

VOICES OF OLDER PERSONS IN UGANDA

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URAA's PROFILE

- Uganda Reach the Aged Association is a national not-for-profit NGO formed in 1991.
- Emerged out of the recognition and appreciation of the plight of Older Persons

THE EXTENT TO WHICH MIPAA HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED IN UGANDA BY THE GOVERNMENT

- In Uganda ageing issues were excluded from the existing development plans and actions, i.e. the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

- To implement MIPAA therefore there was a need to mainstream ageing issues into those and subsequent economic and social development policies, action plans and their implementation.

Since 2002 a great number of programmes have been developed and some of them implemented although the benefits have not yet trickled through to the majority poor.

Legal and Institutional Framework

- The Constitution of the Republic of Uganda, 1995, provides for the protection of the aged. However it has not been operationalised, and is silent on the specific rights of the aged while rights of other marginalized groups are spelt out.

- The Local Government Act was amended in 2006 to provide for representation of the elderly (one male, one female older person) on local government councils.
- But implementation of this amendment is still in balance due to lack of funds.

- The Desk for Elderly and Disability Affairs established in 1995 is now to be up-graded to a Department in the Ministry of Gender– a very positive move.
- As a result of the Age Demands Action Campaign, this ministry has promised that over the next five years it plans to prioritise:
 - a policy for Older Persons
 - a social protection policy
 - a social pension policy
 - a public awareness programme aimed at both public and private sectors to mainstream older persons' issues.

Poverty reduction

- 60% of older persons live below the poverty line.
- However, older persons are yet to benefit from poverty reduction programmes as we are not specifically targeted. Besides, some regulations still discriminate against older persons, e.g. accessing a loan from a bank.

Poverty Reduction, cont..

- The call for a non-contributory pension for older people is seen by the Government as too costly.
- Instead, the policy for reducing old age poverty is to prioritize medical insurance and universal education – as a long term measure, with income generation projects as a short term measure.

Health

- Although the Ministry of Health has a comprehensive five year Strategic Plan, this plan does not target or include older people's health needs.
- A draft policy on older persons' specific needs has been developed but there has been no further action.
- In addition, the attitude of health workers is negative towards older persons.

Older Persons Rights

Incidences of elder abuse, neglect, ill-treatment, exclusion and isolation, though not officially documented, are on the increase.

However the focus has been on the rights of children, youth, women and people with disabilities.

The Role of Civil Society

In Uganda, older persons' issues and concerns are borne by civil society.

It has played a major role, including:

- advocacy
- baseline surveys and research
- life long education and capacity development of older persons
- poverty reduction through income generation projects
- health and care programmes

Extent to which Older Persons have implemented the MIPAA

1. Economic and social development:

During their prime years and now in their old age older persons have been involved in income generation, well being of the family, including orphans, which contributes to social, cultural and economic development.

2. Health Care:

Older people provide care for the sick e.g. HIV/AIDS, malaria, etc. and play a counseling role, whose cost would have been a burden to government.

3. Education and life long well being:

- Older persons provide formal and informal education to the young including preservation of important traditional and social values.
- They keep the home going and intact as young people migrate in search of employment.

Situation of older persons



Shelter after URAA Intervention



Recommendations

1. A policy for Older Persons be expedited.
2. The Local Government Act be implemented urgently to enable older persons to participate in the affairs of their communities.
3. The mainstream health care system should recognize and provide for special health and nutritional needs of Older Persons.

4. The specific needs of older persons must be targeted in poverty reduction interventions and discriminatory laws removed.
5. The Government should establish a non-contributory social pension scheme for older persons
6. Enhance media awareness about older persons issues in order to have a positive media coverage.
7. Commission research and disaggregate statistical data to deepen understanding of older persons' issues and concerns.