

NEWSFLASH

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Graduation Season: Young Talent Joins the IRM Workforce



The [National Business Initiative \(NBI\)](#) proudly celebrates **over 160 learners** graduating from its [Installation, Repair and Maintenance \(IRM\) Initiative](#) as they take their next steps into South Africa's growing artisan and green skills economy.

Graduations took place at Ekurhuleni East TVET College, Ekurhuleni West TVET College, False Bay TVET College, Gert Sibande TVET College, Northlink TVET College, South Cape TVET College, Tshwane North TVET College and Umfolozi TVET College, which brought together learners, educators, host employers, local government representatives and industry partners in a shared celebration of skills, progress and opportunity.

Through the Initiative, learners complete both college-based technical training and workplace-based learning, gaining critical hands-on experience that prepares them for employment, entrepreneurship and further career development in essential IRM fields.

These graduations were delivered as a result of our strong partnerships with [Absa](#), [Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit \(GIZ\)](#), the [European Union \(EU\)](#), [House of Encouragement](#) and [Momentum](#), as well as our growing national network of TVET colleges and host employers.

One of the graduates, Apiwe Vukani from Tshwane North TVET College, shared how the Initiative expanded her skills. “During my three months of full-time training at Tshwane North TVET College, I gained practical skills in tiling, carpentry, electric installations and plumbing. My host employer, St Barnabas College, also played a significant role by teaching me how to weld. With everything I have learned, I now feel confident that I can open my own company.”

100 Graduates Certified as Solar PV Installers

In a separate graduation ceremony, youth with an electrical qualification were trained and certified under the **Solar PV Green Card Programme**, officially recognising their skills and readiness to step into professional installation roles.

A total of **100 newly qualified Solar PV Green Card installers** now formally enter South Africa’s renewable energy workforce with recognised certification, strengthening the country’s capacity to meet the growing demand in the sector.

The cohort reflects the Programme’s national reach, drawing participants from across the country, including youth from smaller towns and communities.



Pictured (left to right): Dr Rethabile Melamu, CEO of SAPVIA; Gugu McLaren-Ushewokunze, Head of Economic Inclusion at the NBI; graduate Sibonisile Mbatha; and Clement Motale, Absa Managing Executive for Strategic Transformation and Partnerships.

This achievement has been enabled through a partnership between **Absa**, the **NBI** and the **South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA)**, all grounded in a shared commitment to building an inclusive pipeline of skilled professionals for the green economy.

Newly qualified Solar PV Green Card holder Sibonisile Mbatha expressed her pride at achieving the qualification, noting that she believes she is the only woman in her rural area in KwaZulu-Natal to hold this certification. She shared her journey through the Programme as both an artisan and a small business owner, reflecting on the skills, confidence and professional recognition she has gained.

Beyond certification, graduates pursuing entrepreneurship will continue their journey through Absa’s Enterprise Development support, ensuring that their achievement becomes a foundation for sustainable livelihoods and long-term economic inclusion.



“What we are seeing through these graduations is the strengthening of South Africa’s skills pipeline in action. These graduates are entering sectors that keep our infrastructure running, our energy systems working, and our economy moving. This work shows that when skills development is done with intention, it becomes a powerful engine for inclusive growth.”

- Gugu McLaren-Ushewokunze, Head of Economic Inclusion, NBI