

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT  
**Skills Push**

NGO-led initiative to develop critical artisanal skills for eMalahleni mining, engineering sectors

CHANTELLE KOTZE | STAFF WRITER

**N**onprofit organisation Vukani-Ubuntu Community Development Projects is moving into the second phase of its skills development initiative, The Job Shop Project, which aims to develop scarce and critical artisanal skills for the mining and engineering sectors in eMalahleni, Mpumalanga.

Research on Phase 1 of The Job Shop Project, which was undertaken in late 2012, indicated a massive need for skilled people in the eMalahleni area, where a significant proportion of South Africa's power-generating capacity is located, owing to the rich coal deposits in the surrounding areas.

There are also several steel producers and engineering fabrication works in the area.

Vukani-Ubuntu Community Development Projects CEO Demos Takoulas tells *Mining Weekly* that the increased demand for coal has resulted in the upgrading of ageing power plants and the building of new power plants, while increased demand for steel, ferrochrome, vanadium, iron and related metals from local producers has also contributed to the increased growth in related engineering and fabrication industries in the area.

Subsequently, these factors have led to high demand for skilled and semiskilled artisans, he points out.

"Businesses based in the area and elsewhere in South Africa are in dire need of artisans who have specific vocational expertise in the electrical, boilermaking, fitting and turning, water and waste-management, basic engineering and construction fields, besides others," says Takoulas.

Currently, there is only one government training facility in eMalahleni.

Further, there is neither a regularly updated and central-

**STORY HIGHLIGHTS**

>> The project will ensure that the mines and other industries have the necessary skills capacity in high-growth areas.

>> The aim of the initiative is to directly benefit the large unemployed community in eMalahleni.

ised database listing trained (or partly trained) artisans available in Mpumalanga and where they are situated, nor a facility that quickly and professionally assesses and places such individuals, thereby matching work seekers with specific industry and government positions.

Therefore, both phases of The Job Shop Project were established by Vukani-Ubuntu Community Development Projects – with initial funding by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC) – to prioritise the upskilling in scarce and critical skills to influence the mining and manufacturing sectors in eMalahleni and address some of the inherent problems associated with job creation.

The project will ensure that the mines and other industries have the necessary skills capacity in high-growth areas and will also develop portable skills for "life after mine", as referred to in the Mining Charter's Social Labour Plan.

Phase II of the project is unique in that it alleviates vocational skills shortages, provides skills certification and ensures direct placement in the mining and engineering industries. This phase will be funded by the European Union and the IDC.

The aim of the initiative is to directly benefit the large unemployed community in eMalahleni by directly providing essential services for job seekers and industry.

The Job Shop Project incor-

porates the registration, assessment and profiling of work seekers, as well as a system for the recognition of prior/experiential learning.

The system is used as an assessment tool to create an easily accessible national work-seeker database.

The Job Shop Project is based in the eMalahleni industrial zone, in Klarinet, at the self-sustainable and black-economic-empowerment-compliant manufacturing and engineering company Facon Engineering.

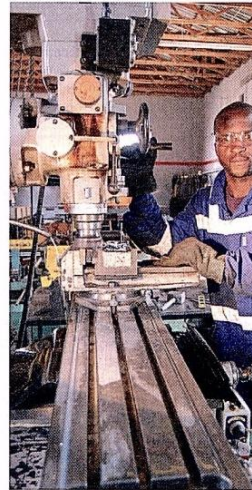
Facon Engineering has been operating for more than 23 years and has an existing client base that can be increased through the partnership with The Job Shop Project.

The services it offers to industry include steel fabrication and erection, new equipment and machinery manufacture, precision machining and precision engineering, as well as light-, medium- and heavy-duty sheet metal work.

Facon Engineering and Vukani-Ubuntu Community Development Projects will provide certified skilled artisans for the mining and engineering sectors that have been sourced and trained locally to ensure economic development and sustainability.

Seed funding of R800 000 was obtained from the IDC for Phase I of The Job Shop Project, with an additional R3-million pledged by the IDC for Phase II – the initiative has also applied for R8.5-million in funding from the European Union.

Takoulas highlights that, besides The Job Shop Project, the organisation has three other upskilling



**PRACTICAL UPSKILLING**

The Job Shop Project aims to prioritise the upskilling in scarce and critical skills

initiatives in the pipeline.

These include a woodwork skill and enterprise development project in Kriel, Mpumalanga, in partnership with global miner Anglo American's coal division, Anglo Thermal Coal; a possible jewellery project in Hoedspruit, Limpopo, in partnership with the Airforce Spouses Forum; and the establishment of a metals incubator at stainless steel products manufacturer Columbus Stainless Steel, in Middelburg, Mpumalanga, in partnership with the IDC.

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