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LET'S MAKE THE GRASS GREENER ON OUR SIDE!

By Terrance M. Booysen

This month, with the support of Wot-If? Trust who provided CGF decorative teddy-bear cushions for children's beds, I set out to visit Philile Diepsloot, an Early Childhood Development Centre established by the Philile Foundation. These decorative cushions are donated by Big Five Duty Free who encourage travelers at all major South African Airports to buy the cushions and leave them behind in large bins for those children in South Africa who are less fortunate.

As mentioned in my previous article, the Philile Foundation ('the Foundation') has an amazing vision for their organisation and the children under their care. The Foundation's vision is a South Africa where every child has access to quality pre-school education. Their play-based learning develops the fundamentals of mathematics, language concepts, innovation, problem solving and creativity. The Foundation has an integrated and holistic approach to education, which includes wellness, nutrition, sport, environmental awareness, entrepreneurship and the personal development of each child.

"Don't spend your precious time asking 'Why isn't the world a better place?' It will only be time wasted.

The question to ask is 'How can I make it better?' To that there is an answer."

Leo Buscaglia (American author and motivational speaker: 1924-1998)

Nestled in the heart of Diepsloot Extension 12, Philile Diepsloot has benefitted from many individuals and organisations who have asked the question *'How can I make it better'?* On arriving at Philile Diepsloot, you immediately notice recently installed rainwater tanks collecting runoff water from the roofs of the brightly painted containers which act as classrooms. Anti-drip taps are fitted throughout to ensure optimal water usage with no wastage. Solar panels shine brightly on top of one of the classrooms providing electricity to the pre-school for the first time since its establishment seven years ago.

A bio digester hums contently in the background, converting the contents of its bulging gut into biogas and providing fertiliser for the pre-school's vegetable garden. This in turn enables the Foundation to make use of the services of a young, unemployed gentleman living in Diepsloot to manage the biodigester and to act as a general caretaker at the pre-school. His presence on the property is added security for the all female staff.



The staff and children at the Philile Early Childhood Development Centre, Diepsloot. Inserts: The container library, the bio-digester, a classroom & rainwater tank

A crowd-funding platform is being used to raise money for eight solar streetlights to illuminate the streets surrounding the pre-school, providing the community with a greater sense of security in their homes at night.

Not only are these seemingly small “green” initiatives making a huge difference to the community of Diepsloot Extension 12, but they are also contributing to teaching the children and the community about ‘paying it forward’, alternate sources of energy, conserving natural resources, the Sustainable Development Goals along with encouraging active global citizenship. These objectives are being achieved because somebody took notice and intentionally took action. They did not leave the future of our country to fate. They stood up and were counted and are making a tangible difference.

“It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do little. Do what you can.”
Sydney Smith (English Clergyman: 1771-1845)

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* According to the UNDP, real transformational change can only be achieved by concurrently reducing poverty and attaining sustainable development.** The 5P's of sustainable development, namely *people, planet, prosperity, peace* and *partnership* all need to be addressed in order to achieve a desirable and holistic outcome.

As stated in my previous article, the Foundation is committed to working with partners to assist the South African government in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4.2, which is to “*ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality Early Childhood Development, care and pre-primary education.*” In doing this critical work with like-minded partners, the Foundation firmly believes it will achieve an even greater social impact, where its children -- as future leaders -- will become well-grounded citizens who will fulfill their part in a future workforce and a more caring society.

This puzzle is by no means complete for the Foundation. The Foundation's purpose is to build a future generation and a brighter tomorrow for generations to come. There are still infinite possibilities of how, together, we can make a difference. One small act of kindness has a ripple effect as it reverberates in individual's lives, in communities and ultimately in transforming the very fabric of our beloved country.

Be a part of the solution! Plant seeds of hope so that we can bring about the change that the next generation deserves. The seeds you plant today will germinate into the green grass we all envisage for South Africa in the future.

If we all play our part, the grass truly can be greener on our side!

ENDS

Words: 1,028

* Source: <http://www.iisd.org/topic/sustainable-development>

** Source: <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/sustainable-development/overview.html>

About Wot-If? Trust

Wot-If? Trust operates primarily in Diepsloot, working on Socio-Economic and Enterprise Development Initiatives. Their focus is on helping emerging and small enterprises to grow and become sustainable and giving the youth hope and opportunities for the future. Agriculture, business, technology, innovation and

media are key drivers, specifically on how these impact on improving lives and the Diepsloot community in general.

For further information, please contact: Gail Styger (Wot-If? Trust: Founder & Trustee) 083 625 3929 or email gail@wot-if.co.za

About The Philile Foundation

The Philile Foundation has been approved as a Public Benefit Organisation for the purposes of section 18A (1)(a) of the Income Tax Act and donations to the organisation are tax deductible in the hands of the donors in terms of and subject to the limitations prescribed in section 18A of the Act.

Bank Account (South Africa)

Bank: First National Bank
Branch: Melrose Arch
Branch No: 254 405
Account Name: Philile Foundation
Account No: 62352506227 (cheque)



Debit Order / Monthly donation

The Philile Foundation accepts both debit and stop orders.

CSI / Corporate donations:

Please contact us to request an appointment or proposal.

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