

MTHONTSI LODGE LAUNCH PUTS RAYMOND MHLABA ON THE EASTERN CAPE'S TOURISM MAP, CREATING JOBS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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HON MAYOR,
Cllr Nomhle Sango

A MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE MAYOR: CLLR. NOMHLE SANGO

To the residents of Raymond Mhlaba,

I greet you with a full heart as we reflect on a quarter that has tested our resolve, honored our history, and reaffirmed why I chose a life of public service. When I stood before our youth at the Golf Course Community Hall to mark fifty years since June 1976, I asked them to travel back with me to those streets in Soweto, to children who marched not because it was safe but because it was right. I said it then, and I say it again to every reader of this newsletter: we owe those young people more than our gratitude.

We owe them our action. That is why I have made it my mission this quarter to ensure that our government does not simply speak to our people from a podium but walks into their communities, their schools, and their homes.

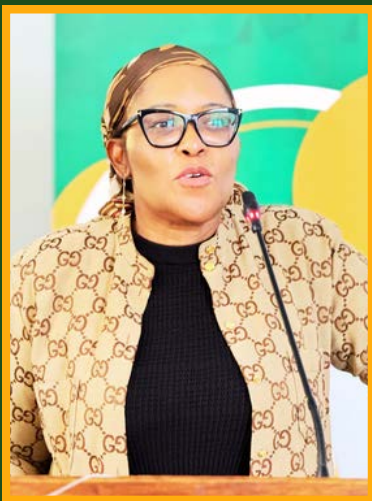
That is what it meant to me to stand in the market at the Bedford SMME Day and buy from our own local vendors with my own hands. That is what it meant to sit with the elders of KwaMaqoma when a system failure threatened their next meal and to look them in the eye and say, "We see you, and we will not turn away." Not every achievement happens from the podium. Sometimes it is found in the quiet moments of service—like watching the children of Thubalethu High School switch on a computer for the first time, knowing that it has opened for them a door that can never be closed.

The same commitment to building opportunities for our people was reflected in the successful launch of the uMthontsi Lodge and Conference Centre Project, a milestone that signals a new chapter for tourism and local economic development in Raymond Mhlaba. This investment has the potential to unlock tourism opportunities, attract visitors and conferences, stimulate local businesses, create jobs, and position our municipality as a destination of choice. It demonstrates what can be achieved through strong partnerships and a shared vision for inclusive economic growth, ensuring that tourism becomes a catalyst for sustainable development and improved livelihoods across our municipality.

I am mindful that a mayor's role is not to take credit for these moments but to ensure they keep happening, again and again, in every ward, for every resident. The stories in the pages that follow are not mine alone. They belong to Gift of the Givers, Telkom, Enel Green Power, the Department of Tourism, Amathole District Municipality, our traditional leadership, our municipal officials and, above all, to you, the residents who trust us to serve you honestly.

As we look ahead to the 2026 Local Government Elections, I ask you to remain an active participant in the democracy we inherited at such great cost. Register. Vote. Hold us accountable. That is how we honour the past, strengthen the present, and build a prosperous future together. With gratitude and continued commitment,

Cllr Nomhle Sango,
Hon Mayor,
Raymond Mhlaba Municipality



MUNICIPAL MANAGER,
Ms Unathi Malinzi

Chief Editor's Summary:

This edition of the Umhlali newsletter covers the second quarter of 2026, a period bookended by two milestones: the launch of the Mthontsi Lodge and Conference Centre on 2 July and the 50th anniversary commemorations of the 1976 Youth Uprisings on 29 June. Between these two events lies a dense record of service delivery, partnership, and civic activity across all 23 wards of Raymond Mhlaba, summarised below by theme.

Tourism and Economic Development: The Mthontsi Lodge launch drew the Deputy Minister of Tourism, the Premier of the Eastern Cape, and the Amathole District Executive Mayor, positioning the project as a flagship of integrated planning between the three spheres of government.

On the SMME front, the Bedford Town Hall hosted the Annual SMME and Cooperative Day in partnership with Enel Green Power, connecting local entrepreneurs with SCM-RMLM, DEDEAT, Mpofu Training Centre, and Nxuba Wind Farm. Separately, equipment handovers to the Khanya Nursery Cooperative, Alice Massive Cooperative, and Dunedin Shearing Shed advanced the municipality's local economic development programme.

Youth and Civic Participation: The Youth Month commemoration at the Golf Course Community Hall combined historical reflection with practical programming from REMDA, the NYDA, EC DEDEAT, and the IEC, the latter using the platform to register young voters ahead of the 2026 Local Government Elections. A parallel Youth Career and Services Expo at Sheshegu Community Hall, held in partnership with the Deputy Minister of Social Development, connected youth to SASSA, the NDA, and the Department of Social Development's services.

Sport and Recreation: The Mayor's Cup Tournament concluded at the University of Fort Hare Sports Ground, with results recorded across six codes: boxing (Bhofolo Boxing Club, Ward 20), cricket (Perksdale Cricket Club, Ward 1), football (Bedford United FC, Ward 23), kho-kho (Mpolweni Indigenous Games Club, Ward 3), netball (Daisies Netball Club, Ward 20), and rugby (Young Bears Rugby Club, Ward 17).

Service Delivery Partnerships: Three distinct partnerships are documented this quarter: Gift of the Givers and donor Folivex handed over 20 medical beds to Adelaide and Bedford Hospitals; Telkom and the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies opened a 40-computer laboratory at Thubalethu High School; and a Multi-Service On-Wheel Programme, run with SASSA and provincial departments, delivered services directly to Wards 4 and 9.

Mayoral Intervention: Following a SASSA system failure that disrupted May grant payments, the municipality coordinated an emergency food-parcel handover to 20 households in KwaMaqoma.

Full accounts of each story, including direct quotes from officials and community members, appear on the pages that follow.

Municipal Manager,
Ms Unathi Malinzi

MTHONTSI LODGE LAUNCH PUTS RAYMOND MHLABA ON THE EASTERN CAPE'S TOURISM MAP, CREATING JOBS FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Mthontsi Lodge and Conference Center | 2 July 2026

The Raymond Mhlaba Municipality celebrated a major milestone in its tourism development agenda on the 2nd of July 2026, at the official launch of the Mthontsi Lodge Project, a state-of-the-art lodge and conference facility set to reposition the region on the Eastern Cape's tourism map. The launch drew a distinguished gathering of national, provincial, and local leadership, underlining the strategic significance of the project to the region's economic and tourism growth.

The event was attended by the **Deputy Minister of Tourism, Hon. Makhotso Soty;** the **Premier of the Eastern Cape, Hon. Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane;** the **Eastern Cape MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Hon. Nonkqubela Pieters;** the **Amathole District Executive Mayor, Cllr Anele Ntsangani;** and councillors of the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, together with community members, traditional leadership, industry stakeholders, and residents of the area and surroundings.

Serving as Acting Mayor for the occasion, Cllr Zingiswa Rasmeni welcomed attendees and reflected on the long and often challenging journey undertaken to bring the project to fruition, paying tribute to the collaborative spirit that carried it from concept to completion.

Premier Mabuyane: Integration Is the Key to Delivery

In his address, Premier Mabuyane placed strong emphasis on the importance of integration in ensuring that development projects of this scale are carried through to full completion. He noted that infrastructure and tourism investments can only deliver their intended value to communities when government departments, municipalities, traditional structures, and private partners work in a coordinated and aligned manner from inception through to operation. The Premier called on all spheres of government to draw lessons from the Mthontsi Lodge Project as a model of integrated planning and delivery.

Deputy Minister Soty: Redefining Tourism for a New Era

Delivering the keynote address, Deputy Minister Soty spoke to the critical role tourism plays in driving inclusive economic growth, job creation, and rural development in South Africa. She challenged attendees to move beyond conventional notions of the sector and to recognise tourism as a vehicle for community empowerment, heritage preservation, and sustainable local economic participation.





The Deputy Minister commended the vision behind the Mthontsi Lodge Project and reaffirmed the National Department of Tourism's continued support for initiatives that unlock the tourism potential of rural and previously underdeveloped areas.

Located in the Raymond Mhlaba area, the Mthontsi Lodge is a state-of-the-art facility poised to enhance the region's offerings for both domestic and international visitors. The development is expected to contribute meaningfully to job creation, skills development, and enterprise opportunities for surrounding communities, positioning Raymond Mhlaba as an emerging destination on the Eastern Cape's tourism map.

"The success of this project is the result of collaboration between all three spheres of government. We appreciate the Office of the Premier for supporting the acquisition of this land, which was later transferred to the Amathole District Municipality. This is a catalytic investment that will unlock tourism and economic opportunities for our communities," said Ntsangani while making closing remarks.

Youth Month

FIFTY YEARS AFTER 1976, RAYMOND MHLABA CALLS ON YOUTH TO VOTE, SKILL UP AND LEAD CHANGE

Golf Course Community Hall, KwaMaqoma | 29 June 2026



The Raymond Mhlaba Municipality brought together the youth of KwaMaqoma and surrounding communities at the Golf Course Community Hall for a landmark Youth Month Celebration that bore the weight of history and held the promise of a new generation. Held under the theme "Empowering Young People for Active Citizenship, Skills Development and Democratic Participation", the event formed part of the national commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Youth Uprisings.



A dedicated session on youth opportunities featured presentations from the Raymond Mhlaba Economic Development Agency (REMDA), the municipality's Local Economic Development (LED) unit, the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), and the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (EC DEDEAT), outlining pathways for skills acquisition, entrepreneurship and economic participation available to young people in the region. The Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) also addressed attendees, underscoring the



importance of youth participation in the upcoming 2026 Local Government Elections and urging young South Africans to register, vote, and engage actively in democratic processes.

Mayor Sango: "They Marched Because It Was Right"

The keynote address by Hon. Mayor Cllr Nomhle Sango was the defining moment of the celebration. Mayor Sango invited those present to travel back fifty years, to the streets of Soweto on the morning of 16 June 1976, painting a picture of children armed with nothing but placards and conviction, marching against a system that sought to diminish their minds by imposing Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

"They did not march because it was safe. They marched because it was right."

She paid particular homage to the young women of 1976, often overlooked in popular narratives, who marched alongside their brothers, who were detained, who were silenced, and who nonetheless refused to be erased from the story of liberation.

"We owe them not just our gratitude, but our action."

Turning her attention to the youth before her, Mayor Sango acknowledged the hardships facing South Africa's young people today, including unemployment, inadequate access to quality education, substance abuse, and the slow pace of economic transformation, but rejected despair. She called on the youth of Raymond Mhlaba to embrace active citizenship not as a seasonal obligation but as a daily practice, challenging them to register to vote in the 2026 Local Government Elections and reminding them that the ballot remains the most direct instrument of change available to them.

As the program drew to a close, attendees were encouraged to make full use of the opportunities presented on the day.

Sport and Recreation

MAYOR'S CUP 2026: TWENTY-THREE WARDS, FIVE SPORTING CODES, ONE WEEKEND OF CHAMPIONS

University of Fort Hare Sports Ground, eDikeni | 28 June 2026

The Raymond Mhlaba Municipality's Mayor's Cup Tournament concluded at the University of Fort Hare Sports Ground in eDikeni, with boxing, cricket, football, kho-kho, netball, and rugby producing outstanding performances from clubs representing all 23 wards of the municipality.



The tournament one of the municipality's most anticipated annual sporting events, reflected its ongoing commitment to grassroots sport development and community cohesion. Prize money totaling hundreds of thousands of rands was distributed across disciplines, with floating trophies and gold medals awarded to the champions in each major code.

Boxing

Bhofolo Boxing Club (Ward 20) claimed gold and the top prize of R13,000, edging out Alice Boxing Club (Ward 6), which took silver and R8,000. Bayethe Boxing Club (Ward 3) secured bronze and R6,000, while Seymour Boxing Club (Ward 4) placed fourth for R4,000.

Cricket

Perksdale Cricket Club (Ward 1) claimed the floating trophy, gold medals, and R13,000. Alice Cricket Club (Ward 2) earned silver and R8,000, while Middeldrift Cricket Club (Ward 16) took bronze and R6,000.

Football

Football once again drew some of the largest crowds of the tournament. Bedford United Football Club (Ward 23) lifted the floating trophy and gold medals after a commanding campaign, taking home R13,000. Balfour United Football Club (Ward 9) were runners-up with silver and R8,000. Shooting Stars Football Club (Ward 10) claimed bronze, worth R6,000, while TUBS Football Club (Ward 2) finished fourth, worth R4,000.

Kho-Kho

The kho-kho category celebrated the heritage of indigenous games with a tightly contested final. Mpolweni Indigenous Games Club (Ward 3) claimed top honors and gold medals, while Balfour Indigenous Games Club (Ward 9) took silver as runners-up. Both clubs will receive sporting equipment in the next financial year.

Netball

Daisies Netball Club (Ward 20) triumphed with the floating trophy, gold medals, and R13,000 in prize money. Tshisa Netball Club (Ward 19) was crowned runners-up with silver and R8,000, while Hurricanes Netball Club (Ward 20) secured third place with bronze and R6,000. Eagles Netball Club (Ward 16) rounded off the top four with R4,000.

Rugby

Rugby produced a gripping finish to the tournament. Young Bears Rugby Club (Ward 17) took the floating trophy, gold medals, and R13,000 after a strong showing throughout the competition. Newtown Wolves Rugby Club (Ward 8) claimed silver and R8,000 as runners-up, while Sunrise Rugby Club (Ward 1) earned bronze and R6,000. Mighty Vultures Rugby Club (Ward 12) received R4,000 for their fourth-place finish.



The 2026 Mayor's Cup Tournament once again demonstrated the depth of sporting talent within the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, serving as a vital platform for community engagement, youth development, and the promotion of both mainstream and indigenous sporting codes. The municipality congratulates all participating clubs, coaches, officials, and supporters who helped make this year's tournament a resounding success.

Local Economic Development

EQUIPMENT HANDOVER BOOSTS COMMUNITY PROJECTS ACROSS RAYMOND MHLABA

#Siphushi_Local_Economy| Raymond Mhlaba Municipality

The Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, under the leadership of Hon. Mayor Cllr Nomhle Sango, has conducted a series of equipment handovers to community-based projects across the municipal area, as part of its ongoing commitment to promoting sustainable livelihoods and local economic development.

The handovers are part of the municipality's broader Local Economic Development (LED) program, which seeks to strengthen community-based projects by providing agricultural production inputs and equipment. The initiative is designed to support local development projects, enhance community participation, and create meaningful opportunities for economic empowerment within the municipality's wards.

About the Initiative

Through this program, the municipality is providing essential resources to selected community projects to strengthen their operational capacity and improve productivity. The support includes agricultural equipment and inputs for crop production. This intervention reflects the municipality's continued efforts to invest directly in grassroots economic activity, ensuring that community-based projects are equipped with the tools and resources required to grow, sustain their operations, and contribute meaningfully to job creation and food security in the region.

Project Name	Date
Khanya Nursery Cooperative	Jun 2, 2026
Alice Massive Cooperative	Jun 2, 2026
Dunedin Shearing Shed (Kolomane)	Jun 26, 2026



Each of these projects was identified for support based on its contribution to local agricultural production and its potential to uplift surrounding communities through job creation and skills development.

A Continued Commitment to Local Economic Growth

The Raymond Mhlaba Municipality has reiterated its dedication to supporting sustainable, community-driven economic initiatives that directly address residents' needs. By equipping cooperatives and community projects with the necessary tools and livestock, the municipality aims to build long-term capacity within the local economy rather than offer short-term relief. Residents and stakeholders are encouraged to continue engaging with the municipality's development programs and to follow the municipality's official platforms for updates on future initiatives under the Siphushi Local Economy campaign.

Youth Month 2026

SHEHEGU EXPO BRINGS JOBS, GRANTS, AND SERVICES DIRECTLY TO RAYMOND MHLABA'S YOUTH

Sheshegu Community Hall, eDikeni | 4 June 2026

The Sheshegu Community Hall in eDikeni buzzed with energy and opportunity as the Deputy Minister of Social Development, Hon. Ganief Hendricks, joined Raymond Mhlaba Municipality's Hon. Mayor, Cllr Nomhle Sango, to host the Youth Career and Services Expo with Stakeholders, a landmark initiative aimed at connecting young people in Raymond Mhlaba with life-changing services and career prospects. The programme drew a strong turnout from youth across the eDikeni area, alongside representatives from multiple government departments, community sectors, and private organisations, all converging under one roof to make services accessible to those who need them most.

A Statement of Collective Commitment

Opening the proceedings, Mayor Sango set an inclusive and energised tone as she welcomed attendees to the expo.

"On behalf of the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, it is my honor and delight to welcome each of you to this important occasion. This expo is not just an event; it is a statement of our collective commitment to the youth of this municipality. We believe in your potential, and today, we bring services, opportunities, and support directly to your doorstep. You are seen, you are valued, and you belong here."



Deputy Minister Hendricks delivered the keynote address, underscoring the national government's resolve to tackle youth unemployment and social exclusion head-on.

"The youth of South Africa are not a problem to be solved; they are the solution we have been waiting for. Through initiatives like this expo, we are breaking down the barriers that have kept too many of our young people from accessing the services and opportunities that are rightfully theirs. Government cannot work in isolation; it is through partnerships with municipalities, the private sector, and communities that we truly build a caring society together."

The expo lived up to its promise of accessibility, with a diverse array of government departments and private-sector entities setting up information and service points across the hall. Attendees engaged with representatives from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), the National Development Agency (NDA), the Department of Social Development, and a host of other public and private-sector partners. Services on offer included social grants, career guidance and employment opportunities, skills development programmes, health and wellness information, youth entrepreneurship support, and community development resources, ensuring attendees left equipped with practical assistance and guidance.

Bringing the day's proceedings to a close, Mayor Sango expressed sincere appreciation to the Deputy Minister and all participating stakeholders on behalf of the municipality. The expo forms part of a broader government drive to bring integrated services directly to communities, in line with the national commitment to building a caring society.

Local Economic Development

BEDFORD SMME DAY OPENS DOORS TO FUNDING, MARKETS, AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS

Bedford Town Hall | 24 June 2026•

For many small business owners and cooperative members, the biggest barrier to growth has never been a lack of ambition. There has been a lack of access to funding, markets, the right people, and information that can unlock real opportunity. That barrier was deliberately addressed in Raymond Mhlaba this week, with effects that could be felt for years to come. The Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, in partnership with Enel Green Power, hosted the Annual SMME and Cooperative Day at the Bedford Town Hall. This session functioned less as a ceremony and more as a lifeline, connecting local entrepreneurs with the tools, networks, and resources they need to survive and scale.



A Mirror of Local Potential

Before the speeches began, the open market told its own story. Stalls lined the hall as local business owners and cooperative members put their products and services on display, drawing the attention of officials, agencies, and fellow community members alike. The Hon. Mayor, Cllr Nomhle Sango, did not merely observe; she moved through the market and made purchases directly from local vendors, a gesture that carried real symbolic and practical weight. When the highest office in the municipality chooses to spend at a local stall, it sends an unambiguous message: local products have value, and local businesses deserve support from the top down.

The Mayor's Words and What They Mean for Business Owners

Mayor Sango's keynote address was direct, personal, and deeply committed.

"This day is not just an event; it is a declaration that Raymond Mhlaba Municipality stands firmly behind its people and their dreams. Our SMMEs and cooperatives are the heartbeat of our local economy, and it is our responsibility as government to open doors, connect opportunities, and ensure that no entrepreneur walks this journey alone. Together, we are building a community that thrives from within."

For local business owners, these were not empty words. They represent a municipal commitment that procurement, partnerships, and public investment should flow into local hands, a signal that entrepreneurs who attended now have a municipal leadership that sees them, backs them, and intends to act.

Real Opportunities, Real Money, Real Support

The presentations segment was where impact became concrete, with agencies and departments unpacking what they can offer SMMEs and cooperatives right now: SCM-RMLM opened the door to municipal supply chain opportunities, meaning local businesses can tender and supply directly to their own municipality. DEDEAT outlined provincial economic development support, a critical channel for businesses seeking government-backed growth. The Mpofu Training Centre offered skills development and capacity building, the kind of practical training that turns a good idea into a viable business. Nxuba Wind Farm highlighted local procurement commitments, meaning a major energy project operating in the area is actively looking to spend money with local businesses. The Department of Agriculture addressed cooperative development and agricultural support, a sector with immense untapped potential in the region.



At the same time, Organic & Natural demonstrated what private-sector partnerships can look like in practice.

Each of these represents a door that local businesses can now walk through, many of which they may not have known existed before today.

Why This Matters Beyond the Day Itself

Sessions like this do not just inform, they transform. Local economies do not grow by accident; they grow when government, business, and communities deliberately create the conditions for opportunity to connect with ambition. That is exactly what happened in Bedford this week.



Service Delivery Partnerships

PATIENTS FIRST: GIFT OF THE GIVERS AND RAYMOND MHLABA MUNICIPALITY RESTORE DIGNITY TO ADELAIDE AND BEDFORD HOSPITALS

May 2026 · Adelaide Hospital & Bedford Hospital



In a region where public healthcare facilities have long faced the burden of under-resourcing, a meaningful act of partnership brought renewed hope to patients and staff at Adelaide and Bedford Hospitals. Raymond Mhlaba Municipality joined humanitarian organisation Gift of the Givers and donor Folivex for the handover of 20 medical beds and blankets, 14 to Adelaide Hospital and 6 to Bedford Hospital, restoring a basic but essential element of patient dignity and care.

The donation came in direct response to requests made by both hospitals, which had identified an urgent shortage of functional beds. Gift of the Givers CEO Dr. Sulaiman noted that Folivex, a longstanding partner of the organization, donated 100 beds to the foundation, enabling this distribution. Beyond the beds, Gift of the Givers teams also conducted repairs and upgrades within some wards, fixing lighting and addressing deteriorating conditions to create safer, more dignified environments for patients and healthcare workers alike.



"It is our responsibility as the municipality to ensure that residents live in a clean, safe, and caring environment. — Acting Mayor for the day, Cllr Elton Bantam"



Cllr Bantam praised the hospital management and boards who did not sit still and accept the status quo, but proactively sought solutions, an act of leadership that went well beyond their formal mandate. District Manager Ms. N. Makeleni expressed deep gratitude, acknowledging that the support extended to these institutions is an investment in the community itself. The donation reflects what is achievable when local government, humanitarian organizations, and private donors align around a shared commitment to community wellbeing.

Service Delivery Partnerships

40 COMPUTERS, INFINITE POSSIBILITIES: TELKOM AND RAYMOND MHLABA MUNICIPALITY TRANSFORM LEARNING AT THUBALETHU HIGH SCHOOL

15 May 2026 · Thubalethu High School, KwaMaqoma

For the learners of Thubalethu High School in KwaMaqoma, International Telecommunication Day 2026 will be remembered as the day the digital world arrived at their school. In a landmark collaboration, Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, Deputy Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies Hon. Mondli Gungubele, and telecommunications giant Telkom came together to officially open a fully equipped computer laboratory, furnished with 40 donated computers, a moment that many in the school community described as life-changing.

The day began with a meaningful and culturally significant gesture: a formal visit to Chief Siseko Maqoma of the Maqoma Royal Household. This deliberate act of respect grounded the entire programme in the community's heritage and identity, affirming a philosophy of development that builds on existing community structures rather than bypassing them. The lineage of the great Xhosa warrior and statesman, Jongumsobomvu Maqoma, carries a legacy of resilience and leadership, a fitting foundation for a programme centred on digital empowerment.

"Initiatives like these restore our faith in what is possible when we come together. — Mayor Sango"

Deputy Minister Gungubele delivered a keynote that drew a direct line between South Africa's 30-year constitutional democracy and the kind of empowerment this laboratory represents. The right to education, to dignity, and to equal access to opportunity, guaranteed in the Constitution, are made real, in part, through investments like this one.

For learners who had previously navigated their academic journey without consistent access to computers, the new laboratory is transformative. It unlocks practical experience in computer applications technology and information technology, access to digital research tools and university application platforms, and the digital fluency the 21st-century workplace demands. Beyond the classroom, learners who gain computer literacy often become informal digital ambassadors in their families and communities, multiplying the impact of this single act of investment many times over.

Service Delivery Partnerships

GOVERNMENT AT YOUR DOORSTEP: RAYMOND MHLABA MUNICIPALITY BRINGS ESSENTIAL SERVICES DIRECTLY TO RURAL COMMUNITIES

21 May 2026 · Seymour

For residents of rural wards in Raymond Mhlaba, accessing government services has long meant navigating long distances, transport costs, and logistical barriers that many cannot afford. On 21 May 2026, that changed, at least for the day, when the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, in partnership with SASSA and a coalition of provincial and national departments, hosted a Multi-Service On-Wheel Programme that brought essential government services directly to communities in Wards 4 and 9.

The programme assembled an impressive array of participating entities under one roof: the Eastern Cape Departments of Social Development, Transport, and Labor; the Amathole District Municipality; First National Bank; the Independent Electoral Commission; and Raymond Mhlaba Municipality itself, offering Free Basic Service Registration to qualifying residents. The result was a one-stop service point that eliminated the barriers of distance and cost that routinely stand between rural residents and their rights.

"Our communities in rural areas should never have to choose between accessing their rights and meeting the daily demands of survival. — Mayor Sango"

Residents from both wards turned out in significant numbers to register for social grants, obtain employment documentation, update voter registrations, and access banking facilities, all without leaving their immediate area. The high turnout reflected both the depth of need and the genuine appreciation communities felt for an initiative that treated their time, circumstances, and dignity with respect.

Raymond Mhlaba Municipality has signalled its intention to expand the Multi-Service On-Wheel model across more wards, using this programme as a blueprint for integrated, community-centred service delivery.



Enviromental Affairs

FARMING WITH THE FUTURE IN MIND: RAYMOND MHLABA EQUIPS COMMUNITIES FOR CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

May 2026 · Phandulwazi Agricultural High School, eDikeni

For communities in Raymond Mhlaba where livelihoods depend on the land, climate change is not a distant concern; it is an immediate and growing threat. Prolonged dry spells, unpredictable frost, flash flooding, and extreme heat are already reshaping the agricultural calendar and threatening food security across the municipality. In response, Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, in partnership with the Eastern Cape Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and Environment (DFFE), hosted a Climate Smart Agriculture Awareness Programme at Phandulwazi Agricultural High School in eDikeni, equipping farmers, learners, and community stakeholders with the practical knowledge to adapt and thrive.

Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) is an integrated farming approach that seeks to sustainably increase productivity, build resilience to climate change, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The programme equipped participants with hands-on insights into identifying crops and planting seasons aligned with shifting climate patterns; water-efficient irrigation methods to manage increasing droughts; soil health management practices; indigenous and drought-resistant crop alternatives; and conservation farming techniques that reduce erosion and retain moisture.

"Knowledge shared today becomes the harvest of tomorrow."

In a municipality where a significant portion of residents depends on subsistence and small-scale farming, this awareness initiative is not simply educational; it is a lifeline. By taking this programme directly into schools and communities, Raymond Mhlaba Municipality demonstrates its commitment to ensuring that no resident is left behind in understanding and navigating the realities of a changing environment. The municipality encourages all farmers, smallholders, and community members to participate in future climate-smart agriculture engagements



Youth Empowerment

OPENING DOORS TO THE FUTURE: RAYMOND MHLABA YOUTH DISCOVER THE WORLD OF CODING AND ROBOTICS

21 March 2026 · Gcato Senior Secondary School, Binfieldville, eDikeni

The learners at Gcato Senior Secondary School in Binfieldville experienced a day unlike any other, one that challenged them to see themselves not merely as learners but as future engineers, programmers, and innovators. Raymond Mhlaba Municipality, in partnership with the HHH Seed of Hope Foundation, hosted an impactful Coding and Robotics Career Day directly at their school, under the leadership of Hon. Mayor Cllr Nomhle Sango, and the Foundation Director, Ms Ntombothando Ndzala.

The programme was far more than a skills session. It was a deliberate intervention into the social challenges facing youth in Raymond Mhlaba, offering learners a compelling reason to dream bigger, stay focused, and see themselves as agents of change.

"Coding and robotics are no longer subjects for a privileged few; they are essential tools that every young person in Raymond Mhlaba must have access to." Said Mayor Sango while making a keynote address. The University of Fort Hare and Lovedale College both participated, opening a direct window for learners into the post-school academic and career pathways available to them in science, technology, and innovation. For many of the young people in that hall, the day planted a seed of possibility that no curriculum alone could have sown. Raymond Mhlaba Municipality remains committed to supporting initiatives that place youth at the forefront of community development, because a skilled and empowered generation is the surest foundation for a thriving municipality.



Youth Empowerment

RURAL CHILDREN STEP INTO THE DIGITAL AGE: RAYMOND MHLABA BACKS THE LAUNCH OF AN INNOVATION CODING AND ROBOTICS CENTER

24 April 2026 · Amathole West District Offices, KwaMaqoma

In a milestone moment at the Amathole West District Education Offices in KwaMaqoma, the municipality joined forces with Likhwezi Consultants and the Eastern Cape Department of Education to officially launch an innovation coding and robotics centre, a bold declaration that the children of rural South Africa belong in the digital future.

The occasion drew dignitaries from across government and civil society, united by a shared conviction: that geography must no longer determine destiny. Acting Mayor for the Day, Cllr Sithembele Zuka grounded the celebration in South Africa's liberation history, reminding those gathered that the heroes of the past paid the ultimate price so that every child from a township, village, or rural district could one day hold knowledge as their most powerful weapon.

"We cannot continue to teach tomorrow's children with yesterday's methods. This center is a correction; it is us saying, 'We see where the world is going, and we are choosing to go there with our children.' — MEC Fundile Gade"

Public Protector Adv Nompilo Kholeka Gcaleka added urgency to the occasion, reminding the gathering that robotics and artificial intelligence are not the future; they are the present. The question, she said, is not whether our children will encounter this world, but whether they will be equipped to lead it.

For the child growing up far from fibre-optic cables and smart cities, this centre is an open door. It is an opportunity to write code in a language the global economy understands, to build a robot, and to realise, with their own hands, that technology is not a mystery reserved for the privileged but a skill that can be learned, mastered, and wielded by anyone willing to engage with it. Coding is the new literacy. Robotics is the new arithmetic. And Raymond Mhlaba's children are ready.



Mayor's Intervention

WHEN THE SYSTEM FAILED, THE MAYOR SHOWED UP: FOOD RELIEF REACHES KWAMAQOMA'S ELDERS

28 April 2026 · KwaMaqoma

When a technical failure at SASSA disrupted May grant payments, leaving many elderly residents without access to their only source of income, the Raymond Mhlaba Municipality did not wait. Hon Mayor Cllr Nomhle Sango, joined by Cllr Nomonde Geza of the Amathole District Municipality, personally led a food-parcel handover initiative that reached 20 of the most vulnerable households in KwaMaqoma, demonstrating what servant leadership looks like in moments of crisis.

For the older persons who depend entirely on their social grants for food, medication, and daily survival, the payment disruption was not a bureaucratic inconvenience; it was a threat to their dignity and well-being. The municipality moved swiftly to bridge that gap.

"Social grants are not merely a monthly deposit; they are a lifeline. We will not turn a blind eye when our community is in distress." Mayor Sango

The scenes at the handover were deeply moving. One elderly recipient, visibly overwhelmed with emotion, addressed the Mayor directly: 'God bless you, Mama. We did not know where our next meal would come from, and you came.' Her words captured what this initiative meant to those who received it: not simply food parcels, but the assurance that their municipality sees them, values them, and will act on their behalf.

The municipality continues to urge residents experiencing challenges with SASSA payments to visit their nearest SASSA office for assistance and guidance.





📦 YOUR VOICE. YOUR VOTE. YOUR FUTURE. 📦

The Final Voter Registration Weekend is here! Mark your calendar for 1-2 August, 8 AM-5 PM.

This is your last chance to register or check/update your details before the next election. Every vote counts, and it all starts with registration.

✅ **Why it matters:** Democracy works best when everyone participates. Whether you're registering for the first time or need to update your address, this weekend is your opportunity to ensure your voice is heard.

📌 **What to do:** Visit your nearest IEC registration station this weekend and bring your valid green barcoded ID book, smart ID card, or valid Temporary Identity Certificate.

🕒 **When:** Saturday, 1 August & Sunday, 2 August | 8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Don't sit this one out. Register now, vote later, shape tomorrow.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to you for taking the time to read the our newsletter.

CUSTOMER CARE:

For your customer care inquiries, please contact the following:

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thank
you.

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