



20th May, 2026

EVENT REPORT

AGEING WITH DIGNITY IN AMERICA

Community Care, Social Connection, and Healthy Longevity



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WHY THIS CONVERSATION MATTERS?

The United States is undergoing a major demographic shift. By 2030, one in five Americans will be aged 65 or older, and by 2034, older adults are projected to outnumber children under 18 for the first time in U.S. history.

As longevity increases, ageing is becoming closely linked with questions of social connection, community participation, and the systems that enable older adults to age in place with dignity. Nearly 27 percent of adults aged 60 and above live alone, and research increasingly shows that social isolation and loneliness are associated with higher risks of cardiovascular disease, cognitive decline, depression, and premature mortality.

U.S. ageing policy is primarily supported through programs such as Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and long-term services and supports (LTSS). In response, community-based and volunteer-driven models, including the Village Model, Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC), senior cohousing initiatives, Senior Sewa, and intergenerational volunteer programs, are emerging as complementary approaches to strengthen neighbourhood support networks.

This Policy Cafe will bring together cross-sector experts to examine gaps in the ageing ecosystem and explore how community-based initiatives can work alongside public systems to promote social connection and ageing with dignity.

HOSTS



Srikanth Gundavarapu

President of Sewa International USA led Sewa's COVID-19 relief efforts and now guides the organization with vision and community trust.



Narendra Jamwar

Associate Director of the Family Services Initiative at Sewa International. he brings together professional excellence and compassionate social impact.

MODERATORS

Kavita Tewary

Pharmaceutical Chemist by training, began her professional journey in drug research before discovering her deeper calling in the nonprofit sector.



Rakesh Kumar

Sewa volunteer who has spent many years serving communities across India and the United States through humanitarian and social initiatives.



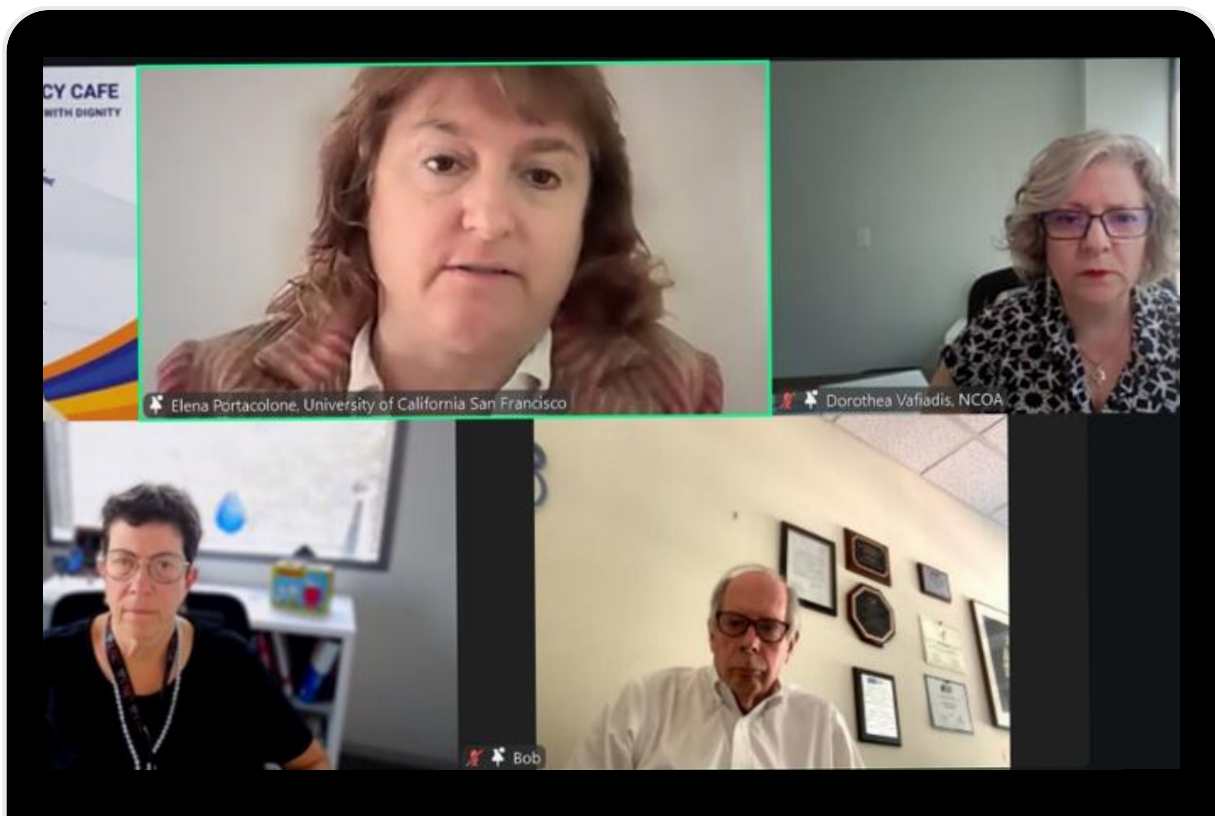
THEMES

THEME 1:

**Federal Policy Architecture and Incentives
in Ageing Systems**

THEME 2:

**Community-Based Models and Social
Connection**



MEET OUR PANELISTS



Robert Blancato

Nationally respected leader in ageing, nutrition, and elder justice advocacy. His leadership was instrumental in the passage of the Elder Justice Act of 2010, and his lifelong contributions to older adults' wellbeing earned him induction into the American Society on Aging Hall of Fame in 2022.

Dr. Laura Mosqueda

Professor of family medicine and geriatrics at the University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine, and is the Senior Advisor to the National Centre on Elder Abuse. As a researcher, clinician, educator, and advocate, she has dedicated her career to advancing elder justice.



Elena Portacolone

Professor of Sociology at UC-SF and a leading researcher on ageing and cognitive health with Cognitive Impairment Project and advanced policies and support systems for older adults while strongly advocating for greater inclusion of communities of color in dementia research.



Dorothea Vafiadis

Senior leader at the National Council on Ageing, where she leads national initiatives on healthy ageing, health equity, and systems-level change for older adults. With more than 20 years of experience, she leads large, multi-state initiatives and manages complex programs, funding, and partnerships.



MOMENTS THAT MATTERED



Robert Blancato, National Association of Nutrition

Robert highlighted the structural problems in the food system, where nutritious food is often inaccessible and unaffordable for many communities. He emphasized that customized nutrition should be viewed as a preventive healthcare strategy, capable of improving health outcomes while lowering expenses related to medications, hospital visits, and chronic disease management.

“In a food system where healthy choices are costly and inaccessible, customized nutrition becomes a pathway to preventing chronic disease and reducing healthcare burdens.”

“Dementia-related behaviors are not problems to be controlled, but expressions of suffering to be understood.”

Laura Mosqueda, Keck School of Medicine of USC

She emphasized the need to shift society’s perspective on dementia care from blame and frustration to empathy and understanding and argued that many behavioral changes in people with dementia stem from fear, confusion, and emotional suffering, and that compassionate care can significantly improve their dignity and well-being.



Elena Portacolone, Institute of Health & Ageing

Elena urged people to rethink how they perceive individuals living with dementia. She emphasized that many behavioral changes stem from emotional distress, confusion, and unmet needs, and that compassionate, person-centered care can create safer and more dignified environments for them.

“Dementia care policies remain rooted in outdated family structures, failing to adapt to the growing number of individuals ageing and living alone.”

“Nutrition is not merely about feeding people, it is about preserving dignity, health, and human connection in the face of difficult economic choices.”

Dorothea K. Vafiadis, National Council on Ageing

She highlighted the harsh realities of food insecurity and economic inequality faced by many individuals and families. She emphasised that access to nutritious food is closely linked to overall well-being, dignity, and quality of life, yet rising living costs are forcing people to make impossible choices among basic necessities like housing, healthcare, and healthy meals.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS



Community Organiser

Governments, researchers, healthcare providers, and community organisations should work together to design flexible, locally responsive policies that connect research with real-world implementation and improve the quality of life for older adults.



Researcher

Individuals and institutions should encourage financial literacy, retirement preparedness, and long-term care planning from early adulthood to help people navigate ageing with greater stability, independence, and choice.



Policymakers

Governments, researchers, healthcare providers, and community organisations should work together to design flexible, locally responsive policies that connect research with real-world implementation and improve the quality of life for older adults.

NEXT STEPS



01

Continue the conversation by engaging with Sewa's upcoming Policy Summit in August to deepen dialogue on ageing, healthcare, and community-driven solutions.

02

Opportunity to learn more about Senior Sewa's work through the shared QR code and identify opportunities to contribute, collaborate, or volunteer in programs supporting older adults.

03

Strengthen partnerships among policymakers, researchers, healthcare professionals, and community organisations to transform discussions into actionable and sustainable impact.

THANK YOU!

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