

# The year of upliftment for mining communities in South Africa

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From the construction of infrastructure and schools to skills development and transfer as well as long-term employment, mines have a central part to play in driving positive change in South Africa.



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Mining organisations have both a legal and moral obligation to ensure that the greater community is uplifted and that people in the area can become involved

The communities surrounding mines also have a critical role to play, not only in the feasibility of a mine, but in the long-term viability of the area after mining resources have dried up.

While Covid-19 put the brakes on a lot of spending, it is time to focus once more on these initiatives and make 2022 the year of upliftment in mining communities.

## Not just ticking boxes

The Environmental Management Plan, which needs to include a comprehensive social labour plan, is central to mining rights in South Africa.

This plan needs to outline what the mine plans to do to uplift the surrounding community, and it needs to involve this community in its development. This exercise, although a legal requirement, should not just be about ticking a box.

Whether the plan is to build roads or deliver electricity and water, improve schooling or provide skills transfer and employment for the community, it needs to be designed with the needs of both the mine and the community in mind.

While the pandemic caused decreased community inclusion and upliftment, the South African mining industry has recovered well, and it is healthy and productive once more.

The time is now ripe for the development and implementation of direct programmes that make a meaningful long-term difference and allow for the absorption of local community members into the employ of the mines.

## **Planning for success**

One of the most significant areas of investment for mines is in the transfer of skills, such as mining, metallurgy, engineering and construction.

However, these skills are often very specific to mining itself, which is not necessarily a sustainable long-term solution. Initiatives need to be in place to assist communities to provide for themselves after mining life. These should be custom-designed for the communities depending on their needs.

For both of these elements, having a strategy in place is essential. An experienced training partner will be equipped to perform a gap analysis to see what skills and initiatives are needed, provide a budget and outline of the training approach, and then deliver the required training in line with the Mining Qualification Authority.

A certified partner will also ensure that technical training provides a license to practice as well as the relevant certificates to operate machinery.

## **Spreading the wealth**

By upskilling local community members to empower them with the skills and qualifications to work on the mine, mining organisations not only benefit themselves, but help to ease friction with surrounding communities.

There are also several non-technical initiatives that can address the direct needs of the community, such as learnerships, apprenticeships, bursaries or short skills courses.

Mines should engage with community unemployment forums to discuss the critical skills needs of the community.

## **Frictionless future**

One of the greatest friction points between mines and communities is the lack of service delivery around the social labour plan.

The reality is that mining organisations have the power to make a major positive impact and uplift communities, but it is essential to deliver on what is promised.

An experienced, certified and accredited training partner can help to ensure that skills development is in line with what the mine needs.

The key is to always ensure that training interventions will have a direct positive impact on communities and are aimed at upliftment instead of just ticking a mandated box.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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