

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Building for a sustainable future

AfriSam's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy forms an integral part of its corporate objectives and is not a mere appendage attached haphazardly to satisfy legal requirements. Tsholo Diale, corporate social responsibility manager at AfriSam, points out that the company is one of a select few of "one-percentile companies" which allocate a minimum of one percent net profit after tax purely to CSR projects.

"We believe we have a moral responsibility to help build the nation," he continues. "AfriSam's CSR policy is founded on the same principle values as the company itself: People, Planet, Performance. At the heart of this policy is the concept of involvement which informs the strategy itself, the approach, the planning implementation, final handover and subsequent support where appropriate. We seek the involvement of as many stakeholders in the community as possible, including other partners we draw in, such as NGOs, local municipalities, associations and government departments."

To optimise performance, AfriSam concentrates its CSR initiatives on two main sectors: Education and the Environment. "Sustainability is an underlying theme in

our operations,” Diale points out. “Building on the present to create the future, and both education and conservation are fundamental to that credo. This involves creating long term relationships, not just donating money and passing on to the next project.”

In undertaking both educational and environmental projects, AfriSam first sets itself to understand the needs of the communities where it operates, conducting wide ranging consultation with leaders, community organisations and local authorities. “Decisions are endorsed by the entire community who take personal interest and pride in the project, promoting not only their involvement, but the future sustainability of the project as well.”

On the education front, AfriSam has entered into a relationship with the National Business Initiative’s (NBI) Education Quality Improvement Partnership (EQUIP) programme which focuses on whole school development. “This embraces the concept of a cluster of schools,” Diale explains. “Extensive needs analyses are undertaken with community leaders and plans drafted to address all shortcomings. Over a minimum period of three years, we strive to put the essential elements of a good school in place, including governance, management, teacher development, academic support, safety and security and even parental participation.”

Where facilities are lacking, the aim is to provide at least one school within the cluster with a well equipped asset, be that a library, science laboratory, sports field or even centre for artisan training. "Both the schools and surrounding communities benefit," he says. "And the schools are utilised not only for learners, but as community centres where meetings and various events can be held."

The second CSR pillar, the environment, is a natural choice for AfriSam, Diale says, since the nature of its operations has a significant impact on the environment. "It also flows naturally into our education initiatives, since the new education curriculum requires that every subject should have an environmental element. However, most teachers do not know how to view their subjects from an environmental point of view, so we have entered into a relationship with the Delta Environmental Centre to train teachers on the practical incorporation of this aspect into their respective curricula."

Education in environmental awareness extends to the training of future conservationists. In this regard, AfriSam, in partnership with the Southern African Wildlife College (SAWC) sponsors bursaries for two students to receive conservationist training at the college on an annual basis. Last year's graduates of this programme have now been deployed to put their skills to practise by overseeing the day-to-day running of an AfriSam site in the Saldanha area, where AfriSam has donated land to the community under the custodianship of

Cape Nature. "We have also partnered with an NGO called Biosphere which is helping transform this land into a conservation area," he says. "The ultimate aim is to turn it into a preferred eco-tourism destination."

AfriSam's Staff Involvement Programme, Mbeu ("seed"), offers two options to staff. Firstly, they can select one of a number of organisations identified by AfriSam to which to donate on a voluntary basis by deducting regular amounts from their salary. Employees already involved in some way with a charity organisation can request AfriSam to match their contributions up to a maximum of R12 000 per annum.

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