

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF THE MEMBER OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL HONOURABLE M.S  
SOKATSHA ON THE OCCATION F OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FAMILIES AT  
THE GAASCA HALL; KIMBERLEY-GALESHEWE ON 15 MAY 2015  
11:00 AM**

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**Program Director: Mr L Sebeloi**

**Head of Department: Ms E Botes**

**Representatives of the Department of Justice:**

**Representatives of the Thuthuzela One-Stop Victim Centre**

**Representatives from the Legal Aid Board:**

**Representatives from Famsa**

**Representatives from Soul City**

**Representatives from Gender Equity**

**Representatioves from Fatherhood Foundation:**

**All Managers and Staff of the Department of Social Development:**

**The Community of Galeshewe**

**Honoured Families:**

**All Media Houses Present**

**Esteemed Guests:**

**Ladies and Gentlement:**

**Good Morning;**

It is indeed a great honor for me to be granted the opportunity to speak on this day that speaks to one of our fundamental instrument of a society.

The family is regarded as the basic and natural unit of society which plays a critical role of nurturing and caring for individual family members from children to youth, men, women, people living with disabilities and the older generations. The family needs to be protected, supported and strengthened to enable them to perform its other essential functions of providing economically for its members.

Program Director; we can however see that the image of the family has changed in terms of structure and areas of responsibilities due to globalization, urbanization, democracy, women's liberation, migration and fast paced lifestyle from social and economic demands.

The International Day of Families is observed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May every year and was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution 47/237 of 1993. The International Day provides an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families and increase the knowledge of the social economic and demographic processes affecting families.

This year's celebration under the theme, **“Men in Charge? Gender Equity and Children's Rights in Contemporary Families”** aims to promote gender equality and rights of children within families. It must also highlight prevention of family violence through fair family law frameworks and a variety of programme interventions.

Program Director; progress has been made with regard to the development and implementation of different family laws and intervention programs to address family violence. The White Paper on Families also advocates for the empowerment and protection of families with regard to various policy framework that relate to their well-being.

However, gender equality and the violation of children's rights within some families still exist. Family violence i.e. physical, sexual and psychosocial including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household and dowry related violence, remains a concern in our communities, Violence in the family often

leads to physical and mental problems and have grave consequences for the well-being of individuals, families and the society. Some children may even display behavioral challenges, perform poorly at school, become pregnant as teenagers, become involved in drug abuse and gangs and become perpetrators later in life.

The promotion of gender equality within the family would contribute to the promotion of healthy family lives (by for example the sharing of domestic, care giving and other family duties by all members regardless of gender). Awareness and education on family violence should thus be strengthened.

A growing number of countries have outlawed gender discrimination and made better provisions to protect children within families but urgent family law reforms and policy initiatives are still needed to ensure better protection of women and children from various forms of violence and abuse. Custody and inheritance laws, in particular, are in need of urgent reform.

Importantly, national family laws should comply with international standards and ensure the rights of all family members. Yet, “despite progress in reforming laws, discrimination against women in the law remains pervasive in several areas, particularly in the area of family law.”<sup>1</sup> For instance, in 26 out of 143 countries, statutory inheritance laws differentiate between women and men. In 27 countries, women cannot confer their nationality to their children and/or foreign spouses on equal basis with men.

Program Director; the voice of children within the family is critical for their well-being. Therefore it is necessary to ensure that children grow up in a stable and healthy family and have access to education and health care.

Families find it more and more difficult to reconcile the competing necessities of their work and fulfilling other family responsibilities such as caring for children, older relatives, or those who are terminally ill.

Both men and women are engaged in gainful employment however the burden of care is mostly experienced by women, which is a fact that needs more attention in the context of both policy and legal framework.

Therefore comprehensive legal and policy framework balancing work and family life should be established to promote shared responsibility between men and women, other family members, government, private sector, NGO's and society at large.

The socio economic demands placed on family to care for its members can have an adverse effect on the functionality of the family. Those living in poverty as well as poor single parent families which are predominately female headed are worst affected. Finding suitable work and family life balance is a challenge faced by all parents (single or married). This can result in strained relationships marital disputes, poor parenting and neglect of children.

The Children's Act emphasizes provision of family preservation services to empower families to take full responsibility in creating a stable environment for family members especially children.

From the beginning God instructed parents to teach their children religious values. Speaking to the ancient Israelites, God said: "And these words which I command you today the Ten Commandments in the preceding chapter and the great commandment of the preceding verse to love God with all one's heart, soul and strength shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7 And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

A crisis in child rearing has developed in part because of the crisis in marriages. Reflecting the consequences of divorce and parents who don't know how to parent, children arrive on the doorsteps of schools unprepared to learn. Schools are now burdened with teaching children basic principles such as civility and respect that used to be universally taught by parents and that helped prepare children to learn.

Now it is left to the school teach children these fundamental concepts before they can hope to educate them. In conjunction with the added job of preparing children to learn, schools today are being heavily criticized by demanding parents for not doing a better job of teaching their children.

Families in our Province are faced with a number of challenges that impacts on their social functioning such as HIV/Aids, substance abuse, crime, child/youth headed households, migration due to seasonal workers, poverty and unemployment. Families also experience financial constraints as most of them solely depend on social grants.

The lack of recreational facilities for children and the youth especially in rural areas is also a problem

Some of the Challenges communicated to us during the Round Table Discussions with families:

- **Children are afraid to discuss sensitive issues with parents e.g sexuality**
- **Parents do not make time for proper-parent child communication**
- **Parents are always not willing to discuss family problems with children**
- **Single parents are increasing due to absent fathers**
- **Mothers are responsible to take full responsibility of caring for children and this**
- **leads to stress**
- **Children experience negative self-image because of being denied opportunity to know the other parent**

- **Parents spend more time at shebeens thus are unable to discipline their children**
- **Children are rebellious due to peer pressure**
- **Substance Abuse leads to poor parenting, violence and stress within the family**
- **Misuse of substance and alcohol leads to poverty because money is not used to provide basic needs of children**
- **Unemployment increases the misuse of alcohol abuse**

All the identified social ills have profoundly affected the well-being of the family structure and consequently placed an added burden on children. Some parents spend most of their time at work and thus cannot exercise their parental obligation. Discipline within families is also challenged especially for parents who work long hours

The Department of Social Development in collaboration with stakeholders need to strengthen service integration. Family Preservation program should focus on balancing work and family life. To address the challenges, family enrichment programs must continue to the identified families by the Department and its stakeholders. These programs and services should amongst other include:

- **Fatherhood programs (Gender equality and role of men in families)**
- **Effective parenting programs**
- **Relationship strengthening programs including marriage enrichment**
- **Life skills programs**
- **Market and improve accessibility of quality ECD services.**

Ladies and Gentlemen; let us ensure that these priorities are successfully implemented, as it is imperative that, as government, we continue to enhance effective partnerships with the institutions of civil society in improving the quality of service delivery in our communities.

This gathering must further offer us an opportunity to strengthen the existing social development system and deliver a package of essential integrated developmental evidence based social services interventions to communities such as this one.

Program Director; I want to conclude by saying that our collective resolve to respond to the plight of the poor and needy communities should serve as rallying point for partnership to make a difference, and change the lives of the people of the Northern cape for the Better.

**WE THANK YOU**

**REALEBOGA**

**SIYABULELA**

**ONS IS BAIE DANKBAAR**