

MTN Foundation donates R6m in multimedia centres to special needs schools

Schools for Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) in KwaZulu-Natal were last week the recipients of three customised multimedia centres, worth R6m, courtesy MTN SA and the Department of Basic Education. The three schools are Day Dawn Special School, S Dass Special School and VN Naik Special School.



Mbali Frazer, MEC for Education in KwaZulu-Natal and Arthur Mukhuvha, MTN SA Foundation General Manager

While students across South Africa continue to benefit from the MTN Foundation's multimedia centres, e-learning platform, and other specialised digital support, load shedding, battery theft and vandalism takes its toll on network connectivity, holding learners back from accessing these opportunities.

“The handover of the multimedia centres is the next step in the MTN Foundation’s support of the communities of KwaZulu-Natal and eThekweni at large. While our main focus remains to help increase access to digital learning and improve academic performance, this is not possible without reliable access to connectivity and, through it, to data and information,” says Arthur Mukhuvha, general manager at the MTN SA Foundation.

“During periods when load shedding is at stages 1 or 2, which allows for MTN backup batteries to recharge, one might expect that access to the network would continue, but criminals are still vandalising towers and stealing batteries, which means that students can’t fully utilise the multimedia centres or e-learning platforms even when the power is on,” continues Mukhuvha.

Community support necessary to stop theft

“We’re working on engaging several critical role-players to collaborate on matters related to the impact of any extended outages and actively seeking alternative solutions to ensure connectivity during load shedding, but criminal activity continues. Community support and vigilance is desperately needed,” says Mukhuvha.

KwaZulu-Natal saw 536 sites vandalised between Jan 2022 to Feb 2023 - 203 of these were battery theft incidents. Copper cables, diesel, generator batteries, alternators and even whole generators are being stolen. While rural remote areas are hit the most, the trends show that no area is safe, with sites in the eThekweni metro also affected.



Learners experiencing the new digital centre provided by MTN SA

Despite these challenges, MTN is making solid progress against its broader R1bn network resilience plans to reinforce the strength of the network to withstand the onslaught of crime affecting customers both in KZN and across the county. These investments are already showing success and will enable significant improvement to network availability in the second half of the year, as more of the work rolls out.

“At the moment nothing is more important than safeguarding our network as an increasing number of South Africans turn to mobile internet for work, for business, education, staying connected to loved ones, and for accessing emergency services,” says Mukhuvha.

“People who are connected are ultimately empowered. Children who are connected are uplifted. To this end, MTN remains committed to doing all it can to contribute meaningfully to helping alleviate the adverse impact of battery

theft, vandalism and load shedding on the nation, it’s people and the economy, and we call on all South Africans to remain vigilant for any suspicious acts.

“Remember, if you see something, report it by contacting 086 101 1721 or anonymous@tipoffs.com,” concludes Mukhuvha.

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