

Flight Centre Foundation looks to tackle poverty through education

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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The [Flight Centre Foundation](#) aims to break the cycle of poverty through education, running a number of relevant programmes, including offering bursaries to children from disadvantaged backgrounds, supporting ECD centres as well as after-school initiatives in underprivileged communities.

Diane Cleary, project manager for the Flight Centre Foundation, shared with Bizcommunity more on some of the successes as a result of the foundation's work, how it ensures its impact is sustainable, and how it plans to further its efforts in the near future.

■ ***Share with us some of the most memorable success stories to come out of the work of the Flight Centre Foundation.***



Diane Cleary, project manager, Flight Centre Foundation

Every time we are able to make a difference to a child's life, however small, we consider it to be a success story. Some of our bigger success stories though have included: our six children, currently in Grade 8, who are on full bursaries. With the help of the parents, the schools and the foundation, all of these children have adapted well to their new schools and are doing extremely well – academically, socially and in sport.

We donated an additional classroom to Philile Diepsloot, enabling 20 further young children to be able to attend an early childhood development centre. Through our own efforts, and those of sponsors, we have managed to ensure that all the children (200 in total) receive breakfast daily and lunches once a week.

We have managed to secure funding from Flight Centre Foundation UK to renovate the Grade R classrooms and play area at Quobosheane Primary School in Soweto.

Taking 100 children from Joe Slovo in Cape Town, an area rife with drugs, gangs and alcohol, and by offering them an afterschool programme, we are giving them the opportunity to have a better future.

■ ***Why has education been chosen as the focus for the Flight Centre Foundation?***

We believe that the only way to make a long-term sustainable difference is to improve education. Through improved education comes improved lives that not only affect this generation, but future generations.

■ ***How does the Flight Centre Foundation ensure its work is sustainable?***

All of our projects are long term projects and cover from the earliest stages of a child's life (ECD centre) right through to tertiary education. Our strategy is not to simply make financial contributions to our projects, but to adopt an active and holistic approach to the project. An example of this would be our whole school project where the aim is not to just improve the lives of the children at the school, but to make an impact on the greater community as well through involving them in the project. Through empowering people, we can make all of our projects sustainable.



■ ***How are Flight Centre employees allowed to contribute to the Flight Centre Foundation's efforts? How is staff participation motivated?***

Flight Centre employees contribute through Workplace Giving (WPG) – our staff pledges a certain amount to be deducted from their salaries on a monthly basis. Staff participation is motivated through regular feedback to all our staff on the work that the foundation is doing and the progress of our various projects. Each staff member also gets a CSI day, which they use to physically work on various projects and see the challenges first-hand.

■ ***How is the performance of the Flight Centre Foundation measured and assessed?***

Through quarterly board meetings, the performance of the foundation is measured and assessed. Regular feedback from our beneficiaries also acts as a form of assessment. There are KPIs in place for the foundation that measure performance in terms of fundraising, staff involvement, and progress on the various projects that we are involved in.

■ ***How important is it to align your CSR strategy with the brand and what are the benefits of doing so?***

Flight Centre Travel Group has a strong focus on self-development and education of its workforce, as well as offering opportunities to its staff for advancement. We believe there is strong synergy between offering our staff the opportunity to reach their full potential, and offering the young people that we assist through education to reach their full potential.

■ ***How does the Flight Centre Foundation ensure its efforts are both authentic and transparent?***

We are very open and transparent with not only what monies we receive from our staff, but how this money is spent. We also give all our staff the opportunity, by way of a survey, every quarter, to let us know how they would like their WPG monies to be spent.

■ ***Are there any plans in the pipeline to further amplify the Flight Centre Foundation's efforts?***

As with any non-profit, our aspirations exceed our income. We aspire to have a further two young people on bursaries annually, increase the number of special needs children to 10, be able to provide meals daily to the 200 children in the ECD centres we support, have an additional classroom so that we can accommodate a further 25 children in Diepsloot, to increase the number of young people on our afterschool programme in Cape Town from 100 to 125 next year, and to fast-track the programme for renovating the school in Soweto and uplifting the local community.

To be able to do this, we need to increase our income substantially. To achieve this, we aim to encourage other corporates to come on board with us in terms of their socio-economic development spend (we can offer all the necessary documentation in terms of B-BEEE).

For more on the Flight Centre Foundation, go to www.fcfoundation.org.za.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

Sindy Peters (@sindy_hullaba_lou) is a group editor at Bizcommunity.com on the Construction & Engineering, Energy & Mining, and Property portals. She can be reached at sindy@bizcommunity.com

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