

22 - 24 May 2026

Munich , Germany

Governance Deficits and the Ageing Crisis in Africa: Rethinking State Responsibility for Social Protection in the 21st Century

Prof. Dr. Daniel Chigudu

University Alliance Ruhr, Germany

Abstract

The ageing population in Africa is on the rise, but social protection systems across the continent are very weak. This paper demonstrates that the continent's ageing crisis is not just a resource deficit but also a governance crisis rooted in institutional weaknesses, policy contradictions, corruption and the exclusion of older people from the development agenda. While families and communities continue to bear the burden of elder care, this dependency is also a governance alibi that obscures the extent to which African governments have failed to provide social protection for older people. Drawing on developmental state theory and rights-based governance, this paper proposes the Accountable Ageing Governance (AAG) Model. This novel analytical and policy framework establishes structures for African countries to fulfil their social protection responsibilities to older people.

In comparative policy analysis across selected African countries with different governance types (good institutional performance, fragile states, post-conflict countries), we examine how governance quality affects social protection outcomes for ageing populations. The paper makes three key points that are as grave as fiscal scarcity: governance deficits are more serious than fiscal constraints; rights-based accountability mechanisms must take the place of paternalistic beneficiary structures; and the African Union must make a stronger contribution to oversight towards member states in terms of their obligations to meet the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. The findings provide actionable recommendations for institutional change and reposition older adults as rights-holders in Africa's wider democratic governance agenda.

Keywords: Governance Deficits; African Ageing; State Responsibility; Social Protection; Developmental State; Elder Rights; Institutional Reform; Public Policy in Africa