

Statement on Lifelong Learning from International Longevity Centre, Canada (Draft April 12, 2019)

On behalf of the The International Centre for Longevity Canada, I would like to speak about lifelong learning, one of the focus points of this meeting.

Lifelong learning is more than a basic human right. It is the key to sustainable social and economic development, to building caring communities and smart cities, to strengthening intergenerational solidarity, and attaining gender equality.

Why do we need to institute policies, legal frameworks, programs and practices that extend lifelong learning opportunities-- both formal and informal-- to older persons?

Because

- Older people are most likely to have lower levels of education than any other age group. This is true in Canada and around the world. In most parts of the world, older women have the lowest levels of literacy and education. Gender inequalities are exacerbated by factors such as Indigenous, racial and ethnic minority status, disability, and in some cultures, restrictions on education for girls and women.
- The traditional 3-stage model of learning in childhood, working in midlife and retiring in older age does not work anymore. We are living and working longer. The longevity revolution demands a more flexible approach where learning, skill development and capacity building is needed throughout the lifecourse and into old age.
- Older people make an enormous economic and social contribution to their families, communities and nations through working in formal and informal settings, caring for others, citizen engagement and teaching the next generation. They bring years of experience and knowledge. But in today's knowledge-based economies, fast-moving technologies and mass migration, they need and want to have opportunities to continue to learn in older age.
- Research shows that learning throughout life is good for your health, wealth, civic engagement, and personal well-being. It provides older learners, even those who are most vulnerable, with tools to strengthen their reserve capacities and resilience, and to be more autonomous and fulfilled in their everyday life.

The International Centre for Longevity, Canada (and our colleagues in the ILC Global Alliance?) urge this Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing to take a strong, rights-based, gender focussed approach to addressing adult education and lifelong learning in a Convention on the Rights of Older People.

At what age should a person lose his or her right to learn? The answer of course is never.