

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

Accessibility, infrastructure, and habitat (transport, housing, and access)

There are various social protection schemes in operation in Mauritius in order to take care of the elderly people so as to enable them to be financially independent. Those aged 60 and above are entitled to a universal non-contributory basic pension. In addition, a care giver's allowance is paid to older persons needing constant care and attendance.

Elderly people are also provided free travelling in public transport at any time of the day.

The main legislation governing residential care homes in Mauritius is the Residential Care Homes Act. The underlying principles of the Act are as follows:

- **Purpose:** The Act aims to:
 - Establish standards and codes of practice for private residential care homes for the elderly.
 - Ensure general supervision and control over these homes.
 - Oversee compliance with licensing requirements.
- **Licensing:** The Act regulates the licensing process for residential care homes. Details are specified in the **Residential Care Homes Regulations 2005**.
- **Inspections:** The Act mandates regular inspections of both public and private care homes, typically at least twice a year. This ensures residents receive appropriate care.
- **Focus on Residents' Well-being:** The Act emphasises on providing adequate care for residents in these homes.

The Building Control Act provides, inter alia, that every building should, amongst others, satisfy functional requirements such as accessibility, in order to

ensure that persons with impaired mobility and communication, elderly persons and pregnant women are able to access and use the building and the facilities within the building comfortably.

The Building Control (Accessibility and Gender Compliance in Buildings) makes provision for new designated building; or existing building which will undergo extensive alterations, additions, repairs, or reconstruction and a permit will be required before commencing those building works to contain inter alia the following features-

- (a) Ramped approach;
- (b) Stepped approach;
- (c) Handrails;
- (d) Passengers lift;
- (e) Communication aids

Access to justice

If a person, including an older person cannot afford to retain the services of a legal representative, he/she may apply for legal aid and legal assistance under the Legal Aid and Legal Assistance Act provided that he/she makes a sworn statement to the effect that (*except for his/her "wearing apparel and tools of trade and the subject matter of the proceedings"*), he/she is not worth 500,000 rupees (USD 12,500), and his/her total monthly earnings are less than 15,000 rupees (USD 375).

Complaint Mechanism

There is a Citizen Support Portal which is an online service which enables the citizen, including an older person to submit their requests and/or complaints with the relevant department or ministry and local authority through the

Citizen's Advice Bureaus. If an older person does not have access to a computer or the internet, he can go to the nearest Citizen Advice Bureau where an officer registers the complaint on the Portal.

The Ministry of Housing and Land Use Planning is responsible for looking into housing problems. In addition, the Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail and the National Land Transport Authority deal with public transport related matters.

Challenges

Lack of Homes for old aged persons – Due to the declining family support there will be a need to increase the number of residential homes especially for the most dependent ones. These homes will need to be equipped with special medical facilities for senior citizens such as mobile health care systems, ambulances, nurses and provision of well-balanced meals in order to provide them with a safe haven.