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## ***ARMA Contributions of the older refugees' s rights***

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### **Introduction**

Statistic indicates that there are 89.3 million displaced people globally out of which 27.1 million are refugees (UNHCR, 2022) with older refugees constituting only about 4% (UNHCR, 2022). As of 2022, 76% of these refugees were from 10 countries of the world which include; Eritrea, Central African Republic, Somalia, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rohingya, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Syria (Concern World, 2023; UNHCR, 2022). While Turkiye, Columbia, Germany, Pakistan and Uganda remain the largest hosts of global refugees (UNHCR, 2022).

Studies reveal that refugees across the world face various challenges such as access to education, school, security, unemployment, health care and above all human right abuses (Ruisi, 2019; Verkuyten, Altabatabaei & Nooitgedagt, 2018; Crea, Loughry, O’Halloran & Flannery, 2017). However, of more serious concern is the challenges and human right abuse faced by elderly refugees in their host countries. The predicament of elderly refugees is usually tragic and pathetic. The UNHCR reports on elderly people in emergency situation indicate that elderly refugees are faced with three major challenges which include lasting dependency, social integration and adverse selection. Furthermore, Lipson and Omipidan (1992) reveal that the situation of refugee is quite different from other people in refugee-like situations because of their perceived fragility due to their old age. Besides, Bazzi and Chemali (2016) and Stewart et al.(2017) note that most older refugees lack access to medication and social support in their host countries. Burton and Breen (2002) emphasized that the situations of older refugees are more likely to be risky and perilous because they have nowhere to go, and no one looks after them. According to the author, the ability of elderly refugees in camps and host countries to achieve their basic needs is more likely to be limited by physical infirmity, psychosocial issues, and a lack of assistance. Also, elderly refugees are seen as contributing nothing to the society and the economy; hence, the reason for their marginalisation and abuse (Yusuf, 2021). It is based on this that this paper looks at some of the rights of the older refugees as well as recommendation to address older refugee abuse.

## **Elderly Refugee rights**

Even though there is no international convention on the rights and privileges of older refugees, some legal frameworks advanced by countries and international organizations emphasize certain rights and privileges. While some of these legal frameworks are specific to elderly refugees, others refer to refugees in general. For instance, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the United Nations Principles for Older Persons in 1991. From these principles, 18 relate to elderly people. These principles relate to independence, participation, care, dignity and self-fulfilment of older people. According to Allaire (2013) the principles underpin the safety needs of elderly people which include security, access to social and legal services, and access to a fair system of justice. The Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 led to a Political Declaration and an International Plan of Action on Ageing (United Nations, 2002). This plan suggests some measures that member countries should take to improve the conditions of the older. The three priority areas under the above procedure are “older persons and development; advancing health and wellbeing into old age; and ensuring that older people benefit from enabling and supportive

environments” (United Nations, 2002 cited in Barbelet, 2018:14). Nonetheless, some empirical assessments of the above plans revealed that they did not achieve the purposes they were created. This could perhaps be because the agreements were non-binding to member countries and no provisions for additional resources for their implementations and inadequate monitoring mechanisms (HelpAge International & Samuel, 2017).

The Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action was established in advance of the World Humanitarian Summit in May 2016. This concerns people of all ages, including the older who are suffering from some kinds of disabilities. About 160 stakeholders endorsed this plan. The plan enhances humanitarian actions for specific groups that are vulnerable (HelpAge International & Samuel, 2017). Besides, a plan for humanitarian inclusion standards for older people and people with disabilities was initiated and made (ADCAP, 2018). To concretise the needs and concerns of the older people, the United Nations General Assembly has made various resolutions calling member countries, UNHCR and other UN relevant agencies to ensure that the needs and concerns of the older are addressed, and their circumstances and conditions are improved.

## Recommendation

1. There is need for government of host countries to develop a framework on implementations of rights of refugees as contained refugee law/Act of their countries. This can be done if special agencies are created for implementation and monitoring.
2. Government, international organisations, NGOs, NBOs and other stakeholders in refugee management must be involved in integration of refugees especially the elderly refugees in their host communities. Stakeholders must ensure that during integration, the needs, capabilities as well as obstacles and challenges elderly refugees are likely to face in their host communities are adequately addressed. Most importantly, access to basic amenities and healthcare services must be prioritized.
3. On the right of refugees on security, adequate provision must be made by stakeholders about protection and security of elderly refugees especially those who reside outside the camp environment. Host nations need strengthen the capacity and ability of security agencies to respond to crime and abuse of elderly refugees in camps and host communities. This can be done with the presence of police in the camps and host communities to protect the rights of vulnerable refugees such as the elderly refugees.

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