

Lira honoured as first African Barbie role model

Ahead of Women's Day in South Africa on 9 August, toy manufacturer Mattel has revealed that local singer Lira is the next Barbie role model to be recognised with a one-of-a-kind doll in her likeness.



Through its 'Shero campaign', the Barbie brand has been on a mission to honour diverse role models, both modern-day and historical, who help pave the way for the next generation of girls. As Barbie continues its 60th anniversary celebrations worldwide, Lira (real name Lerato Molapo) is being recognised for breaking boundaries for the next generation of girls.

Honouring 'Sheroes'

The South African musical talent joins the diverse group of Barbie Sheroes, female heroes who continue to break barriers including Ibtihaj Muhammad, Naomi Osaka, Maya Gabiera, Chen Man and Misty Copeland.

"For 60 years, Barbie has championed girls, inspired generations to believe through make-believe and showed them that they have choices. With more than 200 careers, six runs for president and a trip to the moon before Neil Armstrong, Barbie continues to evolve to be a modern, relevant role model for all ages," said Lisa McKnight, general manager and senior vice president, Barbie.

"The Barbie brand believes girls should never know a world, job, or dream women haven't conquered. Through our global role model programme, we are shining a spotlight on inspiring women, such as Lira, to show girls they can be anything."



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14 Nov 2017



Barbie kicked off its 60th anniversary programming in March 2019, timed to International Women's Day, with the largest lineup of global female role models and continued its commitment to the Barbie Dream Gap Project, a multi-year global initiative to raise awareness around limiting factors that prevent girls from reaching their full potential.

First African role model

Research* has identified that starting at age five, many girls are less likely than boys to view their own gender as smart and begin to lose confidence in their own competence. Cultural stereotypes, implicit biases and representation in media work together to further this issue. In the United States, this has been referenced as the 'Dream Gap', but there are similar trends seen around the world.

While Lira will have been gifted a one-of-a-kind doll, the Lira Barbie will not be for sale to the public.



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"I'm deeply honoured to be Barbie's first African role model and am excited to align with a brand that is on a mission to show girls more diverse role models," said Lira. "I have always been someone who endeavours the celebration of my skin tone and natural hair, and it is amazing to see this reflected in my doll. This is an enormous gesture and affirmation that the world is celebrating Africa for who we are, and I am very grateful."

*Study conducted by researchers at New York University, the University of Illinois and Princeton University.