

# Mobilizing to Support the Rights of Older Persons



As governments, civil society, researchers and advocates for the rights of older persons continue to meet at the United Nations, momentum is building in support of a Convention on the Rights of Older Persons.

The IFA and the Grandmothers Advocacy Network (GRAN) are pleased to announce the next webinar discussing the rights of older persons.

Moderator



Peggy  
Edwards  
Grandmothers  
Advocacy Network

Keynote Speaker



Margaret  
Gillis  
President  
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Canada



## **Mobilizing to Support the Rights of Older Persons**

- Explore the pervasive tendency to discount the rights of older people in Canada and in the global arena
- Present a case study on the rights of older women/grandmothers in sub-Saharan Africa
- Argue that a UN Convention on the Rights of Older Persons is needed to protect and enhance older person's rights
- Discuss how we can take action steps to create momentum and Canadian leadership in preparing and ratifying the Convention.

# Mobilizing to Support the Rights of Older Persons

## Grandmothers/Older Women in sub-Saharan Africa



**grandmothers**  
Advocacy Network  
Mouvement de soutien des  
**grands-mères**

# Setting the Context

- Nearly **15 million** children under age 18 have lost one or both parents to HIV and AIDS
- Grandmothers and older women have stepped in
- Ageism, sexism and invisibility leads to the denial of their rights
- Diversity and inequalities between and among countries





# Grandmothers Advocacy Network



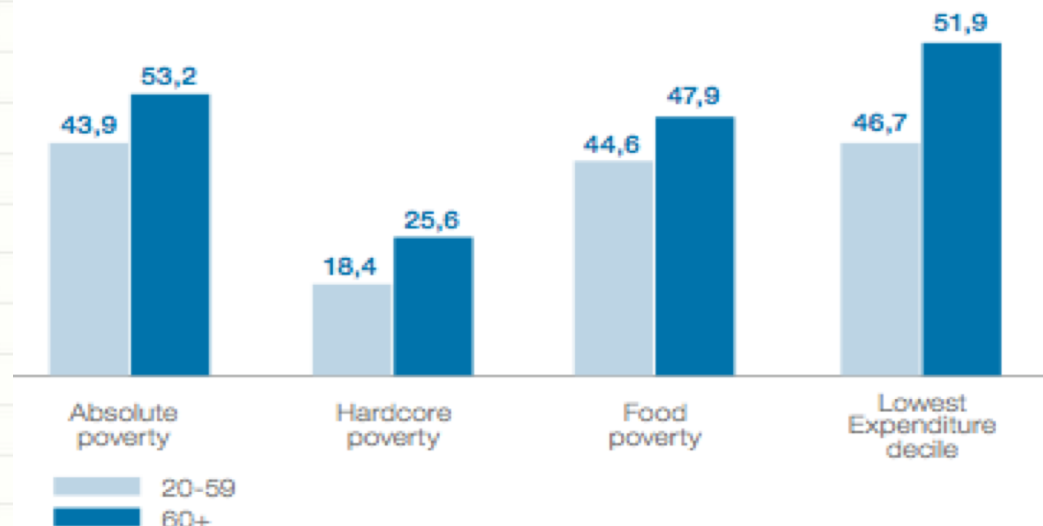
- **GRAN** is a dynamic network of volunteers across Canada (grandmothers and grand-others)
- Became an independent civil society organization in 2011.
- We work together across Canada to advocate in meaningful and strategic ways for the human rights of grandmothers, vulnerable children and youth of sub-Saharan Africa.
- We work with like-minded organizations on campaigns that correspond with our goals.

# Quadruple Jeopardy

## Exclusion, discrimination and invisibility based on gender, age, income and social status

- Exacerbated by other factors such as low income, disability, low literacy, stigma and discrimination based on HIV/AIDS and membership in vulnerable groups
- Largely invisible in Sustainable Development Goals

Age differences in prevalence of poverty: Kenya (2006)





# Older Women Count!

Data collection must include people over the age of 50, and all data must be disaggregated by sex and age. A feminist international development agenda must include older women.

? Number of older women who are HIV-positive

?? Number of older women experiencing violence and abuse

<http://grandmothersadvocacy.org>

Older Women count button at top for full paper, executive summary and five information sheets

# FIVE PILLARS FOR ACTION



Pillar 1: Education and Lifelong Learning

Pillar 2: Health

Pillar 3: Freedom from Violence

Pillar 4: Economic Security/ Social Protection

Pillar 5: Human Rights, Dignity and Full  
Participation





## Pillar Three: Right to Non-Violence

- Failure of law enforcement and legal system to protect
- Domestic violence, Elder abuse, Abusive traditional practices, Land grabbing attacks and killings, Wife inheritance, Sexual abuse and rape in conflict areas, Exposure to HIV infection because of wife inheritance and domestic violence





## Pillar Five: A UN Convention on the Rights of Older People





## Grandmothers Statement South Africa, 2017

*We will continue to struggle, and we will not give up the fight against HIV & AIDS. We will never give up because this grandmother's movement is powered by love. But we should not have to do this alone.*

*Africa cannot survive without us. We are not asking for charity, for pity or for favours. Access to healthcare, protection from violence, political representation, food security, shelter – these are our human rights. We have come to claim them.*



## For More Information

Peggy Edwards

[wanderingpeggy@me.com](mailto:wanderingpeggy@me.com)

Voices of Advocacy: Older Women Speak Out!

[youtube](#)

Grandmothers Advocacy Network

<http://grandmothersadvocacy.org>

Stephen Lewis Foundation Grandmothers Campaign

[www.stephenlewisfoundation.org](http://www.stephenlewisfoundation.org)

Aging Activism media capsules: Trent University

<https://www.agingactivisms.org/montreal-media-capsules>



# Advocacy in Action: The Fight for a United Nations Convention on the Rights of Older Persons

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MARGARET GILLIS  
PRESIDENT  
INTERNATIONAL LONGEVITY CENTRE  
CANADA

# Dreaming Big: A UN Convention

“When something is easy to imagine, its often because you failed to imagine it in sufficient detail”

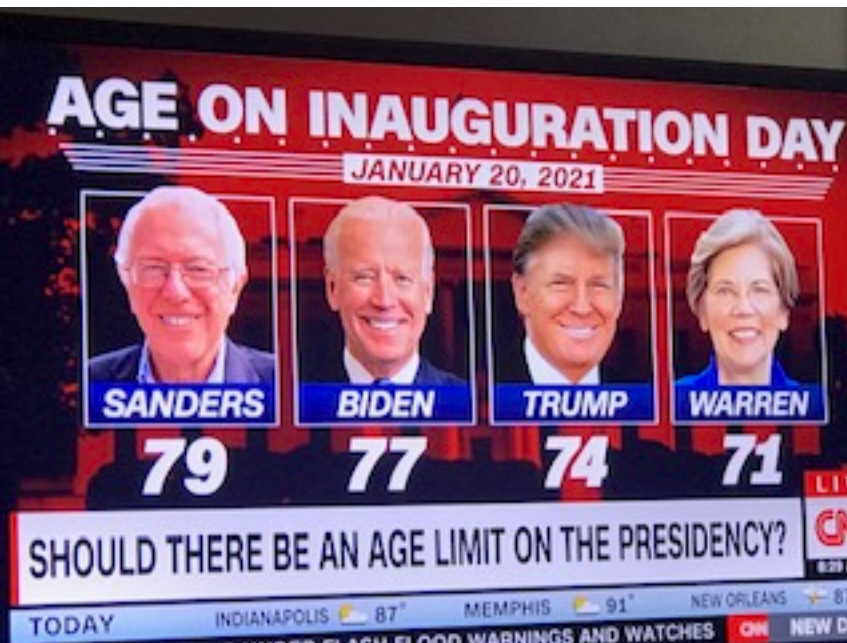
Steven E. Landsburg

More Sex is Safer Sex: The Unconventional Wisdom of Economics

# Dream Killers: Ageism in Action

Oh Please....

Even at the UN....





# Ageism Definition: Happy 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

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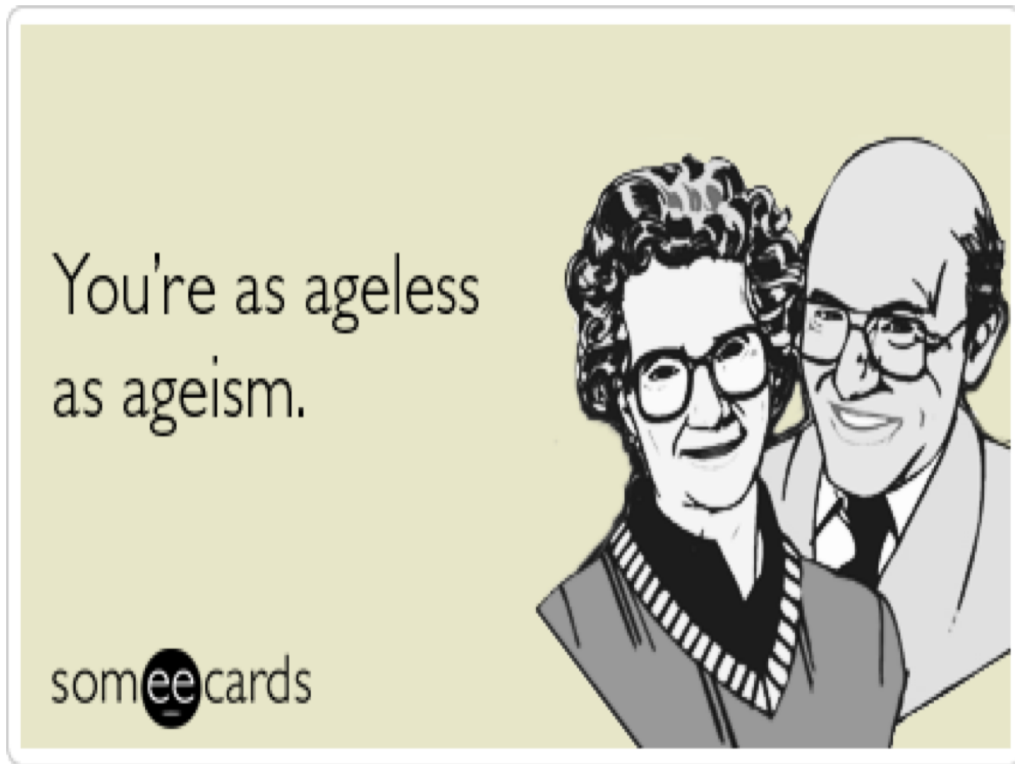
Dr. Robert Butler, founder of the  
International Longevity Centre  
Global Alliance

Coined the term ageism in 1969

Fought to keep older experts in  
aging working in the field.



# The Perplexing Nature of Ageism



"THIS OLD GEEZER HAS AN AGE DISCRIMINATION SUIT, YOUR HONOR. "

# Ageism: The Ugly Truth

Employment Discrimination

Biased Health Care

Lack of Appropriate Housing and Home care

Media Marginalization

And on and on....

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# Speaking at the UN - 2015

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Development of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's).

The UN's largest Anti-poverty Program.

Older People Excluded.... Until Activists Got Involved.



# Why Do We Need a Convention?

Six simple reasons:

**A**geism

**P**olicy Making

**A**ccountability

**W**ork (like other UN Conventions).

**E**ducate and Empower

**R**ights Holders

# Why Do We Need a UN Convention in Countries Like Canada?

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Extra protection for older people

Governments must report/explain and rectify failures.

Older persons rights should be a piece of the human rights picture at home and internationally

Conventions lead to activism





# Arguments Against a UN Convention

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Older People are already protected

Too costly

Draws attention to older persons and increases their social marginalization.



# Advocacy

How do we make it happen: Join us in the fight for a Convention

Start by becoming a member of the Global Alliance on the Rights of Older Persons (GAROP)

Go to their website for advice on National Advocacy

<https://www.rightsofolderpeople.org>



## **GAROP: National Advocacy Tactics**

- Urge governments to participate actively in the OEWG process
- Advocate for older people's participation in the process
- Encourage and contribute to a substantive debate around the OEWG focus areas
- Build links with National Human Rights Institutions and other relevant stakeholders
- Organise timely multi-stakeholder events
- Build links with the media to raise awareness
- Be active all year round in global moments and international events

# ILC Canada Case Study

Our advocacy began at the UN on the need to include older persons in the SDGs

Led to preparatory meeting with Global Affairs Canada officials

Began work with uOttawa academics on the evidence base, to show that UN Conventions 'work'.

Also partnered with Global Affairs Canada on a Side Events at OEWG 2016, 2018 and 2019: government engagement

## **GAROP Guidance**

Urge Governments to participate actively in OEWG process. ✓

Encourage and contribute to a substantive debate around the OEWG focus areas. ✓

Be active all year round in global moments and international events. ✓

Link to Canadian election cycle. ✓

Reach out to all government jurisdictions. ✓



# ILC Canada Case Study

Bureaucrats want evidence Convention would work, politicians want to know “Is there grassroots support?”

Now our focus is on identifying, developing and integrating that grassroots support with other NGOs:

Developed party platforms for political parties in advance of 2019 campaign, now preparing with our partners a national write in campaign and a social media campaign.

## **GAROP Guidance**

- Organise timely multi-stakeholder events ✓
- Build links with the media to raise awareness ✓
- Link to Canadian election cycle ✓
- Reach out to all government jurisdictions. ✓



# IFA 15TH GLOBAL CONFERENCE *RIGHTS MATTER*

NIAGARA FALLS, CANADA | 1-3 NOVEMBER 2020

[IFA2020.ORG](https://ifa2020.org)



International  
Federation on  
Ageing

Thank you!

Questions

Discussion