

Building stronger, sustainable communities

Leading gases company Afrox incorporates a strong culture of social responsibility into its day-to-day business strategies through programmes that support education, job creation and income generation. Its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives aim to assist prudently while making a sustainable difference to society, thereby effecting a positive influence on its external environment, stakeholders and surrounding communities.

Nemenita Mohabir, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Afrox, says that the company is committed to acting responsibly towards people and the environment, conserving natural resources, and developing sustainable practices through socio-economic development and internal programmes.

“Corporate social investment is an inherent part of how we do business. Economically and socially strong communities enhance our success, and our CSR initiatives are aligned to long-term business objectives,” says Mohabir.

Afrox’s CSR programmes comprise a host of projects ranging from fun days for under-privileged children through to developing welding schools, donating gases and welding materials, talent development schemes, and internal programmes that incorporate staff health and wellness, bursaries and tertiary assistance.

In collaboration with LEAP, Afrox has also designed a robust Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) strategy that encompasses comprehensive business development support for a selected group of enterprises and suppliers.

Among Afrox’s most recent and highly successful CSR initiatives are the development of training centres that focus on welding as an in-demand route to a sustainable career. Launched in 2016, the POPUP Welding School in Soshanguve provides welding skills to people who need them the most. Following the success of the POPUP facility, Afrox built the LIV Welding Academy, a custom container welding school developed in partnership with the LIV Village and the Southern African Institute of Welding (SAIW).

Through these training centres, Afrox aims to contribute towards the development of entrepreneurial skills and upliftment of South Africa’s unemployed youth. “Welding is the backbone of industry as it builds economies, infrastructure and whole nations. Afrox has invested tens of millions of rands into research and development over the years,” says Johann Pieterse, Business Manager for Manufacturing Industries at Afrox. “Our commitment to our welding schools and centres is very real as Afrox is dedicated to encouraging youth to take up this profession of the future and we hope to see thousands of young people graduate as welders over the years to come.”

Other programmes focused on socio-economic and skills development include the support and upliftment of 13 secondary and 4 tertiary schools across the country that have received training of learners, upgrading of equipment and facilities and up-skilling of teachers from Afrox over the past four years.

Afrox also runs Young Talent Development consisting of in-service training, apprenticeships, internships and learnerships, while its SED programme continues to provide donations of LPG to Early Childhood Development feeding schemes, and gases and welding materials to various training centres.

“Afrox’s skills development initiatives are focused on ensuring skills growth in the chemical industries division. Last year we invested over R13 million in this sector and placed 480 learners in different training schemes,” says Mohabir.

Initiatives such as these have earned Afrox recognition from the Department of Labour for the company’s efforts to combat unemployment.

A highlight of Afrox’s socio-economic development initiatives and also an important aspect of its community involvement programme is the annual Bumbanani Day, a nation-wide celebration that sees thousands of disadvantaged and under-privileged children entertained by Afrox volunteer staff members all around southern Africa.

“This is a staff-driven, social responsibility programme where our employees get the opportunity to have hands-on involvement with the children while treating them to outings, fun games and gift bags,” says Mohabir. “It is an important date on the Afrox calendar as it allows employees to positively influence and interact with their surrounding communities by not just donating money but also their personal time.”

Mohabir adds that empowerment of their employees is a core value and at the heart of how the company does business, with a corporate culture based on the principles of safety, integrity, sustainability and respect. To this end staff bursaries and tertiary assistance are offered as well as an Employee Assistant Programme. Afrox also runs an Employee Wellness Programme to enhance productivity and performance in the workplace and instil a corporate culture of wellness and caring, while simultaneously empowering their employees to take responsibility for their own wellbeing.

Afrox’s CSR initiatives are designed to reflect the spirit of South Africa and are grounded in consultation, empowerment and partnership, utilising innovative and effective means to build stronger, more self-sustaining communities.

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