

POSSIBLE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR “EDUCATION, TRAINING, LIFELONG LEARNING AND CAPACITY BUILDING”: STATEMENT FROM DR. ISAAC KABELENGA, SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA (SCAZ) AND INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR THE PREVENTION OF ELDER ABUSE (INPEA)

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Introduction

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” is a popular motto in all human rights organizations and documents (United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNUDHR), 1948 Article.1). Unfortunately, this is just a ‘buzz motto’ to some older persons in Zambia. This is due to the failure by most of them to be free and equal in dignity and rights in their own society as most of them are denied the right to education. In this statement, SCAZ presents discrimination against older persons in Zambia with regard to right to education and why the international convention is urgently needed:

Facts about discrimination against older persons in Zambia in the area of education

- Illiteracy levels stand at 58 % among older men and 91 % among older women in Zambia. This brings about exclusion of the older people from national and international information on various issues affecting individual and national development. Illiteracy among older women is also associated with the Zambian traditional beliefs about boy child and girl child which characterized the Zambian society from colonial era up to the early 1980s. During this period, many Zambians believed that even if the girl child was not sent to school, she would be married and the husband would be able to look after her. As a result, many girl children who are now older women did not receive formal education. (Zambia National Gender Policy 2000; Kabelenga, 2018).
- Poor access to education earlier in life means that most of the Older Persons in Zambia are illiterate and unaware of their rights.

- The current education and training programmes consequently have age limitations that prevent the participation of older people and limit their access to new employment and other opportunities.

Key messages to the United Nations and Zambia

- Mainstream ageing in education from pre-school up to university education level and in all training programmes. This will enable the larger segment of the population to understand ageing issues and the importance of the right to education of older persons
- Opportunities for learning throughout the lifespan is essential as research indicates that remaining active and engaged can lead to better physical and mental health as people age.
- With technological advancements happening at a rapid pace, access to training and retraining of older persons should be prioritized. This should be seen as one a way of empowering older persons with relevant knowledge needed in the fight against discrimination of older persons.
- If we are serious about leaving no one behind and eradicating poverty, a convention to protect the rights of older persons to education is essential.

MAIN REFERENCE

Kabelenga, Isaac. (2018). **Elder Abuse in Rural and Urban Zambia – Interview study with community leaders**. Rovaniemi, Acta Universitatis Lapponiensis 372.