

**NSINDAGIZA Intervention: Normative elements on palliative care
By Rose Gahire**

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Thank you Chair.

Today, all around the world, the availability of palliative care is very limited or non-existent, resulting in unnecessary suffering for millions of patients. Palliative care is fundamental to health and human dignity and is a basic human right. There is no explicit standard on the right to palliative care in international human rights law.

The concept of palliative care is a completely new concept to many older people and services are limited or non-existent in many communities. An older woman in Rwanda said “we have no idea of what palliative care is.” This should not be the case, palliative care should be known and available to all and free as air.

In 2011 in Rwanda, a stand-alone palliative care policy was approved and in 2012 a law was approved to authorize the use of palliative care medications. Despite having a palliative care policy there are a number of challenges in its implementation. There is no Ministerial law on how to implement the policy, no budget, nurses and pharmacist are not yet allowed to prescribe palliative care medication and the policy is generic so that it does not specifically address older people’s needs.

Older people have a right to adequate knowledge and awareness on palliative care. They have the right to know how they can access palliative care services and should be involved in the design, development and implementation of the palliative care policy. Older people should be able to make decisions about their end of life care, it is their right.

States must ensure effective access to information so that older persons can access palliative care as early from the time of diagnosis of a life-threatening illness or serious chronic illness to prevent unnecessary delay. States must ensure accessibility, availability and affordability of palliative care medication and services.

The world needs to stop viewing older people as helpless and or charity cases or being undeserving of palliative care, but as rights holders whose rights must be protected on an equal basis with others. We urgently need new international standards on the right to palliative care.

Thank you.