

S.M.I.L.E initiative receives support from Anglo American

Anglo American's dedicated Corporate Social Investment (CSI) arm, the Chairman's Fund, is contributing to improving the standard of education in South African classrooms through the provision of funding to the St Mary's Interactive Learning Experience (S.M.I.L.E).



Since 1999, the Chairman's Fund has provided consistent financial grants to S.M.I.L.E, and recently gave R400,000 towards the training and teaching of learners in English language skills in grades four to nine.

The fund also gave an identical grant to enable the organisation to work in 10 high schools in selected districts in KwaZulu-Natal where the Principals' Management Development Programme was completed.

S.M.I.L.E chairperson Murray Mackay notes that the latest funding has proved crucial to furthering the organisation's reach and impact. "The financial assistance of the Chairman's Fund has enabled our organisation to not only provide much-needed textbooks to these schools, but to be more hands-on in offering direct support in the classroom to both the teachers and learners.

"Subsequently, the teachers have been better equipped to deliver lessons in English to their classrooms, and the learners are benefiting greatly from enhanced standards of learning."

Critical support for educational development

S.M.I.L.E, which was founded in 1991, aims to improve the quality of both teaching and learning in English as the foundation for improved proficiency in all school subjects, by training teachers in classrooms across South Africa.

To achieve this, S.M.I.L.E provides practical teacher training and support to community primary and high schools with the purpose of enabling teachers and learners to meet the standards and goals of the National Curriculum Statements (NCS).

The programme has achieved widespread impact, as it reaches 80 teachers, who in turn reach a further 17,000 pupils at

140 schools each year. Both urban and rural community school teachers participate in the programme, with S.M.I.L.E trainers in classrooms every two weeks for 10 months, teaching with S.M.I.L.E-developed curriculum material. Here they are guided on how to teach their pupils to write essays, use visual aids, get children to read, and how to work in groups.

Chairman's Fund chairperson Norman Mbazima concludes that the fund has committed to this initiative owing to its importance to educational development in the country: "The Chairman's Fund strives to support initiatives that make a real difference in improving the quality of education for all South Africans, thereby helping young people to have meaningful and sustainable working futures.

"We are therefore proud to support S.M.I.L.E, as this initiative is playing its part in realising this goal, by ensuring that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to more effectively teach English and help learners become more proficient in understanding and using the language."

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