# **SUBMISSION TO THE UNITEFD NATIONS OPEN ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS BY THE SENIOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION OF ZAMBIA**

# **NORMARTIVE PALLIATIVE CARE**

This submission is being made after consultations with older men and women in focus group discussions in one urban and one rural communities.

**Zambia’s Situation**

The population of older persons in Zambia is estimated to be over 600, 000 according to 2010 census. Palliative care in Zambia is in its infancy and there is no policy and legal framework to guide its practice. There are very few private institutions offering palliative care and are mainly run by the churches and non-governmental organisations. These institutions are hardly supported by government. Many people who need end of life care cannot access the services. Further, most of the caring of those who are terminally ill takes place in homes and these care gives carry a heavy burden when they are ill equipped to give such type of care. The home care givers are traumatized and stressed that they may end up mistreating those under their care. Palliative care could improve the lives of many and lighten the burden of care givers.

As the demographic changes are taking place throughout the world Zambia is equally affected. With demographic shift Zambia is witnessing an increase in the spread of non-communicable diseases with its consequences. We are seeing older people suffering from debilitating chronic diseases such strokes, arthritis and diabetes.

**What has been done in the area of Palliative care in Zambia?**

As earlier stated palliative care is in its infancy and being spearheaded by the church and NGOs, however, government has expressed the need to have palliative care streamlined. There is no policy nor legal framework.

**1.0 Affirmation**

Older persons have a right to access quality palliative care where and when they need it and affordable.

**1.1 Scope of the right**

* Older persons have the right to access palliative care at health institution closest to them.
* Older persons have the right to choose where to access palliative care at home or institution.
* Older persons have the right to free medication

**State obligations**

* Shall provide policy and legal framework for the practice of palliative care
* Ensure that palliative care is integrated at all levels of primary health care
* Establish institutions to train palliative care practitioners or introduce palliative care training in existing health care training institutions.
* Older persons have the right to participate in the design, development and implementation of Palliative care Policy and strategies.
* Government should fund palliative care services and not leave it to the church and NGOs

**2.0 Affirmation**

Older Persons have the right to adequate information and knowledge on palliative care.

* Older persons have the right to information on palliative care so that they can make informed decisions.
* Older persons have the right to know how they can access palliative care services.
* Older person should have right to decide about their palliative care services, so that they could spend their remaining time in dignity.
* Older persons have right to information relating to disclosure, diagnosis, prognosis, transition to Palliative care and the holistic care plan.

**State Obligations**

* Draw up sensitization programmes for older persons on the availability and importance of palliative care in their lives.
* Ensure that older persons are aware of where to access palliative care without discrimination
* State should ensure that everyone is free from unnecessary suffering and ensure access to pain medications so that they could lead and die in dignity.