



INTRODUCTION

Community Hive Organisation (CHO) is a youth-led community based organisation in Uganda that uses an inter-generational approach to address issues of older persons and Orphans and Vulnerable Children under their care and enable them to live with dignity. We focus on; health care, hygiene and sanitation, education for children, income and food security, and psychosocial support.

TREND OF ELDER ABUSE, NEGLECT AND VIOLENCE IN UGANDA

In Uganda, Older Persons (OPs) are one of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs), recognized by the 1995 Constitution, who deserve special interventions to address their vulnerability. The Population of older persons in Uganda is growing rapidly. In 1991 the population was 686,260; in 2002 it increased to 1,101,039 and in 2005/06 it increased to 1,200,000 (UNH Survey Report 2005/06). The 2014 National Population and Housing Census placed the population of OPs at 1,433,305. This rapid growth of older persons cannot be ignored. The majority of older persons live in rural areas where poverty is rife, economic opportunities are limited, ill health is common and health services are inadequate.

The prevailing legal frameworks in Uganda (the Constitution, National Council for older persons Act, and National Policy for Older persons among others) address the concerns of older persons and give directions to stakeholders for programmes that ensure the rights of older persons are protected. In line with the national objectives and Directive principles of State policy of the constitution, it is stipulated that “The state will make reasonable provision for the welfare and maintenance of the aged”. Article 32 of Uganda Constitution states that: “Notwithstanding anything in this constitution, the state will take affirmative action in favour of groups marginalized on the basis of gender, age, disability or any other reason created by history, tradition or custom, for the purpose of redressing imbalances which exist against them”. Specifically, the National planning framework is consistent with Uganda Vision 2040 which is a long-term National Development framework in Uganda. Its pertinent aspirations are that older persons will have easy access to basic services, infrastructure and other social amenities.

In the National Resistance Movement (NRM) manifesto 2016 – 2021, the Government recognizes challenges facing special interest groups which include the older persons. As a result the Government of Uganda has undertaken deliberate measures to mitigate the plight faced by the elderly. As part of its plan the Government has put in place the Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) where every month over Shilling 2.75 billion in total is delivered directly to beneficiaries through Uganda’s mobile money services (MTN).

Despite such provisions, older persons still face high levels of vulnerability manifested through acts of neglect, violence and abuse. Older persons are abused socially, physically, sexually,

economically and psychologically. Their basic human rights, such as the right to life and liberty, the right to food and shelter and the right to freedom from discrimination, are violated.

The media has continuously reported about the forms of elder abuses that are happening in Uganda today such as rape and the dispossession of property by individuals, families, community and some authority figures. Communities also accuse older women of witchcraft, death of children in villages and natural calamities (drought) after failing to find logical explanations for the events. Such accusations are used to justify the drive of older persons from their families, grab their land, torture, sexually assault and sometimes kill them. This situation arises because they live in isolation and others are too frail to protect themselves.

The policy makers, service providers and other stakeholders still have negative perceptions about ageing and they lack information on issues affecting the older persons. This stereotype has limited their ability to advocate and defend the rights of older persons who suffer neglect, violence and abuse within their communities. Older persons lack information about laws that protect their rights in Uganda. Even where the reporting mechanisms for the cases of abuse, violence and neglect exist, there is little protection from legislation.

Like most part of Africa, Uganda is not exceptional to some forms of violence against older women which is based on cultural practices that specifically target widows, who are often regarded as insignificant. While widows of all ages are subjected to mistreatment, older women are particularly vulnerable because age lowers their status in communities and makes caring for them more difficult. Older women face double tragedy in this regard.

Older persons, more especially in rural areas, lack access to health care services and this is attributed to the fact that some public health workers have negative attitudes towards older persons. Some health facilities do not have age-friendly health care programmes and older persons find it difficult to line-up in long queues for services. This limits the majority of older persons from accessing health care services and increases their vulnerability to Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD).