

GOD BLESS SWAZI MTN – DR VAN WYNGAARD

“God bless Swazi MTN.” These were the words that summarised Shiselweni Reformed Church Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr Arnau van Wyngaard’s remarks when expressing his gratitude to the mobile telecommunications company for coming to the rescue of Hand-in-Hand Pre-school.

Dr van Wyngaard said what Swazi MTN had done was bringing to life the African saying that “Our children don’t belong to parents”. “Parents just bring children to the word and then the children belong to the future,” said the CEO. Recounting the history of the pre-school, the CEO said it was a culmination of four wonderful stories that began with a phone call from the late Mrs Du Plessis Senior in the early 1990s, who offered the family farm, which previously occupied the Dwaleni Trading Store and Post Office, to the Shiselweni Reformed Church.

“At that stage, our church was meeting at a building on a farm and all people attending had to walk 3 to 4 kilometres every Sunday to reach the building. It was no wonder that the church members were excited to have this building right next to the road where they could meet,” said Dr

van Wyngaard.

Then in 2006, the Shiselweni Reformed Church made a decision to bring back hope to the lives of the many people who had lost it.

“We were confronted with people who were chronically or terminally ill with nobody to take care of them. In virtually all aspects, Shiselweni is the most neglected region in Swaziland. With so many people sick to the point of dying, something needed to be done. And this is where Shiselweni Home-Based Care started – when a group of 32 people from Dwaleni area decided they would help to carry the world of those who were at the point of collapsing.” It was at this point that the community leaders approached the church and asked if they would be willing to start a pre-school. However, nobody had the necessary skills to run such a facility but the church started the pre-school nonetheless. Then in 2011, Dr van Wyngaard met Swazi MTN Corporate Affairs Corporate Affairs manager Pholile Dlamini and made a request for funding. MTN responded positively and subsequently began refurbishing the area, painting the building, installing a ceiling, buying learning aid and sponsoring the training of teachers.