

# COMMUNITY CAREGIVING FOR OLDER PERSONS: A GUIDE



Supported by:



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This community inclusion guide would not have been possible without the funding support from Global Affairs Canada through ActionAid Nigeria, believing in the impact the project can make in Nigeria. CGE Africa is grateful for this support. We also acknowledge the commitment of the following persons who contributed significantly to completing the report: Center for Gender Economics Initiative team for their tireless effort in data collection and analysis for the assessment and the information produced. The project partners - the WVL Lagos partners team for providing support through the process, our community mobilizers who supported the data collection, and for ensuring the best quality work from the assessment and the reporting. For their support and contributions, the coordinating team of the WVL Project in Nigeria has enriched the document by sharing ideas, experiences, and lessons learned from other projects. The community stakeholders who participated in the study and the validation of the guide by sharing their knowledge, expertise, and opinion on specific areas, and Ms. Uchenna Idoko of the Center for Gender Economic Initiative edited the report.

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## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

“It takes a village to raise a child.”

Nigerian Proverb

“It takes a community to care for older persons who are free from all forms of prejudices, exclusions, and abuse.”

Uchenna Idoko, 2020.

Elder abuse and neglect are societal issues that require prevention and intervention strategies at the practice and policy levels. At the practice level, which is within the community, we carried out a systematic study. We engaged stakeholders to jointly agree on effective community-based elder abuse interventions that will be undertaken to promote older persons' care.

There are no available guides that provide bottom-top intervention strategies that decrease elder abuse and neglect within the communities in Lagos state. The scarcity of community-based interventions for older adults and caregivers highlights the need for this guide.

If utilized well, this guide will deliver a varied, vibrant, caring, and healthy community that empowers all persons to age well and have opportunities to achieve their full potential.

## **PART A: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Methodology**

The research method used was qualitative. Data collectors observed each community as part of the qualitative research; no numerical data was collected. We conducted focus group discussions and key informant interviews and observed each community's environment, i.e., checking for facilities supporting healthy aging. We gauged them for availability, adequacy, and accessibility.

A purposive sampling technique was used to select communities from Lagos state's three local government areas: Etiosa, **Somolu, and Ejigbo.**

## PART B: CARE STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

### Children and Adolescents



#### What can children and adolescents do for older persons

- Children should respect and obey older persons.
- They should play with the older people and stop seeing them as boring people.
- They should run errands for older persons in their communities.
- They should visit them and request that they tell them stories (historical stories) about the Nigeria civil war, etc.
- They should Learn and recite rhymes that promote aging as a blessing.

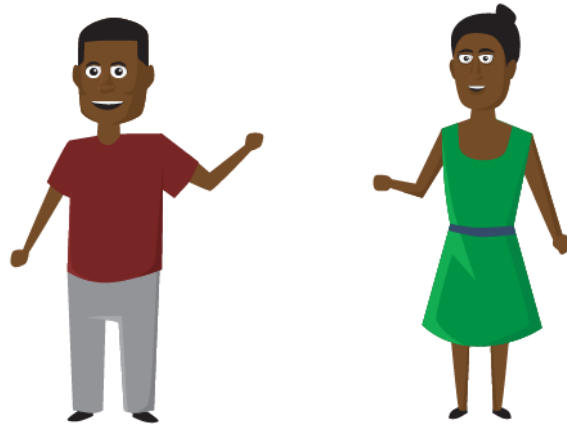
## Youths



### What can youths do for the older persons?

- The youths should respect older persons, irrespective of their status.
- They should volunteer and assist them with farm and domestic work.
- They should help them with repairs in their residences.
- They should ensure that any community law enacted against elder abuse is implemented.
- The Youths should work with road transport unions to ensure they provide age-sensitive services to the older people.
- Youths should create a database of all the older persons in their community from 60years and above; these databases should have the demographical information of the older persons, for example, name, age, address, name of caregivers, phone number, health status and phone number of one of their children.
- Youths should create monthly visiting schedules for all the older persons in their community to ensure that their families and caregivers adequately care for them.
- Seek partnerships with civil society and community-based organizations to improve the lives of the older in their communities.  
Initiate and host recreational and sports tournaments with the older to promote active aging in the community.

## Family



### What can the family of the older persons do for them?

- It is compulsory for family members to provide age-appropriate shelter for older persons.
- They should provide adequate funds for older persons to meet their basic needs.
- They should have a healthy schedule of visiting the older persons regularly and spend adequate time with them.
- They should provide and supervise their caregivers and ensure they are protected from all forms of violence.
- They should always create recreation and adequate fun to enable them to navigate through age-driven depression and sadness.
- Family members should provide food and nutritional supplements that support healthy aging.
- They should negotiate for age-sensitive work voluntarism for older people before allowing them to relocate permanently to rural communities.
- Family members should regularly communicate with the older persons via telephone and video.



## Older Persons



### What can older persons do for themselves?

- Older persons should develop a habit of daily exercise.
- They should be each other's 'keepers,' which means they should visit other older persons in the community and watch out for others.
- They should give back to their communities; they can serve as role models and counselors for younger persons, especially married persons in the community; they can serve as volunteer teachers in community primary schools, etc. This will help them stay mentally active.
- Some of them should gradually adjust to cope with the changing pattern of morning sleep and more frequent naps during the day.
- They should always make use of available food items in their community to create healthy meals.
- They should work with their caregivers to ensure they take their daily medications.
- They should discuss inheritances with their spouses and children, especially those in polygamous relationships.
- Older persons should not endure violence; they should report any form of violence they experience to their trusted family members and friends.
- Having lived a long time on earth, people, especially close relatives, would have offended them in one way or another; they should find forgiveness.
- They should resist negative thoughts such as seeing themselves as 'useless' or less valuable because of their age and status.
- They should also get more involved in spiritual activities in their various religions and denominations.

## Religious Groups



### What can religious groups and religious leaders do for the older persons?

- Institute award ceremonies for the older persons who have served well.
- Establish a department/unit dedicated to elder care.
- Get involved in family reconciliation that affects older persons.
- Religious leaders should preach against elder abuse and advocate for families to take care of their older relatives.
- Religious institutions should ensure their places of worship have age-sensitive facilities, for example, church/mosque buildings with ramps, etc.
- They should have a designated section in their buildings where older persons and their caregivers sit for ease of movement and supervision.
- Churches/Mosques should have food pantries and welfare schemes for older persons, especially for emergencies like covid19 pandemic.
- They should have classes for older persons' caregivers where they can train them and appeal to their conscience to quit elder abuse.
- They should involve them in critical decision-making committees so they don't feel irrelevant.
- Endeavor to check up on them, 'establish older persons homes' for those that lack proper care.

## Traditional institutions & leaders



### What can traditional institutions /leaders do for older persons?

- Traditional leaders should set up community laws that punish elder abuse.
- They should consider older people an asset and give them age-sensitive roles in the community.
- Traditional leaders should involve older persons in peace-building and conflict resolution.
- They should recommend those still into farming for agro-allied enterprise funding from government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies. Most times, government agencies discriminate against older persons because of the assumption that elders are also retired from active farming.
- They should ensure that community buildings have age-sensitive facilities, e.g., halls with ramps, etc.
- They should have a yearly festival to celebrate the older people.
- They should create a forum where older and younger persons can meet regularly for knowledge sharing.

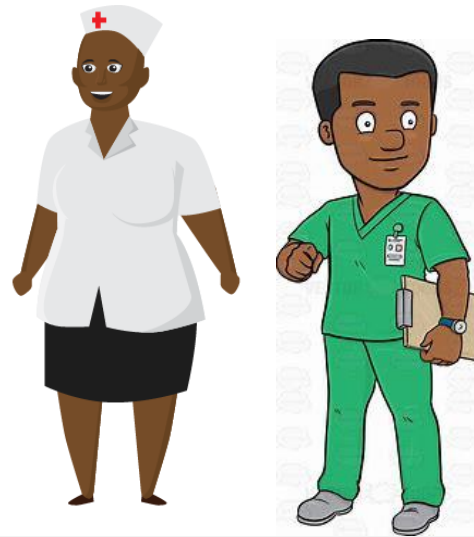
## Educational leaders and stakeholders



### What can educational leaders and stakeholders do for older persons?

- They should mainstream older people's International Day celebrations in the school calendar.
- There is an urgent need for educationists to develop inter-generational activities that will be included in the school calendar annually.
- Educationists should advocate for aging education in schools.
- They should also solicit for the development and production of age-sensitive textbooks.
- They should develop children's rhymes that promote aging as a blessing and teach them how to sing the verses.
- Educationists should provide out-of-school learning opportunities to those older persons still open to learning.
- Encourage the old Girls and Boys Association to institute support to aged teachers, heads of schools, and non-academic staff in their former institutions of learning.
- They should provide classes for older people's caregivers, where they can train caregivers on age-appropriate caregiving for older people.

## Community health institutions and Social workers



### **What can community health institutions and social workers do for older persons?**

- These workers should treat the older people respectfully and attend to them FIRST when they consult or visit their clinics.
- They should visit older persons, especially those with disabilities, in their homes.
- They should set out a day to gather the older persons in the community and sensitize them about their health challenges and how to cope with them.
- These workers should create a corner in the community clinic where older persons can have age-sensitive attention and information.
- Ensure that some of the older persons' essential medications are free of charge, such as painkillers.
- Help carry out studies on the home-grown foods available within the community and identify those that support healthy aging; and then consistently inform the older and their family members about this list of food items.
- They should seek collaborations with wealthy individuals, private firms, donor agencies, and medical associations to carry out medical missions to older persons.