure lives.**

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