



Concept Note: *Addressing Gender and Ageing: Centring Older Women in Social Development Solutions*

Solutions Session at The Second World Summit for Social Development
Doha, Qatar
6 November 2025

Co-hosts: UNFPA, UNWomen, Governments of Aruba, Armenia, Finland, Ghana, Sweden, Uruguay, and Saudi Arabia in collaboration with HelpAge International, and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)

1. Background

Population ageing is reshaping the social fabric of our societies. By 2050, one in six people globally will be aged 65 or older, and the number of people over 80 is projected to triple.¹ This demographic transformation, while a testament to advancements in health and longevity, also brings to the forefront complex challenges and opportunities, particularly at the intersection of gender and ageing. Globally, at least 142 million older people aged 60 and over worldwide are unable to meet their basic needs; moreover, after 80 years of age, more women are less able to meet their basic needs than men, with the gap widening with increasing age. In general, the combination of gender inequality, age-based discrimination and ageist attitudes disadvantage women more than men as they age. This demographic shift, calls for inclusive, rights-based, and gender-responsive social development strategies that centre the needs and contributions of older women.

Women comprise the majority of the older population: currently, they represent 54 per cent of those aged 60 and over, and 62 per cent of those aged 80 and over. The proportion of women over the age of 50 is expected to rise from 27 per cent to nearly 35 per cent of the total female population by 2050. At age 60, women are expected to live an additional 23.2 years — compared to 19.8 years for men — yet they are more likely to spend those additional years in poor health and with fewer protection as longer life expectancy for women often does not translate into better quality of life or enhanced well-being.

Despite their growing numbers and contributions, the inclusion, rights, agency, and specific needs of older women remain largely absent from global development agendas and accountability frameworks. They face compounded disadvantages stemming from gender

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results*. United Nations, 2024: WPP 2024 projects that by 2050, about 16 % of the global population will be aged 65 or older - roughly one in six people. It also estimates that the number of people aged 80 and above will triple from around 140 million in 2020 to 426 million in 2050.

inequality across their life course — from persistent gaps in education, employment, and earnings to limited access to pensions, healthcare, and social protection. They also remain vulnerable to high rates of gender based violence, and discrimination. These structural inequalities, coupled with unpaid caregiving roles and discriminatory social norms, heighten the risk of poverty and exclusion in later life.

It is essential to recognize that population ageing is not solely about older persons, but about a broader social development issue with life-course roots.² Systematic gender inequalities often begin early in life and persist across generations, influencing educational attainment, employment trajectories, access to healthcare, exposure to violence and financial security. These cumulative disadvantages shape the quality of life and opportunities available to women and men in older age, reinforcing disparities that policies must seek to address from a life-course perspective. This requires both targeted support for older persons and upstream interventions across the life-course that tackle root causes of disadvantage before individuals even reach older age.

This Solutions Session will highlight practical, gender- and age-responsive approaches to advancing the WSSD2 pillars of poverty eradication, employment and decent work for all, and social inclusion. Drawing on experiences from Member States, UN entities, and civil society, it will surface solutions that address systemic barriers while unlocking older women’s experiences and contributions across the life course. The discussion will spotlight concrete policies, programmes, and community-led models that have demonstrably advanced inclusive development. It will identify gaps, lessons learned, and opportunities for global replication and partnership with the aim of recognizing and turning demographic change into a driver of resilient, equitable societies and promoting gender equality across the life-course.

As the world gathers in Doha, Qatar, to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda, this Solutions Session proposes that population ageing is a social development issue that needs to be addressed through inclusive, gender-responsive policies grounded in a life-course and rights-based approach. It aims to reinforce global commitments under the Copenhagen Declaration and accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), and for ensuring that no one is left behind.

2. Focus of the Event

While population ageing is often discussed as a demographic trend, it is fundamentally a social

² UNFPA. [Addressing Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific Region: A Life-Cycle Approach](#). Asia-Pacific Regional Office, 2020: This policy guidance emphasizes that “ageing is a life-cycle process,” and underscores the need to address “cumulative disadvantage” through a gender- and age- responsive approach across all

development consideration that intersects with poverty, employment, health, and inclusion. This session will focus specifically on the situation of older women, in alignment with the WSSD themes of poverty eradication, full and decent employment, and social integration.

The session will feature two high-level panel segments organized around these pillars:

- **Social integration**, featuring policy innovations to foster inclusion, participation, and rights in later life; and
- **Poverty eradication and full and decent employment**, focusing on inclusive pension systems, income security in later life, care economies (paid and unpaid), and gender-responsive approaches to labour force participation across the life course.

Proposed Framing for Each Speaker

Each panelist will be asked to present:

- **Practical measures** that have demonstrably advanced older women's inclusion, and healthy ageing by taking a life course approach to addressing gender inequalities and investing in women's health
- **Key insights or lessons learned** that may be relevant for adaptation or replication in other settings.
- **A call to action for multilevel partnership or investment**, to scale inclusive, gender- and age-responsive approaches in line with WSSD2 priorities.

3. Draft Agenda

Event Title: *Addressing Gender and Ageing: Centering Older Women in Social Development Solutions*

Date: 6 November, 2025

Time: 10:00-11:15

Venue: Room 2, the Qatar National Convention Centre (QNCC)

Hosts: UNFPA, UN Women with the support of the Governments of Albania, Sweden, and Saudi Arabia (TBC) in collaboration with HelpAge International, and the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality (IANWGE)



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Session Format:

Time (approx.)	Session Title	Speaker/Activity
10:00 - 10:15 (15 min)	Opening Remarks (2 Speakers)	• UNFPA Executive Director • UN Women Executive Director
10:15 - 10:45 (30 min)	Social Integration Pillar <i>Advancing inclusion, dignity, participation, and care through rights-based and gender-responsive ageing policies</i>	Moderator: Leyla Sharafi, Chief / Gender, Human Rights and Inclusion Branch, UNFPA Panelists: • Government of Sweden, Ms. Camilla Waltersson Grönvall, Minister for Social Services (Confirmed) • Government of Ghana, Hon. Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Dr. Agnes Naa Momo Larrey • Government of Saudi Arabia, Dr. Mansour Al-Rumayyan, Supervisor General, Deputyship of Human Capital Development and Labor Market Affairs, Ministry of Economy and Planning of Saudi Arabia (TBC) • Government of Uruguay, H.E. Mr. Marcelo Esteban Gerona Morales, Ambassador of Uruguay to Qatar (Confirmed) • UN System Network Representatives (IANWGE)
10:45 - 10:50 (5 min)	Transition	• The moderator summarizes and closes the first segment and hands over for the next segment. • Introducing the new panel.



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10:50 - 11:10 (20 min)	Poverty Eradication and Full and Decent Employment for All - Pillars <i>Promoting economic security and decent work across the life course, with attention to informal work, pensions, community based models and unpaid care</i>	Moderator: Aparna Mehrotra / Director, Coordination Division, and Special Executive Advisor on Ageing, UN Women ● Government of Aruba, H.E. Mrs. Melvin Wyatt-Ras, Minister of Health, Social Affairs, Elderly Affairs and Addiction care (Confirmed) ● Government of Armenia, H.E. Mr. Vahan Kostanyan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia (Confirmed) ● Government of Finland, Ms. Hanna Onwen-Huma, Ministerial Adviser, Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Confirmed) ● Mr. Cherian Mathews, CEO, HelpAge International (HelpAge International) ● Ms. Sanjolli Kumari Padhy, The YP Foundation India (Youth Rep)
5 min buffer 11:10 - 11:15 (5 min)	Closing	Moderator summarizes and closes the panel