

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS OF THE MEC FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT:  
HONORABLE MXOLISI SIMON SOKATSHA AT THE  
COMMEMORATION OF WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY ON  
15 JUNE 2015 IN THE ZWELENTLANGA FATMAN MGCAWU DISTRICT  
IN UPINGTON AT THE TOL SPEELMAN HALL AT 09H00 AM**

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**Program Director:**

**District Mayor of the ZFM District: Cllr G Van Staden**

**Mayor of the Khara Hais Municipality: Cllr L Koloji**

**Head of the Dept of Social Development: Me E Botes**

**All Departmental Managers and other Government Officials Present:**

**Our Partners and Stakeholders Present:**

**All Faith Based Organisations and Representatives:**

**Distinguished Guests:**

**Media Houses Present:**

**Ladies and Gentlemen; Good Morning to you all;**

It is indeed a great honour for me to be granted this opportunity- of speaking to our senior citizens.

Our purpose program Director is to improve communication with the people we are here to serve, and to assess the ways in which we can improve the manner in which government contributes to improving the well-being of all South Africans including our Elderly.

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day was launched on June 15, 2006 by the International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse and the World Health Organisation at the United Nations. Each year on or around June 15<sup>th</sup>, communities plan activities and programs to recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. It's a day with excellent an opportunity to share information about abuse, neglect and exploitation of older persons. Today World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is commemorating 10 years of progress by engaging communities in discussions on how to promote dignity and respect of older persons.

Program Director;

The World Health Organisation estimates that between 4-6% of older persons worldwide have suffered from any form of elder abuse such as physical, emotional or financial. Such abuses are unacceptable attack on human dignity and human rights. Making matters worse, those abuse cases often remain unreported and unaddressed.

This year 2015 marks the 60 years of a historic moment in our history, when South Africans from all walks of life adopted the freedom charter in 1955, in Kliptown, Soweto.

They declared amongst other things **“that the aged, the orphans, the disabled and the sick shall be cared for by the state”**.

This, Ladies and Gentlemen, was a powerful and visionary statement which in essence is finding expression here today.

Program Director, Chapter two of the Constitution containing the Bill of Rights; that clearly states **that “this Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom”**, it further states that **“Everyone has the right to have access social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance”**.

Today as we commemorate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day let us all join in reaffirming that the human rights of older persons are the same as those of all human beings. This simply means, human rights do not stop at the age of 60.

Ladies and gentlemen;

This government is committed to reducing high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. An important component of that strategy is to improve household food security so that all South Africans have access to nutritious food. Our strategy is integrated in that it seeks to support families and help small farmers improve their capacity to produce food to feed the nation. This includes looking at ways to lower the prices of essential foods and improving access to social assistance measures, such as grants and food distribution programs.

To reduce poverty and associated challenges, the Department of Social Development works with its provincial counter-parts, our agencies – the South African Social Security Agency with the National Development Agency well as Non-Governmental Organizations as well as Community Based Organizations

It is only through structured and committed partnerships that we can successfully implement our mandate which is to improve the lives of all South Africans.

Today I call upon government officials, organizations rendering service to older persons and private sector to design and carry out more effective prevention strategies and stronger measures to address aspects of elder abuse. Let us work together to improve living conditions for older persons and enable them to make the greatest possible contribution to our province. We need to give support and strengthen older person's forums as they act as the voice of voiceless.

I would like to appeal to everyone who is here today to work together with older persons by involving them in decision making pertaining issues affecting their lives. We should work diligently to educate, engage and empower our older persons by giving them as much information that is accessible and in plain language in order to address the problem of abuse in our communities.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

In South Africa today, all older persons enjoy their rights as stipulated in the Constitution particularly the right to have their dignity respected. The South African Constitution seeks to improve the quality of life for all, our older persons being included.

The Older Persons Act (Act no.13 of 2006) supplements the Constitutional rights as it contains provision to improve the lives of older South African. The main objectives of the Act are to:

- Maintain and promote the status, well-being, safety and security of older persons
- Maintain and protect the rights of older persons
- Shift the emphasis from institutional care to community based care to ensure that older persons remain within the community for as long as possible
- Combat the abuse of older persons

Since the dawn of democracy, government has ensured that all older persons receive the same state old-age grant irrespective of race. Our government has significantly changed the lives of older persons for the better through the provision of free essential services such as water, health and housing.

We have also put in place mechanisms to make sure those services and facilities which promote the respect and dignity of older persons are easily accessible.

Elder people are incredible assets to the Nation and we must take care and listen to them.

To elderly people who are here today, please make use of available structures such as forums in your communities to break the silence of abuse. Report abuse cases to your nearest Department of Social Development office or police station.

Elder abuse is a global social issue which affects the health and human rights of older persons, and an issue which deserve the attention of us in order to promote and protect the rights of older persons. What hurts most is that abusers are primarily people trusted by older persons. This includes their spouses, caregivers, children and other family members, and fear of intimidation and victimization often result in the victim not reporting the abuse. Every day one in twenty of older persons experiences some form of abuse at the hands of someone they trust. It is also estimated that only one in five cases of elder abuse is reported.

In conclusion, my message to everyone is that, let us commemorate World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and show the world out there that we care about ending elder abuse and neglect. Now is the time to get into the action, together we can promote healthy ageing and increase community involvement for older adults by tackling important issues like the prevention of elder abuse. Everyone can make a difference, but together we can unite as one Province and take a stand against elder abuse.

In closing, I want to leave you with a quote from Pearl S. Buck, which says, *“Our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way that it cares for its helpless members”*.

**WE THANK YOU**

**BAIE DANKIE**

**ENKOSI**

**REALEBOGA**