

**Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission**

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**A brief information on position of older persons in Afghanistan**

Protection of older person

In Afghanistan religion and tradition are very determinant factors in every aspect of economic, social and cultural life. Afghanistan is a Muslim dominant country in which protection and care for older parents is considered as religious obligation for all to care for their parents. Most of the population still live in extended families where most of couple live together with the parents of husband. Both parents and their children share their income to run the whole family.

 A research study conducted by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in 2012 reveals that 9.7% of older persons in Afghanistan have more than 9 children, 40.30% have 6-9, 36.60 % have 3-5 children and only 5.90% have no children.

In Afghanistan, in every extended families, mostly the eldest or at least one of the male children care for parents for the whole life. And if an old man or women has no male child, then one of their daughter or their brothers’ family have to care for them.

The research shows that 57% of older men are cared by their wives and 20.60% of older women are cared by their husbands; 43.90 % of older women and 23.70% of older men are cared by their suns.

Those older persons who have children with good economy enjoy of their old age position because they are fully supported by their children in terms of access to special food ration, geriatric health care and treatment and community engagement. It is very difficult in Afghanistan for older parents to live alone without their children, and on the other hand, they cannot afford to live without their children.

During the research study about 90% of older persons (interviewees) have said that they are respected very well by their family members and relatives.

At village level, according to religious believes, villagers have to care for those older persons who have no child, or their children are very poor who cannot afford to care for their parents at the level of minimum requirements.

**Government and older persons**

The Article 53rd of the Afghanistan Constitution reads:

“The state shall adopt necessary measures to regulate medical services as well as

financial aid to survivors of martyrs and missing persons, and for the rehabilitation of

disabled and handicapped and their active participation in society, in accordance with

provision of the law.

The state shall guarantee the rights if retirees, and shall render necessary aid to the

elderly, women without caretaker, disabled and handicapped as well as poor orphans, in

accordance with the provision of the law.”

The Afghan government is executing the pension law only for retired civil servants and security personnel who are paid annually. And in persuasion of the Law on the Rights of Person with Disabilities and other legal instruments, the government pay monthly salary for a number of persons who have become disabled during war and family members of those soldiers who lost their live in war. These categories of people regularly receive their annual pension salary, but the older persons belonging to 75% of the population, who have been farmers or had private business, have no pension rights. On the other hand, the establishment and operation of private companies has not properly regulated by the law in the country so as to monitor the process of standards recruitment procedure and pension pay system. Therefore, employees of private companied has no legal instrument in hand to claim for their pension rights. A few number of private companies including NGOs provide the retired employees with small severance pay but not retirement salary.

The AIHRC’s research study shows that living expenses of 35.30 % of older retired persons is covered by their annual pension pay. But the living expenses of 34.90% of older persons covers by their son, 15.70% depend on daily working and about 10 % of older persons covers are dependent on street begging and other charity aids.

The government so far has not drafted any law, in compliance with the Article 53 of the Constitution, to care or support particularly poor and support-less older persons. Poor older persons survive on charity. A number of them has no house, live in tents in IDP centers or in slum areas. So far nor the government neither social organizations has developed such a program to protect poor older persons. The obligation for caring poor and homeless older persons are always argued between the Ministry of Work, Social Affairs, Martyred and Disabled Persons and Afghan Red Crescent Society and none of these two institutions has protection/care center for poor older persons.

The AIHRC’s research study shows that 60% of older persons live in their own private house, 28% live in rented houses, 10.9% live free of charge at villages and 205% live in tents in IDP camps or slum areas.

At community level, older persons are respected by all community members. They enjoy of different priorities at community level. Older persons are known as resource person on community affairs and are consulted for various community issues such as dispute on family, land and water issues.

In Afghanistan while older person are respected and are requested to advice on community issues, however, age factor affects the social activities of persons. Interviewees responding to the question on relation between the age factor and social position, 50.80% of older persons agree that social position of a person affects as age increased and 47.90 disagreed.

Older persons in Afghanistan suffer from health problems. 79% of interviewees in the AIHRC;s research study said that they have chronic and 21% have acute health problems. 35.7 % suffer from orthopedic problem, 20% suffer from heart and lung problems, 10% suffer from gastrointestinal problems, 3.4% suffer from urological problems, 16% suffer from vision and hearing impairment and about 15% suffer from other diseases. Responding to the question that who pay for their treatment expenses, 56.70 % of interviewees have said that it covers by their children, 29.80% said that it covers by its own income, 7.6% said that their treatment cost bear by their relatives and 3.80% covers by charity aid.

Despite that Afghan people still live under conflict situation, but still people are interested to enjoy of their political rights. Oder persons as others are willing to enjoy of their right to participation. As of the AIHRC’s research, 63% of older persons in Afghanistan have said that they are willing to vote in the presidential and parliamentary elections and only 24% of old aged interviewees said that oldness declines their interest to political participation.