



# NSINDAGIZA ORGANIZATION

Po.Box: 5573 KIGALI, Tel: (+250) 0788509060 & (+250) 0788749692  
E-mail: nsindagiza2014@gmail.com; www.nsindagiza.org

## WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY (WEAAD), 2021

The World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) happens each year on June 15th. It was officially recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 66/127, December 2011. Elder abuse can be defined as “a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”. It is a global social issue which affects the Health and Human Rights of older persons, and is an issue which deserves the attention of both international and national communities.

The population of older persons is rapidly increasing, particularly in third and second world countries. Also happening, is the phenomenon of more people living longer with better skills and health than before. Today, for the first time in history, most people can expect to live into their sixties and beyond. By 2050, the world’s population aged 60 years and older is expected to total 2 billion, risen from 900 million in 2015. Today, 125 million people are aged 80 years or older.

Data from the four Rwandan censuses indicate that the portion of elderly persons first increased from 4.8% in 1978 to 5% in 1991. In terms of population shares, it is important to note that the number of older persons in the country has more than doubled since 1978, growing from 231,999 to 511,738. Now, more than ever, the government is preparing to change systems, policies and legal environments to reflect these changes. In September 2020, the government ratified the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Older Persons and in May 2021, approved the National Older Persons’ Policy.

In Rwanda like elsewhere in Africa, there is a false belief that older persons are respected and cared for by their families and the community in general. On the contrary, the practices are different as there are cases of older persons being beaten by their own children, asking them to hand their property over to them, though this is not accepted, but there is no rigor put into discouraging these evil acts as there are no specific measures to protect them.

This year’s theme “ACCESS TO JUSTICE” serves as a reminder of the importance to fully address the needs of older persons who may seek recourse, who have experienced situations of violence, abuse and neglect often face multiple barriers in accessing judicial remedies such as issues of accessibility, affordability, reasonable accommodation, excessive delays and backlogs in judicial processes, impact of digitalization, cultural norms, gender bias, discrimination and entrenched ageism in

*Fight for the rights and welfare of older persons, [www.nsindagiza.org](http://www.nsindagiza.org)*



# NSINDAGIZA ORGANIZATION

**Po.Box: 5573 KIGALI, Tel: (+250) 0788509060 & (+250) 0788749692**  
**E-mail: nsindagiza2014@gmail.com; www.nsindagiza.org**

policy, norms and practices. If we consider that lodging of formal complaints takes place online and that the majority of older persons is not well versed with technology and the cost of defense - which is high considering the capabilities of most older persons; there should be specific chambers or other support systems for older persons to have more access to justice as their rights and not out of pity.

It is unfortunate that the WEAAD is not commemorated in Rwanda since its establishment in 2011, to give the room to older persons to express their feelings and ageism related issues, for the Government and the community to adopt corrective measure. The Government should add this day to those celebrated annually in the Country.

June 2021,

Elie MUGABOWISHEMA,

President, NSINDAGIZA Organization.