

# **PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF OLDER PERSONS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SAN JOSE CHARTER**

## **SOCIAL PROTECTION, INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND CARE**

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**The First Follow-up Meeting of the San Jose Charter on the Rights of Older Persons  
in Latin America and the Caribbean**

**held in San Jose, Costa Rica**

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# Introduction

- T&T's older persons (i.e., aged 60 yrs and over) represent 13.4% or 177,000 of the total population, of which 9% are over 65 yrs (CSO, 2011)
- The elderly population is projected to be 17.7% in 2025 and expected to increase to 30.1% in 2050
- Economic indicators reveal that institutional arrangements are untenable to bear this exponential growth rate of seniors
- A proactive approach is needed to address the challenge of population ageing
- Increasing number of nonagenarians & centenarians

# Background

- ❑ Division of Ageing established in 2003 to focus ageing initiatives and raise public awareness/sensitization
- ❑ National Policy on Ageing launched in 2007
- ❑ Elderly predisposed to frailty, infirmity & dependency due to biological, social & psychological ageing
- ❑ Older persons prime target to be victims of poverty, exclusion and marginalization & negative stereotyping
- ❑ More focused and integrated approach to manage ageing issues as elderly are fastest growing cohort
- ❑ Increase in number of elder abuse cases reported

# Social Protection

- ❑ World Elder Abuse Awareness Day observed annually
- ❑ Senior Citizens Parliament held annually
- ❑ Public Forum/Human Rights for the Elderly of T&T Seminar
- ❑ Direct Deposit of pension established due to high crime rate
- ❑ Targeted Conditional Cash Transfer Programme
- ❑ National Insurance contr pension & Non-contr gov't pension
- ❑ Significant number of women could be left out of pension schemes due to over-representation in the informal sector
- ❑ Ageism and mandatory retirement age of 60-65 yrs foster social exclusion – trade unions collaborating with DOA
- ❑ More involvement of religious organizations to operate senior activity centres in rural areas

# Intergenerational Solidarity

- International Day of Older Persons observed annually
- Geriatric Adolescent Partnership Programme
- Conversations between teenagers/older persons televised
- Mentorship programme with icons of art & culture
- Grandparents parenting in multigenerational families
- Retirement Planning Seminars for staff aged 20-59 years
- Seniors Social Events
- Senior Games

# Care

- Social welfare grants
- Age-friendly health centres established by Ministry of Health
- Homes for Older Persons legislation to control, monitor & regulate Homes and care facilities for the aged awaits proclamation
- Elderly & Differently-abled Mobile (ELDAMO) Shuttle
- Chronic Disease Assistance Programme (CDAP)
- Cataract Surgeries Reduction Programme
- (12) Priority areas of action outlined in the Ageing policy
- Due to increase in the nbr of single elderly women, assisted living facilities & adult daycare services to be established
- More partnerships to be established with religious bodies to operate senior activity centres in rural & remote areas

# National Laws & Policies

- The Constitution accords universal rights to all citizens of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago of which the elderly populace are a meaningful part
- The Homes for Older Persons Act and Regulations seek to protect and to ensure that an older person's right to liberty, life, equality of treatment and enjoyment of property are not being infringed while they are living in a Home for Older Persons
- A manager, a licensee or employee of a Home, who has in his care an older person, is guilty of the offence of abuse where he willfully assaults, ill-treats, neglects; or exposes an older person to be assaulted, ill-treated or neglected

# Nat'l Laws & Policies (cont'd)

- ❑ A person who is guilty of abusing an older person in a Home is liable on conviction to (i) a fine of \$25,000.00 and imprisonment for 2 years (summary offence); or (ii) a fine of \$50,000.00 and imprisonment for 5 years (indictable offence)
- ❑ The Ministry of Housing currently offers two (2) home improvement programmes designed to assist persons who wish to do improvement works to their home and need financial assistance – (i) the home improvement grant of up to TT\$15,000.00; and (ii) the home improvement subsidy provides a dollar for dollar matching subsidy of up to TT\$20,000.00



# Challenges

- ❑ Other competing social issues on the national agenda such as crime, poverty, narco-trafficking & HIV/AIDS
- ❑ Recruitment of competent staff due high turnover
- ❑ Central Statistical Office is beset with lack of funding, inadequate staffing & resources
- ❑ Single source of demographic data is Population & Housing Census every 10 yrs, thus creating “structural lag” in ageing response
- ❑ Resultant over-reliance on foreign data sources which approximate trends & lack cultural determinism
- ❑ Insufficient networking between line Ministries & Tobago

# Challenges (cont'd)

- Inordinate delay in the proclamation of legislation on Homes due to changes in political directorate
- Retirement of senior public officers compromises institutional memory due lack of succession planning
- Tardy response to resolution of elderly clients' issues
- Increased demand in homecare services vs dearth of caregivers trained in geriatric care
- More males needed as caregivers & users of senior centres
- Degree programs in gerontology and geriatric care not offered in the region

# Recommendations

- ❑ Explore intergenerational approaches such as volunteerism for school-aged children at Homes and care facilities for the elderly
- ❑ Training in homecare services for the able-bodied “young-old”
- ❑ Use of novel/diverse cultural approaches such as folklore in public education campaign to promote positive imaging of ageing
- ❑ Promote strengthening of family care to highlight the negative impact of changing family structures on the elderly
- ❑ Accreditation and standardization of caregiving training courses at local/regional educational institutions

# Recommendations (cont'd)

- Advocacy through community caravans & expert panel discussions to include older persons/ageing issues in parallel policy initiatives
- Establishment of Policy Implementation Unit (combine the resources of research/project mgmt/M&E) in DOA
- More collaborative response to elder abuse cases reported
- Revamping of the Senior Citizens Bureau to utilize skills/expertise of older persons via website/online database, to link seniors with employment opportunities
- Establishment of Residential Long-term Care Facilities
- Promote the effect of climate change on older persons

# Conclusion

- Research/M&E must be the driver of programmes
- NPAA to mainstream ageing across national policies
- Advocacy with interest groups to ensure buy-in
- Older persons must be acknowledged as a resource instead of a burden on state resources
- Intergenerational approaches must be culture-sensitive to capture plurality of T&T
- Omnibus legislation required to protect the elderly who reside in communities
- Formulation of policy & legislation specific to the elderly



*THANK  
YOU!*