

TAKING A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR A WORLD FREE OF POVERTY



11th Annual AARP-UN Briefing Luncheon
on

TAKING A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR A WORLD FREE OF POVERTY

Delegates Dining Room, United Nations Headquarters
Tuesday 30 January 2018 (1 – 3 pm)

Concept Note

Introduction

The fifty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development (CSocD56) will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 29 January to 7 February 2018. The session will address the 2018 policy cycle's priority theme "Strategies for eradicating poverty to achieve sustainable development for all". This year, the Commission will also convene a High-Level Panel discussion on the third review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). The panel is scheduled to be held on the morning of Wednesday, 31 January 2018 at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The third global review of achievements and obstacles in the implementation of MIPAA offers a timely opportunity to raise the profile of ageing and engage members of the Commission and other key stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector, in a discussion on how older persons could be better taken into account in development agendas efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, in the context of leaving no one behind and ensuring lives of dignity for all.

This year, AARP and the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) are organizing the 11th AARP/UN briefing luncheon on 30 January 2018 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. at UN Headquarters in New York. The theme of the luncheon, entitled "Taking a Different Course for a World Free of Poverty", will focus on poverty eradication, including through a lifecourse approach, against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Background

Poverty in all its forms everywhere continues to be the world's greatest challenge. Despite progress in reducing poverty, advancements have been insufficient, as the number of people living in extreme poverty continues to be unacceptably high. According to the most recent estimates, 767 million people lived on less than 1.90 US dollars a day in 2013.¹

¹ United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017*. Available from <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2017/TheSustainableDevelopmentGoalsReport2017.pdf>

TAKING A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR A WORLD FREE OF POVERTY



As with other age groups, many older persons live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity. However, getting old presents a significant additional risk of vulnerability to poverty, with limited options for older persons to escape it. People living in areas where poverty is endemic, and having endured a life of deprivation, are often at greater risk of slipping deeper into extreme hardship in old age - this risk often increasing in very old age.

In later life, people reduce their working hours or stop working because of retirement (both voluntary and involuntary) or health issues. Many do not possess adequate savings or assets that could guarantee income security until the end of their lives.² In some societies, older persons depend on family as a source of financial support, but this may not be reliable nor realistic, especially due to the increasing economic hardship many families are experiencing that compromises the provision of adequate support. With increased longevity and rising cost of living, economic security in old age rests on work opportunities, savings and assets to the extent that they exist, and the provision of and access to adequate pensions.

While pensions constitute a stable income and an effective means of reducing poverty in old age, only 68 per cent of people above retirement age collected a pension in 2016³ and, often, those with a pension were caught between inadequate benefits and rising costs. Despite significant progress in extending pension system coverage in developing countries, where the majority of older people live, less than 20 per cent of eligible older persons in low-income countries receive a pension⁴. In developing countries, older persons often engage in labour markets characterized by widespread informality, where jobs are typically insecure, offer relatively low pay and lack retirement benefits.

In most countries, older women fare worse than older men in access to contributory pensions and in the level of benefits they provide. This is due to the lower share of women in the labour, lower wages, lower retirement ages for women than for men in some countries, the disproportionate number of women in informal employment, as well as shorter and interrupted work histories owing to unpaid care responsibilities for children and other family members. The cumulative effects of exclusion, inequality and gender discrimination are key impediments to attaining income security in old age. There are also indications that suggest that older women are at much greater risk of poverty as a result of unequal access to education, healthcare, income opportunities and resources, not only during their adult life but also in later life, particularly if they are widows or divorcees who are denied control over financial resources, inheritance and land ownership due to discriminatory laws and practices that are prevalent in some countries.

Regardless of the different contexts in which older persons continue to work, whether it is to remain active, or to supplement their insufficient pensions with additional income, or having to work longer out of necessity to secure their livelihoods, they continue to face

² United Nations, *Income Poverty in Old Age: An Emerging Development Priority 2016*. Available from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/PovertyIssuePaperAgeing.pdf>

³ International Labour Office, *World Social Protection Report 2017–19: Universal social protection to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*. Available from http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf

⁴ *Ibid*

TAKING A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR A WORLD FREE OF POVERTY



obstacles in obtaining and retaining employment and experience a disproportionate risk of unemployment. Age discrimination is a widespread reality and an additional impediment to older persons' access to employment and financial services. Older workers often suffer from negative attitudes in the workplace regarding hiring or training, and are sometimes confronted with institutional policies such as compulsory retirement at a relatively young age, and may also be excluded from access to mortgages, small business loans, insurance and microfinance services because of their age.⁵

The growth in the proportion and number of older persons worldwide highlights the importance of understanding the specifics of poverty and income insecurity in old age. This entails understanding that income security in old age is also greatly influenced by the availability of and access to other social services including healthcare, housing and long-term care -- the absence of which places a significant number of older persons and their families, at greater risk of either falling into poverty or remaining below the poverty line. It also entails the importance of understanding vulnerability to poverty across the life course and that much of the occurrence of poverty in old age, results from the cumulative impact of factors experienced earlier in life.

Objective

The 2018 AARP/UN briefing luncheon aims to provide a platform for a diverse set of stakeholders, including Governments, the private sector, civil society, and United Nations entities to undertake a policy dialogue and to enable a better understanding of progress made and challenges faced in eradicating poverty and insecurity in old age, as well as exchange experiences and lessons on new evidence and innovations in poverty eradication efforts targeted at older persons.

Questions for the Audience

- What measures can Governments take to ensure that older persons, in particular those who are vulnerable and living in poverty, have equal access to economic resources, including access to adequate pensions, basic services, financial services, property, inheritance, etc?
- What measures can Governments take to mainstream ageing into national and local-level poverty reduction plans and strategies?
- How can Member States support the development of improved age-disaggregated data to better target future poverty eradication initiatives?
- What steps can various stakeholders take to intensify efforts to eliminate age-based and other forms of discrimination in employment, social protection and the provision of basic social services?

⁵ United Nations, *Economic Inequalities in Old Age 2017*. Available from https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2016/08/Briefing-Paper_Economic-Inequalities_Final_Rev26July2017.pdf

TAKING A DIFFERENT COURSE FOR A WORLD FREE OF POVERTY



- How can stakeholders better engage older people in the implementation of national plans and strategies designed to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and better support their contributions to follow-up and review mechanisms?

Format

The event will consist of a moderator-driven, interactive panel discussion (Davos style) among representatives of Government, civil society and the private sector to identify good practices and challenges about which they would like to share lessons learned. The floor will then be opened to all participants to raise questions and share comments either with regard to specific interventions made by panelists to the theme of the event more broadly. The event is by invitation only.

Suggested Reading Materials

United Nations, *Secretary-General Report to the 72nd session of the General Assembly Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing*. Available from <http://undocs.org/A/72/161>

United Nations, *Secretary-General Report to the fifty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development Third review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002: preliminary assessment*. Available from <http://undocs.org/E/CN.5/2017/6>

United Nations, *Economic Inequalities in Old Age 2017*. Available from https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/wp-content/uploads/sites/24/2016/08/Briefing-Paper_Economic-Inequalities_Final_Rev26July2017.pdf

United Nations, AARP, HelpAge International (2017) *Ageing, Older Persons and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Available from <https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/news/2017/07/ageing-older-persons-and-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development/>

United Nations, *Income Poverty in Old Age: An Emerging Development Priority 2016*. Available from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/PovertyIssuePaperAgeing.pdf>