

The Centre's Campaign on the Rights of 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 and to advocate for States to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons.

For more information about the campaign, please contact
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About the Centre for Human Rights

The Centre for Human Rights is an internationally recognised university-based institution combining academic excellence and effective activism to advance human rights, particularly in Africa. It aims to contribute to advancing human rights, through education, research and advocacy.

Visit the **#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



#AgeWithRights

Strengthening Advocacy around the Rights of Older Women in Africa



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#AgeWithRights

Protecting the Rights of Older Persons in Africa, with a special focus on Older Women



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The Rights of Older Women in Africa

‘Older persons’ can be categorised as people aged sixty (60) years and above. They remain a vulnerable group in society as loss of physical and cognitive capacity results in decreased social status. Older women are particularly vulnerable to the compound effects of ageism, disempowerment and sexism. Efforts to improve the wellbeing of older persons have generally been inadequate and uneven because of a myriad of legal, social and structural barriers that continue to affect their well-being.

Did you know?

- Globally, there is an **increase in the overall number of people who are living beyond the age of sixty**. They make up 5% of Africa’s population; by 2050 this number is estimated to grow to 9%. This is an increase from 46 million people in 2015 to 161 million by 2050.
- Older persons are **a very diverse group and are not all equally vulnerable**. Older women are more likely to be poor, widowed, without pension or health care, socially ostracised and abused, to experience inter-generational conflict and to suffer violence in old age compared to their male counterparts.
- **Older women tend to outlive their male counterparts**, and are disproportionately burdened with caregiving roles in their later years, including taking care of grandchildren and sick family members.
- In some countries including Tanzania, Ghana and South Africa, older women may be characterised as “witches,” and are subsequently chased from their homes, beaten and sometimes even murdered. **Often times they are blamed for problems** such as droughts, HIV/AIDS and infertility.
- **Financial insecurity** is a significant threat for older women in Africa, especially because they are usually without pension and often denied claims to property, land and inheritance following the death of their husbands.

The Human Rights of Older Women in Africa

Key Human Rights Treaties relating to the Rights of Older Women

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW**), 1979
- African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (**African Charter**), 1986
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (**Maputo Protocol**), 2003
- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (**CRPD**), 2006
- Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa (**Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons**), 2016

African Human Rights Framework on Older Women

- The **AFRICAN CHARTER** specifically mentions the rights of older persons in article 18(4), noting the rights of the aged and the disabled to special measures of protection in keeping with their physical or moral needs.
- The **MAPUTO PROTOCOL**, article 22 recognises the importance of providing special protection to older women given the multiple vulnerabilities they face. The Protocol requires States to develop measures to protect older women from violence, including from sexual abuse and age-based discrimination, and to create initiatives to ensure their physical, economic and social needs are met.
- The **PROTOCOL ON THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS** calls for African Governments to institute urgent measures to address the specific needs of older persons such as access to regular incomes, equitable distribution of resources, employment opportunities; access to appropriate health services and to basic social services such as food, water, clothing and shelter. It also calls for State Parties to pay particular attention to the vulnerability of older women, through prohibition and criminalisation of harmful practices and violence against women and to take action to eliminate stereotypes and combat discrimination against older persons.

How can the Rights of Older Women be protected?

Help promote and protect the Rights of Older Women today!

- Commit to healthy ageing by **ratifying and implementing the Protocol** on the Rights of Older Persons.
- Foster **inclusive policy development** that promotes the rights and well-being of older women, taking into consideration their specific vulnerabilities while recognising their agency.
- Create an **enabling environment** through actions that combat ageism, enable autonomy and support healthy ageing in all policies and at all levels of government.
- Conduct **research on the welfare of older persons** to inform research based policies and interventions.
- Join the **#AgeWithRights** campaign and call on your government to ratify the Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons.

