

Commentary on South Africa's domain ranks in the 2014 Global AgeWatch Index

By Ncodimus Chipfupa, Regional Director, HelpAge Southern Africa,
(nchipfupa@helpagesouthafrica.org)



Global AgeWatch Index rank

80

out of 96

South Africa ranks low on the Index at 80 overall, but is the second-highest in its region. It performs best in the income security domain (19), a significant increase from its 2013 ranking (46) due to improved pension coverage data and the contribution of a social pension system.

It ranks low in the capability domain (75), a decrease from its 2013 ranking (60) due to the low level of employment among older people (38%) relative to the regional average (73%). It has the highest rate of educational attainment among older people in its region (43.8%), slightly above the overall Index average (43%).

South Africa performs badly in the enabling environment domain (83), due to below regional averages on older people's satisfaction with their safety (31%) and civic freedom (66%). It ranks lowest in the health domain (89), with life expectancy at 60 (16 years) below the regional average (17 years).

As part of the Age Demands Action campaign, older people from our local partner MUSA are marching with their community to raise awareness about issues that affect older people.



Income security

19

79.6/100

By October 2013, 93% of older South Africans received a pension of which 63% receive the Old Age Grant with the rest receiving contributory pensions. The OAG is approximately 1,260 Rand (117 US\$) per month. Universalisation of the Old Age Grant is planned to start from 2016 for all older persons aged 75 years and above. Currently, South Africa has more than 2.9 million older persons receiving social grants.

HelpAge International recently conducted a baseline study in South Africa that focused specifically on pension-related abuse; particularly where an Old Age Grant remains the main or the only source of income in a family. The study assessed the current social security systems accessed by older people in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo and explored the issue of pension related abuse. The study concluded that if the needs of older people – particularly those who are exposed to abuse – are to be mainstreamed into all government programmes, high level government commitment is required.



Health status

89

25.9/100

Since 2011, South Africa has been re-engineering primary health care to improve service delivery at community level. The focus is to strengthen the district health system (DHS) and improve basic service delivery. This will place greater

emphasis on population based health and outcomes. The package will include: Community based services; preventive services at household level; school health services; effective referral; as well as patient transport. This will be very beneficial to the country's older people because it means the community based health workers will bring health services to their homes.

The Age Demands Action Campaign in South Africa will focus on the national health policy and lobby for a geriatric component to be included in the nursing curriculum, the policies and delivery strategies.



Capability

75

22.3/100

The Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign was launched in February 2008, with the intention of enabling 4.7 million adults above the age of 15 years to become literate in one of the eleven official languages. Initiated and managed by the Department of Education the campaign enables adult learners to read, write and calculate in their mother tongue, and to learn English as well. Older persons in the provinces are participating and taking lessons.



Enabling environment

83

55.0/100

Most older persons from black communities generally live with their families with a very low percentage living in older people's residential facilities that are supported by Government or private institutions.

In South Africa, if an older person is in need of 24-hour care and wants to live in an older people's residential facility, one can apply at the nearest social workers' office or older people's residential facility. The criteria for eligibility are: documented need of full-time attendance, persons must be aged 60 years or more and receive an old-age grant or pension fund.

Crime is a challenge for South Africa affecting all ages and older persons are no exception.

A lot of advocacy work has been done by the South Africa Older Persons' Forum for age friendly transport systems and that advocacy work is still ongoing.

The Global AgeWatch Index ranks countries by how well their older populations are faring.

For general enquiries please contact HelpAge International's Media Manager, Sarah Gillam (sarah.gillam@helpage.org).

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