

# OUR VOICES, OUR RIGHTS

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

### TANZANIA



Older people in Tanzania value their autonomy and independence 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 98 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



98 in total:  
51 women  
47 men



60% urban  
40% rural



39% with  
disabilities

#### Deciding where and with whom to live

Eighty-six per cent of participants said having the freedom to decide where and with whom to live was very important or important. This was important for their 'self-confidence'. They could 'control their life' and people would 'respect their decisions'.

'It means nobody can force me out of the place where I live.'  
*70-year-old woman*

#### Making decisions about what matters in life

Ninety-three per cent 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. It meant 'respect and dignity'. It meant being 'responsible' and 'ready to face the outcome' without 'blaming anyone' and with 'less regret' if the outcome is 'bad'.

'Important things for me cannot be decided by another person. Because what is important to me may not be important to him or her.'  
*80-year-old woman*

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

Ninety-four per cent said it was very important or important to carry out everyday activities based on their own will and preferences. This made them feel 'liberated' and 'respected in society'. They could 'plan their activities' and 'do things effectively.'

'Because I know what is good for me.'  
*69-year-old man*

#### Deciding about care and support services

Ninety 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.

'My freedom to decide support services means a lot. These support services concern me, so I'm happy to decide which support services are easily available and suit my situation.'  
*64-year-old man*

### Supported decision-making

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

Ninety-seven 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-six 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-five 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. This would give them 'hope for the future' that they would be 'cared for and respected.' It was 'the right of every person, young or old'.

'[This] care is for my own life. I must have the right to freely choose.'  
*71-year-old woman*

### Overall response by gender

Women and men value their autonomy and independence almost equally highly. On average, 91 per cent of women and 95 per cent of men said it was very important or important to them.<sup>1</sup>

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

Ninety-three 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>2</sup>

Recognition would enable them 'to claim their rights'. It would make services 'affordable' and 'available to all'. Recognition was important to 'increase awareness', 'protect' rights and make them 'real' and 'effective'.

'This recognition by both the government and the United Nations will help to extend the right to autonomy to all older people at all levels, even at village level.'  
*60-year-old man*



Ben Small/HelpAge International



Kate Holt/Age International

1. 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.

2. Average based on responses to a number of questions about recognition of the normative elements of the right to autonomy and independence.

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