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## **Sibusiso Vilane is First Black African to Trek to South Pole -Expedition Supports Orphaned Children in South Africa-**

**London, UK, Jan. 16, 2008** The Freeplay Foundation announced today that Sibusiso Vilane, the first black African to walk to the South Pole, will reach the Pole this week. Sibusiso's expedition to the South Pole is committed to raising funds for Freeplay Lifeline radios and he is appealing to the public around the world to support him by funding one Lifeline radio for each of the 1,200 kilometres he has walked.



The Lifeline radios donated will be used to bring much needed information and education to children living alone in South Africa. South Africa has an estimated 1 million child-headed households.

"I am making this walk, not just for me, but for South Africa," said Sibusiso. "Please help me and show your support by donating a Lifeline radio for the benefit of the children of South Africa. The future entirely depends on the education of children -- their access to information to broaden their thinking and understanding of the ever-changing and challenging world."

The Freeplay Foundation helps vulnerable people transform their lives using sustainable, self-powered technologies. Wind-up and solar-powered Lifeline radios do not require electricity or batteries. Sibusiso serves as the Foundation's South African Ambassador, along with actor Tom Hanks in the US and humanitarian Terry Waite in the UK.

'We congratulate Sibusiso Vilane on his remarkable achievement,' said Freeplay Foundation CEO Kristine Pearson. 'We are deeply grateful that Sibusiso has chosen his extraordinary journey to support South Africa's child-headed households. His trek to the South Pole will help bring the children critical, even life-saving information and education.'

Most orphaned children cannot attend school and cannot afford batteries or electricity to power a radio. The Freeplay Foundation offers the children a lifeline to the outside world by providing access to radio programs that teach them how to grow their small garden plots to feed themselves, take care of their chickens or goats, and prevent deadly diseases like malaria and Aids.

Sibusiso Vilane's challenge started on the 10 Nov. 2007 on a tough 60-day journey with fellow mountaineer, Alex Harris, in an attempt to become the first South Africans to trek unassisted to the South Pole.

Starting out as a game ranger in Swaziland where he grew up, Sibusiso began climbing South African peaks in 1996 before taking on Mt Kilimanjaro. He began climbing in the Himalayas in 2002, in

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training for the world's highest and toughest mountain. He made history when he became the first black African to climb Mount Everest in 2003.

South African President Thabo Mbeki congratulated Sibusiso on his achievement and grit, saying 'In this, he has shown the heights we can scale in life if we put shoulder to the wheel and work at things without flagging.' President Mbeki awarded the Order of Ikhamanga (Bronze ) to him in 2006.

In May of 2005, Sibusiso teamed up with world-renowned adventurer Sir Ranulph Fiennes and fellow South African Alex Harris and went back to Everest, this time to attempt the technically more difficult and statistically less-successful North Ridge Route.

Sibusiso (which means 'blessings' in the Swazi language) is married with three children and has four adopted children.

The public is invited to donate via Freeplay Foundation's website at [www.freeplayfoundation.org](http://www.freeplayfoundation.org). To learn more about Sibusiso Vilane, go to his website at [www.sibusisovilane.co.za](http://www.sibusisovilane.co.za)

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