Third Stakeholder Consultation for the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Fourth Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing

Working group 3
Priority issues 3 and 4: Neglect, abuse, violence, ageism and images of ageing

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Some recent Australian prevalence data for community dwelling and institutional settings

Important key messages from Australian Studies including developing understanding about interventions

MIPAA's Objectives on Neglect, Abuse and Violence and the complementarity of Human Rights
Systemic reviews (Yon et al 2017) show that pooled prevalence rate for overall elder abuse was 15.7% - compared with 14.8% from the recent Australian Elder Abuse Prevalence Study by Qu et al (2021) for the Australian Institute for Family Studies.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological Abuse</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Abuse</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
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Areas of similarity but lower prevalence rates in financial abuse and neglect.
Systemic reviews (Yon et al 2018) show pooled prevalence rates for elder abuse in institutional settings - compared with a recent Australian Prevalence Study by the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety (2020) in the setting of Long-Term Care.

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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>39.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psychological Abuse</td>
<td>33.4%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Abuse</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
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<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
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Significant differences between prevalence rates
Australian Prevalence Study (Qu et al 2021)

A New Definition

“A single or repeated act or failure to act, including threats, that results in harm or distress to an older person. These occur where there is an expectation of trust and/or where there is a power imbalance between the party responsible and the older person.”

The working definition adopts an approach that is broader than the World Health Organization definition.
Australian Prevalence Study (Qu et al 2021)

Key Findings

- **One in six** community-dwelling older Australians (15%) reported experiencing abuse in the last 12 months.
- Perpetrators of elder abuse are **often family members**, mostly adult children, but they can also be friends, neighbours and acquaintances.
- People with poor physical or psychological health and higher levels of social isolation are **more likely** to experience elder abuse.
- **Two thirds** of older people don't seek help when they are abused (61%).
- Elder abuse often remains hidden, with the most frequent action taken to stop the abuse involving the **victim speaking directly** to the perpetrator.
- Family and friends are the **most common source of support** for older people who experience abuse.
Older persons with cognitive impairment and those residing in institutional care need **additional consideration**

Each form of abuse **involves different dynamics**, meaning that policy and practice responses need to be tailored for different subtypes

A need for **increased focus** on neglect and sexual abuse, in particular, given levels of prevalence and lower levels of awareness and help seeking in these areas

Self-management of elder abuse raises **two potential consequences** that may enable abuse: secrecy and a lack of adverse consequences for those who perpetrate abuse

Need for **proactive mechanisms** for identifying elder abuse, such as screening in health settings
Australian Prevalence Study (Qu et al 2021)

Interventions

• Overall, the evidence base on the coverage and effectiveness of existing interventions is very limited
• Family mediation, which is low-conflict, non-adversarial and may provide an opportunity for family relationships to be repaired
• Multidisciplinary approaches that may include legal, therapeutic and health-based elements
• Need for a comprehensive assessment of the adequacy of responses to elder abuse
• Elder abuse in rural and remote areas presents specific challenges that require specialised policy, prevention and service responses
• Need to better understand the context for the complicated family dynamics, in particular, intergenerational dynamics, and with friends, neighbours and associates significant among perpetrators, further examination of social dynamics is warranted.
The understanding of elder abuse is situated within the history of colonisation and its consequences, including dispossession from traditional lands, removal of children and the disruption of cultural norms in relation to respect and care for elders.

Research on elder abuse among Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander communities is scarce but existing sources have drawn attention to cultural norms concerning resource sharing being distorted as a lever for financial abuse.

Older indigenous people are at ‘greater risk’ of elder abuse and that it may occur at a younger age for these groups.

Policy and services to be developed in partnership with indigenous persons in a culturally safe way and, such research should be led by indigenous communities.
Elder Abuse, Ageism & Human Rights

• Just as gender inequality is seen as a contributing factor to the occurrence of family violence, some approaches posit ageism as a contributing factor to elder abuse. Ageism, or ‘prejudicial attitudes held towards people because of their age’ (Swift et al., 2018), is central to a human rights approach to conceptualising elder abuse.

• A human rights model suggests that abuse of older people, rather than being exclusively ‘located within personal relationships’, (Biggs & Haapala, 2013) also arises out of relationships between the state and individuals as a consequence of the way that the state does or does not safeguard the human rights of older people.
MIPAA and Human Rights Complementarity

MIPAA recognizes the **complementarity** with human rights standards and relies on human rights to be successful in achieving its objectives:

- MIPAA Part I, paragraph 12(e) notes central themes running through the International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 include

  “Ensuring the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights, and civil and political rights of persons and the elimination of all forms of violence and discrimination against older persons;”

- Recognizing full enjoyment of human rights
MIPAA and Human Rights Complementarity

MIPAA recognizes the **complementarity** with human rights standards and relies on human rights to be successful in achieving its objectives:

- MIPAA Part I, paragraph 15 notes that

  “Mainstreaming ageing into global agendas is essential. A concerted effort is required to move towards a wide and equitable approach to policy integration. The task is to link ageing to other frameworks for social and economic development and human rights.”

- Recognizing necessary interconnections and linkages
MIPAA Issue 3: Neglect, abuse and violence

Objectives

MIPAA contains two objectives:

• 110. **Objective 1: Elimination**: (a) Awareness and education; (b), (d) Abolish harmful rites (widowhood) and traditional practices; (c) Enact laws and create legal processes (e) Cooperation on community initiatives; (f) Risk minimization for older women through awareness and protections; (g) Encourage research

• 111. **Objective 2: Support Services**: (a) Establish services; (b) Encourage reporting; (c) Information for older persons; (d), (e) Training and information programs including consumer fraud and scams

Each of the Actions can be **better guaranteed** through human rights mechanisms.
References