

# Improving the Lives of the Older People of Zanzibar

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The Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar has instituted welfare services to its older citizens since the early years after independence, and in 1967 houses to accommodate elders were built at Sebleni, Welezo, and Limbani. Similarly, cash transfers to elders in Zanzibar were provided in all areas, both urban and rural.

Through all phases of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar leadership, older people in need have been accommodated in the three elders' homes of Sebleni, Limbani, and Welezo, where shelter, food, clothes, and money are provided. In addition, social welfare services to elders have been provided through various ministries over time.

In 2022, I was responsible for establishing the Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children, along with its associated departments. This newly established Ministry carries "Elderly" in its name and has a department dedicated to services for elders, illustrating my ongoing commitment to older people in Zanzibar.

In line with Zanzibar's 1984 constitution, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, Agenda 2063 of the African Union, Zanzibar Development Vision 2050, and the medium-term Zanzibar Development

**RIGHT** A woman wears a brightly colored kanga to a meeting hosted by JUYAWAZA, one of the two main Older People Associations in Zanzibar.







**ABOVE** The President and Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Zanzibar speaking to Mzee Saleh Khamis Mohamed, resident of Wesha in Chakechake Pemba, during the National Commemoration of the International Day of Older People, held at Tibirinzi grounds in Pemba, October 2024.

Plan (ZADEP) 2021-2026, together with Chama Cha Mapinduzi's manifesto (CCM) 2020-2025, I am spearheading improved welfare services to Zanzibar's older people. In all these development agendas and strategies, support services for older people were addressed. Moreover, I continue to make meaningful efforts to ensure that the welfare services for older individuals improve.

On May 1, 2022, during our Labour Day celebration, I announced and declared an increase of 150 percent (from TZS 20,000 to TZS 50,000) of the Universal Pension Scheme for all older Zanzibaris who receive this monthly Universal Pension. The Universal Social Pension is provided to people age 70 years and older. By August 2024, a total of 30,552 individuals had received this community pension. The list

is updated monthly to remove those who passed away and to capture new individuals who qualify as they reach the required age.

During the celebration of the International Day of Older Persons on October 1, 2023, which took place at Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein Hall, State University of Zanzibar (SUZA), the Zanzibari elders told me: "We have trust in you, especially for your care of us. You have gone the extra mile to reduce burden on us, especially by improving our financial capability." This shows that the increase of the Universal Social Pension touched the hearts of older individuals and that they are thankful.

In another effort to improve welfare services to older people, I set aside six billion Tanzanian Shilling during 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 financial years for undertaking

renovation work to the Sebleni and Limbani elderly homes. The renovations aim to enhance the conducive environment for their stay at these homes. The renovation work is ongoing and is expected to be completed by March 2025.

Currently there are 63 older people who are residing in these homes at Sebleni, Welezo, and Limbani, including 36 men and 27 women.

In ensuring that senior citizens get better social services and their contributions are recognized by everyone in the society, the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar is preparing special identity cards for older people. The cards will be used to get priority access to public services that are free of charge, including public transport, health services, and recreational events at sports venues. A total of 11,814 older people already received the cards out of a targeted 25,000.

The Ministry of Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children implemented the Elder Persons Affairs Act No. 2 of 2020 to ensure rights and welfare services are provided to older people. Among the rights established in the law is the right to health, including free health services and special treatment in public hospitals and any public health centers, with priority in accessing such services. Currently, the Ministry is preparing regulations under which procedures for elder persons will be clearly stipulated. This step is in line with my effort to improve health service provision to every citizen, and to ensure older adults are prioritized to receive these services.

I also collaborate closely with older persons associations, valuing their advice and contributions to national development. This relationship has fostered strong support and affection from the elderly community. They have visited me and provided advice on various issues, which I have readily accepted and acted upon promptly.

With my guidance, the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, through the Ministry

of Community Development, Gender, Elderly, and Children, continues to oversee the Social Security Program. The program is implemented by the Ministry in collaboration with other stakeholders (including individuals, non-governmental organizations, civil societies, and development partners) who are interested in providing welfare services to older adults in Zanzibar, especially essential services.

I am, therefore, proud to report that, during the first three years of my administration, there has been significant achievement in improving welfare services to older people in Zanzibar. •



**Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi**  
President of Zanzibar and Chairman  
of the Revolutionary Council