

## **14th session of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing**

### **Right to health and access to health services**

As a Welfare State, Mauritius provides free health services in public medical institutions. The right to health is guaranteed without discrimination to all citizens, including older persons. There is a Ministry of Health and Quality of life which primarily ensures that the right to health of all citizens is protected by enhancing the delivery of healthcare services to boost patient satisfaction, promoting social equity by providing a wider range of health services to everyone and ascertaining that an effective and accessible healthcare system for all citizens.

Although the right to health is not entrenched in the Constitution of Mauritius, there is a robust legislative, administrative, and regulatory framework which cater for the citizen's right to health.

The Public Health Act is the primary legislation pertaining to public health matters in Mauritius. It covers a wide range of issues, including:

- Sanitation:
- Food safety:
- Control of infectious diseases:
- Environmental health:
- Healthcare delivery.

In addition, the Food Act ensures Mauritian consumers are protected from contaminated and unhealthy food.

Social assistance, such as income support, free wheelchairs, hearing aids, dentures and eyeglasses, are also being provided those that have low incomes. A fast track system of healthcare for the elderly is operational in all public healthcare centers. The health programs have already integrated many aspects of

preventive care for the elderly so as to prevent diseases to which they are prone such as diabetes. The Medical Unit of the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions undertakes free domiciliary visits to persons over 90 years and to bedridden persons over 75 years. There are specialized geriatric sessions in all health points and our senior citizens have separate queues for them to collect their medicines in hospitals. All hospitals have an orthopaedic department to assist persons with disabilities with assistive devices including prostheses free of charge. Elderly persons, are given priority at public medical institutions which are user-friendly.

.Every year, a vaccination campaign against anti-influenza for the elderly aged 65 and above is also undertaken. In addition, a care giving allowance is paid to older persons and disabled people needing constant care and attendance.

The Equal Opportunities Act (EOA) prohibits discrimination based on inter alia **age**, disability, marital status, race, political opinion, sex and sexual orientation. The Equal Opportunities Commission deals with complaints pertaining to discrimination on the grounds of status which includes age.

The Protection of Elderly Persons Act provides for the creation of the Elderly Person's Protection Unit to, ensure, promote and sustain the physical, emotional, social, cultural and economic protection of elderly persons. It also receive scomplaints from elderly persons who are in need of protection or assistance and take such measures as may be necessary; apply to the Court for a protection order where it deems it necessary in circumstances where there is a real danger to, or threat on, the life of an elderly person. Moreover Section 4 of the Legal Aid Act provides for " any person who wishes to obtain legal aid and to be a party to civil and criminal proceedings". The Act therefore sets out to ensure access to a justice system where there is the protection of human rights by offering quality services in the form of a legal practitioner assigned at state expense to vulnerable groups in both Civil and Criminal matters. However there are no specific mandates of

institutions where the older persons can refer to in order to address their rights. The National Human Rights Commission, under a general mandate, is mandated to enquire into written complaints made i) by any person who feels that any of the human rights enshrined in Chapter II of the Constitution has been violated or is likely to be violated by the act or omission of a public officer or employee of a public body .

A National Integrated Care for Older People (ICOPE) Strategic and Action Plan 2022–2026 has recently been launched, which caters for an integrated care and long-term care and support for older people across health services and will provide for key services for older persons including: annual check-ups, sensitisation campaigns to raise awareness on preventive measures against different illnesses, and the setting up of an Early Dementia Diagnostic clinic.