

MEC Dhlomo and Inkosi Mandla Mandela urge private sector to help fund more health infrastructure projects

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Kwa-ZuluNatal Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo (who is taking part in the Nelson Mandela Day Marathon in Pietermaritzburg today) has joined Inkosi Mandla Mandela in thanking Absa and the Lion Match company for renovating the children's ward at Edendale Hospital in Pietermaritzburg.

Speaking at a ceremony to celebrate this project at the Edendale Hospital yesterday, both MEC Dhlomo and Inkosi Mandla Mandela called on the private sector at large to accelerate their corporate social responsibility, by identifying and sponsoring worthy causes in the public health sector. This, they said, would help improve health infrastructure and access to healthcare. The renovation of the children's ward at Edendale Hospital is part of Absa's partnership with the KZN Government, and the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The refurbishment of the paediatric ward at Edendale Hospital has seen the painting of walls and passages in the paediatric ward into a bright kaleidoscope, and a donation of toys, big curtains, bath towels, teddy bears, tables, chairs and TV sets

Since its inception in 2012, the Mandela Day Marathon has become one of the fastest growing sporting events in Africa, attracting a loyal international following from both athletes and observers. The main race runs from the Manaye Hall in Edendale where Nelson Mandela made his last public speech before his arrest in 1962 and the Capture Site near Howick where he was arrested by the apartheid police on 5 August of the same year.

MEC Dhlomo, who will be running 21km of the 42km race today, said: *"This initiative helps us celebrate the centenary of Mama Albertina Sisulu and Tata Nelson Mandela, who dedicated their lives to the Struggle for liberation. It is also part of the legacy that was founded by the Nelson Mandela family. Incrementally, this partnership with Absa and the Lion Match company is improving infrastructure focus of this hospital, targeting the children's ward. We've seen the wonderful work that they've done, and we are grateful for this partnership. We are grateful that they've decided to honour and respect the contribution of Nelson Mandela, whose love for children was enormous."*

The MEC paid tribute to Madiba for his compassion for the weak and vulnerable, adding that his gallant fight against HIV/AIDS stigma and for access to antiretroviral therapy had been monumental. He emphasised that it was under Madiba's presidency that pregnant women and children began to receive free treatment in public clinics and hospitals.



Inkosi Mandla

Mandela and his wife Rabia; and Msunduzi mayor Cllr Themba Njilo



MEC Dhlomo

with Inkosi Mandla Mandela

MEC Dhlomo added that the partnership with Absa and the Lion Match company should be an eye-opener for other private companies to plough their resources back into the community. *“It’s an enormous contribution, and we want them to plough back. We have infrastructure challenges. If they could come in, adopt one other ward, or corridor, and help improve it, we would be grateful. So, we are calling on private companies to consider identifying other health facilities that they can support .*

At today’s race, MEC Dhlomo will be running 21km, while carrying a board with the message: “The KZN Department of Health supports and encourages healthy lifestyle” emblazoned on it. Reflecting on the sponsorship, and the significance of the Mandela Mandela Day Marathon, Inkosi Mandla Mandela also echoed MEC Dhlomo’s sentiments, urging Absa and other corporates to seek opportunities to fund projects in the health sector in the province, country and across the continent.

“We’re very excited as the Mandela royal family that we’re not only gathering to partake in the ‘Long Walk to Freedom,’ recalling Madiba’s own journey in this marathon, but we are also ensuring that we’re bettering the lives of the most needy of the children in our country. As you know, my grandfather always articulated his love for children. So, we thought it would be fitting

that Absa comes on board to ensure that we have facilities that will be able to keep our children safe, and protect them by providing them with primary healthcare. But we've also requested upon them that this paediatric ward should also be a feeder to the Nelson Mandela Children's Hospital, so that we ensure that our children are able to get the best of medical healthcare. With the assistance of Absa, and the Lion Match company, we have been realising the dreams that Madiba set for us, and we are grateful for that.

"President Mandela was renowned for his own love for children, and reminded us that there can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. "We are proud of this contribution by Absa to refurbish the children's ward, so that our children can receive better healthcare that they need and deserve. Inkosi Dalibhunga (Madiba) reminded us that Africa is renowned for its beauty, its natural heritage and prolific resources. But equally so, the image of its suffering children haunts the conscience of our continent, and the world.

"I therefore appeal to Absa that wherever they are in the African continent, they must likewise continue this relationship of love and caring, nurtured by the life and the legacy of our founding father and global icon, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, to spread access to healthcare for the continent's suffering children. This will be a fitting tribute to this great giant of Africa, and the hero of millions around the world."

Absa managing executive Mr Ronnie Mbatsane and Lion Match Company CEO Mr Basie Van Wyk said their companies are proud to be working with the Nelson Mandela Foundation