



NSINDAGIZA ORGANIZATION

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

REPORT ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF OLDER PERSONS IN RWANDA, 4TH October 2022



Introduction

The UN General Assembly adopted the resolution 45/106 related to the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) on December 14th, 1990. Since 1991, the IDOP has been observed annually, on October 1st. The objective of celebrating this day is to raise awareness about issues affecting older persons and to appreciate the contributions they make to society. The theme for this year, 2022, is *"The resilience of older persons in a changing world"*. The Government of Rwanda rephrased this theme as: *"Abageze mu zabukuru isoko tuvomaho"* to emphasize that older persons are the source of all cultural values.

NSINDAGIZA Organization promoting the rights of older persons, supported by Trócaire-Rwanda, helping to build a brighter future for people in Rwanda, worked with the elderly support groups in Nyarugenge, Kicukiro and Kamonyi districts, to celebrate the IDOP22 in their communities in close collaboration with local authorities and other local stakeholders.

IDOP in Kayenzi and Karama sectors, Kamonyi district, Southern Province

NSINDAGIZA has 27 elderly support groups in Kayenzi and Karama, composed of close to 900 members. All the groups worked together to celebrate the IDOP22 in two sites, Kayenzi and Karama. Thanks to good collaboration with local authorities, the Vice Mayor of Kamonyi district participated in the Kayenzi event together with other district and sector staff who joined the NSINDAGIZA team at National level. The Karama event was honored to have the Executive Secretary and other Sector and Cell staff, together with another NSINDAGIZA team at National level. Both these events were marked by a demonstrative action of older persons feeding milk to small children, in the spirit of promoting the intergenerational relationship. They also provided support to two of the most vulnerable older women to show that older persons are not the burden

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to the society, but can support each other and contribute to the development of the country, contrary to what some people think- that older persons just need support.

In her remarks, the Vice Mayor of Kamonyi district, Madam Marie Josée UWIRINGIRA, highlighted the content of the National Older Persons' Policy and encouraged the pensioners to work closely with the rest of the older persons and the youth, in order to keep the culture of unity and solidarity, and added that the good practice of older persons in Kayenzi and Karama should serve as an example for the rest of the sectors.

The President of NSINDAGIZA, Mr. Elie MUGABOWISHEMA, explained the origin of the IDOP and commended the Government's good will to institutionalize the commemoration of the IDOP. He added that older persons as custodians of cultural values have a role to play in the development of the country and their families. He encouraged them to keep working together through their ESGs, interacting with other existing groups including youth and women's groups. The participants in both sites were estimated to be 450, 75% being women.



Figure 1: IDOP22 in Kayenzi, Kamonyi District on 4th October 2022

IDOP in Kigali Sector, Nyarugenge district

The IDOP22 was also celebrated at Kigali sector, Nyarugenge district on 4th October, in close collaboration between the 3 NSINDAGIZA Elderly Support Groups (ESGs) and local authorities at different levels. Older persons had an opportunity to show their talents through cultural knowledge transmission such as dances and some games. They also showed their solidarity and support to each other by offering gifts to the most vulnerable to ensure their value and consideration among others. The participants were estimated to be 90, women being the majority.



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Figure 2: IDOP22 in Kigali Sector, Nyarugenge district

IDOP in Masaka Sector, Kicukiro district

Similarly, the event was organized in Masaka sector on two sites; Rusheshe on 4th October and Biryogo on 7th October. The participants in both events were 158, $\frac{2}{3}$ being women. There were local authorities at Sector and Cell levels together with the NSINDAGIZA Executive Committee at national level. Older persons were given the platform to share their feelings and views and to advice the younger generation about our cultural values. The local leaders applauded the initiative and collaboration of NSINDAGIZA Organization through the Elderly Support Groups and promised their partnership to establish more groups in order to combat loneliness, isolation and discrimination of older persons. In Masaka particularly, there was involvement of young people who committed to mobilize their fellows to join older persons and learn from their experiences for a bright future. An impressive mark of Masaka event was also how older persons grouped in the Elderly support group started a small project to produce liquid soap and locally made shoes in order to avoid older persons to be seen as burdens for their families and community in general.



Figure 3: IDOP in Masaka, Kicukiro district



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Other related activities

Prior to the commemoration of the IDOP22 at a national level, a number of activities were completed including a one-hour TV/Radio show at IMANZI TV/Radio on 30th September 2022, with the support of the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion (MIGEPROF) and one on the Voice of America Radio.

It has also been an opportunity to meet with different decision makers to discuss the situation of older persons, issues they face and how to solve them through the implementation of the National Older Persons Policy, adopted on 31st May 2021.

Ministry of Health (MoH):

The team, composed of 4 NSINDAGIZA Executive Committee members, met with the MoH team on 30th September 2022, to discuss the role of the MoH in the commemoration of the IDOP22, since nothing could be done if older persons were not healthy. The conclusion was that all social cluster ministries, together with civil society organizations, should be involved in the preparation and implementation of the IDOP. It was also an opportunity to advocate for the MoH to involve CSOs in the implementation of the UN Decade of healthy ageing and the Universal Health Coverage and Ageing, and to review the National Older Persons' Policy, to ensure the objective of Healthy Ageing is adequately implemented in partnership with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

Ministry of Local Government:

MINALOC, as line Ministry of older persons, organized a meeting on 3rd October with the CSOs working with older persons, to share ideas on the IDOP22 and each one's role as the event was organized in Nyamagabe on 4th October, but the MINALOC guidelines supposed the commemoration to be organized at Umudugudu/Village level, where all the stakeholders were encouraged to support local authorities to ensure the IDOP22 is celebrated successfully.

Parliament:

The CSOs working with older persons met with the Commission of Human Rights of the low chamber of parliament to share ideas on the situation of older persons, as the parliament had conducted older persons' situational assessment and found that there were a lot of issues among them. It was also an opportunity to advocate for the parliament to join the civil society advocate for the improvement of older persons' lives through the mainstreaming of ageing across all sector policies.



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Figure 4: Meeting with MINALOC



Figure 5: Meetings with MPs

IDOP22 celebrated at national level in Nyamagabe

We commend the institutionalization of the International Day of Older persons and its decentralization to the village level, though it's still a challenge due to the mindset of some local leaders who don't respect those instructions. The fact that the MINALOC has owned this activity is a good sign of political will. It is known that the Minister sends a concept note to all Mayors with clear details on the commemoration of the IDOP at the village level, the theme, key activities in preparation and where it will be celebrated at national level, with the presence of the government's high officials. This concept note is also shared with the Civil Society Organizations working with older persons, for their information and involvement in their areas of intervention. For IDOP22, beside the sharing of the concept note, MINALOC being invited prior to the event, all CSOs working with older persons to share ideas on the event and ask them their full participation, it was also an opportunity to discuss other issues including the implementation of the National Older Persons' Policy. The CSOs applauded the progress in the preparation of the IDOP to the level of involving CSOs. The actual event was then celebrated in Nyamagabe on 4th October with the presence of the Minister of State, Honorable Assumpta INGABIRE. In that event, 5 older persons were given cows to provide them with milk to improve their health.



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Conclusion

Though we are not able to know all the sites where the IDOP22 was celebrated, it happened in various areas and the collaboration between Elderly Support Groups and local authorities made it a success. The progress is evident each and every year, though a lot is still to be done. We are thankful to MINALOC, MIGEPROF, TROCAIRE, Elderly Support Groups and the CSOs working with older persons for their partnership to keep the rights and wellbeing of older persons promoted. We, however, wish for the involvement of more government institutions, UN agencies, CSOs and development partners in the preparation and implementation phases.

Elie MUGABOWISHEMA,

President of NSINDAGIZA Organization



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