



# SPECIAL REPORT

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## Introduction

The Willis Towers Watson SA Development Trust is increasingly playing a significant role in making a positive social impact in the most marginalised communities in South Africa since its registration and commencement a few years ago. It has partnered and collaborated with a number of NPO's and NGO's and has gained valuable insight and experience in various sectors and industries as a result. The Trust has been fortunate to access a number of world-renowned experts in various fields of education and development, ranging from Early Childhood Development, state and private high schooling, tertiary education, formalised skills development programs and job creation initiatives. These insights have informed and refined how best the Trust allocates its funding and how it embarks on collaborative efforts with established, credible NPO's consistent with the provisions of its Trust Deed. The objective is to catalyse a multiplier effect for the broadest possible impact. To date, the Trust has disbursed funding and provided support to various organisations and initiatives that have been positively impactful on the communities that it has targeted.

The community spectrum includes young children from severely impoverished communities, talented pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds attending state schools, college learners in remote rural villages, young adults enjoying free, dynamic skills development programs as well as the elderly, who rank amongst the most vulnerable members of society. Complimenting this focus on education is the need to also introduce poverty relief measures, especially during the pandemic that the world is currently experiencing and whose effect is most keenly felt in impoverished communities.

Consistent with the Trust's approach and focus, its latest partnership is innovative and exciting.

## SA Impoved Learning Initiative “SAILI” ([www.saili.org.za](http://www.saili.org.za))

As identified by SAILI, Maths and Science are considered to be important gateway subjects to meaningful tertiary education leading to skilled job creation especially in the professional sector. People from poorer and marginalized communities are significantly under-represented in this sector. The conventional wisdom in challenging this reality is to provide scholarships to place disadvantaged students in more affluent private schools (at great cost) with good matric pass and university acceptance rates. Far too often, too little emphasis is placed on quantifying the social dislocation and alienation that such scholarship recipients may experience given the nature of the dominant culture and practices that exist in such schools. SAILI has done extensive and robust research across government schools and identified well-run schools where Maths and Science are effectively taught and where students are well-equipped to successfully complete demanding tertiary degrees with very low drop-out rates. SAILI also continuously evaluates the schools based on sound governance, cost and university pass rates (with a continued keen focus on Maths and Science).

Focusing on government schools also challenges the notion that the only pathway to success is through expensive tuition and private schools. After rigorously analyzing the attributes of various state schools, it has been proven that selected Government schools can provide a more accessible avenue for academically talented pupils in poor areas and communities. In practical terms, SAILI has identified a number of such high schools and whilst a major part of their role is to meticulously analyze and interpret pertinent data in respect of high schools and rank them accordingly, it then partners with selected schools to provide support to principals, educators and learners through various programs and workshops, as well as to facilitate effective interaction and co-operation with other recognized schools and tertiary institutions.

## A review of the Trust’s current projects



### 1. Bulungula Incubator (BI)

The WTW Trust has recently approved further funding to the BI. As previously mentioned, BI operates in what has been recognized as the poorest municipality in South Africa. In summary, it focusses its activities and projects in the Elliotdale Village in the Eastern Cape across four main areas::

#### *Education*

A series of programs has been introduced to promote and support early childhood development through formal and informal education initiatives and care.

#### *Health and Nutrition*

Several projects have been introduced to promote health and wellness, especially in the context of a lack of resources and food supply. Access to healthcare and support is also provided for members of the community.

### *Sustainable Livelihoods*

A number of initiatives has been introduced to support and promote the local economy that uses the assets and land in the area to create local jobs and sustainable livelihoods. One of the most promising initiatives is the Job Skills and Entrepreneurship program that covers subjects such as Community Health, Early Childhood Development, Agriculture and General Administration. 15 of these learners have already been successfully placed into internships. The Trust has provided a number of bursaries to students who have enrolled at the College.

### *Vibrant Villages*

Sport, Art and various cultural programs are regular features that aims to promote growth and cohesion within this community of over 6500 residents



## **2. Amy Foundation**

As previously reported, the Amy Foundation (formally the Amy Biehl Foundation, named after the late American student, Amy Biehl) is a non-profit organization that specializes in programs to develop and empower children and youth (5 to 35 years of age) in challenged and vulnerable communities within the Western Cape. Learners mainly come from the township areas of Gugulethu, Manenberg, Langa, Nyanga, Khayelitsha, Delft and Athlone. The WTW SA Trust continues to provide funding and mentorship support to the Amy Foundation's Youth Skills Development and Entrepreneurship Program that focusses on unemployed youth between the ages of 18 to 35. By providing soft skills and vocational intervention programs, the idea is to place youth into internships and eventual employment. To date, 852 learners have been put through the various programs, of which 80% have been successfully placed. Last year was a particularly difficult year for Amy in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic with onsite skills development programs severely affected. However, enrollment numbers have increased to almost "normal" levels with the Foundation effectively putting the necessary measures and protocols in place. The WTW Trust has renewed its support to Amy for the ensuing year.



### 3. RX Radio

The WTW Trust continues to support RX Radio which officially began operations on the 1st November 2016, under the wing of the Red Cross Children's Hospital Facility Board and supported by the Children's Hospital Trust. The station is now a registered Non-Profit Company under the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission.

As previously mentioned, RX Radio is a radio station run by and for children operating from the Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. It is the first radio station in the world that trains child reporters to broadcast from within a hospital. In the last 2 years, RX Radio has trained 76 child / young reporters (ages 4 to 18), of whom 67% are patients at Red Cross and 33% siblings or friends. It has won numerous awards for its unique and innovative approach to conscientizing, educating and instilling dignity into vulnerable youth groups. During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, it won a prestigious prize for its sterling work from the WHO. RX Radio relies exclusively on grants for its survival and remains vulnerable because of the dire state of the funding market. To this end, the Trust works closely with other funding partners to ensure its sustainability.

The WTW SA Trust has supported this initiative and is playing an active role in fostering an environment where vulnerable children are afforded an opportunity to be exposed to learning, skills development, mentorship and growth.



#### 4. Early Learning Centre / Foundation for Community Work (FCW)

Another anchor partner of the WTW Trust, The Early Learning Centre (ELC) in Athlone continues to provide quality Early Childhood Development services to the communities of Kewtown, Silvertown, Langa, Gugulethu and Bridgetown with an increasing need to service other neighbouring communities. It has broadened its activity in its “Family in Focus” program that employs field workers who visit families on a regular basis and so extend its ECD services to communities who are unable to send their children to pre-schools. The school employs a dedicated group of educators who selflessly give of their time notwithstanding challenging conditions and a lack of decent remuneration. The WTW Trust has agreed to a further annual grant to the ELC / FCW with a focus on their “Family in Focus” program.

#### Conclusion

South Africa’s history has left deep scars that the advent of democracy has not adequately addressed especially in the most marginalized and poor communities. Our response to the severe social challenges that remain prevalent in South Africa is informed by our country’s unique history, hence our emphasis on education, relief measures and job creation. It also unambiguously places the poorest of the poor at the centre of our efforts and activities.

**Willis Towers Watson SA Development Trust**

Level 4 , MontClare Place | 23 Main Road, Claremont  
7708 PrivateBag X30 | Rondebosch 7701

T: +27 21 681 3700 | F: +27 21 681 3800

