



CARE SERVICES FOR OLDER PERSONS IN LESOTHO

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NOVEMBER 2021**

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- The Ministry of Social Development was established in 2012 and was mandated with care, support and protection for vulnerable groups of people including older persons.
- Department of Elderly Care Services was set up in 2014, the department is responsible for care, support and protection for Older Persons in the country.
- Lesotho Policy for Older Persons was developed and approved in 2014 as the main guide for the operation of the department. The policy is aligned with United Nations Principles for Older Persons (resolution 46/91). It also translates the Government of Lesotho commitment for care, support and protection for Older Persons.

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- The strategic Plan for Older Persons was developed and approved to ensure smooth implementation of the policy.
- The Government of Lesotho signed and ratified the AU Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons in 2018 as the commitment for care, support and protection of Older Persons at the regional level.
- The domestication and implementation of the protocol are facilitated by the development of legislation on the protection of Older Persons which is being drafted currently.
- Care, support and protection of Older Persons in Lesotho is guided and aligned with Lesotho policy for Older Persons, AU Protocol on the Rights of Older Persons and AU Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing.

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PROGRAMS

- Programs aligned with the policy key areas as the government commitment to care for, support and protect Older Persons in Lesotho.
 - **Advocacy and awareness raising program**-public education and sensitisation on ageing and ageing issues. It also involves empowerment for older Persons on ageing issues.
 - **Dementia Care Program**-support for families and care givers of older persons with dementia.

PROGRAMS CONT...

- **Community-based Care Program**-care in the community to promote ageing in place. Enhancement of support services in communities e.g. families, support groups and volunteers as informal caregivers.
- **Institutional Care Program**-alternative care, placement of older persons into places of safety (Old Age Homes) when necessary. Support, training and supervision for caregivers in Old Age Homes.
- **Healthy Ageing Program**-recreational and physical activities to promote active ageing and healthy lifestyles, e.g. elderly social clubs and other associations.

PROGRAMS CONT...

- **Retirement Program**-preparation and empowerment for retiring officers; their rights and roles in retirement process, preparation and planning for life after retirement.
- **Social Protection Program**-Universal Old Age Pension for older persons at the age of 70 years and above.
 - Public assistance in cash and in kind for 60-69 years old to address elder poverty
- **Integrated Care for Older Persons (ICOPE)**-to enhance and ensure coordinated and person -centred care for Older Persons to promote intrinsic capacity and maintain functional ability. Merging of health and social care for older persons from the point of entry.

CHALLENGES IN CARE SERVICES

- Poor housing and shelter conditions for older persons
- Older persons becoming primary caregivers to orphaned and vulnerable children which puts more strain on them. This also exacerbates elder poverty as such households depend on Old Age Pension benefit.
- Ageism which results; elder abuse- property grabbing, neglect, physical, emotional, economic, social exclusion, and brutal killings on the basis of witchcraft accusations.
- Limited finances to adequately support the population ageing with their diverse needs.

WAYFORWARD AND PLANNED INITIATIVES

- Situational Analysis study on Older Persons in Lesotho to inform responsive and appropriate programming.
- Intensified public education on ageing and ageing issues.
- Enhanced community-based care; support for care givers of all levels, families, paid and volunteers.
- Sensitize young people including children on ageing and issues related to close the generation gap especially because older persons are becoming primary care givers to orphaned and vulnerable children. Targeting schools both primary and secondary. Also to make younger generation to appreciate ageing as a natural and inevitable process for every human being. This will in turn promote care, support and protection for Older Persons in all settings including in households.