

Deputy President Mabuza accepts donations for schools

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His Excellency Mr David Mabuza, the Deputy President of South Africa, was in attendance on Friday, 18 February 2022, at the Sappi Ngodwana Mill, to accept a donation of paper, masks and sanitiser on behalf of 300 schools in Mpumalanga. The handover event marks the beginning of a public private partnership, and is a continuation of Sappi Southern Africa's donations of scarce items to reduce pressure on government's resources and to support the most vulnerable members of our society, particularly during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.



The handover consisted of 10,000 boxes of Sappi Typek office paper intended to assist schools to resume their full role in the education of learners, after the disruptions that were experienced in the educational system, in the wake of the extraordinary circumstances brought about by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country. The 10,000 cloth face masks, 10,000 surgical masks and 10,000 litres of hand sanitiser that were handed over, are intended to assist the schools with curbing the spread of the pandemic, by adopting good preventative hygienic measures at their premises.

Commenting on the handover, the Deputy President welcomed the launch of this private public partnership, saying : “We are pleased to be part of this important initiative by Sappi Southern Africa to collaborate with the Department of Basic Education to curb the spread of Covid-19 in schools. This is indeed an act of generosity in support of government in its efforts to defeat the coronavirus as led by the Department of Health. We salute Sappi for what it has done in stepping forward to respond to this partnership call. We hope that other corporates will emulate what Sappi has done.”



Sappi Southern Africa Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Alex Thiel responded by saying that this donation supported Sappi's prioritised Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular its support for Quality Education (SDG4) and its SDG17 (Partnerships for the Goals). “Because we believe in our shared responsibility to move toward a sustainable future and recognise that it is work we cannot do alone, and because we want to be a trusted partner to all our stakeholders, we cultivate relationships with those who are able to enact meaningful change. We saw an opportunity where we could help provide quality education delivered in safe surroundings, for our community members, in partnership with government,” he said.

Schools from the area were represented by their principals and selected learners who attended the event and expressed their thanks and appreciation in a selection of musical numbers, performed to the delight of the audience.



The Deputy President was accompanied and supported by the Minister of Basic Education Ms Angie Motshekga, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo, the Deputy Minister of Health, along with several other senior dignitaries on a national, provincial and local level.

Encouraging vaccination

In his capacity as Chairperson of the Inter-Ministerial Committee that oversees the national roll-out of vaccines, the Deputy President also expressed his satisfaction for Sappi's ongoing support for the government's efforts to promote vaccination to curb the spread of Covid-19. Sappi has a vaccination policy amongst its employees and has achieved a 91% vaccination rate at its South African businesses, with 95% having received their first vaccinations. Sappi's 13 countrywide clinics have administered more than 10,000 vaccinations to employees, their family members and contractors. He commented : " Vaccines are our protective tool to contain the spread of Covid-19 in schools and communities in which schools are located. Our country has approved for vaccination of citizens between the ages of 12 to 17. This means that many in the learner population of the 300 beneficiary schools are eligible for Covid-19 vaccination. We therefore encourage those who have not yet vaccinated to do so, not only for their personal health, but for the greater good of the community."

Showcasing skills development

The Deputy President also used this opportunity to pay a visit to the Sappi Ngodwana Skills Centre and Learning Hub, which provides opportunities for local community members to benefit from being active participants in the local economy of the area. Registered with NAMB (National Artisan Moderating Body), the Centre is a registered skills training and trade testing centre. It provides training for apprentices and engineers in training, as well as community training courses, related to basic life and hand skills, and specific skills such as painting, basic electrical work, plumbing, bricklaying and cement work.

To date, 98 community members have enrolled and benefited from the Community Learning Programme. There are currently eleven community members receiving training at the centre in sewing, welding, upholstery and carpentry. The future aim is to increase the number of trainees to between 20 and 30 per group and to take 90 learners through the programme per annum.

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