

# Let's Talk Asikhulume

A QUARTERLY NEWSPAPER FOR THE PEOPLE OF DRDGOLD

DRDGOLD ▶

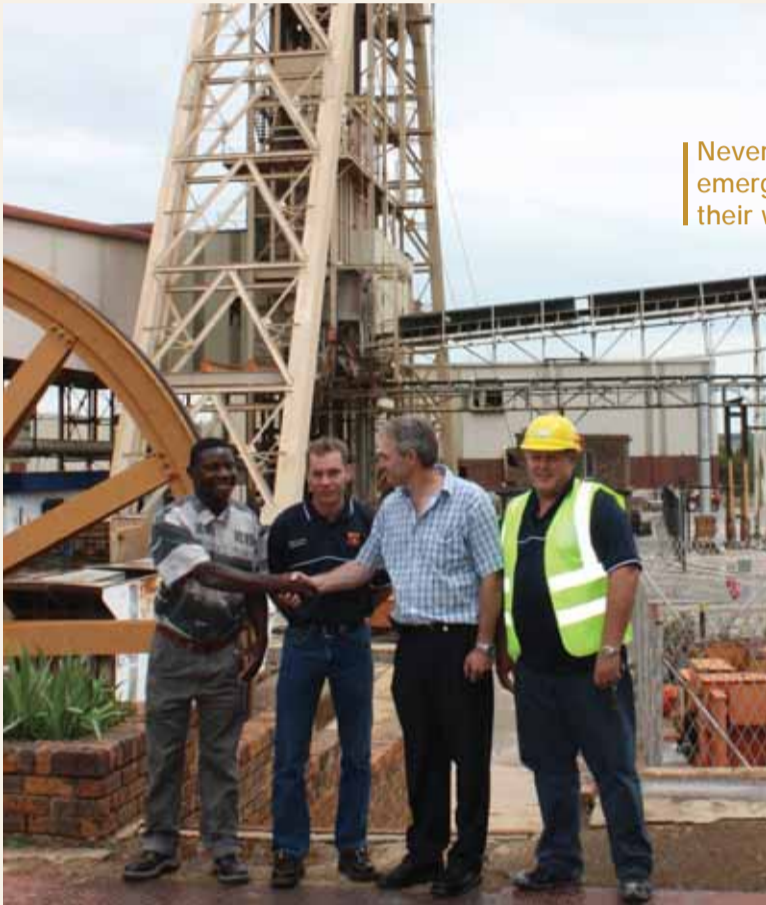
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## When lightning strikes

### 167 employees brought safely to surface



Gabriel Masinga, a miner at No 5 Shaft, Henry Baker, a member of the proto team, general manager Owen O'Brien and production manager Jacques Kleinsmith at No 5 shaft

Some 275 Blyvoor employees were working underground at the mine's No 5 Shaft on the night of 17 January 2009 when an enormous bolt of lightning hit two electricity sub-stations, causing a complete power blackout at the shaft. While none was ever in danger because all had been issued with emergency self-rescuers and were able to make their way

safely to underground refuge bays, 167 nevertheless had a wait of many hours before power was restored and they were brought back to surface.

The lightning struck – and disabled – a nearby Eskom power sub-station, sending a surge of power into the shaft's electrical sub-station. The electrical supply cables also caught fire for a brief moment, sending

smoke into underground working areas. Fortunately, the fire was quickly extinguished while workers were escorted to refuge bays.

**Never in danger, everyone had been issued with emergency self-rescuers and was able to make their way safely to underground refuge bays.**

A group of 108 people were working below surface on 15 Level and could be evacuated via No 6 shaft. A number of employees, 167 people in total, were confined for almost 23 hours between 27 Level and 41 Level (2 200 to 2 800 metres) underground.

The incident turned out to be a textbook example of how a safety incident should be handled.

"Blyvoor is a deep-level mine with an exemplary safety record in the industry. DRDGOLD has proven its commitment to safety on an ongoing basis and has attained various safety awards, including the West Rand Mine Managers Association's Safety Award for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in succession," said Owen O'Brien, general manager at Blyvoor.

"Nevertheless, there are some things beyond our control. The events following the lightning strike highlighted the impact constructive programmes such as the behaviour-based safety initiative implemented at all of DRDGOLD's mines can have on the effective management of a difficult situation," he added.

In order to bring to surface the remaining 167 employees, two avenues were considered. The first avenue entailed the re-establishment

of power to the winders which would provide the most rapid means. The second avenue was to send down two proto teams comprising a total of 10 specially trained rescue workers to lead the employees to No 4 Shaft; however, this could have turned out to be a gruelling eight-hour walk, resulting in the decision to leave the 167 in the rescue bays where they had access to air, water and light.

"When I saw the smoke, I knew from our training that we had to go to the refuge bays where we would have access to air and water. We were also all equipped with emergency self-rescue packs to protect ourselves against inhaling the smoke," says Gabriel Masinga, a miner at No 5 Shaft. "In the refuge bay, I called my bosses to find out exactly what had happened. They explained what had happened, and called my wife to tell her about the events and that they

were doing everything in their power to get us out safely."

While members of the engineering team were doing their best to restore power to the winder and repair the damage caused to the electrical cables, members of the proto team made sure that everyone was safe and accounted for. "When we reached the refuge bays, we saw that everyone was calm and uninjured. It was a first-rate rescue effort," says Henry Baker, a proto team member and shaft foreman at Blyvoor's No 6 Shaft.

All 167 employees were brought to surface by around 19:00 on Sunday 18 January, once power had been restored to the winder and tests had been carried out to ensure that they could be brought to surface safely.

"This was a sterling team effort in which each and every member played a part. Each person knew exactly what was expected of them and they carried out their mission effectively and responsibly," says Owen.

See page 2 for more on the courageous efforts of the proto teams

## Xa kubaneka

Uqwalaselo lokuhlangulwa kwabasebenzi abangama 167 ababevaleleke ngaphantsi emgodini

Impelaveki yomhla we 17 nowe 18 Janyuwari 2009 iyakuhlala ikhunjulwa, njengoko ishishini lemigodi nelizwe ngokwalo, labukela iinzame zobukrothi zabantu abaninzi zokuhlangula abasebenzi abangama 275 ababevaleleke ngaphantsi emgodini emva kokuhawuka kombane wewayindari yeshafthi engezantsi noweshafthi enkulu. Iqela labantu abali 108 babesebenza kufutshane phezu komgodi baze ke bona banyuswa kuselithuba. Uninzi lwabasebenzi, abali 167, bavaleleka iiyure ezimalunga nama 23 phakathi kobunzulu be 27 nobe 41 iimitha ezingama 2 200 ukuya kuma 2 800) ngaphantsi emgodini.

Le ngozi ijike yabangumzekelo wesifundo sendlela ekufanele kusingathwe ngayo isihlo sokhuseleko. "I-Blyvoor ngomnye wemigodi enzulu kweli shishini oneyona mbali ingcono yokhuseleko kweli shishini. I-DRDGOLD SA ibonise ubungqina bokuzimisela kwayo kukhuseleko ngendlela eqhubekayo, kwaye ifumene amawonga wokhuseleko amaninzi awohlukeneyo, kubandakanywa iwonga eliyi-West Rand Mine Managers Association's Safety iminyaka eli 10 ilandelelana," utshilo u-Owen O'Brien, ongumanejala omkhulu womgodi e-Blyvoor.

"Nangona kunjalo, zikho izinto esingenako ukuzilawula. Izinto ezenzeke emva kokubetha kombane zibonise igalelo elakhayo nelinekxaso elingenziwa ziinkqubo ezifana nenyathelo lokhuseleko elisekelwe ekuziphatheni elimiselwe kuyo yonke imigodi ye-DRDGOLD, kulawulo olunempumelelo lwemeko engabanobungozi obukhulu," waleke ngelithshoyo.

Bonke abasebenzi abali 167 banyuselwa phezu komgodi malunga nentsimbi ye 19:00 ngeCawe umhla we 18 Janyuwari, kwakube kubuyiselwe umbane kwaye kwenziwa uvavanyo lokuzinisekisa ukuba banganyuselwa phezulu ngokukhuselekileyo.

## Quarter wrap-up

DRDGOLD reported a 15% decline in gold production to 60 057 ounces for the last quarter, ended 31 December 2008. This reflected declines in production at ERPM (a consequence of the discontinuation of underground mining) and at Crown. Lower production at Crown was a result both of continued overall throughput reduction in order to manage diminishing tailings deposition capacity, and later-than-planned commissioning of the Top Star reclamation site. Blyvoor, however, reported a 4% increase in production, due mainly to an increase in surface yield.

Total revenue for the quarter was unchanged at R476.8 million and, after accounting for cash operating costs which were 2.0% lower at R406.9 million, and for gold process of R24.4 million, operating profit was 65% higher at R94.3 million.

After deduction of depreciation, provision for environmental rehabilitation, retrenchment costs and taxation, the company made a net profit of R33.4 million compared with the previous quarter's R8.8 million net loss.

"The Ergo surface retreatment project is coming to fruition and the Top Star project is up and running and will therefore be able to take advantage of the current gold price attraction as a "safe haven" in economically volatile times.

"Looking ahead, we will remain cautious about new, long-lead capital projects, and avoid those that we cannot fully cover with the cash and facilities we have at hand. Our focus will remain on increasing efficiencies, managing risks, controlling costs carefully, and taking a very disciplined approach to growth," said Niël Pretorius, DRDGOLD CEO.

### Letters to the Editor

This is your newsletter and we want to hear from you. Letters or questions can be sent to your HR manager or faxed to Memory Johnstone at (011) 880-3788.

If you have a question you would like to put to Niël Pretorius, please send it to us. Niël will answer the most interesting question received every quarter.

# ERPM – The ripple effect

The sequence of events following the tragic loss of two employees conducting routine water monitoring at ERPM's SWV shaft in September 2008 has had a significant effect on the future of the mine and its employees.

The stoppage of water pumping at SWV shaft was announced in October 2008. A total of 60 megalitres of water was pumped from this site on a daily basis, and the subsequent cessation of pumping has proved to be a major setback towards the containment of the rising water levels of the Central

The capital cost and the cost of maintaining the entire workforce on full pay were beyond ERPM's financial means.

Witwatersrand Basin. The capital costs and cost of maintaining the entire workforce on full pay were beyond the financial means of ERPM, which incurred a loss of R128.1 million after accounting for impairment of assets for the quarter ended 30 September 2008. Based on this estimation, and estimated installation costs of around R115 million for additional pumping infrastructure at ERPM, mining activities at SWV shaft were halted in October.

"The difficult decision to suspend the underground operations of ERPM was made in January 2009. Of the 1 700 employees affected by this decision, 109 accepted the company's voluntary retrenchment offer; 101 were transferred to Blyvoor; and five have been transferred to Ergo. The remaining 1 335 employees have regrettably been retrenched. DRDGOLD is working in close consultation with labour to identify and implement re-skilling programmes and has engaged with other mining companies which have expressed an interest in recruiting employees," explains Andrew Weir, executive officer human resources at DRDGOLD.

While the SWV shaft will remain on a care and maintenance programme in order to ensure that critical equipment and infrastructure is maintained, surface operations will continue as normal.

## The utmost good faith

This is the standard by which Niël Pretorius (appointed chief executive officer of DRDGOLD on 1 January) believes the company should measure every activity in which it engages.

"We are custodians dealing with the property of our shareholders; we are also responsible for providing our employees with a safe and healthy working environment, for managing the environmental impact of our operations; and for maintaining a sensitive awareness of the needs of the communities affected by our operations," explains Niël.

"Looking ahead, there is no certainty as yet as to when the global economic crisis will begin to subside. In these circumstances, our focus will remain on increasing efficiencies, managing risks, controlling our costs carefully, and taking a very disciplined approach to growth.

"Our surface assets – the Elsburg and Ergo surface retreatment projects – are on schedule and should be able to benefit from the higher gold price, as will the Top Star project, now up and running.

"We will consider new assets as opportunities arise, but are clear on what we would consider and what we would discard. Through this approach, we believe, we will continue our drive towards sustainability as a platform for growth," he concludes.

"We are custodians dealing with the property of our shareholders," says DRDGOLD CEO, Niël Pretorius.

# New life for Top Star

The last issue of *Asikhulume* reported that Crown was on the point of starting treatment of the Top Star Dump, to the south of Johannesburg's central business district. The mining licence was awarded by the Department of Minerals and Energy (DME) on 12 August last year, and the project was commissioned in mid-December. The project forms part of Crown's social and labour plan (SLP), as submitted to the DME.

A full consultation process was followed throughout the project, and a number of public participation and feedback meetings have been held, most recently in October 2008. A comprehensive dust mitigation process is in place, while the mining process itself has been designed to minimise dust.

"In Johannesburg, the prevailing winds usually trend north-west," explains Crown general manager Henry Gouws. "We therefore start mining from the southern side, to leave the generally well-vegetated north-western sides to face the wind."

The mining right for the dump has been granted until 20 August 2013. The project is expected to contribute some 1.276 kilograms of gold per year over its estimated three-year life. The



The Top Star dump, visible from the M2 highway

project will treat some 6 000 tonnes per day, and is estimated to produce around 100 kilograms of gold per month at grades of approximately 0.75 grams per tonne. About 45 people, mainly existing employees of Crown and contractor Fraser Alexander, will work on the project. The reclamation face is clearly visible from the M2 highway. After treatment

on site to remove rubble and larger material, the wet sand is transported by reclamation pipeline to the Robinson Deep reclamation site and then to Crown Plant.

In the meantime, the old drive-in cinema screen, a well-known Johannesburg landmark for so many years, remains in place.

## Kuqaliswa umsebenzi e-Top Star

Ilayisensi yenqumba yomgodi we-Top Star Dump yanikwa liSebe leZimbiwa naMandla (i-DME) ngomhla we 12 Agasti kulo nyaka upheleleyo, kwaye ugunyaziso lokusungula umsebenzi lwenziwa phakathi kuDisemba. Le projekthi iyinxenye yeSicwangciso seNtlalo neseZabasebenzi sase-Crown, esibizwa ngokuba yi-Social and Labour Plan (SLP), njengoko sithiwe thaca kwi-DME.

Kuyo yonke le projekthi kulandelwe inkqubo egcweleyo yokubonisana, kwaye kubanjwe iqela leentlanganiso

zokuthabatha inxaxheba koluntu nezokunika iingxelo, eyakutshanje ibibanjwe ngo-Okthobha kulo nyaka upheleleyo. Sele imisiwe inkqubo ephangaleleyo yokuthomalalisa uthuli. Inkqubo yokwemba umgodi ngokwayo nayo iyilwe ngendlela enciphisa iingxaki zothuli. "E-Johannesburg, imimoya idla ngokuvuthuzelela emntla-ntshona," ucacisa ngelitshoyo umanejala omkhulu wase-Crown, u Henry Gouws. "Ngoko ke, siqalisa ukwemba kweli cala lingezantsi, ukuze la macala asemntla-ntshona, njengoko

enohlumo oluhle lwezityalo, siwayeke ajongane nomoya."

Ilungelo lokwemba umgodi kule nqumba linikwe ukuya kutsho ngomhla we 20 Agasti 2013. Le projekthi ilindeleke ukuba yenze igalelo le 1.276kg yegolide ngonyaka kwisithuba sokuqhuba kwayo esiqikelelwa kwiminyaka emithathu. Le projekthi izakuvelisa iitani ezingama 6 000 ngemini, kwaye iqikelelwa ukuba izakukhupha i-100kg yegolide ngenyanga kwimigangatho emalunga ne 0.75 grams itani.

## Crown appoints full-time health and safety representative

Vusi Mtembu was appointed as Crown's first full-time health and safety representative on 1 December 2008. Vusi previously worked as a boilermaker aide at Crown Plant, and has 22 years' service with the company.

The appointment, which runs for three years, represents a new era for Crown. "While the three plants are legally considered as three separate operations, the appointment of a full-time representative to cover the three plants was discussed with the NUM as part of the 2007-2009 wage negotiations, and the appointment of a full-time rep was agreed. Through a joint consultation process with the NUM, the three health and safety

committees currently in place (at Crown, City Deep and Knights plants) nominated one candidate, with Vusi agreed as the final choice. A central health and safety committee has been constituted, on which both management and the NUM are represented," says chief health and safety officer John Scudder.

Vusi is based at Crown Plant. His role, in terms of the newly drafted Health and Safety Agreement and as prescribed by the Mine Health and Safety Act, will be to monitor safety standards and report back to his constituents. Any issue not resolved at the three plant-based committees will be referred to him.

## Proto teams – The unsung heroes of the mining industry

A proto team service awards ceremony was held on 7 February 2009 at the Civic Centre in Fochville to celebrate the courageous efforts of these valiant brigadesmen. Three members of the proto team employed at Blyvoor – and who helped during the power outage on 17 and 18 January – were rewarded for their efforts.

Attendees were addressed by DRDGOLD's executive officer: underground operations, Collie Russouw. DRDGOLD CEO Niël Pretorius presented the awards to Blyvoor's senior

proto team captain, Morne van Tonder and Hein Bester, both received five-year service awards, and Hugh du Plooy, received his 10-year service award.

In total, two five-member voluntary proto teams assist the Mines Rescue Service – a non-profit organisation – with the provision of an effective emergency service within the mining sector.

Being a proto team member is a voluntary vocation and the teams are not mine-specific in their rescue efforts. "Members of the team

are on call 24/7 and work under extremely difficult conditions with high temperatures in a dangerous environment. Their ability to deal with underground fires and other hazardous underground situations has saved many lives at many mines," said Collie at the awards ceremony.

The events following the lightning strike at No 5 Shaft on 17 January (please see article on page 1) has drawn attention to the importance of these proto teams, and their

sometimes unbelievable ability to rescue and recover fellow workers and protect the assets of mining companies.

"We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the members of the proto teams. They really are the unsung heroes of the mining industry and we at DRDGOLD are extremely appreciative of all that they have done to secure the safety their fellow men and women and the mining industry as a whole," concluded DRDGOLD CEO, Niël Pretorius.

# Winds of change at the Blyvoor plant

In the eight months that have elapsed since his transfer from Crown, Blyvoor's metallurgical manager Juan Oosthuizen has not let the grass grow under his feet. Building on his experience at Crown, Juan and the plant team have embarked on an innovative change management system.

"A critical first step is education. People must understand the business, and the role their individual tasks play in the business. This means they understand the impact of the decisions they take," he says.

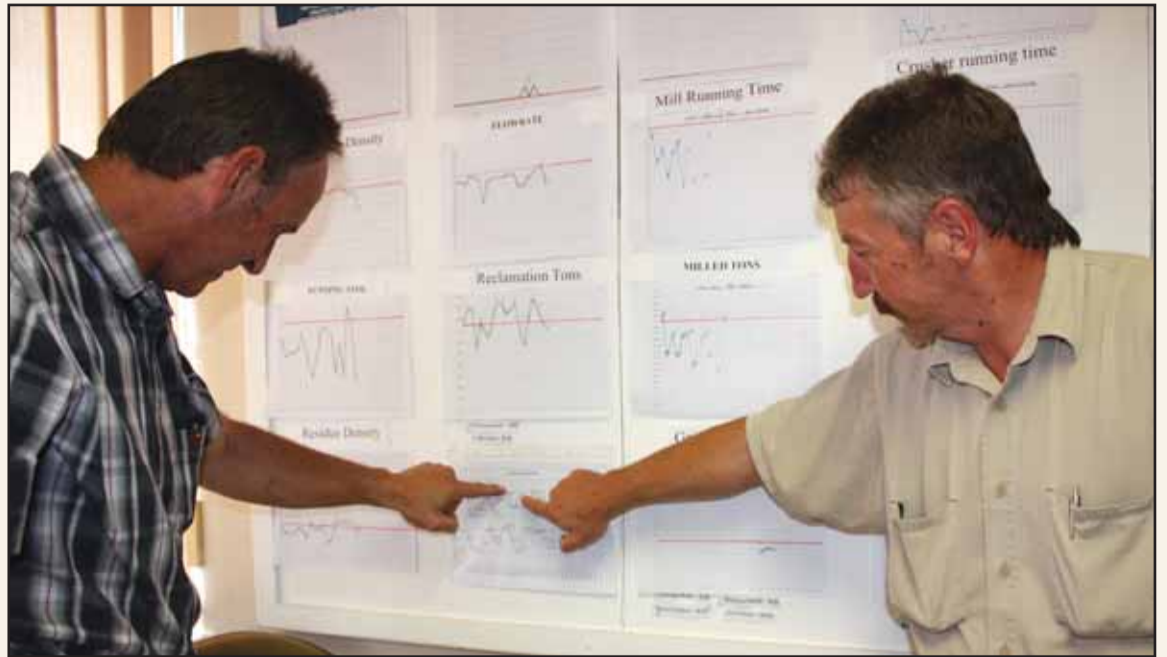
Juan reports that the Blyvoor team has been highly receptive to the new approach.

Through a workshopping process, the team has established four business areas within the plant, with a 'care pair' (representing engineering and

metallurgy respectively) focusing on the results of each. Two of the areas (ore handling and environment) work outside the plant, while the other three (crushing, milling and carbon-in-pulp (CIP) and carbon-in-leach (CIL)) represent the core processes within the metallurgical plant.

"The danger, of course, is that teams focus on their own results rather than those of the business as a whole," says Juan. The answer, according to him, is simple: "People must talk to each other."

The process has involved extensive team-building. "The trick is to focus on the natural leaders within the team, and empower them without threatening the existing structures," says Juan. Comfort zones have to be left behind to a degree. "As a manager, I have to let go of certain aspects, without losing overall control.



Juan Oosthuizen with business leader Pieter Russouw

The team has to move away from thinking in silos, and adopt new ways of thinking."

Change never happens overnight, and it's obviously still early days. "Real results will start coming through

when every single employee in the plant understands his role and its impact on the business," says Juan.

## Property portfolio: progress report

As reported in Issue 9 of *Asikhulume*, Louis Lamsley (who retired as chief operating officer of DRDGOLD at the end of 2007) has taken on the new role of managing DRDGOLD's extensive land and property portfolio. Although DRDGOLD owns land in all its areas of operation, the initial focus is on the East Rand areas surrounding ERPM. (Louis points out that in the event of any sale of ERPM's underground operations, DRDGOLD's ownership of the land would not be affected.)

"At the beginning of 2008, ERPM owned the freehold rights to some 550 hectares, of which some 100 hectares could potentially be developed for residential or commercial use," says Louis.

The freehold rights of large portions of land on which ERPM's operations are situated originally belonged to the Wits Gold Mining Realisation Trust (WGMRT), with the mine holding only the surface rights. Early in 2008, Louis

spearheaded a negotiation process with WGMRT to conduct land swaps. "This meant ceding some surface right permits in certain areas, in exchange for freehold ownership of other areas," says Louis. "Through the Settlement Agreement, concluded in October 2008, we have acquired an additional 362 hectares of land, with an estimated market value of R60 million.

A forum has also been established comprising representatives of Eskom, the electrical engineering department of Ekurhuleni Town Council, and a number of consultants and developers in order to identify future bulk service requirements.

Cash generated by the first project will be applied to a number of other projects, enabling the property division to meet its objective of creating opportunities for making low-cost housing available to the communities surrounding ERPM.



Property currently owned by ERPM, set aside for residential and commercial development

## First Crown apprentices to pass trade test



Members of the first group of Crown apprentices. Pictured here from the back left are: Thabo Keetsi, Mogapi Jan, Mokoti Isaac, Justice Ndlangamandla, Khoza Titus, Mashigo Deph, Vincent Mndaweni

The DRDGOLD learnership programme, initiated in 2006, aims to address the local skills shortage and to afford employees the opportunity to further their careers within the mining industry.

The first intake of apprentices from Crown were enrolled in the programme in 2007. And thanks in large part to the efforts of training officer Thabo Keetsi, the group will be eligible to write their trade tests in November 2009.

"The process has been challenging, to say the least. I have been tasked with guiding and supporting the learners on their path of study and I am confident that they will all pass in November," he said.

The group of six apprentices have signed up for training at the Goldfields Academy and are currently completing their on-the-job training at Crown. Once they

have completed the programme, they will be qualified as electricians, fitters and boilermakers.

"I feel privileged to be part of the first group of learners given that we have paved the way for others to follow," said apprentice fitter Isaac Mokoti.

**"I now believe in the company, because the company believes in me," said Vincent Mndaweni.**

DRDGOLD initiated the learnership programme as an opportunity for employees to further develop themselves to their full potential.

"I now believe in the company, because the company believes in me, and I feel very pleased that other people will look at us and say 'If they can do it, then so can I,'" said apprentice boilermaker, Vincent Mndaweni.

## Baithuti ba ho qala ba Crown ba rupellwang mosebetsing

Lenaneo la thupelo ya mosebetsing la DRDGOLD, le qadilweng ka 2006, le ikemiseditse ho shebana le kgaello ya bokgoni ba mona ka hara naha le ho neha basebetsi monyetla wa ho ntshetsa pele seo ba batlang ho ithutela sona ka hara indasteri ya merafo.

Sehlopha sa ho qala sa di-apprentice (bao ba tla kenela thupelo) se tswang mane Crown se ngodisitswe

lenaneong lena ka 2007. Mme re rata ho leboha haholo maiteko a mohlanka wa thupelo, Thabo Keetsi, hobane sehlopha se tla tshwaneleha ho ngola dihlahlobo tsa seo ba ithutetseng sona ka Pudungwana 2009. "Re ka bolela feela re re, mosebetsi ona e bile o phepetsang. Ke fuwe mosebetsi wa ho tataisa le ho tshhehisa baithuti dithutong tsa bona, mme ke na le tshepo ya hore ba tla atleha ka Pudungwana," ke yena eo.

# Meet

## Reneiloe Masimane

Reneiloe Masimane joined DRDGOLD on 5 January 2009 as legal adviser. She holds a Master of Law degree from the University of the Witwatersrand and has extensive experience within the fields of commercial, criminal and labour law.

Reneiloe spent time as a senior consultant with a corporate advisory firm prior to joining DRDGOLD. She also has considerable experience within the judiciary department of the South African Labour Court.



# Crowned with glory

Teams from DRDGOLD have regularly participated in the Round Table Bed Race, an annual event, held to raise money for child-related charities, and this year was no exception. Two teams from Crown and one from Corporate Office took part in the most recent event, held at Swartkops, near Pretoria – with the crown of victory going, appropriately, to Crown.

“We were the social team, and unfortunately didn’t get to practice much,” says strategic business unit manager Gert Aucamp. The other

team, captained by Wilson Msimango, put in many hours of practice and were rewarded with first place!

“Each team is allocated a standard hospital bed: one team member must lie on it at all times, while the other four move the bed over a series of obstacles – those beds get really heavy after a while!” says Wilson.

Team Crown has previously come close to winning, achieving both second and third place, but is now finally the proud holder of the winner’s trophy.



Pioneering staff members of the new occupational health centre

# New occupational health centre at Blyvoor

Since 1 December 2008, Blyvoor’s employees have been the beneficiaries of a significantly enhanced occupational health service. Management of the new centre is outsourced to Healthshare, which already manages all Blyvoor’s primary and secondary health care.

“The previous centre – sub-contracted by Harmony Gold Mining to Healthshare – was based at the Phumlani Centre in Randfontein. The new centre is located in a fully refurbished section of the old A J Orenstein Hospital, near No 3 Hostel at Blyvoor,” says employee relations superintendent Paul Leenderts. “Employee feedback has been extremely positive. Having the centre on site and staffed by dedicated, customer-focused staff, has resulted in a significantly more streamlined process, running at just over an hour for a full periodical or on-

admission examination, compared with several days at Phumlani,” says Paul.

Healthshare contracts executive Caroline Green and her team of 12 occupational health professionals manage the centre. Occupational health functions available on site include audiology, lung function tests, TB X-rays and the admission of directly observed therapies (DOTS). The full spectrum of primary health care, including the HIV/Aids programme, is also administered from the centre. The only occupational health examinations not handled on site are acclimatisation and heat tolerance testing.

The occupational health and acclimatisation centres currently serve Blyvoor employees only, although, says Paul, discussions are in place to offer this to other mining companies in the area.

## Setsi se setjha sa tsa bophelo mosebetsing mane Blyvoor

Haesale ho tloha ka la 1 Tshitwe, basebetsi ba Blyvoor ba bile baamohedi ba tshebetso e tswetseng pele haholo ya tsa bophelo mosebetsing. Botsamaisi ba setsi se setjha bo fuwe khampani ya ka ntle ya Healthshare, eo e seng e ntse e tsamaisa le tlhokomelo yohle ya motheo le e phahameng ya bophelo ya Blyvoor.

“Setsi sa pejana – se neng se fuwe konteraka ke Harmony Gold Mining – se ne se le mane Phumlani Centre e Randfontein. Setsi se setjha se sebakeng se seng se ntlafaditswe ka botlalo sa A J Orenstein Hospital ya kgale, haufi le Number 3 Hostel e Blyvoor,” ho rialo superintendent wa dikamano le basebetsi e leng Paul Leenderts. “Maikutlo a basebetsi ke a fanang ka tshepo e hodimo jwalo ka ha setsi se le ka hara

setsha, mme se na le moifo o ikemiseditseng, o tsepamisitsweng maikutlo a ona ho dikhastama, mme hona ho bile le tshebetso e tsamayang hantle haholo, moo ho nkuwang nako e ka hodimo feela hanyenyane ho hora ho ena le nako e felletseng kapa ho kengwa sepetele hore o hlahlajwe, ho neng ho nka matsatsi a mmalwa mane Phumlani.” Qetellong nako e shejilweng hore e nkuwe ke metsotso e 45, ho rialo Paul a le motlotlo.

Tsa bophelo mosebetsing le ditsi tsa ho itlwaetsa dintho ha jwale di sebeletsa basebetsi ba Blyvoor feela, empa ho ntse ho ena le ditherisano tsa hore hona ho fuwe le dikhampani tse ding tsa nmerafa tse tikolohong, ho rialo Paul.

# Stepping stones to a better future

The reef picking project at Blyvoor has come a long way since its inception in December 2005 as an initiative to promote opportunities for women to become involved in the mining sector.

The predominantly female workforce is selected from the surrounding communities which comprise six wards, each with its own union representative. Each reef picker is trained to identify rocks with gold-bearing qualities contained in the old waste rock dumps surrounding the mine and is given the opportunity to progress to more skilled occupations in the mining industry.

“As a result of this initiative, we have a constant flow of potential permanent employees,” says DRDGOLD SA’s mineral resources manager, Ryno Botha.

The project is made up of three groups of 32 reef pickers and three grade control officers responsible for producing a rough estimate of 10 kilograms of gold a month. The task of the team is to sort old material from the waste rock dump, and separate and grade the gold-containing material, which is then transported by truck to the metallurgical plant for processing.

The reef picking employees form part of DRDGOLD’s plan to develop a skilled workforce within the communities that surround its operations. “As a result of this initiative, we have a constant flow of potential permanent employees. Our aim is to develop and promote these employees to take up permanent mining positions in all spheres of the company, resulting in a win-win situation for both the mine as well as the surrounding community,” says DRDGOLD SA’s mineral resources manager, Ryno Botha.

“The reef picking project is a stepping stone to bigger and better things,” said grade controller Johannes Matsemane when asked what the project was all about. “It offers employment to women from the community who would otherwise be unemployed and provides them with benefits such as a provident fund, access to the national unemployment insurance fund (UIF) and access to the company’s development programmes such as the ABET programme,” he concluded.



Reef pickers fully kitted out in personal protective equipment

# Creating career paths at Crown

A new initiative at Crown has created further opportunities for career development in the engineering field, eliminating a previous bottleneck and tapping into valuable engineering skills.

“Artisan aides were previously graded at the Category 6 level in terms of the job grading system,” explains senior human resources manager Jeevan Uren. “As artisans are graded as Category 13, there was no route for an aide to progress to the higher level.”

This anomaly has been rectified as part of the 2007-2009 wage agreement concluded at Crown with the NUM, through the creation of a new position of engineering operative, graded at Category 9. Selected artisan aides will attend a modular

training programme, either at Gold Fields Academy (GFA) near Carletonville or the newly established Ekurhuleni Business Development Academy (EBDA) at Ergo. Applicants will be selected from the boilermaking and fitting ranks.

“Training is expected to take between six and 12 months and will comprise both theoretical and practical components. On successful completion of the training, participants will be considered for appointment to the newly created operative level, provided vacancies exist,” says Jeevan.

Internal advertisements were placed during January, and through a consultation process between management and the NUM, six

applicants have been selected from each of the three Crown plants (Crown, City Deep and Knights). A total of 88 applications were received. The first intake began their training during February.

“The engineering operative position offers an opportunity for job enrichment. Incumbents will work with a greater level of autonomy than the current aides, for example, being called out to carry out repairs to equipment,” says Jeevan. “Incumbents will consequently be eligible to receive shift allowances when required.”

A new intake is planned every quarter. Successful candidates will be based full-time at the selected training vendor, and will receive full pay for the duration of the training programme.