



Institute for
Community Prosperity

COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PROFILE

Tentree

Fashioning a greener earth

Background

Industry: Clothing Retailer

Founded: 2012

Headquarters: Regina

Legal Structure: Private Company

Customer: Business to Consumer

Owned: Canadian Owned

Years dedicated to Community Investment (C.I.):

Since founded

Region of Focus: Global

Investees/ Partnerships include:

- Canadian Wildlife Federation
- American Forests
- WeForest
- Eden Reforestation
- Trees for the Future

Community Investment Strategy:

In 2012, Kalen Emsley, David Luba and Derrick Emsley decided to create a socially and environmentally sustainable clothing company. Driven by their shared a passion for nature, the three began their business tentree with the idea to plant ten trees for every piece of clothing they sold.¹ Since then, tentree has expanded its mission by employing communities to plant and take care of the trees, providing people with an income. tentree’s approach improves food and health security for entire communities by growing species which add nutritional value to their diets or can be used for medicinal purposes. tentree is also committed to educating communities about sustainable wood harvesting practices to ensure trees have a long lifespan.

It is difficult to separate tentree’s community investment strategy from the rest of the company. The company was started with an idea to replant trees, selling clothing became the way to fund the project. The success of tentree is proof that community investment is possible no matter the size or stage of a business. It is also evidence that a company can be socially and environmentally responsible, while remaining financially sustainable.

CI Dashboard: This dashboard is one way to illustrate how companies invest in community, providing a tool to compare across different company CI profiles. It is important to note that no category is privileged over another.

Geographic scope



CI staff ratio (Presented as percentage of total staff)

$$\frac{15}{15} = 100\%$$

Granting or sponsorship approach

Responsive

CI responds to existing or emerging needs and opportunities articulated by the community

Strategic

CI approach is intentional, driven by the company’s interests and/or theory of change

Flexible

CI is not tied to the company’s core business

Aligned

CI approach is integrated or in line with the company’s core business

FOCUS Investment: Replanting Madagascar

Issue:

Deforestation is a world-wide issue, it contributes to global warming and causes many other environmental problems such as flooding, erosion, and nutrient loss. This issue has a huge impact on many animal species as habitat destruction is the number one cause of wildlife endangerment.² Human populations are also affected by deforestation. Without trees, farmland can become eroded, building materials become depleted and firewood becomes scarce. Many of the communities that face deforestation also suffer from other social issues such as job, food, and medical insecurity. Trees impact every aspect of life, they provide food and medicine, clean the air, store carbon, and secure nutrient rich soil. Without trees, we are all in big trouble.

Madagascar's landscape has been drastically transformed by deforestation. Extreme poverty has caused many people to clear entire forests for firewood, building material, and farmland. Today nearly 85% of Madagascar's ecosystems have been destroyed by human action.

Solution:

To decide which indigenous species of trees should be planted, tentree partners with the non-profit organization Eden Project who works with local communities to determine which species are most important to them.³ In Madagascar, mangrove trees have been identified as the most important species to plant. The west coast of Madagascar have been almost completely stripped of mangroves, disrupting the ecosystem, and leaving it vulnerable to flooding. Replanting the mangroves is the first step to repairing the ecosystem and increasing plant and animal diversity. So far, 750,000 mangroves have been replanted.⁴

tentree gives communities a hand up and out of poverty by employing community members to clear planting sites of debris, grow seedlings, plant the trees, and guard them from animals. This income allows families to send their children to school, buy food and pay for healthcare. The trees will continue to provide employment as soil becomes replenished and the fish and wildlife return to the area. This allows people to begin their own businesses without being indebted to micro loans. As communities still require wood for fuel and building materials, tentree is dedicated to educating communities on sustainable wood harvesting practices to ensure a future for replanted forests.

Impact and Evaluation:

Impact and evaluation is especially important to tentree because their demonstrated value is tied directly to social and environmental impact. tentree's online registration process increases accountability by showing customers where their ten trees have been planted and the impact they are making. So far, over 6, 067, 560 trees have been planted across the globe.⁵

Tentree strives to be transparent by only manufacturing clothing in socially and environmentally responsible factories approved by Worldwide Responsible Accredited productions (WRAP). WRAP is a third party certification program which ensures that factories uphold fair wages and hours with absolutely no child labour. This certification also makes sure manufacturers adhere to environmentally conscious practices.

Endnotes

1. Kalen Emsley, (Chief Marketing Officer and Co-founder, tentree) Interview by the author, June 26, 2015.
2. tentree, "the benefits of planting trees in Madagascar, Ethiopia, and Nepal" para. 3, tentree, April 24, 2014, <http://www.tentree.com/blog/benefits-planting-trees-in-madagascar-ethiopia-nepal/>.
3. Emsley, Interview.
4. tentree, "Madagascar" para. 2, tentree, 2015, <http://www.tentree.com/ca/madagascar>
5. tentree, "tree map" para. 1, tentree, 2015, <http://www.tentree.com/ca/treecode/map/>