

Australia assists African skills development

The speed of Africa's emergence as a global resources and energy leader has far exceeded the continent's ability to satisfy the demand for its minerals, oil and gas.

Lacklustre infrastructure and mining policy are often pointed to as shortfalls of Africa's extractives sector, but too often the foundation of the industry – the workforce – is overlooked in the conversation.

Fortunately for Africa, Australia is investing in the cogs that turn the continent's mining machine.

LNG hopeful Rubicon Resources Ltd recently announced its on-site skills training business, Futuro Skills, had partnered with Australian-based industry skills council SkillsDMC to design the implementation of holistic workforce development programmes in Mozambique.

Rubicon chief executive Richard Carcenac said the Futuro Skills and SkillsDMC partnership would offer a "turnkey solution" to the "design and delivery of skills forecasting analysis, workforce plans and implementation of strategies, mapping and design of a task-based matrix, verification of competency services, recruitment, medical screening of candidates, comprehensive vocational training and labour hire".

Despite recently joining forces with Futuro Skills, SkillsDMC has been hard at work in Mozambique since September last year, developing a skills competency framework through industry engagement and capacity building of the country's National Authority for Professional Education (ANEP) staff.

SkillsDMC deputy chief executive Danika Bakalich told **Paydirt** although the discovery of potentially world-class coal orebodies and natural gas reserves made Mozambique attractive to investors, the enabling environment for doing business remained challenging.

"At the moment the greatest need for skilling is work entry," Bakalich said.

"People who may have never had a job before, their language and literacy skills are quite low. The strongest educational and training outcome of need is called work preparation and foundational skills. It is simple things, like understanding what it means to work in a shift-based environment or operating within a management supervised environment. It's about setting expectations with that cohort."

Bakalich said SkillsDMC's work had helped



Danika Bakalich

the Mozambican Government develop a better understanding of industry and what it had to offer, particularly to the vocational education system.

She said it was critical Mozambique embraced its changing economy and did everything in its power to seize the countless opportunities afforded to it from the resources and energy sector.

"Activity is increasing exponentially and the operations are in regions where communities haven't experienced this rapid growth by any industry or sector," Bakalich said.

"It's not only about the technical skills, it's

“ Skills policy harmonisation across Africa is the priority and I certainly know that economic communities are focused on that.

about the flow-on impacts of operations in remote regions and any cross-industry skilling that might be sourced out of that. It's about leveraging the investments that operating companies are making in these regions and showing that the flow-on impacts are benefiting regional communities. I think that this is really about generational change in Mozambique."

SkillsDMC's involvement in the project concludes in March, but it was designed with a long-term objective to provide ANEP with the model, tools and skills to develop and maintain skills standards for the mining and oil and gas sectors to support Mozambique's rapid economic development.

Bakalich said ANEP was almost ready to

take the framework reins.

She was also confident it would be held to account by Australian explorers and miners operating in country.

"I think Australia's representation in Mozambique is very strong and that momentum and sustainability will be championed by those organisations," she said.

"There will be some continuity in that regard."

SkillsDMC is also halfway through a similar project in Zambia, in which it was engaged in March to build the capacity of Zambian Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA) to develop skills competency frameworks aligned to the specific op-

erating requirements of the mining and civil infrastructure industries.

Bakalich said Zambia was hungry for economic growth and ready to extract full value from its resources sector, but the Government's relationship with industry was weak.

"The key challenges have been in understanding the value of industry in this context, but more importantly how to communicate and how to identify what is needed to achieve the end game," she said.

"They are seeking to learn how we in Australia do things so they can apply it to their own markets, which is a terrific compliment to Australia. It's been a terrific experience to understand some of the challenges faced in markets where that relationship is not as strong as it is here."

The resources boom clearly uncovered several deficits in Africa's mining workforce, but Bakalich said the continent, with the help of experienced mining nations, was now on a path of improvement.

"Skills policy harmonisation across Africa is the priority and I certainly know that economic communities are focused on that," Bakalich said.

"There are a lot of groups that are key to establishing skills frameworks and to allow and support the movement of workforces. Extractives is really the sector that defines how these multilateral relationships can take shape. The sector has a real influence over the politics and the community. It will be tremendous to see what comes out of this over the next five years."

– Rhys Dickinson