



MUTHANDE SOCIETY FOR THE AGED



Alleviating Poverty



In 1976, a group comprised of community nurses, health educators, social workers and community leaders formed a community based organisation, *Muthande Society for the Aged*. It focused on issues affecting the elderly in the community; their social, physical, economic and emotional needs.

From its inception, the main challenges were to implement programmes that alleviate poverty, reduce social isolation, assist in acquiring skills and help the frail and bedbound through illness.

Over the years the scope of operations has expanded widely to include programmes such as HIV/AIDS and training for family members and caregivers on health and social issues. Muthande was formally registered in 1982.



Vision & Mission



Vision

To be a global leader in protecting the rights and independence of senior citizens through implementing programmes that promote positive ageing.

Mission

To improve the quality of life of the senior citizens in their homes, within the community, to ensure that they live as independent members of the Society.



Rights Programme



The Rights Programme was introduced to address the challenges of abuse and violation of rights faced by older persons. Older persons, especially women, found themselves in a position where they had become completely despondent and dependent on the very limited resources that were meant for black people in general. Furthermore, they found themselves having to care for children who were orphaned mostly due to HIV/AIDS.

The aim of this programme is to educate older people about their rights and to take up cases of abuse. It has enabled older people to open up and seek assistance whenever they feel that they are marginalized and their rights are violated.



Harmful Traditional Practices including Witchcraft Accusation



In the course of our work, we came to the realization that the community was not educated enough about HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Alzheimer's disease. At the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, we saw a rise in the number of cases of older persons who were attacked and murdered as a result of being accused of witchcraft.

Women are mostly the victims of this abuse. This is as a direct result of there not being enough knowledge of the disease.



The elderly and members of families in the communities we work in have very limited and basic information on Alzheimer's and Dementia diseases. Furthermore, there is a lack of knowledge of how these diseases are linked with HIV/AIDS.

Muthande Society for the Aged is the first contact with those suffering and affected with these diseases. The irony, in communities, is that those affected are mostly surrounded by stigma and associated with witchcraft. This has led us having to deal with numerous cases, some even fatal.



Therefore, over and above working tirelessly to ensure that we educate communities and target the younger generation, we took a step further and educated Tradition Health Practitioners. *Why Traditional Health Practitioners?*

Traditional Health Practitioners are usually the first port of call for a large section of the population, especially from the poorer sections of society. By imparting the right HIV/AIDS and Alzheimer's information and knowledge to the them, Muthande played a significant role in making sure that people received the correct information and advice from those they consult. We consulted and shared information with THPs during consultative meetings and workshops run by the organization and its partners.



Some of the cases we have dealt with include:

- In January 2012, an elderly couple in Lindelani, Richmond Farm, was attacked and killed by their community after they had been suspected of Witchcraft. There had been three previous attempts to kill the couple, this after they had chosen to bury their grandchild without informing their community. As a response to this, during International Day of Older Persons and Older Persons Month in October, we held an awareness day to educate the community about older persons rights and abuse.
- In Lamontville, an elderly woman was attacked and killed by a group of young men. This after they had seen her walking during the night. She was accused of witchcraft and stoned to death. It was later discovered that she had been walking to the local police station to report a case of abuse after her granddaughter had left her child locked up in her room.



Violence, Neglect & Abuse



Older persons are termed as one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. They fall prey to perpetrators of physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse as well as neglect.

What is more alarming however, is the fact that most of the abuse is committed by family members. This then makes it difficult for older persons to report the abuse.

The organisation receives plenty cases of violence, abuse, neglect and discrimination which shows that there is lack of understanding about the rights of older citizens. Older persons have a right to freedom and protection in both public and private settings. Furthermore, we work to instil the knowledge that they do, in fact, have the right to equality and non-discrimination as South African citizens.



As an organization we educate older persons on their rights, ensuring that they are well aware of these and how the Older Persons Act protects them. Furthermore, we have a committed team of Social Workers and Social Auxiliary Workers who are trained to receive and act on any and all kinds of abuse and ensure the safety of our older persons.

There is an increasing concern in cases of elder abuse that are reported yet the perpetrators are released back into society, and often than not the abuse continues and in some cases, it is fatal.

We will continue our efforts to ensure that older persons are protected and receive the care that is rightfully theirs.





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