

LEADING WITH COMPASSION: 5000 SHOES, 5000 SMILES INITIATIVE LAUNCHES IN GA-MPHAHLELE

Education and dignity took center stage at Kgaganoko Primary School in Seleteng Village, Ga-Mphahlele yesterday, February 6, 2026. The Mayor of Lepelle-Nkumpi Local Municipality, **Cllr. Dr. Meriam Molala**, joined forces with provincial leaders and media partners to officially launch the **5 000 Shoes, 5 000 Smiles Initiative**.

The program, a collaborative effort spearheaded by the **Lesedi 7 Group** in partnership with **Thobela FM**, aims to restore confidence to underprivileged learners by providing school shoes, a basic necessity that remains a barrier to education for many.

The launch underscored the importance of public-private partnerships in rural development. Joining Mayor Molala was **Ms. Mavhungu Lerule-Ramakhanya**, MEC for the Limpopo Department of Education and **Mr. Jerry Maseko**, MEC for the Limpopo Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture. Their presence highlighted a holistic approach to student welfare, acknowledging that a child's success in the classroom is deeply linked to their physical well-being and self-esteem.

Speaking at the event, Mayor Dr. Meriam Molala emphasised that the initiative is about more than just footwear; it is about "walking the path of success" with the kids of Lepelle-Nkumpi.

"When a child walks to school in worn-out shoes or barefoot, their focus is on their struggle, not their studies," said Dr. Molala. "Today, Lesedi 7 Group isn't just giving out shoes; but delivering hope and ensuring that no learner in Ga-Mphahlele feels less than their peers."

MEC Lerule-Ramakhanya echoed these sentiments, noting that the Department of Education remains committed to removing "non-academic barriers" that lead to school dropouts.

As the ceremony concluded, the sight of hundreds of smiling children in their new shoes served as a powerful reminder of what can be achieved when local government, provincial departments, and the private sector march in the same direction.

"Motho ke motho ka batho"