

**ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT, MRS. H.J MASHAMBA, AT THE  
EVENT OF INTERNATIONAL OLDER PERSONS  
DAY CELEBRATIONS, ITSOSENG BATSOFE  
PROJECT, MOLEMOLE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY.**

**1<sup>st</sup> October 2014**

**Programme Director;**

**MPL's here present;**

**The Executive Mayor of Capricorn District**

**Municipality, Cllr. Gilbert Kganyago;**

**The Mayor of Molemole Local Municipality, Cllr.**

**Pauline Magkato;**

**Councillors present here today;**

**Our esteemed Traditional Leaders;**

**Provincial Director of Age-in-Action:**

**Ms Johannalie Knoetze;**

**Leaders of the various NPO's;  
Ladies and Gentlemen;  
All protocol observed.**

Since the birth of our democracy, government has placed emphasis on the rights and needs of the most vulnerable members of society. This includes our older persons or senior citizens. Indeed our older persons are classified as such due to their advanced age, but we know that in them lies a wealth of wisdom, culture and history, just waiting to be conveyed to the next generation. Hence this year we are celebrating under the theme:

**“Celebrating 20 Years of Democracy – The future we want: What older persons are saying”**

## Programme Director

Our older persons hold the key to knowledge due to past experiences. Most of them have experienced life under an oppressive regime and have had the privilege to see the dawn of a new era; to vote for the first time and to make calculated decisions with regards to the future of this country. How much we can learn from them and even from the mistakes they feel they may have made in the past. When we really listen to their stories, anecdotes and quotes about their youth and the society they grew up in, we realize that the youth of today can benefit from their wisdom and their cultural beliefs of united, disciplined and respectful communities. We can learn a lot from their experiences of *Ubuntu* and of a society free of the moral decay we are seemingly experiencing in today's modern life.

## Programme Director

We realize the need to treasure our older persons and therefore, enshrined in our Constitution, are the rights to have their dignity respected; to enjoy improved quality of life and the right to safety and security. The Older Persons Act supplements their constitutional rights, by making provision for community-based care for an older person, in order to ensure that they remain in their homes within the community for as long as possible.

Government today continues to prioritise the basic needs of older persons, by ensuring that every elderly person receives the same state old-age pension, irrespective of race; free essential services such as water, health, housing and energy in various municipalities and districts, as well as the provision of easily accessible services and facilities that promotes the respect and dignity of older persons.

However, maintaining this enabling environment for older people, can only become a successful exercise with the assistance and support of the community and organisations such as civil society and faith-based institutions. Working together, we can create a better life for all our senior citizens in a caring and self-sustaining society.

Having said that, it is important for our older persons receiving grants, to note that the voice-recognition system for pension pay-outs is no longer compulsory. SASSA continues to put systems in place to ensure that our people get the right grant at the right time. We wish to implore our older persons to be vigilant and to not fall prey to individuals and groups who have in mind to rob them of the money that is meant to support them through the month.

Unfortunately, the exploitation and abuse of older persons is an imminent reality in society today. We therefore need to join hands with the institutions alluded to before, to ensure that this scourge is eradicated. Pensioners are soft targets for ruthless and insensitive individuals and groups who have in mind to rob them of their pension money in a cunning manner.

This is something that needs prudent intervention and as society, we need to take a strong stance against this form of abuse and criminal behaviour. In this regard we call on the youth and especially youth formations against crime to tackle this issue head-on. We will continue to work with communities to ensure the enforcement of laws that will protect older persons from criminality.

Let us agree that there is no place in society for perpetrators who attack and rape a woman as old as 85! Indeed there is no place in society for persons who rape and abuse women and children of any age. Let us take a firm stance against this scourge; let us never remain silent on this matter; let us expose this practice and let our actions and words go beyond the annual 67 days of activism!

## Programme Director

The Department of Home Affairs is encouraging senior citizens to apply for their smart ID cards with the aim of eradicating the green bar-coded ID book in the next seven (7) years. The whole process for senior citizens is free of charge.

No ID photos are needed and no fees apply, because the whole system is electronic. Senior citizens need not be concerned that they have to have the smart ID card by a certain time, because it does not affect their pension grants. They can simply make the trip to their nearest Home Affairs office and will be given preferential treatment when it comes to queuing. This is just one more way how government is caring for its senior citizens!



Another priority for government in terms of older persons is improved health and active aging. We have therefore recently witnessed our senior citizens participate in the annual Provincial Golden Games. Allow me to relate that these active senior citizens can show their children and grandchildren a thing or two on the sports fields! Many have hailed the health benefits of active aging and we will continue to prepare the playing field – literally and figuratively – for their participation in sport and recreation.

In closing Programme Director

Realising the need to place emphasis on the plight of older persons, the United Nations declared the 1<sup>st</sup> of October International Day for Older Persons. Indeed United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said that:

And I quote:

**"By 2050, the number of older persons will be twice the number of children in developed countries, and the number of older persons in developing countries is expected to double. This trend will have profound effects on countries and individuals."**

Close quotes

Suffice it to say then, that we need to put shoulder to the wheel to ensure that our older persons enjoy the dignity and rights within the progressive and self-sustaining communities we continue to create. Let us treasure our older persons. Today is their day!

Together we can move Limpopo and its senior citizens forward!

I thank you!

Mayihlome!

Khanimambo!

Ke a leboga!

Baie dankie!

Ndolivhuwa!