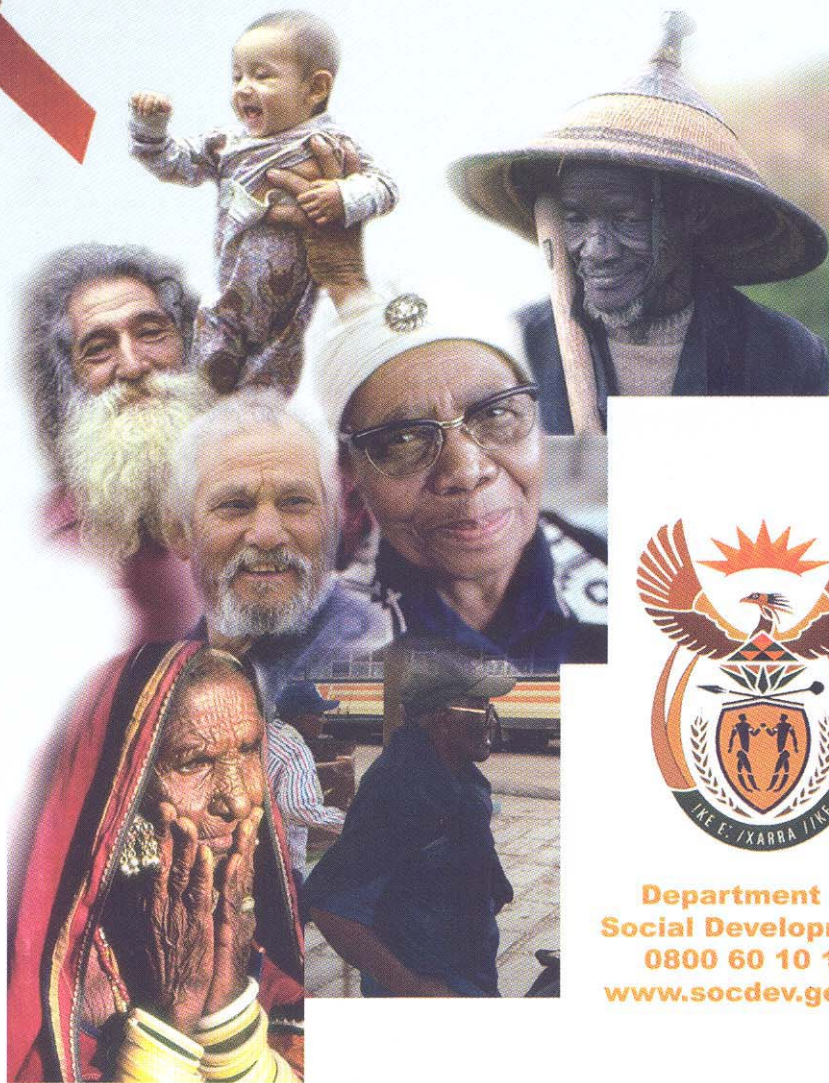


CARE FOR THOSE WHO CAREED FOR YOU



Department of
Social Development
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**Recognise older persons' role in lending a hand in
the fight against HIV/AIDS**

BACKGROUND

An increasing number of children are constantly losing one or both parents as a result of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The family structure and roles are also changing due to the epidemic. The HIV/AIDS pandemic is already placing a burden on older persons. Various programmes on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections do recognize that older persons are sexually active and therefore at risk. They are burdened with the care of the sick and orphaned children. (National Report on the Status of Older Persons: 1994 – 2002). Older persons also suffer when their cares die of HIV/AIDS or related diseases.

OLDER PERSONS AND THE HIV/AIDS EFFECTS

Older persons are losing their children/grandchildren due to HIV/AIDS. This situation often has negative impact on the health of older persons.

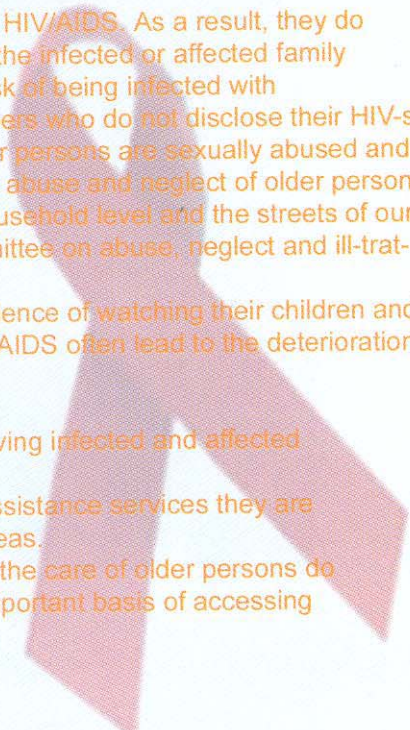
The HIV/AIDS epidemic effects leave older persons:

- With the responsibility of caring and supporting their grandchildren.
- To bear the cost of medical expenses for the sick, food for the family, school fees, books and uniform for the grandchildren.

Some older persons have little knowledge about HIV/AIDS. As a result, they do not take necessary precautions when caring for the infected or affected family members. In other cases older persons are at risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS while caring for their sick family members who do not disclose their HIV-status. Furthermore there are instances where older persons are sexually abused and thus are at the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. The abuse and neglect of older persons, especially through rape, is increasing both at household level and the streets of our towns and cities (Report of the Ministerial Committee on abuse, neglect and ill-treatment on older persons: Volume 1).

The trauma of caring for and the dramatic experience of watching their children and grandchildren during the terminal stages of HIV/AIDS often lead to the deterioration in health status of older persons.

- Some families are discriminated against for having infected and affected family members
- Not all older persons are aware of the social assistance services they are entitled to especially those living in the rural areas.
- Many vulnerable and orphaned children under the care of older persons do not have birth certificates which serve as an important basis of accessing social assistance (grants).



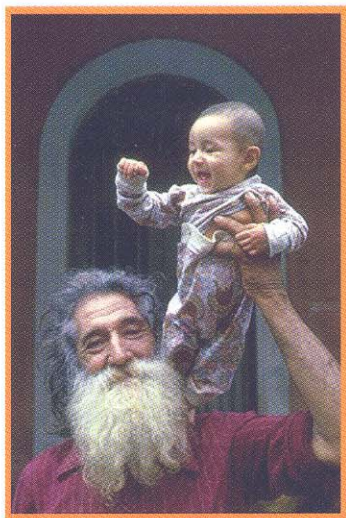
- Some older persons do not have identification documents, which are required to access social grants. The grant application process is being simplified, explained to the public and standardized to increase access to welfare and poverty relief funding.
- There is an increasing need to support Neighbourhood Support Systems to monitor the safety of elderly residents and initiate clubs to fulfil social and nutritional needs of older persons.

WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE A CARING SOCIETY FOR OLDER PERSONS

Various sectors of the society are constantly working together to empower older persons to be full and equal citizens (promoting healthy lifestyles, preventing elder abuse, participation and representation in social structures). Volunteers have also been helpful in assisting older persons where help is needed.

PROGRAMMES IN PLACE

Different programmes are being undertaken by government, business, civil society, NGOs, FBOs, in creating an enabling environment and a better life for older persons. Through close co-operation, these sectors are able to develop appropriate and cost effective community-based care programmes to enable older persons to stay in the community as long as possible (to age at home). Support and training is also given to older persons and family members to care for older persons.



The aim is to improve the quality of life of older persons (improving access to basic service and improving the delivery of such services: health services, pensions, transport and others. This includes:

- Capacity Building** – These are training programmes for older persons to expose and share information which will assist them in knowing how the HIV/AIDS is transmitted and how they can protect themselves from getting infected.

- **Intergenerational programmes** which aim at creating enabling environments for older persons to share their knowledge, skills wisdom and expertise on home / community based care with younger generations. The programme promotes interdependence of generations (promoting family and social integration, promoting older persons as volunteers and utilizing their expertise).
- **Development programmes** that ensure involvement and exposure of older person to new developments and technologies for the workplace demands for the ageing labour force.
- **Care and Support Services** to encourage involvement of older persons at Home/community based care and support programmes, counselling Educating communities to care for their sick, networking with other Stakeholders, and referring cases for further professional attention.

OLDER PERSONS ARE OUR HERITAGE

Older persons have a wealth of knowledge and expertise they share with the younger generations. This can help in building an information bridge between generations, in the wake of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, older persons are already available and taking care of orphaned and vulnerable children. Receiving counselling and support of extended and immediate families strengthen older persons' ability to cope with the harsh effects of HIV/AIDS. Involvement of older persons in decision-making processes both in the family and in the community is vital for the development of society.

CONTACT NUMBERS FOR PROVINCIAL OLDER PERSONS' CO-ORDINATORS:

1. Eastern Cape	040 - 609 5326
2. Limpopo Province	015 - 295 8163
3. North West	018 - 387 5128/5039
4. Mpumalanga	013 - 766 3008
5. Gauteng	011 - 355 7851
6. Free State	051 - 409 0689
7. Western Cape	021 - 483 4682
8. Northern Cape	035 - 874 9133
9. Kwazulu Natal	035 - 874 3785