



## Mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

### Older Persons in humanitarian emergencies

#### *Inter-Agency and Stakeholder meeting*

**28 February 2019, 9:00h – 12:30h, Room IV - Palais des Nations - Genève**

The mandate of the UN Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons and OHCHR is pleased to invite you to a roundtable discussion examining how humanitarian organisations can enhance the inclusion of older persons in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies.

Emergency situations are increasing worldwide and older persons remain one of the most seriously affected groups. Yet, the rights and needs as well as the contributions of older persons are often overlooked in policy and practice. While humanitarian principles require that assistance be delivered impartially to those most in need without discrimination, a “one-size fits-all” emergency response tends to overlook the specific, yet wide-ranging, vulnerabilities of older persons in emergency contexts – such as biopsychosocial support and assistance necessities. Human rights commitments as well as the “leaving no one behind” tenet of the Sustainable Development Goals and commitments to the Inclusion Charter all advocate for inclusive responses.

Older persons are disproportionately affected in emergency situations and rights-based responses require that older persons at risk be identified before, during and following an emergency. Impairments that in normal circumstances do not interfere with the daily functioning of an older person, can overwhelm that person's capacity to cope in an emergency situation. An older person with physical impairment, diminished vision or poor hearing can rapidly become incapable of getting food or receiving messages to flee from danger. At the same time, older persons' knowledge of their community, experience with past emergencies as well as their position of respect within families and communities, makes them a valuable resource that should be drawn upon during emergency situations.

It is essential to further analyse the needs and contributions of older persons to ensure that their rights be taken into account by those developing policies and guidelines, and providing relief and assistance, to ensure effective and rights-based interventions, including equitable access to essential services by older persons during all phases of an emergency. In this context, the digitalization of humanitarian aid and its impact on older persons is of relevance. Consequently, responses that are inclusive of older persons will also contribute to fostering people's resilience.

The main objective of the roundtable is to identify the causes and understand the implications of inadequate humanitarian assistance for older persons in situations of risk and emergencies and to propose solutions. It seeks to identify effective ways, good practices and positive experiences of inclusive humanitarian assistance. The discussion will contribute to the next annual thematic report of the Independent Expert on *the human rights protection of older persons in situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies*, which she will present to the Human Rights Council in September 2019. In her report, which will also serve as input to the work of the intergovernmental UN Open-ended Working Group on Ageing, the Independent Expert seeks to formulate action-oriented recommendations.

Following a short presentation by the mandate, the participants will have an opportunity to:

- Discuss the roles and specific vulnerabilities of older people in humanitarian crises;
- Discuss obstacles and opportunities for inclusive humanitarian assistance;
- Take stock of existing tools and policies and assess the potential of digital tools to ensure better inclusion of older persons;
- Share experiences and good practices on inclusive and effective humanitarian assistance, policy and guidance;

You are kindly requested to confirm your participation by email to [olderpersons@ohchr.org](mailto:olderpersons@ohchr.org) copying [khassine@ohchr.org](mailto:khassine@ohchr.org) by Monday, 25 February 2019.