

Contribution and lessons learned by Civil society in Advancing the rights of older persons in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Background

- Expansion of civil society happening at national and regional levels
- NGOs and CBOs
- Networks being formed to support:
 - Support specific discourses such as UN Convention (GAROP),
 - Officially created spaces for CSO supporting older persons – SDGs- SGA; Banjul commission we have age and disability CSO, Humanitarian cluster – special interest groups; national human rights commissions in Kenya and Rwanda etc
 - Networks for specific geographical location
 - Network formed by NGOs such as HelpAge, SARAN
- Faithbased organisations
- Wider civil societies are also increasingly including older persons programmes in their activities – Care International, IFRC

Contribution of Civil Society Organisations

- Created spaces for engagement - older persons and themselves – voice and accountability
- Data analysis of existing data sets, research and technical studies
- Formation Older People Associations (FBOs, CBOs, NGOs, INGOs)
- Information and awareness raising among older persons on relevant rights and relevant (local and national) operational-level responsible office or/and complaint mechanism, public policy processes.
- Capacity initiatives – older persons, CSOs and duty bearers
- Advocating for lasting improvements (schemes, policies and grievance and complain mechanisms) based on lived experiences of older persons and learning

Contribution of Civil Society Organisations

- Direct technical support to policy design and implementation including financial
- Development of manual, guidelines, policies, programmes, etc
- Study tours and exchanges (both older persons and policy makers)
- Participation in decision making process (SDGs, Election, UN Decade for Healthy Ageing, UN convention for the rights of older persons)
- Age inclusive policies and programmes (SP, Health and care, National planning process)
- Advocacy and campaigns (Age With Rights, ADA, Ageism)

Challenges

- Calling up success (linking local initiatives upwards), but challenges in scaling out (replicating the approach in more areas)
- Creating sustainable community structures
- Limited data and evidence to design effective programmes and policy influencing
- Capacity of CSO limited – number, technical, coordination and leadership
- Limited civic space
- Effect of covid-19 and sources of funding
- Inadequate coordination and sharing efforts.
- Majority operate on charity mode rather than promoting the rights based approaches to development

Lessons learned

- Regular sharing of information using diverse channels – awareness in partnership with media and challenging ageism
- Role of older people leaders in raising complaints.
- Older persons collected data and their lived experience catalyse needed change –require more investment in capacity building
- Limited power/authority of Local government officials to respond to older persons petitions and complaints. They often referred issues and complaints to national government.
- Expansion or Inclusion of all diverse older people (gender, disabilities, education, geographical) in older people's associations or community structures and represented in in various levels needs improvement

Conclusion and recommendations

- Civil society organisations maximising on Civic spaces created and developing tools for both state and non state actors
- Rights of older person capacity development of duty bearers with a focus on local authority and older persons
- Support development of rural older persons community structures to enhance meaningful participation in micro planning, community activities and the voice of older persons
- Contribution and support to rural development institutions, policies and plans to include concerns of rural older persons or develop older persons stand alone resourced policies and plans
- More research and evidence gathering including strengthening data management systems and recognition of citizen generated data
- Position the benefits of longer life narrative with and within the youth demographic dividend
- Sustained partnerships and collaboration including brokering relationships
- Sustaining coordination, position ageing, voice of older persons and their meaningful participation in diverse public policy

