

## **Human rights of older person**

### **Report by Les Femmes, la force du Changement NGO**

**September 27, 2019**

As the number of older persons are increasing at an unprecedented rate, the issue of aging, the rights of older persons and their meaningful existence in the society are increasingly being an important factor under consideration. The population of older persons is growing, anticipated to reach 1 billion from its current 740 million by the end of the decade. More importantly, two-thirds of world's older people live in low- and middle- income countries and this proportion is likely to rise by 80 percent by 2050. This rising rate of population has shed light on the lack of adequate facilities and protection mechanisms, and existing gaps between policies and programs for older person's human rights and quality of life.

It is important that issues of older person be examined under human rights lens. This is attested to the fact that older people face a number of actual as well as legal and policy challenges in their rights. Older persons face multiple level of discrimination including ageist discrimination which are often compounded with other discriminations based on sex, socio-economic status, health status, race or ethnicity. Therefore, consistent analysis, assessments, monitoring and evaluation of the human rights situation must be carried out to ensure the well-being of this growing portion of the population and to ensure the full achievement of human rights which accounts to economic, socio-cultural rights to civil and political rights. Enjoying human rights with age becomes especially difficult for people living with poverty, especially women, people living with disabilities, refugees and people belonging to vulnerable and minority communities across the world. Age discrimination is a universal concern and manifests in different ways of life.

The underlying issue of problems with discrimination faced by older persons to enjoy their human rights heavily depends on the status of vulnerability assigned to them on the basis of their age. Considering them a group of vulnerable population who are beneficiaries of the social and national services rather than being active actors to social growth ultimately leads to hampering their social life and human rights. To make human rights ensured to all age of population, we should realize that older men and women are indeed a contribution to our society. In the case where proper health, economic and living conditions are provided, they can put actual contribution for the problem solving and social betterment.

Among many issues surrounding older person's rights, the income and right to work lies as one of the important concerns. Ageing and longevity means increase in lifespan which requires more and better jobs, well designed and targeted employment policies and effective social security systems. Most of the countries' working system has mandatory retirement requirement when many workers either need or wish to continue working. Further, the pension entitlements and social security options provided for older persons' needs are not equally achievable to all groups of older populations and not in adequate amount to meet all their needs.

Older age workforce is low in all countries, especially that of women. Currently, women outnumber men by about 70 million among those aged 60 years or over. One of the major gender gaps in

workforce currently is women's vulnerability due to their major involvement in unpaid, low paid and informal economy work. Women abound to gender based discriminations get less years of education, less employment opportunities and less financial security options as they grow old, which ultimately affects their rights as older persons too. Therefore, any analysis and revision of older persons' policies will not be complete without keeping gender lens in central to its considerations.

Autonomy, independence and dignity during old age are the most crucial factors that our international policies need to ensure. Today's older persons are very different from those of 10 years ago, and they will be different from those 10 years ahead. It is important that our policies to address older persons' needs shift from just being a social welfare approach to a rights-based approach, which meets certain needs immediately. Older population in coming 10 years can be essential to contributing towards social and economic growth, if from now, we work on developing just and fair policies to meet their needs and implement right-based approaches to secure their economic conditions. Practices such as flexible working hours, home-based works and benefits to care takers is some emerging examples that supports older populations. In some countries the concept of Intergenerational self-help clubs are flourishing which are sustainable, self-managed, multifunctional and community-based and community-led organizations which improves income security through access to micro-loans, provides training and information on laws and policies and provides an environment for their socialization which reportedly makes older people happier. Promotion of such practices with deeper insight and focus on meeting older person's human rights should be done to ensure the protection as well as meaningful participation of older persons in coming years.