The United Nations tells us the world is ageing. By 2030, the number of people aged 60 years and older will reach 1.4 billion, comprising 16.5% of the world population. The fastest growing demographic cohort is 80 and above – and women make up 61% of that group. Many older women, particularly those in developing countries, remain illiterate because they did not have opportunities to attend school. When they have no schooling, they have few employment opportunities. Without a job, how can they accumulate savings? How can they earn a pension if there is no form of social protection? Because of a lifetime of discrimination, women end up with few savings and assets to help them with old age. According to a recent study by Age International, “globally, older women in all their diversity are contributing unrecognized yet critical support to their families, communities and economies through their paid and unpaid work.”

How do we ensure a rights-based, life-course approach to women’s economic empowerment and economic security? (Speaker bio’s following)
*Register for the NGO CSW 66 Forum to visit our Soroptimist International virtual booth and leave us a message. You can register for other events through this platform and keep your agenda for NGO CSW 66.

Panel: Older Women’s Universal Right to Economic Security

Moderator – Sharon Fisher, C.P.A. – Immediate Past President, Soroptimist International – As part of her Presidency (2020-2021) Sharon named the Soroptimist International Road to Equality Campaign. This included the Rights of Older Women and 5 other topics that make women and girls vulnerable to gender-based violence. Sharon is from the Vancouver area of Western Canada and is part of a provincial not-for-profit management team creating a coordinated community response to Elder Abuse with networks throughout the Province of BC.

Ken Bluestone – AGE International – Age International recently issued a report on “Older Women – the hidden workforce”. Ken leads Age International’s policy, influencing work in the UK and internationally on issues affecting older people in lower- and middle-income countries. Ken’s remit includes government relations, parliamentary work, research, and building relationships with stakeholders who have a policy interest in ageing and international development. Ken has worked in policy and influencing for over 25 years with a wide range of NGOs, including: ACORD, CIIR, VSO and The Water Dialogues. He is on the Board of Directors of CommonAge and was previously Chair of the Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People. (GAROP).

Irena Niolle – DIS-MOI, Mauritius – A Youth Advocate, Irena is a peer educator, a Member of African Youth and Adolescence Network in Rodrigues, Mauritius, and the Lead person for the Commission of the Rights of Older People of DIS-MOI Rodrigues.

Ayushi Kundu Bose – Soroptimist International - Ayushi is a Youth Activist residing in Calcutta, India. She holds an LLM in Human Rights Law from Queen Mary University of London. Her specialized areas of study were Human Rights of Women and International Child Law. Ayushi is a Soroptimist and is the coordinator for our Road to Equality Presidents Appeal. Ayushi currently works as an Advocate at the Calcutta High Court in India. Ayushi believes she can make a difference every single day, by standing up for someone or helping or supporting someone.

Amal Abou Rafeh – Chief of Programme on Ageing at the United Nations Department of Economic & Social Affairs in New York (UNDESA) – Amal serves on the Secretariat of the General Assembly’s Working Group for the purpose of strengthening the protection of the human rights of older persons. She was a member of the World Economic Forum’s Global Future Council on Healthy Aging and Longevity (2020-2021). Amal joined the UN in 2001 working in social policy, sustainable development, and demography. Amal was born in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and holds a Master of Science in Population Studies from the American University of Beirut.