

Editorial

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This special issue of the International Journal of Ageing in Developing Countries (IJADC) focuses on 'Ageing in Africa'. As guest editor for this issue, I know that this publication is going to be very welcomed and applauded by researchers in Africa. The call for papers for this first publication coincided with the momentum building up to the 6th UN ECA/African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development scheduled for February 24-28 2020; preparations for 2nd Elders' Forum planned on the side lines of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali Rwanda, June 22-27 2020; the on-going review and revision of the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing (2002), as well as preparations for the 11th Session of the United Nations Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA), April 6-9 2020. However, all preparations and already planned activities were disrupted by the challenges and changes accompanying the sudden occurrence of infections from the Corona virus. Programs like the UN OEWGA which were not out rightly cancelled were transformed from physical meetings to the digital space with minimized agenda.

With COVID-19's intense activity and increasing mortality rates across the globe, WHO declared the disease a global Pandemic on March 11, 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020). and, Africa registered its first case in Egypt in April 2020 (Africa News, 2020). The unprecedented impact on older persons in the African continent was the subject of the survey conducted by the Stakeholder Group on Ageing in Africa. The findings of the study of the impact of COVID-19 containment and mitigation strategies on the rights of older persons in Africa, is one of the 6 articles published in this edition. It affirms the distressed health and socio-economic landscape across 18 African Countries, highlights fragile infrastructure of health care for pre-existing conditions during the pandemic and, in most cases, the lack of social protection for older persons as well as, actions to uphold their voices and human rights. The paper on the SGA Africa Report, 2020 discusses the inadequate mechanisms for coordinated inclusion and participation of older persons in COVID -19 policy response. COVID-19 provides a lens to view the deepening ageism and discrimination against older persons, and pointers for stakeholders to seek mechanisms for promoting stakeholder's

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collaboration and partnerships for effective actions to address inequality, vulnerability, abuse and neglects of older persons in Africa.

The UN Census Bureau 2020 Report on Ageing Africa provides new comprehensive and up to date statistics on current and projected future population ageing and patterns in Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. It reports that between 2020 and 2050, the older African population is projected to triple from 74.4 million to 235.1 million; Africa's growth will outpace that of any region of the world even though, majority of African countries have less than 7% older population in 2020 (He, Aboderin, & Adjaye-Gbewonyo, 2020). The low proportions still translate to increasingly growing absolute numbers. Such a demographic transition has profound impact on every aspect of individual, community and national life. Population ageing is therefore poised to become a major issue in Africa. It is therefore important to integrate the mega –trend within the larger process of development in the region.

In Africa, diverse stakeholders including researchers in the field of ageing are taking the responsibility of mobilizing support towards comprehensive responses across the African continent on older persons. The process of strengthening the protection of rights of older people in Africa is being accelerated, including the nature of the support needed by countries to accelerate the ratification of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on Rights of Older Persons in Africa, as well as the African Member States' participation in the United Nations Open –ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA) sessions. INIA's on-line journal 'Focus on Africa' definitely provides a window for researchers, to share both the challenges and the progress made.

The African Union Agenda 2063 as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and, its Sustainable Development Goals, provide blueprints of action for people of all ages, and are both explicitly grounded in human rights standards. In recent years, more African countries have adopted national policies on ageing and have set-up social protection schemes to tackle vulnerability including social pensions, agricultural subsidies and emergency relief (Omokaro, 2019). Despite such progress, older people face and continue to face severe challenges in their everyday lives. Research findings provide concrete evidence of the systemic inequality and discrimination of older women and men in the African context and the significant impact of ageism on the realization of envisioned continental prosperity for all (Stakeholder Group on Ageing, Africa (SGA Africa), 2019).

The UN Census Bureau 2020 reports that health systems for Africa's older persons, in particular, rural residents, suffer insufficient financial resources and understaffing of health workers, inadequate health insurance coverage and high out of pocket payments. It also suggests that this is happening with increasing dominance of non-communicable diseases in older persons in Africa (He, Aboderin, & Adjaye-Gbewonyo, 2020).

Many older persons face challenges in accessing social security, justice, loans, housing, nutrition, health care and support systems, education and lifelong learning opportunities and are often denied the rights in participating in development activities (SGA Africa, 2019). The

same declaration also acknowledged, that older persons in Africa are experiencing ageism and age discrimination making the stakes for regional and international normative framework, strong institutions policy and, disaggregated data high. Combating discrimination based on age and promoting the dignity of older persons is fundamental to ensure that all Africans enjoy a life of fulfillment (ibid.).

Five research papers are featured in the section on Focus on Africa. *'Socio-economic Factors Influencing Ageism among Undergraduates of the University of Lagos, Nigeria'* by Bola Amaike & Tunrayo Seidun interrogates ageist attitudes and perceptions which jeopardize older adults' life chances, providing evidence that negative perceptions of older people are influenced by level of knowledge (study) with grave implications for their quality of life and life satisfaction in old age; the article *'Doing qualitative research on dementia with carers in Kenya: A reflection on fieldwork experiences'* by Purity Mwendwa, shares practical reflections on fieldwork experiences in the context of challenges of rising incidence of none communicable and chronic diseases and rising caring needs in families and communities with focus on dementia in sub-Saharan Africa. The paper explicitly details the researchers' motivation to focus on dementia and the challenges faced as a researcher in an emerging knowledge domain, providing very vivid insight on factors influencing dearth of much needed international research, knowledge and evidence base about conditions of sufferers and care givers in Africa.

In the empirical article titled, *Forsaking Treatment and Enduring the Status: Ageing into Disability*, Namaganda Rehem presents findings from research conducted in Uganda on older persons and the process of disablement. The research highlights social factors including, the decisions made by older persons; whether or not to seek treatment during events of injuries and, when to stop the treatment seeking journey, as determinant of the disablement process beyond disease. The paper addresses financial and infrastructure challenges also, as factors in understanding the process that leads to disability among older persons

Kabelenga Isaac shares his report on *Political Abuse of Older Persons in Zambia*. This paper raises awareness about political abuse of older persons during parliamentary elections and the role played by politicians, political cadres, older people's family members and election polling officers in determining and perpetuating abuse of vulnerable older people, particularly those with poor eye sight, the illiterates and those living in monetary poverty.

The paper on *Perception, Attitude of Women on Ageing, Old Age and Geriatric Care in River State, Nigeria* by Bellgam & Enebe, presents findings from a cross sectional study of women in River State, Nigeria. It brings to the fore, cultural perceptions and definition of old age and the preferred long-term care system as well as traditional family aversion of institutionalized homes. These documented perceptions and attitude, should add to the on-going discourse of cultural orientation and current reality of weakening family support and long-term care options in Africa. The findings on insurance or retirement/pension plans and preparations for an inevitable phase of life in old age are informative. All the articles suggest ways of designing appropriate interventions.

This special issue also features two book reviews. The first book selected is titled, *What Retirees Want: A Holistic View of Life's Third Age* by Ken Dychtwald & Robert Morison. The reviewer, Dr. Dorian Mintzer, a board-certified retirement coach and author, succinctly brings out the overriding message and the 'call-to-action' for the reader on transforming or retiring "retirement" and focusing on 'Life's Third Age as Life's New Frontier with more learning, more intergenerational contributions, and more activism'. The second book reviewed is titled, *Men, Masculinities, and Aging: The Gendered Lives of Older Men* by Edward H. Thompson Jr. The reviewer, Roberta Sultana, gives an excellent analysis of the book section by section. The author provides the reader with a new standpoint on men's experiences with corporeal ageing, growing older in an ageist society and the last but not the least on how old men steer the non-existent cultural instructions for being an ageing man.

The publication of this special edition of INIA Journal of Ageing in Developing Countries with a 'Focus on Africa', keys into Africa's stakeholders' call for coordinated advocacy for the protection of the rights of older persons in Africa via the regional multi-stakeholder participatory platform on ageing. It would have been easier to send the call to members of the Stakeholder Group on Ageing in Africa (SGA Africa), a regional multi-stakeholder coalition of CSOs, professional bodies, academia, research and human rights institutes, inviting submission of papers for this special edition. However, responses from Uganda, Zambia, Nigeria, Kenya and the SGA Africa report on the impact of COVID-19 on older people across 18 African countries, demonstrate that by working together, we can share and advance knowledge of ageing in Africa and influence policy action. The 'Focus on Ageing in Africa' initiative by INIA is commendable and Africa's researchers and practitioners in the field of ageing, look forward to contributing papers for publications in subsequent editions.

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