

# Simba and Heifer launch Blouberg project

In order to uplift and invest in the communities in which Simba operates, the company has initiated various sustainable community farming projects over the past few years. Simba is a wholly owned subsidiary of PepsiCo.



PepsiCorps team: Back L-R Brett Townsend, USA; Kristin Danganan, USA; Stephanie Taffe, USA; Mike Jolley, UK. Front L-R Silvia Cruz-Vargas, Colombia; Maggie Connors, USA; Syed Kazmi, Pakistan; Palmira Camargo, Mexico

Simba's latest project is in partnership with Heifer International South Africa, which focuses on ending hunger and poverty in South Africa and sustaining the earth.

This month eight PepsiCo associates from around the globe, all participants in the company's PepsiCorps programme, have travelled to Limpopo to assist Heifer on the Blouberg project.

PepsiCorps is a skills-based volunteer programme that affords PepsiCo employees, from around the globe, an opportunity to make a positive impact by dedicating their knowledge, business skills and time to help local communities address societal change. The PepsiCorps programme is a realisation of the company's performance with purpose agenda allowing PepsiCo employees to gain perspective, insights and skills, which they can then bring back into the business, while using their current skills to improve the lives of disadvantaged communities.

## Productive farmers

The Blouberg project is based about 70km from Polokwane in an area affected by high rates of unemployment and an increasing number of child-headed households due to HIV/AIDS related deaths. The project will provide the community, consisting predominantly of women and children, with the training, skills and resources necessary to become more productive farmers and keep livestock.

The goal is to provide the community with the means and knowledge to provide an ongoing income and improve their living conditions. Key to the Heifer project is the concept of passing on the gift, which allows participants, once established, to pass on the equivalent of livestock, seeds and training to ensure the continuity and growth of the programme.

The PepsiCorps team working on the Blouberg project is made up of volunteers with different cultural and business backgrounds from America, United Kingdom, Mexico and Saudi Arabia. Over the following four weeks the team will pass on their gift of knowledge and experience to jump-start the project by working with the community to conduct value chain analyses and business development plans for the local Farmers Business Association, the Community Animal Health Workers Association as well as the Youth Honey Business, a new project designed to provide an income from bee keeping and honey production.

## **Key is knowledge**

"The contribution that the PepsiCorps team will make to the Blouberg project, passing on their knowledge and experience, are key to the current projects that Simba is involved with in Limpopo and other parts of the country. It is especially relevant in that it also focuses on the most marginalised in these communities - the women and children," says Arnold Selokane, CSI manager at Simba.

Simba has also increased the focus on community engagement projects by aligning with the University of Mpumalanga, previously Lowveld College of Agriculture. 15 learners have been enrolled and funded by Simba to do a three year diploma in Plant Production. 25 students have been put through the programme since its inception in 2010. Once completed with their studies, these learners will be placed at the community farms to conduct their experiential training and in so doing imparting knowledge and skills for the betterment of their communities.

"These projects will improve the quality and reduce the risks of potato production by improving the knowledge base of potato farmers. Simba believes it makes good business sense to invest in and uplift the communities where we do business and we believe other organisations can leverage the project and make it grow," concludes Selokane.

For more, go to <http://heifer.org.za>

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