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SENIOR CITIZENS COUNCIL
Inputs for Convention on Rights and Dignity of Older Persons

1. Health

- Older Persons should be provided free and unconditional access to health care to help them maintain or regain their optimum level of physical, mental, social, emotional and psychological wellbeing.
- Hospitals and health centres should be equipped with appropriate medical support.
- Special and well equipped geriatric wards should be created in public hospitals.
- Proper dietary habits should be inculcated at all ages to ensure a healthy ageing process.
- Older persons should be given facilities to obtain medicines/drugs.
- Elderly women who statistically have longer life span need more attention due to their vulnerability to poor health.
- Free domiciliary medical visit to severely disabled and bedridden elderly persons.

2. Institutional Care

- Older persons should have access to appropriate level of institutional care in a secure environment.
- Older persons should benefit from fundamental rights and freedom when residing in an institution including full respect for their dignity, beliefs and needs.
- Regulations should be drawn up to rationalise creation of institutions caring for older persons.
- Appropriate training should be provided to carers of older persons.

3. Dignity and Rights

- Older persons should be treated with fairness regardless of age, gender, race, religion, status or ethnic background.
- Older persons should be empowered to live a secured life with dignity free from physical, mental or psychological exploitation.

- Older persons should have the right of access to appropriate services and supports based on their needs.
- The government should draw up and enforce appropriate legislation for the protection of older persons.
- Media should be fully involved in mobilising positive attitude on the issue of ageing.
- Civic lessons should be introduced in school programme concerning the need to respect elders.
- Appropriate legal counselling programme should be organised to help sensitise and protect the elderly concerning the rights to their property and prevention from abuses.

4. Education

- Older persons should be provided access to educational, technical and capacity building programme to enhance literacy and skills.
- Older persons should be provided opportunity to share, educate and impart experience, knowledge and skills with younger generations.
- The promotion of awareness of older persons among educators, social workers, policy makers, health cares, youth and the community should be enhanced.
- Research and information on issues for older persons should be set up.

5. Employment

- Older persons should be encouraged and empowered to work and perform income generating activities without age barriers.
- Older persons should be properly prepared for their retirement.

6. Participation

- Older persons should exercise their rights and be consulted for planning and decision making that affects issues of the daily life.

- Older persons should be encouraged to set up senior citizens associations and participate in the activities for ensuring active and happy ageing.
- Interactions between generations should be enhanced to foster better understanding between different age groups.
- Elderly people should be initiated to latest technological, social and educational development to bridge the gap with the next generation.
- Consultations and involvement of the elderly in policy decisions concerning them should be an on-going process.

7. **Financial**

- The State should guarantee a minimum pension to elderly persons to cope with the decrease in income after retirement from an active work.
- Legislation concerning compulsory contribution by employer and employees to national pension Scheme should be set up.
- The Elderly with disability should receive increasing support from the government.
- All Citizens should be encouraged to participate in a financial/Insurance Scheme that will generate funds to meet their needs in old age.

8. **Security**

- Appropriate legislation should be enacted to provide security to the Elderly especially regarding their rights, properties and amenities.
- Severe penalties and legal sanctions should be introduced for attacks/violence against elderly persons.
- Elderly should be given priority in all public places and services so that they do not have to wait a long time in queues.
- Attention to be given to single elderly women with weak family ties.

9. **Housing**

- The housing structure should be accessible and appropriate for older persons.
- Legal housing framework should be able to meet the needs of older persons

- The State should promote housing scheme that encourage older persons to live as far as possible with their children.

10. Leisure

- Appropriate leisure facilities should be made available to elderly persons.
- Special encouragement should be given to talented elderly persons.
- Elderly persons should encourage to participate in recreational activities.
- Rebate facilities should be provided to elderly persons to encourage them to travel both locally and abroad.

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL SECURITY, NATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND REFORM INSTITUTIONS

Programmes and Challenges

1. AGEING POPULATION

Mauritius is facing an ageing population as the rest of the world.

Presently, there are some 169,545 elderly population aged 60 and above in the Republic of Mauritius. This represents about 13% of the population of Mauritius and it is expected that by 2040 the elderly population will double as the life expectancy rate for women is 76.8 years and 69.9 years for men according to the Central Statistics Office "Mauritius in figures 2010". It is also projected that the Pensioner Support Ratio will experience dramatic shifts from 6.7 in 2007 to 2.3 in 2047.

2. PAYMENT BASIC RETIREMENT PENSION (BRP) AND OTHER BENEFITS IN CASH AND KIND

Basic Retirement Pension (BRP) is paid on a universal basis to the Mauritian citizens aged 60 years and above subject to certain residency conditions. The number of such beneficiaries stood at 169,545 as at 2013. Government Expenditure on Basic Retirement Pension for 2013 is around Rs 7.2 billion, representing more than 50% of the Ministry's budget.

The retirement age is being extended up to 65 years up to 2018. However, all persons aged 60 and above although in employment received the BRP for the years 2011-2013 as follows:-

	2011	2012	2013
	<u>Rs</u>	<u>Rs</u>	<u>Rs</u>
60 - 89 years	3,146	3,350	3,494
90 - 99 years	9,357	9,975	10,404
Centenarians	10,621	11,320	11,807

Other financial provided are inter-alia:-

- (i) Provisions free travelling – by bus to all elderly persons aged 60 and above
- (ii) Free Health Services
- (iii) Domiciliary Medical Visit to all persons aged 90 and above and to those aged 75 and above bedridden
- (iv) Free Anti-Influenza Vaccination for protection in the winter season
- (v) Highly subsidised rate for residential recreational facilities in the Recreation Centres for Elderly – Rs 250.00 for two-night stay on full board
- (vi) Protection against abuse by a network of Elderly Watch
- (vii) Rent allowances to needy elderly persons
- (viii) Incontinence allowance to needy bedridden elderly aged 75 years and above
- (ix) Hearing aids, spectacles and dentures to needy elderly persons

The above weighs heavily on the budget of the Ministry.

3. NEED FOR CARERS

With the ageing population, nuclear and working family, there is a high demand for the services of carers. The Ministry has trained more than 125 Carers and is proposing to train informal Carers who are already providing care to the elderly over the next five years.

4. KEEPING THE ELDERLY ACTIVE AND HEALTHY

The senior citizens aged 85 and above are grouped in Senior Citizens Associations which are registered with the Senior Citizens Council (SCC), a corporate body administered by an Executive Committee, operating under the aegis of this Ministry.

There are 645 Senior Citizens Associations in Mauritius and 61 in Rodrigues as affiliated members of the SCC which group a total of around 78,930 senior citizens aged 55 and over. Moreover, the Ministry runs 19 Day Care Centres for the Elderly.

The Ministry and the Senior Citizens Council organise a host of leisure, IT literacy, health promotion programme, preventive health activities, annual game tournaments and drama competition, to keep the elderly active and healthy.

5. CONTINUOUS LEARNING

There is an urgent need to keep the elderly intellectually active. In this connection, educational programmes have been elaborated to keep them abreast of developments at national and global level on social, economic and other issues affecting their lives and society in general. Mauritius is proposing to develop partnership with the Chinese government for the setting up of a University for the Elderly.

EMERGING ISSUES

1. Research on Ageing

There is need for greater research work on ageing to ensure that relevant policies are geared towards the elders and services are provided according to the needs of the elderly. The Ministry is committed to the wellbeing of the elderly so that they could age with dignity and self-respect while being active, independent, productive and healthy.

2. Revamping the programme in Elderly Day Care Centre

There is need for a well-structured programme for the elderly in Day Care Centres where the elderly can participate in activities while their children are at work. In addition of health, preventive health programme, new activities such as IT literacy, drama, painting, artworks could be organised for the benefit of the elderly.

3. Mental Health

More and more elderly persons are encountering mental health problem and diseases such as Alzheimer and Dementia. There is need to sensitise the citizens of Mauritius on such diseases and its prevention. On the other hand, rehabilitation for those who become dependent due to mental illness is required.

4. Intergeneration Gap

More and more the gap between parents and children or grandchildren is widening, thus creating conflicts and affect the harmony and peace of the family and society. Ongoing Awareness Campaign to sensitise young people on the issue of wellbeing of older person is required for keeping the elderly in the family system.

5. Development of Cross Sectoral Linkages

Elderly issues should be mainstreamed in policies of all Ministries and among all stakeholders. Elderly issues should be a concern of all partners of development and not only of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions.

Developing mainstreaming in this respect is a challenge as each stakeholder has its own constraints (human, technical and financial).