

CONTRIBUTION OF OLDER PERSONS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Submission by:

UNIVERSAL PEACE AND VIOLENCE AMELIORATION CENTRE
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NORMATIVE INPUT

**THE CHAIR OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP FOR THE PURPOSE OF
STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN
RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS**

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1. DEFINITION

Ageing has posed a serious challenge to governments in Nigeria as seen in their inability to cope with regular payment of pensions to their retired work force who have served their land meritoriously, both civil servant and military men, and inability to provide social services and health facilities to cater for the needs of the teaming ageing population. The aged in Nigeria can be categorized as people who fall within the age bracket of sixty or sixty-five and above. It is believed that at that age, a person is less productive and can only contribute a little to the economy, hence the need for such person to retire.

The issue of protecting the rights of the aged in Nigeria does not really have constitutional backing in Nigeria, which is regarded as the most fundamental document for protecting rights that are very essential to human existence. There are certain provisions of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria that seem to ascribe some rights to the aged in Nigeria within its social milieu. For instance, as part of the economic objective of the country, it is provided that the country shall direct its policy towards ensuring that suitable and adequate shelter, food, old age care and pension, and unemployment, sick benefits and welfare of the disabled are provided for all citizens.

2. Scope of the Rights

In Nigeria particularly, age has been a barrier to meaningful contribution to sustainable development by older persons. But with the recent government legislation on the abolishment of age discrimination, the elimination of ageism, ageist stereotypes, prejudices and behaviour that devalue older persons' contribution to sustainable development has been curtailed through such policies and passed into law as an ACT. Hence, no person should be discriminated against on account of his or her age. Some of the rights of the old people are encapsulated in the right to be free from discrimination. The perception of the general public on what ageing means should be changed and to promote the positive image of active elderly persons.

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Every citizen shall have the right to participate freely in the government of his country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives in accordance with the provisions of the law. Every citizen shall have the right of equal access to the public service of the country.

3. State Obligations

The issue of protecting the rights of the aged in Nigeria does not really have constitutional backing in Nigeria, which is regarded as the most fundamental document for protecting rights that are very essential to human existence. According to the Constitution the government is supposed to direct its policies towards ensuring that there are adequate medical and health facilities for all persons; and that the children, young persons and the aged are protected against any exploitation whatsoever, and moral and material neglect. This provision will give protection to the categories of people captured therein by providing basic supports to them in the areas of health and materials needed to live a decent life.

4. Implementation

Human rights impose duty on the states to treat their subjects appropriately and fairly. The States are also required to protect their subjects from unjust interference with their rights by other people. One of the ways these can be achieved is through the use of relevant laws.

- i) Setting up of a pension fund for ensuring security for those persons who have been in active service
- ii) Construction of old age homes and day care centers
- iii) Enacting legislation for ensuring compulsory geriatric care in all the public hospitals;

Some of the main challenges faced by Nigeria includes economic instability, poverty and corruption.