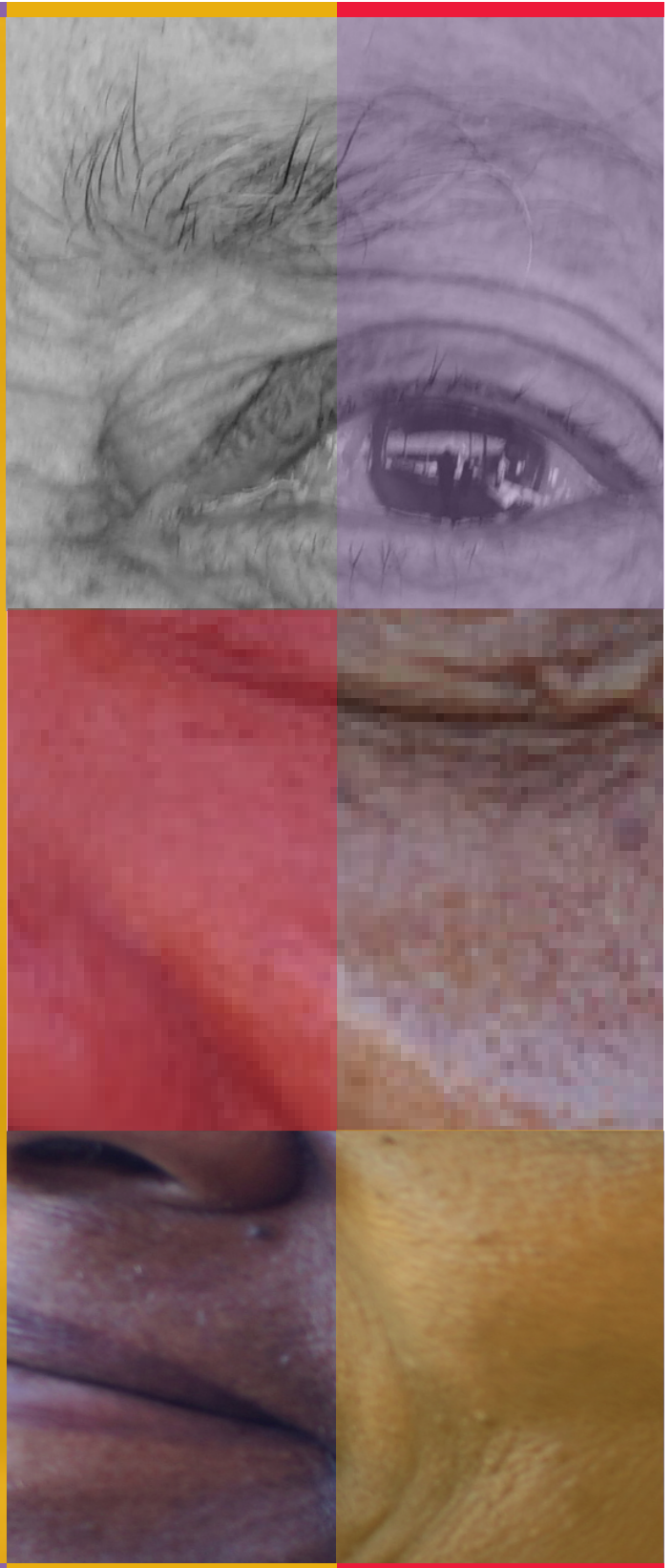


West African Expert Meeting on the Rights of Older Women

*Human Rights of Older
Women in West Africa:
The Need for Enhanced
Protection*

THURSDAY 9 AUGUST 2018

**Law School Auditorium
University of Ghana
Legon, Accra, Ghana**



West Africa Expert Meeting on the Rights of Older Women

“Human rights of older women in West Africa: The need for enhanced protection”

1. Purpose of the meeting

The Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria is spearheading a campaign on the rights of older women in Africa. This Campaign seeks to strengthen advocacy around the rights of older women in Africa and to advance State initiatives to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Older Persons (Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons). The purpose of this one-day expert meeting is to examine the emerging issues on the protection of older women, as well as, discussion on action towards popularisation and ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons. Furthermore, the meeting will serve as an awareness raising and knowledge sharing platform on the extent and nature of violation of the rights of older women in Africa. The meeting participants will include state representatives and civil society from the region.

2. Background and justification

By 2050, the global population of older persons is projected to more than double its size in 2015, reaching nearly 2.1 billion. Over the next 15 years, this will be a 64 % increase in the population of older persons in Africa. The number of people over the age of 60 is expected to grow from 64.4 million people in 2015 to 220 million by 2050. Women generally tend to outlive their male counterparts despite the cumulative effects of disadvantages linked to gender inequality and will therefore comprise a significant part of this population.

A myriad of legal, social and structural barriers continue to affect the wellbeing of older persons. Experiences of ageing are not uniform, a trajectory of feminisation of ageing is apparent with older women facing a triple jeopardy of sexism, disempowerment and ageism. The combination of urbanisation/modernisation, the feminisation of poverty and the impact and effect of HIV/AIDS across the continent contribute to the gendered ageing experience of women. Older women are more likely to be poor, widowed, without pension or health care, socially ostracised and abused, experience generational conflict and suffer violence in old age compared to their male counterparts. In addition, it is not uncommon for older women to be burdened with caregiving roles in their later years, taking care of grandchildren and sick family members.

Within the African human rights framework, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (African Charter) and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) contain a number of fundamental rights that can be applied to older women with article 22 of the Maputo Protocol specifically providing for the special protection of elderly women.

Further, on 31 August 2016, member states of the African Union (AU) adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons. This establishes a legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons. Two years later, five countries have signed (Benin, Comoros, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Zambia), but no member state has ratified this protocol. The Protocol in addition to other numerous rights and protections, specifically addresses issues that affect older women. Article 8 on protection from abuse and harmful traditional practices looks at issues such as witchcraft accusations, which affects the welfare, health, life and dignity of older women. Article 9 on the protection of older women focuses on protection from violence, sexual abuse and discrimination; addresses the need for legislation and other measures to guaranteed protection from abuses related to property and land rights; and the right of inheritance of older women.

As a result of the momentum and interest that has been evident in recent years towards the advancement of the rights of older persons, this makes it an opportune time to call for increased attention on the issue and drive a more robust continental discussion, scholarship and improve legal and social protections for older people. Accordingly, the Centre for Human Rights decided to raise awareness on this issue in 2018 through a campaign.

3. West Africa Expert Meeting on the Rights of Older Women:

The Centre as part of the #AgeWithRights Campaign held the Southern Africa Expert Meeting in May 2018 which brought together representatives from the African Union, the Pan African Parliament, government representatives, embassies, civil society and academics from Southern Africa.

In partnership with HelpAge International, Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa, University of Ghana and the Centre is organising the second regional expert meeting in West Africa on the theme "Human rights of older women in West Africa: The need for enhanced protection" in Ghana. During a one-day working meeting in consultation with invited experts, state representatives and civil society from West Africa, discussions on action towards popularisation and ratification of the Protocol and the required actions that are necessary to fully realise the rights enshrined in the Protocol will be taken. Furthermore, the meeting will serve as an awareness raising and knowledge sharing platform on the extent and nature of violation of the rights of older women in Africa.

4. Objectives

The overall objectives of the Expert Meeting are to explore the realisation of the fundamental human rights of older persons, with specific focus on older women; and to facilitate a robust discussion on the popularisation and ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons.

Specific objectives of the meeting are:

1. Identify and examine emerging issues regarding protecting and promoting the rights of older women, including measures to prevent discrimination, neglect, abuse and violence;
2. Evaluate good national and international approaches to widening and deepening the rights of older persons; and
3. Elaborate recommendations on how to promote the rights of older persons, with specific focus on the popularisation and ratification of the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons.

Programme

08:30 – 09:00 Arrival of participants, registration and networking

09:00 – 09:45 **OPENING CEREMONY**

INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES: **Patience Mungwari Mpani**

*Programme Manager, Women's Rights Unit, Centre for Human Rights,
University of Pretoria*

WELCOME REMARKS: **Prof Frans Viljoen**

Director, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

REMARKS: **Dr Delali Badasu**, Regional Institute for Population Studies Legon & Former Director, Centre for Migration Studies

SHORT VIDEO: "Kaya," A short film by **Adebayo Okeowo**

Advocacy Coordinator, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

09:45 - 10:30 **SESSION 1: POPULATION AGEING AND ITS GENDER DIMENSIONS**

CHAIR: **Mawuli Dake**

Founder, Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa

PANELISTS:

Chris Dadzie, Former Department Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice; Lawyer and former Army Officer

Dr Akosua Agyemang, Centre for Ageing Studies, University of Ghana, Legon

10:30 - 10:45 **Tea Break and Group Photo**

10:45 - 12:00 **SESSION 2: THE VALUE & IMPORTANCE OF THE PROTOCOL ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS**

CHAIR: **Prof Frans Viljoen**

Director, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

PANELISTS:

Lefhoko Kesamang, Senior Social Welfare Officer, Social Affairs Department, African Union

Honourable Otiko Afisah Djaba, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection

Roseline Kihumba, International & Regional Policies Coordinator, HelpAge International

Deacon Ben Gbenda, Executive Director, Salone Organisation for the Welfare of the Aged, *Sierra Leone*

12:00 - 12:30 **CONVERSATION: OBSTACLES TO RATIFYING THE PROTOCOL**

CHAIR: **Dr Ciara O'Connell**

Project Officer, Women's Rights Unit, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

PANELISTS:

Sarah Kargbo, Assistant Director, Gender Policy, Gender Directorate, Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, *Sierra Leone*

Momodu K. Metzger, Consultant, Human Rights Protection Division, Ministry of Justice, Liberia

12:30 - 13:15

Lunch Break

13:15 - 15:15

SESSION 3: COUNTRY CASE STUDIES: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN STRENGTHENING THE PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF OLDER WOMEN

CHAIR:

Trésor Makunya Muhindo

*Doctoral Candidate and Academic Tutor, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria
Advocate, Goma Bar Association, Democratic Republic of Congo*

PANELISTS:

Kazanka Comfort Dada, CEO Fanstsuam Foundation, *Nigeria*

Mamadi Condé, Head of Family Development Division, Department of Social Action of the Ministry of Social Action, Child and Women Empowerment, *Guinée-Conakry*

Dr Esi Ansah, Founder- Association of Ghana's Elders, *Ghana*

Dr Bully Camara, Head of Medical & Home Visiting Team, Ageing with a Smile Initiative, *The Gambia*

Debaba Lufira Wafulandi Patient, Regional Coordinator, Club des Amis du Droit, *DRC*

14:45 - 15:15

Discussion, Questions and Answers

15:15 - 15:30

Tea Break

15:30 - 16:45

SESSION 4: ACTION PLANNING AND WAY FORWARD

CHAIR:

Patience Mungwari

Programme Manager, Women's Rights Unit, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

Break-Out Groups & Plenary Discussion

16:45 - 17:00

CLOSING CEREMONY

REMARKS:

Ebenezer Adjetey-Sorsey

Executive Director, HelpAge Ghana

VOTE OF THANKS:

Satang Nabaneh

Women's Rights Unit, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria

Centre for Human Rights University of Pretoria

The Centre for Human Rights is located within the Faculty of Law, at the University of Pretoria. The Centre was established in 1986 and was part of the movement to eliminate the apartheid system of the time. Members of the Centre participated in meetings with the liberation movements outside the borders of South Africa, organised conferences and participated in efforts to promote human rights in South Africa, and, when the transition came, served as technical advisers to both the interim and final constitution writing process. Over the years, the Centre has positioned itself in an unmatched network of practising and academic lawyers, international and national civil servants and human rights practitioners across the entire continent, with a specific focus on human rights law in Africa, and international development law in general.

The activities of the Centre include four continental Master's programmes in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa, International Trade and Investment Law in Africa, Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Africa, and Multidisciplinary Human Rights; short courses for civil servants and others from all countries of Africa; an annual African Human Rights Moot Court Competition which is attended by the vast majority of law faculties on the continent and the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition; publishing the leading publications in the field of human rights law in Africa, including the African Human Rights Law Journal and the African Human Rights Law Reports; and an academic press that publishes leading texts on public law in Africa (PULP). The Centre has 30 staff members from 15 countries. For more details on the Centre, visit www.chr.up.ac.za.

#AgeWithRights The Centre's Campaign on Older Women

The Centre for Human Rights is spearheading a campaign on the rights of older women in Africa.

This Campaign seeks to strengthen advocacy around the rights of older women in Africa and to advance State initiatives to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons.

For more information on the campaign, please contact
E: satang.nabaneh@up.ac.za
T: +27 (0)12 420 4397

Visit the [#AgeWithRights](https://www.chr.up.ac.za/AgeWithRights) website to read more about this campaign, and to learn how to call on your government to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons.

www.chr.up.ac.za/AgeWithRights

