



## CASE STUDY

# ENGINEERING SKILLS UPLIFTMENT PROJECT

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Tongaat Hulett's starch operations requires scarce technical skills, and as such training and development initiatives look to grow these skills and address succession and retention in these critical positions. The engineering skills uplift project is an example of one such technical training initiative. In 2016, a gap assessment and closure project involved 62 participants, comprising artisans, technicians and co-ordinators. They each underwent skills gap assessments and specific personalised development plans were compiled. Based on these results, 23 gap closure initiatives were prioritised. The focus was to drive competency acquisition and demonstrate application of skills through performance measurement. The selected employees varied in age, gender, race and experience.

The ultimate objective of the starch operation's technical training initiatives is to create a pipeline of highly competent, capable and productive employees to be groomed for highly skilled artisan, technician, co-ordinator and material roles.

A second initiative focused on technical skills is a recognition of prior learning programme, in which six experienced but unqualified employees are in various phases of becoming

qualified artisans. These employees attended six weeks of gap closure training in preparation for their trade tests. Four have already successfully completed their assessments and have been qualified while the final two are awaiting their trade tests. The impact of this project is tremendous; there have been some marked improvements after the employees' acquisition of their trade qualifications. In some cases, the employees who participated in the project have been allocated their own plants and they can operate without supervision. Where applicable, there is application of human resources policies and processes related to pay progression, performance management and service obligations to advance the employees.

A third initiative targeting these scarce technical skills is the apprenticeship programme. The intake for the period 2016 - 2018 is 16, of which 44 percent are African female and 56 percent African male. One participant was already a Tongaat Hulett employee while the other 15 were unemployed. This 36 month programme is comprised of theory and workplace training. The trades incorporated include instrumentation, millwright, electrical, mechanical and boiler operators.