

GROWING OLD WELL TOGETHER IN A GREENER GARDEN

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MAZINGIRA DAY | 10 OCTOBER

**The environment
we care for today is the
environment in which
we will grow old**

Caring for our common home.
Preparing for our own ageing.



CASAK

Care for Aging Sisters Association Kenya

Today, as Kenya marks Mazingira Day, I find myself thinking about growing older. What will our homes and communities feel like when our steps become slower, our eyesight changes, or we need someone's support?

Mazingira means environment in Kiswahili. Celebrated on 10 October, this day calls us to care for our surroundings through conservation, tree growing and keeping our communities clean. For me, it also raises a personal question: How can I create a place where I would feel comfortable as I age? How can you create a place where you would feel comfortable as you age?

I think of a tree offering shade, a level path leading to the chapel, or a bench where someone can sit and enjoy a conversation. These ordinary things can make a difference to an older person's day.

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis connects care for the earth with care for people (§139). *"When we speak of the 'environment', what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it"* He also asks us to consider the world we pass on to future generations (§159). His message invites me to see environmental care as an expression of love and responsibility.

At CASAK, our Shelter and Environment pillar reminds us to pay attention to where ageing and infirm sisters live. A room may be clean, but is it comfortable? A garden may be beautiful, but can everyone reach it? We can begin by asking older persons: "What would make life easier for you?" Then listen. Sometimes the answer may be better lighting, a handrail, or somewhere to sit with others.

As we plant trees today, let us also notice the people around us. Let us make space for their comfort, companionship and belonging. One day, we too may welcome that shade, need that handrail, or hope someone will sit beside us.

About the Author

Sr. Agnes Ngure is the Executive Director of the Care for Aging Sisters Association Kenya (CASAK). CASAK promotes healthy aging and dignified care through caregiver training, advocacy, participation in research, partnerships, brain health promotion, and the strengthening of sustainable systems of care for older persons.