

## FROM THE EDITOR



“ There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children. ”

Nelson Mandela

We live in interesting times! Since our last edition, we have witnessed a major financial crisis and ensuing recession, Barack Obama elected as US president, and our own change of leadership, with Jacob Zuma coming to power in May this year. Each of these events has touched our lives, in ways big and small, and for all the uncertainty that change brings, so too new possibilities and opportunities abound. In the face of South Africa's enormous developmental challenges, and recessionary setbacks, we must continuously find new ways of responding: in our individual lives, our communities, in the way we do business and as a nation. To do so, we must be bold in interrogating old ways of thinking and persist in seeking new ways of seeing so that we can imagine and create seemingly improbable outcomes. Approaching challenges with altered mindsets and new eyes: this is the necessity – and the gift – of transformation.

A gradually shifting business mindset is perhaps most evident in the corporate contribution to society – more than R5 billion over the past year. This was substantially more than the previous year, despite recessionary pressures. Regulation, undoubtedly, has played a big part in driving corporates to give to society, but with this, companies are engaging more seriously with CSI and finding innovative ways to respond to community needs. And while cynics might dismiss CSI giving as little more than 'grudge spend', it is also true that action wears a groove – with each real engagement with needs on the ground, the spirit of development grows, and useful lessons are reaped.

It is the younger generation who will take this legacy and weave it into the future. What children experience, what they learn, the roots they are given, the opportunities they have – or don't have – will shape the country's future. During economic hard times, children in impoverished communities are particularly vulnerable and, as an already embattled social welfare sector suffers cutbacks, their situation is even more precarious. Now more than ever, South Africa's vulnerable children require systemic and sustained support. It is in our hands, collectively, to put our money where our legal mouth is, ensuring that children's rights – to food, shelter, protection and to a meaningful education – are more than just a paper promise.

That so many children should go to bed hungry, and to school on an empty stomach, in a country that exports grain, is a national disgrace. The launch earlier this year of our first national food banking initiative – FoodBank South Africa – galvanising a co-ordinated response to escalating food insecurity, is a significant and timely intervention. Initiatives like this show what can be done when development players join hands and leverage resources smartly. Through their CSI programmes, some companies are contributing to this national effort, while many others are helping to strengthen food security by supporting community food gardens and encouraging a food-growing culture.

Thank you to our sponsors whose Programme Overviews and Case Studies provide richly textured examples of CSI initiatives in every corner of the country. Your actions provide much food for thought and inspiration for your peers in the corporate and development arenas.

Finally, the Handbook team – Gilly, Karen, Andy, Michelle, Gillian, Vee and Debs – deserves special mention. You demonstrate every year how dedicated teamwork translates ideas, research findings and practical examples into a meaningful tapestry of knowledge.

From all of us at Trialogue, we hope you find the 12th edition informative, useful and, above all, inspiring!



**Heather de Wet**