

# Brushing up on SA's training

EDUCATIONAL projects continue to form a key component of many firm's corporate social investment initiatives.

Continuing its bursary campaign that kicked off in 2002, a company that makes one of South Africa's best-known washing powders has underlined the importance of schooling with a R2-million sponsorship of bursaries for pupils.

For eight years Omo has sponsored bursary campaigns that have ranged from art and literature competitions to consumer-awareness challenges. More than 300 children have benefited from education bursaries and schools throughout South Africa have received donations ranging from computer equipment to new sports fields.

Ethne Whitley, a spokesman for Omo, says: "More than anything, a good education allows young people to achieve their ambitions and to unleash their potential.

"We are hoping that the bursaries will give children who may not have had the chance to complete or pursue their education, the opportunity to continue the learning process so that they can become successful adults in whatever profession they decide to follow."

In addition to the 2009 Door 2 Door Challenge, which will give away R2-million worth of bursaries by the end of the year, Omo has invested in a Lessons for Life project that rewarded children with education bursaries as well as the funds to make a difference to their own communities.

Education and the youth are also the themes for the community social investment programmes of TWP Projects, a multi-disciplinary engineering and project management firm.

TWP group human resources executive Cynthia Schoeman says CSI initiatives support and advance company values and objectives and make a sustainable difference.

To encourage students to pursue careers in engineering, Jabulani and Altmont technical high schools in Soweto recently received 50 sets of technical drawing equipment and stationery for its Grade 10 pupils.

TWP will accept applications to the company's drawing office training centre from matriculants with maths and technical drawing as part of their final-year subjects. Jabulani and Altmont also received 25 PCs and both schools participated in TWP's "eyes and ears" project.

"We've had incredible results from our campaign to test learners' sight and hearing and providing those in need with spectacles and hearing aids. We are thrilled that learners are already achieving improved school marks. Our objective is to focus on boosting academic results at technical schools to ensure a sustainable influx of technically competent young people into the industry," Schoeman says.

**A good education allows young people to unleash their potential**

# Happy scholars are happy at home

Parents the most important influence on learning, writes **Gregory Ramey**

**W**HEN children do poorly at school, most parents look to teachers for guidance. Here's what teachers know but are reluctant to say: parents are the most important influence on children's school performance.

These are the five most important things that parents can do to help their children achieve success:

- **Make sure they are prepared for school, with enough rest and exercise**  
School supplies, lunch money and new clothes are not adequate preparation for learning. Many scholars, particularly teenagers, do not get enough sleep. Teens need nine

## Be as concerned about your children's moral development as their maths scores

to 10 hours of sleep a night, and primary school students need 10-11 hours.

Children who routinely don't get enough sleep are much more likely to have various learning and emotional problems. It's critical that parents make certain that their children get enough exercise too; overweight and tired children make bad learners.

- **Send happy children to school**  
Children and teenagers need a foundation of emotional stability. It's hard to focus on school if you are worrying about your parents' alcohol problems, emotional or physical absence, or constant arguing. Staying in a turbulent and destructive relationship for the sake of the family rarely works out. Create the type of home you'd like to live in and you'll see a big impact on your children.

to study and do homework. Set up a routine time to get their work done. Review their homework. Talk about what happened in school. This can be a bit more challenging with teenagers, who may be more interested in complaining about a particular teacher than talking about trigonometry.

This is a great opportunity for parents to discuss their own experiences in school, both the good and bad stuff. Talk about how you dealt with boredom, frustration and failure.

- **Don't get too involved in school**  
Children need to know that you really care about school, but make certain that they see learning as their responsibility, not yours. Don't do their homework or ask to meet with teachers over minor issues. Help them solve their own problems and figure out how to manage nasty kids and tough tests.

- **Grades matter but they are not the ultimate indicator of your child's value**  
Recognise that not all children are gifted and should get As. Encourage your children to get involved in sports, arts activities, volunteering and work.

Be as concerned about your children's moral development as their maths scores. Pay particular attention to the ways they interact with other people, solve problems, handle failure and manage success.

These are the traits that determine how they will eventually turn out. —  
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- *Gregory Ramey is a child psychologist and vice-president for outpatient services at The Children's Medical Centre of Dayton, Ohio, in the United States*

# Investing in a focused and meaningful way

## CSI efforts should address societal problems

**DAVID JACKSON**

THERE is a growing awareness that the "shotgun" approach to corporate social investment initiatives is not working effectively. CSI strategies must therefore be more closely linked to the economic priorities of the government and the communities it serves.

Dr Nomsa Masuku, head of CSI for the Standard Bank Group, says although there generally has been a substantial amount of money available for corporate social responsibility or CSI projects, there has been no effective mechanism to demonstrate how the money is being spent.

"Part of Standard Bank's repositioning on CSI is premised on the assumption that while we have an interest in growing future markets, we need to ensure that, in the areas in which we do business, we do not take on unnecessary risk and do not invest more capital than is absolutely necessary."

In this regard, Masuku adds, there is a need to understand the social factors prevalent within communities that prevent companies from doing business better.

She cautions that if organisations do not work proactively with the government to help it to operate efficiently and effectively and make proper use of its resources, they will continue funding a range of projects without really seeing any tangible benefits resulting from them.

"More and more of us have come to appreciate that addressing our immense societal challenges is not the responsibility of the government alone. And it is clearer than ever that dealing with issues such as health, education, safety and security is central to our ability to sustain and keep economic growth at the levels that we desire," says Masuku.



**TEAMWORK:** Nomsa Masuku says CSI should compliment government initiatives Picture: JEREMY GLYN

"Therefore we have tended to listen very carefully to what the government says are their priorities, and we seek to align these with those of our own. Through our stakeholder engagement processes, we have a dialogue with the government through which we are able to identify the priority needs, such as those relating to the country's education system, for example, and the effect this has on providing the kind of skill sets we need to do business effectively."

Other identified priority CSI areas include healthcare and entrepreneurship development, says Masuku.

"We believe that this CSI model will result in better traction if the government is being helped to carry out its responsibilities more effectively, which in turn will free

us to play a meaningful role."

Masuku's view is that CSI is not only important in helping to build capacity and efficiencies within the government, but that it is also a vehicle for collecting intelligence for both business and government, which helps them to identify areas in which resources can be better utilised, thus curbing wastage in the process.

She argues that interventions which are not properly considered and co-ordinated are not necessarily going to be effective in assisting the government and communities.

"Communities are almost intervention-weary in many instances. Often these interventions are not designed to augment each other and there is no common strategy in implementing them."

Masuku says Standard Bank's strategy was to work on the ground and co-operate with the various government agencies and role players, including NGOs and other corporate organisations, in "connecting the dots" between the many interventions directed towards communities.

Microsoft Citizenship head Vis Naidoo believes the company's value lies in applying its core competencies — technology and expertise — in three key areas: education, creating jobs for employment and driving a local software economy through innovation.

"The key challenges faced by the government include providing the population with accessible and quality healthcare, the development of the marginalised youth and service delivery backlogs," says Naidoo.

"But with better education, skills development and the development of an innovative mind-set, South Africans will be better placed to participate in the knowledge economy."

**BRUCE DAMONS** is principal of a no-fee school in Port Elizabeth.  
His accomplishments include winning the 2008 national  
teaching award for excellence in primary school leadership

*Sunday Times 20/9/09*

# Nip such behaviour in its bullying bud

WE have recently read tragic stories about bullying. The disturbing thing is that it seems to be more widespread than we imagine. What is your suggestion for parents like myself, who have boys in the foundation phase and fear that they can become bullies or can be bullied by bigger boys? Do you think it is wise to involve the local community policing forum to educate pupils on the harms of antisocial behaviour such as bullying? — Mohammed Bham, by e-mail

Dear Mohammed,

The question of bullying is a serious challenge for the education system as well as the broader society.

The bully is usually someone who is being bullied himself or has been bullied in the past. They usually have low self-esteem and, because they have been bullied, they usually do not know any better. Many bullies are also faced with serious social challenges such as absent or abusive parents or a weak social support system. They are prone to give in to peer pressure more easily.

The non-reporting "victim" is usually an individual who is physically smaller or weaker than the bully.

So, quite clearly, any action needs to focus on both the bully and the victim. I have found that learners who feel valued and appreciated tend to shy away from antisocial behaviour.

Education plays a big role in tackling this challenge. Bullying left unattended by the school or parents can lead to other serious issues later.

There are many NGOs and other organisations that offer anti-bullying

programmes, and I would strongly advocate that you use them either through the school, religious organisations or organisations of civil society, like the policing forum. I would recommend that the programme must not only focus on education but also allow for processes of rehabilitation.

Some programmes that are quite effective are:

1. Schools sending a list of possible symptoms to help parents to identify whether their child is being bullied or bullying.

2. Schools having anti-bullying policies that are included in the learners' code of conduct. I want to emphasise that this should be clearly explained to the learners.

3. Displaying anti-bullying posters throughout the school.

4. Regular plays and talks about why children bully and what can be done when they are bullied.

5. Allowing for peer reporting to help those who are afraid to report themselves.

6. Immediate intervention when cases of bullying are reported at school or at home. Remember, no matter is too small to be followed up.

So, if you want to ensure your kids are safe and develop into excellent individuals, perhaps approach your children's school and ask them to activate such a programme, even if it does not have a bullying challenge

A panel of experts is available to answer readers' queries about any aspect of education, from preschool to university. Send your questions to [ask@sundaytimes.co.za](mailto:ask@sundaytimes.co.za)

**EDUCATION**

20/9/09

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Sunday Times 5



WELL-BALANCED: A good diet, a happy home, caring parents and lots of exercise are the foundations for a good scholar

Picture: GALLO IMAGES

# Corporate citizenship counts

DAVID JACKSON

**H**ARSH economic necessities and leaner operating budgets are forcing organisations to adopt a critical approach to their corporate social investment spend. As a result, strategic inter-company co-operation on a range of CSI initiatives is now an increasing international trend.

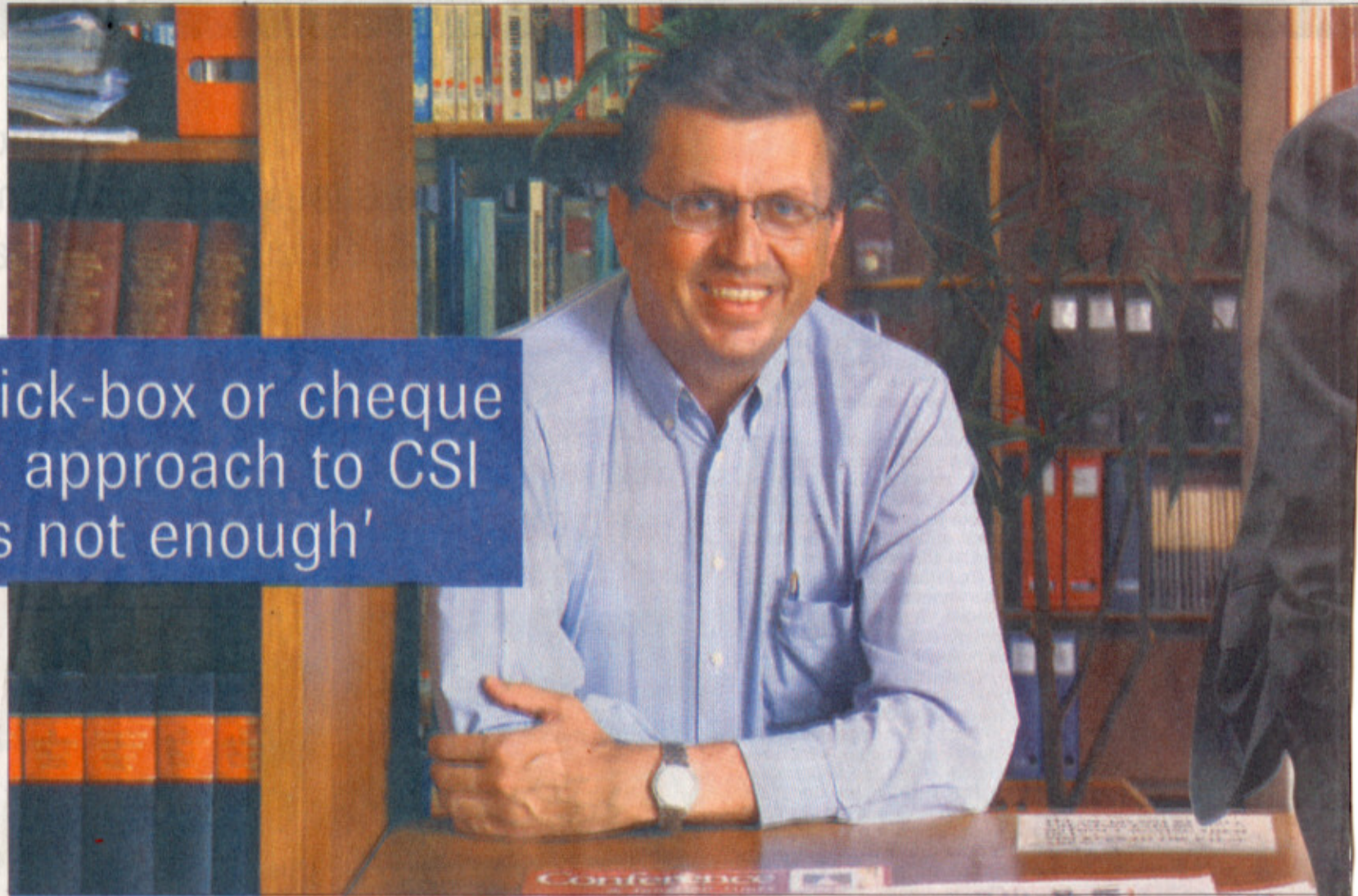
In this new pragmatic approach to CSI, many companies want to find synergies with like-minded organisations. The aim is to pool skills and resources to make a direct impact on communities and small business enterprises through skills transfer and expert mentoring, without duplicating resources. The strategy is then to sustain this assistance over time by nurturing these businesses and communities and to provide ongoing practical help as and when needed.

Carl Ballot, director of corporate citizenship for KPMG, says: "Businesses are looking for a bang from their buck and pointing to the fact that they are not charities in themselves. Arguably, it is in the interests of the organisations and communities supported that the giving businesses remain profitable and successful because, by definition, there is then more available for tomorrow."

Companies should offer communities access to their knowledge and skill sets, especially given dire skills shortages, Ballot argues. In so doing, companies are not throwing money at initiatives that are intangible and not always quantifiable in terms of results, but are providing valuable consultancy and skills transfer. He adds that KPMG pursues a CSI policy of active engagement, in which its own employees take part directly in CSI initiatives, compared to the "cheque book and hand-out" approach to CSI.

To meet the enterprise development criteria for the EE scorecard, for example, it is possible to obtain corecard points by simply writing out a cheque to an appropriate organisation, Ballot notes.

'The tick-box or cheque book approach to CSI is not enough'



MEANINGFUL EFFORT: Carl Ballot, director of corporate citizenship for KPMG, says skills transfer is a vital component of CSI

Picture: JEREMY GLYN