



Ensuring the Rights of Older Refugees in the UNHCR Global Compact for Refugees

**Side Event, 37th Session of the Human Rights Council, Room XXVII  
Monday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2018, 15.00-16.30**

Older refugees make up some 8.5 per cent of the overall population of concern to UNHCR, or an estimated 1.2 million people over the age of 60. Policymakers and service providers in host countries often put older refugees 'at the back of the queue'. In the context of humanitarian crises and forced displacement, older persons are at heightened risk of exploitation, discrimination and marginalization. Addressing the unique health and psycho-social issues of older refugees also protects their families and the host communities.

UNHCR is currently developing a global compact on refugees (GCR) that will offer a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and program of action. We are calling for a GCR that recognizes the specific needs of older refugees, their contributions and their roles in their families and communities in accordance with the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. To that end, it is essential that the GCR includes several key elements which are outlined in the document "The Rights of Older Persons in the Global Compact on Refugees" submitted by the NGO Committee on Ageing, Geneva to the UNHCR. This document, which follows below and is the result of several collaborators, will be discussed at this special side event.

**Objective of Side Event**

To bring awareness to the needs of older refugees and promote the recommendations submitted to the UNHCR Global Compact on Refugees on the rights of older refugees. Presenters will provide a brief discussion on recommendations related to the focus of their organization. Mental health, social work, and NGO/government response are some of the areas that will be addressed.

**Moderator:** Dr. **Kelly Fitzgerald**, Vize Chair, NGO Committee on Ageing, Geneva (Representing IFA)

**Panelists**

- Ms. **Ellen Hansen**, Senior Policy Advisor, UNHCR
- Dr. **Jane Barratt**, Secretary General, International Federation on Ageing (IFA)
- Ms. **Lola Casal-Sanchez**, Chair, European Network on Intercultural Elderly Care (ENIEC)
- Ms. **Ann Lindsay**, Representative to the UN & WHO, Geneva, World Federation for Mental Health

**Member State Sponsors:** Mission of Montenegro to the UN in Geneva, Mission of Argentina

**Sponsors:** United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), International Federation on Ageing (IFA), International Longevity Center Global Alliance (ILC-GA), International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), Make Mothers Matter (MMM), Graduate Women International (GWI), Soroptimist International (SI), Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), HelpAge International, European Network on Intercultural Elderly Care (ENIEC), and others to be confirmed.

## The Rights of Older Persons in the Global Compact on Refugees

--Submitted by the NGO Committee on Ageing, Geneva (January 2018)

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### *Key Recommendations*

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- *Data to be disaggregated by age, sex and disability.*
- *The rights of older persons must be recognized as a cross-cutting issue, ensuring they are not discriminated against based on age.*
- *Recognize the heterogeneity of older persons, including their specific needs and their active roles in their families and communities.*
- *Any structures for refugee participation in decision-making must include and involve representation by older persons.*
- *Older refugees should be identified at reception and admission with age-related specific physical health, mental health, medication and nutrition needs.*
- *Ensure independence and autonomy, including recognizing that older people contribute to the intrinsic wellbeing of their families and the community.*
- *Age, sex and disability specific services, support, education and training should be offered to contribute to prevention of and response to abuse to the older refugee.*
- *When older refugees are in their country of asylum, country of origin and/or third country, they should be included in host government service systems, aligned with a human rights based approach.*
- *Older refugees need to be recognized as a potentially vulnerable group, however they can also be a valuable resource. Older refugees should be recognized as the global society's socio-economic memory bank due to their wide experience and accumulated knowledge helping accelerated learning and innovation at national and global levels benefiting ALL stakeholders through programs designed and delivered for the mentioned purpose.*

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Complete document can be found here: <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/events/conferences/5a6703357/rights-older-persons-global-compact-refugees.html>