

## De Beers Group, Free State Education Department and KST unveil a multi-million school in Kroonstad

De Beers Group unveiled a R27 million school in its labour sending area community of Maokenq in Kroonstad, in partnership with the Free State Department of Education and KST on Friday, 2 November 2021.

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The construction of Phuleng Primary School falls under De Beers Voorspoed Mine's Rural School Development Programme, which aims to address infrastructure needs for local schools, leave a legacy for communities, and develop a working partnership with the Department of Education.

De Beers recognises the importance of public-private partnerships and is passionate about forging strategic partnerships that significantly contribute to the socio-economic development of the country. Through this partnership, the De Beers Fund and the Free State Department of Education contributed R17 million and R10 million respectively to the construction of the Primary School set to benefit 842 learners and 22 educators. The infrastructure development and overall project delivery was managed by KST.

Speaking at the handover, Voorspoed Mine Closure Manager, Petrus Jordaan, said: "De Beers fully supports the Department of Education's national agenda to provide basic education to South African children which also includes the Rural School Development Programme. In partnership with KST and the Free State Department of Education, we have made a significant and lasting contribution through implementing infrastructure projects in schools – including the construction of a science laboratories, medical centres, refurbishments of schools and classrooms, while also offering curriculum and financial assistance. We are proud of the legacy we are leaving behind for the communities of the Free State Province."

Phuleng Primary School was established in 1928 and forms part of Voorspoed Mine Social and Labour Plan (SLP 2017 -2021) under the Rural Development Programme. The feasibility studies by KST revealed large

cracks throughout the structures and foundation walls, including poor water drainage. The infrastructure support provided will add great value for both learners and teachers, providing an improved safety learning environment.

The newly built school comprises of a Grade R and Primary section, media centre, nutrition centre, covered walkway and security fencing. The Primary section boasts 20 new classrooms and 17 ablution facilities which cater for learners with disabilities. The Grade R section boasts 3 new classrooms, a play area and ablution facilities, a media centre that consists of a library and computer centre, a nutrition centre that consists of a kitchen and dining centre, and a sports field with change rooms.

Phuleng Primary School Principal, Maryann Mnaba, said: “As the new Principal in the School, I have observed and noted with interest the level of pride and confidence amongst the staff and learners as well as parents about the new school. The facility is well structured and has a well-equipped kitchen to serve hot meals, which is key in the community that experiences some level of poverty and unemployment. Learners and Educators will benefit greatly from these amenities/resources.

I find pleasure in working in a facility that brings development and community building such as this. On behalf of parents, governors, community, and staff we are thankful.

Chairperson of KST Board of Trustees Mankodi Moitse, said: “I convey the warmest gratitude to De Beers for partnering with us as we invest in the young children of Phuleng Primary School and therefore the future of South Africa. Through our District Whole School Development programme, we will encourage our teachers and learners to allow themselves to be nourished by the fruits of this valuable resource. Working together we can improve the quality of education in the Free State province and in South Africa at large.”

Free State Education MEC Dr Tate Makgoe, said: “We wish to express our sincere gratitude to De Beers and KST for choosing to partner with us in delivering quality education to our children. The new state of the art Phuleng Primary School will go a long way in improving learning and teaching in the school. We call on the Mqohaka community to ensure that they safeguard the facility. Through this facility, our learners and teachers are now in safe buildings. The Free State Department of Education remains committed to co-funding models such as this to deliver quality services to communities it serves.”

De Beers has a long-standing relationship with the communities of Mqohaka and Ngwathe Municipalities, which started 14 years ago when Voorspoed Mine began operating in the area. In 2020, De Beers spent R1.1 million in supporting educational projects in the Free State, and an overall of R24 million on educational and training projects across all its operations.

DBCM has also partnered with KST and other various organisations in the District Whole School Development Programme, which has been successfully implemented in schools in the Fezile Dabi and Motheo Districts in the Free State. Currently in its eighth year, over 264 schools have benefited through the programme by receiving infrastructure projects such as new and renovated classrooms, ablution facilities, libraries, media centres, science laboratories and kitchens. Over 619,525 learners and 29,098 educators are being supported through the curriculum development programme.

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