Government of Jamaica

Report on implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) in Jamaica

2018 – 2022

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SEPTEMBER 2022

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Introduction

Jamaica welcomes the opportunity to present its report on the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the Regional Implementation Strategy (RIS) at the Fifth Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing and the Rights of Older Persons in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The report is prepared and being presented within the context of the public health disaster of the COVID-19 pandemic, in the 60th year of Jamaica's political independence and the decennial Population and Housing Census and Jamaica's second Voluntary National Review Report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The reporting period also coincides with the period of the revision of the National Policy for Senior Citizens. This policy revision was undertaken within the framework of Jamaica's Vision 2030 National Development Plan, efforts towards a comprehensive social protection strategy and the full enjoyment of rights by older persons.

The National Policy for Senior Citizens envisages that by 2030,
Senior Citizens live and participate actively in a society that guarantees their rights, promotes their responsibilities, recognizes their capabilities and contributions, and facilitates their enjoyment of a life of fulfilment, health and security.

This report demonstrates continuity in action and purpose to implement the strategies of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, even as Jamaica pursues the achievement of the SDGs by the year 2030. A multi-stakeholder approach to support the overall implementation, coordination and monitoring at the macro, mezzo and micro level is adopted and was used to inform this report.

Executive Summary

This fourth report to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) will outline progress Jamaica has made towards the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and its Regional Implementation Strategy.

The report was informed by data from public consultations with during the process to revise the National Policy for Senior Citizens which was undertaken during the period under review. The report is also informed by national and agency reports as well as data collected from key informant interviews with officials in stakeholder entities with responsibility for oversight, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Jamaica has a population of approximately 2.73 million; the elderly population (60+ years) representing 13.9 per cent (375,700) persons.

Notable achievements over the period include:

- The Revision of the National Policy for Senior Citizens
- Establishment of a non-contributory social pension for persons 75 years and older
- Funding under the IDB's "Integrated Support to Jamaica Social Protection Strategy" project in support of training of social workers in gerontology
- "Jamaica Moves" national health promotion campaign for prevention, reduction and management of non-communicable diseases with specific strategies and resources for the elderly
- Pensionable age adjusted to 65 years for both men and women
- Primary Health Care Reform
- Expansion of National Health Fund services to provide drug subsidies for 17 chronic illnesses as well as respiratory devices, diabetic testing supplies and diagnostic tests
- Training to support the ageing population. A new programme – Post Graduate Diploma in Geriatric Medicine being offered at University of the West Indies
- Provisions for special bank accounts to increase access of low income persons to financial services

The COVID-19 pandemic provided the opportunity to test the strengths, weaknesses and resilience of our health and social systems. We are encourage by the aforementioned milestones and look forward to the implementation of the Revised National Policy for Senior Citizens in collaboration with all stakeholders to achieve our vision: *Senior Citizens live and participate actively in a society that guarantees their rights, promotes their responsibilities, recognizes their capabilities and contributions, and facilitates their enjoyment of a life of fulfilment, health and security.*

General Information

Name of Country: Jamaica

Prepared by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (National Council for Senior Citizens)
14 National Heroes Circle, Kingston 4
www.mlss.gov.jm

The Ministry of Labour and Social Security is the national focal point for ageing.

Strategic documents: National Policy for Senior Citizens, 2021
Vision 2030 Jamaica, National Development Plan
Jamaica Social Protection Strategy

Overview

Jamaica is located in the North Western section of the Caribbean Archipelago, 145 kilometres south of Cuba, 161 kilometres west of Haiti and 898 kilometres south east of Miami. With an area of 10,991 square kilometres, it is the third largest island in the Caribbean. The Jamaican society is multi-racial although the majority of the population is of African descent. Jamaica is a middle-income country with a GDP of US$13.64 billion[1]. The principal sectors of the Jamaican economy are services (tourism included) manufacturing, mining, and agriculture (including forestry and fisheries). The services sector is the most important in respect of contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The informal sector is also very important in the economic structure contributing an estimated 40% to GDP and providing employment for 53% of the labour force[2].

Situation of Ageing in Jamaica

Demographic Profile

Jamaica has a population of approximately 2.73 million and an average annual population growth rate of 0.2 per cent. The most current data show the elderly population (60+ years) representing 13.9 per cent (375,700) of the total population. Of this number, 47.5% are males and 52.5% females. The predominance of females in this age cohort is indicative of females recording higher survival rates than males[3]. The majority of the elderly fall in the 65-74 years age group 39.4 per cent, while the 60-64 age group accounted for 29.9 per cent, and the 75+ age group for 30.7 per cent.

[1] https://data.worldbank.org/country/JM
[2] https://one.oecd.org Jamaica's Informal Sector, 2018
[3] https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=ESSJ+2021

The Statistical Institute of Jamaica (STATIN) projects that the elderly will account for about 22.0 per cent of the population by 2050, and surpass the percentage for the child population by 2040. Approximately 32.0 per cent of all households have a member who was 60+ years old[4].

Health

Chronic non-communicable diseases remains high among the elderly population with the majority (72%) having at least one chronic illness. Hypertension and diabetes are the most common diseases with 0.3% of elderly persons living with HIV/AIDS. Fifteen (15) per cent of elderly persons have a disability, with a slightly higher prevalence among males. Functional independence is high among the elderly at 81.6%. The extended family and kinship network remain strong in the society; as a result older persons are ageing in their communities with only approximately 1% living in residential care institutions. The majority of older persons in residential care institutions are 75 years and older[5].

Social and Economic

Current data (2021) show an increase in the labour force with the age group (25–54 years) representing 69.0 per cent of the total[6]. The 65 years and over population registered the largest increase in the labour force (11.6 per cent), this was mainly driven by an increase in females (by 13.0 per cent) in this age group. Persons 55 years and older represent 16.9% of the employed labour force (61.6% males, 38.4% females).
Data on poverty prevalence from the Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (JSLC) 2019 record that 11.0 per cent of the population was living below the poverty line. This represented an 8.3 percentage point decline when compared with 2017. Rural Areas recorded the highest regional poverty prevalence figures, at 14.2 per cent. Other Urban Centers recorded a poverty rate of 13.4.

Policy and Legislative Framework

The Revised National Policy for Senior Citizens with its Broad Plan of Action was tabled in Parliament as a White Paper in October 2021. The policy utilizes a whole-of-society approach to the healthy, active and productive ageing of the population, and the social protection, participation and intergenerational transfers that would optimize national development with strategic actions for individuals, families, communities and other stakeholders.
The Policy has established six major **goals/expected outcomes.** These are:

Goal 1. Increased participation of senior citizens in all spheres of the society
Goal 2. Improved income security and social protection coverage for senior citizens
Goal 3. Adequate and supportive health and wellness systems for senior citizens

[4] Revised National Policy for Senior Citizens at https://mlss.gov.jm/departments/national-council-for-senior-citizens/
[5] Ministry of Health and Wellness, Standard Monitoring and Regulations Division
[6] Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica(ESSJ) 2021

Goal 4. Improved independence, security and safety for senior citizens
Goal 5. Enhanced family support systems and community solidarity, for interaction with senior citizens
Goal 6. Strengthened institutional, and infrastructural networks for partnership, collaboration, governance and advocacy.

The National Council for Senior Citizens (NCSC) has the mandate to manage the implementation of the new policy approaches. Within institutional frameworks such as the National Social Protection Committee, National Poverty Reduction Programme Committee, and technical oversight committees, the outcomes of policy are supported.

The Disabilities Act[7] came into effect on February 14, 2022. This followed its approval in 2014 and the affirmation of the Disabilities Regulations in 2021. The Act makes provisions to safeguard and enhance the welfare of persons with disabilities across Jamaica. It also aims to protect and promote the rights of Persons with Disabilities and prohibits discrimination, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), of which Jamaica is a signatory.

COVID-19 AND OLDER PERSONS

The COVID-19 pandemic threatened the well-being of older persons. Early identification of older persons as the population most at risk of death from severe COVID infection prompted early infection prevention and control measures.

As at September 2022, the COVID-19 Clinical Management Summary[8] revealed a total of 151,791 confirmed cases (87,621 females, 64,167 males, and 3 under investigation); 3,314 directly related deaths (with another 280 coincidental deaths in persons with COVID-19); and 269 deaths under investigation.

Vaccination among older persons

The Ministry of Health and Wellness reports the status of fully vaccinated as at September 2022 to be 45% of 60-69 age group, 45% of the 70-79 age group and 31% of the 80 and older age group. Vaccine options include Pfizer, Astrazeneca, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson and SINOPHARM. Vaccine hesitancy exists among the older person population and may be associated with fear, misinformation about the vaccines and their constituents, personal and religious reasons as well as vaccine preferences and the belief in infection prevention measures and natural remedies.

[7] Disability Act, 2014 at https://www.japarliament.gov.jm/index.php/publications/acts/acts-of-parliament/2014

[8] https://www.moh.gov.jm/updates/coronavirus/covid-19-clinical-management-summary/

Social and Economic impact of COVID 19 on the elderly

Government imposed Public Orders geared at virus containment and mitigation of additional health vulnerabilities inevitably disrupted the lives of citizens including the elderly. The COVID-19 pandemic had a severe impact on the operations of the National Council for Senior Citizens. The majority of calendar activities had to be cancelled and others that could be held virtually were staged, albeit with smaller numbers of participants. Activities of senior citizens clubs and senior day activity centers were cancelled in compliance with rules against social gathering and for the protection of older persons.

The impact of the pandemic on the elderly was compounded by the following issues which emerged:

- The unbanked elderly, who without active bank accounts faced difficulties being served by social service systems, which require bank accounts for direct deposits of pensions and other cash transfers. Other payment methods, such as the use of remittance agencies existing at the community level had to be utilized.
- Submission of Life Certificates required as proof for continued payment of pension benefits had to be waived. This was done initially on a limited basis and resulted in some pensioners not receiving pension benefits in a timely manner. However, as restrictions were relaxed, it became easier for many elderly persons to make their submissions
- Digital/Financial Literacy Gaps. Some elderly persons were unable to, or were uncomfortable with the use of online banking and Point of Sale and ATM/ABMs services/ This proved a challenge and resulted in many older persons conducting business in person, sometimes in overcrowded conditions which increased the risk of COVID-19 infection
- Inadequate documentation/ Undocumented elderly. Some older persons who did not possess birth certificates and government issued identification faced barriers to accessing social welfare services
- Lack of internet accessibility excluded some seniors (both rural and urban) from timely information and services. In some cases, devices to access the internet were not present in the home or were being used by children for online learning. In other cases, internet access was not available or was severely unstable.
- Fear of COVID-19 Infection prevented some seniors from leaving their homes to venture into public spaces and to contend with public transportation and crowds. Seniors were encouraged to call the Ministry of Health and Wellness Helplines and the Senior Citizens Toll Free Line for assistance with information on services.

Government Response

The Government of Jamaica implemented several strategies in support of older persons during the pandemic.

1. Older persons prioritized to receive COVID-19 vaccinations, after healthcare workers
2. The GoJ allocated one time CARE Cash Grants to support persons who had lost employment as well as persons with disabilities.
3. A COVID Vaccine cash incentive for persons 60 years and older upon proof of full vaccination
4. Older persons were designated a priority group within quarantined communities and were provided with groceries and supported by public health staff and social workers
5. Waiver of life certificates to support continued payment of pension benefits

6. Provision of food baskets to approximately 12,000 vulnerable older adults in collaboration with the World Food Programme. This benefit was also extended to cash grants to the beneficiaries.
7. Establishment of a RONA Emergency Helpline for older persons. Support was provided for emergency services as well as information and referrals. A wide network of volunteers provided support for errands such as bill payment, shopping, emergency food supplies etc. An intergenerational activity paired students with older persons who engaged in telephone check-in during "lockdown" or "no movement" days.
8. Provision of up to 3-months' supply of medication for chronic illnesses under the National Health Fund/Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme (NHF/JADEP).
9. A new social pension providing cash grant to persons 75 years and older and who are not in receipt of a retirement pension.
10. Wellness kits for 5,000 older persons identified to be at high risk of social isolation, loneliness and depression. Wellness kits contained activities to support mental health, craft work, backyard gardening items, basic personal protective equipment (face mask, gloves, sanitizer), health and information brochures and a personal COVID-19 journal to document their experiences.
11. No visitor policy for government-operated nursing homes, vaccination of residents and staff and upgrading of isolation units. Residents communicated with their relatives virtually.

Methodology

The preparation of the national report for the fourth review and appraisal cycle of the implementation of the MIPAA/RIS was coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security which is the Government's focal point on ageing. The Government of Jamaica through the Ministry of Labour and Social Security undertook a process of revision of the National Policy for Senior Citizens during the period 2018 -2021. This policy revision was in keeping with the commitment of the Government to establish a comprehensive social protection strategy, and inclusive economic and social development. Stakeholder consultations for this process with a multi-sectoral Technical Review Panel, the Planning Institute of Jamaica, the National Council for Senior Citizens, senior citizens and their organizations, academia, the youth, civil society, government and non-government entities proved useful to the preparation of this report.

The report is also informed by national and agency reports as well as data collected from key informant interviews with officials in stakeholder entities with responsibility for oversight, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Summary of National Measures and the Process of Implementation of MIPAA/RIS

Priority Area 1. Older Persons and Development

Objective 1: Promote the human rights of older persons

The Charter of Rights[9] and the Constitution of Jamaica provides protection for the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all persons in Jamaica. The Government of Jamaica has committed to focus efforts on creating a responsive framework that acknowledges and facilitates the enjoyment of human rights by older persons, while empowering them to lead active and productive lives. This has been emphasized in the guiding principle of respect for human rights and dignity underpinning the Revised National Policy for Senior Citizens. A series of information seminars on the rights of older persons has been held annually since 2018 to educate older persons, service providers, families and the general public on the rights of older persons. While restrictions in movement and gathering may have affected the social engagement and participation of older people, a balanced approach to ensuring other rights such as access to health care, social security inter alia were not abrogated, abridged or infringed. The implementation of a robust social marketing and behavior modification campaign of the rights of older persons is anticipated in the short term.

The Disabilities Act and Regulations was effected February 2022 and makes provisions to safeguard the human rights of older persons with disabilities in Jamaica.

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

In support of the global thrust for credible engagement of older persons in economic and social life, the revised Policy has incorporated active and productive ageing models recognizing the economic opportunities presented by the ageing population and the role of older persons as consumers, innovators, investors, entrepreneurs, workers, taxpayers and a knowledge base among other things.
The National Council for Senior Citizens and its partners continue to collaborate for lifelong learning and to provide skills training, economic grants and economic empowerment workshops for older persons. Private sector partners such as FLOW Foundation Skills for the Future Programme[10] have provided ICT training for older persons seeking to improve their digital literacy and equipping them for jobs online or support to start small and medium enterprises (SMEs) often from the comfort of their homes.

[9] The Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms
https://www.japarliament.gov.jm/index.php/publications/acts/acts-of-parliament/2011
[10] https://www.smallbusinessportal.com/business-services/Flow-Foundation-Skills-for-the-Future-Programme

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

Under the Public Sector Pension Reform[11] normal pensionable age was gradually increased from 60 years by one year each year since 2016; as at 2021, retirement age for both men and women is 65 years.

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

A new Social Pension Programme that targets elderly persons 75 years and older, who are not in receipt of a pension or any other retirement income, old age or disability benefit or other income and are not resident in a government's institutionalized care facility was introduced in May 2021 to expand social protection coverage to the elderly.

Table 1: Data on the number Elderly by age group	
60-64	105,785
65-69	81,686
70-74	62,596
75+	105,507
Total Elderly population (2018: STATIN)	**355,574**
No. of NIS Pensioners (August 2020)	122,104
No. of Elderly on PATH & Poor Relief (August 2020)	85,202
Total Elderly in receipt of social protection benefits	**207,306**
Total Elderly not in receipt of PATH, Poor Relief or NIS	**148,268**
Elderly population not in receipt of social protection benefits	**42%**

As at September 2022, there were 10,879 registered social pensioners.

For the first time, Jamaica's household helpers and fisher folk will be able to secure pension benefits under the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) as the Government moves to formalize these sectors under the 2022 Transition to Formality Action Plan[12]. This segment of workers will be able to access health and life insurance, pension and other facilities to provide them with security and protection in their work environment

[11] https://www.mof.gov.jm Public Sector Pension Reform
[12] https://jis.gov.jm/fw-informal-sector-workers-to-get-nis-benefits-jis/

Objective 5: Creation of suitable conditions for older persons' full involvement in society as a means of promoting their empowerment as a social group and strengthening the exercise of active citizenship

The Government of Jamaica, having recognized the importance of active input, participation and involvement of senior citizens and their representative organizations has committed to pursue strategies and actions outlined in the Revised National policy for Senior Citizens under Priority Area 1 - Social Engagement and Participation. Broad strategies will include supporting the inclusion of older persons in social organizations at the community, other local or national levels in both urban and rural contexts; and promoting the participation of senior citizens in governance structures at local or national levels as appropriate.

Older persons were active in the design of this revised policy and have key roles and actions in its implementation, monitoring and evaluation and monitoring of policies

Priority Area 2: Advancing Health and Wellbeing

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

Recognizing the importance of the overall health and wellness of senior citizens, the Government of Jamaica has committed in the National Policy for Senior Citizens strategies to be advanced under Priority area #2 – Health and Wellness. The Government has continued a no-user fee policy thereby providing access to basic health care services. Pursuant to the enactment of the Disabilities Act 2014, health facilities are being upgraded to universal design and special lines in reception and pharmacy units for senior citizens.
A review of the hindrances to successful Primary Health Care reform was conducted, with special consideration paid to the demographical and epidemiological transitions that have taken place in Jamaica over the last four decades. From this, the Primary Health Care Reform for Jamaica 2021–2030 was developed. This health care reform seeks to harness the current system's advantageous structural frameworks and the population's geographical distribution for integration into a highly coordinated superstructure that fosters service access to all members of the population; adequately supports health needs, regardless of age; promotes appropriate, horizontally and vertically integrated escalation of services and implements extensive health promotion programmes that drive prevention.

The National Health Fund /Jamaica Drug for the Elderly Programme (NHF/JADEP)[13] provides subsidies to older persons with any of seventeen (17) common chronic illnesses. The benefit also includes subsidies for a select list of prescription drugs, respiratory devices, diabetic testing supplies and diagnostic tests via select pharmacies, laboratories or doctor's offices. Older

[13] NHF/JADEP https://www.nhf.org.jm/the-nhf-card/about-the-nhf-card

persons with disabilities may also access grant to support the acquisition of mobility aids and other devices to support the health and independence.

The elderly are prioritized as a vulnerable group in the Ministry of Health 10-year Strategic Plan 2019 – 2030 [14] Effective community-based primary care is noted to be essential in order to support healthy ageing. Many of the health priorities for adults fall in this age cohort, with particular emphasis on the prevention and care of chronic diseases. Health must be addressed in conjunction with social care, with mental health being of equal priority for the elderly. However, improvement in necessary in the quality and type of primary health care services and support for the elderly at the community level. Older persons experience long waiting times to access services and in some cases have to travel long distances to access diagnostic services. The Ministry of Health and Wellness collaborated with the National Council for Senior Citizens in a series of workshops to sensitize healthcare workers on older people's rights and the changes needed to eliminate barriers to older persons' access to health-care services. However, improvements in health care system and training is necessary to change conscious and unconscious bias and ageism.

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

Strategies to advance comprehensive health care services for older adults have been delineated in the Ten-Year Strategic Health Plan and Primary Health Care Reform. The Community Health Aide model requires strengthening as part of community-based primary health services for older persons. An essential benefit package to include among others, basic screening and diagnostic services that meets the identified needs of the elderly population is being developed. Training was provided to first responders including social workers working with the elderly on psychological first aid.

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

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and injuries are a major public health burden in Jamaica, and are the leading cause of death. In response to this epidemic, the Cabinet approved a comprehensive multi-sectoral National Strategic and Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs in Jamaica[15] 2013 to 2018. This has provided the framework for the national health response to NCDs. The goal is to reduce the burden of preventable morbidity and disability and

[14] https://www.moh.gov.jm/data/vision-for-health-2030-ten-year-strategic-plan-2019-2030/
[15] https://www.moh.gov.jm/data/national-strategic-and-action-plan-for-the-prevention-and-control-non-communicable-diseases-ncds-in-jamaica/

avoid premature mortality due to non-communicable diseases and injuries by 25% by 2025. One of the priority areas is risk factor reduction and health promotion.

"Jamaica Moves" is a coordinate national education and behavior modification campaign launched in April 2017 in response to the high prevalence of NCDs. The campaign was designed to educate, engage and build supportive environments, with the goal of reducing NCDs by 25% by the year 2025. The programme targets three main areas: Physical inactivity, healthy nutrition and promotion of routine health checks for the general population. It employs a settings approach to tackle NCD prevention in three (3) environments: workplaces, schools and communities and a multi-stakeholder approach to its implementation.

Older persons are prioritized under the programme in the community setting and workplaces. Health promotion messages, and resources specifically for older persons have been produced and made available for use by older persons. These include physical activity guide for older persons and 24-hour access to the physical activity web portal[16] for workout routines and tips on healthy lifestyle under the three priority areas. Health workshops and seminars for small and large groups are held to promote healthy lifestyle practices among older persons including HIV/STI prevention and management. The programme is endorsed by the WHO and CARICOM leaders and has since been expanded to other regions as "Caribbean Moves" with other island nations adopting the programme in their approach to NCD reduction.

Health promotion activities also take the form of Diabetic support groups, Alzhiemer's support group and Lost Partner support groups for grieving older persons. The National Council for Senior Citizens has collaborated on advocacy for front of package labelling and against the reduction and elimination of sugary drinks from the diet.

Objective 4: Creation of legal frameworks and suitable mechanisms for the protection of the rights of older persons who use long-term care services

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has responsibility for the registration and monitoring of standards of care in institutions and health facilities under the Nursing Homes Registration Act[17] Facilities covered by the Act include residential care institutions for senior citizens including nursing homes, adult day centers, convalescent homes and palliative services. Psychiatric Nursing Homes provide dementia care and other mental health services are regulated under the Mental Health Act, 1999, and are jointly monitored by the Mental Health team and the Health Facilities and Institution Unit. Residential institutions under remit of the Government are administered through municipal authorities. There has been no legislative changes since the last report. Staff and operators of long term care facilities receive training on residents' rights and the schedule of activities for the facilities.

[16] https://www.moh.gov.jm/physical-activity/
[17] https://www.moh.gov.jm/divisions-agencies/divisions/standards-and-regulation-division/

Objective 5: Promotion of the development of human resources through the design and implementation of a national gerontology and geriatrics training plan for existing and future healthcare providers at all levels of care, with emphasis on primary health care

Ensuring human resources for health sufficient in number and competency is a strategic goal of the Health Strategic Plan. The University of the West Indies, Mona offers training in gerontology and geriatrics specialties via Masters of Public Health and the addition of Doctor of Public Health and Ageing.

NUMBERS TRAINED IN GERONTOLOGY AND GERIATRIC MEDICINE AT THE UWI MONA

YEAR	MPH (GERONTOLOGY)	POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA - GERONTOLOGY	POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA - GERIATRIC MEDICINE*
2014/15	1	1	-
2017/18	4	0	-
2018/19	4	5	-
2019/20	3	0	-
2020/21	4	6	4
2021/22	1	0	-

Objective 6: Development and utilization of instruments for improving the understanding of the health status of older persons and monitoring changes in this regard.

The Planning Institute of Jamaica continues to lead and support the inclusion of ageing issues on national research agendas. The Mona Ageing and Wellness Center, University of the West Indies also contributes significantly to research on health and ageing and the training of human resources for research.

Priority Area 3: Enabling and Supportive Environments

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

Older persons who have contributed to the National Housing Trust are able to access the benefit of owning a home or loans to upgrade their home after receiving the initial benefit.

National housing construction standards are not specific to the needs of older persons and provisions in relation to accessibility, safety and access to public services serve the general public under the Disabilities Act. Older persons in the metropolitan areas of Kingston and Montego Bay where Government-owned transportation operates, benefit from discounted fares.

Older persons in road fatalities are more often pedestrians according to the Road Safety Unit[18]. The anticipated is expected to reduce road fatalities through various measures including pedestrian and driver education on safe use of the road network and penalties to deter risking road use.

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

The National Council for Senior Citizens assist senior citizens to organize senior citizens clubs and registers these groups through with initiatives geared are promoting healthy active and productive ageing are implemented. These groups undertake intergenerational, caring, community and income generating projects. The Council undertakes annually a series of retirement planning seminars aimed at empowering working aged persons to make health, psychosocial and financial preparation for retirement years. The Council also works with stakeholders to provide caring and support to caregivers of older persons.

Older persons have benefitted from homes under the New Social Housing Programme (NSHP) established in 2018 to improve the housing condition of the country's poor and vulnerable population by providing quality, affordable and sustainable housing. It is implemented in three ways: the provision of indigent housing, relocation of vulnerable communities and upgrading of large tenements. The NSHP is implemented under the Housing Act.

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

Intergenerational programmes are aimed at promoting solidarity between older persons and the youth. The programmes include volunteerism, intergenerational debates, public speaking training for older person advocates, tree planting exercises inter alia. Public education strategies for the implementation of the revised Policy for Senior Citizens will promote positive images of ageing and interaction with older persons. The Ministry of Labour and Social Security has indicated its intention to develop specific legislation for the protection of older persons. Access to legal and psychosocial assistance is provided by the state under the Ministry of Justice Legal Aid Unit, Victim Services Division and Restorative Justice Centers across the island.

Objective 4: Promotion of a positive image of old age

Respect for the rights and dignity of older persons will be advanced with the implementation of the Revised Policy for Senior Citizens. Senior Citizens Month and National Grandparents' Day are observed annually in September. The National Council for Senior Citizens maintains a Centenarian Register and person 100 years and older receive special tokens on Centenarians Day. The International Day of the Older Person is also observed on October 1 each year and

[18] Annual Traffic Crash Report www.mtw.gov.jm

provides opportunities to showcase the value and worth of older people. Significant work is necessary for a sustained approach to changing perceptions and attitudes toward ageing.

EMERGING ISSUES

Like most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Jamaica's population is ageing. The older persons/senior citizens' cohort represents the fastest growing demographic segment. This presents both opportunities and challenges for national development.

Pension systems

Concerns about the adequacy of the National Insurance Scheme (NIS) prompted pension reform to improve the sustainability of the fund. There has been gradual increases in contribution rates annually to 6%. A decrease in fertility and increasing life expectancy means that older Jamaicans who are receiving benefits are expected to do so for a much longer time. Workers in the large informal economy do not contribute to the system and taken together these threaten the sustainability of the system.

Healthcare systems

As Jamaicans live longer with high prevalence of chronic conditions demand for health care and health care costs will increase. Jamaica continues to experience migration of trained health personnel such as nurses, to developed countries. This has implications for adequacy and quality of health service delivery.

Climate Change

The Caribbean is one of the world's regions most vulnerable to climate change, due to the greater frequency and intensity of natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods, in addition to rising sea levels. This poses significant risks to our economy and the livelihood of ordinary citizens.

Caregiving

Many older persons continue to contribute to national development by unpaid or paid care giving. Some 20.4 per cent of the elderly take care of other adult members in the household, with 12.7 per cent doing so as they deemed it to be their responsibility. However, the pandemic has highlighted the need for formal caregiving services which can be accessed by families when older persons require such services. The cost of caregiving services may be out of the reach of older persons with meagre or no pension.

Labour Market

The 60 – 74 age cohort is more educated and skilled than older cohorts. This trend is expected to continue and presents economic opportunities which may be realized by tapping the potential of older persons as consumers, innovators, investors, entrepreneurs, workers, taxpayers and reservoirs of skills and knowledge.

NEXT STEPS

1. Implementation of the Revised National Policy for Senior Citizens.
   The revised policy framework is on the premise that the value and worth of senior citizens to the country will be enhanced, while systems for the delivery of goods and services, and resource mobilization for programmes and initiatives will have a platform for prioritization and planning. Strategies in the short term will include institutional strengthening of the National Council for Senior Citizens, the establishment of regional and parish structures to support successful policy implementation and a national social marketing campaign aimed at public education and behavior modification.
2. Data for evidence-based decision making
   Data from the Population and Housing Census which is currently being collected as well as the Health and Social Status of the Elderly study inter alia is anticipated to support evidence-based decision making for policy implementation. The maintenance of a robust registry of vulnerable elderly
3. Increase uptake of Social Assistance Programs
   Some 50,000 persons aged 75 years and older are to benefit from the new social pension. Strategies must be implemented to increase access to the benefit by this targeted population. This will include efforts at providing civil documents to older people.
4. Advancing specific legislation to protect against elder abuse
5. Re-engagement of older persons with activities on hold since the pandemic to promote healthy, active and productive ageing
6. Digital/Financial literacy training for older persons