



# Quick Brief

A news update from the NBI on its programmes, business leadership and issues on sustainable development.

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## Structured Workplace-based Learning Pilot Programme for the Construction Industry Takes Off

The National Business Initiative (NBI) on behalf of the Construction Industry Partnership (CIP) in partnership with Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator (Harambee) is piloting a tailor-made workplace-based learning programme for the construction industry in bricklaying and carpentry trades. The CIP consists of Aveng Grinaker-LTA, Basil Read, Group Five, Murray & Roberts, the Construction Industry Development Board (cidb), the South African Forum of Civil Engineering Contractors and the Master Builders Association. This partnership aims to address key obstacles in the pipeline of technical skills for the construction sector.

In February 2016, 28 graduates in Civil Engineering and Building Construction from Gauteng Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET), began their twelve-month Structured Workplace-based Learning Programme at Group Five and Aveng Grinaker-LTA's Skill Training Centres in bricklaying and carpentry respectively. Of the total 28 graduates, 17 are women with 9 of them in carpentry. Each company hosts 14 candidates.

The structure of the placement programme presented below was informed by the outcome of a Curriculum Mapping Exercise conducted by the CIP which mapped the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV), Civil Engineering and Building Construction curriculum in bricklaying and carpentry against the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations qualifications for bricklaying and carpentry, to identify overlaps and gaps in the NCV curriculum. Importantly, the exercise helped to gauge the preparedness of graduates for entry-level jobs in the identified trades in the construction industry.

The Structured Workplace-based Learning Programme consists of the following key components:

1. Sourcing and matching of candidates by Harambee through a variety of appropriate tests for the construction industry, aimed at measuring the candidate's learning potential, affinity and suitability for the construction industry.
2. The work-readiness programme takes place at Harambee and the Skills Training Centres for a three-month period. This component integrates personal mastery; numeracy and literacy; cultural diversity and team building. In addition, the programme also addresses specific knowledge and skills for the world of construction as well as physical work conditioning and in particular, addresses the gaps identified in the Curriculum Mapping Exercise. The integrated approach provides a unique opportunity for immediate translation and application in the real work environment. The candidates are scheduled to complete this component in May 2016 and will receive a Skills Programme Certificate in Carpentry Specialisation and a Certificate of Competence for each module completed in bricklaying accredited by the Construction Sector Education and Training Authority.
3. On completion of the work-readiness programme, candidates will be placed in various construction sites for structured workplace-based learning for 9 months and will be attached to a supervisor. During the placement, candidates will follow a structured programme and complete a logbook, signed-off by their supervisors. The pilot will use the cidb Learner Management System to track the performance of candidates during the placement period and for up to a year after completion.
4. At the end of the nine months, companies will assess the candidates for various exit options, which include: (i) Those that can work at production level who could be absorbed into jobs; (ii) those that have potential to become foreman that companies can train further; (iii) those that companies can train further towards a trade test; and (iv) those that would prefer to start their own businesses.

## **Reflections**

The CIP is committed to identifying appropriate pathways into priority construction trades and strengthening partnerships between companies and TVET Colleges. The pilot though in its early stages, is already providing useful lessons on the design and implementation of workplace-based learning and pointing to important policy and best practice questions. The timing for this pilot couldn't be more apt when the Department of Higher Education and Training is in the process of developing policy for workplace-based learning.

One such policy consideration relates to the need for flexibility in the funding regime for workplace-based learning for the construction sector so as to respond to realities such as the mobility of jobs as well as the availability of skills in relation to project cycles. These factors necessitate stipend adjustments to cater for increased travel costs where placements cannot be found in the proximity where candidates are located.

The pilot has also surfaced the urgency to understand the interplay of policies such as the Skills Development Act (97/1998), Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Amendment Act, 2013 (Act No. 46 of 2013), and The Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, No 130 of

1993 and the implications for employers.

The pilot further illustrates the value of the ‘meeting of minds’ where an employer-led initiative aimed at addressing priority needs in the construction sector, whose design takes cognisance of the strength and limitations of the TVET College curriculum as well as a purposefully designed induction and work-readiness programme could produce a work-ready and employable pipeline. Crucially, for a partnership of this nature to succeed, expert coordination and facilitation to ensure achievement of common purpose is imperative. The policy environment for workplace-based learning, therefore, must take these factors into account.

The pilot boasts 17 women out of a total of 28 candidates and this is a major feat that must be recognised especially in a field where traditionally, few women would go into.

The approach adopted and the structure of the pilot, are generalizable and could be adapted for implementation in other economic sectors. Achieving the unique combination of: employer investment and commitment; the Harambee methodology and private funding, and the knowledge of TVET College lecturers, through the expert facilitation of the NBI cannot be overemphasised. This unique combination points to some of the ingredients necessary for the developing of a system for workplace learning for the construction sector, that is scalable.

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## **Business Action for Sustainable Growth**

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