

Segunda Conferencia regional intergubernamental sobre envejecimiento
en América Latina y el Caribe: hacia una sociedad para todas las edades
y de protección social basada en derechos

Brasilia, 4 al 6 de diciembre de 2007

SAINT KITTS AND NEVIS

Informe de la aplicación de la Estrategia regional de implementación para América
Latina y el Caribe del Plan de Acción Internacional de Madrid sobre el Envejecimiento

**Review and Appraisal of the Priority Areas of the regional Strategy for the
Implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the Madrid International Plan
of Action on Ageing
St. Kitts and Nevis**

Priority Area 1: Older persons and Development

Objective 1 and 5: Promote the Human Rights of Older Persons

St. Kitts and Nevis is one of 35 states which have signed on to the Charter of the American States and has ratified the requirements of the charter since 1984. The country has also adopted the additional protocols which has emerged from the said Charter, in particular, the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

("Protocol of San Salvador," O.A.S. Treaty Series No. 69 (1988), entered into force November 16, 1999, reprinted in Basic Documents Pertaining to Human Rights in the Inter-American System, OEA/Ser.L.V/II.82 doc.6 rev.1 at 67 (1992).

Article 17 Protection of the Elderly

Everyone has the right to special protection in old age. With this in view the States Parties agree to take progressively the necessary steps to make this right a reality and, particularly, to:

- a. Provide suitable facilities, as well as food and specialized medical care, for elderly individuals who lack them and are unable to provide them for themselves;
- b. Undertake work programs specifically designed to give the elderly the opportunity to engage in a productive activity suited to their abilities and consistent with their vocations or desires;
- c. Foster the establishment of social organizations aimed at improving the quality of life for the elderly.)

To date, the following measures have been taken to ensure that vulnerable aged persons are protected and cared for:

Through the Social Assistance Act (1998) special provisions have been made for indigent persons to receive assistance in terms of housing, food, medication and funeral grants. Although the act does not speak specifically to the elderly, it provides the platform for support to this vulnerable group of persons.

- Through the Social Assistance arm of the Ministry of Social and Community Affairs a Home Care programme was established in June 2000 to meet the needs of elderly persons in their homes in

eight (8) communities across St. Kitts. This programme employs a total of eighteen (14) workers covering 275 elderly clients. Additionally, ties of the Home Care Programme with the community health programme are also being strengthened.



- A special home for elderly persons was established in Saddlers in 2003, and accommodates seven (7) persons and has a staff of four (4) persons who work on shift system.
- The Social Assistance officer Makes referrals to Cardin Home, a home for the elderly and other indigent persons. The home currently hosts 75 individuals, 33 are females and 42 are males.
- Older persons in two (2) communities Cayon and St. Pauls have been able to participate in the Golden Years Club since 2005. There are about 90 members in regular standing. This club provides the opportunity for older persons to participate in recreational activities in their communities during the day. It allows for the elderly themselves to organize their own activities. The Ministry of Social Development provides provides resources for meals, transportation, materials for craft and resource personnel especially for training. It is anticipated that this programme will be embraced in every community across St. Kitts.
- Faith-based organizations, Community Based organizations and private sector institutions also organize elderly programmes such as the distribution of food hampers, housing assistance and medical

assistance. These programmes are supported by the Ministry of Social Development with the provision of transportation, stipends for meals and resource personnel.

- Training activities have been conducted with elderly persons that allowed them to develop products for sale (2005, 2006, 2007). This is continued in the Golden Years Club however the marketing aspect of this project is still being developed so that the elderly can be connected to a viable and sustained market for their goods.
- Government through the collaboration of the Utilities Department and the Ministry of Social Development pays concession rates for water and electricity for senior citizens and some disabled persons. Approximately 50 persons have been benefiting from this initiative since 2003.
- The Federation of St. Kitts and Nevis is making inroads with respect to the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Plans are in place to develop a Gender Policy which should take a life cycle approach that would in fact highlight and address the needs of elderly women in the Federation.
- A number of retirees now sit on boards of key organizations and contribute to the decision making processes of Organizations such as the Public Service Commission, Social Security Board and National Bank Group of Companies. A number of individuals serve on advisory committees in the fields of education and health.

Objective 2: Promotion of access, under conditions of equality, to decent employment, continuing training and credit for individual or community undertakings

Broad based training in various income generating areas have been offered over the years and these are open to persons of all ages. Training for older persons has become even more critical given the recent closure of the sugar industry which left a significant proportion of older individuals without jobs. It has pointed to the need to implement more targeted and age specific training programmes so as to be able to attract these individuals and others to the training activities.

A number of training programmes have been conducted with the aged in the production of good for sale. The issue however remains one of funding

especially as it relates to the marketing of products and developing linkages to niche markets.

It still remains a difficulty in terms of elderly persons accessing credit. This usually requires the elderly person pairing with a younger individual whether child/grandchild. The St. Kitts Credit Union presently is a key source where seniors have very little problems with access to credit.

Funds for micro-enterprise have also been made available through the Development Bank of St. Kitts and Nevis for former sugar workers as well as other individuals to access credit at substantially low rates of interest. This is one avenue through which monies can be accessed by older persons in the society. The challenge is to ensure that older persons or groups of older persons are aware of this programme and are suitably equipped to access it.

Objective 3: Promotion and inclusion of older persons in the formal-sector workforce

Consideration is being given to the extension of the retirement age in the public sector from 55 years of age given that the age at which persons can draw from social security stands at 62 years of age. The age at which persons can begin benefiting from social security is also under scrutiny. This would result in older persons being able to remain in the workforce for a longer time should they choose to do so.

Objective 4: Expansion and improvement of the coverage of both contributory and non-contributory pension schemes

The social security scheme is the main avenue through which information can be gleaned regarding the number of persons employed by age categories. However once an individual turns 62 years of age, he or she is no longer required to contribute to the scheme so therefore information regarding the number of persons over 62/65 who are employed is difficult to ascertain.

Objective 6: Promotion of equal opportunities and access to lifelong learning

One of the key pillars of our education system is the principle of life long learning or learning over the life span. As such, there is an Adult and Continuing Education Programme which is run through the College of Further Education.

Academic courses are offered to the general public in a number of subject areas. The majority of classes are held in the evenings mainly at the College. The programme also offers short term skills training courses which are conducted around the island depending on the nature of the course. All classes are open to everyone regardless of age.

Recently, The Youth Skills Programme was renamed the National Skills Programme in recognition of the change in training needs as well as the age range which it will now be required to reach. The closure of the Sugar industry has further highlighted the need for constant retooling and upgrading of the workforce at all age levels. The programme will be restructured to reflect the expanded training and skills development needs.

Community based programmes executed by the Ministry of Social Development are also open to the elderly.

Priority Area 2: Promotion of Health and Wellbeing During old age

Objectives 1 and 2: Promotion of universal coverage for older persons to health-care services through the inclusion of ageing as essential component of national legislation and policies on health

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis is finalizing the development of a National Health Plan. A central tenet of the Family Health component of the Health Plan is the establishment or expansion of policies and programs that will greatly increase the quality of life of the elderly. It elaborates the development of the existing Geriatric care program and like the Ministry of Social Development it proposes the development of a National Policy on Ageing. Active ageing is a critical aspect of the country's approach to ageing in the Federation.

A situation analysis of the elderly was conducted in 2003 through the Social Planner in Ministry of Sustainable Development. A draft policy on ageing was articulated through consultation with the elderly, persons who care for elderly persons, other key stakeholders and policy makers. The situation analysis will be revised and the policy revisited in the short-term.

All persons 62 years of age and older are provided with free medical attention, eye care and medication through the public health system. They however are required to pay the fees for specialty services such as orthopedic care and CT Scans. If however an elderly person falls within the indigent bracket the Social Assistance Department would pay for the services required.

The Ministry of Social development through the Social assistance Program also provides assistance to older persons in terms of purchasing certain medications which may not be available from the public health system.

In addition, those elderly persons who suffer with chronic diseases such as diabetes and hypertension are furnished with free medication and care. Given that health centres are located in most communities or in close proximity older persons are able to avail themselves of these services. Nurses also conduct visitations to shut-ins so as to ensure that their medical/health needs are met. There are plans to develop a registry of shut-ins in the various communities to detail demographics and disease classification.

A Home care program has been established to meet the needs of persons who are unable to fully care for themselves. (Details outlined in previous section).

The Government intends to equip all public health facilities with improved access for elderly and disabled persons – ramps, lifts and bathroom rails. Ministry of health and NGOs such as the Rotary club and the St. Vincent de Paul Society often distributes wheel chairs, prosthesis and other ambulatory aids to older persons in the society who cannot afford to purchase for themselves.

There are also plans to advocate for a meals on wheels programme for elderly who are unable to adequately provide for themselves.

The Government set out to eradicate pit toilets and have been replacing pit toilets with water closets on the homes of elderly persons.

Objective 2: Establishment of comprehensive health care services that meet the needs of older adults by strengthening and refocusing existing services and creating new ones where necessary.

St. Kitts and Nevis is in the process of completing the National Health Action Plan. One aspect of this plan speaks specifically to the needs of elderly at the community and national level. The outlined strategic objectives are as follows:

- a. To develop and expand programs for geriatrics and physically disabled;
- b. To improve the health and well being of the elderly and physically disabled;
- c. To establish a National Policy for the elderly and physically disabled.

There is articulation of plans to develop the mental health program however it does not specifically refer to mental health needs of elderly individuals. It is hoped however that adjustment will be made in this area so as to ensure as wide a coverage as possible.

Objective 3: Promotion of healthy personal behaviours and environments through legislation, policies, programmes and measures at the national and community levels.

Priority Area 3: Creation of an enabling and supportive Environment

Objective 1: Adaptation of the physical environment to the characteristics and needs of older persons to enable them to live independently in their old age:

The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis has instituted a programme where starter homes were distributed to senior citizens throughout the island. Approximately 50 elderly were able to benefit from this scheme. These homes are provided free of cost to the elderly person and in the event of death a relative, that person is expected to pay the going rates.

In addition to this the Ministry of social development also administers a programme of home repairs for elderly persons. Approximately 15 elderly individuals have benefitted since 2003 with an approximate cost of about \$5500.00 per home.

There is no system in place as yet regarding transportation discounts for older persons. There is a shuttle system in system in Nevis for elderly but this does not yet exist in St. Kitts.

The Private sector and the Public sector are adapting their buildings to facilitate access for elderly persons. Business places have put in place special lines for senior to assist in the conduct of business. The sidewalks have also been converted with ramp access by the Basic Needs Trust Fund and some Private sector Partners.

Community Centers, Health centers and schools are not equip. with ramps and wheel chair accessible bathrooms.

Objective 2: Increased availability, sustainability and suitability of social support systems for older persons

As noted earlier, a home care programme has been implemented over the last seven years. The aim is to provide community based care and assistance to elderly persons in communities. Community members regularly make referrals of elderly persons who they think are at risk to the programme.

In recent years two private homes have been established.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development conducts training activities for Homecare officers, family caregivers and Health Professionals. Approximately 45 to 50 individuals are trained during each sitting. This is sometimes conducted twice per year by FAVACA and local practitioners. Training is done across several areas, namely therapy, diagnosis of mental problems, care giving, medication, stress management, counseling and time management.

Basic Needs Trust Fund will also be conducting some training of caregivers over a six month period for Homecare workers and family caregivers.

Objective 3: Elimination of all forms of discrimination and mistreatment against older persons:

There is not a large number of reports to the Ministry of Social Development regarding ill-treatment of elderly. However there are large numbers of cases where elderly persons are abandoned by relatives.

Steps are being taken to Institute a policy on Ageing in the near future which will deal with these and other issues.

Objective 4: Promotion of a positive image of old age

Every year the Ministry conducts a month long programme of activities in October for elderly persons in St. Kitts and Nevis. Activities include a church service, a picnic, visitation of places of interests, elderly variety concert, elderly march, exhibition items produced to elderly during the year and Government Ministers visitation of elderly. During period highlight specific issues regarding ageing and these are televised, broadcast over the local radio stations and in the news media. Doctors and Social Security Personnel speak to elderly persons about ageing and benefits to be derived from social security. This places the issues of ageing in the public's eye and it is well received. It has raised the profile of the elderly and their contribution to the country.

There is also a monthly Birthday Programme which is broadcasted on the television and each person is presented with a basket.