

**11th Session Open-ended Working Group on Ageing
Written Statement – International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse**

Submission to: Normative discussion on focus area of 10th Working Session

Education, Training, Lifelong Learning and Capacity Building (30.03.2021)

By Bridget Penhale

- INPEA representative – UN, Geneva; NGO Committee on Ageing (Geneva)
- University of East Anglia (UEA), Norwich, UK
- Reader Emerita in Mental Health of Older People
- Contact: B.Penhale@uea.ac.uk

By Marie Beaulieu

- INPEA Board member – North American region
- University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada
- Research Chair on the Mistreatment of Older Adults
- Contact: Marie.Beaulieu@USherbrooke.ca

These comments on Education, training, lifelong learning and capacity-building are made by Bridget Penhale and Marie Beaulieu, on behalf of the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA). INPEA aligns itself with and endorses the position statement(s) presented on behalf of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People.

An international convention would guarantee - for all older persons – in all countries and settings, everywhere:

The right to education and life-long learning, which would protect them against various forms of economic exploitation, foster personal autonomy, help individuals to secure full social integration within broader society and reduce dependence on others (for example with issues relating to literacy and/or numeracy). All of these aspects are important concerning risk factors for the mistreatment of older persons. Actions taken via promotion of and access to education and lifelong learning, via a specific right, would serve to reduce risk factors and promote protective factors for older individuals.

Older women may be particularly adversely affected by a lack of education and training since they may have little opportunity to go to or complete schooling when younger, or due to care-giving responsibilities for children or other (dependant) relatives. With a lack of formal education or training and without strategies that incorporate life-long learning, older women may be dependent on other family members for information and support to access health, economic, and other aspects of societal inclusion that require (relatively complex) negotiation via proficiency in literacy and numeracy skills. Such dependency also increases the risk of mistreatment for older women.

Similar to all age groups, older persons require access to basic literacy (and numeracy) training so that they can function independently within society and contribute meaningfully within their families and communities. Yet in many countries, institutional ageism relating to education and lifelong learning, concerning the social norms, policies and practices restricts

opportunities for older individuals and leads to systematic disadvantages. Education, training and skills acquisition can serve as important protective factors concerning elder mistreatment – perhaps particularly in relation to financial and material abuse and exploitation.

Education and training in relation to the many forms of elder mistreatment that happen is needed for the public, for health and human services professionals and for older persons. Violation of an older person's rights is recognised by INPEA as a form of elder abuse. It is also acknowledged that within every situation of mistreatment, rights violations are likely found.

Educating people about violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation in later life is important so individuals know what mistreatment is, how to report it and/or to access help and support (including protection, when needed) and what can be done about it. Educating older persons about such violence, abuse and neglect and associated risks will likely enable individuals to keep themselves safe from such harms; this will increase their capability to protect themselves if necessary.

Capacity-building for health and human services professionals and para-professionals is also important so that in their dealings with older persons they can be vigilant to relevant risks concerning mistreatment and offer appropriate assistance as required. Promotion of existing protective factors and helping older persons to develop additional protective mechanisms and coping strategies are key approaches in combating elder mistreatment. The role of education and training for older persons and those who support them should not be under-estimated.

If society/the world is serious about leaving no-one behind and attaining sustainable futures a convention to enhance and protect the rights of older persons is a crucial requirement and a critical need. It is one which is respectfully demanded without delay.