

ermira pirdeni ageing activist

Newsletter

Albanian Older Women Issue – April 2023

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#EmbraceEquity

International Women's Day, 8 March 2023 was a moment of huge inspiration and solidarity as we united to provide a snapshot of some key issues where age and gender combine with a negative impact on Albanian older women who as a result experience double discrimination. Older women are a reflection of how windows can remain invisible.



March 8, 2023 joint activity of the three oldest women organizations in Albania: Business Women, SHGPAZ; Women and Children, SHGF; Elderly Women, ASAG with the theme: "Mother-the greatest Albanian power"

Women's roles need to be valued; the strengths, skills and knowledge of older women need to be rewarded and respected; pensions need to be equitable.

We need a childcare and social care system that is fit for purpose to ensure that we are not completely reliant on the heroic efforts of the unpaid and the underappreciated.

"Age-Friendly Communities" create places where people of all ages are able to live healthy and active later in their lives.

Our communities do not meet the basic Decent Communities' Standards where poor urban planning, lack of local services and support do actually put the inhabitants' health and safety at risk.

Untrained local media is unable to provide the reliable and qualitative information needed to make informed decisions about the issues that affect our communities and quality of life.

We need to emphasize the viewpoint that many commitments have gone unfulfilled since 1994 Cairo Conference on Population and Development & 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing.



People don't want to give me a job because of my age. It is sad to get older and poorer.

CARMEN LEIVA (NICARAGUA)

#EmbraceEquity
#SocialProtection
#LeaveNoWomanBehind

 **Global Call to Action Against Poverty**
People Rising to End Inequalities

What are of reasons why so little light is shed on older women's contributions to Albanian society. The primary problem is that the typical telling of the narrative of history is extremely biased.

ASAG represents an important element of older women who are not only continuing to fight a history of dehumanizing treatment, but also refusing to be defined or imagined within the rigid, confining, and stereotypical boxes that power minds have drawn around them. Examining "older women poverty" causes and effects should be a priority for the UN Convention "Age with right",

so that societies all around the world will start to abandon the primitive narrative that has been prominent for far too long.

Photo activity:



Quotes

Life is not easy for any of us. But what of that? We must have perseverance and above all confidence in ourselves.

We must believe that we are gifted for something and that this thing must be attained.” Marie Curie

UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWG)

'Age with Rights' Campaign

ASAG joined the statement of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People (GAROP) for the 13th session of the Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing

The statement was made on behalf of the 400 member organizations worldwide by the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People.

The Global Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) concluded that "while there has been progress in the past five years, the persistence of the same challenges over the 20 years of the implementation of the Plan constitutes a failure of 'business as usual' and there is a need to accelerate action on developing an international legal instrument to strengthen the implementation of the MIPAA. Policy alone does not work.

We need a legal framework to reinforce the recommendations of MIPAA.

This year, based on feedback from campaigners, GAROP held a weeklong Global Rally from 27th February to 5th March 2023. This coincided with the start of the Human Rights Council's 52nd session.

In addition, GAROP organized a high-level virtual summit on March 1st to celebrate the growing activism for older people's rights taking place around the world and to facilitate a global dialogue between older people, civil society, governments and other key stakeholders.

I, Ermira Pirdeni, received an invitation to be part of this summit thanks to the important role ASAG playing in championing the human rights of older people in Albania.

Through meetings and the media, I urged the Albanian government to participate and be active in participating and engaging in OEWG:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/08lesjnuumk1fqk/OlderWomenAL.mp4?dl=0>

OEWG13 "Age with Rights"

The graphic is a promotional poster for the Global Rally Summit 2023. It features a white background with a red border. At the top left, it says "THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE" and "#AgeWithRights". The main title "Global Rally Summit 2023" is in large red letters. Below it, it says "Join us for this central event of the Global Rally 2023!". On the left, it specifies the date and time: "ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST MARCH, 2023" and "STARTS AT 9:00-10:15AM EST / 3:00-4:15PM CET". It also mentions that the event will be supported by Spanish and French as well as International Sign Language interpretations. A QR code is provided for registration. On the right, there are six circular portraits of speakers, each with their name and title below them. The speakers are Ermira Pirdeni, Jane Miano, Krishna Gautam, H.E. Federico Villegas Beltrán, Margaret Young, and H.E. Paula Narvaez Ojeda.

THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE
#AgeWithRights

Global Rally Summit 2023

Join us for this central event of the Global Rally 2023!

ON WEDNESDAY, 1ST MARCH, 2023 **STARTS AT 9:00-10:15AM EST / 3:00-4:15PM CET**

The event will be supported by Spanish and French as well as International Sign Language interpretations.

For registration scan this code or follow the link in the description

The virtual summit will be recorded and live streamed on Facebook and YouTube

Ermira Pirdeni
Albanian Society for All Ages

Jane Miano
Focus of Disabled Persons, Kenya

Krishna Gautam
Ageing Nepal

H.E. Federico Villegas Beltrán
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations in Geneva

Margaret Young - Moderator
The Chair of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People

H.E. Paula Narvaez Ojeda
Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations in New York

Ermira's speech:

I am Ermira Pirdeni, representative of Albanian Society for All Ages. I am 76 years old. In Albania, the political and social structures have neglected the problem of the elderly. The infrastructure on ageing is underdeveloped in both central and local governments. The lack of access to services, inadequate pensions, and active age discrimination means poor quality of life and lack of respect situation for older Albanian.

In the building next to me, 100% of the tenants are elderly. Albania's most famous folk dancer also lived there. This gentlemen suffered muscular atrophy and did not have proper medical care. For example, I contact the local government to get him a proper medical bed. Instead, they gave him a regular portable bed so he suffered a lot of pain. Because there is no government help, his 80-year-wife served him by herself until he passed away. At his deathbed, their 83-year-old neighbor helped his wife.

The geriatric service is lacking in primary healthcare, hospital, and the door-to-door service. Therefore, right to health care and dignity is not there for older Albanians.

The economic situation has worsened in the past years. Younger people are emigrating, and this means the elderly population is now 50%. While younger people can go and look for work, older people are suffering because they have limited pension.

I personally, in the time of corona received only \$80 in aid, in addition to my \$200 monthly pension after 35 years of work. Most of my peers gets less. Some have no government pension after years of work.

My neighbor was happy with her \$80 aid. She could then afford her blood thinning medication, which costs more than what she received in aid and is not reimbursable. Older Albanians have difficulty getting reimbursable medication. This big problem is talked about in media.

Older Albanians need to choose between eating, paying for heating, or getting their medication with their small pensions.

I live in the same community for 48 years. We used to have two modest community venues of the former pre-90s system, a Public Library, a Community Park. In 2019, the authorities decided to convert the park to only for cars. There is now no green space.

Older women, also supported by the environmental association, had a protest at the park. Media showed our protest on the news.

But the authorities ignored older women's voices and calls for preservation.

Today, older people and mothers with small children cannot find physical space for a minimal life action, like staying in a pleasant public environment and talking to each other.

This means older Albanians are more isolated and lonelier.

“Development” has become a scary word for many communities, because the local government has not taken any step forward to assist older Albanians in the community with social services.

UN convention for older people and ‘Age with Right’ ambition is to support a place where people age well, where older women are valued, respected, and appreciated, and where older people are seen and treated as the rights holders.

The Older People UN Convention is an important international legal document that pressure unwilling governments to take action now. Current representation is inadequate and stakeholder voices are being muted. The UN Convention will emphasize the importance of endorsing programs and policies that protect the rights of all older people globally.

Retired professionals dreaming of the green park's return

ASAG heard first hand from older residents on how the urban environment affects them and how their experiences have changed as they have aged and temperatures have risen as a result of climate change. Urban public spaces have shrunk and thus become uncomfortable for older people.

It is essential that policies and initiatives take into account the unique needs and vulnerabilities of older adults, especially those living in urban areas.

Older adults have a wealth of knowledge and experience, and are using their voices to demand a better future for themselves and for generations to come. Nonetheless, the representation model is inadequate for their voices to have the necessary impact so that communities may be protected by uplift policies, instead of undermining and destroying them.

Communities can thrive only with healthy and diverse planning that promotes and safeguards environmental factors such as green, cultural and recreational spaces.

As such, we hope in the support all networks worldwide to enliven the common goals in the framework of UN Decade of Healthy Ageing.

<http://www.panorama.com.al/pushteti-lokal-pa-vizion-komunitar/>



This community in the center of Tirana was built by voluntary unpaid work during the dictatorship years. Professionals from different fields, who worked until late at night, did also build the park. This community is historic for its efforts in important fields.



Retired professionals argue in front of the media that local government is causing harm to their health, their homes and their community. Local government has a responsibility to prevent environmental harm, as it is a serious threat to the well-being of the community.



Products are branded with the logo of Women's Business Association and the Municipality of Pogradec City



Creative ideas during the Covid-19 pandemic isolation

Mrs. **Shpresa Blaceri** a 72 years old woman, councilor in the **Municipality of Pogradec City** exercised her influence in the local government to provide solutions for the present problems of women, in extreme poverty in her city. In cooperation with the **Women's Business Association**, she proposed public spaces to be made available tax free to artisanal and rural women so that they may sell their products in order to sustain themselves and their families. Mrs. Shpresa believes in women who are born with a profession/talent and their creative nature. Their skills in special/traditional cooking, handicrafts, crochet, embroidery, spears, paintings, etc. can be marketed to the community and tourists alike. These women do not beg but seek understanding and support in their modest enterprises. Mrs. Blaceri's lobbying included Pogradec Mayor Mr. Ilir Gjakolli who ruled in favor of opportunities and public spaces for these women.

Women poured into the city full of ideas and enthusiasm embracing this initiative. The respectful and encouraging environment created in Pogradec is an excellent model of facilitating entrepreneurship among marginalized women. We can only hope that this rare understanding between local government and civil society in support of women in poverty will find support and expand in other cities as well.

These feminist movements contribute directly to women's economic empowerment; it is 'associated with more expansive economic rights, better support for domestic work, against unjustified poverty and better protection from violence'.



- Mrs. Shpresa Blaceri, councilor in the Municipal Council of the city of Pogradec
- President of Women's Business Association, Mrs. Flutura Xhabija



A dinner with the youth of YES Alumni Albania

In the context of March 8, International Women's Day, I was invited to a dinner conversation about the problems of the older women in Albania by the active young people of [YES Alumni Albania](#).

While most Youngsters are taking selfies on Snapchat, YES youth with Professor Linda Mëniku is on the front lines of social justice activism.

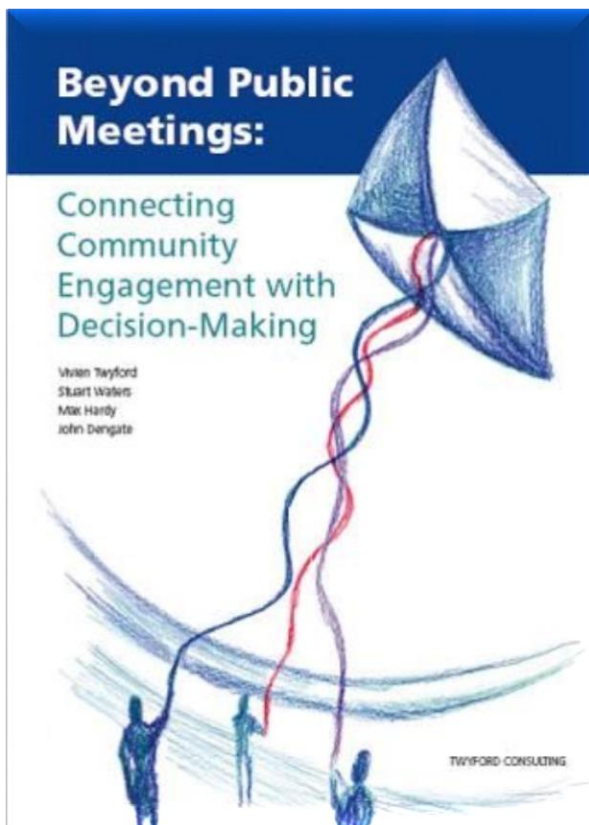
Miss Linda is brave, confident, and proud to inspire the future generations with the principles of justice, equality and solidarity. Her wisdom and commitment are driving history.

This meeting brought together a conglomeration of dynamic younger voices who are refusing to accept the marginalization of their parents and grandparents.

In each dialogue, they glow as they share experiences and knowledge on healthy community building. They humbly acknowledge that they have a lot of work to do; to walk together, to reclaim knowledge and move forward.

The reality is that we are all working towards solving a problem. Why work in isolation hoping to come up with a golden solution, when there is so much potential in this crowd of beautiful brains around us? Stakeholders should be as involved in the design process as we are. I dare to say: they are designers of the solution.

ASAG intends to continue the cooperation with all active young people willing to make a positive change in the communities. Our common goal is to get acquainted with the global and local efforts to make transition to older age an easier, meaningful and more rewarding experience. In my word to the young people I emphasized our commitment to examining “Multigenerational Cycle of Older Women in Poverty” through the lens of the UN Convention **“Age with Right”**.



“EURAG 60th anniversary in Graz - Jubiläumskonferenz in Graz, September 15th, 16th and 17th 2022

Happy anniversary to EURAG

It is an anniversary of extraordinary achievements!

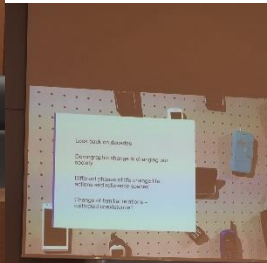
The municipality of Graz, where EURAG was founded 60 years ago, and the University of Graz in cooperation with EURAG organized a grand meeting in appreciation of this historic event.

The speech of Elke Kahr, Lady Major of the City Graz was impressive, as well as the hospitality of the University of Graz by Rector Dr. Peter Riedler was very warm. Year 2012 was the European Year for Active Aging and Solidarity between Generations. The University of Graz decided to honor such a commitment by opening the 'Department for Intergenerational Issues', the first of its kind in Austria at the time. This is proof of how European policies are put into action and may change the course of our lives if properly implemented.

President Mr. Dirk Jarre presented an impressive list of important EURAG work milestones. His presentation includes challenges and a lot of hard volunteer work throughout many years of service. It may be downloaded here:

https://www.dropbox.com/s/qd4qkkeqdudk35h/EURAG_60%20years%20anniversary_contribution%20by%20Dirk%20Jarre%20on%2015.09.2021%2022.10.2022-1.pdf?dl=0

Activity through photos:



Elke Kahr, Major of the City Graz, Dirk Jarre, EURAG President and Rozmeri Kruz





I was privileged to be part of the EURAG anniversary celebration and wanted to express my gratitude to its founders and members who kept its mission alive. Amongst them Mrs. Rosemarie Kurz (EURAG representative) and Mayor of the city of Graz Mrs. Elke Kahr.

I was so moved by the Mayor Elke Kahr's interview: in a world conquered by greed, she has chosen not greed, but creed. "If you grow up in this social environment, you can only pursue a socially just world," Ms. Kahr said, "It just depends, on whether the leaders also live by it." This explains her high approval rate by Graz citizens.

The 60th anniversary of EURAG coincides with The United Nations Decade of Healthy Aging (2021–2030) and Communities. A global collaboration, aligned with the last ten years of the Sustainable Development Goals, will bring all types of agencies together to improve the lives of older people, their families, and the communities in which they live.



Rector Dr. Peter Riedler Austrian student union, Department for Intergenerational Issues, University Graz



In Media:

The *Barometer* show of *Euronews Channel* conducted a survey on the poverty of the elderly in Albania, and they invited me, as an aging activist, to be part of the discussion.

The survey revealed how dire the situation is for the elderly, while there is an absolute lack of any Government initiatives to remedy this.

I am an older woman, advocating at the forefront against poverty that has stricken the elderly in my country.

I use a community-based approach to promote principles of good governance. My work involves bringing together everyone from all walks of life, and bridging the gap.

I strive to promote active participation of elderly women even beyond my community – at both national and global levels.

As an older woman activist, to me, the international level cooperation is another significant advocacy platform, through which my work will have a direct, more powerful impact on policy-making and decision-making related to MIPAA Goals.

We should join forces and truly see our strength in building a sustainable and safer world for all. Our voice demand action. Insufficient financing remains one of the greatest bottlenecks preventing the world from achieving the MIPAA.



An Albanian TV station, Report TV, invited me for a cooking show. I prepared two traditional meals. Here are the videos:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxkggEsNrMo>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_eUf4IyyOE

I am originally from Dibra e Madhe, which is currently part of North Macedonia. Like many other families from that city, my grandmother, who at the time was pregnant with my mother, came to Tirana after the Serbian reprisal. I am sparing the horrendous details here.

The women of Dibra brought along a rare harmony with local Tirana families. Their contribution was a unique example of building further the social fabric, and I think those women nurtured wonderful human relations.

Those women have left permanent roots in my life. They bestowed upon me courage, delicacy, dedication, humor, and class, which they throughout their lives conveyed through the hospitality show, and the quality of food.

Food is deeply symbolic, on so many levels. It is tied to cultural practice, values, and Dibra traditions.

As I grew an older, I became more and more fascinated with Dibra culture and customs. Both, I think, are rooted vividly in a sense of place: the works were a window for me into my identity. I realized how the women of Dibra needed suddenly and desperately a means to connect with their culture and each other. They needed something to bond over the atrocities committed in Dibra – they had fled a genocide, a harrowing event that broke their roots and disrupted their origins. My natural instinct is to celebrate and respect food, to see it as an offering, to relish in the connection and deep joy and nourishment it can bring, and growing up, this longing was not suppressed and overshadowed by diet culture.

We are more than just a physical body and bodily health does not equal total health. Mental and spiritual health are just as, if not more, important.

In my heart is a culture that is inextricable from Dibra food. Dibra people loved life; they loved their tradition in a very openhearted way!

Through sad longing, today I can measure their influence in different ways in my life, in the abundance to feel and taste on an uncommon level, the unique leaven that every human inherits!



Berat City is located in the south of the Albania.

Berat is one of the exceptional cities that belongs to early humankind history. Thousands years ago, a damaging stream of water fell down over the terrain, thus creating a massive rock formation, imposing over the river and welcoming the life of a city that survived for over 2400 years. Berat was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. It comprises a unique style of architecture with influences from several civilizations that have managed to coexist for centuries throughout history.

Like many cities in Albania, Berat is an old fortified city filled with churches and mosques painted with grandiose wealth of visible murals and frescos.

Berat is one of the main cultural centers in Albania.



Art

Influencers - Cole Thompson photographer

<https://colethompsonphotography.com>

About the Artist

Cole Thompson, famous artist, master of black and white photography, interview:

I was born into a world of Black and White images.

Television and movies were in Black and White. The evening news was in Black and White.

The nation was segregated into Black and White. My childhood heroes were in Black and White and that image was an extension of the world, as I knew it.

So I created images in Black & White. For me color records the image, but Black & White captures the feelings that lie beneath the surface.

My art has appeared in many exhibitions, publications and has received numerous awards.

Yet my resume does not list those accomplishments, why?

In the past, I've considered those accolades as the evidence of my success, but I now think differently. My success is no longer measured by the length of my resume, but rather by how I feel about the art that I create. While I do enjoy exhibiting, seeing my work published and meeting people who appreciate my art, this is an extra benefit of creating, but not success itself.

Melting Giants



Swimming towards the Light



OEWG13 “Age with Right”

From Dependence to Independence of the Older Women!

Let us hope, a positive change a policy making on ageing!

Design by Ermira Pirdeni