

Agility and zest during the 16 Days of Activism 2014 launch

Reports Angel "Mkhethie" Sibisi, pictures by Sibongile Dlangalala

The community of Harry Gwala District Municipality came out in numbers at the launch of this year's 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children Campaign. This auspicious event was spearheaded by the Honourable MEC for Human Settlements and Public Works in KwaZulu-Natal Mr RR Pillay, held on Tuesday, 25 November 2014 at Ward 6, Ematsheni under the UMzimkhulu Local Municipality, which falls under the Harry Gwala District Municipality.



As seen in the above pictures on the left is the CEO of Rietvlei Hospital Ms Kheswa, in the middle is Mjuqu who is driving the Condom Distribution Project, in the middle right is MEC RR Pillay for Human Settlements and Public Works, on the right is the Mayor for Harry Gwala District Municipality, Councillor Ndobe.

The launch of this campaign took form of a prayer and was aimed at raising awareness within communities regarding social ills and interventions, it commenced with the MEC distributing condoms to community members and encouraging the concept of practising safe sex. The condom distribution objectives aim to protect all sex acts that can put someone at the risk of HIV and/or unwanted pregnancies. The condom promotion objective was achieved through concentrated efforts where the MEC and the local leadership took charge and steered this campaign which is seldom in rural areas.

Within the community of EMatsheni, Ward 6 amongst other social issues is the abduction of young girls, forced marriages, slaying of elderly woman accused of "witchcraft". In an exclusive interview with the communications team MEC Ravi Pillay accentuated the following "We want to go out in every community and convey a strong message that we condemn the act of *"ukuthwala"* (abduction of young girls) it is totally unacceptable and we draw a distinction between certain cultural practises such as *"umgcagciso"* (arranged

marriages) which is quite different and separate from “*ukuthwala*”. You can’t abduct a young child and keep that child as an abductee, it is wrong, illegal and unacceptable.”



As seen in the above picture is the MEC for Human Settlement and Public Works Honourable RR Pillay delivering his keynote address during the launch of the 16 Days of Activism against women and Children at Harry Gwala District Municipality.

The 2014 Campaign theme is “**COUNT ME IN: TOGETHER MOVING A NON-VIOLENT SOUTH AFRICA FORWARD**”. The Campaign builds on the efforts of the past 16 years of mobilizing society with a specific emphasis on engaging men and boys in furthering the prevention of violence against women and children.

At the National launch of 16 Days of Activism campaign, President JG Zuma delivered a keynote address and said “This year, we are reaching out to men and boys. We encourage greater participation of men in the campaign of preventing violence against women and children. We urge young men and boys as well to commit themselves to become activists against gender based violence. We are focusing our message on men as well not because South African men are abusive. It is because excluding men from participating actively in this campaign has been a serious shortcoming. Men also have solutions to offer in fighting violence against women and children. All of us have a role to play. That is why the 2014 theme says “Count me in”.