



WAITROSE FOUNDATION SOUTHERN AFRICA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE: 1 | MARCH 2025



CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF IMPROVED LIVELIHOODS

Foreword by our Chairman

"In 2025, we celebrate the Waitrose Foundation's 20th anniversary, with festivities in October (dates to be confirmed). I'm excited to join our friends from Waitrose, UK importers, our South African partners, exporters, and, most importantly, farm workers themselves. We will reflect on their improved lives, inspiring projects, and our vision for the next 20 years.

It's been an incredible journey. I remember when we packed for Waitrose in those old green crates. The energy among our packhouse staff and vineyard pickers was always different, knowing that quality had to be at its best for Waitrose.

The growth in our community has been remarkable. The farm worker committee and a bottom-up approach shifted the focus. Instead of employers telling workers what they needed, workers themselves shared what mattered most - especially in areas like early childhood development and health. The improvements go beyond material benefits to include education and personal growth, which, though hard to measure, are deeply significant."

Sir De Villiers Graaff

WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION OF OUR NEWSLETTER!

We are so excited to connect with our stakeholders through our new quarterly newsletter!

Our aim is to **inspire** our worker committees, **showcase** impactful projects, and **share** best practices across our Waitrose Foundation Southern Africa network.

During the course of 2025 we will also look back at Foundation memories and past successes as we focus on our **20th Anniversary Celebration year!**





Worker Voice Projects

BRINGING BOOKS TO LIFE: THE GROEP 91 LIBRARY PROJECT

Reading opens doors to knowledge, opportunity, and a brighter future. That's why a library project has been launched in two primary schools to help students develop essential English literacy skills and a love for reading.

The goals are simple:

- Help all primary school students speak, read, and write in English.
- Encourage a love for reading and a willingness to explore books.

How it works: Each school has a library assistant who ensures that every Grade R-7 student visits the library weekly. These visits include storytelling sessions and book exchanges, making books more accessible. Additionally, six students per grade (1-7) receive special English remedial lessons to boost their literacy skills.

This initiative responds to a national challenge - 81% of South African Grade 4 students can't read for meaning (Department of Basic Education, 2023). With limited access to books and crowded classrooms, personalized support is hard to provide. The libraries offer a solution.

At Manyunu Primary, 661 children now visit the library weekly to read, build puzzles, and discover new books.

With books in their hands and curiosity in their hearts, these learners are laying the foundation for lifelong learning.

NAMIBIAN GRAPE COMPANY FIRE PREVENTION PROJECT

The farming community situated in Aussenkehr, Namibia faces a high risk of fires due to open-flame cooking and dry reeds, the building material of the home. In order to improve fire preparedness, funds were used to train 20 community members, including workers, relatives at home during the day, and local leaders who can assist in emergencies. Additionally, 20 fire extinguishers were purchased and placed in key locations.

With a trained team and accessible fire extinguishers, the community is now better equipped to respond to fires, reducing potential damage. This initiative provides greater safety and peace of mind for all residents.





Central Programmes are designed to address and strengthen socio-economic development in agri-worker communities, fostering leadership, youth development, wellness and economic empowerment. They are based on regional needs.

- **Leadership & Management Development**
Worker Committee and Project Coordinator
- **Youth Development Programme**
Bursary Project
Psychometric Assessments
Personal and Professional Development
YearBeyond
- **Partial Care Services**
Registration of Partial Care Facilities
Partial Care Facilitators Training
Partial Care Management Committee Training
Nutrition: Cooks Training and Meal Subsidy
- **Information, Communication and Technology**
Computer Software and Hardware (eg CAMI)
Internet Connectivity
- **Community and Family Wellness**
Psychosocial Resilience
Substance Abuse Mentorship
Reproductive Health
- **Economic Empowerment**
Emerging Farmers

Youth Development Programme | Reggie Benjamin's Story

"I grew up on Karsten De Hoop in De Doorns. After matriculating in 2022, I joined the Waitrose Foundation's Youth Development Programme in 2023. I worked at The Pines farm before becoming a Sailing Instructor at The Little Optimist Sailing Academy. I now live in Heideveld, Cape Town, while working at the academy's headquarters at the V&A Waterfront. In 2025, I have the exciting opportunity to be part of a new pilot project with the 9 Miles Project, launching the first Sailing Therapy programme at Strandfontein tidal pool.

My connection with the Waitrose Foundation started in primary school. I still remember when England cricket captain Alastair Cook visited De Doorns in 2016. In grade 6, I was part of the ATKV group and youth choir. Though I lost touch during high school, I later joined the Youth Development Programme, attending courses like the School of Entrepreneurship and the Laureus YES Programme. These experiences built my confidence - I even spoke on a panel, something I never imagined doing.

I'm incredibly grateful to the Waitrose Foundation for the knowledge, mentorship, and personal growth over the past two years. I've learned to turn my perceived weaknesses into strengths, and I now have the skills and confidence to inspire others through sailing. The Foundation equipped me with tools I didn't even know I needed, and I'm proud of the person I've become."



**Franzille,
Abredeane
and Eleanor**

Introducing our 2025 Bursary Students

Abredeane Smith is a full-time BEd Foundation Phase Teaching student at CPUT, Wellington Campus. Abredeane resides at Verdun Estate.

Franzille Geduld is studying online for a BEd Foundation Phase degree at SANTS, while working part-time as a data administrator for the YearBeyond Programme to support her family as a young single mother. Franzille resides at Lushof Graaff Fruit.

Community Voices

Food Green Garden | EXSA | Habata Boerdery

"The Food Green Garden project supported by the Waitrose Foundation and exporter EXSA, has grown significantly over the past year. It started off with a relatively small investment to establish the garden, eventually producing beans, carrots, beet, onions and corn. To generate funds, the vegetables are sold. The intention is also to use the vegetables during winter in a soup kitchen."



Cooking Skills Development: "It makes me happy when I speak to a mother, and she tells me that her child doesn't eat vegetables. This gives us a challenge to find ways to motivate the child to eat them at the nursery. When we receive feedback from the mother later, and the child proudly says, 'Mom, I ate all my vegetables,' it feels rewarding."

Community Choir | Langrivier

"I am inspired by the choir's dedication and their care for each member. The group has a special 'choir cupboard' for the items they need to store safely and where they build up resources. They also pool funds together to support a member financially if they must travel to the Eastern Cape for family emergencies. This group of gifted local singers are most certainly on their way to be known and recognised well beyond their local community and region, and hopes to be performing on festival stages at regional as well as national competitions soon."



Youth Development: "I was immersed in a dynamic and supportive environment that encouraged me to grow personally and professionally. I developed valuable skills such as teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving. One of the most significant takeaways from my experience was the importance of resilience, adaptability, and empathy. I learned to approach challenges with a growth mindset, to appreciate diverse perspectives, and to cultivate meaningful relationships. My experience has boosted my confidence, clarified my goals, and equipped me with skills and knowledge necessary to make a positive difference in my community. It has been a life-changing experience I'll always treasure."



STEMS Roslesia Visual & Hearing Screening: "Once the intervention occurs, the change in the child's behaviour and level of achievement at school drastically improve. Most often a child does not know that what they are seeing or hearing is not 'normal'. They accept it as normal, but they fall behind and are often labelled as slow. The lives of these young beneficiaries are radically impacted by these interventions." - 470 learners were screened with 21 hearing and 6 vision referrals.



Reproductive Health: "I used to avoid talking about my health issues. Now I can ask questions and even encourage others to go to the clinic if they have infections."

Psychosocial Resilience: "I never realised how much past trauma affected my daily life until this training. Now, I can recognise the signs and deal with them in a healthier way."

Emerging Leadership Training - Dennegeur | Lonetree & Maluti Farms:

"Personally, it has helped me to start a small business. I am now selling eggs, and I am able to save money", and another participant said: "I never used to be a person who saved. I used money recklessly but after the training, I have learned how to do a budget."



Westfalia Koeltehuis Rechargeable Lights: Workers chose to allocate their funds to tackle the ongoing challenge of frequent load shedding, which significantly impacts daily life. One major concern is its effect on children's ability to complete homework and study effectively. To address this, they purchased rechargeable lights, which have proven to be highly beneficial. Among the key advantages is that learners, particularly Matric (Grade 12) students, can now study and complete their homework in the evenings, helping them stay on track with their education.

"... it provides light for us to cook during load shedding as well as for the children to study."



Memories Feature

Past Bursary Student - Inspirational Story

"I am **Siyabonga Mathebula**, and I'm honoured to have been a bursary recipient from the Waitrose Foundation from 2010-2015. I was fortunate to receive financial assistance from the Foundation during my educational path, which began with my diploma studies (Plant Production) at Lowveld College of Agriculture, followed by a Bachelor of Science degree (Crop science) at Northwest University. This period marked six years of significant academic development for me. This invaluable support opened new avenues for me, allowing me to further my studies at the University of Ireland, Galway. Currently, I'm working as a researcher at the Agricultural Research Council, focusing on tropical and subtropical crops while pursuing my PhD.

The Waitrose Foundation has played a crucial role in my life; it provided me with the necessary support during challenging times and offered a farm boy like me the opportunity to reach new heights. For this, I am eternally grateful. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to extend my warmest wishes for a happy 20th anniversary to the foundation. May it continue to be filled with inspiring stories, remarkable achievements, and ongoing success."



Rooipad - Aganang Women's Project

Located between two packhouses, this project empowers women by manufacturing overalls and other workplace apparel. The project's strategic location fosters pride among workers, creating visible and inspiring results. The well-equipped facility provides an excellent environment for high-quality production, and workers take pride in their contributions. One participant, Confidence, has been with the farm for 27 years and finds personal satisfaction in sewing workplace items while also training other women in the craft. The project generates additional income and opens up new opportunities for youth, enhancing the company's reputation as a socially responsible business.



WORKER COMMITTEE INSIGHTS AND BEST PRACTICES

Training for Empowerment:

Training empowers Worker Committee members by developing leadership skills, building confidence, and deepening their understanding of their roles. Equipped with these skills, members are better prepared to address socio-economic challenges. Committees serve as a vital link between workers and management. They also form portfolio teams aligned to the WFSA's five focus areas. This structure promotes inclusive representation, active worker participation, and collaborative problem-solving, fostering equality and shared responsibility.

Regular Meetings:

Monthly meetings (workload permitting) help maintain open communication, provide a platform for raising concerns, and support a structured feedback process between workers and management.

Management Support:

The success of Worker Committees relies on transparent communication and active support from management for a worker-driven approach to addressing challenges.

Role of the Worker Committee:

Recognising the committee's key role in representing workers in social development efforts and strengthening relationships between workers and farm management.

Empowering Workers:

Encouraging workers to see themselves as capable contributors to social solutions, shifting away from feelings of inferiority and fostering pride in their role within the farming community.

Information worth sharing

Early Learning and Development Areas (ELDAs) in the South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF)

The NCF promotes a holistic vision of Early Childhood Development (ECD), focusing on the first 1,000 days and the early years before Grade R. It aligns with the National Qualifications Framework to ensure young children develop critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and social skills.

Key Themes & Principles:

- I am a competent person – Children actively shape their identity and understanding of the world.
- My learning and development are important – Learning is enhanced through play, cultural knowledge, and strong links to family and schooling.
- I need strong connections with adults – Loving relationships and inclusive environments support a child's well-being and rights.

The Six ELDAs - These guide structured learning for babies, toddlers, and young children:

- Well-being: Developing self-awareness, emotional regulation, and healthy habits.
- Identity & Belonging: Building self-image, understanding diversity, and fostering respect.
- Communication: Strengthening language skills, problem-solving, and critical thinking.
- Exploring Mathematics: Developing early numeracy and problem-solving abilities.
- Creativity: Encouraging self-expression, innovation, and imaginative thinking.
- Knowledge & Understanding of the World: Learning about the environment, relationships, and how things work.

Our Impact in 2024: As part of the **Central Programme**, we introduced the six ELDAs to ECD practitioners on farms, equipping them with essential tools to enhance early learning. During the last financial year, we trained a total of 121 practitioners. By strengthening ECD in farming communities, we are laying the foundation for improved early learning outcomes and sustainable community development.



Message from Faith

Six months into my role as General Manager, I am truly grateful to be back at the Waitrose Foundation after being away for several years. Returning has been both a privilege and a reminder of what first drew me to the Foundation - the opportunity to witness first-hand the growth and development of farm workers and to hear their voices shaping their own futures.

I have always been a firm believer in a bottom-up approach, and that is what sets the Waitrose Foundation apart. We don't impose solutions from the top down; instead, we take time to listen - to understand workers' needs, their challenges, and their aspirations. We equip and empower them to identify the socio-economic needs of their families and communities and to translate these into projects that improve their livelihoods. The Foundation is about more than just meeting needs; it's about unlocking potential, fostering hope, and creating opportunities for growth.

In the past six months, I have had the privilege of visiting 22 exporters and 21 farms across 5 provinces in SA. Seeing the dedication and hard work of farm workers, committee members, and all our partners has been both humbling and inspiring. To those worker committees, farms, and exporters I have yet to visit - I look forward to meeting you soon. Your commitment to making a real difference in your communities is what fuels the heart of this Foundation. As we move forward, let's continue working together to build stronger, more resilient agri-worker communities. Thank you to everyone who has welcomed me so warmly. I look forward to the journey ahead!

Faith Brown - General Manager

Help us Celebrate 20 Years of Impact

Do you have any special memories or impact stories from the past 20 years of your involvement with the Waitrose Foundation that we can share? You're most welcome to make contact with us. We'd love to hear from you and share your special memories on our social media channels or newsletter.

Share your Projects Success Stories

We are always on the look-out for impactful projects that have truly changed the lives of our worker communities across Southern Africa. We welcome you to make contact with us to share the details of the projects you want to see highlighted in our next newsletter or social media posts, in order to be an inspiration for others who may wish to do the same on their farms and in their communities.



LET'S BE SOCIAL!

@waitrosefoundationSA

FACEBOOK & INSTAGRAM

CONTACT US

021-880 1035 | 021-880 1039
info@waitrosefoundation.org.za
www.waitrosefoundation.org.za