

2010

North West Provincial
Legislature

**REPORT ON OLDER PERSONS
PARLIAMENT HELD AT
MATSHENG VILLAGE, GREATER
TAUNG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY**

CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF OUR ELDERS IN OUR LIFETIME

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THEME: CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF OUR ELDERS IN OUR LIFETIME.

1. Introduction

The National Parliament of South Africa has resolved to frequently visit various sectors of the community to interact with them and listen to their plight and various challenges they are experiencing. This resolution was cascaded down to all Provincial Legislatures, where they also need to frequently visit various sectors of the community. Their mandate is to ensure that public participation, law making and oversight are efficient and effective. It is a constitutional requirement to ensure that Chapter 2 of the Constitution, sub- section (7 – 11) is adhered to by government.

Older Persons Act No. 13 of 2006 seeks to deal effectively with the plight of older persons by establishing a framework aimed at the empowerment and protection of older persons and at the promotion and maintenance of their status, rights, well-being, safety and security, thus the North West Provincial Legislature align itself with the Act by holding Older Person's Parliament in an effort to interact and listen to their challenges and identify ways to solve them.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the event was to solicit views and look at challenges faced by the elderly as well as to show appreciation to the elderly for their involvement in the rebuilding of our nation. Furthermore is to establish progress and impact that government has made as well as ensure that policy pronouncements are implemented.

3. Background

Older Person's parliament was held in Matsheng, a village outside Taung. The Legislature invited 600 elderly people from all the four districts. Each municipality send between 15-22 people as advised by the legislature. Some sent 15 because they were booked for while some could send 22. The remaining number was invited from the hosting municipality.

4. KEY ISSUES/CONCERNS RAISED

Each district was represented by one elderly person to present the challenges of that particular district as agreed upon. The following were raised:

- Older persons expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the service they receive from public health institutions. Their complaints included inefficient appointment systems, long waiting period, understaffed facilities, shortages of medication, unavailability of assistive devices, and health personnel perceived as not doing thorough examinations, no enough explanation of their health problems and not treating them with respect.
- A concern was raised about the apparent lack of involvement of older persons in the active raising of their grandchildren, this, it is argued, will lead to the loss of valuable teachings, as the elderly are the custodians of our values and traditions.
- The lack of support from government on projects run by the elderly was raised as a concern.
- A concern was raised that there is a perception that elder abuse occurs only in care or residential facilities, whilst in actual fact, the majority of older people live in communities where elder abuse is more difficult to expose and investigate.
- Elders were encouraged to be active in their communities; they were encouraged to join elderly social clubs and various other community forums, such as, community policing forums. It was argued that this will ensure that the elderly are not isolated and are respected members of the community.
- Older persons asserted that they wanted to be taken seriously on the issues they raise; they said they want to start seeing action, not just government talk shop.
- Elders were encouraged to guide the youth and ensure that the grandchildren accessing social grants are properly taken care of.
- Elders were encouraged to continue to build their livelihoods and that of their own children.
- Elders appreciate the fact that they are able to access social grants, but are bemoaning the lack of optimal services at some of the pension pay points, such as: pay points lacking water, toilets, seating, shelter and fences.

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- Long queues still prevail at some pay points, with some pensioners spending up to 8 hours in a queue.
- Many pensioners travel long distances to pay points, which is costly.
- At some pay points there is no medical assistance for those who take ill while queuing.
- In some areas pensioners are paid through local shops and they are forced to buy their goods.
- Non-governmental organisations (NGO's) offer a range services to the elderly. The services include: social support groups, training and education, income generating projects, frail care services, transport to health facilities and Home Based Care, the challenge is that the NGO's remain underfunded despite delivering services to older persons which the Department of Health and Social Development is responsible for providing in terms of legislation.
- Home Based Care and Community Based Care in some rural areas are almost non-existent and those that do exist are generally underfunded.

4. Recommendations by Elderly People

- Intersectoral collaboration amongst government departments and between these departments and their civil society partners to deal with issues relating to the elderly.
- Increased budgets for services targeted at the elderly.
- The community to be encouraged to report elder abuse.
- Services to older persons especially those in formally disadvantaged areas needs to be brought in line with current similar services to older persons in more affluent areas.

5. Conclusion

It is the responsibility of the Legislature to ensure that Older Persons' enjoy their rights as contemplated in section 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa hence they held Older Persons' Parliament to engage with them, monitor and evaluate the implementation of issues raised.

HON. M. ROSHO (DEPUTY SPEAKER: NWPL)

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