

**UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA**



**NATIONAL AGEING POLICY**

**MINISTRY OF LABOUR,  
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND SPORTS  
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## **PREFACE**

Since our independence in 1961, the need to have a National Policy to guide service provision to the elderly has increasingly been felt. It has become apparent that strategies were needed to guarantee effective service delivery.

In 1982 the United Nations adopted the International Plan of Action that guided the course of thinking and action of ageing. This plan was reviewed in 2002 to accommodate and reflect the needs of the elderly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

During the celebrations of the International year of older people (1999), the Government committed itself to putting into place the National Ageing Policy. This commitment is a clear demonstration of government resolve to put ageing issues into the development agenda of the nation. We are aware that our older people face a number of problems which include poverty, inadequate health services and pension and lack of participation in important decisions affecting national development. The weakening of traditional ties has greatly affected the lives of the majority of older people. Despite this fact we recognize that older people are a new power for national development. Every effort will be taken to ensure that older people are recognized and equally provided with opportunities to participate in development activities.

The existence of a National Policy on Ageing is a new phenomenon to many countries Tanzania being one of them. In Africa, Tanzania is the second country after Mauritius to have a policy on ageing. In case of any short comings in the implementation of the policy statements, the Ministry will be ready to accommodate new ideas for its rectification.

This policy document is a useful guide to the Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports in planning, implementation and evaluation of service delivery to older people.

The Ministry wishes to sincerely thank its staff, older people themselves and various stakeholders for their contributions that led to putting this document in place. I would like to pay special thanks to HelpAge International for its remarkable contribution in the preparation of this important document.

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**CHAPTER ONE**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The subject of old age and aging has been of great concern to the international community particularly in view of economic, political and social dimensions.

The United Nations Organisation reports (1999) show that there has been an increase in the number of older people in the World. This increase has been demonstrated more in developing nations where the rates do not match with the available resources to cater for older people's health, nutrition and other basic services essential for human life.

According to these reports, in 1950 the United Nations estimated an existence of 200 million people aged 60 years and above. In 1975 that number increased to 350 million people and is expected to reach 625 million people by 2005.

It is also expected that by the year 2050, the number of older people for the first time in human history, will have increased and surpassed the number of children under 14 years of age. In the African continent alone, that number is expected to increase from the present 38 million to 212 million.

The increase in the number and percentage of this population is a success in that it demonstrates an improved standard of living that results from better services such as health and education. This increase, however, is a challenge because the government is called upon to put in place the

vital infrastructure for providing services to older people. The majority of older people live in poverty and uncertainty. Furthermore the fact that a large number of older people (about 75 percent) live in rural areas and that the number of older women is bigger than that of older men presents yet an additional challenge. In view of this there is a need for the government, its institutions and voluntary agencies to create an environment that recognizes older people and gives them an opportunity to participate fully in the daily life of the society.

The government realizes that older people are a resource in the development of our nation. The existence of Tanzania as a nation is an evidence of older peoples' contribution in political, economic, cultural and social arena.

#### **1.1 CONCEPT AND MEANING OF OLD AGE**

Old age and aging is a concept that defines the final stage of human growth from childhood, youth to old age. In Tanzania an individual is recognized as an older person based on age, responsibilities and his or her status, for example, a leader at his or her work place or in a clan. The older people we have were either salaried or self employed or those living in rural areas whose advanced age limits them from active work.

In developed countries such as Britain and United States of America (USA) old age is associated with retirement at 60 years. In other countries retiring age differs according to gender. In Latvia for example men retire at the age of 55 whereas women retire at the age of 60.

Despite the fact that government employees retire at the age of 60 and that older people in rural areas and those who are self-employed stop working only due to limited energy, it remains that at the age of 60 years

there are clear indications of decrease in their working ability. Both the National Health Policy and the Public Service Act recognize 60 years as retirement age. For the purpose of this policy, an older person is an individual who is 60 years and above.

## **1.2 THE SITUATION OF OLDER PEOPLE IN THE COUNTRY**

The twentieth century has witnessed an increase in the number of older people. According to available statistics, Tanzania with an estimated total population of 33,500,000, has about 1.4 million older people (4 per cent of the total population) aged 60 years and above. This figure will increase to 8.3 million (10 per cent of the total population) by the year 2050. In everyday social life, older people are an acknowledged source of information, knowledge and experience. In traditional life both older and young people shared responsibilities. Whereas older people were custodians of customs and traditions, advisers/mediators and child carers, the young people had the responsibility of providing basic needs including food, shelter, clothing and protection. Older people in Tanzania are of various groups that include retirees, peasants, herdsman and fishermen. Generally, the situation of older people in Tanzania is characterized by the following:

### **1.2.1 Weakening of traditional life:**

Globalization, growth of towns and the movement of people from urban to rural areas in search of jobs have changed the formal relationship in the family and society in general.

As a result of weakened traditional life, older people are no longer playing a vital role in the life of the community. Consequently the young people do not show respect to older people and often times despise them.

### **1.2.2 Inadequate care:**

The movement of young people from rural to urban centres have left the majority of older people lonely and unprotected. Moreover HIV/AIDS pandemic has taken away lives of the majority of young people. On the other hand older people are increasingly called upon to care for themselves and their orphaned grand children.

### **1.2.3 Poverty:**

Economically, older people are among the poorest in the society. Various groups of older people such as peasants, herdsman and fishermen do not belong to any formal social security system. Retired older people who are members of the Social Security Schemes face problems resulting from inadequate benefits and bureaucratic bottlenecks. Furthermore, the existing poverty reduction strategies do not include older people.

### **1.2.4 Diseases:**

The majority of people become old with poor health due to poor life styles and poor nutrition during their childhood; women heavy work load, and frequent pregnancies. Prolonged diseases are a common feature among many older people. Additionally, health services are not easily accessible to the majority of older people besides they are expensive. Health care professionals on the other hand lack motivation and are not adequately trained to handle older peoples' illness.

### **1.2.5 Older Women and incompatible traditions.**

Older women are more affected by old age problems. Women live longer than men, that is why there are more older women than men. Besides, older women struggle against problems related to their gender.



Furthermore older women are denied the right to inherit and own property including land. In some areas women have been raped and killed due to superstitious beliefs.

#### **1.2.6 Older women with disabilities:**

Due to our culture and environment, women, people with disabilities and older people have had an equal opportunity to participate in decision making on issues related to their development and welfare. Whereas women have been discriminated due to their sex, people with disabilities do not access equal opportunities to participate in securing their own development. Moreover older people have not received the recognition they deserve, a situation which denies their right to own and inherit property.

#### **1.2.7 Laws that do not protect older people:**

The current social and legal system does not provide adequate protection and security to older people as a special group. Consequently, they do not receive deserving care and older women are denied their right to own and inherit property.

### **1.3 Rationale for the Policy:**

The life situation and circumstances of older people demand for a National Policy to guide the provision of services and their participation in the life of the community. The National Ageing Policy addresses the following:

- To recognize older people as an important resource in national development.
- To allocate enough resources with a goal of improving service delivery to older people.
- To involve older people in decision making in matters that concern them and the nation at large.

- To involve older people in Income Generation Activities.
- To provide legal protection to older people as a special group.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.0 POLICY DIRECTION.

#### 2.1 Direction:

This policy concerns older people living in rural and urban areas as well as other special groups of older people such as retirees, peasants, herdsmen and fishermen. It also concerns young people who need to prepare themselves for responsible old age.

#### 2.2 General Objective:

The general objective of the policy is to ensure that older people are recognized, provided with basic services and accorded the opportunity to fully participate in the daily life of the community.

#### 2.3 Specific Objectives:

- To recognize older people as a resource.
- To create a conducive environment for the provision of basic services to older people.
- To allocate resources for older people's income generation activities and their welfare.
- To empower families for sustained support to older people.
- To initiate and sustain programmes that provide older people with the opportunity to participate in economic development initiatives.
- To prepare strategies and programmes geared towards elimination of negative attitudes and age discrimination.
- To enact laws that promote and protect the welfare of older people.

- To ensure that older people receive basic health services.
- To initiate programmes that will provide an opportunity for older people to sustain good customs and traditions for the youth in the society.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0 POLICY STATEMENTS.

The government realizes that older people are a resource in the development of our nation. The existence of Tanzania as a nation is an evidence of older people's contribution in political, economic, cultural and social arena. Besides protection and care services emphasis will be put on involving older people in national development and incorporating them in the national development plans. The National Ageing Policy recognizes human rights as stipulated in the Tanzanian constitution of 1977 as amended in 1984 and 1995 respectively. Moreover the policy has taken into consideration the United Nations Organization declaration No. 46 of 1991 on the following older peoples rights.

- Independence
- Participation
- Care
- Self - fulfillment
- Dignity

The following Policy statements aim at providing an implementation framework which will facilitate improvement of older people's life and set the aging agenda within the national development paradigm.

### 3.1 Health Services:

Frequent and prolonged diseases is a common feature among many older people. This condition calls for a professional care.

Despite this, health services are not easily accessible for the majority of older people and in most cases are expensive. The existing procedure of providing free health services to older people has some shortcomings. The majority of older people particularly in the rural areas are left out as a result of their inability to prove that they are 60 years and above and that they can not afford to share the cost. In order to improve the health status of older people, the government in collaboration with various stakeholders will ensure that;

- (i) The cost sharing policy shall be revised to adjust the criteria for determining 60 years as a standard age.
- (ii) Health personnel receive special training to handle older people.
- (iii) There is an established mechanism for making follow up on older people's health.
- (iv) There is an established mechanism for awareness creation for older people in HIV/AIDS pandemic and care of its victims.
- (v) Older people and the public in general are sensitized/mobilized on old age health related problems.

### **3.2 Care of older people:**

The ability of the oldest old to manage themselves is either minimal or not existing. Due to this fact the society has the responsibility of providing them with care and support. However the family will remain the basic institution of care and support for older people. Institutional care of older people will be the last resort.

Furthermore, the government does not expect to establish older people's long term care institutions. In order to provide care for older people;

- (i) Families and the society in general will be mobilized/sensitized to care and support older people.
- (ii) Older people will be cared for in their respective community.
- (iii) The government through Local Government and Voluntary Agencies, will continue to provide institutional care to older people and others who have no one to care for.

### **3.3. Participation of Older People:**

Every citizen has an equal right to participate fully in issues that concern him/her and the society as a whole. The government realises that older people are an important resource that needs to be tapped for the development of the nation. In order to do so;

- (i) A Mechanism will be put in place to ensure that older people participate in the planning and implementation of development programmes at various levels.
- (ii) Organisations and groups responsible for older people's welfare will be dully recognized. The government shall also encourage the formation of such new organizations and groups.

### **3.4 Older People's Fund:**

The government recognizes older people's potentiality in poverty reduction initiatives. However, the same has not been translated into reality. In order to develop its utilization, the government in collaboration with various stakeholders will establish a Revolving Loan Fund.

### **3.5 Income Generation:**

Older people are among the poorest in the society. Besides being skilled, knowledgeable and experienced as farmers, fishermen and retired public servants, the majority of older people go into retirement ill-prepared. In order to rectify this situation;

- (i) Older people, individually or in groups, will be sensitized and mobilized in establishing income generating activities.
- (ii) Local Government Authorities and Voluntary Agencies will incorporate older people's groups in income generating activities.

### **3.6 Social Security:**

Older people face a number of problems that include lack of savings. The existing Social Security Scheme is designed to accommodate older people who were employed in the formal sector. However, the benefits they receive do not correspond to increasing living costs. Older people in the informal sector such as peasants, fishermen and herdsmen particularly in rural areas face a high degree of vulnerability. In order to rectify this situation;

- (i). A mechanism will be established to ensure that social security institutions direct their services to the informal sector.
- (ii). Local Government Authorities and Voluntary Agencies will sensitize older people in the informal sector to save through Ward Banks, Primary Cooperative Societies and Savings and Credit Cooperative Societies.
- (iii). Families will be mobilized in order to participate in income raising activities.



### **3.7 Basic needs:**

Old age reduces working capacity of the body thus, making many older people in both rural and urban areas dependant. This situation is worse in low income families and consequently the majority of older people live in destitution. In order to rectify this situation;

- (i) Local government authorities in collaboration with Voluntary Agencies will conduct basic needs assessment for older people.
- (ii) Local government authorities and voluntary agencies will develop a mechanism to provide direct assistance to needy older people.
- (iii) Families and the community will be mobilized to participate in income generating activities in order to raise family income.

### **3.8 Education:**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by Science and Technology. Changes in Science and Technology have led to changes in human attitude and behaviour. In many societies older people still bear the responsibility of educating communities through traditions and customs. It is important for the community to preserve this culture as well as for older people to live abreast with time and therefore acquire education which will enable them cope with current demands. In order to meet the above challenges;

- (i) Older people will be sensitized on their rights and responsibilities in the family and community.
- (ii) A mechanism will be put in place to ensure that older people participate in adult education training programmes.

- (iii) A mechanism will be put in place to ensure that older people participating in income generation receive relevant training.
- (iii) Mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that young people are inculcated into good customs and traditions.

### **3.9 Older women and Incompatible traditions:**

Traditions and customs shape the life of an individual in the community. Good practices like building a house or cultivating a farm for the needy persons, enhance cohesion and community development. Bad practices like denying a widow the right to property inheritance or killing of older women suspected of witchcraft, retard relationships and community development efforts.

In order to rectify this situation;

- (i) The government in collaboration with stakeholders will sensitize the public to address the challenges resulting from the bad practices mentioned above.
- (ii) The government in collaboration with Local government authorities and Voluntary Agencies will identify and protect older women suspected of witchcraft.

### **3.10 Older Women with disabilities:**

Older women with disabilities lack opportunities, live in destitution and their participation in community life is reduced. In order to improve the living conditions of older women with disabilities;

- (i) A mechanism will be put in place to identify and provide basic needs to older women with disabilities.
- (ii) A mechanism will be put in place to include older women with disabilities in income generating activities in their respective communities.

### **3.11 Laws that do not protect older people:**

Currently, there is no specific law that is in favour of older people's rights and development. This being the case the government will enact a law for the same.

### **3.12 Preparation of young people for responsible old age:**

Old age is a cross cutting issue. The majority of people enter old age unprepared and hence becoming a burden to the community. There is a need for the government to sensitize the society on the role of older people and the need for the youth to prepare themselves for responsible old age. In order to achieve this;

- (i) The government in collaboration with stakeholders will sensitize the society and youth in particular on the stages and various old age related problems.
- (ii) The government in collaboration with stakeholders will educate and establish capacity building programmes for the youth to prepare them for responsible old age.
- (iii) Ageing will be included in the civics subject syllabus.

### **3.13 Older People's Organizations:**

The government recognizes the role of voluntary agencies that render services to older people. The government will continue to support these efforts and ensure that services provided maintain the required standards.

Currently, the registration of voluntary agencies that provide services to older people is done by a non sector ministry which does not have the mandate to monitor activities of these agencies.

In order to rectify these short comings;

- (i) The government will set a mechanism to ensure that the registration of older people's organizations is done through the sector ministry.
- (ii) The government will ensure that the registration of older people's organizations does not constitute a license to operate and that the sector ministry will provide a licence for the same.
- (iii) The government will supervise and coordinate the services rendered by voluntary agencies to older people.

#### **3.14 Older People's Councils:**

Decisions on participatory plans for people's development are made at the village/mtaa, ward, district, region and national levels. The contribution of older people in such decisions is important for the development of our nation. There is a need to establish a mechanism that will ensure the availability of older people's contribution on their affairs and those of the community. In order to ensure the inclusion of older people's voice in such decisions, older people's Councils will be established at village/mtaa, ward, district, region and national levels.

#### **3.15 Stakeholders Participation:**

The government recognizes and values the contribution of voluntary agencies that provide service to older people. The Government will continue to work hand in hand with these agencies to improve the life of older people.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.0 ROLES OF STAKEHOLDERS.

Since Ageing is a cross cutting issue, the implementation of this Policy will involve the Central Government, Local Government Authorities, Voluntary Agencies, Families and Villages. The roles of stakeholders will be as follows:

#### 4.1 Central Government:

- To supervise and coordinate services provided to older people.
- To enact a law that protects the welfare of older people.
- To ensure older people's participation in the community.
- To encourage local government authorities and voluntary agencies to take responsibility of providing care and support to older people.
- To sensitize the society on issues related to older people and their participation in national development.
- To sensitize and empower the youth on their preparation towards responsible old age.

#### 4.2 Local Government Authorities.

- To conduct older people's needs assessment in the society.
- To provide care and protection for older people in the community and institutions.
- To ensure the provision of basic needs for older people.
- To involve older people in income generating activities.
- To sensitize the community on issues related to older people and their participation in the national development.
- To sensitize and empower the youth on their preparation towards old age.

#### **4.3 Families/Villages.**

- In collaboration with Local Government Authorities will provide care and protection to older people.
- In collaboration with Local Government Authorities and Voluntary Agencies, families and villages will participate in income generation activities.
- In collaboration with Local Government Authorities, families and villages will conduct older people's needs assessment.

#### **4.4 Voluntary Agencies:**

- In collaboration with Local Government Authorities, Voluntary Agencies will conduct Older People's needs assessment.
- In collaboration with Local Government Authorities, Voluntary Agencies will ensure the provision of basic needs to older people.
- To provide care and protection to older people in the community and institutions.
- In collaboration with Local Government, and voluntary agencies will mobilize and incorporate older people and their families in income generating activities.
- To sensitize the community on issues related to older people and their participation in the national development.
- In collaboration with Local Government Authorities and other stakeholders will sensitize and empower the youth on preparation towards old age.