

Imtech's CSR Initiative Takes Off IN SOUTH AFRICA

Dutch technical services provider, Imtech, developed its Shared Success in Developing Countries (SSDC) programme to do its bit for our planet. With the assistance of SANEC, this initiative successfully launched its first project in South Africa.

How can a stock-market-listed company sustainably fulfil a responsibility to protect our planet and its people? Dutch technical services provider Imtech asked itself this question, and subsequently developed a programme called Shared Success in Developing Countries (SSDC). Teams of employees conduct intensive, short-term work on business cases in developing countries, with the aim of boosting the efforts of local entrepreneurs. South Africa hosted the first SSDC project.

Hendrik Smeenk was appointed Project Manager of Imtech's SSDC programme. With the support of non-profit organisation, SharePeople, Smeenk was able to define and organise SSDC's first business case. In July 2008, Smeenk visited South Africa to find a suitable local partner. He was accompanied by Ilse van Gulik, Programme Manager at SharePeople.

"We would normally match local entrepreneurs and European parties ourselves, but we don't have a network in South Africa," explains Van Gulik. "That is why SharePeople asked SANEC to assume a matchmaking role." Smeenk adds: "Before our visit, SANEC gave us a clear review of potential partners, who we then met in Johannesburg. This proved to be a very efficient way of enlarging our network, as it allowed us to compare different parties, and investigate what is currently happening in South Africa regarding sustainable energy and the protection of the environment."

Biodiesel

Imtech decided to partner with World Mobile Plants, founded by Dutch CSR entrepreneur Carlo Bakker. This initiative will run a plant that converts used cooking oil into high-quality biodiesel. Disadvantaged women will collect this oil from restaurants (some large, but most small) in Johannesburg. This will enable the women to earn an income. In October 2008, eight Imtech employees visited Johannesburg for two weeks to develop a technical logistic plan for the collection of the oil, to prepare a model to optimise the production process and to write a maintenance plan for the plant.

Trade Mission

The last day of the Imtech team's visit to Johannesburg coincided with the SANEC World Cup 2010 Trade Mission, headed by Erica Terpstra. "Thanks to SANEC, we could invite the trade mission for a lunch in Soweto, where we were able to present our project," says Smeenk.

Knowledge and Network

In November 2008, Van Gulik and Smeenk conducted several follow-up meetings with SANEC to identify the next partner. Says Smeenk: "Right now we are debating between two new South African partners. When the next boost team starts their assignment, we would like to make greater use of SANEC's vast knowledge and business network." Van Gulik agrees: "SharePeople would like to expand its activities in South Africa. We hope SANEC can help us to develop our network, so we can facilitate more exchange programmes between Dutch professionals and South African entrepreneurs and organisations."

Imtech

Imtech is a European technical services provider in the fields of electrical engineering, ICT and mechanical engineering. Over 22 500 employees serve around 18 000 global customers. Through its subsidiaries, Pertec and Radio Holland, Imtech has branches in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, St. Helena Bay and Mossel Bay. Visit the Imtech website on www.imtech.eu.

SharePeople

SharePeople brings entrepreneurs in developing countries into contact with ambitious European professionals. By facilitating an exchange of knowledge and experience, both the local entrepreneurs and the European parties are able to strengthen their professional skills. This also becomes a way of contributing to a better world. SharePeople is always on the lookout for local entrepreneurs and organisations with an interesting business proposal. View their website on www.sharepeople.nl.