

## **IMPERIAL LOGISTICS HONOURS MADIBA WITH NEW SCHOOL LIBRARY IN SOWETO**

**Supply chain and logistics leader Imperial Logistics - together with Motus Corporation - celebrated the legacy of Nelson Mandela today by handing over a newly built library and resource centre to the Elsie Ngidi Primary School in Chiawelo, Soweto.**

This project was undertaken through the Imperial and Motus Community Trust, which was established with the aim of advancing education in South Africa by investing in fully resourced libraries for public schools primarily in under-privileged communities in Gauteng. It reflects Imperial Logistics' strategic focus on education as a key pillar of its corporate social investment programme.

*"In the words of our beloved Nelson Mandela, 'No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated'. This long-awaited library will help the children gain a love of reading and learning and provide opportunities for life-long learning for the people of Chiawelo,"* comments Imperial Logistics Group CEO Mohammed Akoojee.

Since 2009, the project has delivered 38 libraries filled with over 200 000 books, reaching about 42 000 learners and employing 82 people, including trained library assistants.

Akoojee explains that the Trust's involvement does not end with the handover of the facility. *"When we first launched this initiative, we found that when we left the schools, the libraries were not maintained. We realised that we had to relook at our model, so we hired people to run the libraries and we saw a difference. Stricter requirements are now set with schools. As our model has matured, so has our understanding of where our intervention is best placed, and how to ensure sustainable benefits for the children and communities."*

*"The Trust works together with the National Department of Basic Education on this project, including selecting beneficiary schools based on the department's recommendations,"* expands Shayda Arbee, the Trust's executive manager. The libraries are open daily until 4pm, as well as on three Saturdays of every month. Each child from Grade 1 to Grade 6 must attend two compulsory reading periods every week. *"The project also sponsors book clubs, book quizzes and spelling competitions. Other initiatives include mathematics, science and technology challenges; as well as spelling and dictionary skill development initiatives,"* Arbee continues.

The Trust employs two qualified teachers to upskill educators on how to use the resource centres and the equipment. These employees have a keen understanding of the challenges facing the project, as well as the specific management and teacher challenges facing the schools. Pleasingly, teacher motivation is increasing as a result of this intervention, and the presence of our teachers has helped us to gain an understanding of the level of teaching delivered, how the equipment is used and where there is an opportunity to improve.

The broader spin-off of the project is the jobs that it creates. In addition to teachers, library assistants are sourced from the local communities. They are unemployed people who have completed matric and are provided with in-house training by the Trust. These assistants ultimately become role models to visitors in the library - able to teach learners to read and provide them with opportunities in improving their future employment prospects.

Other jobs created by the project include the covering of the library books by university students, a service provider that does all the signage for the libraries and a builder, whose business has grown substantially since the initiative's inception.

As part of the project, children's reading levels are tested every two years. These assessments at beneficiary schools have shown that the compulsory reading programmes and related activities are contributing to better than average reading, comprehension and numeracy scores.

*"The Imperial and Motus Community Trust is delighted to be able to give our newest library and resource centre to the Elsie Ngidi Primary School and the Chiawelo community; to have this opportunity to pay tribute to the memory of Madiba and to empower our youth, the future of our nation," Akoojee concludes.*