



CASE STUDY

GROWING TONGAAT HULETT'S TALENT POOL THROUGH INVESTMENTS IN EDUCATION

Tongaat Hulett's operations require many skilled employees, particularly engineers and artisans. Over the past few years, the business has employed several people that have benefitted from the Programme for Technological Careers (PROTEC). Tongaat Hulett has had a long-standing relationship with the PROTEC Tongaat branch, which is located at the Maidstone mill. The company's investments in PROTEC contributed to the education and development of a student that qualified as a mechanical engineer. She is now employed at the South African sugar refinery and is making a significant contribution to the development of previously disadvantaged students throughout South Africa. Tongaat Hulett's ongoing commitment to investing in education speaks to the UN Sustainable Development Goal to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education.

Snothando Mzobe is employed as a plant engineer at Hulett Refinery, responsible for raw sugar receiving, melting and decolourisation. She joined Tongaat Hulett as an engineer in training in mechanical engineering in 2013, based at the Maidstone mill, after graduating with a BSc (Mech Eng) degree from the University of Cape Town. Upon completion of her traineeship in 2016 she remained at the Maidstone mill for a few months before being appointed at the Hulett refinery in her current position.

As one of the few female engineers in Tongaat Hulett, she attributes her interest in engineering to her involvement in PROTEC (Tongaat), when she was still a learner. "I was good with my hands growing up, and through PROTEC I gained exposure to engineering careers," said Snothando.

PROTEC was founded in 1982 to help previously disadvantaged school learners to successfully embark on careers in sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The Tongaat branch of PROTEC, which celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2016, receives a significant portion of its annual funding from Tongaat Hulett, as part of the company's commitment to developing a skills pipeline and addressing youth unemployment. The PROTEC model provides a comprehensive 10-year learner excellence programme. The school phase runs from grades 10 to 12 offering Saturday and vacation school

covering STEM subjects, exposure to the world of work, career guidance and support. During the post school phase, PROTEC mentors their learners for seven years, providing information regarding bursaries, internships and financial aid, workshops in computers, CV writing, budgeting and interview skills to prepare learners for student life.

Inspired by the experiences and challenges that she faced, Snothando has been instrumental in establishing the post school programme at PROTEC Tongaat. Some of the initiatives she implemented include a university preparation camp for first year students, bi-annual workshops to address challenges faced by students, a mentorship programme to support and guide students and a World of Work Conference to prepare recent graduates for the working world.

"Because of the success of these initiatives at PROTEC Tongaat, Snothando is now implementing this programme across the nine PROTEC branches nationally. As is to be expected, extending any project on this scale comes with many trials, but thanks to Snothando's clear vision and belief in a brighter future for all, her tireless energy, drive and passion have remained unwavering and all PROTEC students will now be able to benefit from her ingenuities," commented Marion Takis, PROTEC Tongaat's branch manager.

In recognition of her strong leadership skills, Snothando has been selected for the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders which will bring some 1 000 young leaders from across Africa to the United States for seven weeks from June 2017 for academic coursework and leadership training. The programme also looks to create unique opportunities in Africa for Fellows to put practical new skills to use in leading their organisations, communities, and countries.

The fellowship was launched in 2010 to support young African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across Africa.