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**FIFTH SESSION – EIGHTH PARLIAMENT**

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**SECOND REPORT**

**OF THE PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE ON LABOUR AND SOCIAL WELFARE ON  
THE STATE OF WELFARE OF OLDER PERSONS IN ZIMBABWE**

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*Presented To Parliament 2018*

**S.C 14, 2018**

**Announced:** Tuesday, 19<sup>th</sup> September 2017

That the Committee consists of the following:

Hon. Chibagu G, Hon. Chibaya A, Hon. Chitura L, Hon. Kwaramba G, Hon. Mabuwa C,  
Hon. Makoni R, Hon. Mapiki J, Hon. Mkandla M, Hon. Mpala M, Hon. Mpariwa P,  
Hon. Mpofu R, Hon. Mudau M, Hon. Mudyiwa M, Hon. Mufunga A, Hon. Ndlovu A,  
Hon. Ndlovu S.M, Hon. Nduna D.T, Hon. Nkomo M, Hon. Phiri F.P, Hon. Rungani A,  
Hon. Savanhu T, Hon. Shava J, Hon. Tarusenga U.D

**Hon. M. Mudyiwa to be Chairperson**

**ORDERED IN TERMS OF STANDING ORDER NO. 17:**

- (1) At the commencement of every session, there shall be as many Committees to be designated according to government policy as the Standing Rules and Orders Committee may deem fit.
- (2) Each select committee shall be known by the portfolio determined for it by the Standing Rules and Orders Committee.

**TERMS OF REFERENCE OF PORTFOLIO COMMITTEES STANDING ORDER NO. 20**

Subject to these Standing Orders, a portfolio committee shall-

- a) examine expenditure administration and policy of government departments and other matters falling under their jurisdictions as Parliament may, by resolution determine.
- b) consider and deal with all bills other than a Constitutional Bill, and statutory instruments or other matters which are referred to it by or under resolution of the House or by the Speaker;
- c) consider or deal with an appropriation or money bill or any aspect of an appropriation or money bill referred to it by these Standing Orders or by or under a resolution of this House;
- d) monitor, investigate, inquire into and make recommendations relating to any aspect of the legislative programme, budget, policy or any other matter it may consider relevant to the government department falling within the category of affairs assigned to it, and may for that purpose consult and liaise with such department; and
- e) consider or deal with all international treaties, conventions and agreements relevant to it, which are from time to time negotiated, entered into or agreed upon.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

While longevity should be celebrated, it is paradoxically a major risk factor in African countries, including Zimbabwe. The dollarisation of 2009 wiped out savings of the majority of the citizens who had reached the pensionable age, which is on average 60 years. In addition, the ravaging of the HIV and AIDS pandemic has left many childless in old age but instead with the burden of taking care of orphaned grandchildren. Furthermore, the current economic environment in the country characterised by high unemployment levels, inflation and cash shortages has exacerbated poverty levels, thereby severing the traditional community support systems for vulnerable members of society such as kinship ties. Consequently, older persons have become one of the most vulnerable societal groups in Zimbabwe and some find themselves destitute with no option but to enlist at Old People's Homes around the country.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

The main objectives of the inquiry were to:

- establish the state of welfare of older persons, including access to basic needs such as food, medical care, decent shelter sanitation and hygiene;
- find out the occupancy levels of homes and causal factors;
- ascertain the accessibility of the Ministry of Labour and Social Social welfare's programmes to older persons; and
- understand opportunities and challenges encountered in the administration of homes

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The Committee employed the following methods to gather information:

- a) field visits to the following old people's homes as shown on Table 1 below.
- b) oral evidence sessions with Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, Help Age Zimbabwe and Zimbabwe Older Persons Association

*Table 1: Old People's Homes toured by the Committee*

<b>PROVINCE</b>	<b>HOME</b>
<b>Mashonaland Central</b>	<b>Mazowe River Bridge Centre</b>
<b>Bulawayo</b>	<b>Entembeni old People's Home</b>
<b>Harare</b>	<b>Bumhudzo Old People's Home</b>
<b>Mashonaland East</b>	<b>Idawekwako Old People's Home</b>
<b>Mashonaland West</b>	<b>Nazareth Shelter for Destitute Older Persons</b>
<b>Masvingo</b>	<b>Mucheke Old People's Home</b>
<b>Matebeleland North</b>	<b>Dete Old Age Home</b>
<b>Midlands</b>	<b>Rugare Old People's Home</b>
<b>Manicaland</b>	<b>Zororai Old People's Home</b>
<b>Matebeleland South</b>	<b>Gwanda Association Home for the Aged</b>

### **3.0 COMMITTEE FINDINGS**

#### **3.1 Administrative Framework**

Section 21 (2) (b) of the Constitution stipulates that the state and all agencies of government should provide facilities, food and social care for elderly persons in need. In addition, the Older Persons Act [Chapter 17:11] of 2013 which is currently administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare governs the welfare of older persons. The Act provides for the establishment of an Older Persons board with the major responsibility of spearheading programmes to improve the welfare of older persons and public assistance allowances, among other social welfare services to individuals aged 65 years and above. The Minister of Labour and Social Welfare, Hon. P. Kagonye informed the Committee that a 15 member Older Persons Board had been set up in 2013.

The Minister further highlighted that there were 29 registered old people's homes in the country, out of which only Harare Old People's Home was owned by government, while the majority belonged to private voluntary organisations (PVOs). During its field visits, the Committee learnt that churches played a significant role in the establishment and running of old people's homes as shown on Table 2. Although the founding objectives of these old people's homes altered over the years, the major thrust was to accommodate destitute older members of the society whose situations were attributable to a

myriad of factors, including retrenchment.

**Table 2: Administration of Old People's Home**

<b>Home</b>	<b>Administrator</b>
Bumhudzo Old People's Home	Salvation Army
Dete Old Aged Home	Catholic Church
Entembeni Old People's Home	Volunteers
Gwanda Association Home for the Aged	Gwanda Association
Idawekwako Old People's Home	Christian Marching Church
Mazoe River Bridge Centre	HelpAge Zimbabwe
Mucheke Old People's Home	Baptist Church
Nazareth Shelter for Destitute Older Persons	World Vision
Rugare Old People's Home	Inter-denominational
Zororai Old People's Home	Roman Catholic Church and Mutare City Council

Out of the 10 old people's homes visited by the Committee, 6 were run by church organisations, while the remainder were managed by non-governmental organisations and volunteers. However, the Committee learnt that the Mutare City Council Community Development Officer directly superintended over the daily running of Zororai Old People's Home. The Committee also found out that government Social Workers play a peripheral role in the administration of old people's homes, such as; registration of homes, vetting potential inmates, facilitating payment of per capita grants and collection of grain under the Food Mitigation Programme.

### **3.2 Government Support for Older Persons**

The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare was allocated a meager \$500 000.00 in the 2018 National Budget against a bid of \$10 177 450.00 towards the support of older persons. The Minister highlighted that this amount is inadequate to even cater for administrative and per capita grants for older persons living in registered old people's homes. An administrative grant is a once-off payment \$15.00 payment per individual domiciled at the home, while per capita grants are paid to the institution at the same rate upon submission of monthly claim forms. In addition, both older persons in or outside institutionalised

care benefit from the Ministry's social welfare programmes including; Harmonised Social Cash Transfers, Assisted Medical Treatment Orders (AMTOs), Food Mitigation Programme and Maintenance Allowances.

Although management at various homes visited by the Committee acknowledged the assistance from the Ministry indications were that the grants and grain disbursements were irregular. Mr Sithole of Entembeni Old People's Home highlighted that social welfare grants had been last received in 2014, for instance. As a result, old people's homes largely depended on well-wishers such as churches, schools, Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZIMRA) and Zimbabwe Revenue Authority (ZINARA) for basic needs such as food and blankets.

The Committee also noted that although local authorities around the country offered variable support to old people's homes they had provided construction land free of charge in most cases. Mutare City Council Community Department was the only local authority involved in the daily running of Zororai Old People's Home and seconded some of its employees to maintain the yard and garden. Kwekwe City Council provided water at Rugare Old People's Home free of charge and paid electricity bills.

### **3.3 Occupancy Levels at Old People's Homes**

The Committee found out that the occupancy levels of old people's homes had dropped drastically due to the inadequacy of resources as shown on 3. Major Nyarubero at Bumhudzo Old People's Home highlighted that the institution could no longer accommodate more inmates as it lacked resources to cater for their needs.

**Table 3: Occupancy Levels**

Home	Carrying Capacity	Actual Occupancy
Mazowe River Bridge Centre	175	14
Entembeni old People's Home	150	36
Bumhudzo Old People's Home	110	30
Idawekwako Old People's Home	56	26
Nazareth Shelter for Destitute Older Persons	45	21
Mucheke Old People's Home	45	19
Dete Old Age Home	40	18
Rugare Old People's Home	36	9
Zororai Old People's Home	35	15
Gwanda Association Home for the Aged	15	9

### **3.4 Push / Pull factors to Old People's Homes**

The majority of inmates at old people's homes originated from neighbouring countries, such as Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique, therefore had no relatives to take care of them. In addition, rejection by relatives and childlessness were commonly raised as reasons why individuals ended up staying in old people's homes. Mbuya Mamoyo at Mucheke Old People's Home informed the Committee that no one could take care of her since all her 4 children and husband had succumbed to the HIV /AIDS pandemic.

### **3.5 Criteria for Admission to homes**

Administrators highlighted that the Social Welfare Department played the role of vetting and referring inmates to all homes toured by the Committee. In addition, there was general concurrence that individuals referred to the homes were 65 years of age and above. However, the Committee noted that this was not always the case, for instance, there was a couple below that age staying at Mucheke Old People's Home in Masvingo and a disabled young man at Idawekwako Old People's Home in Marondera

### **3.6 Challenges encountered in Caring for Older Persons**

#### **3.6.1 Poverty**

The majority of older persons in Zimbabwe have no source of income to cater for their basic needs. This state of affairs can be attributed to Operation Murambatsvina, a programme under which houses built illegally were destroyed, leaving many people homeless and introduction of the multi-currency system (dollarization). Mr Mandaza from the Zimbabwe Older Persons Organisation explained that dollarization eroded all pensions, savings and investments of older persons.

#### **3.6.2. Financial constraints**

The Minister of Labour and Social Welfare lamented that the inadequacy of financial resources and erratic releases hampered the Ministry's efforts to deliver services to older persons, for example regular payment of per capita grants to old people's homes. Mr Makotore of Rugare Old People's Home informed the Committee Social Welfare grants were only disbursed 2 or 3 times a year. Consequently, the unavailability of funds to meet daily needs, including; food and materials for use by gloves for use by care givers was a constant challenge. The management of Mucheke Old People's Home further informed the Committee that the home used firewood for preparing meals since they could not afford to purchase electricity. Similarly, Entembeni Old People's Home and Dete Old Aged Home faced serious challenges settling electricity and water bills. Additionally, Mr Makotore noted that donations from well-wishers which had become the mainstay of old people's homes were fast dwindling due to economic hardship and closure of local industry. Furthermore, Mrs Gavi, the Director of Help Age Zimbabwe and Mr Mandaza of the Zimbabwe Older Persons Association informed the Committee that they encountered challenges in mobilizing funds for the support of older persons as the sector was perceived as welfaristic, therefore, a responsibility of government.

#### **3.6.3 Difficulties in accessing health services**

Both older persons under and outside institutional care experience challenges in accessing medical services. Although older persons are entitled to free consultation through AMTOs, the facility does not cater for drugs. Ms Gavi of Help Age Zimbabwe further decried the lack of geriatric doctors and hospitals in the country, as well as the abusive language suffered by older persons from health

personnel. The lack of vehicles to ferry inmates to clinics was also reported to be a major challenge as the majority of homes visited by the Committee.

#### **3.6.4 Burial of inmates**

While the government provides the pauper burial facility and in some instances local authorities offer burial land free of charge, some homes experienced difficulties in sending off inmates. The Committee learnt that Rugare Old People's Home, Mucheke Old People's Home and Gwanda Association Home for the Aged faced difficulties in raising funds to purchase coffins and transport the deceased from the mortuary to such an extent that burials were in some cases delayed by a month.

#### **3.6.5 Difficulties in accessing documentation**

Mr Makava, Secretary of the Board of Directors at Rugare Old People's Home informed the Committee that the home had been attempting to retrieve a lost registration certificate from the Social Welfare Department for about 3 years without any success. The certificate is required in seeking financial support for the home. Additionally, Mr Bandawe of Mucheke Old People's Home highlighted that it was difficult to acquire identity documents and burial orders for inmates since most of them could not even remember their names or origins due to old age or sickness.

#### **3.6.6 Dilapidated infrastructure**

The Committee noted with concern that that the buildings at Mazowe River Bridge Centre were in a state of dilapidation.

#### **3.6.7 Non-remuneration of care-givers**

All the homes toured by the Committee were manned by women volunteers who were not being paid for their services due to lack of financial resources. In the majority of cases care-givers received food rations from the commodities donated to the home or irregular token allowances. As a result, old people's homes were experiencing a shortage of volunteers to take care of the old and frequently sick inmates. Mr Sithole of Entembeni Old People's Home in Bulawayo recounted to the Committee how the Social Welfare Department used to run the home and employees' salaries were paid by the government.

## **4.0 OBSERVATIONS**

**4.1** The 2018 budgetary allocation for the support of welfare of older persons is grossly inadequate to support the welfare of older persons in the country. In view of the current harsh economic environment older persons living under or outside institutional care require assistance to cater for their basic needs.

**4.2** The \$15.00 per capita monthly grant to old people's homes is a paltry amount which cannot cater for the basic needs of an individual considering the rise in costs of living. Although most old people's homes are privately owned they can no longer sustain their operations as evinced by failure to maintain their infrastructure, provide adequate food for inmates and pay care-givers, for instance, Mazowe River Bridge Centre

**4.3** Old people's homes heavily rely on handouts for sustenance.

**4.4** Government Social Workers play a peripheral role in the administration of old people's homes.

**4.5** Local authorities are minimally involved in the operations of old people's homes except for Mutare Municipality where the Community Services Department is involved in the daily running of Zororai Old People's Home. Similarly, other local leadership including Members of Parliament seem to be detached from the activities of old people's homes in their constituencies.

**4.6** Accessing health services is a major challenge experienced by older persons across the country mainly because AMTOs only cover hospital consultation fees and not medication.

**4.7** There are no geriatric doctors and clinics in Zimbabwe

## **5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee recommends the following:

**5.1** The government should establish a state funded universal pension scheme for persons aged 65 years and above by December 2018. The introduction of a minimal levy of \$0.01 on toll gate fees, for

example, can go a long way in raising funds for the universal pension scheme.

**5.2** The Treasury should prioritise social welfare programmes relating to the support of older persons in the allocation and disbursement of financial resources to ensure the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare delivers regular services such as grain and grants to old people's homes by October 2018. In addition, per capita grants should be reviewed in line with the current costs of living from \$15.00 to \$30.00 by January 2019.

**5.3** The government should provide funds for self-sustenance projects at old people's homes, for instance, chicken rearing, horticulture, grinding mills and fish farming by December 2018.

**5.4** The Social Welfare Department should closely monitor operations of old people's homes to ensure they satisfy minimum standards for human habitation and assist in resolving challenges such as access to identity documents and retrieval of Rugare Old People's Home registration certificate without delay by October 2018.

**5.5** Local authorities and Members of Parliament should assume a more active role in operations of old people's homes under their territories by October 2018. Councils can assist in settling water and electricity bills, for instance, while Members of Parliament can provide constant oversight on old people's homes.

**5.6** The Ministry of Health and Child Care in collaboration with Council Clinics should provide critical items such as gloves, a vehicle to ferry sick older persons to hospital, a nurse to watch over inmates at night and visiting doctor once every month at all old people's homes by October 2018. The business community is also encouraged to provide assistance as part of corporate social responsibility.

**5.7** The Assisted Medical Treatment Orders facility should be extended to cover drugs by January 2019.

**5.8** The Public Service Commission in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare should employ requisite workers such as resident care takers and care-givers to service old people's

homes. In addition, volunteers currently serving at the homes should be granted a monthly allowance of at least \$50.00 since they are performing a national duty.

**5.9** The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care should incorporate geriatric health in medical training courses or introduce programmes at university level to ensure a constant supply of qualified staff to attend to the health needs of older persons in the country by January 2019.

## **6.0 CONCLUSION**

There is need for concerted efforts to uphold the rights and dignity of older persons in Zimbabwe. Today's old men and women have immensely contributed to national development, albeit at different levels and deserve honour and respect. The government should assume a more leading role in this regard in order to fulfill its constitutional obligations.