

NEWS RELEASE

ABCD Approach In Employee Volunteering Pioneers Social Upliftment In SA

Johannesburg, 2 July 2018 - To create truly empowered and successful corporate employee volunteering programmes that can truly influence and have a lasting impact within the communities in which they are deployed, several South African corporate entities are collaborating with their employees using the the Asset-Based Citizen-led Development (ABCD) approach.

The ABCD approach – developed decades ago at Northwestern University in Chicago in the United States – allows employees to act as facilitators, and foster community ownership of initiatives that ultimately translate into long-term sustainability.

This was highlighted at the FirstRand Beyond Painting Classrooms workshop held for corporate entities and NGOs to take them through a short introductory masterclass of the approach, which focuses on identifying and mobilizing the assets, strengths and gifts already available within communities, and encourages active participation by citizens in their own capacity.

FirstRand Volunteers Manager **Desireé Storey**, who hosted the event, says: “Our aim is to share a new approach to employee volunteering that shifts from a needs-based, problem-solving approach to one that uses the existing strengths and capacities of communities as the starting point for social investment engagement, policies and practises.

“Through Beyond Painting Classrooms, FirstRand is committed to forming collaborations and building systems for action-orientated volunteering, learning through practice, and strengthening value added by corporate communities.”

Session facilitator **Janine Ward**, a director at Space4Impact, said while many organisations might talk about corporate social investment, few rarely do it authentically.

“Too often, traditional approaches place professionals in positions of power, determining what the community needs and determining how investment will proceed,” says Ward.

“Through ABCD and other strength-based approaches, the community remains in control and the professionals act as facilitators, and we have seen the results. Community ownership of initiatives directly translates to sustainability. This is because we can identify concrete opportunities to strengthen collaboration, and see how those communities can buy into the investment programme.”

Ninnette Eliasov of Ikhala Trust, an NGO, says “the wheels are falling off” corporate social investment as it currently stands.

“Community expectations are not being met, and volunteers are not adequately trained. On the ground, we are seeing dependency entitlement, opportunistic leadership, manipulation, and communities unwilling to pitch for corporate media displays as it deteriorates into an ‘us and them’ scenario.

“We find the ABCD approach offers a solid solution because it brings money into communities in a more sensitive and cautious way, and builds trust as funding follows positive initiatives.

It is the best way for brands to find authentic relationships for co-investment in training, financial or material support, which leads to a win-win impact for both parties, and at half the budget.”

ABOUT:

FirstRand established the Beyond Painting Classrooms initiative in 2012 with the support of Charities Aid Foundation South Africa (CAFSA). CAFSA is an NGO which promotes philanthropy, volunteering and corporate social investment in South Africa. Beyond Painting Classrooms provides opportunities for people passionate about corporate employee volunteering to learn about good practices in the field, share success stories, discuss challenges and build knowledge collectively through critical and respectful engagement.

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