



Human Rights and Social Protection for Older Persons
08-09 February 2010 – Palais Wilson, OHCHR, Geneva

Objective

The meeting aims to support the preparation of the forthcoming report of the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, Ms Magdalena Sepúlveda, which will be submitted to the Human Rights Council in June 2010.

The report will address the enjoyment of human rights by older persons living in poverty. The report will include (a) an assessment of the link between the key determinants of poverty for older persons and the enjoyment of their human rights, in particular their economic, social and cultural rights; and (b) the role that social protection systems play in reducing extreme poverty and contributing to the realization of human rights of older persons. With regard to the latter, the expert will discuss in particular the impact on human rights of recent experiences of non-contributory pensions for people above a certain age. The proliferation of these schemes is playing a significant role in the expansion of social protection around the world. How do these initiatives contribute to the realization of human rights? What is needed to ensure they are anchored by human rights principles? These are some of the questions that must be further addressed in the meeting.

Format

This meeting brings together experts from governments, international organisations, academic research institutions and non-governmental organisations working on ageing, social protection and human rights. In order to maximize discussion, the meeting will consist of round table discussions. Each session will be introduced by brief presentations which will serve as a basis to open the debates. To facilitate the discussion we have identified some of the questions we would like the meeting to address. These are indicative and should not prevent any participant from raising different issues.

9.30 - 10.00 - Introduction: objectives for the meeting and the report

10.00 -10.45 – Older persons and extreme poverty

- *What are the specific risks facing older persons that expose them to extreme poverty? What specific human rights are more at risk?*
- *Given the large percentage of older persons working in the informal sector in unsafe, irregular, low-paid and strenuous jobs how can they be better supported to fulfill their right to dignity, equity, freedom and security at work?*
- *How should the principle of equality and non-discrimination protect older persons' access to basic services?*

10.45-11.30 - Extreme poverty at old age and the role of social protection

- *What do we understand by a social protection system for older persons?*
- *What constitutes the right to social security in this context?*
- *How can social protection systems also contribute to increased access to work by the older persons?*

11.30-11.45 - Coffee break

11.45-13.00 - International legal standards

- *What do human rights standards say about access to health services and work? What are the standards in regard to social security and an adequate standard of living?*
- *What are the specificities of old age in relation to the enjoyment of these standards?*
- *What do labour standards say about ensuring social security?*
- *Is it necessary to have a retirement age? What do human rights standards say in this regard? What type of measures would be more in line with international standards?*

13.00-14.30 Lunch Break

14.30-15.15 Expanding social security coverage

- *How big is the gap in social security coverage? How far are we from universal coverage (considering regional and national specificities)?*
- *What are the alternatives in hand to expand the coverage of security?*
- *How is it possible to ensure long term funding for old age pensions (contributory and non-contributory pensions, tax funding etc.)?*
- *What is the role played by social protection schemes other than pensions? (for example in-kind benefits such as user fee exemptions and subsidised services aimed at guaranteeing access to health services and essential drugs, housing support including access to water and sanitation, life-long education, social work and care services).*

15.15-16.00 – Improving the institutional and legal framework

- *What role does the State play in the expansion of social security, in particular, some of the recent experiences of non contributory pensions?*
- *What should the role of the State, civil society, international community be in the implementation of social security systems for persons living in the informal economy?*
- *What is the interplay between contributory and non-contributory pensions? Do the non-contributory pensions strengthen or undermine the contributory pension system?*
- *What are the core challenges for the transition between piloting pension programmes and adopting stable and sustainable universal policies?*

16.00-16.15 Tea Break

16.15- 17.00 - Social protection of older persons and access to health care

- *What are the key obstacles for older persons' to access health care? What needs to be done to reduce age-discrimination in the health sector?*
- *How do health care systems and social protection systems interact? How can social protection increase access to health care? What are the good practices and lessons learned in this sense?*

17.00-18.00: Age identification and registration

- *Is a comprehensive identity and registration system necessary before social security systems are implemented?*
- *What mechanisms need to be put in place to address the specific barriers older men and particularly women face to accessing legal identity documents (mobility, geographical isolation, recognition and treatment within government administration, issues of ethnicity etc)?*
- *What are the key obstacles to older persons' identification and registration? Can identification and registration mechanisms help ensure equal access to social security for older persons?*

9.30- 11.00: Targeting criteria

- *What are the existing targeting criteria for non-contributory pensions? Are they transparent? Are they developed with a sense of progressively achieving universal coverage? Lessons learned in all regions.*
- *What are the possible adverse effects of narrowly/wrongly targeted pilots?*
- *What are the main challenges when attempting to prioritize the extremely poor and other particularly vulnerable groups?*

11.00 – 11.15: Coffee Break

11.15 – 12.00: Social protection and the situation of women at old age

- *What factors expose older women to poverty? Why does the gap in social security coverage affect women in particular?*
- *Are there examples of good practices addressing specific challenges of women at old age?*

12.00 – 13.00: Impact of social pensions on the wellbeing of persons with disabilities and children

- *Can non-contributory pensions also benefit children and persons with disabilities? How do they impact in the situation of these groups?*
- *How can old age pensions be combined with other cash transfer programmes?*

13.00-14.00 Lunch break

14.00-15.30 Transparency, participation and accountability: Mechanisms for the participation of older persons in the development and evaluation of programs - existing monitoring mechanisms and complaints procedures regarding social protection to people at old age.

- *What measures are needed to ensure transparency in the delivery of old age pensions? What measures can ensure the participation of persons in extreme poverty? Examples of challenges and success stories.*
- *What measures can guarantee that older persons are being heard in the design and implementation of social protection programmes?*
- *What are effective and accessible complaints mechanisms in social protection programmes*
- *How can non-contributory pensions be monitored and evaluated independently?*

15.30-17.00 Recommendations for the Independent Expert's report

- *Structure, main issues of concern, main recommendations*