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Improving Policies for a Better Future for All Ages

I am a 78-year-old woman at the forefront of advocating to promote my demographic's participation in the community.

An activist of ageing, I have always felt that my work at the grassroots level is not visible at both national and global levels, where I could better use my voice to speak up for my community and country.

I see the Ageing Forums as an advocacy platform where I can fight for my cause, hoping that my work has a direct impact on policy-making and decision-making related to MIPAA and the SDG. I use my voice to demand actions on the Goals.

Development cooperation has a crucial role to play in rescuing the MIPAA and UN Convention for older people "Age with Right".

The more we study elder abuse, the more we understand that it predominantly affects women—and that's not simply because women outnumber men as they age.

Gender disparities exist across the lifespan; they do not stop in later life. In fact, more often than not, the disparities are amplified as women age.

The Beijing Declaration recognized age discrimination as a decisive barrier to women's empowerment and advancement, and it included a reference to the rising aging population and urging policymakers to recognize the human rights of women and girls throughout every stage of their lives.

In the absence of serious data for older people in my homecountry, Albania, especially from the local government, the Euronews TV invited me as an age activist, to their "Barometer" show. They had prepared a survey about the older people. The survey showed how dire the situation is in the total absence of government initiatives.

When politics becomes icy and society hardens, change becomes very difficult!

It is mostly older women like myself, especially those from the marginalized communities, who do not get the chance to speak out for themselves; hence other people, who do not represent us, tell our stories.

ASAG started Changing the Narrative, a leading anti-ageism initiative: The draft law for the older people towards a new vision.

The Albanian Parliament did not pass the draft law in favor of older people (February 2008), which was an initiative of the Albanian civil society in partnership with a political party and other active players. This draft law proposes to support the local government in its efforts to guarantee the active participation ensure the eradication of poverty among and promote a dignifying environment for the older persons.

We have repeated the draft Law, 2 years ago, and the women of the Parliament of Albania do not support us.

It is no coincidence that the WHO finds that higher rates of older people abuse exist in countries where social frameworks that marginalize women also tend to devalue older persons.

Older women seem to be suffering the final indignity of being excluded from the movement to bring about the equality they have been denied throughout their lives, this time on account of age discrimination.

Violence against women tends not to stop when they reach older age. Instead, it becomes less visible. Data collected on older women lack the gendered experience of abuse, including financial abuse, and even neglect. This critical information gap conceals patterns of violence against older women, resulting in their exclusion from prevention and support policies and programs.

Being prepared to examine the challenges of the aging with a diversity lens allows us to tailor solutions that cut through much of the rhetoric. We might be surprised at the difference make, need to put our hand on our heart and make that they really do matter.

Important steps must be taken to reflect the spirit of the Beijing goals and provide examples I hope will use no one be left behind in the next phase of global development.

Older women are rarely visible in global gender policy, and aging is seldom discussed in the context of gender.

“If not addressed, the feminization of aging has the potential to become one of the biggest challenges to gender equality of this century; therefore, these issues need targeted action by governments and international organizations.” Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka / UN Women.

Yet, the representatives of UN Women Albania do not resonate!

It is imperative that future agendas for women’s rights intentionally include older women.

Ageing networks and activists are charting a new path for global development with the MIPPA, a UN convention older people and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, and it is critical that the interconnectedness of aging and gender be universally embraced.

Addressing and undoing the multiple forms of discrimination against older women is not only an essential step from a human rights perspective, but it will also make positive impacts on the community and wider society.

With the right policies and supports in place, older adults can and will make valuable contributions to their communities, economies, countries, and the world.

Enhanced access to reliable, predictable financing to support developing countries’ long-term resilience is especially important for countries as Albania that facing multidimensional structural vulnerabilities.

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