

# OUR VOICES, OUR RIGHTS

## WHAT OLDER PEOPLE SAY ABOUT THE NORMATIVE ELEMENTS OF THEIR RIGHT TO AUTONOMY AND INDEPENDENCE

### CAMEROON



Older people in Cameroon value their autonomy and independence very highly and want to see their right to this officially recognised by their government or the United Nations.

This is the main finding of a consultation held from December 2018 – January 2019 with 100 older people. Participants were asked what they thought about different aspects of autonomy and independence. The findings presented here aim to capture their views. They are not intended to be representative of the population of older people as a whole.

#### ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS



100 in total:  
51 women  
49 men



50% urban  
49% rural



84% with disabilities

#### Deciding where and with whom to live

Ninety-nine per cent of participants said having the freedom to decide where and with whom to live was very important or important. Having this freedom meant they were 'free to live their own life' and were 'responsible'. They felt 'happy' and a 'full person'. They had their 'liberty'.

*'I am a person living in liberty.'*  
64-year-old woman

#### Making decisions about what matters in life

Every participant said having the freedom to make decisions based on their own will and preferences about the things that mattered to them was very important or important. Having freedom to make these decisions made them 'feel at ease'. It gave them 'power'. They felt 'respected' and able to 'play all parts of life'.

*'I am considered a human being with rights.'*  
76-year-old woman

#### Autonomy and independence in everyday activities and participation in society

Every participant said it was very important or important to carry out everyday activities based on their own will and preferences. Having freedom to carry out these activities as they wished was important to be 'integrated in the community', lead a 'normal life', be 'independent' and not feel 'useless'.

*'It means that I am able to exploit my potential.'*  
70-year-old woman

#### Deciding about care and support services

Ninety-seven per cent said it was very important or important to make their own decisions about their care and support, including planning ahead for future support.

*'It's good for me. I decide if it's necessary or not.'*  
68-year-old man

### Supported decision-making

Ninety-eight per cent said it was very important or important to have access to support for making decisions about their care and support.

Ninety-nine per cent said it was very important or important to have a trusted person or persons to support them in decision-making about their care and support.

Ninety-nine per cent said it was very important or important to have the opportunity to issue advance instructions about the kind of medical care or treatment they wanted to receive in the future.

### Deciding about palliative care

Ninety-seven per cent said it was very important or important to decide for themselves, with support if necessary, the type of palliative care they would receive if they needed it. Freedom to choose their palliative care was important because they 'have that right'. They wanted 'to have a good end of life', 'to die without pain' and 'in peace', and to end their life 'with dignity' and 'in control'.

*'I am free even at the end of my life.'*  
*66-year-old man*

### Overall response by gender

Women and men value their autonomy and independence equally highly. On average, 99 per cent of women and 98 per cent of men said it was very important or important to them.<sup>2</sup>

### Official recognition of rights by the government or the United Nations

Ninety-nine per cent said it was very important or important that their government or the United Nations officially recognise their right to autonomy and independence.<sup>3</sup>

Recognition would 'change their lives'. It would lead to 'better treatment' and necessary 'practical assistance'. Other people would 'know and respect' their rights. They could live 'with dignity' and would not be 'discriminated against'.

*'It gets to prove that I am a citizen of my country.'*  
*70-year-old woman*



1. 1% answered 'I don't know'.
2. Average based on responses to a number of questions about the level of importance attached to normative elements of the right to autonomy and independence.
3. Average based on responses to a number of questions about recognition of the normative elements of the right to autonomy and independence.

This consultation was funded by Svenska Postkod Stiftelsen (Swedish Postcode Foundation) and conducted by Association Camerounaise pour la Prise en charge des Personnes Agées (ACAMAGE)

Copyright © The Global Alliance for the Rights of Older People 2019

[www.rightsofolderpeople.org](http://www.rightsofolderpeople.org)