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BLOG

South African social enterprise wins another international award



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Partners for Possibility (PfP), the flagship programme of Symphonia for South Africa NPC, has earned further global recognition for innovation and social impact – this time as winner of the UK Social Enterprise Mark’s Making a Mark competition.

The Social Enterprise (SE) Mark is the only international accreditation scheme that assesses the impact of social enterprises and Symphonia for South Africa is the first SE Mark holder in South Africa. The announcement was made yesterday at the 2018 SE Mark Conference in York, UK where PfP was one of five finalists for the Making a Mark competition. The award was accepted by a delighted Dr Louise van Rhyn, CEO of Symphonia for South Africa, who was the opening keynote speaker of the conference where the theme was #SpreadingTheWealth.

PfP addresses one of the biggest challenges that South Africa is facing, namely the country’s poorly performing education system. PfP does this by strengthening the leadership capacity of principals who lead under-resourced schools amid extremely challenging circumstances. PfP’s frugal and innovative approach to developing these leaders, whose role is critically important for the country, is to partner them with experienced leaders from the business sector in a year-long, structured programme of leadership development and support.

Several partnerships are clustered in a group which forms a learning community that meets regularly to share insights, discuss challenges and provide mutual support. Each group is supported by a Learning Process Facilitator who is a professional coach.

Since the launch of its very first principal-business leader partnership at Kannemeyer Primary School in Grassy Park, Cape Town seven years ago, the PfP programme has grown steadily and has now reached over 750 schools across South Africa.

“Our programme provides much-needed support and capacity building for school principals who have received little or no preparation for the challenging task of managing a complex organisation with very limited funds amidst crippling social challenges, such as poverty, child-headed households, drug abuse and gangsterism,” says Dr van Rhyn.

“Aside from supporting principals and partnering them with a business leader who works and learns as an equal alongside them, the programme also creates fertile ground for further interventions and support from business and social change organisations,” she adds.

The annual Making a Mark competition, celebrates the vital role that accredited social enterprises are playing, and their often life-changing impact, in local communities and wider society. This year’s six finalists reflect the diverse spectrum of work being done by social enterprises to address various societal needs. PfP was the only finalist from outside the United Kingdom. The voting process allowed for considerable public participation, with the public vote accounting for 50% of the final result.

In her keynote speech, Dr van Rhyn showed how reciprocal learning partnerships between business and community can be a powerful force for positive change and challenged participants to consider ways in which a fairer society can be constructed through social enterprises.

Melanie Burke, Chairman of Symphonia for South Africa, adds “PfP’s innovative concept of partnering with the business community to capacitate and support school principals in under-resourced communities has attracted wide acclaim. The global platform HR.com named PfP as one of its Top International Leadership Providers in 2016 and 2017, while in 2018 Geneva-based NGO Adviser ranked Symphonia for South Africa as one of the Top 100 NGOs in the world for the impact of the PfP programme.”

If you would like to get involved with the groundbreaking PfP programme, please contact:

PfP@Symphonia.net

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