

**Speech by KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo on the occasion of the Provincial launch of the FIGHT AGAINST MORAL DECAY at KwaSwayimane**

**8 February 2013**

Programme Director

Chairperson of the Provincial House of Traditional Leaders: Inkosi Phathisizwe Chiliza.

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Co-operative Governance, Ms. Nomusa Dube

KZN MECs for Social Development, Mrs. Weziwe Thusi,

Arts, Culture, Sport and Recreation MEC: Mrs. Ntombikayise Sibhidla-Saphetha

It is indeed with shame that we converge here not to talk about development but to address the issues pertaining to the restoration of morals in our society.

We found it wise and befitting that traditional leadership be requested to be part of this *Azibuye Emasisweni (Let's get back to basics)* initiative as they are the custodians of good behaviour in their areas. Of particular interest is the effort to rekindle the spirit of Ubuntu and fighting social ills (such as elderly abuse, high levels of drugs and alcohol abuse, abuse of women, violence etc.) engulfing the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

Our target here is the youth which we must all find ways to nurture in good moral ethos and move them away from all forms of anti-social behaviour practices.

In this area we have shuddered whilst observing increased incidents of shameful sexual assaults on the grannies.

In a very crude way we are made to accept barbaric abuse on babies; women and elderly as a normal crime. In Upington, it was baby Tsepang – mutilated and gang raped by drunkards; in Soweto, it was a mentally challenged girls openly abused in the community; two day ago in Cape Town, it was a 17 year old girl – gang raped and repeatedly stabbed by men who she stayed with in the neighborhood; she will be buried this weekend!

Here at KwaSwayimane we rape the grannies; not once, not twice but trice! One of these fragile elderly gogos, has since died following the assault.

We are thus here to launch this provincial campaign at KwaSwayimane as means to inform you of the damage and long term effects of this type of abuse to our elderly.

It is now clear to us that there may have been other cases that have happened here but not reported as we know that age and generational differences often makes it difficult for older women to disclose their

experiences because of greater feelings of shame, fear, vulnerability and the increased isolation.

It is no small wonder that **Gogo Masangu Salukazi** age 84; raped on the New Year's Day died 14 days later because that the people in her situation are bound to experience fear for their lives and that feelings of being powerless continue to occur after the assault. Intense feelings of anxiety; depression and loss of self-esteem also overwhelm them.

Gogo Salukazi could not live longer; could not overcome the experiences of shame, betrayal and loss of trust especially when the perpetrator happens to be her own son.

People in her situation often ask, "why me"?

It is time we all know that when raped, older women will be more vulnerable to severe physical injury and infections e.g. an increased susceptibility to urinary tract infections due to the aging process and also those brittle bones break easily and often take a long time to heal.

Abuse is abuse, but again on babies it has dire consequences. The impact of child abuse has long lasting physical, psychological, behavioural, and societal consequences. Physical consequences manifest in damage to a child's growing brain thus negatively causing cognitive delays or emotional difficulties. Psychological problems often manifest as high-risk behaviours.

Abused children also end up depressed and suffering from anxiety and eventually resorting to smoking, alcohol and drug abuse or to overeating. They are also prone to suicide attempts and a higher incidence rate of personality disorder.

Programme Director, I am pleased that uNdabezitha, Inkosi Chiliza and other Amakhosi are present today as they are the most important stakeholder in this matter of fighting moral decay and restoration of good values.

In our Department we heavily rely on Amakhosi to give moral guidance to our youth especially in our circumcision camps. Through the Medical Male Circumcision we are aiming at reducing the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted disease. Of particular importance is the quest to ensure that those found to be HIV negative when circumcised, remain so for as long as they live. We thus rely on Amakhosi in to give guidance and lecture the initiates on good behavior and moral perceptions of health and life in general. Medical male circumcision is not offered as just a clinical operation. Amakhosi are informed of the camps planned in their areas; they play a leading role in the mobilisation of the participants and are key on giving guidance about good values; respect; drug and alcohol abuse. Through their courts they also deal with all acts of misdemeanour taking place in their areas of jurisdiction.

We definitely honour the association we have with Ondabezitha especially now that their good offices are there to spread positive

behavior messages and to distribute condoms. All these assist us in the reduction of HIV incidence, unplanned pregnancies and spread of STI.

Programme Director, as I end, allow me to specifically address all the young men and boys here present on what rape and sexual assault is:

Sexual assault and abuse is any type of sexual activity that you do not agree to, including:

- Inappropriate touching
- Vaginal, anal, or oral penetration
- Sexual intercourse that you say no to
- Rape
- Attempted rape
- Child molestation

Sexual assault can be verbal, visual, or anything that forces a person to join in unwanted sexual contact or attention. Examples of this are voyeurism (when someone watches private sexual acts), exhibitionism (when someone exposes him/herself in public), incest (sexual contact between family members), and sexual harassment. It can happen in different situations: in the home by someone you know, on a date, or by a stranger in an isolated place.

Sexual violence is always wrong, and a person who is sexually abused does not ever "cause" the attack. Rape and sexual assault are never the victim's fault — no matter where or how it happens.

Keep in mind that there are times when a person is not able to agree to sex, such as if they are drunk or have been drugged with a date rape drug, or if they are underage.

Our mission here is to say all of us must get involved in fighting all forms of abuse. All of us must give support and solidarity to the victims in our areas. We are saying you can help someone who is abused or who has been assaulted by listening and offering comfort. Go with her or him to the police, the hospital, or to counseling. Reinforce the message that she or he is not at fault and that it is natural to feel angry and ashamed.

*Azibuye Emasisweni*

I thank you.