

PROFESSOR REBECCA NTHOGO LEKOKO

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BIO AND BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

I am an adult educator by profession. A full-professor who retired from the University of Botswana 2 years ago having taught, researched, published and engaged in lifelong learning, community development, community empowerment, community-based and participatory research. Currently working on a contract basis for the government.

ENGAGEMENT IN AGE-FRIENDLY SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS

Professor Rebecca Nthogo Lekoko is a Co-Founder of Ageless Inspirations Charitable Organization and a founder of University of the Third Age (U3A), Botswana, both addressing age-friendly services of the elderly, 55 years and over. U3A niche is lifelong learning, lifeskills for older adults and research on older adults while Ageless Inspirations looks at their lives holistically – Age with Rights.

Ageless Inspirations is a new organization, Registered in 2021. Apart from being fully registered, Ageless Inspirations was granted accreditation to the UN general Assembly Open-Ended Working Group on Ageing at meeting held 3-6 April 2023 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It also made its first appearance at the just ended International Federation on Ageing (IFA) 16th Global Conference held at Bangkok, Thailand, 27-30 June 2023. Prof Lekoko presented two papers on Family Care Giving and A Policy on Older Adults at this IFA conference. She also participated in a dialogue about the current and

future trends in healthy ageing in a symposium entitled ‘The Implementation of the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing’. She has led a 50/50 Global Pioneer conversation with a theme, “I am who I am: An older person’s self-concept”. Believing that it is never too late to learn and that older adults are trailblazers, the motto for her organizations is ‘Each one teaches the other’ - that is, people are empowered through empowering others; as the African axiom goes, “I am because you are” (Mbiti).

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

Prof Rebecca Lekoko is a Motswana whose professional career trails a wide academic sphere; primary, secondary, teacher education and tertiary/university level. Her education beyond foundational has been done in Botswana (University of Botswana), Canada (University of Alberta) and USA (Pennsylvania State University). She is a full professor of adult education (specifically lifelong learning and community development). She did a short course on Gerontology and Geriatrics with the International Institute on Ageing, United Nations - Malta (INIA) in collaboration with the Dave Omokaro Foundation INIA Satellite Centre for Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria.

Prof Lekoko has a long career as an academic specializing in adult education, especially in the areas of lifelong learning and community development. In her position as a Professor of Adult Education, her practices weave together diverse and pertinent issues pertaining to education for empowerment, lifeskills, citizen education, mobilization strategies as well as participatory approaches.

ADVOCACY FOR EMPOWERMENT

Prof is a passionate advocate for empowerment of the rather underprivileged or excluded groups such as older adults, people with disability and the poor. She has passion on age-friendly services and thus engages in international dialogues with different groups like Global PION Age Advocacy groups, Pion Southern African Network, Global Pioneer 50/50 Conversation, all under the coordination of Pass-it-On Network, Paris, France. Prof Lekoko has also attended a number of debates by the International Federation on Ageing (IFA) Global Café and gets empowered also through IFA’s newsletter. She is regularly updated about the UN Open Ended Working Group on Ageing, especially through her affiliation to the Pass-It-On. She has been a participant in a study on ‘Civil Society mobilization for the rights of older persons carried by the Global Alliance for the Rights

of Older People. Coupled with these platforms, Prof Lekoko is getting a firm grounding on age friendly services nationally, she is a member of Aging Directory Group of the University of Botswana that also discusses issues around rights of older adults and support needs. This background has been inspirational in her effort to run CE-CE Resorts for the elderly and Ageless Inspirations.

In the last twenty-five years of her profession as a community development agent, she enjoyed spending quality time volunteering services to underprivileged groups especially older adults, Deaf and Blind communities under the auspices of non-profit making companies such as Sign Language and Skills Development Centre and Pono Low Vision Society. Prof. Lekoko has a firm belief that together, with multiple voices and one goal, we can create pathways for very one to live a happy life; by caring for and appreciating others as we would like to be loved and cared for. She strives to honor these principles in her life and services.

FLAGSHIP PUBLICATIONS

Prof Lekoko's flagship publications in the areas of lifelong learning, empowerment, community development as well as issues of older adults include Lifelong learning for Africa's older adults: Botswana (Older Adults): Perspectives on older adult education: Visible Barriers to Economic Empowerment: Lessons from San Wood Carvers of Botswana, The Crossroads that Were Never Meant to Be: An Account of Promises and Challenges in an Orphan's Empowerment Journey, Training for a living: Can women street vendors be counted in? Botswana; Leveraging community-university engagements for social impact with lifelong penchants" Cases on Grassroots Campaigns for community empowerment and social change; An engaged learning: A pocket resource for building community living skills; Cases on developing countries and ICT integration: Rural community development. Community Learning Centres as Podia for Technology Enhanced Ubiquitous Learning and others. She has published extensively in local and international outlets such International Journal of Lifelong, Community Development Journal, Journal of Family Ecology and Consumer Sciences.

RESEARCH ENGAGEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Prof Lekoko serves in a number of research networks. She is a member of Sustainable Futures in Africa Strategic Research Network - a network that aims to consult extensively and engage community of development experts to identify, discuss and map out community strategies and pedagogies that can help build sustainable futures in Africa for innovation and inclusive

economic growth; PASCAL International Member Association (PIMA) - a global network of experienced individual adult learning and education professionals, with an active interest in the different dimensions and contexts of lifelong, wide and deep learning; African-Swedish Adult Educators partnership; Adult Literacy Research Network and Knowledge, Innovation and Enterprise (KIE) Communities of Practice - a knowledge-sharing and networking forum under the aegis of the Academy of Innovation and Management and World Education Fellowship; the MOJA Adult Learning researchers and others. These are great platforms to engage in research and debates on older adults' rights, support needs and empowerment.

HER ASPIRATIONS

Motto: Empower Self by Empowering Others

Recreation and Well-being

- Run a Resort
- The proposed CE-CE Resort: Blissful Golden Years, is an age- friendly services to the elderly, 55 years and over; targeting all categories within this age group including the vulnerable and marginalised, senior citizen influencers, retirees in private, NGOs and public institutions, senior citizens working class, senior citizens non- working groups, etc. The Resort will offer variety of services to appeal to diverse interests and needs of this age group. Services will include seniors' recreational activities, relaxation rooms and lodging facilities, health and wellness services, lifelong learning and enrichment activities, conference/seminars/workshops as well as some tailor-made value added services.
- Sports and other well-being activities for older adults

Training and Research Interests

- Age with Rights: Awareness and Conscientization: We're all aging at all age groups
- Pre and post retirement
- Entrepreneurial skills – e.g. Old adults and microfinances
- Family structures and care giving for older adults
- Advancing self-advocacy
- Community justice (poverty, discrimination and abuse)
- Older adults' voices in community and national development
- Combating Ageing inequities and promoting Ageing Rights
- Intergenerational relationships – Connecting with the young generations

- Chronological age approach and other types of ages: Their interplay
- Healthy aging discourses
- Digital services for older adults
- Empowerment and lifeskills training
- Identity politics and self-concept

Signed: 