



**GENEVA INTERNATIONAL NETWORK ON AGEING
RÉSEAU INTERNATIONAL SUR LE VIEILLISSEMENT DE GENÈVE**

MINUTES

GINA General Assembly

Wednesday 18 March 2009

13h30 to 16h00

WHO – Room M405

Agenda

1. **Welcome and apologies / presentation of newcomers**
2. **Minutes of the last meeting (5 November 2008)**
3. **GINA & United Nations activities**
 - a. **UN/NGO statement on the rights of older women at the 10th Session of the Human Rights Council**
4. **GINA activities**
 - a. **International Day of Older Persons, 1st of October 2008**
 - b. **Publication Synthesis**
5. **Misceallaneous**
6. **Next Meeting**

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES / PRESENTATION OF NEWCOMERS

The meeting was opening by the President Dr. Astrid Stuckelberger who welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Presentation of newcomers: Mr Graber who was retiring introduced **Mr Stéphane Birchmeyer** as his successor. **Hans Peter Graf** from the University of Geneva was particularly entrusted with housing for the elderly and “Stratégie pour bien vieillir” thus following in the footsteps of Prof Rabin., **Margareta Annen-Ruf** representing the Swiss Council of Senior Citizens, the European Federation of Older people and the Forum “Age and Migration”,

Stephan Germann of World Vision International dealing especially with Global Health, **Chiara Frattini** of IOM, **Susan Somers** Secretary General of INPEA.

Apologies: **C.Hager**, (Benevolus Int.) **E.Gobits** (Consultant), **R.Rizzoli** (HUG), **N.Mendieta** (FIAPA), **P.Daepfen** (FAWCO), **C.Poncini** (IFUW), **C.Starey** (PPSEAWA), **S.Gebs** (CRESCENDO Network) **K.Ahhoojapatel** (WILPF), **M.Lachenal** (WFMH), **A.Beutler** (WOW), Alter Ego.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (5 NOVEMBER 2008)

The minutes were distributed at the meeting, read and accepted.

3. GINA & UNITED NATIONS ACTIVITIES

a) Rights of Older Persons in progress: UN/NGO statement on the rights of older women at the 10th Session of the Human Rights Council (March 2009)

The Chair distributed the English version of the text which was the only one available for distribution at UN although it was presented also in French and Spanish.

She also recalled the profound effect that the first statement on the Rights of older person was presented at the Human Rights Commission in Geneva in 2006 by the NGO committee on ageing (including many members of GINA).

The movement around older women has grown and women often suffer multiple discrimination and violation of human rights (e.g. women, older, etc.). Furthermore, the celebration of the Beijing 15+ declaration on women is coming up in 2010 with an assessment of what has been achieved and it is an opportunity to bring up that older women had not been mentioned anywhere in the Beijing declaration and not much progress has been done, except for the last year with the NGOs and CEDAW (UN Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women).

Two important points of the Statement were:

- a request to support CEDAW in the protection of rights of older women, and
- a request to develop a surveillance and reporting mechanism of older persons and abuse and discrimination as well as disaggregated statistics.

The official statement with the UN logo and 34 will be sent with the minutes¹.

b) Report on the UN Committee on the Status of Women in New York by Jeannine de Boccard

A one day consultation was held between CSW and NGOs on: "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men including care giving in the context of HIV/AIDS. "

¹ See Written NGO Statements : <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrcouncil/10session/documentation.htm>
(see statement no A/HRC/10/NGO/95)

In the afternoon of that day one break out session was held on older persons where she distributed the Geneva Statement, which was extremely useful.

During that break-out session the issue of women of all ages was discussed in the context of widows and older caregivers, as well as HIV/AIDS prevention in older people. The message was one of prevention, as the elderly were not safe from contamination. In the general debate the older persons were hardly mentioned.

A second statement by the International Network of Liberal Women on older women was well received in the light of the increase in ageing around the globe, even in Africa. A change of attitude seemed necessary so that new legislation could be enacted. It was often grandparents, in particular grandmothers who bore the heaviest burden with the death of their children from HIV/AIDS. In general the ageing population was growing but their income was decreasing.

Next year will mark Beijing +15, UN Declaration on Women. The Chair underlined that GINA with the UN/NGO community will try to highlight the theme of older women and collaborate with other instances for events and publications.

4. GINA ACTIVITIES

a) International Day of Older Persons 1 October 2009

As no particular issue had been selected, **R.Wagner** suggested that it could be linked to the Anniversary of Calvin and the 450th anniversary of the University of Geneva in a general context of education.

In the course of the discussion it was mentioned that the university had started as an academy and that Calvin had been the founder of the Hospice which at that time was a great social achievement.

Some people thought that with too much talk about Calvin people felt saturated, but on the other hand it could also be the opportunity of getting to know Calvin better and correcting some of the wrong ideas about him and his time.

Susan Somers (INPEA) suggested that several ideas could be brought together for the theme of the day, Calvin, the foundation of the hospice, support for the elderly, education for social inclusion and integration into social development, dignity and respect for the elderly. It could all be put into acceptable UN language.

Stephan Germann (WVI): It could be connected to the general issue of Social protection as many countries had no pension schemes thus bringing together elements of past history with present day problems.

According to **Mr Graber** involving the Geneva Canton and the Hospice together with the University would be an appropriate follow up of last year's gathering at the World Council of Churches and thus building a bridge between the local and the international

It was agreed to set up a small group to determine the precise title of the 2009 International Day of Older Persons, composed of R.Wagner (UNI 3), S.Germann (WVI), R.Eggleston (AFICS), a representative of Anciens de l'OMS, someone from the Canton of Geneva and possibly someone from the ILO.

b) Publication synthesis:

The President handed out the following documents

- UNECE publication (2008) (Stuckelberger & Vikat, Eds) A Society for All Ages, Ministerial conference 5 years after MIPAA (Madrid Intl Plan of Action on Aging) – this booklet includes an NGO Declaration. and a Scientific Statement which she was in charge to organise with the Spanish govt;

She pointed out to other publications which can be ordered and distributed the cover & table of content of the following:

- Civil Society Forum on Ageing, Research and Evidence (2008) published by the Ministry of Social Affairs of Spain for the MIPAA+5;
- UNESCO study on Generations in the Region.

She also distributed a recent Newspaper clip on elder abuse in a old age home in Zurich which illustrates that Elder Abuse is also happening in Switzerland, despite an excellent health care system. INPEA therefore has also an important role to play all over the world and collaborate with local and national associations combating elder abuse, such as Alter Ego in Switzerland.

5. MISCELLANEOUS

a) INPEA (International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse)

Susan Somers Secretary General of INPEA presented the 2009 “World Abuse Awareness Day” to be held in Paris at the same time as the World Congress of Gerontology and Geriatrics. This day was organized with the involvement of the Geneva, New York and Vienna Committees on Ageing. Its aim was to raise awareness on rights, needs and abilities of older persons.

This special Day was also part of general advocacy work with United Nations System, which hopefully might lead to the appointment of a Special Rapporteur or the drafting of a Convention.

The importance of laws at international level to protect older persons was stressed. A number of scandals in developing and developed countries demonstrated the importance of empowering the elderly yet to do so their human rights must be respected.

The Chair suggested that GINA contemplate developing a website gathering reports to make a case at international level in the future.

b) World Congress of Gerontology, Paris 5-7 July 2009 The Chair added to what INPEA had said that the Presidency of IAGG will go to France so that the collaboration with the UN could be intensified. For the next four years Prof Bruno Vellas, incoming President, was the son of the founder of the Université du 3^{ème} Age.

The City of Geneva, through the “Villes Amis des Aînés” will intervene at the Congress. Astrid will be on 2 Panels; ethical and anti ageing issues will be on the agenda and was asked by INPEA to chair a panel. INPEA will also host several panels with Global members.

c) “Commission consultative des aînés” (Canton of Geneva) **Eric Sublet** reminded the meeting that the Constitution of Geneva was 150 years old so it was decided to elect a group to work on a new Constitution for the next 4 years.

The Platform got two of its members into the Commission in a consultative capacity (as they were not elected) both GINA members, Astrid Stuckelberger and Jeannine de Boccard to defend the rights of older people giving them their rightful place in society.

6. Intervention of Dr Stephan Germann, Director Learning and Partnership of World Vision International - Global Health Team and Global HIV Hope Initiative *(with powerpoint presentation)*

Dr Germann indicated that WVI was one of the largest child focused organisations with 300 programs, 30.000 staff members, yet insisted that the elderly were also considered important in particular through the "Age Friendly Cities". He stressed the need for closer collaboration with organizations such as Help Age in particular in Africa on issues of social, psycho social protection, and pension schemes (mostly inexistent). Strong coalitions were required for the establishment of a global social protection scheme possibly through a Global Fund, which could make globalization a useful tool.

With the problem of HIV/AIDS trade issues had become very important in the light of growing poverty. Only 15 % of children were benefiting from treatment.

Dr Germann also indicated that for 2020 a project on intergenerational and health statistics should materialize as grandparents and the elderly had become the main care-givers of children but had no social protection.

A Swiss retired doctor used his old age pension to create an organization in Tanzania where he found that as little as 2-5 dollars a month could make a difference. What people often need most was soap, salt and shoes. Soap being essential for their dignity..

WVI mobilized many communities to create coalitions for children and elderly caregivers, through home based care programmes, life skills learning where WVI collaborated with other faith-based organisations. In May a meeting was to be convened to decide on a longitudinal scheme, which may also include pension schemes for the elderly (some examples already exist.)

The importance of older people had to be recognised including in the MDGs.

Dr Germann also mentioned the "Sphere" project where Gina could possibly collaborate in cases of emergencies where the elderly were often forgotten. WVI was also intensifying inter-agency cooperation.

He indicated that he was chair of a Mental Health and Psychosocial Working Group which intended to develop a working plan based on social determinants for health which was to become an important issues for the years to come.

The Chair thanked warmly Stefan Germann and suggested that Gina could possibly support those actions and that it would be useful to develop some case studies to show the situation in the field.

7. Presentation of Dr John Beard, newly appointed director of the WHO Life Course and Ageing, Department

After a period of vacancy with the departure of A.Kalalche, WHO was back in action with AGEING and from a Programme it became a Department however staff and general capacity remained low.

He came to WHO in January and briefly reviewed his background. He had been a researcher in New York on the influence of the environment on old people and also participated in making New York an Age friendly City. In Australia he had been in charge of Rural Health and also very involved in the Olympics of Sidney. He participated in a programme for the prevention of falls in the elderly through community based intervention and was able to convince the Australian Government to take the issue of falls seriously. The key Message: Not to view older people as a burden but an opportunity, as a resource and a contribution to society. Dr.Beard would welcome suggestions to design new programmes. Although re sources were limited the Director General

was committed to his department. For the time being the best was to build on past achievements to make the Department truly functional and hopefully linking with researchers to identify the key issues. The knowledge on ageing and health was very inadequate. If people lived longer they should also be healthier, which is mostly not the case in the developing countries, although the elderly were crucial for holding the families together. It was essential to go back to the Madrid Plan of Action on environment, development and health and under development social protection should become a priority.

One of the key issues was the financial crisis which made people vulnerable, especially the elderly with insufficient income on retirement, particularly in the developing countries, quite apart from unemployment. After 50 many will depend on society for subsistence so that innovative action was essential. He announced a meeting with the World Bank in the near future.

As to emergency situations, (Rwanda, Gaza), the highest mortality rate was among the elderly but the issues was not addressed although some very simple and practical measures could be of great help.

Concerning Age Friendly Cities, Dr Beard reported that he had been invited to "Cité Senior" which proved that a supportive environment could lead to better health. Guidelines had been developed for Age Friendly Cities. He had been approached by Shanghai as Chinese wish to participate and the French Government had shown great interest as well as Slovenia. Better communication channels for countries to learn from each other were required.

WHO was planning collaboration with HelpAge International on Primary Health Care (PHC) focussed on the elderly.

Dr. Beard ended by saying that he was very open to any new ideas as WHO needed partnerships with other groups, in particular with research centres as well as GINA and NGOs in general (e-mail. beardi@who.int)

The Chair asked whether Alzheimer disease was also within the competence of his Department to which Dr Beard answered that everything within the "Life Course" was including mental health of the elderly.

Mr Graber added that the City of Geneva was very committed to developing the project of the Age Friendly Cities to prove the positive consequences of collaboration between NGOs, municipalities, governments and others showing the importance of cities for research purposes (not only universities) . Twinning of cities from the North and from the South should be encouraged. In October of 2009, after 2 years, there will be a stock taking to determine what was achieved so that it could be proved that the elderly were not the problem but part of the solution. A document will be prepared and it would be interesting to see how WHO viewed its role.

Dr Beard (WHO) expressed his appreciation for the project and underlined how Geneva was an exceptionally age friendly city and many could take Geneva as an example as it truly was a "city for all ages".

The Chair This project had shown that NGOs universities, municipalities and the UN can collaborate successfully. She thanked Dr Beard for taking the time to address GINA and invited him to collaborate with the members and GINA and get involved in leadership if he wished to.

8. NEXT MEETING

The meeting was adjourned at 3.45 pm. It was decided that the working group for the organisation of the International Day of Older Persons would meet in the next months to prepare a programme and that GINA would meet again at the end of the Summer.

By Ursula Barter-Hemmerich