



NSINDAGIZA ORGANIZATION

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ADDRESSING AGEISM AND PROMOTING INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE AND DECISION-MAKING: A CALL TO ACTION BY NSINDAGIZA ORGANIZATION, PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE.

Introduction

In fostering inclusive societies, the engagement of all segments of the population in public life and decision-making processes is paramount. This essay delves into the prevalent ageism within Rwandan society, examining the existing policy framework, data disparities, imperatives of equality and non-discrimination, and the pressing need for accountability to ensure equitable participation for older people.

Legal and Policy Framework

Rwanda boasts a legal and policy framework ostensibly committed to non-discrimination, yet significant gaps persist in the implementation and enforcement of these provisions. While older people are revered within Rwandan culture, this respect does not translate into tangible opportunities for participation in decision-making processes. Notably, while youth and women enjoy explicit mainstreaming across sectoral policies, older people lack formal forums for representation. Despite the existence of a national older persons' policy, ratified international agreements, such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa, remain largely unimplemented, leaving people individuals marginalized and their rights not respected.

Data Disparities

A crucial facet of addressing ageism lies in comprehensive data collection and analysis. However, current data practices in Rwanda largely overlook older demographics, perpetuating their invisibility in policymaking spheres. The Fourth and Fifth population and housing censuses, conducted in 2012 and 2022 respectively, provide scant insights into the participation and decision-making dynamics of older people. Age-disaggregated data collection predominantly focuses on the 'active' population under 49, neglecting the nuanced needs and contributions of older segments. This data gap not only reinforces ageist stereotypes but also hampers evidence-based policymaking essential for addressing the challenges faced by older people.

Equality and Non-Discrimination

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The principles enshrined in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development underscore the imperative of equality and non-discrimination, emphasizing the commitment to 'leave no one behind.' However, in the Rwandan context, significant disparities persist among different generational cohorts, undermining the realization of these principles. Older individuals encounter systemic discrimination across various domains, including employment, access to financial services, and healthcare. Despite cultural reverence, ageism permeates societal attitudes and practices, perpetuating inequalities and hindering the active participation of older people in public life and decision-making processes.

Accountability

Addressing ageism and promoting inclusive participation necessitates robust mechanisms for accountability. Currently, older individuals in Rwanda lack both judicial and non-judicial avenues to address rights violations and advocate for their interests. The absence of formal platforms for older individuals to voice their concerns and engage in decision-making exacerbates their marginalization and perpetuates cycles of auto-discrimination. To rectify this, enhanced accountability mechanisms are imperative, ensuring that governmental commitments to uphold the rights of older individuals are translated into tangible actions and outcomes. Moreover, fostering a culture of transparency and inclusivity is essential to hold stakeholders accountable for advancing the participation and well-being of older segments of society.

Conclusion

In conclusion, addressing ageism and promoting inclusive participation in public life and decision-making for older people in Rwanda requires a comprehensive approach encompassing policy reform, data-driven decision-making, commitment to equality and non-discrimination, and enhanced accountability mechanisms. By bridging these gaps and fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect for older people's rights, Rwanda should advance towards a more equitable and participatory society where the contributions of all generations are valued and recognized. Understandably there is need for a binding instrument on the rights of older people. WE NEED A UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PEOPLE AS SSON AS PEOPLE.

Elie Mugabowishema,

President of NSINDAGIZA Organization

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