



Health Promoters @ Mkhulu

“Our elders deserve good health in their sunset years”.

Health Promotion South Africa Trust (HPSA) is very concerned for the health of elderly South Africans, especially those living in vulnerable communities. We have named this programme **HP@Mkhulu**, because *Mkhulu* is a respectful Xhosa term for the elderly.

In 2011 4, 1 million people over the age of 60 were living in South Africa, most of whom live in vulnerable South African communities. Due to many reasons, the HIV/AIDS epidemic being only one, this elderly population is extremely poor, mostly unemployed, illiterate and often abused by their younger family members and others. Studies show that most older Africans in urban and rural areas are less healthy (especially regarding preventable communicable and lifestyle diseases) and more depressed than the rest of the population. This poor health and depressive state is considered mostly due to poverty and related issues since millions of elders (mostly women) are unemployed and have to use their small state pensions to support children, adolescents and unemployed adults (the unemployment rate in South Africa is very high).

As Health Promoters we feel a heartfelt urgency to help elders learn how to improve their health with simple lifestyle choices. Improved health would enable them to cope better with their responsibilities, as well as enabling them to feel more empowered and better able to enjoy their sunset years. It would also enable them to train their young family members to improve hygiene, prevent dehydration, eat more healthfully, and exercise more faithfully etc., and thus prevent some diseases.

The aims of the **Health Promoters @ Mkhulu** programme are devised to enable elders to:

- Learn knowledge about basic health and hygiene principles and practices
- Understand how healthy practices can prevent many diseases
- Improve their self-esteem and coping skills especially regarding depression and abuse
- Help their dependants to develop positive attitudes towards healthy lifestyle habits.

HPSA has been running the HP@Mkhulu programme for quite a few years now, especially in our Kayamandi, Mfuleni and Langa Health Information Centres. It has been encouraging to see the grateful response of these elders, many of whom are women. More funding will enable us to empower and support many more of South Africa's vulnerable aged.

December, 2018

HEALTH EDUCATION IS **ALSO** A HUMAN RIGHT!

