



# Responding to the need for caregivers for older people in Uganda: Experience of a small local NGO



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# Older People in Uganda

There are about 1.5 million persons aged 60 years and older in Uganda, representing about 5% of the population. They are a vulnerable group of people, largely neglected by governments and the international aid community. Many older Ugandans live in extreme poverty. Elder abuse is common, sometimes going as far as murder, with old women being accused of being witches. And yet older people play a vital role in Ugandan society. In particular, they provide much of the care for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS.



# Methods

Three projects were conducted. First, in 2006, TAFU and Age Concern Devon were brought together by the International Federation on Ageing to carry out a survey of the lives and experiences of 382 isolated older persons living in seven regions of Uganda. Second, TAFU worked with the African Palliative Care Association to carry out a situation analysis of the needs of older persons. Third, TAFU, with financial help from Unie KBO, used the findings of the first two studies to develop a training program to empower caregivers with basic geriatric knowledge and skills.

# Main Problems Facing Older People

## TAFU Survey

Not enough food	143 (72%)
Lack of income	140 (72%)
Child dying of AIDS	133 (67%)
Poor access to health care	102 (51%)
Abuse (including neglect)	42 (21%)
Property tax	10 (5%)
Lack of political representation	7 (4%)



# Patients' Views Palliative Care Study



“There is nothing I do, because I cannot walk or even crawl. I stay here from morning to day break, I just get my rosary and pray... My biggest challenge is pain; I have a burning pain in the legs, it's eating me up.”

“My problem is that my legs are swollen and very painful, I was advised to go to Mukono (health centre) in the maternity ward and get free treatment, but even I do not have the two thousand shillings to take me there.”



# Carers' Views Palliative Care Study



“Taking care of these elderly patients is a full time job. It becomes difficult for me to leave the patient alone. Often I fail to make it to hospital for my own treatment and medication.”

“I want to know how to...measure high blood pressure and diabetes, then the malaria. I want them to teach me. I think I can make it...Anyway we need training...in fact we need training. We really want it.”



# Caregiver Training Program

The TAFU caregiver training program has so far involved 218 community caregivers, including local council leaders, who have been trained on how to care for older persons, especially isolated older persons. To date, 75 households are beneficiaries of the program.



*[The Carer] is a wonderful Ambassador of TAFU! She is professional, loving, caring, compassionate, and has a big heart for the elderly. I yet have to see somebody who acts like a nurse, physiotherapist, nutritionist, prayer woman - in short, with a big loving character - as this lady. Since they arrived here on 9th September, the old lady has picked up weight, and is able to give the warmest smile you could ever get!!*

*So, to end, thank you so much TAFU for the good work you are doing for our elderly people, given the way the world is moving fast now and the basukulu cannot always be available to serve the bajaaja (forgive my little Luganda - I am from Kapchorwa!!).*

**MAY GOD RICHLY BLESS YOU AS YOU TAKE TAFU COUNTRY-WIDE, AND ALSO GUIDE YOU AS YOU ENGAGE LOVING AND CARING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WILL TAKE CARE OF THE ELDERLY IN A DIGNIFIED, TENDER-LOVING MANNER!!**

Testimonial from son of a TAFU client