

Commentary on South Africa's domain ranks in the 2015 Global AgeWatch Index

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Global AgeWatch Index rank

78

out of 96

South Africa ranks low at 78 overall. It ranks highest in the income security domain (19), with high pension coverage (92.6%), a below average poverty rate (12%), and the second highest GNI per capita (US\$11,764) regionally.

It ranks low in the capability domain (69). An increase from last year's ranking (75) is due a revision of the educational attainment data.

South Africa ranks low in the enabling environment domain (83) due to low satisfaction of older people with safety (31%). It ranks lowest in the health domain (89), with life expectancy at 60 (16) below the regional average (17).

In October the Age Demands Action campaign is taking place in South Africa.



Income security

19

79.5/100

Almost 93% of older South Africans receive a pension. According to GHS 2014 data, 67.6% of people aged 60 and over received a state pension, with 66.9% receiving the means-tested Old Age Grant (OAG).¹ The OAG is approximately 1,350 Rand (US\$122) per month. Universalisation of the OAG is planned to start from 2016 for all older people aged 75 and over.²

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.³



Health status

89

25.9/100

Since 2011, South Africa has been re-engineering primary healthcare 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 benefit the country's older people because it means 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

69

25.9/100

The Kha Ri Gude Mass Literacy Campaign was launched in February 2008, with the intention of enabling 4.7 million adults over the age of 15 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 people in the provinces are participating and taking lessons. In 2014, 301 older people were enrolled in the Kha Ri Gude program in South Africa (GHS 2014).⁴



Enabling environment

83

55.0/100

Most older people from black communities live with their families, with a very low percentage living in older people's residential facilities that are supported by the 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, he or she can apply at the nearest social worker's office or older people's residential facility. The criteria for eligibility are: documented need of full-time attendance, aged 60 or over and in receipt of an Old Age Grant or pension fund.

Crime is a challenge for South Africa. It affects all ages, and older people are no exception.

Advocacy work has been carried out by the South Africa Older Persons' Forum for age-friendly transport systems and is still ongoing.

¹ General Household Survey (GHS), 2014,
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182014.pdf>

² Address by President Jacob Zuma on the occasion of the Annual Older Person's Luncheon and launch of National Older Persons Week, 29 September 2013,
www.thepresidency.gov.za/pebble.asp?relid=16160

³ <http://dgmt.co.za/files/2014/09/LB-65-M-A-2014-final.pdf>

⁴ General Household Survey (GHS), 2014,
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182014.pdf>

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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