

## **Shoprite supports female community champions**

A community in rural Limpopo is celebrating today (1 June) following a partnership that resulted in a fully resourced creche, better equipped carers and good nutrition for preschoolers.

The partnership between Shoprite and Sweet Home Daycare Centre in Xigalo village, Malumelele followed the call made by President Cyril Ramaphosa in his maiden State of the Nation Address to end poverty by educating poor children in early childhood.

Shoprite has and will in the coming months take hands with women heading up early childhood development (ECD) centres in a multi-pronged initiative that includes training for teachers and managers, structural upgrades and access to nutritional meals.

One of these women is Khomi Maluleke. She founded Sweet Home twenty years ago, but faced many challenges maintaining the school, which provides a home away from home to 109 children under the age of five and employs six people.

Khomi first partnered with Shoprite last September, when Sweet Home was chosen as a beneficiary of the Shoprite Community Network initiative - which meant a once-off R10 000 donation to the school. In line with the retailer's efforts to offer more sustained support to female community champions like her, Sweet Home was selected for a major intervention in which the Shoprite Group drew on the expertise of various implementation partners.

One of these was the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD), through which the retail giant was able to offer teacher training not only to carers at Sweet Home, but also their counterparts at seven other schools in the area.

"The building which housed the school was in a sad state of disrepair and without electricity, so with the help of local contractors we plastered and painted the walls, fixed the roof, installed a ceiling and upgraded the office and kitchen," says Rukea Shaik of CECD. They were also able to complete an additional classroom Khomi and her governing body had started to build.

Fighting hunger is a central pillar of Shoprite's attempts to transform the communities in which it trades. Thus for a year learners at Sweet Home will be provided with a meal from the Lunchbox Fund. A food garden was also planted on the plot to ensure that there is always fresh vegetables available for the children to eat, courtesy of the Group's long-standing partner, Food and Trees for Africa.

"We are very happy and grateful to Shoprite and CECD for what they did for our children. Our children will greatly benefit not only from the food and renovations, but also from the educational toys and equipment provided by them," comments Khomi.

Maluleke Thomas, from the local division of the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO), praised the retailer for the way in which it undertook to bring about change. “My organisation supports development in this area and welcome this initiative. We need more private companies to assist like this because it cannot be left up to government to do absolutely everything,” he explains.

Shoprite is partnering with ECD centres across the country to bring about transformation by enabling the education of the poorest and most vulnerable. To read some of these stories, click [here](#) and [here](#).

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CAPTION: Khomi Maluleke with learners from Sweet Home Daycare Centre in front of the colourful mural, which formed part of extensive renovations to the school building housing the school she established in 1998.