

Bonds with China boost jobs in Phalaborwa



Palabora Mining Company (PMC) operates a smelter and refinery complex in Limpopo.

Palabora Copper (Pty) Limited is an incorporated operative subsidiary of Palabora Mining Company (PMC), a copper mine that also operates as a smelter and refinery complex in Ba-Phalaborwa Municipality, Limpopo Province in South Africa.

The mine is 80% owned by a Chinese Consortium comprising HBIS, Tewoo, General Nice and CADFund through Smart Union Resources South Africa. The rest of the equity is jointly owned by the South African government through the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), a black empowerment consortium, PMC employees and communities.

Since its incorporation in 1956, Palabora Copper (PC) has been South Africa's sole producer of refined copper, and the mine produces other by-products such as magnetite, vermiculite, sulphuric acid, anode slimes and nickel sulphate.

Chinese investment

The Chinese Consortium acquired PC in 2013 when PC was facing two possible scenarios: (a) culmination of the life-of-mine and (b) no overhauling of the smelter which was outdated and facing shutdown. The first scenario would have resulted in the loss of employment for more than 3 500



employees (direct and indirect) while the second scenario would have led to the loss of jobs for more than 700 off-stream employees at the smelter.

Soon after the sale transaction, the new owners fostered partnerships between PC and Chinese companies in areas such as economic development, trade, skills and technology transfers to achieve ground-breaking and substantive results in extending the life-of-mine, refurbishing the smelter and building a floatation plant.

To this end, the Chinese Consortium approved R10.4-billion to extend the life-of-mine to beyond 2033, R878-million to refurbish the smelter to ensure that PC continues to produce copper rod, and R199-million to construct the floatation plant to improve copper recoveries, operational efficiencies and to reduce operational costs.

Looking into the future

Palabora Copper is undertaking a life-of-mine extension project known as the Lift II. The project aims to extend the life of the business up to 2033. The project includes the magnetite reclamation and beneficiation study aimed at creating additional revenue from the legacy stockpile. The company committed about R700-million to the pre-feasibility study and approximately R10-billion is expected to be spent throughout the development of the project.



The employer of choice

Since its inception, Palabora Copper has been at the forefront of employment practices in the local mining industry. Palabora, which employs an average of 3 700 employees (Lift I and II) aims to remain industry competitive through its favourable conditions of employment.

This is reflected in the utmost importance with which the safety and health of employees is regarded in order to remain efficient and profitable as a business.

The company has written and developed its code of ethics to follow strategic imperatives

which include: providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees and contractor employees and practising sound environmental management to ensure the sustainable biodiversity of the natural environment within which it operates.

Palabora Copper acknowledges and respects its stakeholders' interest and concerns, striving to be a leading corporate citizen within the mining industry and supplying a high standard of quality products and services, reliably and responsibly, at national and global level. Palabora Copper is certified as a Top Employer. ■

For more information: www.palabora.com



Women of PMC

Experience, skill and drive underpin two success stories.



A number of highly motivated women are making stellar careers for themselves in mining at PMC and providing inspiration for scores of other women in the sector.

Matsela Ntsepe: Process Engineering Manager

Matsela Dolphinah Ntsepe is a chemical engineer with more than 17 years of experience in diamond, coal and copper mining. Matsela is Palabora Copper's (PC) Process Engineering Manager for the Smelter Retrofit Project, a position she earned through hard work and ascending through the ranks. Matsela started her career as a Metallurgical Trainee and rose through various levels including System Engineer, Refinery Technical Metallurgist, Refinery Technical Superintendent, Concentrator and Magnetite Technical Superintendent and Refinery Operations Manager.

Matsela or "Tsela" serves as the current Chairperson of the Women in Mining (WiM) PC branch and is an Ex-Officio Executive Member in the Limpopo region. In addition, Tsela is a member of PC Transformation Committee and a Trustee of PC Essop.

Matsela holds a National Diploma and B-Tech in Chemical Engineering from Witwatersrand Technikon and a Management Development and Financial Management Programmes from the University of South Africa.

As the member of the PC Transformation Committee, Tsela influences and facilitates the direction of PC's future strategic transformation agenda. Tsela is a finalist for the Limpopo Mine and Safety Council's Women Achievers Award and the Standard Bank Women in Science Award.

Manyabela Mailula: Manager for Training, Development and Contractor Management

At only 35 years of age, Manyabela Mailula has more than 13 years' experience in technical research and mining in countries such as Turkey, Georgia, USA and South Africa. Manyabela is Palabora Mining Company (PMC) Manager



Matsela Ntsepe:
Process Engineering
Manager



Manyabela Mailula:
Manager for Training,
Development and Contractor
Management

for Training, Development and Contractor Management.

She holds a National Diploma in Metallurgical Engineering from Vaal University of Technology, a BTech in Metallurgical Engineering (Tshwane University of Technology), Honours in Management of Technology (University of Pretoria), a Higher Certificate in Education, Training and Development (University of Johannesburg) and a Work Place Assessor Certificate from the Drum Beat Academy.

Manyabela started her career as a Metallurgical Trainee at ASA Metals (Dilokong Chrome Mine). She joined PMC/ Palabora Copper (PC) as a Smelter Training Officer and ascended to the position of Operational Readiness Manager. Manyabela's current responsibilities include the development of PC's training and development strategies, policies and standards.

Manyabela is the Chairperson of Limpopo Region's Women in Mining. She is Chairperson of Employment Equity Skills Development and serves as the member of the board of Phalaborwa's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College.

Manyabela is a finalist for the Limpopo Mine and Safety Council's Women Achievers Award and Standard Bank Young Achiever of the Year Award. The latter award is for women who have achieved a lot before the age of 40. ■

Driving sustainability

Palabora Mining Company preserves the natural environment in which it operates.



Palabora Mining Company's code of ethics includes consideration given to the healthy work environment of employees but also to ensuring that sound environmental management is pursued so that the biodiversity of the natural environment in which PMC operates can be sustained for many years to come. These are among the company's strategic imperatives.

Mining activities are inherently energy intensive, so PMC launched an Energy Management Programme in 2012 to curb the half-a-billion-rand energy bill which was continually growing. PMC collaborated with a consulting company, resulting in the employment of 12 energy specialists and project managers who would, in conjunction with mining personnel, identify, implement and sustain energy cost-saving projects. As a result, 117 initiatives were identified. Following stringent technical and financial adjudication processes, 31 projects were implemented, using the Productivity Approach.

The company has saved R232-million through avoided energy costs. Palabora Mining Company's Energy Management Programme has not only created a sustainable model but has also emphasised the company's standpoint regarding its environmental responsibility. PMC is now an energy efficiency leader in the mining sector.

Going green: The company is a certified ISO 14001 business, that subscribes to world-leading practices. Located directly adjacent to the world-renowned eco-tourism attraction, the Kruger National Park, Palabora Copper coordinates several onsite wildlife management and cultural heritage programmes as part of its ongoing sustainability drive.

Over the past years, Palabora Copper has retained a record of being one of the safest mines in South Africa and Africa. This is particularly due to stringent SHEQ regulations and procedures in place, and the effective management of contractors on site. ■