Communities

Smurfit Kappa is committed to the communities in which we operate, while our Foundation empowers people to improve their lives.

In Smurfit Kappa, we actively support local communities through our Smurfit Kappa Foundation and local operations. Internally and externally, we adhere to high ethical and professional standards, making the well-being of people a priority throughout our organisation. Smurfit Kappa invests significantly in its host communities, contributing to their economic and social development. The aim is to keep generating well-being and improvement through our core business in areas vital for the future, such as education, income generation, collaboration, and participation. By doing this, we can make positive, long-lasting changes in the communities with which we are privileged to work.

Involved in Communities

We always consider the concerns of the wider community at national and international level. Community involvement builds trust and serves as a link to the issues important to us. Local general managers are expected to represent the Group as part of the local community and play a positive part in its development. In our philanthropic work, we focus on self-help initiatives, education and health programmes, and contribute through financial donations and volunteering by local employees.

The circular economy has an impact on our communities as well. Smurfit Kappa participates widely in local circular operations. Some examples of these are:

- Delivering district heating from our paper mill to the residents of Fjärås, Sweden
- Supporting municipality water treatment systems with our effluent that has nutrients that help treat municipality waste water in Nittingdorf, Austria and Hernán, Spain
- Treating municipality waste water in Morava, Czech Republic
- Planting rural road structures at our Colombian Forestry Operations
- Collecting city-recovered paper in Malaga, Spain

Employee Engagement Through Community Activity // UK

Smurfit Kappa SSK is a paper mill located in a deprived area in Birmingham, UK. After the second MyVoice Survey, the UK HR team focused on how they could improve engagement within the workforce and how they could invite more ideas from employees.

“We know that our employees feel strongly about our community initiatives, and we thought that this could be a key for engaging our employees as well,” says Maria Ryan, Head of HR SK UK. “So the idea was born, but we had to determine how best to encourage our people to share with us the Charitable Organisations closest to them and the activities they would be willing to get involved with.”

An autonomous committee of members across all areas of the workforce who could independently decide which projects to support was established. Learning from people from different departments of the mill made the initiative easily accessible for the employees, and nominations for projects to support started to pour in. After the Giving Back initiative was launched in March 2019, over 50 nominations were shared with the committee. In 2019, £30,000 was donated to projects such as children’s cancer charities, local homeless charities, a local children’s hospital and even a local dog rescue shelter. While the SKK budget for these donations in 2019 was £5,000, the remaining funding came from the employees and their families, showing the engagement power of this initiative.

“We can measure success in many ways,” says Maria, “the employees are engaged by choice and through a feeling that their employer is ready to invest in initiatives close to their hearts; the perception of SKK as an employer and associate citizen in the area has increased and all this while the site has been doing good for the community.”

Helping Communities Transform Themselves // Colombia

“Helping Communities Transform Themselves” is a focus on rural communities that lack opportunities, with citizens rarely consulted on municipality development projects. That’s why they’re so enthusiastic and empowered when they can propose ways to improve their lives,” says Beatriz Mejía, Director of Smurfit Kappa Colombia Foundation.

The Focus was in South West Colombia and took a grassroots approach to implementing sustainable initiatives, mostly benefiting the communities neighbouring our forest plantations. As Beatriz points out, “We build valuable partnerships with these neighbouring communities. For example, they can be the first to inform us of risks like forest fire. In the last year, the SK Foundation has spent over £1.2 million on long-term and large-scale social development projects in Colombia.”

We work with communities, designing and implementing local development initiatives that focus on creating sustainable communities. These are based on a shared vision of the territory, strengthening participatory processes, planning and territorial management. The Foundation gives them tools, capabilities and knowledge to influence their own territory, enabling local leaders to work with government and other organisations to bring the projects about.

Some of the activities have been presented in case studies throughout this report.

Progress in 2019

We estimate that as a Group, including our Smurfit Kappa Foundation, approximately £3.5 million was donated in cash and in kind in 2019. This was for a wide range of activities, including children’s education, health and social inclusiveness projects and research.

As Beatriz says, “The award is for creating ownership and leadership – particularly important for Colombia today. We work by the Colombian saying – don’t give fish, teach to fish!”

The Foundation’s goal is to end the cycle of poverty and dependence that exists in some of the communities and countries in which we operate, using the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a guide. The projects we support tackle global issues with local relevance and operate under the ethos: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.” Thus, we support sustainable projects which involve input from the local community and are capable of becoming self-sufficient in the long-term.

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