

SPEECH BY HONOURABLE MEC MR SAM KWELITA AT THE IMBUMBA
YAMANYAMA ELDERLY PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION, 14 OCTOBER 08

Programme Director

Our Senior Citizens

Government departments

Ladies and Gentlemen

And everyone present

I greet you all

Today, we feel honored to be part of these celebrations where we honor our older persons. These are true custodians of our values, heritage and culture.

In reality, many have viewed old age as a social challenge. Social Policy analysts and makers have concentrated more on what can be termed the "burden of dependency" and as a result have neglected the fundamental role which social policy can play in structuring the lives of older persons. This general misleading view has led many to believe that older persons are a national threat and this has without doubt acted as an obstacle to policy development.

Older persons have been relegated to mere passive observers. This view has been primarily supported by social welfare policies that have robbed the aged population the right to participate in the socio economic programmes of governments. These policies have been based on the assumption that society has a major responsibility of only providing basic social welfare services to older persons. All these stereotypes have led to the creation of a relatively passive and disenchanting sector of the population of older persons which has painted a

negative picture that has led to the marginalization of older persons by younger generation.

OLDER PERSON'S BILL

As government, we realized that, participation by older persons in the socio economic development of this country is of fundamental importance. This has led our National Assembly to pass an Act that seeks to fight for the rights of older persons. The New Act focuses on active participation by older persons with regard to social transformation:

- It shifts the emphasis from institutional care to community based care in order to ensure that an older person remains in his or her home within the community for as long as possible.
- It provides the platform for them to participate in community life in any position appropriate to their interests and capabilities.
- It advocates for active participation in intergenerational programmes.
- It promotes participation in activities that enhance their income generating capacity.
- It also advocates for access to opportunities that promote their optimal level of social, physical, mental and emotional well being.

In essence, the Act seeks to advocate for the rights of older persons to participate in developmental, political, social, cultural and economical activities of their country and not be regarded as mere beneficiaries. It also seeks to give them access to knowledge, education and training.

OLDER PERSON'S ROLE ON RESTORATION OF MORAL VALUES

At the same time, we view your contribution to family and community values as vital as it cannot be measured in economic terms. With the rebuilding of our moral fibre led by the Moral Regeneration Movement, we see older persons as key ambassadors and role models that our young people can learn from.

Today as we celebrate, we take our hats off to our pride, our heritage, reservoir of our culture, values and' think tanks 'who have managed to shape our destiny, reshape our social, political and economic landscape. Your selfless sacrifice to serve as care givers to our young people who are ravaged by the HIV and AIDS pandemic continues to inspire us. As our senior citizens we are still relying on you to share your skills so that we can sustain the good work you have been doing from generation to generation.

I thank you