

**ADDRESS BY THE ACTING-MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT DR PHOPHI
RAMATHUBA ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT MONTH AND THE INTERNATIONAL OLDER PERSONS DAY,
NEW COMMUNITY HALL, MUSINA LOCAL MUNICIPALITY, VHEMBE**

Sunday, 01 October 2017

“Working Together to Build Caring and Sustainable Communities for All”

Programme Director

Premier of Limpopo, Mr Chupu Stanley Mathabatha

King Toni Mphephu Ramabulana

Representative of Older Person’s Forum, Mr Joseph Salani

Executive Mayor of Vhembe District Municipality, Mme Florence Radzilani

Councilor of Beitbridge Town, Matebeleland South in Zimbabwe, Mr Mbongeleni Mulea

Mayor of Musina Local Municipality, Mme Mhloti Muhlope

Traditional Leaders and Municipal Councilors here present

Head of Department Social Development Ms Daphne Ramokgopa

Community of Musina

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Comrades and Friends

Media Houses and Institutions

Good Morning

It is an honour and privilege to be in your midst as we unveil Social Development Month and at the same time celebrate International Older People Day as part of our broader

programme for the month.

The United Nations General Assembly designated 1 October the International Day of Older Persons by Resolution 45/106 of 14 December 1990; following up on UN initiatives such as the Vienna International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted by the 1982 World Assembly on Ageing and endorsed later that year by the General Assembly.

Today South Africa commemorates International Day of Older Persons and to also launch Social Development Month.

The theme of International Day of Older Persons 2017 is **“Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Old Persons in Society.”**

This year International Day of Older Persons is about enabling and expanding the contributions of older people in their families, communities and societies at large. It focuses on the pathways that support full and effective participation in old age, in accordance with old persons’ basic rights, needs and preferences.

The theme for 2017 Old Persons Day underscores the link between tapping the talents and contributions of older persons and achieving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which is currently undergoing its third review and appraisal processes.

Between 2015 and 2030, the target for the Millennium Sustainable Development Goals, the number of older persons worldwide is set to increase by 56 per cent – from 901 million to more than 1.4 billion. By 2030 the number of people aged 60 and above will exceed that of young people aged 15 to 24.

Stepping into the future with pledges that no one will be left behind, it is starkly evident that the need to tap into often overlooked and under-appreciated contributions of older people is not only essential to older persons’ well-being, but also imperative for sustainable development processes.

The 2017 theme will explore effective means of promoting and strengthening the

participation of older persons in various aspects of social, cultural, economic and civic and political life of their communities, province and country.

We are converged here today on the occasion to celebrate International Older Persons Day as an affirmation that older persons are persons like any other in society and need to live and be treated like other citizens.

This is a radical departure from how older persons were treated in the past. Then they were treated badly and neglected. Not any more, they have been practically resurrected, given a new lease of life. All these are thanks to the democratic government which is geared towards creating a caring and loving South African society.

That old age is not a death knell has been affirmed by a citizen of this province Beka Ntsanwisi or Mama Beka as she is affectionately called. In 2006 she established a successful grannies soccer team, Vakhegula-Vakhegula. The soccer team toured Brazil in June 2014 where the old ladies met their soccer heroes.

Vakhegula-Vakhegula like the national soccer teams Bafana-Bafana and Banyana-Banyana continue to inspire and impress the nation with their prowess in the field. Who said old age is death! Those who entertain this pessimism must think again. Old people are like wine, they mature with age.

Another narrative of abundant and active life in old age is that of the inspiring 85 year old South African runner who recent broke a world record. Deidre Larkin is an 85 year old woman who started her running career late in life but broke a world record. In 2013 she broke her record for women over 70 years. She beat the world record set by Melitta Czerewenka of Germany by 2 and a half minute.

Deidre ran the Geneva Marathon in Switzerland on 8 May 2017 and broke her own record. She ran the race in 2:05:13, breaking her previous record of 2:12:37 for 85+ World Marathon Record.

She is an inspiration to everyone, showing that age is just a number and older people can live life to the fullest.

In recognition and celebration of our older people Limpopo will be represented at this year's National Golden Games to be hosted by the Kwa-Zulu Natal province this month, 22 – 28 October 2017 . We expect a huge haul of medals from these national olympic games of older people.

As we celebrate International Older People Day we also mark the beginning of Social Development Month which is honoured every October month of each Year.

Social Development Month is an initiative of the Department of Social Development whose focus is enhancing access to basic social services to the most vulnerable groups in society. The target groups of basic social services include among others older people like yourselves here, people living with social disabilities and children.

Together with our agencies South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and National Development Agency (NDA) the Department of Social Development will roll out specific programmes in communities in partnership with other role players like traditional leaders and formations focusing on women, youth and children.

The NDA is rolling out a capacity building for cooperatives in the province with a special focus on governance, marketing and business management. The thrust of this capacity building intervention is to grow our fledgling cooperative movement into the mainstream of the economy and to guarantee their sustainable. Professionally run cooperatives will transform into fully-fledged economic entities which will be a boon to the provincial economic and roll back the frontiers of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

68 cooperatives will be beneficiaries of this capacity building programme. Civil society organisations and women traditional leaders will also be capacitated with skills to render them effective and efficient in their functional areas.

SASSA will during the Social Development Month roll out the Integrated Community Re-registration Programme. This is an outreach programme to increase access to social security by those who need it the most. This is to ensure that those in most need and therefore vulnerable are not left outside the social security net. Sister department like Home Affairs will be part of the campaign.

The target of this programme are the poverty stricken municipal wards. SASSA currently has brought its services to within a 20km radius of each beneficiary community. Over and above this intervention SASSA reaches out to communities on beneficiary maintenance campaigns to deal with all sorts of enquiries on problems afflicting beneficiaries.

This shows that the Department of Social Development mean business.

Social Development Month is the period in the year during which the democratic government focusses itself in making vulnerable members of society aware of plans, service, programmes and projects available and accessible for their empowerment and benefit.

We know that despite this that often, poor people living in rural areas find it difficult to access government services and are also neglected by the private sector. This failure by the state and the private sector makes it difficult for the children in poverty-stricken areas who indeed have the same ambitions like their counterparts in other parts of the country to achieve their dreams.

Ladies and Gentlemen the purpose of designating October as Social Development month is that we can inform the citizens and residents of our country of the services that they are entitled to by our Department, and the whole of government.

The theme of our month-long programme is “Working together to build caring and sustainable communities for all”. We will, therefore, during this month engage with communities. We will listen and seek to understand the problems they are experiencing and hopefully, jointly identify what we need to do to practically improve living conditions and build better communities.

The Department of Social Development has been hard at work in its efforts to engage ordinary people that should benefit from a democratic government. Through the campaign “Taking DSD to Communities.” We have begun a process to unlock service delivery bottlenecks and optimise opportunities for development. As part of this process, the national, provincial and local government will work together with the communities to develop Community Action Plans which will serve as road maps to address all challenges emerging in various communities in the province.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this campaign is part of a broader programme that is meant to impact positively on the lives of all our communities. Taking DSD to Communities is an important initiative of the War on Poverty campaign aimed at confronting poverty and under-development and improving the quality of life of all our people in rural areas.

We are of the firm view that in order to respond to the needs of our people, we have to

work in partnership with our communities. Unless as South Africans, we all dedicate ourselves to the eradication of poverty and under-development, especially among children, women, youth, people with disabilities and older people, our good intentions to make South Africa a better place for all will never be realised.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in launching the Social Development Month here, we reaffirm our commitment as government to speed up change towards poverty eradication and improvement of the quality of life for our people. It has always been the mission of our government under the leadership of the African National Congress to tackle injustice and inequality wherever we see it. There can be no greater injustice than children's life chances being limited by being born into poverty.

That is why the bold and historic commitment that our movement made in 1994 – to dismantle the legacy of apartheid and make poverty eradication the central theme of our work in government. It remains one of the driving purposes of our government and we are committed to taking further measures to make progress towards these goals. During this month we will intensify our efforts to ensure that all children who qualify for the Child Support Grant, especially in rural areas receive this benefit without any further delays.

Ladies and Gentlemen, violence against women and children are acts of criminality that erodes the soul and vibrancy of our communities and our society. We must all – men, women and traditional leaders work to reduce practices that are harmful to women and children so that the ideal of living in a constitutional democracy is felt by all the citizens of this country.

The recent crime statistics was a reminder that we need to redouble our efforts to protect women and children. The statistics indicated that there was a general decline in all major forms of violent crimes but, that crimes against women and children remain stubbornly high. As a society, we must therefore act as one to prevent violence from happening by challenging the attitudes and behaviours which foster it and intervening early where possible to prevent it.

Giving every child the best start in life is not just a political slogan, but is part of the mission statement of our government. Tackling child poverty through early childhood development is an economic necessity because it is about improving the life chances of children from poor communities. It also has benefits to the wider society too. As a society we all benefit when families and communities become stronger and cohesive.

Ladies and gentlemen, since 1994 our government has pursued the goal of poverty eradication as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The MDGs are consistent with our government's Medium Term Strategic Framework to fight poverty and promote human development.

While our government is deeply committed to eradicating poverty by supporting families and communities, we also recognise that we cannot achieve this goal on our own. All sectors of our society-business, faith based organisations and the Non-Governmental Organisations have a critical role to play. And, of course, families and communities must play their part in making the most of the opportunities that government is making available to them. The success of Social Development Month initiative will depend largely on the active involvement of all spheres of our government in partnership with our social partners.

On progress in the implementation of the 2017/2018 Budget Speech the following milestones have been attained:

- The Department has funded and established two (2) additional Community Nutrition Development Centres and will continue to sustain and support the existing seventeen (17) CNDs in 2017/2018
- 259 Youth were empowered in various skill development programmes
- 108 973 people accessed DSD feeding programmes
- 2 479 Youth were empowered on entrepreneurship

Let me conclude by emphasizing that the battle lines against poverty are drawn. The Department of Social Development is working with sister departments, municipalities, government agencies, private sector and society in general to intensify the struggle against poverty on all fronts. The acid test of our success in this regard must be based on the extent to which we extricate our people and vulnerable communities from abject poverty. This will continue to be our focus during this Social Development Month.

A number of activities to mark the importance of Social Development Month will continue throughout October. They kick off today with the celebration of the International Day of Persons and the unveiling of Social Development Month. Other activities are World Food Day on 15 October, International Day for eradication of poverty on 17 October, National Golden Games in Kwa-Zulu Natal on 22 to 28 October and Nelson Mandela Children's Parliament in Kimberley, Northern Cape on October 06.

Between 30 October and 01 November 2017 I will embark On Radio Imbizos to engage in conversation with the people of the province on what we do in relation to their aspirations and frustrations. We are a government that cares and listens to the people.

I thank you.