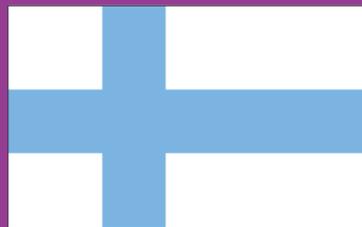


AU POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PLAN OF ACTION ON AGEING



HelpAge International is a global network of not-for-profit organisations with a mission to work with and for disadvantaged older people worldwide to achieve a long lasting improvement in the quality of their lives.



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Co-operation between HelpAge International Africa Regional Development Centre and the African Union





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Foreword

The population of older people throughout the world is increasing at a very rapid rate. It is expected that the number of older persons would have reached the 2 billion mark by 2050. The most rapid increase is taking place in the developing world, with Africa alone projected to have between 204 and 210 million older people by the year 2050. This unprecedented rise in the number of older people is a situation of conflicts, globalisation and socio-economic difficulties, deterioration of cultural values and morals, perennial man-made and natural disasters and HIV/AIDS among others. However, these changes are such that governments, the private sector, NGOs and society in general need to be prepared to deal with them bearing in mind the special needs of older people.

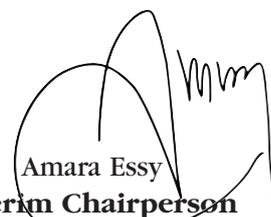
In addition to the usual physical, mental and physiological changes associated with ageing, old people in Africa are particularly disadvantaged due to lack of social security for the everyday social and economic needs. The care and support by the family and community that was taken for granted in the past is no more because of changes in society associated with urbanisation and "development" in general. In some communities, instead of relaxing and enjoying old age, the senior citizens are obliged, once again, to take up the responsibility of caring for children and young adults succumb to HIV/AIDS or migrate. Apart from children, old people are the social group most vulnerable to the numerous ills facing Africa: poverty, food insecurity, civil strife, armed conflict, violence, inadequate social welfare services, to mention but a few. Africa, therefore, needs to intensify efforts to put in place effective mechanisms to cater for the needs of its old people.

Continental efforts to address the challenges resulting from an ageing population in Africa started at the 1999 Session of the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission that was held in Windhoek, Namibia. The partnership between HelpAge International - Africa Development Centre and the then OAU and now African Union, has, over time, seen the drafting and finalisation of the AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing in Africa. The policy received the final seal of approval during the 38th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Durban, South Africa in July 2002.

The Policy Framework that binds all AU member countries to develop policies on ageing is already being used as a guide in the formulation of national policies to improve the lives of the Continent's older people. As such, advocacy efforts need improve the adaptation and domestication of the policy and encourage appropriate consultations with older people in these processes. There is need for continuous advocacy to ensure the allocation of resources for the implementation of commitments.

The International Plan of Action on Ageing agreed upon in Madrid during the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002, borrowed significantly from the AU Policy Framework, as the concerns of Africa's older people are, therefore, well outlined in the International plan.

It is therefore my hope that all countries in Africa will adopt the AU Policy Framework and Plan of action on Ageing in Africa in an effort to improve the lives of our continents senior citizens. The Africa Union will continue to work hand in hand with its development partners and Member states to ensure that the quality of life of Africa's older people is improved.



Amara Essy
Interim Chairperson
Commission of the African Union

I Context

1.1 Demographic Profile

The world population aged 60 years and above is increasing rapidly. Whereas in 1950 it was 200 million, by 2000 it had increased to nearly 606 million. It is projected that by 2025, the world population of the aged will reach 1.2 billion and by 2050, 2 billion. The older population of Africa, currently estimated to be slightly over 38 million, is projected to reach between 203 and 212 million by 2050. Thus, Africa's older population will increase six-fold in five decades.

Although the AIDS epidemic is projected to reduce life expectancy in affected countries, the older population of Africa will continue to grow. Over the next 30 years (2000-2030) the population of older people will more than double in many countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo (2.1 to 4.9 million), Mozambique (0.8 to 2.1 million), Cameroon (0.8 to 1.6 million), Ghana (1 to 2.8 million) and Uganda (0.8 to 1.9 million). During the same period, the proportion of older people will also rise dramatically in many countries. For example; in South Africa the increase will be from 7 to 11.5%; in Ghana 5.1 to 9.5%; Guinea 4.5 to 6.0% and Sudan 3.9 to 6.4%; Mozambique 3.9 to 5.7%. Despite AIDS, the majority of people in Africa will thus grow older and will, in all probability, live longer than previous generations.

The majority of older persons in almost every country are women (55% globally), with differences in gender ratios increasing with age.

The majority of older people in Africa live in rural areas and this trend is expected to continue. By 2020 it is projected that 64% of people over 60 years will be living in areas defined as rural.

This increase in the number of older people provides a challenge for the continent as a whole, as well as for individual countries.

1.2 Quality of Life of Older Persons

Apart from their increasing number, the question of Older Persons should also, and above all, be seen in terms of quality of life. Today's society has been built thanks to the efforts deployed by previous generations of people who should be guaranteed better living condition for meaningful transition to old age. These guarantees include access to efficient health care service and specialised living environment, the right to retirement pension, active participation in leisure, sporting and cultural programmes, and lastly, the right to custody and company of their children and grandchildren.

Fulfilment of these basic needs of older persons is a prerequisite for African governments in mainstreaming the key international instruments and United Nations Conventions on Protection of Older People.

1.3 Key International Instruments and UN Conventions

There are three age-specific international instruments that should protect the rights of older people namely the:

- *UN Plan of Action on Ageing - 1982*
- *UN Principles for Older Persons -1991*
- *UN Proclamation on Ageing - 1992*

The mere presence of instruments providing for the rights of the aged does not ensure the protection of older people. The conference calls for the rights of older people to be guaranteed as defined in the instruments under-mentioned.

There are many other non-age specific instruments that should ensure the protection of older people including:

- *UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights - 1948*
- *African Charter of Human and People's Rights*
- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)*
- *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)*
- *UN Declaration on the Right to Development - 1986*
- *The Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) - 1965*
- *The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) - 1979*
- *The Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) - 1984*
- *The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) - 1989*
- *International Labour Organisation Conventions (Various)*
- *UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities 1996*

1.4 Collaboration Between the Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union) and HelpAge International

In 1999, during the International Year of Older Persons, the Twenty Second Ordinary Session of the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission considered issues affecting older persons. The Commission recommended that a Memorandum of Understanding be signed between the OAU and HelpAge International, and that collaborative work be initiated to advocate and advance the rights of older persons; to promote issues of ageing; and to develop interventions to address the needs of older people in Africa.

In this regard a Memorandum of Understanding between the OAU and HelpAge International was signed in March 2000 and the two organisations embarked upon joint activities directed at implementing the work mandated by the Commission.

- In November 2000, the OAU and HelpAge International hosted an Experts Meeting to draft a Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing. The draft was reviewed at a Labour and Social Affairs Commission where it was decided that there was need for a tripartite review of the document.
- In December 2001 a stakeholder's meeting was held in Nairobi to endorse the draft document. The meeting included governments, employers and employee organisations and other stakeholders.
- In April 2002, the draft Framework was considered and adopted during the 25th Ordinary Session of the OAU Labour and Social Affairs Commission In Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.
- In July 2002 it received the final seal of approval during the 38th and last Ordinary Session of the Heads of State and Government in Durban, South Africa.

2 The Goal

The Policy Framework and Plan of Action will guide AU Member States as they design, implement, monitor and evaluate appropriate integrated national policies and programmes to meet the individual and collective needs of older people.

3 Stakeholders

It is vital that all stakeholders are actively involved in the design, development and implementation of National Policies and Plans of Action on Ageing. There is need for strategic partnerships at all levels involving individuals, communities, NGOs, donors, the private sector, the media, Governments, religious bodies and other civil society groups.

4 Policy Recommendations and Plan of Action

4.1 Rights

The Issues

In Africa, it is often believed that traditions of respect mean that all older people are well supported. This is not always the case. Older people are abused socially, physically, sexually, economically and psychologically. Their basic human rights such as the right to life and liberty, the right to work and the right to freedom from discrimination are violated. Older people are abused by family and community members and are accused of everything from witchcraft to preventing or causing too much rain – for which they are tortured and assaulted. Economically they suffer as their assets are stolen and financial institutions refuse credit and other services. Age based discrimination is pervasive and prevents older people from accessing basic rights such as adequate health care and legal protection.

Recommendation I: That Member States recognise the fundamental rights of older persons and commit themselves to abolish all forms of discrimination based on age; that they undertake to ensure that the rights of older people are protected by appropriate legislation; including the right to organise themselves in groups and to representation in order to advance their interests.

Actions:

- a) Elaborate and adopt an additional protocol to the African charter on Human and Peoples Rights relating to the rights of older persons.
- b) Review and amend, as appropriate, the Constitution or legislation to guarantee the fundamental rights of older people are protected.
- c) Provide direct and permanent legal assistance to older persons to defend their rights.
- d) Include older persons in the development, review and implementation of a comprehensive and integrated national policy to meet the needs of older people.
- e) Ensure that the UN Principles for Older Persons (independence, dignity, self-fulfilment, participation and care) are legally binding and implemented.
- f) Develop and review legislation to ensure that older people, especially women, receive equitable treatment from customary and statutory laws including reviews of legislation on property and land rights; inheritance laws; social security legislation and so on.
- g) Enact legislation which makes it an offence for family members, the community or other persons to abuse older persons.
- h) Enact legislation requiring adult children to provide support for their parents.
- i) Enact legislation to ensure that when children are left in the care of older relations, the parents of the children provide adequate levels of financial and/or material support.
- j) Enact legislation that requires, in the event of the death of a child, a percentage of the estate is left to the older person; this is particularly important in cases where older people have used their resources to care for sick children.
- k) Enact legislation that pays particular attention to the needs of older people with disabilities.

Recommendation II: Member States should undertake all the necessary measures to ensure that older people can access all their rights.

Actions:

- a) Ensure that information is collected regarding the number of older people who are victims of crime.
- b) Implement programmes of civic and public education, including schools, to address issues arising from witchcraft allegations and other human rights abuses.

- c) Improve older people's access to legal services through public education targeting (i) older people to ensure they are aware of their rights and (ii) communities to ensure that they understand the rights of older persons.
- d) Ensure that sensitisation and information programmes relating to the rights of older persons involve older people at all levels.
- e) Ensure that the training of all public servants includes information on the rights of older persons.
- f) Develop and review the training curricula for social workers, care givers and all those working with older people to ensure that they adequately include the rights of older persons.

4.2 Information and Co-ordination

The Issues

Unlike most other population groups there is relatively little information about the situation of older people. The absence of comprehensive information means that ageing is poorly understood and, as a result, resources are not allocated to meet the needs of the older population. The absence of an agreed definition of 'older person', at country as well as continental level, means that where data exists it is often not comparable.

The needs and rights of older people are cross cutting and so ageing issues need to be integrated into the policies and work of all Ministries at all levels. Whilst integration is desirable, it may result in duplication or omission unless there is an overall policy on ageing and co-ordinating structures are established to oversee its implementation.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to standardise the definition of older people.

Actions:

- a) Review and harmonise definitions of older persons in line with the UN common usage of older persons i.e. those aged 60 years and above.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to ensure that comprehensive data on the situation of older persons is compiled and made accessible.

Actions:

- a) Ensure that the collection and analysis of national census data includes issues specific to the needs of older people and that data is fully disaggregated by age (without upper age limits) and gender.
- b) Ensure that all household surveys and other information collection activities compile, analyse and present issues and questions related to older people in society and that data is fully disaggregated by age (without upper age limits) and gender.
- c) Ensure that the collection, compilation and analysis of data includes socio-economic and other indicators specific to issues affecting older people (including number of dependants and family support) for utilisation in policy and programme planning.
- d) Ensure that all information on ageing is collected, analysed and published in a format that expresses the differences in ageing between men and women.
- e) Undertake research to identify the impact of differences in longevity between women and men in terms of living arrangements, income, health care and other support systems.

- f) Improve data collection about the contributions of older people to the economy, including their participation in the informal economy and in unremunerated work including household work and subsistence agriculture as reflected in the United Nations System of National Accounts.
- g) Collect, compile, analyse and utilise data on contributions made and benefits received from State and other social security systems for the purpose of improving older people's access to such systems.
- h) Strengthen statistical systems to ensure effective analysis of data by age and gender; including the development of indicators to assess issues of specific concern to older people.
- i) Identify information gaps that exist in relation to the needs and rights of older people and an ageing society. Address the identified information gaps by including the needs of older people in on-going research work and by commissioning older people specific research.
- j) Improve the collection of data on access to all essential services by age group with special emphasis on health services (including access to age and gender specific health services).
- k) Ensure that the collection of data relating to those who are victims of crime and abuse is fully disaggregated by age and gender (including issues of rape, financial abuse and household conflict) so that appropriate measures can be taken to ensure the protection of older people.
- l) Provide tax relief to individuals and organisations that give assistance to organisations working with and for older persons.

Recommendation III: Member States undertake to ensure that the needs and rights of older people are integrated into all existing and new policies in all sectors.

Actions:

- a) Ensure that older people are actively involved at all levels of policy development, strategy formulation, action, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
- b) Formulate and modify existing policies (in all sectors) to ensure that the specific needs of older people are included and that they complement the national policy on ageing.
- c) Ensure that the concerns of older persons with disabilities are placed on the agenda of existing national policy-making and co-ordination bodies dealing with both disabilities and older persons.
- d) Draw up guidelines to facilitate the implementation of appropriate policies regarding older persons.

Recommendation IV: Member States should undertake to ensure that co-ordinating and monitoring mechanisms are established, at all levels, so that issues affecting older people are addressed effectively.

Actions:

- a) Establish a Ministerial position responsible for issues affecting older people.
- b) Strengthen or establish national co-ordinating structures (bringing together representatives of older people, different Ministries and other stakeholders as appropriate) to ensure that the needs of older people are addressed.

4.3 Poverty

The Issues

Older people are consistently among the poorest of the poor, yet their needs are seldom acknowledged in poverty reduction initiatives. Most people in Africa enter older age without any formal social security and so rely on their own, and their family's ability to meet their needs.

Older people are severely affected by structural adjustment programmes; they are the first to be targeted during periods of retrenchment and are hardest hit by cuts in social welfare programmes. Despite their needs, older people are systematically denied access employment, credit, training and other services that would enable them to increase their income.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to ensure that the rights and needs of older people are comprehensively addressed in poverty reduction strategies.

Actions:

- a) Collect, compile, analyse and disseminate information on the factors that contribute to the poverty experienced by older people.
- b) Develop and review policies and programmes on poverty reduction programmes that ensure that the specific needs of older people are taken into account.
- c) Involve older people in the assessments, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation programmes.
- d) Conduct research prior to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes to determine the potential impact of such programmes on older people.
- e) Implement poverty reduction programmes specifically targeting the needs of older people; including, for example, specially designed credit programmes.
- f) Review anti-poverty programmes to ensure that they support, rather than contribute to the decline of, traditional support structures.
- g) Older persons of low income should be exempted from direct tax.
- h) Ensure enlightenment of the populace to change attitudes that prevent older people from accessing services available to other population groups.

4.4 Health

The Issues

Older people's capacity to earn a living and participate in family and community life is governed, to a large extent, by their health status. Even though health is a basic human right, older people are denied access to essential health services. The training of health personnel gives little attention to older people and very few specialist services exist. Because older persons disproportionately use traditional healers the use and interaction of traditional healers and modern health care services should be further promoted and supported. The negative attitudes of some health workers affect the quality of services provided to older persons. Many older people are unable to afford even basic treatment, let alone, the medications needed to control chronic diseases that become more prevalent in older age such as diabetes and hypertension. The positive role that older people can, and do, play as providers of traditional medicine and carers of family and community members should be acknowledged and supported.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to ensure that older people's rights to appropriate health care are legally constituted and guaranteed.

Actions:

- a) Develop and review all national health policies and strategies to ensure they respond to specific needs of older people.
- b) Involve older people in the development and revision of health policies and strategies.
- c) Implement legislation to ensure that health workers do not discriminate against older people.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to guarantee the delivery of health services that meet the specific needs of older people.

Actions:

- a) Undertake research to establish the nature and extent of the physical, social and mental health needs of older people, with due consideration to promotive, preventative, curative and rehabilitative health issues. Ensure that research reflects the different health issues affecting older women and older men.
- b) Develop and review health budgets to ensure that adequate funding is devoted to the provision of services for older people, taking into account the higher per capita health requirements of older people.
- c) Involve older people in the design, provision and monitoring of health services targeting older women and men.
- d) Develop and review the pre-service and in-service training curricula of health professionals to ensure that the health needs of older people are adequately reflected.
- e) Ensure appropriate and continuous training on ageing issues for family and community health workers and thereby enable them to provide support to older people and their families.
- f) Provide support and training to older persons in their role as caregivers.
- g) Ensure national coverage of promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative health services, including HIV/AIDS services, designed to meet the needs of older people and particularly those in the rural areas.
- h) Establish or strengthen integrated geriatric services and training at all levels of the health care system.
- i) Provide access to free health services for older people, and especially those with disability, who are unable to meet the costs.
- j) Develop and implement a strategy for the provision of safe traditional medicine in view of the fact that, for cultural and cost reasons, older people are proportionally higher users of traditional medicine than other population groups.
- k) Promote research, production and use of traditional medicines for both national and international use.
- l) Provide promotive, preventive, curative and rehabilitative ophthalmic and oral health services for older people and ensure that National Prevention of Blindness strategies give due consideration to the needs of older people reflecting the fact that eye health issues disproportionately affect older persons.
- m) Subsidise the costs of walking aids, hearing aids, dentures, prosthesis, glasses and other assistive devices for older persons.
- n) Develop and implement a strategy for the management of chronic health conditions that become more prevalent in old age including, for example, dementia, hypertension and diabetes.

- o) Review the provision of existing sexual and reproductive health services to ensure that they meet the needs of older people.
- p) Strengthen public health programmes to ensure accessibility to safe water and adequate sanitation.
- q) Implement national education programmes that focus on healthy lifestyles for all age groups to improve the health status of people as they enter their older years.
- r) Encourage the development of health insurance schemes that include older persons.

4.5 Food and Nutrition

The Issues

Nutrition research and interventions have tended to focus on the needs of the under-fives, lactating mothers and other younger population groups. Whilst important to lifetime health, this focus has resulted in a failure to acknowledge the needs of other population groups. It is a fact that very little is known about the nutritional situation and needs of older people in the continent. Most nutrition training curricula do not include older people and nutritional assessments fail to include this age group.

In rural areas, older people produce food for themselves and their families and sell surpluses to meet other household needs. However, food production and marketing programmes usually exclude older people.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to ensure that older people's rights to adequate food and nutrition are legally constituted and guaranteed.

Actions:

- a) Develop and review national food and nutrition policies (including those governing emergency situations) to address the specific needs of older people.
- b) Involve older people in the development and revision of food and nutrition policies.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to ensure that older people have access to adequate food and nutrition.

Actions:

- a) Undertake research into the nutritional status, vulnerabilities and needs of older people to guide the development of food and nutrition policies.
- b) Ensure that issues related to the food and nutritional status, vulnerability and needs of older people are included in national, local and household nutritional surveys.
- c) Provide subsidy to older people for medically recommended foods, medication and related health services.
- d) Develop and review the pre-service and in-service training curricula of food and nutrition professionals to ensure that the food and nutrition needs of older people are adequately addressed.
- e) Ensure that all nutrition education programmes give equitable consideration to the needs of older people.
- f) Implement national nutrition education programmes for all age groups to improve their nutritional status as they enter their older years.
- g) Ensure that the nutritional needs of older people are specifically addressed in relief and emergency programmes.

Recommendation III: Member States undertake to ensure that older people have equal access to means of food production and marketing.

Actions:

- a) Ensure that land distribution policies do not discriminate against older people.
- b) Enact and review laws to ensure that older women have the right to land tenure irrespective of marital status.
- c) Develop and review government agricultural and food security programmes to ensure that the needs of older people are taken care of.
- d) Ensure the inclusion of older people in the planning, design, implementation, management and evaluation of all agricultural and food security programmes.
- e) Develop and review the pre-service and in-service training curricula of food and agricultural professionals to ensure that the needs of older people are adequately addressed.
- f) Recognise the role of older people in all aspects of food production and ensure that financial institutions do not prevent older people from accessing credit facilities on the basis of their age and gender.
- g) Establish specialist credit facilities for older men and women recognising the fact that older population groups often have low levels of literacy.
- h) Implement agricultural marketing programmes to meet the needs of older people and other groups who have small amounts of surplus produce to sell.

4.6 Housing and Living Environments

The Issues

Many older people are denied access to decent shelter as a result of socio-economic changes and belief systems. The majority of older people live in rural areas where, in many cases, land ownership is governed by customary law. Property disputes affect older persons as family and community members strive to take control. This is particularly true for older women following the death of their spouse.

Building designs often limit older people's access to services as well as reducing their access to political and civic representation. Equally, public transport and communication systems need to be responsive to the needs of the older population group.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to ensure that older people have access to safe, durable and affordable shelter.

Actions:

- a) Review and update housing policies to ensure that they reflect the needs of older people in both rural and urban areas.
- b) Ensure that policies and legislation governing land rights, including security of tenure, in urban and rural areas do not discriminate against older people.
- c) Review and revise laws to ensure that older women enjoy property rights.
- d) Enact and implement legislation to protect the rights of older people living in 'older people's homes' (both Government and private) with due regard to issues of security, private space and privacy.
- e) Ensure that families caring for older relatives are given priority in public housing schemes.
- f) Ensure that older people and families caring for older relatives are eligible for subsidised housing, low cost interest housing loans and other similar benefits.

- g) Provide preferential allocation of ground floor accommodation for older people in respect of high rise buildings.
- h) Incorporate shelter issues affecting older people into programmes monitoring poverty and its reduction.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to ensure that public infrastructure accommodates the needs of older people.

Actions:

- a) Design accessible public buildings to accommodate the needs of older people.
- b) Modify existing public buildings during periods of refurbishment and renovation to ensure access for older people by providing ramps, rails etc.
- c) If lift access is not available, ensure that services for older people are located on the ground floor of public buildings.
- d) Develop and review the pre-service and in-service training curricula of architectural professionals to ensure that the needs of older people are reflected in their training.
- e) Ensure there is equitable distribution of services for older people between urban and rural areas.
- f) Provide accessible transport for older people.
- g) Subsidise transport costs for older people using public transport.
- h) Develop or review and revise services and systems to ensure that older people are given priority when purchasing and using public transport and communication services.
- i) Ensure that universal standards are observed in the provision of goods and services for older people.

4.7 Family

The Issues

Although the family remains the most important source of support for older people, family structures are changing and traditional patterns of care are no longer guaranteed. Living patterns are fundamentally changing. For example, urbanisation has resulted in many older people living alone in rural areas. Economic pressures and changing social values mean that many families are either unable or unwilling to care for older relatives and that cases of abuse (physical, social and economic) by family members are increasing. The contributions that older people make to the family are seldom acknowledged and programmes designed to support families fail to take into account the valuable role that older people can and do play. In communities affected by AIDS, older people are the primary carers of the sick and of the large numbers of orphaned grandchildren.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to enact legal provisions that promote and strengthen the role of the family and the community in the care of its older members.

Actions:

- a) Review and revise family focused legislation to ensure that it is inclusive of the needs of older persons within the family.
- b) Enact legislation pertaining to taxation that encourages the care and support of older persons within the family e.g. provision of tax concessions for those supporting older relatives.

- c) Learn from traditional values and norms to inform legislation about family values and the care of older persons.
- d) Identify, support and strengthen traditional support systems to enhance the ability of families and communities to care for older family members.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to ensure that legal instruments exist to protect the rights of older people within the family and community.

Actions:

- a) Enact or strengthen legislation specifically designed to protect the rights of older people within the family and community.
- b) Provide training for the judiciary and law enforcement agencies on the legal rights of older persons within the family and community.
- c) Train older persons to provide information and advice relating to older person's rights and their right to protection within the family.
- d) Implement public education programmes to create awareness and understanding of the rights of older people to strengthen the image and dignity of older people in society.

Recommendation III: Member States undertake to develop and strengthen strategies that empower older people to contribute to their families.

Actions:

- a) Encourage the involvement, role and contribution of older persons in the family, community and the State.
- b) Collect, analyse and disseminate information about the contributions that older people make to their families and society.
- c) Involve older people in all stages of the design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes.
- d) Establish vocational training and retraining programmes specifically for older persons to ensure self-sufficiency, enhance self-esteem, and facilitate their participation in the economic life of their communities.
- e) Strengthen the development and transformation of the informal economy recognising that most older people are not employed in the formal sector.
- f) Ensure that low income older people have access to low interest loans and other credit facilities, taking into account the fact that most older people have limited resources and repayment capacity.

Recommendation IV: Member States undertake to implement policies and programmes that strengthen families and are inclusive of older people.

Actions:

- a) Review and update policies and programmes relating to the family to ensure they make adequate provision for the specific requirements of older persons.
- b) Include issues related to older persons and family responsibilities in the curricula of all educational institutions.
- c) Develop and strengthen rural economies to curb the speed of the rural/urban drift that negatively affects the support structures for older persons in rural areas.
- d) Design and implement services to meet the specific needs of urban older people, recognising that family networks tend to be weaker in urban centres.
- e) Establish or expand programmes of intergenerational social and cultural activities.

4.8 Social Welfare

The Issues

Traditional family structures are changing (see section 5.7) and older people can no longer rely on the family for support. Whilst the family remains the main and most appropriate form of support for older people, social welfare programmes have a vital role to play to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are addressed. Whilst social security legislation exists, in most cases it does not give specific consideration to the needs of older people. Many existing social welfare programmes are centralised making them inaccessible to those older people who have limited mobility or who are unable to afford the cost of transport from their homes to centres where services are provided.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to design, develop, and implement practical, realistic and appropriate social welfare strategies that include the concerns of older people.

Actions:

- a) Develop, review and implement strategies which emphasise traditional community support and care mechanisms for older people.
- b) Discourage the institutionalisation of older people and retain the cultural respect for older persons; encourage the emphasis of community based support systems such as kinship, extended family, neighbourhood, etc.
- c) Promote the participation of older peoples' associations, self-help and NGO initiatives in all social welfare strategies.
- d) Recognise, support and encourage the voluntary contributions of older people in community based initiatives.
- e) Provide and enhance access to social assistance schemes for older people including public assistance schemes, old age pensions etc.
- f) Devise welfare systems that ensure that older people are given priority when they seek social and other services including access to multi-purpose day centres.
- g) Ensure the provision of adequate and accessible recreational and leisure facilities both in urban and rural areas to avoid/reduce boredom, loneliness and depression.
- h) Decentralise health, welfare, social and services to ensure access by older persons.
- i) Design programmes and services to sustain the independence of older persons in rural areas.
- j) Facilitate and strengthen traditional rural and community support mechanisms.

4.9 Employment and Income Security

The Issues

Older people are among the poorest in most societies and often do not have access to a regular income. They are denied access to employment opportunities and are often the first to be targeted during periods of retrenchment. The ability to contribute to and benefit from formal social security programmes is generally limited to those in the formal sector and as a result, most people enter older age totally reliant on their ability to continue generating their own income. For those covered by social security systems, the value of their benefits are eroded by inflation and mismanagement.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to eliminate the discrimination against older people in accessing employment and training opportunities and retaining their jobs.

Actions:

- a) Enact legislation that prevents discrimination on the basis of older age during recruitment, promotion and retrenchment processes.
- b) Introduce flexible retirement policies and appropriate strategies and opportunities to enable older people to continue contributing to the workforce as long as they are willing and able.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to enact legislation that ensures the establishment and implementation of formal and informal social security systems.

Actions:

- a) Provide public education on individual responsibility for social security issues so that people understand the need to plan for their old age.
- b) Social security structures should be put in place that allow for contributions by all those in the formal and informal sectors, including part-time workers, rural, agricultural, domestic and migrant workers.
- c) Involve both younger and older persons in the design and implementation of strategies and policies relating to social security.
- d) Develop and implement strategies that extend the coverage of formal and informal social security systems.
- e) Promote the reallocation of defence spending to social security provision.
- f) Strengthen the governance of social security systems to include performance targets relating to set objectives including the processing of payments to ensure transparency and solvency.
- g) Provide support to informal social security programmes through Government and non-government supported training.
- h) Ensure that social security and social programmes address the situation of older women whose employment has often been interrupted by maternity and family responsibilities.
- i) Conduct pre-retirement programmes to enable older persons to develop the necessary coping skills that will prepare them for the emotional, psychological and socio-economic challenges of retirement.

4.10 Crises, Emergencies and Epidemics

The Issues

During periods of conflict and emergencies, older people are often excluded, marginalised and powerless. Their rights and needs are often overlooked by those implementing aid programmes and the contributions that older people can make are ignored. Emergency situations often result in rapid changes in social patterns and the status accorded older people in stable situations is undermined.

The impact of HIV/AIDS and other epidemics on all sections of society is immense, but the specific impact on the older people is seldom analysed. In the case of HIV/AIDS, not only are older people at risk of contracting HIV but they are the main providers of care of those affected by AIDS and for orphaned grandchildren.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to ensure that assistance reaches older people in situations of conflict.

Actions:

- a) Member States should promote national and international efforts to prevent and resolve issues of conflict, thereby establish peace and security for the well-being of the older population.
- b) Develop and review policies and practices related to conflict situations to ensure that the rights of older persons are protected.
- c) Recognise and utilise the potential contributions of older people e.g. their knowledge of traditional coping mechanisms; alternative health systems; conflict prevention and resolution strategies.
- d) Where communities are displaced, ensure that family tracing is undertaken to reunite older persons with family members.
- e) Develop and review appropriate social security legislation to ensure the inclusion of employed refugees.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to ensure that the needs of older people in emergency situations are met.

Actions:

- a) Develop and review policies and practices related to emergency situations to ensure that the rights of older persons are protected.
- b) Ensure that older people are involved at all stages in the design and implementation of programmes intended to address the needs of those affected by emergencies.
- c) Ensure that during assessments, the potential vulnerability of older persons is given special attention and specific action is taken to locate and identify them.
- d) Provide support to older people to meet their basic needs, such as food, water, shelter, clothing, health care and fuel.
- e) Ensure that the design and delivery of services reflects the particular needs of older people for example 'fast track' systems for the distribution of basic necessities and special distribution points for older persons.
- f) Recognise and address the social and psychosocial needs of older persons.
- g) Recognise and support the contributions of older people such as care of children; knowledge of traditional coping mechanisms and understanding of alternative health systems.
- h) Ensure that older people are involved in, and benefit from, the design and implementation of rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.
- i) Design and implement programmes that strengthen and sustain family structures during periods of displacement and the rehabilitation phases of a disaster.
- j) Ensure that appropriate emergency relief programmes enable the participation of older people through the use of their skills.
- k) Ensure that the special needs of older people are addressed during repatriation and reintegration programmes.
- l) Establish modalities that ensure that older persons who are former refugees receive their pension in respect of services rendered in the country of asylum.
- m) Ensure that older persons who have been forced to leave their homes are able to recover their property upon return.

Recommendation III: Member States undertake to protect the rights and needs of older people affected by HIV/AIDS and other epidemics.

Actions:

- a) Recognise the fact that HIV/AIDS and other epidemics affect older people in multiple ways.
- b) Conduct and strengthen research to understand the nature and extent of the impact of HIV/AIDS and other epidemics on older persons.
- c) Develop and review policies relating to HIV/AIDS and other epidemics to ensure that they include issues affecting older persons.
- d) Develop and implement intergenerational public education programmes relating to HIV/AIDS and other epidemics.
- e) Develop and review policies and programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections to recognise that older persons are sexually active and therefore at risk.
- f) Ensure that public awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections include older people and that such campaigns are appropriately targeted.
- g) Ensure that policies and programmes relating to HIV/AIDS and other epidemics recognise that older people are major providers of care for those who are sick and for orphaned grandchildren.
- h) Provide a budget allocation to support older people caring for those affected by AIDS and other epidemics.
- i) Strengthen community based care mechanisms to ensure that older people who are carers of those affected by AIDS and other epidemics receive support.
- j) Strengthen community based care mechanisms to ensure that older people whose children have died of AIDS and other epidemics receive support including psychosocial support and counselling.
- k) Involve older people in programmes on HIV/AIDS and other epidemics as educators and learners.

4.11 Ageing and Migration

The Issues

The situation of migrant workers and ageing is of great concern. They fall outside the realm of social protection, not having access to pension schemes and adequate health services. It is important to ensure equal treatment with nationals as well as to maintain acquired rights after transfer of residence from one country to another. Also, older persons are worst affected by forceful removal of migrants from their settlements.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to ensure that ageing migrant workers rights to employment and minimum working conditions are respected.

Actions:

- a) Review the provisions of appropriate legislation to ensure minimum working conditions, protect the rights of older workers and are protected against hazardous work.
- b) Review provisions of appropriate legislation to ensure equal treatment of migrant workers.

- c) Sending countries create conducive environment for migrant workers upon return to their place of origin.
- d) Design programmes to fully integrate returning migrant workers into the society by providing basic necessities like housing and training programmes for employment.

4.12 Education and Training

The Issues

Poor access to education earlier in life means that high proportions of older people are illiterate and unaware of their rights. Public education programmes often use language and images that are not accessible to older people. Education and training programmes have age limitations that prevent the participation of older people and thereby limit their access to new employment and other opportunities. As training and education programmes are developed, the skills and experience of older people are often overlooked and their contributions are not encouraged.

Myths and misconceptions are the cause of many of society's negative attitudes towards ageing and older persons. Issues relating to older people are absent from education and training curricula – from primary school to tertiary and professional education.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to ensure that older persons have access to education and training.

Actions:

- a) Strengthen and extend adult education programmes to ensure that they are inclusive of the needs of older persons.
- b) Ensure that public education campaigns are culturally sensitive to the needs of older people.
- c) Ensure that public education campaigns are also conducted in local languages and that they take account of literacy levels among older people.
- d) Design and implement vocational training programmes that encourage the participation of older people, including older people with disability.

Recommendation II: Member States undertake to develop and strengthen strategies that encourage older peoples' participation as educators and trainers.

Actions:

- a) Recognise and acknowledge the skills of older persons and create a data bank of their knowledge, skills and experience.
- b) Provide opportunities for older people to be trained as formal, informal, non-formal, peer-educators and trainers in all sectors.

Recommendation III: Member States undertake to increase understanding and awareness of ageing issues through education and training.

Actions:

- a) Establish or strengthen national education, training and research on ageing.
- b) Include issues of ageing and traditional values in all formal and non-formal education.
- c) Create public awareness about ageing issues.
- d) Promote positive images of ageing and address negative attitudes that exist towards older people.

4.13 Gender

The Issues

The majority of older persons in almost every country in the world are women, with the women to men ratio increasing with age. Ageing affects women and men differently both physiologically and socially. For example, older women's lack of property rights means that widowhood or the dissolution of marriage often brings with it a loss of home and property. On the other hand, older men without a family may be more vulnerable than women who tend to have more domestic skills. Gender should be integrated throughout policies and programmes that relate to older persons. Equally, gender focused programmes should consider the specific needs of older people.

Recommendation I: Member States undertake to mainstream ageing into policies relating to gender.

Actions:

- a) Research and disseminate information on differential ageing in women and men.
- b) Develop and review national gender policies and programmes to include the specific concerns of older women and men.

5 Resource Mobilisation

The development of a national Policy Framework and Plan of Action on ageing will have resource implications, both during design and implementation phases. Consideration needs to be given to the following:

- Availability of technical skills and appropriate human resource development
- Capacity building issues are highlighted throughout the Policy Framework and Plan of Action. Capacity building is particularly important given that ageing is a relatively new field in most countries.
- Financial resources will need to be allocated with specific budgets allocated to the development and subsequent implementation of the Policy Framework and Plan of Action.
- It should be recognised that some of the recommendations in the Plan of Action do not require additional resources but require changes to be made to the way existing resources are administered.
- Resource mobilisation needs to be considered by all the stakeholders involved, with effective co-ordination mechanisms (see section 5.2) needed to ensure appropriate use of resources and avoid possible duplication in some areas. Examples of the means by which stakeholders might be involved in resource mobilisation include:
 - Private Sector: revision of corporate policies that discriminate against older people in employment of older people; training on pension issues; pre-retirement training; contributions towards pension schemes; contributions to community development programmes targeting older people.
 - Non Government Organisations: the integration of issues relating to older people into existing programmes and the allocation of resources to develop older people specific programmes.
 - Religious bodies: the provision of specific services to older people; education on ageing and family issues for all age groups.
 - General public: the provision of support to older people within the family and community.
 - The media: provision of reporting time and space to address issues relating to ageing and older people.
 - The role of Government is outlined in the above Policy Framework and Plan of Action. As well as the provision of specific services, Government has responsibility to provide leadership on the development of National Policies and to challenge discriminatory practices. The rights and needs of older people should be included in national budgets and Governments should advocate the allocation of resources for programmes to address ageing issues from the international donor community.
 - Request increased technical and financial support from the international community to compliment the national and regional efforts at the implementation of programmes on ageing in Africa.

6 Monitoring and Follow-up on Implementation

The conference requests the AU to, urgently, establish an Advisory Council on Ageing and ensure that it is operational. The Advisory Council would then be responsible for the monitoring, implementation and follow-up of the Plan of Action.

One of the main tasks of Council is to establish a research committee to co-ordinate research on ageing throughout the continent and to disseminate this information to national and regional organisations responsible for research and policy implementation.

Indicators against which progress can be monitored should include the following:

- a) Development of a National Policy and Plan of Action on Ageing, with specific targets, timeframes and means of monitoring and evaluation.
- b) Review undertaken and the rights of older people included in the Constitution.
- c) Review and modification of national laws and legislation to include the rights of older people.
- d) Ministerial position or National Department responsible for ageing issues established.
- e) National budgetary allocations made to support policies and programmes of work with older persons.
- f) National legislation implemented to enforce the implementation of the UN Principles for Older Persons.
- g) Social security and social welfare policies reviewed and updated.
- h) Annual national reports submitted to the AU.
- i) An appropriate existing international government organ has responsibility for ageing and older people's issues.
- j) Mechanisms for and participation of older people in national and other committees.