

ELDER ABUSE AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: PERSPECTIVES FROM NIGERIA

OLAYINKA AJOMALE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**CENTRE ON AGEING,
DEVELOPMENT AND
RIGHTS OF OLDER
PERSONS**

OUTLINE OF PRESENTATION

- **Elder abuse in Nigeria: awareness and definitions**
- **Human rights and the wider development context**
- **Policy formulation on older persons**
- **Human rights and social sector policy**
- **Social sector old age discrimination?**
- **Further human rights abuses against older persons: indications**
- **What should be done**
- **Instruments of realisation**

ELDER ABUSE IN NIGERIA: AWARENESS AND DEFINITIONS



- **Very limited public awareness or study of elder abuse**
- **Prevailing myth. ‘We take care of our elders’**
- **No consensus or framework on what practices may constitute elder abuse in the Nigerian context: different conceptions depending on ethnic, cultural and religious perspectives/contexts**

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE WIDER DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

- **Realization of human rights an explicit goal of recent core development agendas in sub-Saharan Africa, as part of emphasis on ‘social’ and ‘human-development’**
- **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (e.g. in Nigeria: NEEDS, SEEDS, LEEDS)**
- **Constitution of Nigeria (1999)**

POLICY FORMULATION ON OLDER PERSONS

- As part of the broad emphasis on human rights, and prompted by the UN Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid in 2002, various SSA governments have formulated policy documents on older persons
- -African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing (2003)
- -Various national policy frameworks
- -e.g. Nigeria: National Policy on Care and well-being of the Elderly (Draft 2003)
- National Policy on Ageing (Draft 2006)

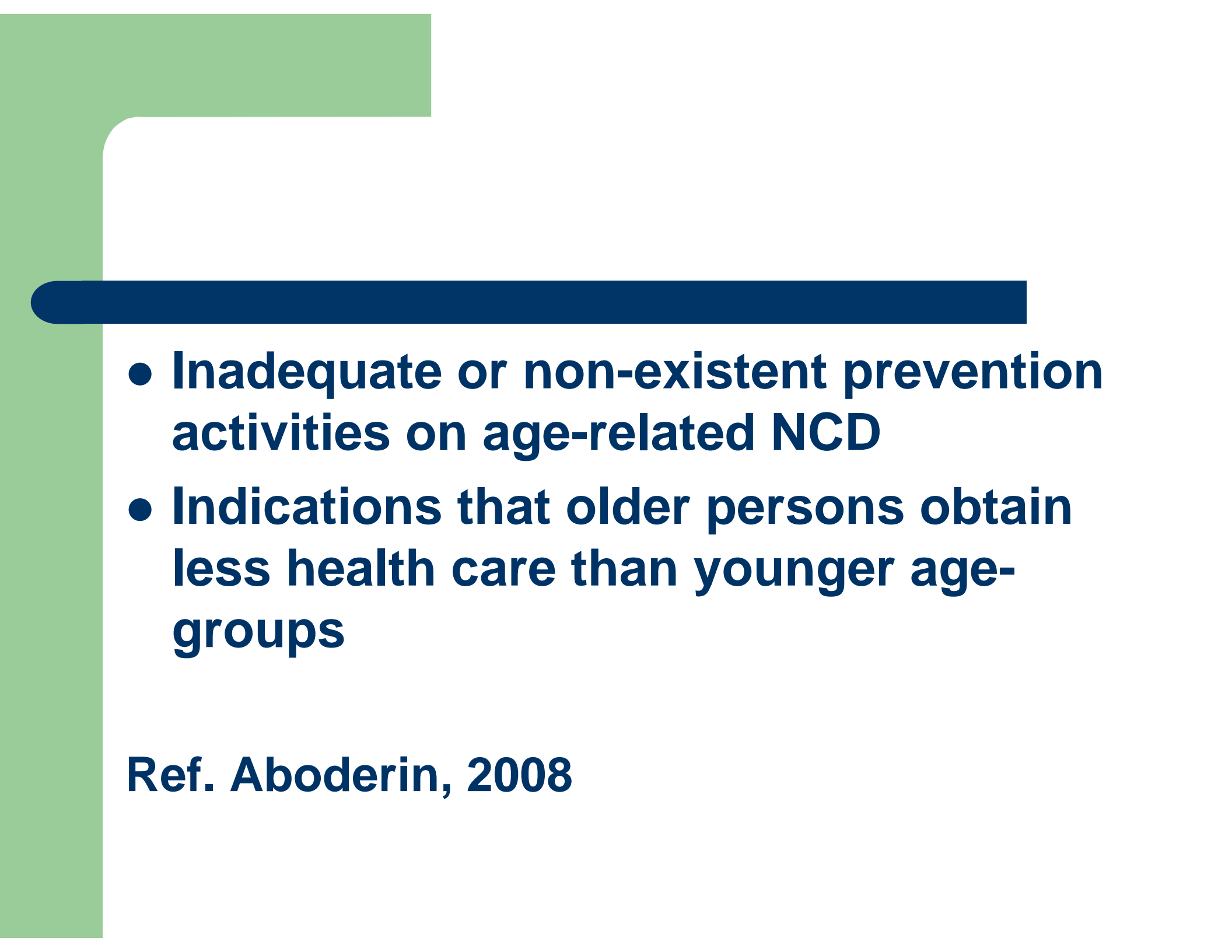
- 
- 
- **Yet, (as in many other SSA countries) national policy has not yet been enacted or ratified and no policy action has ensued**
 - **Ultimately, ageing, older persons not a priority**
 - **Ref: Aboderin & Ferreira, 2008**

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL SECTOR POLICY

- While broad development agendas and rhetoric emphasizes rights and dignity for all, actual social sector policy remains highly circumscribed:
- Narrow, MDG-driven focus on children, youth and adults, especially women of reproductive age, through investments in
- Main policy goals: expansion of basic education, reduction of child and maternal mortality, halting spread of HIV/AIDS
- Education sector focus: expansion of primary school enrolment
- Health sector focus: control of infectious diseases (malaria, TB, AIDS) and improvement of maternal and reproductive health

SOCIAL SECTOR (OLD) AGE DISCRIMINATION?

- **Narrow social sector focus results in inadequate public provision for basic needs of older persons, particularly in the area of health:**
- **No routine and subsidized provision of drugs to prevent, control or treat age-related non-communicable disease (e.g. hypertension, diabetes, stroke, arthritis, cataract)**
- **Inadequate or non-existent provision for the diagnosis of age-related NCD**

- 
- **Inadequate or non-existent prevention activities on age-related NCD**
 - **Indications that older persons obtain less health care than younger age-groups**



Ref. Aboderin, 2008

FURTHER HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AGAINST OLDER PERSONS: INDICATIONS

- **Societal policy level**
- **Serious de-faulting on payment of public-sector pensions (with grave consequences for older persons)**
- **Community level:**
- **Family level:**

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

- **Building of a systematic and culturally grounded classificatory framework for identifying conditions and practices of elder abuse and age discrimination at societal-policy, community and family levels**

- 
- 
- **Forging of robust documentation and raising of awareness of the nature, and occurrence of (old) age discrimination and human rights abuses against older persons at societal-policy, community and family levels**

- 
- 
- **Development of interventions or community programmes drawing on relevant experiences gained and lessons learnt in other developing (or developed) countries**

INSTRUMENTS OF REALISATION

- **Dedicated civil society organizations in collaboration with researchers**
- **Faith Based Organizations**
- **The media**

**Thank you very
much for listening!**

