



Cancer Advocates programme

Case Study – Fundraising

Namibia – Cancer Association of Namibia The Cancer Apple Project

A wealth of expertise

The Cancer Association of Namibia (CAN) was founded in 1968 and has since worked tirelessly to educate the Namibian population on cancer and related issues, providing care and supportive services to patients and their families, as well as supporting cancer research.

The CAN started its activities with modest means sending its staff around the country by caravan twice a year to implement breast cancer screening services, as well as Pap smears for the prevention and diagnosis of cervical cancer. Over the years, its activities and expertise have grown, achieving many successes, such as the first chemotherapy in the country (1968), the establishment of the National Cancer Outreach Programme (2015) and the opening of several interim homes and centres for cancer patients.

The development and implementation of its activities have been made possible both through the continued development of their expertise and skills, but notably also as a result of their continued and effective fundraising efforts.

“An apple a day, keeps cancer away”

Driven by the idea to engage staff of one of the largest commercial banks in Namibia and raise awareness of cancer and its prevention, the “Cancer Apple Project” has been established in 2000, as a corporate social investment programme.

Through this project, the CAN together with the bank, have set themselves the objective of reaching every Namibian with the message “prevention is better than cure”. For a donation of USD 0.35, employees receive an apple and a bookmark with important information and tips to follow a healthy lifestyle in order to reduce the risk of developing cancer.

A growing project

Since the beginning, in 2001, the initiative has raised more than USD 1'600'000 for the CAN. The bank has been the main sponsor for the event throughout and in addition to this fundraising success, the project has been very popular with the employees. In addition to the opportunity to purchase apples, the bank encourages internal competition between employees by providing “seeding capital” and then creating innovative fundraisers to generate more money. The seeding capital and all profits derived are reinvested in the Apple Project, while the winning branch of the bank receives a financial prize, which is used as part of their branch’s end of year function.

Given the success of this initiative, the Project has started to also engage schools to participate, with the opportunity to win a prize sponsored by the bank. The top three schools that purchase the most apples in the pre-primary, primary and secondary categories receive a financial prize and packs of stationery. Schools ordering the most apples per student receive donations ranging from cash prizes of USD 4,100 to vouchers—

of USD 340 distributed through different sponsors. To give even the smallest school a chance of winning, the ratio between the number of apples purchased and the number of pupils is calculated. The project has been a success story with more than 600 schools participating in the challenge since 2018.

Building strong partnerships is a key to success

For Rolf Hansen, CEO of the CAN: “By involving the wider population, medical staff, schools, bank sector and many other actors, the Cancer Apple Project shows a true involvement and coordination from both the private and public sectors. And it is a pertinent example of coordination between both sectors and the population, demonstrating that we can have a big impact through an inexpensive and easy initiative.”

This is even more true since to sustain the programme, the CAN has also secured a partnership with the single largest private accommodation and tourism entity in Namibia, to accommodate CAN’s staff in their establishments all around the country to facilitate the delivery of their screening and awareness-raising activities. This entity is also often providing the CAN with company vehicles to help in reaching the local community who live in surrounding villages.

Thanks to the apples...

Funds raised through the Cancer Apple Project are earmarked for two key projects of the CAN: the National Cancer Outreach Programme (NCOP), and the Patient Financial Assistance Programme (PFAP). The NCOP provides screening for breast, cervical and prostate cancer to people living in remote rural areas where cancer is often still unheard of and not spoken about.

To break the stigma and educate the community on cancer, a dedicated outreach team visit each of the 14 regions of Namibia annually and provide screening free of charge, while community talks are conducted. Since its inception in 2015, the NCOP has screened more than 34,000 Namibians and this number is growing steadily, with HPV-DNA testing for cervical cancer introduced in 2019.

The NCOP includes among its programmes, the Kavango against Cancer Programme, which is an educational development programme funded in 2017. The programme is aimed at nurses from village clinics, providing the opportunity to participate in a 2-day training and development programme focused on Pap smears, breast examination and prostate cancer screening. The training leverages a “Train the Trainer” approach, to equip nurses with knowledge who can subsequently share this learning with enrolled and registered nurses serving the community in the field.

The second programme funded by the Apple Project is the PFAP, assisting Namibians diagnosed with cancer to get timely treatment. With an estimated 3,700 Namibians newly diagnosed with cancer, in 2020, but spread all over the vast country of 825,419 km², it is often very difficult for patients to travel for treatment.

If the challenges of geographical access can be overcome, the Ministry of Health and Social Services provide “free” cancer treatment for state patients, while private medical aid holders have the option between state or private health care. There are however co-payments and medicines that often need to be paid/purchased to ensure the treatment plan continues as planned, which often incur significant costs for the patient.

Through this programme, the CAN assists patients with transportation money to travel to relevant treatment centres, which are centralised in the capital city of Windhoek, provides accommodation at CAN’s House Acacia Interim Home for cancer patients, or at the Interim Home for childhood cancer patients (CHICA). The fund also makes provision for financial support of medical co-payments or necessary medical supplies.

Since 2015, the CAN has extended direct financial assistance to Namibians totalling more than USD 623,000, in addition to accommodation, medical equipment and other support programmes, and has also been able to contribute funds for the establishment of the Children Fighting Cancer in Namibia (CHICA). The CHICA is the first interim home offering a safe haven for childhood cancer patients and their families.