

CELEBRATING THE WORLD DAY FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THE ELDERLY ON 26TH JULY 2026

Ageing with Dignity: A National Responsibility

By Sr. Agnes Nguire

Executive Director, Care for Ageing Sisters Association Kenya (CASAK)

Everyone hopes to age with dignity, good health, and the assurance that they remain valued. Yet for many older persons in Kenya, ageing brings loneliness, chronic illness, reduced independence, and limited access to specialized care. As life expectancy rises, we must ask ourselves: are we creating a society where people can grow older with dignity?

This 26th of July, as we celebrate the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, we are reminded that older persons are not simply beneficiaries of care. They are our parents, grandparents, teachers, religious men and women, community leaders, and custodians of our history, culture, and faith. Their contributions have shaped our nation and our communities. They deserve not only our gratitude but also our commitment to ensuring that their later years are lived in dignity, security, and hope.

Kenya, like many countries across Africa, is experiencing a demographic transition. More people are living longer due to advances in health care and improved living conditions. While this is a remarkable achievement, it also presents new challenges. Our health and care systems, communities, and families must be prepared to respond to the growing needs of an ageing population.

Unfortunately, geriatric care remains an underdeveloped area within our health system. Many families find themselves caring for ageing relatives without adequate knowledge or support. Caregivers often carry heavy physical, emotional, and financial responsibilities. Older persons living with dementia, frailty, or multiple chronic conditions frequently struggle to access coordinated and specialized care.

Healthy ageing is about much more than the absence of disease. It is about enabling people to maintain their physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being throughout life. It means creating environments where older persons remain connected to their families, participate in community life, access quality health care, and continue to live with purpose and respect.

Building such a society requires collective responsibility. Government agencies must continue strengthening policies that protect older persons. Health-care institutions need to invest in geriatric services and professional training. Educational institutions should

prepare the next generation of caregivers and health professionals. Faith-based organizations have a unique role in accompanying older persons with compassion while advocating for their dignity. Communities must foster inclusion rather than isolation, and families must continue to cherish the invaluable presence of their older members.

One of the greatest investments Kenya can make is in caregiver education. Compassion is essential, but compassion alone is not enough. Caregivers need practical skills in healthy ageing, dementia care, brain health, palliative care, communication, safeguarding, and person-centred care. When caregivers are well trained and supported, the quality of life of older persons improves significantly.

At the Care for Ageing Sisters Association Kenya (CASAK), we believe that ageing is not a burden but a natural stage of life that deserves thoughtful preparation and compassionate care. Through caregiver training, advocacy, research, partnerships, and the promotion of healthy ageing and brain health, CASAK is working to strengthen care systems for older religious sisters and, increasingly, for older persons within the wider community. Our vision is simple but transformative: changing the way we live, the way we age, and the way we care for older persons.

As we commemorate the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on 26th July 2026, let us move beyond celebration to action. Let us visit an older neighbour, spend time with a grandparent, support a caregiver, advocate for age-friendly policies, and promote respect for every older person. Small acts of compassion, when multiplied across our communities, create lasting change.

The measure of a society is reflected in how it treats its older citizens. If we aspire to build a compassionate, just, and inclusive Kenya, then we must place the dignity of older persons at the centre of our national development. Ageing is not someone else's future; it is our shared future.

Let this month be more than a commemoration. Let it be the beginning of a renewed national commitment to ensuring that every Kenyan can grow older with dignity, purpose, and hope.

About the Author

Sr. Agnes Ngure is the Executive Director of the Care for Ageing Sisters Association Kenya (CASAK). She is enthusiastic about healthy ageing, geriatric care, brain health, caregiver development, and building compassionate care systems that uphold the dignity and well-being of older persons through training, advocacy, research, and partnerships.