

A water wheel with a difference

Trouble-free access to clean drinking water is a constant challenge facing many rural communities throughout South Africa, and water provision is a key aspect of social development programmes. Coca-Cola's Southern and East Africa Division therefore works with government and Roundabout Outdoor to bring sustainable sources of fresh water to rural areas.

The daily rural grind

Picture rural South Africa, where many impoverished women and children spend hours every day traipsing to fetch and carry buckets of water. Or bend laboriously over hand-pumps to draw their daily potable requirement from communal boreholes.

What about an alternative way that is sustainable, clean, 'green', and uses a renewable power source – the boundless energy of children?

Children's energy – always on tap

A few years ago, Roundabout Outdoor introduced the innovative 'Play-Pump'. It's a merry-go-round with a difference – a children's roundabout with a hidden agenda to provide energy for a borehole pump.

The Play-Pump is installed over an existing borehole, and as children cavort so the roundabout's motion powers a pump that draws water into an overhead storage tank. Gravity lets the water flow from the elevated tank, and voila! The community has water on tap, courtesy of its children who have a fine time whilst making a valuable contribution to their community.

Working together

Roundabout Outdoor works in conjunction with the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry to identify sites that are suitable for drilling a borehole and installing the Play-Pump. These are areas where the ground-water table is high and the water quality meets World Health Organisation safety standards for potable water. And of course it helps if there are ready sources of playful children nearby, like schools and community crèches.

Once sites have been identified, Roundabout Outdoor rounds up corporate benefactors willing to sponsor the fitting of its Play-Pumps, with full 'ownership' of each one passing to the community after installation.

Patented by Roundabout Outdoor, the Play-Pump device achieved World Bank recognition in 2000, through its Development Marketplace award for innovative solutions to development problems. It also enjoys international support through the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation and the ClearWater Project in the USA.



Adults and children alike congregate at a Coca-Cola sponsored Play-Pump, which provides a steady stream of clean water within their rural community.

"Water is essential to life and we are committed to finding solutions that help alleviate its scarcity in some of our neediest communities. The Play-Pump concept offers communities and schools an excellent way to access fresh water."

Dave Govender
Division Environmental Affairs Manager,
Coca-Cola Southern and East Africa (Pty) Ltd

Coca-Cola joins the merry-go-round

And so Coca-Cola joined the partnership with sponsorship for nine initial installations in the Eastern Cape. It recently made a further commitment of R2,5 million to install 50 more, with the first 25 planned for Limpopo province. Each will supply water to 4,000 to 5,000 people, which means that thanks to the Coca-Cola sponsored Play-Pumps, at least 200,000 rural-dwellers will have a steady stream of water in their communities.

Keeping water flowing

Aside from infrastructure sponsorship, Roundabout Outdoor ensures that projects are self-sustaining by fitting revenue-generating advertising billboards to each storage tank. Four are fitted, two of which are allocated to the sponsors. The ongoing revenue stream generated in this way is used to service each site, and also to train people in each community to maintain the apparatus and carry out simple repairs. Coca-Cola chooses to use its billboards for health and environmental educational messages, rather than corporate marketing.

Roundabout devotes the other two billboards at each site to community education: used for the LoveLife HIV/Aids education campaign, and to inform the community about environmental issues and water safety.

Widening the focus

As one of the world's and Africa's largest employers, Coca-Cola recognises how important water is for sustaining life and preventing disease – and what an important part water provision plays on the global development agenda. The Coca-Cola Africa Group therefore views this project as one way to commit to bringing freshwater solutions to impoverished rural communities throughout the continent.

