

Economic Security for Older Persons

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Economic security is a condition of having stable income or other resources to support standard of living. It can also be defined as the ability of individuals, households or communities to cover their essential needs sustainably. In this regard Constitution of the Republic of Uganda under the National Objectives and Directives Principles of State Policy, stipulates as follows;

Objective VII: "The state shall make reasonable provision for the welfare and maintenance of the aged". There are specific laws which have been enacted and they include;

- (i) The Pensions Act (Cap 286) which provides for granting and regulating of pensions, gratuities and other allowances in respect of the Public Service of Officers under the Government of Uganda.
- (ii) The National Social Security Fund Act (Cap 222) provides for social security benefits for employees in the private sector.
- (iii) The Uganda Retirement Benefits Regulatory Authority Act, (2011) provides for an institution to regulate the establishment, management and operation of retirement benefits scheme in Uganda in both the private and public sectors.
- (iv) The minimum Wage Board and Wage Councils Act (Cap 221) provides for the establishment of minimum wages advisory boards and wages councils, and for the regulation of the remuneration and conditions of employment and employees.

As regards to policy framework, the National Development Plan (NDP) highlights social security as one of the key strategies for transforming Uganda from a peasant society to a modern and prosperous country.

Other related policies are summaries below:

- (i) The National Policy for Older Persons (2009) provides for equal treatment, social inclusion and provision of livelihood support for older persons. It identifies direct income support and social insurance for addressing the needs of older persons.
- (ii) The National Employment Policy (2010) supports provision of social security for workers in the formal sector.
- (iii) The National Health Policy (2010) aims to provide a good standard of Health for all people of Uganda in order to promote healthy and productive lives.

- (iv) The National Food and Nutrition Policy (2003) aims to promote the nutritional status of all people of Uganda through multi-sectoral and coordinated interventions that focus on food security, improved nutrition and increased incomes.
- (v) The Agricultural Policy aims at using modern farming techniques in crop, husbandry, animal husbandry, poultry and aquaculture.
- (vi) Operation Wealth Creation was launched in 2013 to mobilise masses including older persons to engage in commercial agriculture to boost household incomes.
- (vii) The Parish Development model has been developed to enhance storage, processing and marketing of commodities.

In Uganda, absolute poverty is officially defined as a condition of extreme deprivation of human needs, characterized by inability of individuals or households to meet or access the minimum requirements for decent human wellbeing such as nutrition, health, literacy and shelter.

Studies indicate that older persons in Uganda mainly suffer from intergenerational poverty. They find it difficult to get out the cycle of poverty. In this regard older persons, find it difficult to access healthcare as they cannot afford the costs of health care. This robs them of their quality of life.

It has been found out that people aged 80years and above have a higher poverty rate and older women live in a worse situation than men in terms of poverty. Due to poverty older persons do not get adequate food. The majority of older persons live in rural areas where poverty is rife, economic opportunities are limited. They work in the agricultural sector which is characterized by fluctuations in produce prices. Their situation is worsened by the burden of looking after orphans mainly left by youth who succumbed to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Access to safe water is minimal. Most of them use contaminated water as they cannot walk along distances. The pit latrines are not old age friendly as older persons usually have squatting problems. Latrine coverage is very low in most communities. The majority of older persons live in dilapidated structures and this puts them and their dependents in grave danger especially during rainy seasons.

Physical accessibility to facilities is vital and has major on the mobility and independence of older persons. Poor physical accessibility discourages older persons from leaving their homes to enjoy their rights in society.

Uganda has taken steps to address economic insecurity and poverty in old age by introducing the following strategies:

- (i) The Social Assistance Grants for Empowerment (SAGE) was launched to provide direct income support to older persons.
- (ii) Expansion of coverage and scope of contributory social security in the formal and informal sectors.
- (iii) Integration of issues of ageing in all development programmes including operation wealth creation and the Parish development model programme.
- (iv) Promotion of a culture of saving for old age
- (v) Mobilizing older persons to access credit
- (vi) Training older persons in modern farming techniques.