



Dominica

National Policy on Ageing

An illustrated version

EMPOWERING OLDER PERSONS

For a national policy on ageing to work, certain structures and mechanisms need to be put in place, for example there needs to be an effective organization of older persons.

Older persons should be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, disability or other status, and be valued independently of their economic contribution.

CONTENTS



Page.....	I	<u>Situation of Older People in Dominica</u>
• Population Changes		
• Health		
• Economic		
• Social		
Page 5.....	II	<u>Development of A National Policy—The Process</u>
Page 6.....	III	<u>Policy</u>
Page 9.....	IV	<u>National Infrastructure</u>
Page 10.....	V	<u>Education and Media</u>
Page 12.....	VI	<u>Health and Nutrition</u>
Page 14.....	VII	<u>Social Welfare</u>
Page 15.....	VIII	<u>Income Security</u>
Page 17.....	IX	<u>Family</u>
Page 18.....	X	<u>Housing and Living Environment</u>
Page 20.....	XI	<u>LEGAL</u>
Page 21.....	XII	<u>Research</u>



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2000



Members of Grand Bay Day Centre squeezing sugar cane juice the traditional way.

Population Changes

Over the past 30 years, the number of older people in Dominica has been increasing. In 1960, the total population of Dominica was 59,916, but this increased by 18.8% to 79,183 in 1991. However, during the same period the older population increased from 4,850 to 8,177. This represents an increase of 68.6% which is nearly four times the rate of increase in the overall population. What this means is that the older population has been growing at a much faster rate than the rest of the population.

Although there is a larger number of older women in the population, more men are now living longer. In 1960, men represented 38% of the older population. By 1991, this figure had increased to 44%. As a result the percentage of women in the older population decreased, from 62% in 1960 to 56% in 1991. During the same period, the female population in the total population decreased by less than 3%, from 53% in 1960 to 50.2% in 1991.

Table 1. Number and Percentages of Older Persons by Parish, Dominica 1991

Parish	No. Older Persons	% in Parish	% Older Persons in Population
St. Peter	273	17	3
St. Mark	291	15	4
St. Patrick	1251	14	15
St. Luke	220	14	3
St. Andrew	1385	13	17
St. David	772	12	9
St. John	729	12	9
Roseau	1475	10	18
Rest of St. George	443	10	5
St. Paul	666	9	8

Source: Central Statistical Office

Health

In 1992, the organization named REACH (Reaching Elderly, Abandoned Citizens House-bound) conducted a sample survey among Older Persons in Dominica concerning their health status. The findings were as follows:

- **The majority (60%) of Older Persons believed that they were in fair health;**
- **Approximately 40% did not suffer from any physical disability;**
- **Most (57%) of them went to the Health Clinic when ill;**
- **Approximately 33% never saw their District Nurse;**
- **Another 39% saw their nurse 3 or more times per year.**

The Older Persons in their responses requested the following in the health care system:

- **Free medical attention/medicine;**
- **More frequent visits by medical practitioners;**
- **Improved health standards/hygiene;**
- **Free meals/better (more balanced) diet.**

The Findings also revealed that:

- **The majority of Older Persons (84%) believed they ate enough food for their age;**
- **Approximately 50% of them had family members preparing their meals;**
- **Approximately 45% prepared their own meals**



Princess Margaret Hospital

The Chief Medical Officer's Report for 1996 showed that the leading causes of death among Older Persons in Dominica were:

- **Heart Disease (including high blood pressure/hypertension);**
- **Malignancy;**
- **Cerebrovascular disease;**
- **Diabetes.**



Economic

The economic conditions in which Older Persons lived in Dominica were also investigated by the REACH Team. The responses from the sample survey included the following areas: Housing Employment, and Salary/Wages, and are set out below:

Housing

- 25% of Older Persons lived in houses with four (4) rooms which did not include a kitchen and bathrooms.
- 25% occupied two (2) rooms.

Employment

- 20% were in employment. It was pointed out that this response was in keeping with a 1991 Population Census Report which showed that 26% of persons aged 60 and over were employed. This figure represented about 9% of all employed persons.

Salary/Wages

- A little over half of Older Persons who earned wages, earned \$50.00 or less per week.
- Males who worked earned a median weekly wage of \$47.00.
- Females on the other hand, earned a weekly median wage of \$34.00.
- Approximately 17% of Older Persons had no source of income.
- 10% of men and approximately 20% of women fell in this category.

It was revealed that:

- **Approximately 3.8% of Older Persons received no monetary assistance from an organization.**

This information, supported by findings from a Report on Poverty Assessment in Dominica in 1995/96 which was conducted by Lucy Bonnerjea and others, showed that very few Older Persons have Pensions or Savings. Instead, the majority depended on family support not only financially, but also for emotional and other support. Neighbours also played a role in assisting Older Persons.

- **Less than 4% of those with no source of income received non-monetary assistance from an organization.**
- **75% stated that they received food as the most common form of assistance.**

With regard to the percentage of Older Persons who were either trained professionally or were skilled persons, the 1991 population Census data showed approximately 8% of them within this category.

Social

With regard to participation and involvement in social activities the REACH survey revealed that there was very little participation by Older Persons. As a matter of fact, it was found that:

- **Less than 7% participated in community activities or were involved in associations.**
- **Approximately 50% of those responding however, cited the need for improvements in social and recreational facilities.**

They desired improvements in the following ways:

- **Building of community halls/centers;**
- **Organising outings - for example bus tours;**
- **The need to socialize more with young and old persons;**
- **Organising spiritual gatherings/prayer groups.**



II Development of A National Policy—

The Process

The approach used in the development of the National Policy on Ageing was widely consultative and participatory. On the 31st July, 1996, the first meeting was held and brought together representatives of groups and organizations with active programmes for older



Policy Consultation at Public Service Union building.

persons; representatives of Government Ministries who were involved in providing care and welfare to Older Persons (Ministries of Health and Community Development) and persons responsible for institutional care of Older Persons.

Following this meeting, a series of community meetings were held during the months of August to November 1996. Some of the communities that participated in these meetings were Marigot, Portsmouth, Grand Bay and Roseau as well as the Carib Territory.

The purpose of these community meetings were to obtain the views and opinions of a wide range of participants in order to develop a policy that would adequately focus on the needs, concerns and problems of the Older Persons and to identify the various means and ways of dealing with these issues. As a result of the needs and suggestions expressed, a draft policy statement was prepared and discussed at a National Symposium held on the 5th July 1998. At this symposium there were further discussions and inputs from a broad based group representing Government Ministries,

Non-Governmental Organisations, Trade Unions, village councils, professional organizations and associations.

The final draft was discussed by the Cabinet at a joint session of the Cabinet and representatives of the Dominica Council on Ageing in June 1999.

The General Principles and Objectives upon which the policy is built, is based on the proclamation and resolution of the United Nations General Assembly regarding ageing and older persons, endorsing the International Plan of Action on Ageing (Resolutions 37/51) and more specifically on the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, promulgated in 1991 in Resolution 48/91.

III Policy

The Government of Dominica recognizes that:

1. The progressive ageing of the Society and the continuing increase in absolute numbers and the proportion of Older Persons in the population are inevitable.
2. The economic and social impact of this ageing of the population provides both an opportunity and a challenge.
3. Older Persons constitute a valuable and important component of the Country's human resources.
4. All sectors have a responsibility to share and participate in providing for the well-being of Older Persons.

a. Goals

This policy is based on the rights of Older Persons as stated in the United Nations International Federation on Ageing (IFA) "Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Older Persons," namely the right to:

1. Independence;
2. Active participation in society;
3. Benefit from family and community support and care;
4. Self-fulfillment in pursuit of education and other opportunities and,
5. Dignity, security and freedom from exploitation,

Question: What is the Goal of the policy?

Answer: The Goal of the policy on ageing will be:

To ensure that the Older Persons will be provided with protection, care and opportunity to be involved in the development of the nation.



The Government Headquarters

Question: How will this be done?

Answer: The policy will focus specifically on:

1. Providing opportunities in order that the skills and abilities of the older person will be utilized and recognized. By so doing, they would be viewed as contributors to their own welfare and not as burdens to family and society.
2. Providing Older Persons with protection from physical, mental, sexual and emotional abuse, and also ensuring their care through support services such as community and home care.
3. Ensuring that the proper human and financial resources are put in place for the social and economic welfare of the older person.
4. Increase the provision of services for Older Persons. Additionally, to encourage those services that recognize the importance of the family unit as the basic link to generations and hence the place of older persons in the family.
5. Helping nationals to prepare for retirement through promotion of the idea of individual responsibility.
6. Developing and promoting programmes which provide opportunities for the involvement of older persons in economic activities and for the sharing of their expertise, skills and experience.
7. Implement appropriate legislation for the promotion of the welfare of older persons.

8. Ensuring collaboration of efforts between other agencies that focus on activities related to the needs of women and the disabled.

Question:

What are the general guidelines or foundations on which the policy is based?

Answer:

The general guidelines or foundations on which the policy is based is in keeping with the Principles for Older Persons of the United Nations. These principles are set out below:

1. Independence:

Older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care through the provision of income, family and community support and self-help.

Older Persons should be facilitated in accessing opportunities to work and to engage in other income generating activities.

2. Participation:

Older Persons should remain integrated in society, participate in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.

Older Persons should be given opportunities to serve as volunteers in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities.

3. Care:

Older Persons should have access to health care to help them to maintain or regain the optimum level of physical, mental and emotional well-being and to prevent or delay the onset of illness. Older Persons should have access to social and legal services to enhance their independence protection and care.

4. Self-fulfillment:

Older Persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.

5. Dignity

Older Persons should be able to live in dignity and security and be free from exploitation and physical or mental abuse.

Older Persons should remain integrated in society, participate in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.



Older persons should be treated fairly regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, disability or other status, and be valued independently of their economic contribution.

IV National Infrastructure

For a national policy on ageing to work, certain structures and mechanisms need to be put in place, for example there needs to be an effective organization of older persons. This organization would among other things develop plans and programmes to meet older people's needs for finance, food, housing, health, recreation and leisure etc.

a. Goals

The government of Dominica considers it important to put the necessary and basic measures in place that will ensure that the policy on ageing is implemented on as wide a basis as possible.



The Consultation process.

b. How will this be done?

The policy will be implemented with government, the private sector and voluntary organizations working together. Each group or sector will take responsibility for identifying resources to implement the policy. These different sectors will also seek to publicise information as contained in United Nations and other documents to the public.

c. What will be accomplished?

The policy on ageing will be included in national development plans.

- The needs of older persons in both urban and rural areas will be addressed through submissions made by NGO's community organizations and local government agencies. Special

attention will be paid to housing, transportation, health and social services in national development plans.

- An older person in Dominica will be defined as anyone who has reached the age of 60 years in keeping with United Nations resolutions.
- The Ministry of Community Development and Women's Affairs or any other ministry which may deal with ageing matters will receive the necessary staff and other resources to deal effectively with the concerns of older people. Older people will have a place to go and discuss their concerns, and will have persons visit to look into their situation.
- The Dominica Council on Ageing will have the necessary financial, human and other resources to assist the government in this effort.

V Education and Media

Question:

What does the policy want to achieve in the area of Education and Media?

Answer:

The overall educational goal of the policy on Ageing is to start and maintain programmes for the purpose of informing and educating the public on matters relating to the process of ageing.

Question: With this goal in mind, what will be accomplished?

Answer:

On-going educational programmes will be established with the media to ensure that:

- All persons of all ages become aware of the process regarding ageing. In addition, persons will become aware of the need to plan and effectively prepare themselves for retirement and old age.
- The various partners will promote the total development of older persons.
- Opportunities will be provided so that older persons can obtain continuing education.
- Older persons will have the opportunity to utilize their knowledge and skills, training the youth and others among them.
- Promote the integration of Older Persons to the family and their role in contributing to national development as a whole.
- Guide and assist Older Persons in knowing and understanding their basic Human Rights and Freedom not only as local but also as Global

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citizens.

Question: How will this be done?

Answer: This will be done in the following ways;

- Various agencies along with the media responsible educating and informing persons of all ages on the process of ageing. The following are examples of how these plans will be put in place or implemented.
- Starting with children at the pre-primary school level and moving through to the post-secondary school level, the Curriculum Development Unit of the Ministry of Education will include in its curricula, information which emphasise and promote an awareness of the process of ageing and the value and worth of older persons;
- Training programmes which focus on the total development of Older Persons, that is, their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, mental and spiritual development will be conducted;
- Educational programmes will be developed to prepared individuals in the society for retirement.
- Community centres, churches and public buildings will be used as teaching and learning centres for the community and older persons to come together and share skills, talents and resources.
- Every effort will be made by the various agencies coming together to deal with matters as they affect the welfare of older persons.

VI Health and Nutrition

a. Goal

Question:

What is the goal of the National Policy on Ageing as it concerns the health and nutritional state of Older Persons in Dominica?

Answer:

The goal is to ensure that focus on Health and Nutrition of Older Persons will be structured in such a way, so that all areas, such as those relating to the proper maintenance of health, physical and mental care will be included. In accomplishing this goal, recognition will be given to the importance of the main areas of care. That is Home Care and Community care.

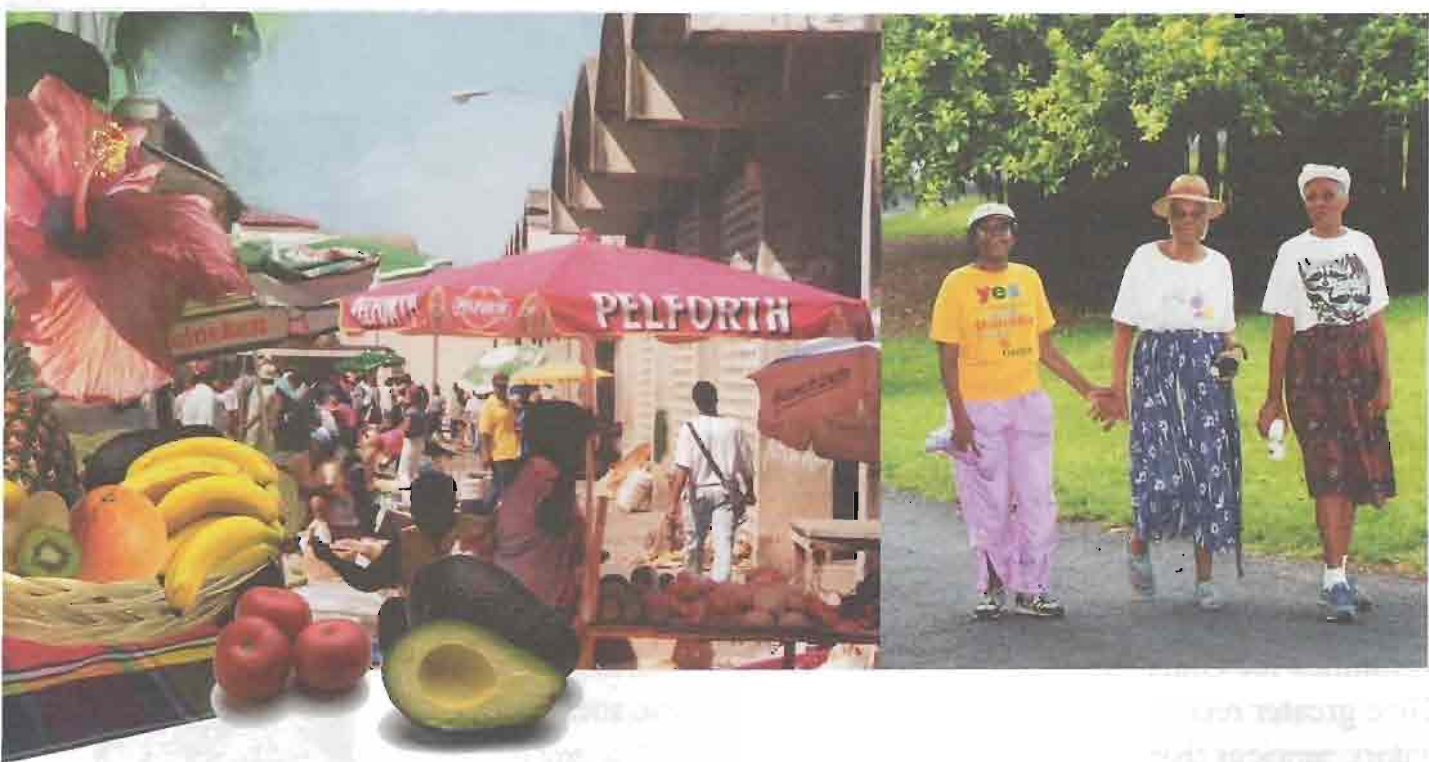
- Ensure that statistical data include information relating to gender and age.
- Produce and widely articulate on a regular basis, information relating to ageing;
- Develop and utilize methods that are necessary to monitor the health and social and economic conditions of Older Persons through the information systems within the various agencies;
- The Government and Private Sector will work closely together in the provision of benefits such as subsidies, technical assistance and psychological support.

b. A healthy lifestyle.

- Promote the conditions whereby rehabilitation of Older Persons who are disabled or those who are victims of disaster can take place in the best way possible.
- Provide education and training in the areas of focusing on the ageing process and the various needs of Older Persons.
- Those to benefit from such a training would be mainly involved in the home and community health care programmes. For example, health care workers, elders, youth policy makers and the media.
- Encourage the formation of Day Care Cen-



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tres for Older Persons in the communities of Dominica.

- Increase the growth and development of day care of Older Persons, through the establishment and maintenance of support groups.
- Ensure the safety, security and well being of Older Persons in Dominica.
- Endeavour to provide equal share for rural and urban families to health services especially in the areas of medical, ophthalmology or eye care and dental care.

Question: How will this be done?

Answer: To ensure the total well-being of Older Persons in Dominica the following will be carried out:

- Programmes that are specifically created for the physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual well-being of the Older Persons will be constantly examined and revised.
- From time-to-time, conduct research that focuses on the well-fare of Older Persons. Attention will be given to those persons who are receiving home and community care.
- Public Education will be developed and put into effect.
- With the use of available resources, that is, human, financial and others, focus will be given to the personal development and upliftment of the Older Persons. This will be necessary in assisting them in taking charge of their own well-being.

VII Social Welfare

Some of our
centenarians

Question:

What is the goal of the Social Welfare Programmes?

Answer:

The following are what will be accomplished in the policy as it relates to the Social Welfare of the Older Person:

- Strengthen and expand national and community-based social services while at the same time making sure that Older Persons are able to afford and obtain these services easily;
- Balance the roles and contributions of the public, private and voluntary sector in their efforts to encourage the development and provision of opportunities for Older Persons;
- Give greater recognition and value to the role of those social and voluntary services that provide care for Older Persons;
- Collect information on the number of old, more vulnerable and therefore, more at risk persons in the various community districts. This information will be recorded in registers at these locations along with information on the necessary services that are available for this category of persons.
- Ensure that “Home for Older Persons” and Nursing Homes operate at standards that are satisfactory to National and International Standards;
- Promote programmes that reflect a new culture whereby there is a strong bond and relationship developed among the various agencies which play a role in the total well-being of the Older Person;
- Encourage the setting up of “Golden Age Clubs” nationwide.

Question:

How will this be done?

Answer:

In order to achieve the goals of the social welfare policy, all agencies involved will work together to:

- Provide free, or at a discount cost, medical, and health services to older persons.
- Respond to the changing social, cultural and economic conditions that Older Persons will find themselves, through revising of the social welfare programmes that are put in place by all agencies including those of Government . By this approach, there should also be improved combining



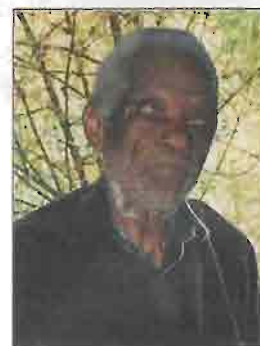
Felicita James



Wilfred Seaman



Nelly Cuffy



Walkins Ettiene



Home for the Aged



The Dominica Social Security

of efforts.

- Ensure that Older Persons are, sufficiently included in all family related programmes offered at the National and Community Levels.
- Set up a system to monitor and set standards for the establishment of Homes for Older Persons, Nursing Homes and Day Care Centres.
- Endeavour to put in effect a system whereby Older Persons can benefit from discounts or reductions in the cost of transportation.
- Encourage and support the efforts of Non-Government Organizations in setting up community-care and social service programmes.

VIII **Income Security**

a. Goals

Question:

What is the main goal of the policy as it relates to Income Security?

Answer:

The main goal of the policy is aimed at promoting and supporting a reasonable and sufficient income for Older Persons.

Question: What will be accomplished?

Answer: The Government will endeavour to:

- Promote a Pension Plan which would allow as far as possible a broad coverage, match the prices of goods and commodities and supported by the necessary laws;

- Promote a system, whereby, there is easy conversion of pensions of Older Persons.

In addition to these accomplishments the policy will also ensure that Older Persons are:

- Included in a Skills Bank;
- Allowed to develop their talents and show their potential;
- Allowed to utilize their skills so that not only themselves but their families and communities can benefit from such uses;
- Provided with proper training opportunities, technical advice and guidance;
- Allowed to receive financial assistance;
- Identified and assisted adequately in cases where they are seen as helpless and dependent;
- Not discriminated against, whether by gender or other forms, in programmes which have been set up especially for them!

Question:

How will this be done?

Answer:

The Government will put into effect laws to ensure that at the time of compulsory retirement of public officers, there would be a corresponding receipt of social security retirement benefits.

- The Trade Unions, Non-Government Organisations, The Employers' Federation, The Dominican Association of Industry and Commerce, The Public Service Associations will work together in putting into effect, programmes for Older Persons.
- Encouragement will be given to the Young to plan carefully for their retirement.
- In order to supplement their pension, Older Persons will be allowed to be involved in activities from which they can gain an income.
- Older Persons will be able to look forward to useful advice, guide and direction from a prepared manual on income-generating activities.
- Community based organizations and local clubs will be organized so that training opportunities and information can be provided for Older Persons interested in starting their own business.
- A Data Base/Resource Bank will be set up to provide easy access to the skills that Older Persons possess.



IX Family

a. Goals

Question:

What is the goal of the policy as it related to the family unit in? Dominica?

Answer:

The Government recognizes that the family unit is the foundation of the society. Therefore, the goal overall, is to provide systems that support the family in such a way as to give Older



Recognise the important contribution that Older Persons make to families and the society as a whole.



Persons a feeling of importance in family matters. At the same time enabling the family to adequately take care of the Older Person.

Question: What will be accomplished?

Answer: The aim of the policy is to:

- Nurture and increase the skills of Older Persons so that they can fulfil their roles not only in passing on knowledge and values, but as a leader, counselor and care giver.
- Make it possible for adult members of very poor families and Older Persons who work in the home to function as best as they are able to. This will be done by creating a supportive environment when setting up social and economic programmes from which the society as a whole will benefit.
- Develop and support those systems that will take care of the special needs of families who are disadvantaged and with children, dependent Older Persons, disabled members (including those resulting from HIV/AIDS) as well as those suffering from dementia or are mentally ill.

- Encourage both men and women in these family settings to share roles and responsibilities.
- Recognise the important contribution that Older Persons make to families and the society as a whole.
- Develop those systems that strengthen the independence of Older Persons. In so doing, these persons will be able to enjoy a better quality of life within their own communities for as long as it is possible.
- Promote, increase or support family care-giving.

Question:

How will this be done?

Answer:

The Government, while recognizing the role and contribution of Non- Government Organisations in strengthening the family, will promote those activities which will encourage sound relationships among families. The government will also encourage roles where all members of the family are able to take part in joint decision making.

- In order that the family can continue to provide support for its older members, protection and assistance will be provided by the government.
- All policies and programmes which deal with the matter of reducing poverty, will also recognize the importance of the 'Older Person' age group.
- All training and retraining programmes concerning the family and family life will include topics on ageing and Older persons.
- Where the Private Sector and NGO's are involved in the setting up of community based programmes and projects for Older Persons, the Government will encourage such activities by granting these organizations tax exemptions and other incentives.

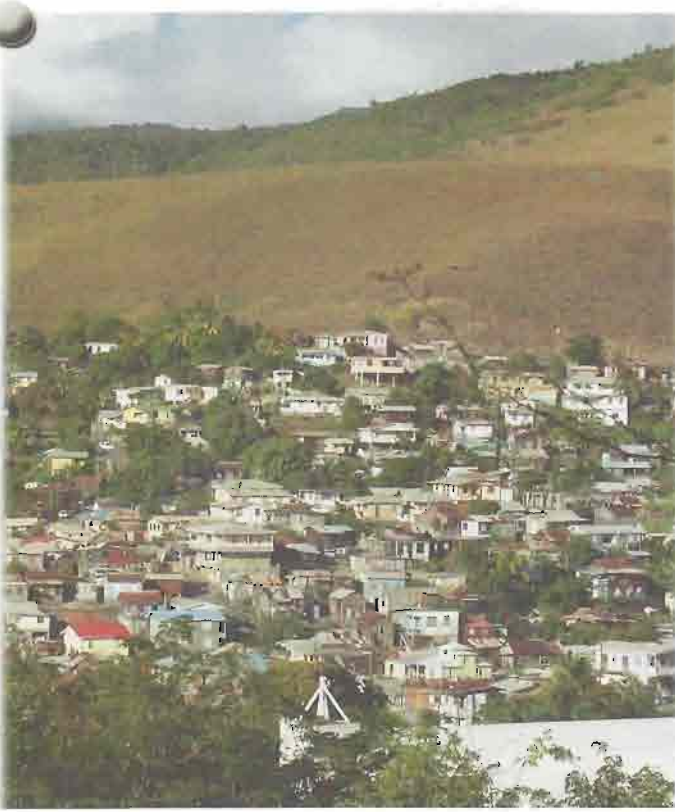
X Housing and Living Environment

a. Goals

Question: As far as the policy is concerned, what are the goals as they relate to Housing and Living Environment.

Answer: The goals are as follows:

- To make it possible for Older Persons to have access to satisfactory and affordable housing.
- Encourage and support programmes started by other organizations/agencies which assist older persons in continuing to live in their own homes as long as it is possible, and to also support alternative housing arrangements if their own home is no longer habitable.



Two West Coast communities.

Question: What will be accomplished?

Answer: There will be close working together between the:

- Government agencies, in particular the National Housing Authority to determine the true situation of national housing for the Older Persons in Dominica. In addition, statistics and relevant data will be put together to assist the process.
- Ensure that the national housing development plans include the housing needs of older persons.
- Promote the need to have other types of housing arrangements for older persons that are suitable for community and national development plans.
- Establish links with those organizations which represent the disabled so as to ensure that wheel chair access to public buildings are provided.
- Encourage the erecting of ramps and rails in buildings, especially where social and health services are provided at the workplace, and where suitable, on side walks and public transportation.
- Ensure that the National Disaster Preparedness Plan gives sufficient attention to the provision of accommodation for Older Persons in times of National Disaster.
- Promote community education on personal security in the home and community.

Question:

How will this be done?

Answer:

Again, the Government and private sector must work together to:

- Deal with the effects of providing shelter for older persons. These sectors will need to examine the physical, psychological and social effects of carrying out this programme;
- Plan and introduce housing of various types which are affordable for Older Persons. The Private Sector's input or involvement will be sought to provide financing and agreements;
- Working closely with those concerned with community services to ensure that where policies on housing are concerned, the national budget provides for the entire population in a fair and just manner.
- Encourage financial institutions to increase the age limit at which persons can obtain loans for providing accommodation at home for their elderly family members.



Encourage the erecting of ramps and rails in buildings, especially where social and health services are provided at the workplace, and where suitable, on side walks and public transportation.

XI LEGAL

a. Goals

Question:

What is the goal of the policy in regard to laws to protect the rights of Older Persons?

Answer:

The aim is to put in place a basic legal structure which will protect the rights of Older Persons.

Question: What will be accomplished?

Answer: The main concerns are to promote:

- The passing of laws to protect the rights of retirement and post-retirement benefits and pension;
- A revision and amendment of the present pension law. This would be



The Parliament Building

carried out in such a way as to allow for review and revision of this law from time to time;

- The passing of a maintenance law which enforces obligations to parents and grand parents.
- Amendments to the Title by Registration Act regarding the protection of the property rights of the Older Person.
- Laws to ensure equal access for Older Persons to social welfare services.
- A system of Universal Social Insurance.

Question:

How will this be done?

Answer:

The Dominica Council on Ageing will work closely with the Office of the Law Revision Commissioner and the Attorney General's Office to establish a system to examine and make adjustments or changes to those laws which affect older persons.

XII Research

a. Goals

Question:

What is the goal of the policy in regard to conducting research on the situation of Older Persons in the society?

Answer:

The aim is to provide information that is accurate and reliable on the situation of older persons in the areas of their capabilities, potential, problems and needs. Information that will assist in blending Older Persons in the nation's economic, social and political life will also be provided.

Question: What will be accomplished?

Answer: Research will focus specifically on identifying:

- The problems, needs and strengths of Older Persons in the society;
- The skills, knowledge, talents and other resources that are available among older persons and which could be utilized in a beneficial way in national development programmes;
- The relative efficiency and effectiveness of alternative "age care practices." For example community care as against care provided in an institution for Older Persons.

Question: How will this be done?

Answer: To accomplish these things, the following will be done:

- The Central Statistical Office will be provided with resources needed and be required to collect, analyse and record relevant data on older persons, from time-to-time;
- All Age Care Organisations will work closely with the Central Statistical Office and other institutions that are involved in research work, to design research, projects and identify sources that will fund such research.
- The knowledge obtained from research will be utilized in developing suitable and relevant programmes for the Older Person. This knowledge will also be used in determining how resources will be spread around for the effective putting in place of these programmes.


The aim is to put in place a basic legal structure which will protect the rights of Older Persons.


The aim is to provide information that is accurate and reliable on the situation of older persons in the areas of their capabilities, potential, problems and needs.



Central Statistical Office



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