

## TVET graduates kick-started on the path to green jobs in SA

Ten young, female Nkangala Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates in Mpumalanga province have a better chance of being employed in the renewable energy sector, thanks to a six-month internship with Enel Green Power South Africa (EGP SA), which was hosted at four of its solar farms.

EGP SA partnered with the RES4Africa Foundation, and the Energy and Water Sector Education Training and Authority (EWSETA) to reskill and equip young graduates from Nkangala TVET College. The initiative aims to create an entry-way into working in the renewable energy sector for new entrants and established, aligning with the Country's move towards achieving a 'Just Energy Transition' to cleaner sources of energy.

EGP SA Head of People and Organisation (HR), Abigail Fidelis, says RES4Africa enlisted EGP SA's support in furthering the activities of the RES4Africa Re-skilling Lab initiative, which equips communities across South Africa with essential skills and renewable energy training. As a start, the project focuses on the Mpumalanga Province, being the country's most coal-dependent region.

"The 10 female students were amongst a group of 25 young people to graduate from Nkangala TVET College at the end of 2023. Notably, artisans aren't traditionally female and the industry as a whole is largely male-dominated, so the fact that a significant number of successful students were high-achieving females was incredibly heartening."

For the students to be able to translate their theoretical learnings into practical understanding, they needed on-site experience and that's where EGP SA was able to step in, providing internships at its Paleisheuvel, Upington, Pulida and Adams solar farms from January to June 2024.

"We believe that training and development programmes such as these are critical to not only make a meaningful difference in the lives of several communities in South Africa, but to accelerate a mind shift to a sustainable economy by preparing a skilled future workforce and empowering the next generation of professionals in the renewable energy sector," adds Fidelis.

Nkangala TVET College, which is in close proximity to the Komati power station - a facility earmarked to be the first to be decommissioned - was chosen to pilot the college-based part of the project in 2023.

Learners were provided with skills training across three renewables-focused programmes, including South Africa Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA)-accredited Rooftop PV installation; Quality Council For Trades & Occupations (QCTO) Energy Performance Certificate Practitioner L5 certification; and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) modules 2 and 3 in Electrical Engineering from the Energy & Water Sector Education Training Authority (EWSETA) NC.

Fidelis says the 10 graduates have now also gained practical insight into their learnings, as well as gaining soft skills such as technical report writing and presentation skills. “Our HR department communicated with the students on an ongoing basis to check what their challenges were and we requested monthly reports from the site managers.

“What has stood out for me is how well these young people were able to adapt to working and living in a remote area. They all embraced the challenge with open arms and absorbed their new experiences like sponges, leading to an enormous amount of personal growth. This makes us happy, because the whole point of this was to help them gain experience and boost their employability,” she adds.

The mission of the Re-skilling Lab extends beyond certificates and service letters - it's about empowering a generation to promote and bolster a brighter and greener South Africa. “With the focus on collaboration and employable outcomes, the initiative marks the beginning of a fresh chapter where skills aren't just learnt, but become the cornerstone of South Africa's transformative journey,” concludes Fidelis.

Ends.