

# Migrant Rights, the Rights of Women and Girls, the Right to Water, and the Rights of Older Persons

Stakeholder Summary Report



Submitted for the 36th Session of the  
Universal Periodic Review



**UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

# UN Universal Periodic Review: Third Cycle Summary of Stakeholder Report: United States of America “Migrant Rights, the Rights of Women and Girls, the Right to Water, and the Rights of Older Persons”

The United Nations Association of the USA (UNA-USA), a program of the UN Foundation, is a membership organization dedicated to informing, inspiring and mobilizing the American people to support the ideals and vital work of the United Nations. Striving to sustain and expand upon this remarkable human rights legacy as well as its submission for the U.S. UPR in 2015, UNA-USA submits this summary stakeholder report to inform the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the U.S. in May 2020 on:

- the rights of migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees;
- gender equality and combatting human trafficking;
- the right to water; and
- the human rights of older persons.

This stakeholders report was compiled through a UNA-USA nationwide consultation process that took place from February to September 2019. The process involved UPR consultations across UNA-USA's network of chapters in communities and on college campuses.

## **A. The Rights of Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees**

The human rights of migrants and refugees has taken center stage in the U.S. Advocates have criticized a wide spectrum of policies in the current Administration, ranging from the family separation policy to the travel ban targeting Muslims to the poor treatment of migrants, and others on the U.S. border. Nevertheless, in 2015, the U.S. supported the UPR recommendation “Consider alternatives to the detention of migrants, particularly children.” Similarly, the U.S. also supported the UPR recommendation “Ensure due process for all immigrants in immigration proceedings, using the principle of the best interest, especially in the case of families and unaccompanied children.”

## **B. Rights of Women and Girls**

The U.S. has expressed its commitment to support the rights of women and girls in previous UPR cycles, through the U.S. State Department's Trafficking in Persons reporting process, and by the ratification of the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. However, there is urgency to address growing nationwide gaps in these efforts.

During a consultation in Washington DC, one expert noted that one in three women in the U.S. are victims of physical, sexual, assault, or verbal abuse from an intimate partner. Problematically, the Violence Against Women Act lapsed in February 2019 and has yet to be renewed by Congress.

Contact: Ryan Kaminski, Policy Advisor: Human Rights, [rkaminski@unausa.org](mailto:rkaminski@unausa.org).

For full report please visit: [http://bit.ly/UNA\\_UPR\\_Stakeholder-Report](http://bit.ly/UNA_UPR_Stakeholder-Report)

## C. Right to Water

During its second UPR, the U.S unfortunately only “noted” two recommendations pertaining to human rights and water rather than accepting them. The UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty also noted challenges to access to water following a 2017 U.S. visit. “In Alabama and West Virginia, I was informed of the high proportion of the population that was not being served by public sewage and water supply services. Specific challenges connected to clean water include the presence of toxic superfund dumping sites, including in Northern New Jersey. According to one respondent, there are also no functional water fountains in some schools in Newark Public School systems. The widely publicized events in Flint, Michigan are emblematic in gaps to the right to water.

## D. Rights of Older Persons

The U.S. has yet to receive a specific UPR recommendation focused on the human rights of older persons, but this issue remains salient across the country. Overall there is need to ensure access to social security programs given older persons spend more on health care than any other group. This encompasses improving access to quality, guaranteed health care and housing to older persons, as well as ensuring access to affordable drugs. It was reported in a consultation, for example, that current levels of social security benefits are inadequate to cover food, housing, and medical needs.

An intersectional lens should be used to ensure the rights of older persons. Cities and towns, especially in rural areas, need to have infrastructure and transportation accessible to older persons.

**“Everyone has the right to seek a brighter future in a new country. What makes the U.S. so strong is the diversity of its people”**

- Rachel Pittman, Executive Director,  
UNA-USA, September 2019

## Recommendations to the U.S.:

- End the policy of family separation at the U.S.-Mexico border, and ensure safe, sanitary, and dignified conditions for all asylum seekers, migrants, and refugees;
- Avoid racist, xenophobic, and other hate speech at the highest political levels of government;
- Reverse policies inhibiting comprehensive, universal access to voluntary sexual and reproductive health services, especially in emergency situations;
- Recognize disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable communities, including women and girls;
- Ratify the CEDAW without delay;
- Implement a national affordability plan to ensure access to safe and clean water, especially among marginalized populations;
- Develop and implement a long-term, strategic plan to repair and strengthen water-related infrastructure;
- Expand resources to ensure cities and infrastructure are accessible to and usable by older persons, including in economically disadvantaged areas;
- Pass national legislation to protect older persons from fraud, including phone scams, Internet scams, and price gouging; and
- Grow and protect a broad range of social security benefits.