

Investing in the future of Southern Africa through education

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As long-term investors, we believe that success comes from a lasting commitment, and that true empowerment stems from more than just a donation, no matter how large. It requires consistency, dedication, and a willingness to make a difference over many years, as what we do today needs to have the ability to empower people into the future. We believe that education lies at the heart of breaking the cycle of poverty: it empowers individuals to become meaningful participants in our society, improving their lives and uplifting communities along the way. Because of this deep-rooted belief, educational investments are at the heart of M&G Investments' corporate social investment (CSI) programme.

Through a variety of selected initiatives, we aim to help develop human talent, realise individual potential, and transfer practical skills to young, bright minds in the communities in which we operate and where our staff hail from. We believe the best way to achieve this is to partner with successful, like-minded organisations that are already making a real difference in the special areas in which they operate.

This year, we partnered with 12 different organisations focused on uplifting deserving communities through education at the foundation, intermediate and senior phases, including the S.A. Medical and Education (SAME) Foundation, LEAP Science and Maths Schools, Life Matters, ABC for Life, Amoyo and Kwano Academy.

We have long-standing partnerships with LEAP, Life Matters and ABC for Life, which offer high-quality education to students from underprivileged communities. For LEAP, our continuous support contributed to funding the operational expenses of their Gauteng schools in 2023, as was the case in 2022. Our partnership with Life Matters facilitated the implementation of the Literacy, Numeracy, and Life Skills Programmes at Steenberg Primary School in Cape Town. Our contribution to ABC for Life currently provides intensive literacy support to 550 foundation phase learners (Grade R-4) every month at three under-resourced schools serving some of the poorest learners in Cape Town, namely Sentinel Primary (Hangberg, Hout Bay), Hout Bay Primary (Imizamo Yethu) and Ellerton Primary (Sea Point).

In 2023, we initiated CSI partnerships with Amoyo Foundation and Kwano Academy. Through a unique approach to upskilling and empowering children through an after-school and holiday programme, Amoyo offers high-quality dance, drama and performance classes to 400 students from Imizamo Yethu and Hangberg, in Hout Bay, Cape Town. Kwano Academy is a NPO situated in Plettenberg Bay utilizing education and cycling as catalysts to uplift and academically transform historically disadvantaged youngsters and communities. We committed funding to support their IT equipment and cycling costs.

Supporting STEM education

A highlight for this year was the completion of construction of a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) centre at Letsibogo Girls High School in Soweto, Johannesburg, through our sponsorship of the S.A. Medical and Education (SAME) Foundation, a non-governmental organisation (NGO).

STEM education plays a crucial role in driving innovation, economic growth, and societal innovation. It equips learners with the critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity skills necessary to develop groundbreaking solutions to real-world challenges; and by encouraging students to explore STEM fields, South Africa can cultivate a new generation of innovators who contribute to the country's progress in a variety of economic sectors.

Around 1,500 female learners are enrolled at the school, of which 100 learners are currently participating in the robotics and coding programs. The STEM projects will encompass diverse fields such as robotics, communications, coding, and hydropower, thus nurturing the knowledge and skills of the pupils in cutting-edge scientific and technological disciplines.

The newly built 80sqm STEM centre is fully equipped with the latest technology including science, robotics and coding kits, Android tablets containing the robotics curriculum, as well as software to communicate with and control the robots they build. The centre will be the hub of school's Robotics and Coding projects program. The centre is a physical manifestation of our commitment to supporting education efforts with the aim of creating future talent for our industry and the country.

Charity starts at home

Part of our social purpose is to help uplift the communities that we come from, or in which we live. At M&G, we broaden our CSI efforts to support causes close to our people's hearts and those that we're personally involved in. Staff members can apply for much-needed funding from our CSI spend for local communities or causes. Some of the causes we supported this year include U-Turn, which provides ongoing training programmes to assist homeless members of society; MES, focusing on transforming inner cities; and Little Seeds ECD, which is dedicated to early childhood development.

Other causes we are passionate about and vital to healthy communities include St Augustine's Cricket Club and Ottoman Cricket Club, both of which provide a recreational outlet for their surrounding communities, as well as outreach programmes. Scouts SA, one of the oldest volunteer-driven educational organisations in the country also received our support, to help fund various projects throughout South Africa, including the "food project" where township youth are trained to set up and maintain a community vegetable garden.

Making a difference throughout the year

During the year, we use the opportunity of various commemorative days to bolster CSI efforts, and our staff gave generously to these initiatives. On Mandela Day, for example, the M&G SA team arranged a food and book collection drive for one of our long-standing CSI partners, LEAP, donating the much-needed items to LEAP schools in Crossroads, Cape Town and Ga-Rankuwa, north of Pretoria.

On Women's Day, M&G SA donated to the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children, which supports women and children who've endured abuse.

For Heritage Day, we hosted an initiative called "A Dish with a Difference" where staff celebrated their diverse backgrounds by bringing in traditional dishes that are representative of their respective heritages. For each dish contributed, M&G plc pledged a generous donation of £10 per dish and M&G South Africa matched the amount in rands, resulting in the donation to U-Turn doubling in value and enabling 128 individuals to escape life on the streets for a month. It serves as a moving reminder of the positive change we can bring about in our communities when we come together with compassion and generosity.

At M&G Investments we are proud of these partnerships and the opportunities they provide for us to make a meaningful difference. However, we also recognise that there is still much more to be done and we are committed to keep going for the long term, day after day.

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