ECONOMIC SECURITY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Demography

- **Uganda** has a population of approximately **1.7 million older persons**, majority of them live in rural areas. They are mostly custodians of land and animals. Older persons, continue to be **economically active for as long as their bodies and minds allow them**. Due to the absence of an effective old age pension system.
- **85% of older persons are engaged in subsistence agriculture,** which is labour intensive, characterized by irregular income with **no social security**, rendering them at risk of poverty.

(Source: National Plan of Action for older persons 2012/13- 2016/17)

- **Older persons contribute to household economic resources for autonomy and to remain relevant at old age**. Even when frail robbing them of their right to age with dignity.

(Source: Uganda National Household Survey 2012/13 and 2016/17)


3 in 5 older persons are engaged in subsistence farming
More than 1 in 2 households headed by an older person rely on remittances

Some quotes from older persons

“There is not enough to eat. We don’t have the means and it is difficult to work. Our grandchildren are an additional burden. As people grow older, they subdivide their lands leaving very little for themselves.”

“As long as old age brings poverty, people will fear older persons [and old age]’’.

“We have worked our entire lives. We built this country on our resources and our sweat and now there is nothing for us. Nobody wants to give us anything’’.

Current Economic situation

- **Older persons want to continue to work, to fight poverty and to contribute** to national development but they face **numerous challenges**, including limited **access to income and financial resources:**
    - Many lack capital and other means of production. They need money to hire labour and pay for other requirements.
    - Financial Institutions consider them as risky borrowers, while the first question an insurance firm asks is one’s age, exposing them to social marginalization.
    - 60% stay with grandchildren which worsens their economic situation. Poverty in multigenerational homes is higher at 25% compared to 20% in homes without.
- Older persons have **no access to water or decent housing**:
    - 3 in 4 do not have improved toilets in their houses and with no access to clean water for both drinking and cleaning.
    - No access to decent buildings since over 1 in 4 live in household without a permanent roof.
    - Many older persons cannot walk long distances, so they have no access to clean water (URAA 2017).

State Intervention to Economic Security

- The **Social Assistance Grant for Empowerment** (SAGE)
  - Older persons aged 80 years and above receives 25,000 shillings ($7) every month.
  - Evaluation showed that it had decreased poverty levels among the beneficiaries by 8%.

  (Source: ESP study report 2018)
- **Parish Development Model (PDM)**
  - 10% affirmative action allowing Older Persons' Associations to access the funds as soft loans.
  - Majority report not to have accessed these funds yet.
- **Social Enterprise Grant for Older Persons** (SEGOP)
  - Group of older persons access funds to carry out economic activities.
  - Intended to address the **discrimination** of older persons aged (65-79yrs) not under SAGE and cannot access loans.
- **Pension schemes**
  - Public service Pension scheme for the few older persons on retirement, National Social Security Fund and the Parliamentary pension scheme.
  - Subject to inflation, and increasing cost of living. Do not provide economic security without medical coverage.

Violation of Human Rights

Old age in Uganda is full of misery, exploitation and violation of rights

- **Loss of financial resources:** Older persons’ assets and money cease to be theirs, since it is declared as household income at the disposal of the children and those under their care.
- **No access to Government funds:** Older persons have failed to access funds from Government programs aimed at alleviation of poverty like Wealth creation.
- **Age discrimination by financial institutions:** The banking sector in Uganda does not extend loans to older persons since they regard them as risky borrowers, yet they own most of the collateral (land).
- **Poverty:** Older persons have been reduced to paupers with the daily financial demands of fending for children and other vulnerable persons under their care.
- **Land grabbing:** In URAA work 65% of land grabbing cases are mostly reported by older persons, such cases drag on for long, denying the OPs the right to use their land.
- **Age discrimination in employment:** Older persons are denied the right to work. Most do not have any regular and predictable means of income and struggle to cover their basic needs. This denies them the right to live in dignity.

"Our houses crumble in the rain and we do not have enough money to rebuild."

Over 1 in 4 older persons live in a household without a permanent roof

Legislation and policies

The National legislation and policies are in line with existing international and regional legal frameworks. They emphasise providing economic security to older persons, but **the challenge is ageism** as stakeholders **view older persons as non-productive.**

Uganda has the following legislations and policies:

- The Constitution 1995, article 32
- Land Laws and the Penal Code Act
- The National Policy for older Persons 2009
- The National Council for Older Persons Act, 2013 coordinates Government departments, other service providers and older persons
- National Social Protection Policy 2015
- Equal opportunities commission
- Five members of Parliament to represent older persons in parliament.

But they are **not comprehensive**, **fall short of effective implementation and are not punitive**.

Recommendations

The state should enable older persons to age in dignity and with rights by:

- **Addressing age-based discrimination in services**: Public and private service providers e.g. financial services and the police often fail to recognize and respect the rights of older persons when they seek assistance.
- **Implementing a universal old age pension:** Rolling out the SAGE to everyone aged 65 years and above will reduce the national poverty rate, boost local economies and generate additional income for entire communities. Include older persons as volunteers in their communities.
- **Enabling access to justice**: There should be legal services that are objective and easily accessible to older persons when they are victims of land grabbing and gender-based violence.

Call for a UN convention on the rights of OP

The Convention will clarify and codify Member States' obligations:

- To **fully understand the rights and needs of older persons** and ensure that they age with rights with appropriate support from the state and society.
- To form a **basis for mainstreaming the principles, practices and obligations into all Ugandan laws pertaining to human rights of older persons.**
- The convention will be **an anchor for which laws at all levels including grassroots communities shall be implemented and monitored,** so that stakeholders can promote, protect and ensure the recognition of all human rights of older persons, so that they can contribute to their full potential through inclusion, integration and participation at all levels in the society in its totality.

Thank you