



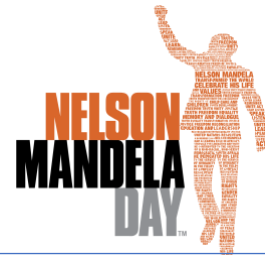
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Transforming Futures: SAQA's Heartfelt Mandela Day 2024 Journey



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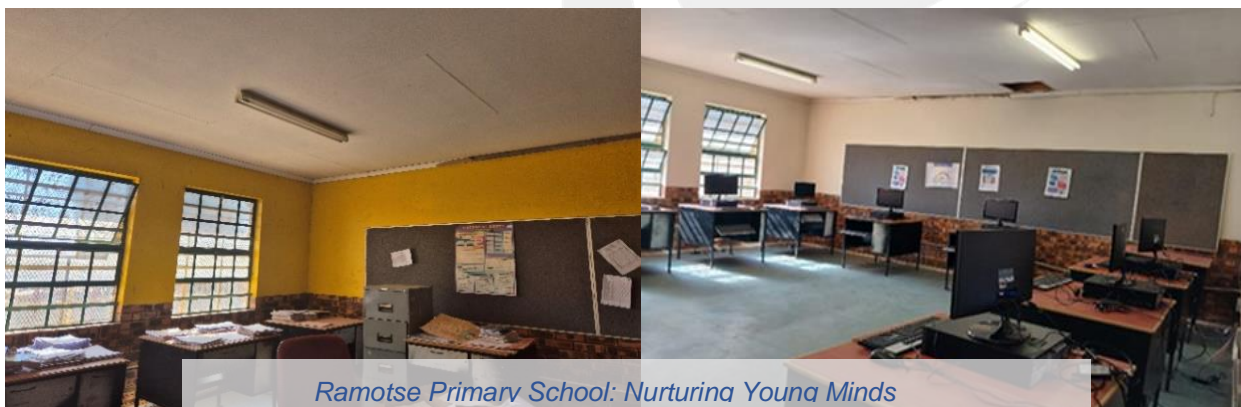
Mandela Day 2024 dawned bright and hopeful, filled with the spirit of giving and community upliftment that Nelson Mandela epitomised. Inspired by Madiba's legacy, SAQA took this opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of learners and educators in Northwest and Hammanskraal. Our team, armed with paintbrushes, books, and boundless enthusiasm, set out to transform Molebatsi Secondary School, Ramotse Primary School, and the Community Library into vibrant hubs of learning and growth.

Molebatsi Secondary School: Painting a Brighter Future

Nestled in the heart of Northwest, Molebatsi Secondary School is a beacon of hope for many young learners. Upon arrival, our team was met with a sea of eager faces—students who, despite the challenges they face, brim with dreams of a brighter future. The school's walls, worn and faded, were a stark contrast to the vibrant energy of its students.

One of the most heartwarming moments was when a group of Grade 11 students joined us in painting their classrooms. Among them was Thabo, a soft-spoken young man with dreams of becoming an engineer. As we painted, Thabo shared his story. His mother, a single parent, works tirelessly to provide for him and his siblings. "This school is my second home," he said, his eyes shining with determination. "Having a clean, colourful space to learn makes a big difference. It shows that someone cares about us."

As the day progressed, the once-dull walls transformed into a kaleidoscope of colours, each stroke a testament to the power of collective effort. By the end of the day, the classrooms were unrecognisable, brimming with life and hope. The gratitude in the eyes of the students and teachers was overwhelming, a reminder that small acts of kindness can indeed make a monumental impact.



Ramotse Primary School: Nurturing Young Minds

Ramotse Primary School in Hammanskraal is a sanctuary for young, impressionable minds. The school, though lacking in resources, is rich in spirit and dedication. Our team arrived with donations of books for Grade R learners and computer desktops. The school principal was very happy to receive the donations, mentioning that the computers will support parents in submitting applications for Grade 1.

The School Governing Body (SGB) and some community members joined the team and painted six Grade 1 classrooms. The SAQA team embraced the task of giving back wholeheartedly, making the teachers and school children happy to see their school transformed for better learning.



Pictures of the Grade R classes before painting



Pictures after the painting by the team

Community Library: A Beacon of Knowledge

The Rock of Ages Living Church, founded in 1996, with the vision of meeting community needs, started a crèche in a small shack in 2012. With the partnership of Abba's Pride, they managed to build an ECD centre now known as the Ramotse Reformed Church. This centre provides a safe space for more than 100 children daily, offering nutritious meals and educational, spiritual, and leadership training. Recently, the centre built a library by selling second-hand clothes and using the proceeds to purchase building materials. Abba's Pride also assisted with the roofing of the library. Since there is no other library in the community, it will serve the entire community in Ramotse. In collaboration with Abba's Pride, a reading initiative started in 2023, helping struggling learners become confident readers. On Mandela Day, SAQA painted the library and provided some furniture.

We were welcomed by Pastor Oupa, who manages the library. His passion for education was palpable. "This library is a lifeline for many," he explained. "It's a place where people come to learn, to dream, and to find solace."

The community members mentioned how the library had been a refuge, a place for their children to get more help from the pastor's work. Together, we painted the walls. By the end of the day, the library was transformed into a vibrant, welcoming space. The community members who visited were deeply moved, expressing their gratitude for what they saw as a new beginning for their beloved library.



Our Mandela Day journey also took us to the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centre in Hammanskraal. This vibrant centre is a sanctuary for the youngest members of the community, providing a safe and nurturing environment where children can begin their educational journey.

Upon arrival, we were greeted by the joyful sounds of laughter and play. The centre's brightly coloured walls and cheerful decorations reflected the boundless energy of the children. The staff, led by the warm and dedicated Ms. Ndlovu, welcomed us with open arms.

One of the most touching moments of our visit was meeting little Lerato, a four-year-old with an infectious smile. Despite coming from a challenging background, Lerato's enthusiasm for learning was evident. "I love coming here," she said, clutching a new picture book we had donated. "I get to play and learn new things every day."

We spent the morning engaging in various activities with the children, from storytelling sessions to interactive games. The highlight was a painting session where the children were encouraged to express themselves through art. Watching their creativity flow freely was a beautiful reminder of the potential that lies within each child.

Ms. Ndlovu shared her story with us, explaining how the centre serves as a crucial support system for many families in the area. "For many of these children, this is their first exposure to structured learning," she said. "We aim to provide them with a strong foundation, not just academically but emotionally and socially as well."

Our team also had the opportunity to sit down with the staff to discuss their needs and challenges. It was clear that while the centre is making a significant impact, there is a continuous need for resources and support. "We do what we can with what we have," Ms. Ndlovu explained. "But every bit of help makes a difference."

Before leaving, we donated educational toys, books, art supplies, and computers to the centre. The gratitude from the staff and the joy on the children's faces were heart-warming. As we waved goodbye, we left with a deep sense of fulfilment and a commitment to continue supporting the ECD Centre's invaluable work.

Our visit to the Early Childhood Development Centre underscored the importance of investing in early education. By providing a nurturing and stimulating environment, we can help plant the seeds of hope and success in the hearts of the youngest learners. Inspired by Madiba's vision, we are dedicated to ensuring that every child can thrive from the very start.

Abba's Pride: Strengthening Community Bonds

Our journey also led us to Abba's Pride, a local church deeply involved in supporting the community through various outreach programmes. Abba's Pride is a non-profit organisation established in 2012. Its vision and mission is to come alongside rural under-resourced communities to bring hope to vulnerable children and their families.

Abba's Pride has a footprint in seven centres across three provinces: Gauteng, North West, and Mpumalanga. They train teachers through in-house training and provide the means for formal qualifications from five Early Childhood Centres (ECD) and provide weekly on-site support. All these efforts go towards making more than 250 learners school ready.

The After-Care programme reaches more than 650 children and youth with homework help and leadership training. A significant part of this programme aims to equip youth to take their leadership skills to a level where they can become role models in their community.

Holistic care is a significant part of their work, where they feed more than 900 children and youth daily and provide psycho-social, leadership, and educational support to children in the communities they serve, many of them orphaned and vulnerable

The pastor, who is the guiding force behind Abba's Pride, shared stories of how the church has become a beacon of hope for many. "We see ourselves as a family, a place where everyone is welcome and cared for," he said. "Our mission is to uplift and support those who are struggling, offering them a chance to rebuild and thrive."

The church runs several initiatives, including food distribution, educational support, and skills training workshops. During our visit, we participated in a food drive, distributing essential supplies to families. The gratitude and relief on their faces were humbling, a stark reminder of the challenges many face daily.

One of the most inspiring stories came from Maria, a single mother of three who found solace and support through Abba's Pride. "This church has been my rock," she said, holding back tears. "They have helped me provide for my children and given me hope when I had none."

Abba's Pride exemplifies the spirit of Ubuntu, the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity. Their work, rooted in compassion and community, aligns perfectly with the values Mandela Day seeks to promote.

Learning the Realities on the Ground

While the day's activities were filled with joy and accomplishment, they also brought to light the stark realities facing education in South Africa. Many schools are under-resourced, and educators are often overburdened. However, the resilience and dedication of the students, teachers, and community members were profoundly inspiring.

We learned that the challenges are many, but so are the opportunities for impact. By coming together and supporting one another, we can help create environments where every child has the chance to thrive. Madiba's legacy teaches us that even the smallest acts of kindness can ripple outwards, creating waves of positive change.

Continuing Madiba's Legacy

As Mandela Day 2024 came to an end, our hearts were full. The smiles of the children, the gratitude of the teachers, and the renewed vibrancy of the schools and library were testaments to the power of collective action and the enduring legacy of Nelson Mandela.

We left Northwest and Hammanskraal with a renewed commitment to making a difference, one act of kindness at a time. Inspired by Madiba, we will continue to honour his memory by contributing to the betterment of our communities, uplifting others, and striving for a brighter future for all. The NQF Information Centre (NIC) will return to the secondary school to offer information regarding the NQF and the opportunities available within the Post School Education and Training (PSET) System.

Conclusion

Mandela Day 2024 is a powerful reminder of the importance of community, compassion, and collective effort. SAQA's initiatives at Molebatsi Secondary School, Ramotse Primary School, the Community Library, the Early Childhood Development Centre, and Abba's Pride exemplified the impact of small, dedicated actions. We left Northwest and Hammanskraal inspired and committed to furthering this work, driven by the spirit of Nelson Mandela.

As we move forward, let us carry the lessons of this day with us. Every act of kindness, no matter how small, contributes to a larger tapestry of positive change. Let us continue to support our

educators, uplift our children, and strengthen our communities, ensuring that the legacy of Madiba endures for generations to come. Through education, compassion, and unity, we can build a brighter future for all.

In celebrating Mandela Day, we celebrate the best of humanity—the ability to connect, to give, and to transform lives. Let us make every day a reflection of these values, honouring Nelson Mandela not just with our words but with our deeds. Together, we can achieve greatness and create a world where everyone can shine.

Names have been changed to ensure confidentiality.

