

Ageing Issues in Africa

Background

1. While Africa is often described as the continent with the youngest population, the age structure in the region is also changing dramatically. The population of persons aged 65 years and above increased in Africa from 15 million in 1980 to 41 million in 2015. While the proportion of older persons to the total population remains small, it increased from 3.1% to 3.5%, respectively for the periods 1980 and 2015 and in terms of absolute numbers; older persons are projected to increase to 58 million by 2025 and to 186 million by 2065.
2. ECA recognizes that older persons have their vulnerabilities, but also have their capabilities. Ageing issues until recently were considered a low priority by many countries in Africa and more focus was placed for a long time on addressing challenges of young people, rather than addressing development challenges where older persons are an excluded group.
3. ECA has therefore continued prioritizing ageing issues in our programmes. The commission continues to stress the link between older persons and social development and in 2015 ECA undertook research activities on “*Ageing and development in Small Island Developing States in Africa,*” as part of a field project on the Demographic Dividend in Africa.
4. Presently, older persons in Africa are mainly supported through family solidarity. But at the rate at which ageing is taking place, family support will no longer hold as a means of social security. Expanding pension coverage for older persons is something that requires urgent action.
5. ECA has responded to the requests that RCs conduct the *Third MIPAA Review* for the continent. Secondary and primary data were collected during the month of January through February 2017 and a draft report has been prepared for this exercise.

Equality and non-discrimination

6. ECA has made issues of Older Persons part of the Regional Commission’s priority areas of focus. Recognizing that the Small Island Developing States of Africa have a different demographic regime and their populations are rapidly ageing, in 2015 we undertook a study on Ageing in these Island States of Africa. In addition, in January 2017, we undertook a data collection, analysis and report writing in preparation for the upcoming 3rd MIPAA Review. These two exercises have given us information and insight into a wide range of issues concerning Older Persons with regard to discrimination. Some of the key highlights are as follows:
 - a. Available information from the MIPAA 3rd review exercise shows mixed findings on employment of Older Persons in the formal sector. While some countries indicated that the information was available, many others simply lack such data. A similar picture emerged regarding employment of older persons in the informal sector with majority of respondent countries reporting absence of such information.
 - b. About one third of the countries reporting in the 3rd MIPAA Review indicated absence of data on living arrangements for older persons. Only in a few countries is

- there data on older persons who are institutionalized. Information in this regard is reported to be mainly found in reports on Demographic Health Survey and studies by individual organizations.
- c. Most countries (18 out of 27) reported having undertaken old age contributory pension scheme with regard to social protection for older persons but majority of them (20 out of 27) do not have an old age non-contributory (or social) pension with regard to social protection for older persons. Notwithstanding good practices in public sector, results of the MIPAA+15 in Africa show that in most countries, policies that mandate social protection and pension for older persons in the informal sector are non-existent and just under half of the countries (13) reported availability of policies/programmes that support income-generating projects for older people.
 - d. Only 11 out of 27 countries reported having policies that enable participation of older persons in the development of social and health care programmes. Six out of 27 countries mentioned that they had self-care promotion programmes for older persons. These included free medical treatment, national action plan for older persons, regional homes for those that can live independently and training of trainers manual. Unfortunately, each of these programmes was used by only one country, which suggests that very few countries had such services.

Protocol on the Elderly in Africa

7. The African Union Charter makes specific provisions for the protection of the rights of Older Persons. For example; under **Article 18(4)** which stipulates that “***Older persons and people with disabilities shall also have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with their physical and moral needs***”? There are many other provisions including the 2003 Kigali Declaration on Human Rights which “***calls upon State Parties to develop a Protocol on the protection of the rights of Older Persons***”
8. The Protocol to the African Union Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa was adopted by the 26th ordinary session of the assembly, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 31 January 2016. Among other provisions the Protocol obliges State Parties to ensure that the 1991 UN Principles of “***independence, Dignity, Self-fulfilment, Participation and Care of Older Persons***” are included in their national laws and are legally binding as the basis for ensuring their rights.
9. Furthermore, the protocol calls on State Parties to prohibit all forms of discrimination against older persons and encourages the elimination of the social and cultural stereotypes which marginalise Older Persons. State Parties are also called upon to support and enforce local, national, regional, continental and international customs, traditions and initiatives directed at eradicating all forms of discrimination against Older Persons. The ratification of the Protocol to the Charter will lead to increased awareness of the role of African Union State Parties in the implementation of provisions related to Older Persons including the SDGs.

Neglect, Violence and Abuse

10. From the responses to the MIPAA Review, all African countries admitted that the older persons suffered abuse, neglect and violence. The survey found that 11 of the 27 African governments considered the vices against older persons in their countries to be high, 6 to

be medium and 7 to be low. This state of affairs where at least two thirds (17) of 24 governments who answered the question reported that older persons abuse, neglect and violence was either high or medium is a very serious matter.

11. Introducing a basic social pension (non-contributory), disability grants and child care grants (for orphans etc.); regular income is an essential component of the right to social security and an adequate standard of living. The pensions increase the quality of life of older persons and their dependents and families immensely.
12. According to the MIPAA+15 review survey for Africa, it was reported that two thirds (18) of 27 governments have undertaken measures to mitigate neglect, abuse and violence against older persons. The specific programmes used to address the vices were legal advice by half the countries, awareness campaigns by 10 out of 27 countries, using hotline by 4 governments, improving food by 10 countries and providing shelter by a third of the countries.
13. There were several findings of the MIPAA Review on the issues of neglect, abuse and violence against older persons. Less than a half (12) of the 27 Member States had policies/programmes that protect older persons without family or are homeless. The programmes reported in the review were government using older persons homes. Half the African governments provide training to health and social workers on abuse of older persons and detection. Seventeen of the 27 African countries have programmes that raise awareness of older persons' abuse and their detection among the public.
14. According to the MIPAA Review, only 6 of the 27 African countries had conducted studies to address neglect, abuse and violence towards older persons. The studies were national public hearing on elderly abuse, NGOs surveys and government information gathering and data collection studies, including a survey on elderly needs in one of the countries. This low data gathering activity done by only one or two out of 27 governments, suggests that African governments do not take these vices seriously.