

Capespan Group & Cool Fresh help youths in South Africa

The Dutch-based produce marketing company Cool Fresh International have teamed up with Capespan's CSR division and a number of NGOs, in a youth development project in the Eastern Cape of South Africa. In the spectacular Sundays River Valley – the most prolific citrus production area of South Africa – the first phase of this collaborative project, was recently launched, which sees five parties addressing social challenges in various disadvantaged communities.



The Thembaletu Aids & Edu Trust was registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (NGO) in 2005, focusing on outreach programs to needy communities in the Sundays River Valley area. The organisation manages various activities, including youth development and training, preschool teacher training, a feeding scheme for preschool children, as well as character transformation and gardening projects.



The Cape Town based NGO 'Little Libraries' was created by Camille Quine in 2013. The organisation provides a first step into the wonderful world of literacy and reading to preschool care centres in disadvantaged rural communities, by installing bookcases filled with carefully selected books for children in the age groups of 1 to 5 years. Since its inception in 2013 the organisation has installed close on 200 libraries, as well as various facilities which enhance handicraft and the development of motor skills.



The Stars in their Eyes Foundation (a charity organisation established by Cool Fresh in 2006) has a solid track record as a leadership and community development, using sport -specifically football (soccer) - as driving force. The organisation has been involved in the training of around 800 coaches from more than 240 communities all over South Africa.



Capespan, the largest exporter of fruit from South-Africa, established the Capespan Foundation more than a decade ago, to drive its corporate social investment mandate (adding value to the lives of communities in which Capespan operates) by implementing various social, health and educational development programmes. This mandate is currently managed by the company's Corporate Social Responsibility Division, which is referred to as the Capespan Blue Hand Programme at project level.



Cool Fresh International has been at the forefront of developing corporate social responsibility as an integral part of fresh produce marketing since 2003. The company is the only fresh produce operator in Europe with a formal certification according to the CSR Performance Ladder 4 management standard.

One of the challenges facing the rural communities in the Sundays River Valley is the seasonal nature of labour opportunities in the local citrus industry, the single biggest employer in the region. The local communities are struggling with poverty and its associated social evils. Young people are particularly at risk in terms of inadequate health care, nutrition, education and sporting facilities.

Using its individual and collective experiences and skills, the project partners aim to create a project which will focus on obtaining broad-based inputs and involvement from various supply chain stakeholders partners. Over the coming 24 months this approach must result in a chain of events which will create 'new beginnings' for local communities, including strong local youth leadership, sporting excellence, increased literacy levels and harmonious cooperation between communities.

At the launch of the project, Ansonette van der Merwe (Capespan CSI Manager) said that joint ventures can drastically increase the impact and scope of community development. She appealed to local government to partner with the five organisations by providing 'in kind' resources, such as the use of venues for sport development, and being involved and present at activities which are hosted at grassroots level.

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