

MEDIA RELEASE:
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KZN Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo completes 30km Ballito-Umhlanga walk in aid of anti-women and children abuse campaign

PARENTS must cease from raising boy and girl children differently; and boys must be taught to respect girls so that they can grow up to be upstanding men who don't abuse women and children.

This is the clarion call made by KwaZulu-Natal Health MEC, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo today, as he



finished a grueling 30km walk from Ballito to Umhlanga in aid of a campaign to raise awareness about the abuse of women and children.

MEC Dhlomo did the walk alongside the famed human rights crusader, Jan “The Walker” Mabuyakhulu, whose walk began in Mtubatuba last Tuesday (03 May 2016).

Today's leg of the walk, which started at 07h30 and finished just after 13h00, created quite a spectacle along the N2 south carriageway between the two towns.

With the South African national flag flying high, MEC Dhlomo carried a flag emblazoned with a message: “Stop Abuse of Women, Stop Rape, Stop Violence”; while Mabuyakhulu's

poster read “Stop Abuse, Rape and Violence.” Support staff members the MEC’s office also participated in the walk, under the watchful eye of the SAPS and Metro Police who ensured safety along the freeway.

Many motorists who encountered the party hooted and gave the initiative the thumbs-up.

Speaking shortly after the walk, a still-energetic MEC Dhlomo said he had long been meaning to show his support for Mabuyakhulu’s initiative.

“There’s nothing nobler than standing up for the rights of humanity, and rights of women and children. We fully support this campaign. What Mabuyakhulu is doing is encouraging to all of us as men... to stand up for the rights of women. As the chairperson of the KZN Men’s Forum, I am saying not in our name should men continue abusing women and children,” said MEC Dhlomo.

MEC Dhlomo, who has run the Comrades Marathon and last weekend took part in a park run in Richard’s Bay, called on the public to participate in initiatives such as this one, as it was like “killing two birds with one stone.

“On one hand, you are supporting an important initiative, but on the other, you are practicing healthy lifestyles, which will help you live longer and healthier. Today, I must have lost at least one kilogram from this exercise. What this shows is that physical exercise is possible even for those who cannot run. Walking is also part of exercising.”

MEC Dhlomo said it is unfortunate that the abuse of women and children continues.

“It is our wish to, one day, have generations of children and women that will not even get to hear words such as abuse, let alone to experience it. In this regard, the socialisation of children is very important. As parents, we tend to focus too much on girl children when raising children. But boys also need to be properly orientated from boyhood to manhood and taught the importance of respecting themselves, and to respect women and children. If things have gone wrong in the past, it need not continue.”

As yet another symbolic gesture, MEC Dhlomo handed Mabuyakhulu a pair of brand new takkies to help him continue his crusade.

Mabuyakhulu expressed his heartfelt thanks to MEC Dhlomo for the support, saying: “MEC Dhlomo has made this initiative worthwhile for me. When I approached him and asked him to be part of this campaign, I didn’t think he would be able to cover this distance. But he has been extremely helpful to me, and I’m extremely thankful for his support. I’ve also gained a lot of knowledge from him about health matters, and I will be spreading those messages everywhere I go.”

MEC Dhlomo will rejoin Mabuyakhulu on Thursday, to complete the walk from Umhlanga to Durban.

ENDS

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