

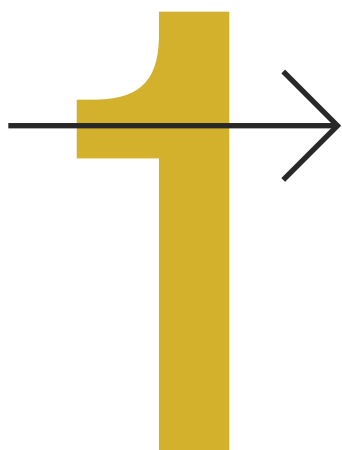


2025 C.S.I

CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT

NARRATIVE





Investing in Food Security - Page 5

Merensky Timbers
Mondi Southern Africa
MTO Group
NCT Forestry
Sappi Southern Africa
SAFCOL
York

6
7
9
10
11
13
14



Investing in Health and Welfare - Page 15

Mondi South Africa
NCT Forestry
Sappi Southern Africa
York Timbers

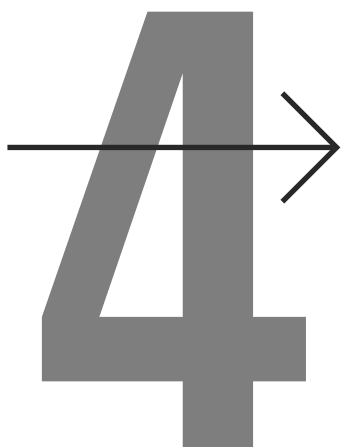
16
17
17
18



Investing in Education - Page 19

MTO Group
Mondi South Africa
A C Whitcher
NCT Richards Bay Wood Chips
Singisi Forest Products
Sappi Southern Africa
York Timbers

20
21
23
24
25
27
29



Investing in Community Infrastructure - Page 30

NCT Forestry
SAFCOL
York Timbers
SAFCOL
Sappi Southern Africa

31
33
34
35
36

40
41
43
46
49

Investing in Supplier and Enterprise Development - Page 39

SAFCOL
Mondi Zimele
SAFCOL
Sappi Forests
York Timbers

Investing in Community Upliftment - Page 51

52
53
54
55

Mondi South Africa
NTE Forestry
Sappi Forests
York Timbers

Investing in Recreation - Page 57

58
59
62

MDS Timbers
Sappi Forests
Merensky Timbers

Investing in the Environment - Page 63

64

Sappi Forests



FORESTRY SOUTH AFRICA™

www.forestrysouthafrica.co.za



A SECTOR COMMITMENT TO Corporate Social Investment

As we reflect on the South African forestry industry's two-decade journey of Corporate Social Investment (CSI), I am proud to highlight the intentional efforts of our members to create sustainable livelihoods, foster environmental stewardship, and promote good governance. Our industry's commitment to sustainable development has evolved from mere philanthropy to a strategic approach that integrates social and environmental considerations into our business practices.

Many of our members have successfully re-engineered their markets, products, and value chains to benefit local economic development, helped to develop entrepreneurs, and created new businesses owned and managed by people in their local areas of operation. This not only contributes to the economic empowerment of rural communities but also enhances our environmental sustainability and social licence to operate. Any

business school will tell you that if you are not responding to a genuine societal need in your business venture, then it is not likely to be sustainable.

Our Sector has a proud record of not only producing goods and services which indeed meet broader societal needs, but we do so in ways which meet local societal and community needs in the process.

Our members' CSI initiatives, which encompass eight core areas – Education, Health and Welfare, Community Engagement and Upliftment, Food Security, Enterprise and Supplier Development, Community Infrastructure, Environment, and Recreation – demonstrate our industry's dedication to creating positive social impacts. Furthermore, we are placing special emphasis on the empowerment of women and youth, recognising the critical role they play in shaping a more equitable and sustainable future.

Our CSI initiatives represent a vital aspect of our identity as a responsible and sustainable Forestry Sector and they produce massive societal rents for the State, which would otherwise have to be met from the fiscus.

To us and our communities, our commitment to sustainability principles and CSI is a badge of honour, symbolising our role as a socially caring and environmentally friendly industry.

**Please enjoy the
read!**

Michael Peter
Forestry South Africa
Executive Director

FORESTRY SECTOR CSI

an Overview

The South African Forestry Industry is deeply committed to sustainable development. We recognise that environmental, social, and economic considerations are interconnected and essential to our success. Guided by the United Nations Global Compact and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we are embracing the transformative power of the forest bioeconomy.

This approach values natural resources and seeks to harness their potential for sustainable growth, social prosperity, and environmental stewardship. Our industry is striving to create a more circular and regenerative Forestry Sector. To achieve this, our members strive to create shared value through their business strategies and operations.

Our commitment to responsible forestry practices, sustainable wood production and eco-friendly products, is both a moral imperative and a sound business strategy. The Corporate Social Investment (CSI) initiatives of Forestry South Africa (FSA) members demonstrate our industry's dedication to creating shared value and promoting positive change.

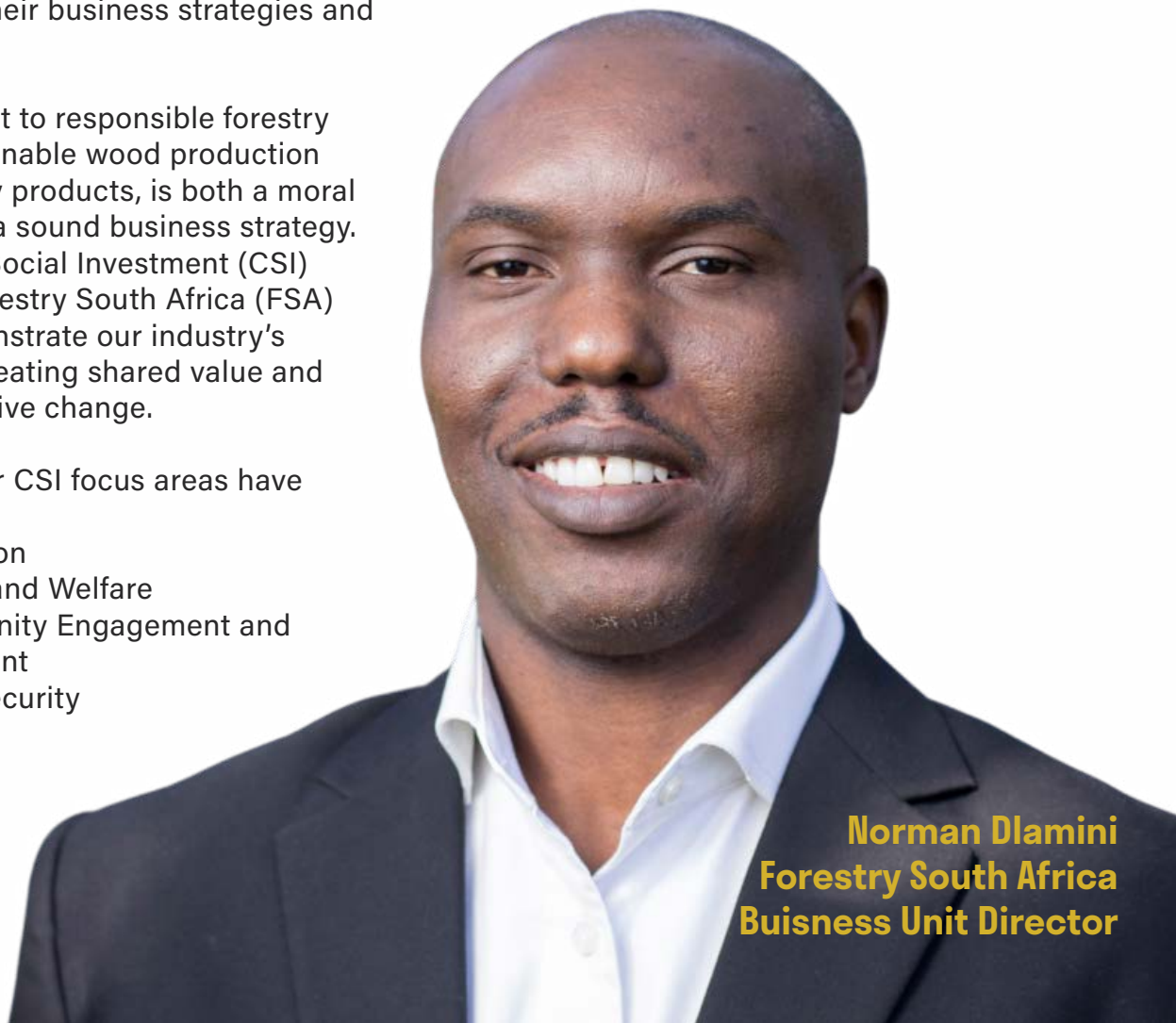
Traditionally, our CSI focus areas have included:

- Education
- Health and Welfare
- Community Engagement and Upliftment
- Food Security

- Community Infrastructure
- Enterprise and Supplier Development
- The Environment
- Recreation

This report showcases some of the innovative initiatives being implemented by FSA members across these focus areas. While not exhaustive, this compilation highlights the tangible contributions and benefits that our industry is making to the lives of rural communities, where State resources often fall short.

By sharing these success stories, we hope to inspire further collaboration, innovation, and investment in the sustainable development of our Sector.



Norman Dlamini
Forestry South Africa
Business Unit Director

Investing in FOOD SECURITY

The CSI initiatives driven by the South African Forestry Sector play a vital role in promoting food security, sustainable agriculture, and community development. The following projects demonstrate the commitment of various forestry organisations to addressing the challenges of food insecurity, unemployment, and poverty in rural communities.

These initiatives not only provide immediate relief but also empower communities to become self-sufficient, promoting long-term sustainability and economic growth. By

supporting small-scale farmers, promoting agroforestry practices, and providing access to markets, these projects contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) and the United Nation's vision of a world where everyone has access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

The following CSI projects showcase the collaborative efforts of various forestry organisations, government entities and local communities, to drive positive change and promote food security in South Africa.



ROOIKOPPIES VEGETABLE GARDEN - MERENSKY TIMBER

Location: Rooikoppies Village
Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

Rooikoppies is one of Merensky's village where employees stay with their families, including some family members who were unemployed. Twelve unemployed women were identified as beneficiaries of this project and trained in basic safety, environmental awareness and firefighting to ensure that they had the appropriate training for working in a forestry environment. Since the area was not fenced, the company allocated funds to procure and install the fencing and an irrigation system. 1 500 seedlings were also procured for the women to start planting. The first crops planted were spinach, cabbage, tomatoes and chillies, with Merensky employees in the surrounding communities the target market.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human resources and consumables.

"Growing your own food is like printing your own money!"
Ron Finley, Beneficiary



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Identify and allotting land for the garden.
- Installing fencing and irrigation system.
- Acquiring planting tools, PPE and handing over seedlings.

GROUND NUT CULTIVATION - MERENSKY TIMBER

Location: Merensky Plantations
Initiated: 2000
Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

An annual Merensky Timber's agro-forestry project in collaboration with our local communities, agro-forestry plays a vital role in reducing soil erosion and weed control. The nuts are grown within the recently planted compartments, as part of a multi-land use approach that helps in ensuring soil health.

During the 2024 planting season, 213 hectares were allocated to 1 682 interested community beneficiaries to plant groundnuts within Merensky's forestry plantations. After four months of cultivation, between 50kg and 80kgs of nuts were harvested by each beneficiary and sold in informal markets, with surplus used



for household consumption. Merensky is delighted in having community members taking an active role in Agro Forestry as this initiative promotes the spirit of entrepreneurship and create jobs in the area

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Plot allocation within various plantation compartments.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human Resources.
- Hand hoes, seeds and PPE.

THE MASIDLE LETS EAT - SHARING HOPE OVER A MEAL MONDI SOUTH AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and
Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2020

Duration: Ongoing

*Partnership with Gift of the Givers
and various NGO's*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Launched in response to the significant challenges posed by COVID-19, social unrest, and floods, the Masidle programme is a vital initiative for Mondi to support local communities. By providing food assistance along with seedlings for home vegetable gardens, the programme fosters community resilience, ensuring that vulnerable families receive immediate help and the means to grow their own food.

The campaign has supplied food to thousands of families while reinforcing Mondi's commitment to the spirit of Ubuntu—caring for those in need during challenging times. The Masidle programme exemplifies how collaborative efforts can make a meaningful impact on food security and community well-being. As it continues to expand its reach and effectiveness, the initiative positions itself as a sustainable solution to the ongoing challenges faced by communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

***"We wish to thank Mondi
for being good neighbours during
this difficult time. The food parcels,
hygiene products and everything else
you do for this community count!"***

Keegan Chetty in Merebank

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- **Food Parcel Distribution:** Over 5,000 vulnerable families (averaging five members per family) were fed for an entire month through the distribution of food parcels across Mondi's operational areas, including the Midlands and Zululand in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as parts of Mpumalanga.
- **Sustainability Initiatives:** Each food parcel included seedlings for home vegetable gardens to promote self-sufficiency and sustainable food production within households.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- **Food parcels:** Provision of essential food items and seedlings for home vegetable gardens.
- **Community collaborations:** Partnerships with organisations such as the Gift of the Givers and local NGOs.
- Mondi employees actively participate in fundraising and the distribution process.
- Logistical support.





ZIMELE AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMME - MONDI SOUTH AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2020

Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Mondi Zimele Agriculture SMME Programme was established in 2020 to address significant challenges of unemployment and food insecurity in South Africa. Focused on emerging farmers in Zululand and northern KwaZulu-Natal, the programme provides essential technical and business support, helping farmers grow their operations and access formal markets. Since its inception, the programme has created approximately 320 jobs and generated R2 million in revenue, significantly impacting rural communities. The programme's success lies in its ability to connect farmers with formal markets, enabling them to sell their produce to major retailers. This connection has led to increased food security, improved incomes, and strengthened local economies. By fostering self-sufficiency and creating pathways to economic freedom, the Agriculture SMME Programme serves as a powerful model for transforming rural communities. It is poised to expand into other regions, providing a scalable and replicable solution for sustainable agricultural development.



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Technical farming support: seedlings, training and expertise.
- Business and financial training.
- Market access.
- Job creation and community impact.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Mobile agricultural support teams.
- Seedlings and equipment.
- Partnerships with retailers.
- Funding for infrastructure, training, and the development of farmers' business capabilities.
- Logistics and infrastructure support for transportation and market access to ensure consistent delivery of produce.
- Monitoring and evaluation through continuous data collection to track progress and outcomes and identify areas for improvement.

"Mondi Zimele have been instrumental in teaching us the financial and business side of farming; to record everything that is coming in and what's spent on business needs like chemicals and seeds, so we know how much profit we make individually."

Eva Biyela of Imahlobo Cooperative in Nzalabantu Reserve

FOOD GARDENS - MTO GROUP

Location: Tsitsikamma, Knysna, George, Riversdale, Stellenbosch, White River, Bushbuckridge and Barberton

Initiated: 2019

Duration: Ongoing

Partnering with Extended Public Works Programme, Department of Agriculture, Nelson Mandela University, Department of Correctional Services, Department of Health and Department of Social Development



PROJECT OVERVIEW

It is estimated that almost 2.8 billion people around the world are unable to afford a healthy diet. In South Africa and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) over 58 million people are facing food insecurity, and over million children are not receiving the nutrients they need to grow and thrive. As a company we realised that adequate intervention on the food crisis requires all hands-on-deck. Hence, we got involved in establishing the community food gardens project as we believe that through small steps change can be achieved.

The food gardens are established in backyards, schools, communal land and clinics. In 2023/2024 the food gardens were also established in MTO staff villages as well as the company's sawmill premises in George - all to the benefit of its own employees and their families to support them as they navigate living through challenging economic times. We have established a partnership with the Department of Correctional Services (DCS) and Nelson Mandela University (NMU) on a food project to alleviate



"We use the vegetable gardens to teach our learners responsibility and the veggies come in handy for our school feeding scheme, especially because a lot of parents in this area are unemployed"

Isak Meshaka, Headmaster of StormsRiver Senior Primary school in Tsitsikamma

poverty for deserving students in NMU. Food insecurity is a significant issue in South African public tertiary institutions with prevalence rates ranging from 11% to 38.3% (Devereux, 2021), due to limited financial resources. MTO supplies seedlings, DCS provides land, while NMU provides technical support.

To ensure the sustainability of the food security programme various partners have been incorporated to support with, amongst others, soil testing; skills to prepare vegetable beds and how to plant for income generation; advice on which crops are best to boost the immune system. Some beneficiaries plant both for their own consumption and income generation.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- The establishment of additional food gardens in all MTO's business locations.
- Intention to grow this number into the wider communities MTO services.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human resources.
- Since 2019: R571 000.00

COMMUNITY GARDENS - NCT FORESTRY



“Food gardens nourish communities, sustain the earth and cultivate a healthier future.”

Mfundo Ngcobo, NCT Forestry

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human resources.
- Sponsorship of learnerships.
- Resources required for fencing the garden.
- Land donated for the garden.

Location: Bazana, Farm Politiek and Enqabeni
Initiated: 2021

Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Bazane (VG 199) Community Garden: NCT management sponsored 16 learners for a plant production learnership. These learners were selected from the VG 199 community, where the learnership is being conducted. Mthashana TEVT College oversees the learnership at our Commondale farm. The community garden, supported by NCT, aims to cultivate vegetables and uplift the community. VG 199 Community expressed gratitude for NCT's donation, which has strengthened the relationship between NCT management and the community. Additionally, NCT employed five community members to fence the community garden and other areas, providing them with fencing skills to further benefit the community.

Farm Politiek Community Garden: NCT management generously donated land for the establishment of a community garden, complete with fencing and water supply. Recognising the community's need for upliftment, NCT created this garden where residents can cultivate vegetables, potentially generating income and creating employment opportunities. The community expressed gratitude for this donation, understanding that self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship can thrive through their own efforts.

Nqabeni Community Garden: In 2021, the Learnership Programme, in partnership with Mthashana, benefitted 20 learners from the community. The community expressed high appreciation for both the youth upliftment and the community garden.



EMPOWERING PEOPLE IN THE AGRI-BUSINESS SECTOR - SAPPI SOUTHERN AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal, Mphithini (Bulwer), Palm Ridge (Mtubatuba) and Salpine (Sokhulu)

Initiated: 2018

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Farmusa, SOS, Cedara Department of Agriculture

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sappi aims to empower rural youth and women by granting them access to land for agri-business. These pilot projects serve as a testing ground for supplementary ventures. Through Sappi's Enterprise and Supplier Development Unit, participants register as a cooperative, ensuring project sustainability and financial gains. Sappi provides support in areas like funding, market access, and business development.

Mphithini Cooperative, Bulwer: The cooperative, consisting of 8 members, specialises in sugar beans and maize production. To address seasonal gaps, they've expanded into vegetable farming. Ziningi Mazibuko, a Sappi-trained uMshintshi, leads the way. With guidance from agriculture extension officers, Ziningi handles administrative tasks and markets the produce. Ziningi aims to change the perception that farming is only for older generations, promoting youth involvement and the cooperative's plans for commercial farming. This initiative contributes to job creation, economic growth, and food security in the community and beyond. Sappi is in the process of approving and installing an irrigation system that will further benefit the members of the Cooperative.

Shikishela, Mtubatuba: The Groundnuts and Sugar Beans Shared Value Project began with four women inspired by Ms Ntombiyenkosi Mbuyazi. They initiated groundnut cultivation in a newly planted Sappi compartment near their community in Shikishela, Mtubatuba, back in 2018. Since then, Sappi has allocated



"Because the youth generally consider farming as being something for the older generation, they do not consider the potential there is in the agriculture field. I want to change that mindset and show them that by being part of these community initiatives and by becoming commercial farmers, they will secure futures for themselves."

Ziningi Mazibuko, Mphithini Cooperative



additional land and sponsored seeds, benefitting 150 participants across the Palm Ridge (Mtubatuba) and Salpine (Sokhulu) areas—both adjacent to Sappi plantations. Sappi views this project as an exemplary case of creating Shared Value. By granting the community free access to Sappi land, participants earn profits during harvest while also reducing Sappi’s weed control costs through routine weeding. Moreover, the peanut plant roots enrich the soil with nitrogen-fixing properties, benefitting the surrounding trees.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- To grow emerging farmers to fully fledged commercial farmers.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Sappi’s Forestry managers, Community Services officers and ESD department.
- Sappi partners (contractors, government departments and agencies).

“The women here are very proud of this project, and they have much to celebrate. With money made from this initiative of planting groundnuts we can pay our children’s school fees,”
Ms Ntombiyenkosi Mbuyazi, at Shikishela community



AGROFORESTRY AND FOOD SECURITY - SAFCOL



Location: Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal
Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SAFCOL plays a significant role in supporting the communities in which it operates by aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals and SAFCOL's mission to facilitate the sustainable economic transformation of the forestry Industry and uplift communities. Sustainable Development Goal 2 aims to achieve zero hunger, end hunger, ensure food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture.

Through community upliftment, SAFCOL has supported communities across Mpumalanga, Kwazulu-Natal and Limpopo in Agroforestry by providing beneficiaries with land for crop production, agricultural implements, and skills development to ensure food security. This initiative and support from SAFCOL contribute to improving the quality of life and addressing socio-economic challenges within the communities. In Limpopo, SAFCOL has established an agroforestry project focused on growing groundnuts and jugo beans, which are in demand locally. In Mpumalanga, SAFCOL has assisted in the establishment of the Dudulani Agricultural Cooperative in Mayflower (Ngodini village), producing a variety of crops for local supermarkets and nearby households. In Kwazulu-Natal, SAFCOL has supported the establishment of the Sidlasonke Agricultural Cooperative in Mtubatuba, which also produces a variety of crops and sells them in local supermarkets and nearby communities.

“Homestead vegetable gardens and small-scale farming are more than just sources of food—they empower rural communities with food security, economic opportunities, and self-sufficiency, fostering resilience and sustainable livelihoods for generations to come.”
Hazel Banda, SAFCOL GM Development and Transformation

ARBOUR MONTH CELEBRATIONS - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Simile Location, Sabie, Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2023

Duration: Annually

Partnership with Klipkraal Nursery

PROJECT OVERVIEW

September is also Arbor Month and South Africa celebrates Arbor Week from 1-7 September annually. At York Timbers we celebrated Arbor Day by planting trees and started a vegetable garden at Ekuthuleni Day Care Centre. This was an opportunity for us give back to nature, improve our local environment, and promote sustainability. The trees were planted at Memezile High School, Ekuthuleni Day Care Centre and Lindani Primary School.

Planting trees in schools will assist in providing shade but also serve as educational in teaching the learners about the importance of preserving trees. Planting vegetables at a pre-school helps the little ones to consume fresh, home-grown vegetables which improves nutrition and health, providing essential vitamins, minerals and fibre that contribute to a balanced diet. The Ekuthuleni day care centre enjoyed the freshly planted cabbages and spinach that were planted amongst other vegetables.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Seedlings.
- Vegetable seeds.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

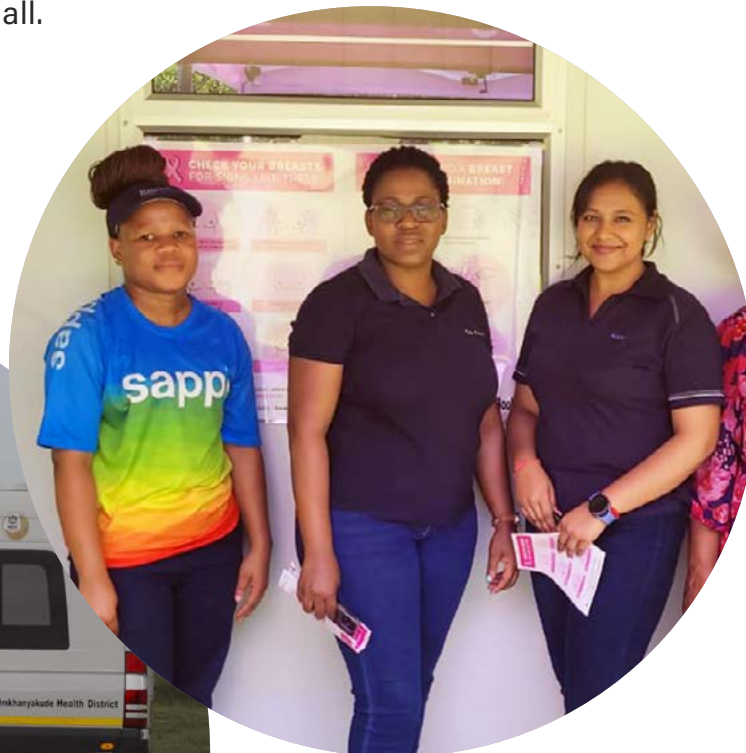
- Human resources.



Investing in HEALTH AND WELFARE

The South African Forestry industry's CSI initiatives focused on health and welfare make an important contribution to addressing the unique challenges faced by rural and disadvantaged communities. The following projects demonstrate the commitment of various forestry organisations to improving the health, well-being, and quality of life of their employees, surrounding communities, and the broader society.

Through innovative partnerships, strategic interventions, and community-based programmes, these initiatives aim to bridge the gap in healthcare services, promote health awareness, and provide essential support to vulnerable populations. By investing in the health and welfare of their communities, these organisations not only improve lives but also contribute to a more equitable, prosperous, and sustainable future for all.



MOBILE CLINICS DELIVERING HEALTHCARE TO REMOTE COMMUNITIES - MONDI SOUTH AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2010

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with the Department of Health

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Mondi Mobile Clinic Programme meets the critical need for healthcare in remote rural areas where infrastructure is limited. By providing services like HIV and TB testing, chronic disease management, and maternal care, the programme improves the health of both Mondi contractors and surrounding communities. Since its inception, the programme has completed over a million visits, reducing absenteeism and mortality rates and increasing access to essential medications.

This programme highlights the power of public-private partnerships to deliver essential healthcare. By working with local health authorities and community organisations, the programme addresses immediate healthcare needs and promotes long-term behavioural changes through peer education. Its data-driven approach supports ongoing improvement and scalability, making it a replicable model for other industries facing similar challenges in rural healthcare.

“There’s a big drop with absenteeism. Instead of taking days off to collect medication, my staff now collect their medications from Mondi’s mobile clinic.”
Silviculture Services – A Mondi Forestry Contractor

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Mobile healthcare services for Mondi contractors and rural communities, reaching 241 service points monthly across 11 municipalities and six districts.
- Maternal care, HIV/TB testing, and treatment for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and mental health conditions.
- Peer education programmes to promote health awareness and encourage behavioural change, especially for HIV and chronic disease management.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation evaluation for data-driven improvements in resource allocation and programme effectiveness.
- A scalable model for other sectors to replicate, enhancing healthcare in rural areas.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Nine Mobile Clinics: Fully equipped units with medical supplies and diagnostic tools.
- Medical Personnel: Nurses, doctors, and peer educators providing care and health education.
- Partnerships: Collaboration with the Department of Health for ARVs, TB treatments, and referrals, plus non-profit partners for community outreach.
- Medical Supplies and Health Education Materials.
- Behavioural Change Programmes: Peer educators and health education initiatives.
- Monitoring, evaluation & logistical support.

SANITARY TOWEL DRIVE - NCT RICHARDS BAY WOOD CHIPS



Location: Enqabeni Combined School - Vryheid
Initiated: 2023
Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

NCT initiated a sanitary drive in August 2023 at Enqabeni Combined School in Lenjane, a small rural community outside Vryheid. During this drive, 193 girls were gifted with a six-month supply of sanitary pads. The principal of the school indicated that this initiative would significantly alleviate the absenteeism rate, as many learners miss school during their menstrual cycles due to the inability to afford sanitary pads.



In May 2024, we had the privilege of visiting Enqabeni Combined School once again to continue our mission of providing essential hygiene supplies to the girls. This effort is part of our broader ongoing commitment to giving back to the community.

NCT looks forward to a continued and long-lasting working relationship with the school, aiming to lessen the obstacles that prevent the girl-child from reaching their full learning potential.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Supply girls with a 6-month supply of sanitary pads every six months.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human resources.
- Sanitary resources.



BRINGING HEALTHCARE TO OUR COMMUNITIES -

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, communities neighbouring Sappi operations
Project duration: Ongoing

Partnership with the Department of Health

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sappi Clinics offer a range of services, including HIV and TB testing, dental care, vision and mental health assessments, pap smears, vaccinations, and circumcision campaigns — all conveniently provided at the worksite.

This approach boosts testing participation and enhances long-term management of conditions that require ongoing monitoring and care.

Annually, we conduct approximately 12,000 consultations, covering both Occupational and Primary health care needs, including chronic and acute care, as well as counselling and advice. Notably, some cases involve requests for advice on behalf of family members.



CANCER WELLNESS CAMPAIGN - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Sabie Town, Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2022

Duration: One day

Partnership with Department of Health

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The growth of our knowledge about cancer has led to an increased progress in cancer prevention, early detection and treatment. Scientists have learnt more about cancer in the last two decades than in all the previous years of medical science. This does not negate the fact that early awareness and adequate scientific knowledge of a nation's state in this regard, is of utmost importance.

We, at York Timbers Health Department have taken an initiative to go to the people of

Sabie, by campaigning awareness of cancer in general. We did not want to focus on breast cancer only but on cancer in general to plant a seed of knowledge and awareness. This can serve as a way to promote self-assessment and early detection of cancer. Prevention is better than cure.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Cancer screening questionnaire.
- Haemoglobin Test (HGT) performed on the day.
- Blood Pressure (BP) taken.
- Weight management counselling.
- TB screening.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- York employees spent the whole day at the venue.
- We gave away water bottles, cancer pin and cancer pamphlets.



SAPPI FORESTS

Moreover, effective management for individual cases—such as diabetes, HIV, or hypertension—extends beyond the patient. The care information provided to one person also benefits their entire household, creating a positive ripple effect.

Collaborating with government institutions has yielded cost savings for Sappi. By covering the cost of HIV medication and other medical interventions where the state cannot, we alleviate strain on local services, saving them time, administration, and resources.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Employees, especially those living in remote areas with limited health care resources, are provided with access to quality health care through initiatives driven in collaboration with private and state institutions.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Occupational Health Nurses.
- Nursing Assistants.
- Employee Wellbeing Practitioners.
- Four fixed clinic sites in KZN and 1 in MPU.

“Our local business clinics serve as a vital resource in the communities that we operate, providing invaluable support in building trust and adding value. Through the team’s dedicated efforts, we can contribute not only to the economic but also to the social well-being of our surrounding communities.”

Dalroy Moon, HR Manager Sappi Forests

Investing in EDUCATION

The South African Forestry industry's CSI initiatives focused on education and learning support are pivotal in empowering individuals, communities, and future generations. The following projects demonstrate the commitment of various organisations to improving access to quality education, promoting literacy, and enhancing learning environments.

Through innovative partnerships, strategic interventions, and community-based programmes, these initiatives aim to bridge the educational divide, foster a culture

of learning, and equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in an ever-changing world. By investing in education, the South African Forestry Industry contributes to the development of thriving communities, promotes social mobility, and helps build a brighter future for all.



ICT LEARNING CENTRES - MTO GROUP

Location: Tsitsikamma, Eastern Cape

Initiated: 2019

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Edunova, Department of Basic Education, Department of Higher Education, National Electronic Media Institute of Southern Africa (MENISA).

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In 2019 MTO partnered with Edunova, an NGO specialising in ICT skills training for teachers and learners. Three years into the programme, during post implementation assessment, it was found that the learners and teachers were acquiring new skills while the rest of the community - including parents - were left behind, thus causing a disconnect amongst the community stakeholder groupings. The idea for a learning centre was born. Equipped with laptops and audiovisual material, the learning centres are used by learners during school hours and community members afterwards. An e-library programme - Zibuza_KiBooks - has also been introduced within the Learning Centre platform to improve learners' online reading skills.

The Learning Centres have attached partnerships from both Adult Basic and Higher Education Departments who are providing skills for communities which include basic education; further education for matriculation certification; and basic digital skills. In 2023/2024 about 190 unemployed youth received certification on basic computer

"It's great to know that our children can have a place that they can access for knowledge and opportunities. We feel sad that after matric they can't carry on fulfilling their dreams, but this kind of platform exposes them with new possibilities. This is good for the Tsitsikamma community because we've never had such a facility"

Nombulelo Maseko, a Storms River resident and parent



literacy. Through the Learning Centres, the National Electronic Media Institute of Southern Africa (NEMISA) has trained SMMEs in using digital skills to explore, start and run a digital enterprise. As unemployment continues to be a reality in our business location, such opportunities also help to drive towards sustainable and self-sufficient.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Two Learning Centres in Tsitsikamma.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- MTO Staff, Ednova staff, interns from the YES Programme, community leaders and teachers.
- Since 2019: R3 020 000.00.



MONDI-LIGBRON E-LEARNING PROJECT - MONDI SOUTH AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal
and Mpumalanga
Initiated: 2017
Duration: Ongoing

*Partnering with Ligbron
Academy*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Ligbron e-Learning System connects schools all over South Africa to an online learning network, whereby Ligbron coordinates the live streaming of clear, concise maths and science lessons to schools who would otherwise not have this access.

In 2017, Kwanxusa High School near Melmoth, KZN, became the first school in the Mondi footprint to receive the infrastructure and software training needed to join the Ligbron e-Learning System. Mondi has since added another five high schools to the Mondi-Ligbron programme, which now is at a total of six schools and 3 831 maths and science learners.

Each e-Learning classroom has an e-Boxx with a smart interactive whiteboard, LCD screen with a digital camera, sound system and microphone. The LCD screen shows the image of the teachers/learners from linked schools, enabling them to take an active part in the lesson.

The recorded lessons and other resources can be accessed by teachers and students at any time from the online platform known as DigiCampus. Lessons targeting grades 11 and 12 are live-streamed, four days a week, while all day-to-day lessons in maths and science from grades 8-12 are available on DigiCampus.

Hot spots have been installed at Kwanxusa, Mahlahla and Indala high schools to provide free Wi-Fi access to the DigiCampus. Ligbron



makes regular contact with the schools, engages in constant monitoring of the log-in to live sessions, and holds quarterly meetings with all e-learning teachers to address and assist with any problems.

The schools have made significant strides in their academic progress. Candabuthule Secondary School has improved from a 15% pass rate in 2018, to 100% pass rate in 2023, whilst Mahlahla Secondary School shows an improvement from 30% pass rate in 2018, to 71% in 2023. Most impressive is the blossoming of Bachelor Passes at all the schools. As examples, Kwanxusa displays growth from 53 Bachelor Passes in 2017 to 128 in 2023. Indala High School improved from 34 Bachelor Passes in 2017, to 69 in 2023.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Mondi began with baseline research and identified schools that needed support as well as displayed the level of capacity and dedication required to make the project work. In addition, these are the project deliverables:

- Interactive Virtual Classrooms, Live Streaming, Recorded Lessons, DigiCampus Access and Wi-Fi Hotspots.

- Training for Teachers, Monitoring and Evaluation.
- Improvement in Academic Results and Increased Bachelor Passes.
- Expansion of Programme Reach.
- Partnership with Local Communities.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

Mondi funded the installation of each e-learning classroom with the necessary technological and safety equipment (burglar guards and alarm system), as well as the ongoing maintenance of each classroom.

- **e-Boxx Technology:** Each e-Learning classroom is equipped with advanced technology to facilitate interactive lessons, Smart interactive

- whiteboards for visual learning and LCD screens with digital cameras to enable two-way communication.
- Sound systems and microphones to ensure clear audio during virtual lessons.
- DigiCampus Platform: An online platform that provides access to recorded lessons, study materials, and other educational resources for Grades 8 to 12.
- Free Wi-Fi hotspots installed at participating schools to ensure students and teachers have internet access for the DigiCampus and live-streamed lessons.
- Live Streaming Technology.

“Stronger maths and science will build the bridge between the communities and the opportunities that exist in the forestry value chain. Our success as a business is intrinsically connected to the well-being and success of our neighbouring communities.”

Corné Peters, the Social Programme Coordinator at Mondi



RAINBOW CRECHE - A.C. WHITCHER

Location: Coldstream, Tsitsikamma,
Eastern Cape
Initiated: 1984
Duration: Ongoing



“She learns more and more every day. The excitement in her eyes every morning shows that the creche makes her feel safe and happy... Thank you for the safe, positive feeling the creche offers.”

Jennifer Michello, Parent

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The need for a crèche where the children of the Coldstream community can receive early childhood education and develop their social skills was identified as far back as 1984 by Emily Buchanan of A.C. Whitcher's Ritchie family and a few women from the community. A small creche, which could accommodate only twelve children, was opened and women from the community volunteered their time to take care of the children. A.C. Whitcher assisted in providing a building with facilities and a playground.

A.C. Whitcher also sponsored Magdalene Pati, one of the women who volunteered her time from the beginning, to complete an Early Childhood Development course to ensure quality education and care. Rainbow Crèche was registered as a NPO during 2013 and registered with the Department of Education in 2020. Today, Magdalene Pati is still committed and involved at the crèche which can now accommodate 53 children from the community in a safe environment where they can receive quality education and care.

In December 2022, Coldstream Timber Co joined A.C. Whitcher to financially assist the creche.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- More than 53 children from the community receive early development education from qualified teachers in a safe environment.
- Additional income is generated through the sale of donated timber, this benefits the community who can buy timber at affordable prices at the creche.
- A greenhouse tunnel was erected, and seedlings supplied to assist with the supply of healthy meals to the children.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Payment of teacher salary.
- Provision of administrative assistance and business advice.
- Donation of timber.
- Provision of a greenhouse tunnel and seedlings to grow vegetables.



“We have seen great improvement in our child's ability to communicate, socialise and we are even surprised by his counting skills since he joined the Rainbow creche... I want to give a big thank you to the principle, teachers and staff members of the Rainbow Creche for their hard work and determination on taking care of my son. We would therefore ask they continue giving our children the great education while they are still small because their future depends on a good foundation.”

- Edwin Munuhe Ngatia, Parent

BURSARIES AND SUPPLIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS - NCT RICHARDS BAY WOODCHIPS

Location: Emandlanzini

Initiated: 2023

Duration: Ongoing

Partnering with Mandlanzini Traditional Council, North Coast Workers Forum, and Manadlanzini Workers Forum

PROJECT OVERVIEW

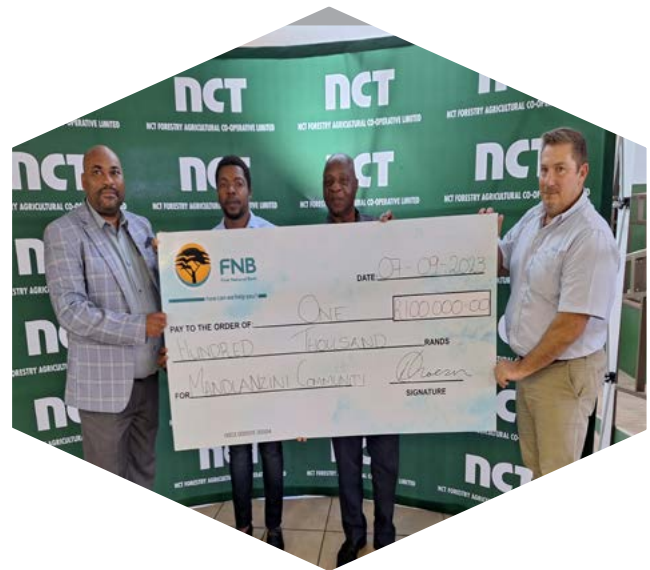
NCT Richards Bay Woodchips recently awarded the community of Mandlanzini with learnerships, bursaries, and supplies to Early Childhood Development centres. This came about after the community represented by North Coast Workers Forum made a plea to NCT for help to alleviate the unemployment crisis within the community. NCT saw this as an opportunity to foster a relationship with the community while uplifting them. The award ceremony was held at Mandlanzini Agri-Village. 61 youth benefitted from this initiative - 30 Learnerships, 10 Bursaries to Richtek and 21 enrolments for driving permits for various construction machinery. This, according to NCT, will improve the community's employability. NCT further donated R100 000 towards supplies to three Early Childhood Development Centres.

The community of Mandlanzini has been ostracised by local businesses during community development projects. NCT is changing that narrative and aims to restore hope to the Mandlanzini community. Although some challenges incurred during this process, NCT is honored to have had

"I have no words to express our gratitude, on behalf of our team and the Mandlanzini Mqedi Community, this was the highest donation we have received. We appreciate and are genuinely grateful to you for being there to support us."

Mandlanzini Mqedi Management

"I would like to thank NCT for providing me with a bursary that changed my life. NCT offered me an opportunity to enrol in my studies. I have obtained a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering and NCT offered me a job within their company."
Sboniso Mtshali, Bursary Recipient



the opportunity to engage with the Mandlanzini Traditional Council, North Coast Workers Forum, and Manadlanzini Workers Forum.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human Resources.
- R100 000 Donation towards supplies for three Early Childhood Development Centres.
- Resources linked to 30 learnerships, 10 bursaries and 21 driving permit enrolments.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - SINGISI FOREST PRODUCTS

Initiated: 2022
Duration: Ongoing

*Partnering with Edu-build Institute,
Redcross SA, Impande Foundation and
Department of Education*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

An inspection found most of the facilities did not comply with government health and safety standards e.g. there were no conducive outdoor facilities, they were inadequately furnished and did not have the learning and play material for early childhood development.

To ensure that the above standards were met, Singisi collaborated with Edu-build, Red Cross SA, Impande Foundation and Department of Education. A baseline assessment of the preschools was conducted, where activities and projects were identified that would address the various needs. This included, providing training for teachers so they could gain their N4 Level of Early Childhood Development certification, as well as First Aid training by the Red Cross.

Tables and chairs were donated to create a conducive learning environment inside the classroom, while fencing material was donated to ensure a safe and secure environment.



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Edu-Build Institute offered accredited training to 10 preschool teachers on Level 4 Early Childhood Development.
- Preschool buildings renovated and played facilities built.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Renovation materials.
- Preschool furniture.
- Timber poles and fence.
- First aid kits.

“Thank you for helping us to build a stronger foundation for our young learners. The programme was fruitful and will positively influence our development and that of the children”

Teachers, Graduation Ceremony



SCHOOL DESKS AND BOOKSHELVES PROGRAMME - SINGISI FOREST PRODUCTS

Initiated: 2020

Duration: Ongoing

Partnering with Mkhomasi Woodwork Enterprise

PROJECT OVERVIEW

During 2020 Merensky was approached by some local schools to donate desks to comply with Covid-19 protocols. On assessing various local schools, it was discovered that most had a high enrolment of pupils and a shortage of desks.

In addition, a high proportion of the desks they did have were broken and kept outside or at the back of classrooms. The decision was made with the schools' management that Merensky would collect and refurbish the old desks. To date, over 7500 school desks have been refurbished as Merensky continues on its mission to create better learning environments for school learners.

The Bookshelves Project was initiated to improve the literacy, reading skills, writing ability and vocabulary of the learners in our local schools. To date, 65 schools have benefitted from this programme, which has greatly influenced the reading culture and mindset of the learners in these rural schools.

"The assistance provided to our local schools is noticed and highly appreciated. The learning environment will never be the same."

- Principal of one of the Beneficiary Schools



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Old steel framed desks from schools are collected and refurbished.
- The steel frames are repainted and new wooden desktops installed.
- Timber shelves are also installed in classroom as reading corners and in school libraries.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Timber.
- Small machinery.
- Paint and screws.
- Human resources.



EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT TRAINING: BRIGHT BEGINNINGS FOR LITTLE ONES - SAPPI SOUTHERN AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, servicing communities that neighbour various Sappi operations
Initiated: 2014
Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with TREE and Penreach

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sappi believes that the way to make a real difference for the better in its communities is to do this in the very earliest years of the lives of the children, and partnering with TREE and Penreach has offered the complete solution.

In KwaZulu-Natal, Sappi partnered in 2014 with local NPO Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE) to train ECD practitioners from communities adjacent to Sappi Forests' plantations. Upon completion of their training, they graduated with NQF Level 4 Accreditation as fully-fledged and qualified ECD practitioners. In 2016, Sappi expanded this collaboration with TREE and also partnered with Penreach to establish an ECD Centre of Excellence at the Sappi Elandshoek community.

Since the inception of the programme 14,000 children have benefitted from teacher training through Penreach & TREE. Given the proven causal link between ECD and success and wellbeing later in life, we plan to launch a 'Follow the Child' tracking initiative, which will give us greater insights into the positive outcomes and social impact of this initiative. Research so far indicates that 90% of the practitioners who completed training have demonstrated improvements in their approach to teaching.

"I am now funded by DSD, the knowledge that I gained through TREE training helped me in knowing the requirements and standards for a creche to be registered by DSD."

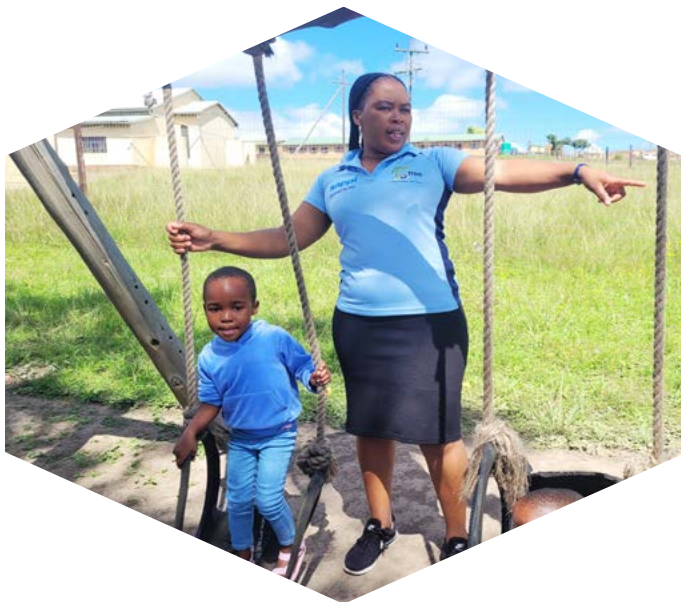
Thandeka Madiba from Fundokuhle Creche



"Training assisted us a lot because I am recognised as a qualified ECD Practitioner. Parents are trusting our creche because they know that we are qualified. Toy making training that I received has helped us to make toys since we had no toys on our site. Municipality has donated tables and chairs."

Newane Ziningi from Abaholi Bakusasa





PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- ECD practitioners to reach NQF4 level of proficiency.
- For ECDs to be properly registered as learning institutions and as formal businesses for the owners.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Financial support for training of candidates.
- Sappi's Stakeholder Relations Officers liaise with the ECD practitioners to keep abreast of developments.
- Mentoring and support from professionals in the Sector.

FARM SCHOOL EDUCATION PROJECT - SAPPI SOUTHERN AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal: Karkloof Schools

Initiated: 2023

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Karkloof Conservancy

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Bringing a love of nature and the outdoors to young learners was the mission of the Karkloof Conservancy when they embarked on an environmental education programme with three farm schools in their area. The programme, sponsored by Sappi, focused on fun outings and learning experiences for the youngsters, but educators also received meaningful input from experienced former teachers through interactive workshops. Exciting sessions with wildlife experts, like the 'Snake Man' and 'The Insect Man', enriched the curriculum, while a birdwatching trip with Birdlife KZN Midlands' volunteer guides at the Karkloof Conservation Centre was a highlight.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Enlightened educators and informed learners.



RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Sponsoring trainers and educators to impart their expertise to local schools through innovative and interesting interventions.

"We are extremely grateful to organisations and sponsors like Sappi who support meaningful education in the KZN Midlands. It makes a big difference in the lives of the children."

Jessica Gird, Karkloof Conservancy representative

FUMIGATION AT SITHULILE PRESCHOOL - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Sithulile Pre-school, Warburton, Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2022

PPI duration: Once off

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Covid-19 pandemic necessitated stringent hygiene measures across various settings, including educational institutions such as pre-schools. Fumigation, a process involving the use of disinfectant aerosols to sanitise the environment, has been a key strategy in reducing the spread of the virus in such settings.

Fumigating preschools during the Covid-19 pandemic was a critical measure to ensure the safety and well-being of children and staff. By effectively eliminating pathogens, complying with health guidelines, and reassuring stakeholders, pre-schools could continue to operate in a safer environment.



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Covid-19 precautionary measures.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human Resources.
- Disinfectants to the value of this small project was about R500.00.

LINADNI PRIMARY SCHOOL: DESKS WITH COVID-19 PARTITIONS - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Linadni Primary School

Initiated: 2022

Duration: Single Initiative

PROJECT OVERVIEW

During the Covid-19 pandemic, schools faced significant challenges in maintaining safe learning environments. One crucial measure to ensure safety while allowing in-person learning was the use of physical barriers, such as plywood boards, to partition school desks. Donating plywood boards for this purpose proved to be of paramount importance for many reasons.

Donating plywood boards to partition school desks was a vital measure to ensure the health and safety of students, maintain educational continuity, and provide psychological and social benefits during the Covid-19 pandemic. This practical and cost-effective solution not only facilitated safer in-person learning but also underscored the importance of community support in times of crisis.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human Resources.
- Plywood Boards to the value of R20 794.34.



Investing in COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

The South African Forestry Industry's corporate social investment initiatives extend to community infrastructure development. The following projects demonstrate the industry's commitment to improving the quality of life for rural communities.

Through strategic partnerships and collaborations, these initiatives focus on providing essential services, upgrading community facilities, and promoting sustainable development. From boreholes and water harvesting systems to classrooms, kitchens, and community halls, these projects aim to create thriving, self-sufficient communities with access to necessities and opportunities for growth.



COMMUNITY BOREHOLE PROJECT - NCT FORESTRY

Location: Bazane and Enqabeni

Initiated: 2022

Duration: 1 year

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Two boreholes were installed in VG 199 (also known as Bazane). Previously, the community had been sharing water sources with livestock, the installation of boreholes has ensured a clean water supply. The community expressed gratitude for this water donation, and since the boreholes were handed over, conflicts related to water access have ceased. This positive initiative has fostered a stronger understanding between NCT and the community.

NCT management aided the Nqabeni Combined School in repairing a functional borehole. Previously, the school had relied on NCT for water supply due to occasional delays from the government in delivering water to the school.



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Installation of boreholes.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human resources.

“Water is life! Boreholes bring hope, sustenance and a future to communities in need.”
NCT Forestry

SHELTERS AND BUILDINGS - NCT FORESTRY

Location: Vryheid

Initiated: 2021

Duration: 3 years

PROJECT OVERVIEW

VG 199 Standby quarters and Community Clinic: NCT management has constructed standby quarters at our Commondale farm, which also serves as a clinic. Previously, community members had to wait for the clinic outdoors, enduring both rainy and sunny weather without proper facilities. The community members who now use the standby quarters expressed their gratitude towards NCT. Additionally, the clinic serves as a classroom for the learnership programme.



VG 203 (Known as SQINTINI) Community:

NCT management renovated the existing standby quarters, converting them into a clinic shelter and standby quarters for the VG 203 employees on the Commondale Farm.

Pension payout point: NCT also donated a pension payout point adjacent to the NCT Enyathi offices. This donation greatly benefitted the community, which had previously relied on trees for shade and shelter during both rainy and sunny days.

School Kitchen - Freiburg Primary

School: NCT management donated the school kitchen because the school was using the classroom both for teaching and cooking for the children. The donation of the school kitchen by NCT management had a positive impact on the community in several ways:

1. Improved Learning Environment: By relocating cooking activities from the classroom to the kitchen, the school created a better learning environment. Students

no longer had to share space with cooking equipment, leading to a more focussed and organised classroom.

2. Health and Safety: Separating cooking facilities from the classroom reduced health and safety risks. Properly equipped kitchens ensure hygienic food preparation, benefitting both students and staff.

3. Resource Optimisation: The school could now allocate classroom space solely for teaching, optimising resources and enhancing the quality of education.

Overall, the donation of the school kitchen not only improved the school's functionality but also positively influenced the community it serves.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Shelters.
- Accommodation.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Building contractors.



“The shelters were built with love and brought happiness to the community.”
Eric Mdluli , NCT Community Liaison

MAPHELENI COMMUNITY HALL - SAFCOL

Location: Mapheleni community- Mtubatuba (KZN)

Initiated: 2018

Duration: Ongoing



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Mapheleni Community Hall project is located close to SAFCOL's Palmridge research centre and it was initiated in FY21/22 in response to the community's need for a central gathering space for the community. Previously, community meetings and events were held in a dilapidated shelter that was not conducive, which was impractical during extreme weather conditions. Community gatherings, training and cultural events were hindered by the lack of a dedicated facility.

SAFCOL, recognising the importance of such a facility, committed to constructing a multipurpose community hall and water harvesting system equipped with gutters and a storage tank. Construction of this facility commenced in FY21/22 and was completed and handed over to the community in

November 2022. Residents of Mapheleni can easily access essential services through this satellite office, which now serves as a satellite office for Home Affairs and other government departments. Additionally, the hall hosts various training programmes, such as furniture making apprenticeships and agricultural training, which are vital for skills development and economic empowerment.

As a result of this initiative, Mapheleni community members have access to essential services and community events in a reliable and safe venue. The hall symbolises progress and empowerment, fostering self-sustainability among residents. It stands as a beacon of hope, reflecting SAFCOL's dedication to community development and support.

“The Mapheleni Community Hall has truly transformed our community. It has provided us with a reliable space for our activities and access to government essential services. We are immensely grateful to SAFCOL for their unwavering commitment to our development.”
Mr Enoch Gumede, Induna of Mapheleni Community

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Construction of a multipurpose community hall (FY2021/22).
- Provision of a venue for community meetings, arts, training, and cultural events.
- Provision of harvested water for consumption, maintaining gardens and green spaces around the community hall, enhancing the aesthetic and ecological value of the area.

- Provide facilities for other Governmental departments like Home Affairs, and Department of Agriculture to service the community.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Physical: Construction material.
- Time: Staff hours for planning, construction and supervision of project.
- Financial: R 950 000.00 for the provision of labour and material (outsourced).

WOOD AND WATER DONATION - YORK TIMBER

Location: Jessieval, Nganga Village

Initiated: 2022

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Mhlambanyathi

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Many communities face water shortages, which affect their health, sanitation, and agricultural productivity. Also in rural areas, wood is a primary source of fuel for cooking and heating. York is committed to supporting sustainable development and improving the well-being of local communities. In line with this commitment, the company has initiated a wood and water donation programme to address the pressing needs of underserved communities. This programme aims to provide essential resources that are crucial for daily living.



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Drinking water and firewood.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Truck to transport the drinking water and firewood.
- Staff hours.
- Water to the value of R6 440 and wood to the value of R 26 400.00.

EDWALENI PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - SAFCOL



Location: Mpumalanga, Mbombela,
Edwaleni Primary School

Initiated: 2022

Duration: Ongoing

*Partnering with the Department of
Education*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In the heart of Mpumalanga lies Edwaleni, a community where children dream of a better future but are often held back by the harsh realities of their environment. For years, the local school struggled to provide adequate learning spaces, with learners cramming into a makeshift carport covered with canvas. In winter, cold winds blew through the flimsy canvas, while scorching summer sun made concentration impossible. It was a far cry from the conducive environment every child deserves for learning and growth. Recognising the urgent need for improved educational infrastructure, SAFCOL embarked on a mission to transform the lives of these children by providing them with proper classrooms. There was a remarkable transformation that has not only reshaped the physical landscape of the school but

also ignited a newfound sense of hope and possibility among its learners and teachers alike.

The project involved replacing makeshift carport classrooms covered with canvas, with timber-framed classrooms, offering a comfortable and conducive environment for teaching and learning. These timber-framed classrooms provide natural insulation properties, regulating temperature to keep the interior cool in summer and warm in winter. Additionally, they contribute to sustainability by reducing energy costs and aligning with SAFCOL's commitment to environmental stewardship through the use of renewable resources.

The impact of SAFCOL's investment goes beyond physical infrastructure; it significantly improves the lives of children by granting access to quality education in a safe and nurturing environment. With proper classrooms, students can focus on their studies without distractions or discomforts, while teachers are empowered to deliver lessons more effectively. Ultimately, SAFCOL's investment in education in the Edwaleni community not only builds physical structures but also lays the foundation for brighter futures and empowers future generations.

“eDwaleni Primary school would like to thank and appreciate the support you have given to us. By building two classrooms, which made a huge difference and impacted our learning and teaching environment to be conducive and more effective. There is enough space now to accommodate 45 learners in each class room, resolving our overcrowding issues.”

Hluphile Glory Madonsela, Principal eDwaleni Primary School

Gone are the days of shivering in the cold or sweltering under the unforgiving sun. Thanks to SAFCOL's initiative, the school now boasts of timber-framed classrooms that offer a comfortable and conducive environment for teaching and learning. Timber-framed classrooms offer numerous advantages over traditional construction methods. Their natural insulation properties help regulate temperature, keeping the interior cool in summer and warm in winter. This not only enhances the learning experience but also reduces energy costs, making them a sustainable choice for the environment and the community. Moreover, timber is a renewable resource, making it an eco-friendly option that aligns with SAFCOL's commitment to environmental stewardship. But perhaps the most significant impact of SAFCOL's

investment lies in the lives of the children who now have access to quality education in a safe and nurturing environment. With proper classrooms, students can now focus on their studies without the distractions and discomforts of the past. Teachers, too, are empowered to deliver lessons more effectively, knowing that their efforts are supported by modern facilities conducive to learning.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Construction of timber-framed classrooms.
- Rainwater harvesting (through gutters and tank).

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- SAFCOL provided financial resources of R 737 889.83 for the construction of the classrooms.

SAPPI SUPPORT FOR RURAL SCHOOLS - SAPPI SOUTHERN AFRICA

Location: KwaZulu-Natal, various; Mpumalanga - Idalia, Mafo, Matshotshombeni and Wildrand
Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Masamini borehole project: The Masamini community, located near the Sappi plantation in the Sutton district of KZN sought a water supply solution. Local community member Mr Mark Hauff approached Sappi with a proposal for a borehole partnership. Through collaboration between Sappi, Mr Hauff, HES – our local contractors in the area - and with community support, the borehole was successfully installed, with all parties contributing to the project costs.

Ekwakheni Primary School Kitchen

Refurbishment: Situated in the Mapheleni community neighbouring the Sappi Palm Ridge plantation at Mtubatuba, this no-fee school faces some challenges and through its School Governing Body (SGB) sought assistance for a number of items. Sappi decided to prioritise the refurbishment of the school kitchen, which was unsatisfactory for a





“The change brought to our school is good now we have a renovated kitchen and security house. Our community and learners are benefitting since we were using a shack house that wasn’t safe and a kitchen that was a terrible place to cook food for learners.”

Mrs Prudence Nene, Principal, Ekwakheni Primary School

structure where food is prepared and served for learners. A partnership for implementing this project was established with Richards Bay Minerals (RBM). This led to the inclusion of the guard house in the project. The project scope included the replacement of the asbestos roof on both structures and replacing it with corrugated iron sheets, building of shelves and painting.

Sibongile Creche Roof Shelter: After a heavy storm damaged the roof of the assembly area of the Sibongile Creche in the Shikishela community in Mtubatuba, Sappi partnered with Leomat, a Zululand contractor, to repair the roof. The installation of the roof was undertaken and the refurbished area handed over on 10 July 2024. In addition, school shoes were also donated to 25 learners.

Sondelani Creche Classroom

Refurbishment: The Sondelani Creche in Winterton in the Emadolobheni community was assisted through the provision of a refurbished container that is now being used as a third classroom for the learners. Other contributions included learning materials, tables and chairs, mattresses, and toys. The



donation was in partnership with Winterton contractors Farmusa and Ferrow Trading and the handover was done on 12 June 2024.

Hlelo Water project: Sappi collaborated with the Mkhondo Municipality to bring water to the four communities at Hlelo, being Idalia, Mafo, Matshotshombeni and Wildrand. Labour was contracted from Sappi's contractors to dig the trenches for the water pipes to be laid. Sappi supplied the Jojo tanks and stands where water was to be kept and also supplied the pumps, overall spending in excess of R300k. The Municipality provided the technical support and labour.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Various ad hoc requests are received and where immediate support or assistance can be provided to offer relief for pressing situations.
- Collaboration with other community stakeholders is also sought and encouraged.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

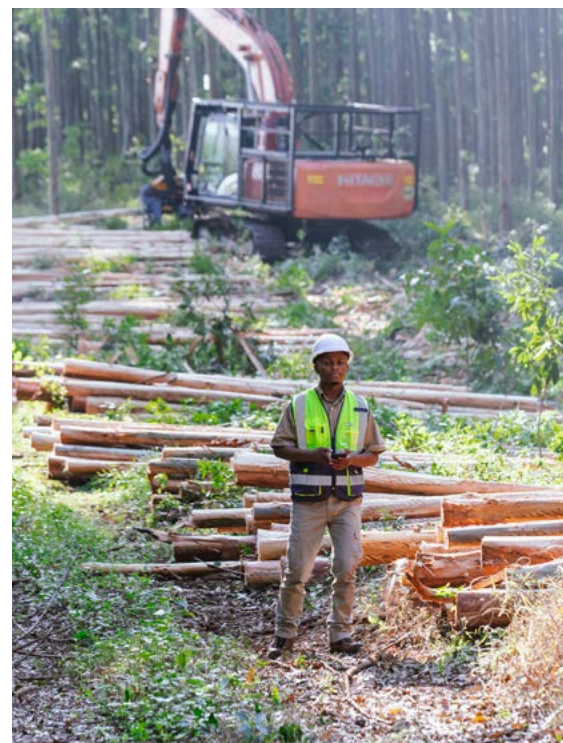
- Sappi Forestry and Stakeholder Relations teams work together with contractors to obtain quotes and oversee the installation.



Investing in SUPPLIER & ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

The South African forestry industry's corporate social investment initiatives include enterprise and supplier development, fostering economic growth, and promoting entrepreneurship. The following projects demonstrate the industry's commitment to empowering small, medium, and micro-enterprises (SMMEs), improving livelihoods, and contributing to the development of thriving local economies.

Through targeted training, mentorship, and financial support, these initiatives aim to create sustainable businesses, stimulate job creation, and enhance the competitiveness of local enterprises. By promoting entrepreneurship and skills development, the industry is helping to build a more resilient and inclusive economy, ultimately benefitting both local communities and the broader Forestry Sector.



AMSTERDAM FURNITURE MAKING AND REPAIR PRIMARY COOPERATIVE (AFMAR) - SAFCOL

Location: Amsterdam, Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2023

Duration: Ongoing

Partnering with Mkhondo Local Municipality

PROJECT OVERVIEW

SAFCOL's skills development exit programme encourages young aspiring entrepreneurs to start their own businesses. Amsterdam Furniture Making and Repair (AFMAR) operates as a furniture manufacturing business located in Amsterdam, Mpumalanga, an area where opportunities are scarce and unemployment rates are soaring. SAFCOL, in collaboration with the Joint Community Forum (JCF), identified the urgent need to implement skills development programmes within local communities. The primary goal is to foster entrepreneurship and employment opportunities, particularly targeting youth in furniture manufacturing.

Today, AFMAR stands as a symbol of resilience and dedication. With a team of seven skilled staff members, the company specialises in creating exquisite pieces, ranging from TV stands to chopping boards, wooden trays, coffee tables, and cupboards. Driven by a vision to establish a reputation for high-quality furniture, AFMAR aims to become the preferred choice for furniture and repair services. In the short term, the company is focused on expanding its client base, improving profitability, and ensuring sustainability. Furthermore, AFMAR is committed to recruiting



“What sets us apart from other furniture companies is that we prioritise customer satisfaction above everything. From the initial design concept to the final product, we work closely with clients to bring their vision to life satisfaction.”

Miss Felicia Nkosi, Beneficiary

talented local artisans and designers, thereby facilitating the transfer of skills and knowledge within the community.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Mkhondo provided the beneficiaries with adequate operational space with adequate ventilation, lighting, and safety standards.
- SAFCOL provided a 10-month furniture making learnership programme which imparted critical skills in furniture making.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- SAFCOL provided the entity with start-up furniture making materials, equipment, and PPE valued at R82, 425.31 to start operations.



SUPPLIER AND CONTRACTOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME - MONDI ZIMELE

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and
Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2007

Duration: Ongoing

*Partnership with the Department of
Heath*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Mondi Zimele Supplier and Contractor Development programme is a comprehensive initiative designed to support and empower small businesses, contractors, and entrepreneurs within the Mondi value chain and neighbouring communities. By offering a combination of financial support, business development resources, and skills training, the programme aims to foster sustainable growth, job creation, and economic empowerment in underdeveloped areas.

The programme has already supported several successful contractors, such as New Age Forest Solutions, owned by Sabelo Sithole. His journey with Mondi started when he was awarded a full Mondi bursary to study towards a National Diploma in Forestry at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). Upon completion of his studies, he worked for SiyaQhubeka Forests, before joining an established harvesting contractor where he gained valuable experience.

Through Mondi Zimele's funding, mentorship, and training, Sabelo was able to start his own forestry harvesting business, employ 20 people, and secure a five-year contract with Mondi in the Zululand area. His success illustrates the effectiveness of Mondi Zimele's holistic approach to business development.

The long-term vision of the Mondi Zimele programme is to create sustainable, transformed, and competitive contractors



“At MZ, we are committed to driving economic transformation and see sustainable development of local businesses and communities.”
- Nelly Ndlovu, Mondi Zimele CEO

who not only support Mondi's supply chain but also contribute to the economic development and transformation of their communities. By bridging the gap between underdeveloped areas and meaningful business opportunities, the programme helps build stronger local economies and create pathways for skilled employment. In summary, the Mondi Zimele Supplier and





Contractor Development programme is an impactful initiative focused on building sustainable businesses that generate employment, drive economic growth, and empower historically disadvantaged communities within the forestry and related industries.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

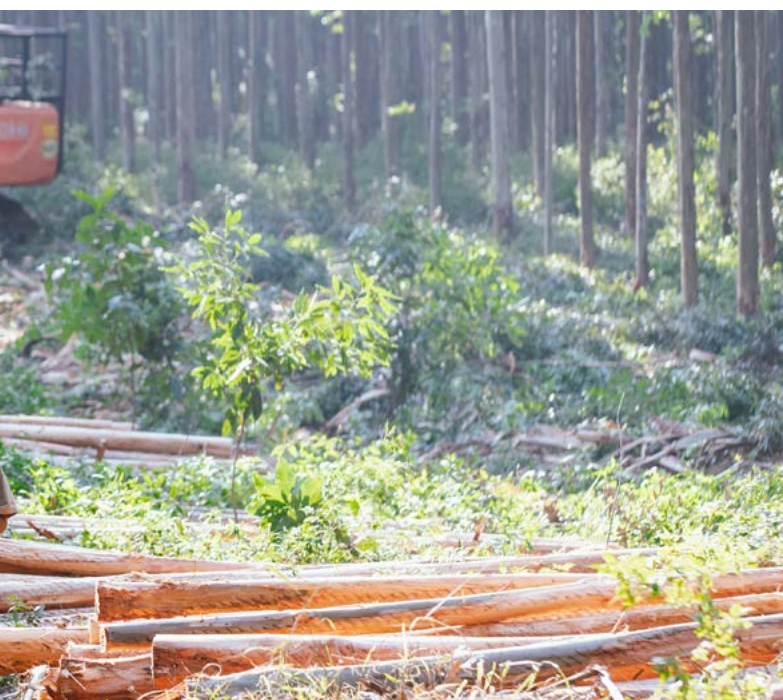
- **Business Development Support:** Offering guidance in business management, corporate governance, legal compliance, and strategic planning.
- **Financial Assistance:** Providing soft loans and discounted funding to help businesses acquire the capital and machinery needed to operate and grow.
- **Skills Transfer and Training:** Facilitating workshops and mentorship

programmes that equip contractors with the skills to run and manage businesses effectively.

- **Job Creation:** Supporting contractors that create employment opportunities within local communities, contributing to economic upliftment.
- **Sustainable Supplier Development:** Ensuring the development of competitive and independent contractors within the forestry and business sector.

RESOURCE EMPLOYED

- **Financial Resources:** Loans, funding, and financial support to cover start-up and operational costs.
- **Human Resources:** Business mentors, technical advisors, and experts providing ongoing support and guidance.
- **Technical Resources:** Funding for machinery and equipment to enable contractors to perform tasks such as harvesting and forestry operations.
- **Training Programs:** Workshops, skills development, and ongoing training to improve business management, productivity, and technical capabilities.



“We see the businesses we support as our partners. Through our development and support, we aim to ensure they grow and become successful big businesses that create revenues and generate jobs in the communities.”



MAMBITENI BEE KEEPING PRIMARY COOPERATIVE - SAFCOL

Location: SAFCOL Wilgeboom
plantation, Hazyview area, Mpumalanga
Initiated: 31 August 2017
Duration: Ongoing

*Partnering with Mineworker
Development Agency (MDA)*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mambiteni Bee Keeping Primary Cooperative was established in 2017 by seasoned beekeepers from the Marite area in Mpumalanga. It focuses on beekeeping, honey extraction, and leasing beehives to nearby farmers for cross-pollination. The cooperative consists of five members two of whom are females. With assistance from SAFCOL, the cooperative has significantly grown its hive count from 90 to 250 through the donation received from MDA.

These hives are strategically placed within *eucalyptus* plantations, capitalising on the flowering season from October to December, which enhances bee forage and honey productivity. Currently, the cooperative employs seven local residents. The presence of cooperative members helps SAFCOL minimise timber theft in its plantations and enhances the company's relationship with the surrounding community.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Job creation.
- Contribution to food security.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

Following a thorough analysis, the cooperative was provided with Enterprise and Supplier Development support in the following forms:

- **Capacity building programmes:** Members of the cooperative were trained on Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) to equip cooperative members with the skills to identify and address hazards in the honey extraction process, ensuring the safety of honey sold for public consumption.
- Bee keeping equipment and tools.
- SAFCOL procured honey extractors, bee suits, and smokers, for the cooperative to ensure safety precautions/measures are applied during honey harvesting and hive management.
- **Lumber:** Lumber was donated to the cooperative from SAFCOL's sawmill for them to manufacture their own bee hives since they have the skill in-house.
- **Beekeeping licences:** SAFCOL

"We would like to thank SAFCOL for the assistance they have given to us and bringing us partners such as MDA to help our businesses grow and enabling us to provide for our families"

Mr Lenius Malapane, Member of the Cooperative

permitted the cooperative to place hives at SAFCOL plantations.

- **Beehive boxes:** The collaboration between SAFCOL and the MDA resulted in the cooperative receiving an additional 100 beehive boxes from MDA. In addition, the cooperative gained access to markets for honey.
- **Promotional materials:** SAFCOL further supported the entity with promotional materials to enable them to access the market.
- Estimated SAFCOL support cost: R180 000.00.



SIHLE SIVE AND RALLY BUSINESS CONSULTANTS - SAFCOL

Location: Various plantations in SAFCOL

Initiated: 2019

Duration: 6 years

Partnering with UNIDO (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sihle Sive (Pty) Ltd and Rally Business Consultants (Pty) Ltd are 100% black women owned forestry contractors specialising in silviculture both based in Mpumalanga. The two contractors operate at SAFCOL's various plantations as silviculture contractors. They collectively employ over five hundred and seventy-seven (577) local residents for silviculture operations. Their passion for forestry has led them from being classified as Exempt Micro Enterprises (EME) to Qualifying Small Enterprises (QSE). Their forest management expertise and the assistance provided by SAFCOL's enterprise and supplier development programme have enabled them to secure silviculture contracts with other companies in the forest industry. The company Directors provide voluntary mentorship to other black women-owned forestry companies.



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Job creation and contributing towards SAFCOL's production targets.
- Implement training programmes and capacity-building initiatives tailored to the specific needs of these contractors, enhancing their skills and competitiveness in the industry.

“Through the ongoing support from SAFCOL, our company has achieved the following significant milestones: Grown from being a B-BBEE Exempted Micro Enterprise to a Qualifying Small Enterprise; Achieving NOSA 4-star grading for 4 consecutive years (2021 – 2024); Invested in a state-of-the-art office space; Full ownership of five labour carriers and two multipurpose fire tenders; Diversified the business to include new businesses in: Occupational Health – Medical Surveillances and Training in Qualifications and Skills Programmes as per the accreditation with the QCTO, FP&MSETA, Services SETA and Department of Labour. Supporting other women owned enterprises that are in the Silviculture business space. Through the business opportunity, breakthrough and support that SAFCOL gave us as a company, I can proudly say Rally Business Consulting is now a sustainable business!”

Rally Business Consulting CEO

- Establish partnerships with institutions to provide access to capital and financial resources for investment in equipment, technology, and infrastructure.
 - Facilitate networking opportunities and mentorship programmes to foster collaboration and knowledge-sharing among black-owned women forestry contractors.
 - Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation to track progress, identify challenges, and make necessary adjustments to ensure the success of the initiative.
 - Create a database of job opportunities within SAFCOL operations and collaborate with local communities to facilitate recruitment and employment opportunities for residents.
 - Foster sustainable forest management practices through awareness campaigns, training workshops, and incentivising environmentally responsible behaviour among contractors and community members.
- **Capacity building programmes:** Implemented training programmes and capacity-building initiatives tailored to the specific needs of these contractors, enhancing their skills and competitiveness in the industry.
 - A short learning programme with the University of Mpumalanga was offered to capacitate forestry contractors with business management skills.
 - **Forestry equipment and tools:** SAFCOL in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) procured forestry tools and equipment for these contractors to an estimated value of more than R100 000.00.
 - A forestry mentorship programme was provided by an external service provider to assist the contractor in improving productivity and compliance. In addition to providing mentoring sessions, SAFCOL management uses its internal expertise to assist these forestry companies in achieving efficiency and adhering to the best practices of SAFCOL.
 - Estimated cost of support from SAFCOL exceeds R 400 000.00 for both entities.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

Following a thorough analysis, two Black women owned companies were provided with non-financial support in the following forms:

ESD PROGRAMME - SAPPI FORESTS

Location: KwaZulu-Natal,
Mpumalanga, Gauteng
Initiated: 2018
Duration: Ongoing

*Partnership with NBI,
SEDA, NYDA, DCCI, IDC,
SEDA, MEGA, Ithala
Bank, Trioplus*



PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Since its inception in 2018, the Sappi ESD programme has developed several SMEs by providing training and mentorship through various courses and programmes such as HR management, chainsaw operation, financial and HR system implementation, costing and pricing, rep training for supervisors, first-aid, firefighting, fire marshal, OHS and SHE, incident investigation, legal liability, RTMS and advanced driver training as well as handling of hazardous chemicals, harvesting, silviculture and chemical spray weeding and weed control. To date 52 SMEs - specifically related to Forests - have benefitted from this training, of which 36 are now suppliers to Sappi in KZN and in MPU 58 have been through the programme, with 13 supplying services to Sappi, directly or indirectly.

One example of this successful enterprise and supplier development partnership, was the establishment of an MOU between Sappi Southern Africa and the Ithala Development

“Thank you Sappi for entrusting us with the task of being a strategic partner in transforming the lives of ordinary citizens in our province. Partnering with the private sector who share our values of driving socio-economic transformation in the province is a key ingredient in supporting the provincial government’s economic recovery plan.”

Mr Sihle Mkhize, Ithala Development Finance Corporation, Chairman of the Board of Directors

Finance Corporation Limited (IDFC) when Sanele Mkhize, MD of KZN transport company Exodec 384 established his fleet by taking delivery of three brand new state-of-the-art Mercedes trucks valued at R11.6 million. In terms of the MOU, IDFC provides the financing to SMEs who are part of the Sappi Enterprise Supplier Development (ESD) programme and Sappi provides the training and development and access to market through the provision of long-term contracts. Exodec is now a transport provider to Sappi Forests in KZN.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Advancing economic transformation in South Africa by upskilling SMEs and fast-tracking the preferential procurement of goods and services from previously disadvantaged individuals or businesses.



KHULISA: A 40 YEAR SUCCESS STORY - SAPPI FORESTS

Location: Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, communities neighbouring various Sappi operations

Initiated: 1983

Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Our Sappi Khulisa tree-farming initiative celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2023, marking it as our most enduring example of creating positive social impact and shared value. Integral to our woodfibre supply chain, it bolsters the security of our fibre supply while uplifting rural communities. By equipping them to participate sustainably in the forestry value chain, the programme has expanded from individual landowners to encompass community forestry projects and land-reform beneficiaries.

During 2023 there were 37,269 ha of land managed through Sappi Khulisa, which delivered 318,116 tons of timber worth ZAR332,6 million to our operations. There

are currently 4,143 growers involved in the programme, as well as 942 small, medium and micro-enterprises who are involved in silviculture, harvesting, loading, short and long-haul activities.

Since 1995, Sappi has purchased 5,187 906 tons to the value of ZAR3,334 billion from small growers. Training has been provided to 471 Khulisa growers and SMMs in the value chain on 20 different forestry business management-related courses. We have also established 16 incubation initiatives in collaboration with contractors whereby SMEs were sub-contracted to perform services, while also being trained on technical, operational and management skills.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Sappi provides high-quality seedlings, carefully selecting site-specific species for optimal yield. These genetically superior seedlings are produced in Sappi's nurseries after years of research. Dedicated Sappi Khulisa foresters offer ongoing extension services, providing expert advice to growers.

“We have a strong relationship with Sappi and they have played an instrumental role in our development. They have shared forestry knowledge that has enabled us to expand our business. We have now employed 90 people from our community and roped in a few business professionals to work with us. Forestry is the most stable field in the world today and I would encourage all small farmers to treat their farms as businesses and set out objectives in order to reach the next level.”

Sihle Sibisi, Khulisa Farmer in Jolivet- Highflats

As international demand for Sappi's products grows, the company ensures a secure future market by purchasing timber from growers at fair, market-related prices. Additionally, Sappi offers interest-free loans to cover farming input costs, including annual plantation maintenance until harvesting. Growers receive advances for their work during the 8-10 year growing cycle. Encouraging collaboration, Sappi emphasises the importance of

developing not only growers but also other participants in the Forestry Value Chain, including silviculture and harvesting contractors, transporters, and support services.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Sappi employs 32 full-time foresters and support personnel in its Khulisa department.

“I was young when my father Alson Mpangela joined Khulisa, but the forestry bug got me early in life as I would accompany him to work on the plots. The soil is a powerful natural resource and working in forestry has benefitted our family in a huge way. I am happy that Sappi is now bringing silviculture contractors on board, as they help us to re-plant our plots – the future looks bright for our family!”

Velemseni-Mpangela, KwaMbonambi Zululand South District



PHUMLANI CAR WASH - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Simile Location, Sabie,
Mpumalanga
Initiated: 2023
Duration: 2 years

PROJECT OVERVIEW

As part of the Enterprise Development (ED) Programme, we have established three car wash bays within York Timbers. The car wash bays are operated by an Enterprise Development Beneficiary from Sabie. The ED Programme seeks to support disadvantaged communities and promote entrepreneurship thus strengthening local economies.

The three wash bays are located at the Sabie Mill, York Fleet Solutions, and the Finance office. All the employees were urged to support this initiative by sending their cars to one of the locations to be washed. This car wash is only for York employees and company vehicles.

Here are the benefits of having a car wash in the workplace:

- **Convenience:** Employees don't have to go out of their way to



have their cars cleaned, saving you time and effort.

- **Cost savings:** The car wash will be at a reasonable cost compared to other car wash.
- **Improved employee morale:** Providing convenient services like an on-site car wash has proven to improve employee satisfaction and morale.
- **Increased productivity:** Having an on-site car wash can save employees time and they can be more productive at work since they don't need to spend time driving to a car wash in town or waiting in line.



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Three pressure washers and three vacuum cleaners to the value of R89 700.00.
- Soap from soapreme clean to the value of R 10 111.12.
- Branding to the value of R13 437.98.

- Personal Protective Equipment to the value of R4 925.77

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Donation of tools to the total value of R 118 174.87

DM CREATIVE - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Simile Location, Sabie, Mpumalanga

Initiated: 01 May 2023

Duration: 2 years

Partnership with Sabie Mill and Plywood

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The objective of integrating DM Creative, a wood-making enterprise, into our Enterprise Development initiative is to foster sustainable economic growth by promoting craftsmanship, creating job opportunities, and leveraging local resources. This will enhance the local community's skill set, stimulate entrepreneurship, and contribute to the broader development of the creative and manufacturing sectors.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Training at Furntech to the value of R 55 000.00.



RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Training.
- Donation of tools and equipment to the total value of R 179 068.34.
- Transport to go to the college: R13 600.00.
- Branding: R8 370.85.
- Building material from builders warehouse R54 086.00.
- PPE: R2 926.76.
- Timber from Sabie Mill and Plywood: R45 084.73.

“Your corporate sponsorship has been an incredible benefit to our team and organisation, and we are grateful for your kindness. Thank you York Timber.”

DM Creative



Investing in COMMUNITY UPLIFTMENT

Investments in community upliftment yield substantial economic and social benefits. Improved community well-being leads to a more stable and productive society, which in turn creates a favorable environment for businesses to thrive. Additionally, such investments can enhance a company's reputation and strengthen its relationship with the community.

The Forestry Sector plays a major economic role in many rural communities, who look to FSA members for support, guidance and engagement on a broad spectrum of projects and initiatives, that aid in the development and growth of their communities. These projects build ties between communities and the private and public sectors that will ultimately benefit future generations.



THE MONDI MKHONDO AGRI-VILLAGE PROJECT

- MONDI SOUTH AFRICA



Location: Mkhondo, Mpumalanga

Initiated: 2009

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with government agencies, local municipalities and non-governmental organisations

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Mondi Mkhondo Agri-Village Project, 2009, is a pioneering public-private partnership aimed at addressing land tenure, poverty alleviation and sustainable rural development in South Africa. The project began in Mkhondo, Mpumalanga, where over 9,500 people lived in 62 impoverished villages without secure tenure, municipal services or employment opportunities.

The pilot project consolidated five small villages into one sustainable agri-village, Jabulani, which now provides 110 permanent homes for 500 people. The community benefits from basic services, access to land for vegetable gardens, and economic opportunities. The village also features modern infrastructure, such as schools, community centres, and street lighting. The project has been developed through multi-dimensional partnerships, addressing critical issues like land security, food production, skills development, and social infrastructure. Following the success of Jabulani, eight more agri-villages are in development, set to benefit over 3,000 people. This initiative exemplifies a reproducible model of rural development, offering a holistic solution to enhance the well-being of vulnerable communities and promote long-term sustainability.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- **Land:** Mondi's land in Mkhondo serves as the foundation for the development of the agri-village.
- **Financial Resources:** Funding from Mondi and its public-private partnerships to cover the costs of building infrastructure, housing, and developing social services.
- **Construction and Infrastructure Development:** Contractors and engineers involved in constructing permanent housing, roads, sanitation systems, electricity infrastructure, and other community facilities such as schools and community centres.
- **Agricultural Inputs:** Resources to support agriculture, such as land for vegetable gardens, seeds, and tools for farming activities that promote food security and livelihoods.
- **Training and Capacity Building:** Skills development programmes and business training for residents to ensure they can manage agricultural enterprises, participate in community development, and sustain the project.



SISONKE WOMEN'S CLUB - NTE & MS BUYISILE MDUNGE

Location: Mbuba Location, Greytown

(Kwazulu-Natal)

Initiated: 2020

Duration: Four years

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Mbuba location is no different from many other rural areas in South Africa which are overwhelmed by the most difficult living conditions and are hardest hit by poverty and unemployment. Many households in Matimatolo are headed by women, most of them are widowed and when death comes, not only women, but many families battle to bury their loved ones. The majority of people depend on social grants as they live from hand to mouth and are left with no money to spare for a funeral plan. This social problem triggered

Mrs Buyisile Maureen Mdunge to stand up and to start something that can have a positive social impact on her women neighbours. In 2020, Mrs Mdunge

started and launched a Club called Sisonke Women's Club (meaning we are together) with four other women who are also neighbours. Since its launch, the Club has grown and currently has a total membership of fifteen (15) people, of which thirteen of them are women and two are men. Every member of the Club contributes R 100 per month, and the money is deposited into the Club's bank account. Each member can cover up to thirteen (13) family members.

When a member loses a loved one through death, the club contributes R 4 000 cash and buys groceries worth R 3000. In the unfortunate event when the main member dies, the Club contributes an amount of R 6000 cash as well as groceries at a value of R 3000. According to Mrs Mdunge, members have seen the value of the Club and have encouraged her to grow it because it has touched their lives in many positive ways.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human resources.



“We live in times of rising cost of living. When you have nothing at all, even a R 100 note is a lot of money. Encouraging and gathering people to make little efforts is what makes a huge difference.”

Mrs Mdunge

ABASHINTSHI YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME: DEVELOPING OUR YOUTH TO BECOME LEADERS - SAPPI FORESTS

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, communities neighbouring various Sappi operations

Initiated: 2015

Duration: Ongoing

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Within our community development we look at programmes that promote social cohesion in our communities and foster nation building through leadership development. One such programme is the Sappi Abashintshi Youth Leadership Development Programme. The programme started as a mobilisation programme back in 2015 as part of Sappi's strategy to build sustainable relationships with communities surrounding its operations, to improve community relations and manage business risk by applying the asset-based community development (ABCD) approach.

There are 91 active Abashintshi who continue to provide ABCD training and who arrange holiday programmes and sports and recreation activities in their communities. Individuals who show strong entrepreneurial acumen, are mentored and guided by the Sappi ESD team to look at ways to grow into business owners.



“The Abashintshi programme is helpful in my life, it changed my lifestyle, I learnt to appreciate my life and start taking responsibility. I manage to make money on my own, am my own boss, am setting big goals for myself.”

Phindile Dlamini, Abashintshi Beneficiary

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- A social mobilisation and community development initiative to involve the rural communities living in and around Sappi's operations in taking responsibility for their own futures; instead of waiting for work or development to arrive from outside.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Interaction on a regular basis with Sappi's Stakeholder Relations officers, with the local foresters in the areas where they operate, and with HR Training and ESD (Enterprise Supplier Development) Department.



“My business is going very well because I receive orders every weekend. I am grateful for the Abashintshi in our community because they give us fresh ideas to use to uplift our livelihoods.”

Sibongile Lungwase from Mqadi who owns a started up a business inspired by local Umshintshi



WOMEN EMPOWERMENT EVENT - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Nganga Village, Warburton, Mpumalanga
Initiated: 2023
Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Old Mutual, Anova Health, Broadreach Health, Mobile Clinic, Occupational Therapist and Psychologist

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Women today face multifaceted challenges that impact their overall well-being. Spiritual disconnection, financial insecurity and mental health struggles are prevalent issues that often go unaddressed. This event was designed to create a supportive space where women could explore and enhance their spiritual lives, gain financial literacy, and develop strategies for maintaining mental wellness. The holistic empowerment for women event aims to create a lasting positive impact on the lives of the participants, equipping them with the resources and confidence to thrive in all aspects of life.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Empowerment on health issues.
- Financial wellbeing.
- Mental wellbeing.
- Spiritual wellbeing.
- Life in general.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

R10K for gifts and refreshments for all the women in attendance. The Human Capital Team was also in attendance running the programme and ensuring that everything went smoothly.

CHRISTMAS TOY DRIVE - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Simile Location, Sabie, Mpumalanga
Initiated: 2023
Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Caltex Bakery, individual donors and Ward Councillors

PROJECT OVERVIEW

On December 13th, the Human Capital Team, led by the Chief Human Capital Officer, embarked on a heartwarming mission to bring joy to the lives of the residents of Simile and Harmony Hill. The purpose of their visit was clear – to extend acts of kindness and bring smiles to the faces of children by delivering Christmas toys. The generosity of York Timbers' employees, combined with the Executive's

commitment, resulted in a collection of toys and tinned food, which were distributed to underprivileged children and families facing financial challenges. In a collaborative effort, York Timbers partnered with Caltex Bakery, who graciously donated 30 loaves of bread that were shared among the families. The entire initiative was conducted in the presence of Ward Councillors, adding to a sense of community involvement.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- New and pre-loved toys.
- Non-perishable food.
- 30 Loaves of bread from Caltex bakery.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Human Resources.

WINTER DRIVE - YORK TIMBERS

Location: Mpumalanga, Simile Location, Sabie

Initiated: 2023

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Twypack/Indigo and Individual Donors



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The winter drive was launched to address the urgent need for warm clothing and blankets among vulnerable individuals and children facing the harsh winter season. The drive aimed to collect and distribute essential winter items to ensure their warmth and safety. The primary goal of the winter drive was to gather donations of new or gently used warm clothing, including coats, sweaters, hats, gloves, scarves, and blankets as well as non-perishable food items and citrus fruits. By mobilizing community resources and encouraging local participation, the drive sought to provide these necessary items to those in need, preventing cold-related illnesses and improving overall well-being.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- At the Simile Old Age Home, we donated fleece blankets, winter clothes, 2 x luggage bags, non-perishable foods and 1 bin of citrus fruits.
- At the Masiphakamisane Child Care Centre, we donated clothes, non-perishable foods, ration packs and 1 bin of citrus fruits.
- At the Sunrise Day Care Centre, we painted the outside of the house, one room inside including the ceiling. We also donated clothes for the kids, non-perishable foods, rations packs and 1 bin of citrus fruits which were also shared with the neighbours.
- At Ekuthuleni Day Care Centre, we assisted with cleaning the yard, painted inside and outside including the jungle gym. We also donated blankets, clothes, non-perishable foods, ration packs and one bin of citrus fruits.
- Sabie Schools Citrus Donations.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- New and previously loved clothes and warm blankets.
- Non-perishable food.
- Paints and brushes.
- 12 bins of citrus fruits.
- Human Resources.

Investing in RECREATION

The South African Forestry Industry recognises the importance of promoting outdoor recreation and conservation. The following projects demonstrate the industry's commitment to providing accessible and sustainable recreational opportunities, while also driving economic growth and community development.

Through strategic partnerships and collaborative initiatives, these projects aim to promote eco-tourism, job creation, and environmental stewardship. By leveraging the industry's natural assets, these initiatives create shared value for local communities, enthusiasts of outdoor activities, and the environment, ultimately contributing to a more sustainable and equitable future.



COMMUNITY SOCCER TOURNAMENT - MDS TIMBERS

Location: Indaleni (Barton Heights) and Inkumane (Solitude), Richmond
Initiated: 2022
Duration: Ongoing

Partnering with Farm Contractors

PROJECT OVERVIEW

It is important to uplift the youth of the community, build relationships within the community and be able to assist with the development and growth of the community.

One area in need of developing is sport. The soccer tournaments encourage the youth to untap their potential and develop skills, as well as encouraging them to opt for healthy lifestyle choices. It will also work as a platform for promoting community responsibility, in particular, taking care of the environment and avoiding fires in uncontrolled zones.

“We are very pleased to see that MDS Timbers has contributed to the community and have given children the opportunity to play a sport they love and develop themselves.”

Mayor Ngcengo



PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Youth beneficiaries putting their potential to practice at the tournament.
- Send out a message that sport does not just have to be just for fun but can be shifted into a career level sport.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Financing tournament expenses - soccer kits and food parcels.
- Supplying water.



#EMPOWERHER PROGRAMME - SAPPI FORESTS

Location: KwaZulu-Natal, communities
neighbouring various Sappi
operations

Initiated: 2023

Duration: Ongoing

*Partnership with KZN Netball and
LoveLife*



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sappi launched the #EmpowerHer programme - a community sport initiative to address certain societal challenges, faced particularly by young women in our communities. Whilst the programme is currently targeted to the areas around our manufacturing operations, this is set to expand into our forestry communities within the near future. The programme was launched in collaboration with KZN Netball and trained 24 previously unemployed young people to become accredited netball coaches and umpires. In addition to promoting healthy lifestyles through active netball leagues, we also partnered with LoveLife, a youth health NGO, to equip the coaches with addressing some crucial topics like teenage pregnancy, period poverty and ways to combat violence against women and girls.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- Training previously unemployed young people to become accredited netball coaches and umpires.
- Establishing netball leagues in communities and providing basic equipment necessary.
- Equipping coaches with the skills to address issues of societal importance.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Providing training and equipment.

“The initiative has shown me and the girls and young women in the programme that playing netball is not just about having fun but also a way to compete and unearth talent as well as expose you to different opportunities. As a coach, I use my influence to talk about social challenges like teen pregnancy. Being part of a programme like this helps me to positively influence young girls and keep them busy and focus on something positive.”
**Mthoko Mqadi,
Sappi EmpowerHer
Coach**





THE SAPPI TRAILS PROGRAMME SAPPI FORESTS

Location: KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, communities neighbouring various Sappi operations

Initiated: 2011

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Karkloof Club (KZN), Mankele and Tranquilitas (MPU)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

As part of the Sappi Trails Programme launched in 2011, we granted access to our plantations for recreational trail running, hiking, and mountain biking. Recently, Sappi entrusted the custodianship of the breathtaking Karkloof Falls, located on our land, to the Karkloof Country Club. By professionally managing the Falls, the club is poised to expand its role in tourism and conservation within the valley, inviting other stakeholders and partners to join in this exciting journey. Beyond granting access to our preserved biodiversity lands, which constitute one-third of our unplanted holdings, we collaborate with trail partners to create networks that drive broad-based economic benefits, aligning with SDG8's goal of promoting decent work and economic growth.

The club's vision extends beyond mere sports and recreation; they aim to leverage their access to the 250 kilometres of pristine trails on our property to boost the local economy through job creation and community outreach initiatives, aligning with Sappi's commitment to utilising our natural assets for shared value. An excellent example of this collaboration is the Nguni Trails team, which emerged from our support of the Karkloof Adventure Tourism Incubator (Karkloof ATI). The team is now contracted by the club to provide trail building and maintenance services. Additionally, the Karkloof Club has hired 10 staff members and actively supports a local school and crèche.

Research by Tourism KZN has shown that the annual Sappi-sponsored Karkloof event creates a total economic impact of R6,88million, and recreational riding has grown to provide an overall annual economic impact of R231million in the region. Mankele (near Sudwala Caves) and





“The Karkloof Country Club now plays a pivotal role in the entire community. What started as a mountain bike race, is now a world class trail network, employment and education provider and outdoor tourism destination for tens of thousands of people annually. Our long-term partner relationship with Sappi not only started this process, but continues to develop this extremely successful community project.”

Andrew Nicholson, Chairman, Karkloof Country Club

Tranquilitas (Near Waterval Boven) are Sappi’s current partners in Mpumalanga, offering an exciting range of riding and running trails as well as accommodation and recreational facilities, also catering for families with young children.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Through collaboration and development of strategic partnerships, we will grow the positive economic impacts of recreational and event access to Sappi land.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Sappi employs a consultant who manages all relationships between custodians of the various recreational clubs on its behalf.
- Clubs and organisations enter into access agreements with Sappi regarding the custodianship of the trails on Sappi land.





THE MAGOEBASKLOOF MTB CHALLENGE - MERENSKY TIMBER PTY LTD

Location: Christinasrust Plantation and
Faerie Glen Westfalia

Initiated: 2020

Duration: Ongoing

*Partnership with Tzaneen Cycling Club, MIAMI
Canners, Westfalia*

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Merensky plantations located in Limpopo offer a unique blend of commercial forestry and recreational and competitive mountain biking opportunities. Merensky management was approached by the Tzaneen cycling club to allow them to host their annual mountain bike race on Merensky property. These plantations, primarily consisting of *Eucalyptus* trees, have become a hub for mountain biking enthusiasts, fostering partnerships between forestry management and the biking community. Tzaneen Cycling club with their collaborators held successful races on Merensky property. The aim in future will be to establish trails and manage access, while ensuring rider safety and minimising risk.

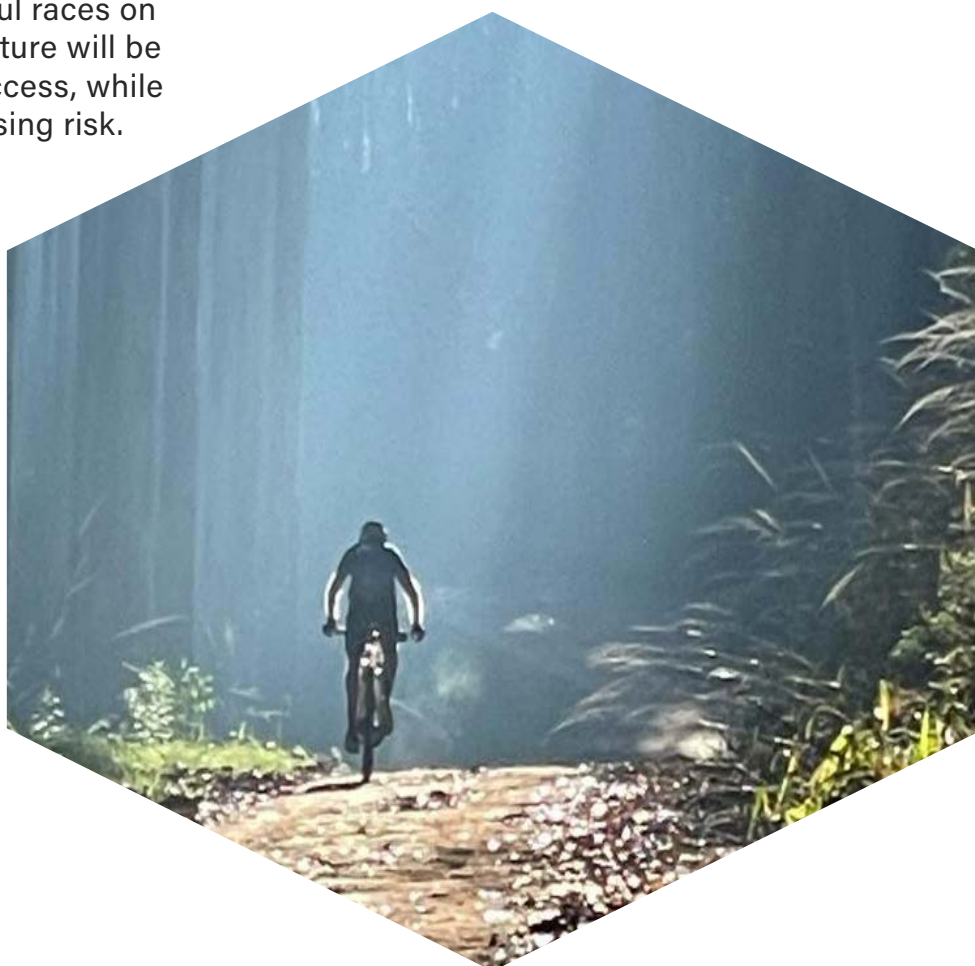
*“Every mountain top is
within reach if you just
keep pedaling.”*

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Our plantations are ideal mountain bike trail terrain. Adding value to stakeholders by making our plantations available as mountain bike trails and create strategic partnerships with the mountain biking fraternity. Help the sport grow at recreational and competitive level.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

Human resource and tools.



Investing in the ENVIRONMENT

Prioritising environmental sustainability in CSI aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 13, which calls for urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. By investing in environmental initiatives, corporations contribute to global efforts to achieve these targets, fostering sustainable development.

The South African government has implemented policies to encourage corporate involvement in environmental sustainability. The National Framework for Sustainable Development emphasises integrating sustainability as a key component of development, highlighting the importance of environmental protection alongside economic and social development.

The forestry landscape is a patchwork in nature, with around 30% of forestry land remaining permanently unplanted, two-thirds of which remains natural and semi-natural ecosystems, including over 61 000 hectares of indigenous forests, 171 000 hectares of grassland and just under 60 000 hectares of waterbodies. These are managed, monitored and maintained by the Forestry Industry and through working with governmental departments, environmental NGOs and research institutes these natural areas in the heart of our plantations could have a central role in the protection and conservation of ecological services and biodiversity, for benefit of future generations.

CHAIR OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND PLANTATION SUSTAINABILITY - SAPPI FOREST

Initiated: 2023

Duration: Until 2026

Partnership with the University of Witwatersrand

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The inauguration of the Sappi Chair in Climate Change and Plantation Sustainability at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, was a notable achievement during 2023. Professor Mary Scholes, who is an internationally recognised authority on tree physiology and climate change and who is affiliated with the research platform in the Wits School of Animal, Plants and Environmental Sciences, will act as the Research Chair.

The Chair will concentrate on the development of essential research needs and outputs concerning climate change. It will also prioritise the growth and mentorship of budding academics and researchers, facilitated by funding for a post-doctoral fellow and scholarships for a Master's and an Honours student.

In response to the escalating global demand for precise accounting of greenhouse gas emissions from forests, land, and agriculture,



Professor Scholes will spearhead the enhancement of skills to manipulate and interpret climate modelling data.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

- The enhancement of skills to manipulate and interpret climate modelling data to the benefit of the Forestry Industry.

“The partners from universities, industry, and Forestry South Africa are for the first time working closely together on the details of plant responses to climate change and the application of the climate data. In 2025, we will continue with the climate modelling workshops, streamlining the accessibility of climate data, examining the changing fire regimes, and linking plant responses to climate change at variable spatial and temporal scales; from leaf level to plantations. We thank Sappi for the ongoing collaboration.”

Professor Mary Scholes, Research Chair, Climate Change and Plantation Sustainability, Wits

THE SAPPI/WWF WATER STEWARDSHIP PARTNERSHIP

SAPPI FORESTS

Location: uMkhomazi Catchment,
KwaZulu-Natal

Initiated: 2021

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with WWF SA and INR

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Sappi has extended its partnership for a further four years in the Sappi-WWF Water Stewardship project in the uMkhomazi catchment area. Where Phase One set the platform for the establishment of positive stakeholder engagement and the creation of environmental improvement projects (which included alien clearing (83ha of wattle), erosion control and better rangeland management (13,402ha) and included the creation of 24 jobs and the upskilling of an additional 65 community members); Phase Two focuses on managing water risk by securing water through proper water governance and through the establishment of a single agreed governance structure for water management in the entire catchment.

Other key focus areas include continued ecological restoration, better land use, improved socioeconomic well-being of communities and the identification of opportunities for additional partnerships through the development of a sustainable finance model.



One of the notable outcomes to date is the Sappi/WWF team partnering with the Institute of Natural Resources (INR) to help local farmers restore their grazing lands and enhance livestock quality, boosting their income from cattle farming. The INR led efforts to remove invasive wattle trees, trained farmers and 'eco-rangers'—who oversee the cattle, rotate



grazing areas, prevent wildfires and theft, and contribute to land rehabilitation, through bioturbation and other innovative methods. Managed by participating cattle owners, the eco-rangers were educated by Meat Naturally on sustainable grazing, land recovery, and herd management.

Meat Naturally has also initiated a travelling auction,



providing farmers with opportunities to sell their cattle and access new markets.

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

In the uMkhomazi catchment area, we aim to understand water needs, engage multiple stakeholders, dispel misconceptions about plantation water use, create a water roadmap, conserve freshwater resources, and generate green jobs for sustainable livelihoods. The desired outcomes of the partnership are improved water security, improved biodiversity, positive social impact, and sustainable income for the communities.

“The partnership with Sappi is crucial, as WWF cannot work on its own to secure these important Strategic Water Source Areas. It is only through collaborative partnerships with corporates such as Sappi, who are also large landowners, that we can begin to support a social change process for improved governance and management of our water resources at a landscape and catchment level such as in the uMkhomazi. This will ensure that in the future we will have some water, for everybody, forever.”

David Lindley, WWF Partnership Manager

SAPPI RARE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED SPECIES STEWARDSHIP PROGRAMME - SAPPI FORESTS

Location: Sappi Forests

Initiated: 2013

Duration: Ongoing

Partnership with Agricultural Research Council. SANPARKS and KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife, Priscillavale farms, Mpumalanga Parks, Twinstreams Nursery, Silverglen Nursery, Fort Hare University, Nobantu Charity Trust, Biodiversity Trust

PROJECT OVERVIEW

With approximately 80% of Africa's population relying on traditional medicine for their essential health needs, the Sappi Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species Stewardship Programme is dedicated to safeguarding trees from excessive harvesting for medicinal purposes. Through successful collaboration with industry partners- Agricultural Research Council. SANPARKS and KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife and associated parties - the critically endangered *Warburgia salutaris* (Pepperbark tree) has been provided and as such reducing the unsustainable wild harvesting and reducing the anticipated full extinction of the species

in the wild. Sappi was alerted to the plight of the trees during 2013, when the groundwork being undertaken by the Kruger National Park (which included using armed guards to protect a grove of Pepper Bark trees that were under constant attack by poachers) was highlighted. Support for the efforts of the KNP established the first focal point for the Sappi project, which has subsequently expanded in scope and geography. A pivotal initiative, driven by Sappi's Forestry R&D team, has resulted in innovative germination and propagation methods of cuttings and sourcing of seeds from an orchard planted in 1996. To date, over 130,000 seedlings have been cultivated, with approximately 95,000 saplings thriving after transplantation. This project provides a practical blueprint for nurturing endangered trees that pose cultivation challenges yet hold significant roles in traditional medicine.

The upcoming phase of the programme, following consultations with local communities and conservation agencies, will focus on *Prunus africana* (African Cherry), *Ocotea bullata* (Black Stinkwood), and *Curtisia dentata* (Assegai tree).

PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Working with the traditional healers of the surrounding local communities to offer a safe and sustainable supply of the tree components for use by the traditional healers to the benefit of the surrounding communities. Researching innovative and sustainable methods to propagate seedlings and cuttings and growing and strategically placing legacy orchards to ensure a viable seed supply for the future. Assisting in developing a National Strategy to ensure the sustainability of the



tree species. Running community workshops with traditional healers and community members and providing them with the trees and growing materials and assistance.

RESOURCES EMPLOYED

- Sappi Forests Research.

“The project’s success lies in understanding end-users’ needs by collaborating with social ecologists who are mandated by their relative organs of state to support the communities through the sustainable use of the biodiversity of South Africa. These needs are combined with expert knowledge to address germination and propagation challenges. The project implements sustainable growing protocols, distributing plants to communities through social ecologists. This is a truly sustainable project using simple protocols and solutions to provide a closed-circuit solution.”

Tim Neary, Environmental consultant



IN CONCLUSION

Norman Dlamini

Upon reviewing our socio-economic investments and innovative solutions over the past three years, we reaffirm our commitment to a sustainable and inclusive forestry sector in South Africa. Our collective efforts have yielded significant progress across eight key areas: education, health and wellbeing, food security, community development, enterprise growth, environmental conservation, and recreation. These initiatives have improved the lives of thousands and contributed to the long-term sustainability of our industry. As we move forward, we

anticipate increased collaboration, innovation, and impact. Together, we will strive to balance economic, social, and environmental imperatives, fostering a resilient and thriving Forestry Sector.





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