

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE MEC FOR EDUCATION, MS. LINDI MASINA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE OFFICIAL HANDOVER OF CHIEF MANDINDA EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, MGOBODZI, NKOMAZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY

Programme Director and Head: Education, **Mrs Lucy Moyane**

Member of the Mayoral Council of Nkomazi Local Municipality

Traditional Leadership,

Officials from the Department of Education, Public Works Roads and Transport and Sister Departments

Leadership of the ECD Forum

ECD center Managers

ECD Practitioners,

Parents and Caregivers

Representatives from the Media

Distinguished Guests,

Sanibonani

This week has truly been a defining moment in our journey to transform the education landscape of our Province.

On Monday, we had the distinct honour of officially handing over the State-of-the-Art Lucky Dube Secondary School of Performing Arts.

Earlier today, we continued this momentum with the official handover of Silulu Secondary School in Maqhekeza, further confirming our commitment to providing conducive learning and teaching facilities.

And now, this afternoon, we are gathered here in Mgobodzi to fulfil yet another promise, to officially hand over the Chief Mandinda Early Childhood Development Centre.

What a week, what a day and a clear demonstration that working together we can do more.

Indeed, the Executive Council Outreach and Premier's Imbizo is a showcase of a province that is investing purposefully in education, from Early Childhood Development right through to Secondary Schooling, ensuring that no learner is left behind.

It is common knowledge that Chief Mandinda ECD Center was operating from a humble structure.

Though modest in its physical form, it was rich in purpose, commitment, and love.

Within those walls lived the hopes of many young children, nurtured daily by dedicated practitioners who understood that the early years of a child's life are the most critical.

We are delighted that those hopes and dreams have today found a beautiful new home.

It is therefore with great pride and a deep sense of fulfilment that we officially hand over this state-of-the-art Chief Mandinda Early Childhood Development Centre.

This facility stands as a powerful symbol of progress, growth and development and a sign of our commitment to investing in the future of our children.

This is government at work, a caring government in action and a government that places the future of its people at the centre of its priorities.

Here, young minds will be nurtured, imaginations will flourish, friendships will be formed, and the seeds of lifelong learning will be planted.

These are the formative years that shape the leaders of tomorrow, the teachers, doctors, engineers, entrepreneurs, and innovators who will carry our province and our country forward.

At the tabling of the 2026/27 Policy and Budget Speech, I emphasized that the **success of our education system is built on a strong foundation**.

For this reason, we continue to prioritise Early Childhood Development and foundational learning, particularly reading for meaning, language development, and numeracy.

In our province, we are currently providing a subsidy of **R24** per child per day, for **22 days** a month, to over **83 700 children**.

In total, more than **101 000** children are accessing ECD programmes across all four districts.

This demonstrates our firm commitment to expanding access to early learning opportunities.

We are also strengthening the capacity of our practitioners through NQF-aligned qualifications, ensuring that the quality of teaching and learning in the early years continues to improve.

Our target is to train at least **100 practitioners towards NQF Level 4** qualifications, as part of our broader effort to professionalise the ECD sector.

Through initiatives such as the Bana Pele Campaign, we are accelerating the registration of Early Childhood Development Centres.

Since its inception, over **1 200 new Bronze-level centres** have been registered, with ongoing support provided to ensure progression towards full compliance.

We are working closely with municipalities, health services, and development partners to bring unregistered centres into the regulatory framework.

We are also investing in parents and caregivers, recognising that learning does not begin and end in the classroom.

Through structured training programmes, over **200 parents and caregivers** are being empowered with knowledge and skills to support their children's development at home—covering areas such as health, nutrition, play, creativity, and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, we continue to invest in infrastructure and support services.

Since the migration of the ECD function, new centres have been constructed, others maintained, and many supported with essential health and safety resources.

These efforts are complemented by partnerships with organisations such as Gift of the Givers, who have contributed to improving conditions in our centres.

While we celebrate these achievements, we are also mindful of the challenges that remain.

These include infrastructure limitations, accessibility in rural areas, connectivity constraints, and documentation barriers faced by some families.

As a Department, we remain committed to addressing these challenges through innovation, partnerships, and sustained investment.

The handover of the Chief Mandinda Early Childhood Development Centre is more than the unveiling of a beautiful building.

It is a bold statement of intent, a declaration that every child, regardless of where they are born, deserves access to quality early learning opportunities.

It is a celebration of a government that continues to deliver services that improve lives.

It is an investment not only in infrastructure, but in human potential.

As we stand here today, we can already imagine the laughter that will echo through these classrooms, the songs that will be sung, and the lessons that will shape young minds.

In those moments, we are reminded that every investment we make in a child is an investment in our collective future.

To the parents, I say: entrust us with your children, knowing that they are in a safe and nurturing environment.

To the practitioners, continue your noble work with renewed pride and dedication.

We wish to urge the community to protect and cherish this facility as your own.

Together, let us ensure that this centre becomes a beacon of excellence and a foundation for lifelong success.

Today, the future of Mgobodzi is brighter,

Thank you to everyone who made this possible and we are truly certain that the future of Mpumalanga shines with renewed hope.

Ngiyabonga