Birth of a new era for the Telkom Foundation

The Telkom Foundation – the corporate social investment arm of Telkom – is celebrating the birth of a new era. The Foundation has been fundamentally restructured and is now an autonomous legal entity with its own board of trustees and management structure. The new-look Foundation was officially launched on 22 August 2002.

Newly appointed CEO Nkheteleng Vokwana says that the new structure will give the Foundation greater flexibility and enable it to add more value by allowing it to concentrate on its core functions. The Foundation will now have responsibility for three main areas: to drive and co-ordinate Telkom’s corporate social responsibility programme; to manage Telkom’s Corporate Social Investment (CSI) programmes – including the selection of appropriate projects for funding – and to communicate all CSI activities on behalf of Telkom.

Although Telkom will remain the main sponsor of the Foundation, it is hoped that the organisation’s new-found autonomy will give it greater scope to attract meaningful partnerships and form alliances with other like-minded sponsors.

Vokwana, who joins the Telkom Foundation after five years as Deputy Group Executive at Telkom’s Centre for Learning (CFL), says that she is honoured to be given the opportunity to lead the Foundation into new terrain and that while at the helm she will strive to demystify science and technology in South Africa, particularly among the youth.

“As a major player in the technology sector, Telkom is committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in the country,” she says. “We want to get to a point where every South African child chooses subjects such as mathematics and science because they are interested in and passionate about these subjects and not because they are afraid.”

In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation’s management structure has been streamlined into three key focus areas where delivery will be concentrated: Education and Training, Science and Technology and Empowerment (see page 3 for more details on each of these three areas).

A fourth area that will fall under the new Foundation is the Telkom Exploratorium based in Cape Town at the Waterfront. The Exploratorium houses telecommunications technology equipment and functions as a museum and learning centre. The Foundation plans to continue to promote the Exploratorium as a teaching and learning centre where visitors and school children are taught the basics of science.

Vokwana is passionate about the role that the new-look Telkom Foundation can play in the future of southern Africa and is confident that her new team is well placed to lead the Foundation into the 21st Century. “This includes my enthusiastic and professional board of trustees,” she says.

“By not being entangled in other areas of Telkom’s business such as revenue generation, the Foundation can concentrate on what it does best and that is, ‘adding value to the communities it serves’.”
Adding value to the communities we serve

It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you the Telkom Foundation’s slogan: Adding value to the communities we serve. The challenge that faces me after having joined the Foundation is how to utilise the experiences gained in my 28 years in Telkom’s Technology divisions to assist in our President’s call of volunteerism.

To this end, we have harnessed the support of Telkom’s top management team to “adopt” a project of their choice in a disadvantaged community. These projects are referred to as Adopt-a-Project (read more about this initiative on page 4). To further enhance the President’s call of giving, we are also encouraging all Telkom employees to assist the Foundation in achieving our goals and objectives.

The objectives of the Foundation are as follows:

- To provide financial and other resources to disadvantaged communities to ensure sustainable development;
- To provide funding for effective education and training to nurture and develop the youth of our rural and poor communities;
- To develop a culture of empowerment and sustainable economic growth;
- To promote maths, science and technology at the different levels of our educational system to help grow South Africa’s skills base;
- To vigorously provide financial and other resources to disabled individuals and groups.

To achieve the above, the Foundation operates according to certain key principles. These include:

- The development of a technology-rich society in South Africa with a particular focus on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs);
- A commitment to reaching the most needy communities;
- A commitment to skills development and working with stakeholders from previously disadvantaged communities and people with disabilities;
- Actively involving Telkom staff in ongoing social investment projects.

The Foundation is a non-profit-making organisation which consists of a Board of seven trustees chaired by none other than Telkom’s CEO, Mr Sizwe Nxasana.

The Board consists of four Telkom members and three external members. The Foundation has a core staff of 14 headed by the CEO, Nkhetheleng Vokwana. Contact details of the Foundation can be found on the first page of this newsletter.
The Telkom Foundation is committed to a philosophy of empowerment and sustainable development. Empowerment for the Foundation is defined as a state of feeling self-empowered to take control of one’s destiny through a process of enabling or authorising an individual to think, behave, take action and control work and decision-making in autonomous ways. Current projects include:

**People with Disabilities/Special Schools Project**
Seeks to provide resources to schools for learners with disabilities.

**Enterprise Competition**
Is aimed at developing and encouraging entrepreneurship.

**Gateway**
This project trains people from previously disadvantaged communities to enable them to compete in the Enterprise Competition.

**National Plan for Action for Children (NPA)**
The Foundation funds the NPA, which is co-ordinated by the Office of the Presidency and focuses on issues of children and children’s rights. A media campaign complements this process.

**Telkom Family Helpline**
The Foundation supports a free telephone helpline in the Free State, which offers counselling to victims of child and domestic abuse.

**Ucingo Project**
Through this project, the Foundation supplies a group of women with waste copper cable from which they make crafts and corporate gifts, as a way of empowering themselves.

The bulk of the Telkom Foundation’s projects are in education and training because of the strategic and economic importance of this field. The Foundation’s projects are intended to promote maths, science and technology. Current projects include:

**102 Dedicated Schools (Dinaledi)**
Involves providing technical support to the 102 schools that are part of the national ministerial initiative to improve maths and science education.

**Education Africa Forum**
Sponsoring the printing and distribution of the Education Africa Book.

**I-Afrika Entasha**
Supporting an initiative to upgrade learners' performance in maths and science at the I-Afrika Entasha Community Centre in Pietermaritzburg.

**Maths and Science Teacher of the Year Award**
A competition aimed at promoting maths and science teaching.

**Rally to Read**
Providing support for the purchase and delivery of educational books to selected rural schools.

**ReadRight Sunday Times**
Supporting the production and distribution of the ReadRight supplement to Telkom Schools.

**Most Improved School Awards**
The Foundation supports the technology category in the Most Improved Schools Awards of the National Department of Education.

**Schools Career & Training Expo 2002**
A once-off sponsorship to the Careers Expo event aimed at providing learners with reliable career guidance.

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**By Nonhlanhla Shangase**

The Telkom Foundation is committed to supporting the development of a technology-rich society in South Africa, with a particular focus on Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). There are several projects in the Foundation that are geared directly towards promoting maths, science and technology throughout the country. The Foundation has a specific commitment to reaching the most needy communities. Current project include:

**Telkom Department of Communications World Internet Laboratories**
Involves standardised internet centres aimed at training learners from previously disadvantaged communities in programming and other technical skills.

**Telkom SuperCentres Project**
Involves the installation of networked computer centres, with internet connectivity, at 100 schools around the country and the development of effective educational use of the facilities through teacher development.

**ThinkQuest**
A national education competition in which teams submit web design projects from both primary and high schools.

**University of the North (People with Disabilities Project)**
Involves supporting learners with disabilities by providing them with the necessary technology equipment.

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**By Nkosinathi Pahlana**

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“The Thank-you Telkom to help us about computers, as deaf learners communicate easily with computers”

Pinky Ximba, Kwathintwa School for the Deaf, KZN
Empowering our future inventors

"There is an inventor hidden inside each of us. My passion is to bring out the inventor in each child, by sparking an interest in the sound, light and electricity that are around us every day."

This is the message from Johan du Toit, manager of the Telkom Exploratorium. The Exploratorium is situated in Cape Town's popular Waterfront development and is visited by around 120 000 children every year and more than 65 schools every month. Around 70% of these children who visit are from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Discount rates, and even free entrance, are arranged for groups that cannot afford the R7 per head entry fee.

"There's magic in this place," says Du Toit. "Children are given guided tours, in Xhosa, English or Afrikaans, but it is really a personal journey of discovery. We don’t mind what children discover as long as it is relevant to their own lives, and we entice them to gain more knowledge. Every second word in the visitor’s book is ‘fun’, ‘cool’ and other words like that. Children laugh, shout, clap their hands in delight at the displays, which are highly interactive because children learn best using their own senses and bodies."

Among the exhibits at the Exploratorium are a gyroscope in which, by the gentlest muscle movements, children can tilt themselves upside down; mirrors that distort their reflections; a Van der Graaf generator that makes their hair stand up; optical illusions and a host of more sophisticated interactive displays. Video conferences with science centres overseas, which children can watch, are a monthly event at the Exploratorium. Two new displays are in the pipeline. One will consist of cellular telephones and the other will be a historical collection of phones, the only one of its kind in Africa.

The Exploratorium takes many interactive games, such as puzzles that teach the children to use the internet, to community venues. It is also conducting an awareness programme to prevent cable theft.

Du Toit says that the independence of the Telkom Foundation will have “only positive results” for the Exploratorium. “The Foundation’s emphasis on education will help the Exploratorium to promote its education projects and linkups with Telkom’s other educational divisions, such as its Centre for Learning, could become possible,” he says.

Telkom’s commitment runs deep

Telkom’s commitment to Corporate Social Investment (CSI) is more than skin deep. Staff across the board are encouraged to take a hands-on role in supporting CSI initiatives and the Telkom Foundation manages and co-ordinates this involvement across the country.

One such initiative is the Adopt-a-Project initiative. Adopt-a-Project is designed to give members of Telkom’s top management team the opportunity to select or “adopt” a deserving project of their choice which fits with the Foundation’s investment profile. But their commitment does not end after the funds have been handed over. Staff also devote their time and skills to the project to ensure its success.

As part of Adopt-a-Project, a total of 20 stand-alone computers were donated earlier this year by CEO of Telkom, Mr Sizwe Nxasana, to Umlazi and Menzi High Schools in Durban. And in July, a community legal centre in Johannesberg became the most recent organisation to benefit from the initiative when it was adopted by Mandla Ngcobo, Group Executive, Legal Services. The Centre, which protects the legal rights and assists indigent persons of all races to obtain legal representation, received three Pentium computers.

CEO of the Telkom Foundation Nkhetheleng Vokwana says that the Adopt-a-Project initiative is just one of the ways that the Foundation is able to meet its primary objective of adding value to the communities it serves.