

## **MEDIA BRIEFING**

### **Ageing with Dignity: Promoting the socio-economic rights of older persons**

The Community Law Centre, based at the University of the Western Cape, is hosting a workshop on promoting the socio-economic rights of older persons in South Africa.

The workshop is preceded by the World Day of Social Justice (20 February), a day proclaimed by the United Nations (UN) to encourage people to look at how social justice affects poverty eradication. It is a day to recognise the importance of tackling poverty, exclusion and unemployment, in order to promote solidarity, harmony and equality of opportunity within and between societies. These are issues that are critical to older persons as well as the poor in our society.

The United Nations Commission on Social Development has called on the UN member states to ensure that appropriate and effective measures are in place to promote and protect the rights of older persons. There is a strong need for the South African government to heed to this call as it has one of the most rapidly ageing populations in Africa, which is projected to increase to 4.42 million (9.5% of the population) by 2015.

This increasing numbers and proportions of older persons have implications for the planning of social and health services in South Africa. The challenges facing older persons are numerous; mainly reflecting inadequate or non-realisation of the socio-economic rights of older persons which impacts on their dignity and intensifies their vulnerability. Also, the majority of the older population is income poor.

Civil society organisations working with and on the rights of older persons as well as government and human rights institutions will take stock of and deliberate on, among other things: the extent of realisation of the socio-economic rights of older persons and the challenges they face; the extent to which the government considers their needs in working towards the Millennium Development Goals; and the relevance of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The ICESCR is a fundamental international treaty on socio-economic rights that also pays particular attention to the rights of older persons; but which South Africa has not ratified despite signing it over 16 years ago.

The workshop is being held at the University of the Western Cape (Room 1 C&D, School of Public Health) from 08h30 to 16h30.

For more details and information, contact  
Dr. Lilian Chenwi, Community Law Centre  
Email: [lchenwi@uwc.ac.za](mailto:lchenwi@uwc.ac.za)  
Tel: 0721726346

*Funding for the workshop is contributed by the Foundation for Human Rights which is funded by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development and the European Union under the sector budget support programme – Access to Justice and Constitutional Rights.*

*Financial assistance is also contributed by the European Union.*

*The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Community Law Centre and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the Foundation for Human Rights, the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development or the European Union.*