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MEBALA YA RONA HERITAGE WALK GAINS MOMENTUM

Mebala Ya Rona Heritage walk brought over 100 walkers across Bokone Bophirima and neighbouring provinces together. This was a significant increase from the inaugural event last year and seen as a sanction for a vision turning reality.

The Walk which embraces and encourages citizens to celebrate their culture, diversity, beliefs and traditions held its second annual walk last week starting from Bakgatla Gate, Pilanesberg National Park, passing through Legkraal, Vlakplaas, Rampampa and Molatedi to Madikwe Game Reserve.

The 117km Walk presented an exciting and educational trail in accordance with the key strategic objectives of this initiative which mainly focuses on promoting the heritage corridor; increasing awareness and interest amongst local communities to appreciate preserve and protect their culture and heritage whilst they optimise on the economic value as well as to encourage the investor community towards the biodiversity economy and partnership opportunities with local communities within the node and to increase tourism footprint in the area.

MEC Manketsi Tlhape of the North West Department of Rural, Environment and Agricultural Development (READ) applauded all individuals and environmental clubs that participated and completed the Walk for their perseverance and commitment to completing the challenging trail.

“When we started the Walk, we were a certain number but I am happy with the number of participants that have completed. This shows commitment and the fact that the vision behind this initiative is worth consideration. Mebala Ya Rona Transformation project is growing and has drawn so much interest and we are assuring our participants that steadily we will reach the greater heights with it. It is our responsibility as the Department of READ together with our entities and Mebala to ensure that this Walk succeeds and becomes sustainable” she said.

During the closing ceremony, Tlhape announced that the National Department of Tourism has pledged to invest in the refurbishing and development the Dwarsberg Hiking Trail that will be linked to the Molatedi Dam Resort. This, she said would increase biodiversity awareness and contribute to the economic development of the area.

Furthermore, she encouraged communities to be part of the Mebala Ya Rona brand, to improve and develop new community projects that are aligned with the objectives of the initiative.

Biodiversity Management Director within the Department of READ, Mr Jonathan Denga added that the Walk had cultivated some legacy projects within the local communities and that includes first level training in fire and first aid to assist walkers during the trail. These community members who are mainly youth will receive further training as part the Mebala legacy community development projects.

The Walk envisages attracting more walkers form other provinces as well as international in line with the Mebala Ya Rona Transformation initiative objectives. One of the walkers, Steve Moloko (54) from Johannesburg says that he enjoyed walking inside Madikwe Game Reserve

where got to see wildlife. "The experience has also taught me about different villages within Rustenburg area and the way people there live. I am from a city and I had little knowledge of the life in villages but this has given me a valuable lesson and some life experience to cherish," Moloko said.

All participants who completed the Walk were awarded medals to acknowledge their selfless efforts.

The 3rd Annual Mebala Ya Rona Heritage Walk will take place from 5 – 9 June 2019.

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