The Minister of Education, Honourable Dr. David Namwandi (photo) officially launched the VET Levy at a gala dinner held in the capital on the 24th of April 2014.

Dr. Namwandi describes the VET Levy as a key programme to support Namibia’s transformation into an industrialised and skills-based economy. “The levy is a step in the right direction and represents a quantum leap towards effectively addressing our national skills needs”, he stressed.

Dr. Namwandi also called on the NTA to ensure that the VET Levy is administered in a sustainable and effective manner. “Gone are the days of simply talking about increased access to training. Our focus should now be on creating tangible training outcomes and generating more value from the increased resources we now have available for training”, he emphasised.

Speaking on behalf of the donor – the Millennium Challenge Corporation – the Deputy CEO: Operations of the Millennium Challenge Account-Namibia, Sikongo Haihambo commended the NTA for its commitment and drive to establish the VET Levy as a national programme aimed at alleviating the country’s skills needs. MCA-Namibia supported the Vocational Training Grant Fund under the VET Levy Pilot Project and also made available funds for the implementation of the VET Levy marketing campaign.

Altogether 1 713 employers registered as VET Levy paying employers during the registration campaign in February this year. Of this number, 21% are employers from the Wholesale and Retail sector, 18% from the Financial and Business Services sector and 17% from the Mining; Quarrying; Construction; Electricity; Gas; Water Supply and Sanitation sector.

A further 8% of registered employers are from the Hospitality and Tourism sector, whereas 7% of the employers registered as VET Levy-paying employers are from the Health and Social Services sector.

Based on the aforementioned registration numbers and the individual annual company payroll volumes, the NTA expects to collect for the first 12 months of levy payment a total amount of about 198-million Namibia dollars.

EDUCATION MINISTER LAUNCHES THE VET LEVY
South Korea has expressed its readiness to host and support the training of a select group of young Namibian VET trainees and prepare them for participation at the 2015 World Skills Competition, slated for Sao Paulo, Brasil.

This was revealed during consultations between the NTA and representatives from the South Korean government, which took place at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris, earlier this month. The discussions were primarily aimed at the development of an implementation framework to ensure Namibia’s sustainable participation as a fully fledged member at the bi-annual international showpiece and formed part of broader support being rendered to the NTA under UNESCO’s ‘Better Education for Africa’s Rise’ (BEAR) Project.

The South Korean experts are to assist the NTA in the selection of trainees in a select range of occupational areas to make up the Namibian national team. The Namibian contestants will be hosted at a special venue in South Korea where they will be allowed to train with members of the South Korean team and enjoy exposure to their rigorous and intensive preparations, which have secured unparalleled successes at the World Skills International competitions for that country.

The NTA delegation consisted of the Manager: VET Standards, Sens Shoolongo, the Manager: VET Programmes, Amon Haufiku and the Manager: PR, Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement, Mornay Louw. Speaking to The Stakeholder, Shoolongo welcomed the assistance and said it can go a long way in supporting the NTA in ensuring Namibia’s sustainable participation at World Skills International. “It is one thing to participate and merely make up the numbers. It is another to go and compete against the best and come home with a medal. That is our goal”, he stressed.

The Vice-President of South Korea’s Global Institute for Transferring Skills (GIFTS), Dr Yi Sunk Ki led the South Korean delegation. UNESCO’s Head for Technical and Vocational Education and Training, Dr Borhene Chakroun facilitated the meeting.

Sens Shoolongo, Mornay Louw and Amon Haufiku (front) with representatives from the South Korean delegation in front of the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

Greetings!

The effective engagement of stakeholders remains of key importance under our Strategic Plan. It therefore gives me great pleasure to introduce our monthly newsletter aimed at keeping you abreast of our progress in establishing a dynamic organisation and a responsive VET regime.

The past month has seen the launch of the VET Levy which ushers in a new dawn for the NTA and our country’s skills sector.

Although a huge milestone, there now rests upon our shoulders the important task to ensure that the VET Levy is administered efficiently and that it maintains its relevance to our stakeholders.

It has been an arduous journey thus far and the road ahead can prove to be even more challenging. However, we remain confident that the involvement of our stakeholders will guide us in the implementation of an effective and efficient VET Levy for our country.

Share this newsletter with your peers and partners and participate in subsequent editions by sharing your own insight and views.

Yours in training,

Ester Anna Nghipondoka

1. SH: Tell us more about yourself. Who is Jerry Beukes away from the office? A family man, first and foremost, blessed with a beautiful wife and three kids. I still play soccer once a week (schedule permitting) to keep fit and show off my breath-taking dancing skills at special occasions (no pun intended, wait for the year-end function)! Also, part-time farming is a relatively new venture but the passion for it is growing.

2. SH: What are your impressions of the NTA as your new employer? The NTA staff is a close-knit family and I fit right in. The frameworks, policies and systems that were developed in recent years are hugely impressive, but the focus is now shifting towards implementation. The NTA, in my early assessment, endeavours to be a learning organisation and is well-positioned to be at the forefront of skills formation in our beloved country.

3. SH: When are you most satisfied in life and in work? I am most satisfied in life when I am able to make a positive impact on the lives of people I interact with. At work, it is always about having synergy and attaining objectives and targets.

4. SH: What do you see as immediate tasks under your portfolio as Chief Operations Officer? Quite critical for the COO is to ensure that key dimensions of the regulatory framework for VET are in place and fully functioning, as well as compliance on the part of training providers. However, charity begins at home, hence the need to re-engineer our business processes as a matter of priority to enhance internal efficiency and effectiveness.

5. SH: What is your message to our stakeholders? I would like to reassure our stakeholders that they are important to us – the NTA cannot execute its mandate without involving key stakeholders. The notion of stakeholder engagement is a key focus area in the NTA’s revised Strategic Plan and requires the implementation of innovative strategies to enhance our engagement practices and be more responsive to stakeholder needs. This is an area where immediate impact is essential.
Paying the VET Levy: How Does It Work?

The NTA’s National Training Fund expects VET-Levy registered employers to start making their first levy payments as from May 2014.

The Stakeholder asked the NTA’s Manager: VET Levy Collection, Genette Shitalangaho (photo) to shed more light on the payment and related processes.

SH: Tell us about the VET Levy registration process.

GS: Eligible employers were expected to register with the NTA following the Notice in the Government Gazette, published on the 27th of January 2014. Registered employers forecast their total payroll for the period 1st April 2014 to 31st March 2015, calculate their liability to pay levy and incorporate the projected levy amounts in the registration form.

SH: At what frequency is the levy paid?

Registered employers pay the levy monthly based on a calculation of 1% of actual payroll for the month in question.

SH: How Do I Calculate the Amount of Levy to Pay?

GS: Under the approved framework, the levy rate is 1% and the amount of levy to be paid is calculated as a percentage of actual monthly payroll and paid monthly in arrears on, or before the 20th of the month it is due. For example, the levies payable for April 2014 should be paid on, or before the 20th May 2014.

SH: Can you explain this by means of an example?

GS: Sure! Let us assume a company has an annual payroll of exactly one million dollars. The amount payable can then be calculated as follows:

- Annual payroll = N$1,000,000.00
- 1% Annual Levy = N$10,000.00
- Monthly Return = 10,000/12 = N$833.00 monthly.

This is merely an example. Employers need to take note that their payrolls would vary from month to month and that their actual payments would be based on actual monthly payroll amounts.

SH: It seems some employers are not sure as to when they are expected to make their first payments? Can you elaborate?

GS: Payments are to be made on, or before the 20th day of the month following the commencement date of the levy on the 1st of April 2014. Subsequent payments are to be made on, or before the 20th day of each month thereafter.

The very first VET Levy payments are therefore due on, or before the 20th May 2014. These payments are for the payroll of April 2014. The next payments are to be made on, or before the 20th of the following month. As such, the VET Levy payment for May 2014 is due on, or before the 20th of June 2014.

SH: What about penalties?

GS: Employers will incur an additional penalty of 10% on amounts outstanding including interest as stated in the Prescribed Rate of Interest Act of 1975. An estimate will be made of amounts owed including interest and penalties for employers that fail to pay the levy.

However, we would like to encourage employers to avoid penalties by paying their monthly levies as early as possible.

SH: Tell us more about the methods of payment?

All payments should be deposited into the National Training Fund Account, Bank Windhoek, Number 800 3909 368, Branch Code 482 172, Kudu Branch. Employers should pay by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT), cheque, or cash.

All payments should be accompanied by a monthly submission form available online at the VET Levy Helpdesk portal on our website. The forms document proof of payment and reconciliation of the amounts paid.

We encourage employers to complete and submit forms online. However, forms can also be downloaded or collected from our Head Office in Rand Street, Khomasdal, for completion and submission. For further queries, contact our Customer Care Centre at 0800 2078 550.

SH: What happens if an employer pays the levy, even though its payroll for the year is below the threshold?

GS: Employer accounts will be reconciled at the end of the financial year and those employers that are under the threshold of N$1 million annual payroll will be refunded.

Join our VET dialogue and participate in our newsletter!

Send us your contributions, pictures and comments:

info@nta.com.na

www.nta.com.na
PICTURE FOCUS
From Around and About the VET Scene

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The Mining; Construction; Quarrying; Electricity; Gas and Water Supply and Sanitation Industry Skills Committee commissioned a Sector Skills Plan for the sector in 2012. The plan provides a basis for extended consultation and discussion to ensure that priorities for the MCQEGWS sector are recognised and addressed.

The Stakeholder approached the Manager: Policy & Planning, Ernst Mbangula (photo) to share some of the highlights of the plan.

Taking into consideration the socio-economic challenges our country faces, including high levels of poverty and unemployment and an unequal distribution of wealth and income, the MCQEGWS Industry Skills Committee agreed on the development of a Sector Skills Plan to address broader industry skills challenges.

Below, a few highlights from the plan:

## 1. SKILLS SHORTAGES ABOUND

There is consensus that the disparity between skills imparted by institutions and skills demanded by industry is exacerbating current skills mismatches and shortages.

There is a serious shortage of both tertiary and VET graduates, while most businesses continue to rely on in-house training interventions to develop skills.

## 2. STATISTICS

There are 58 753 employed workers in the MCQEGWS sector, which comprises 9.3% Of concern is the percentage of the labour force with education levels up to junior secondary: mining and quarrying 10%; electricity, gas and water 24.7%; and construction 32.6%.

This is significant because it shows that for Namibia to move to a knowledge-based economy in line with Vision 2030 it would require a considerably higher proportion of graduates in the secondary and post-school phases.

There is an abundance of unskilled labour available. The problem, however, is the lack of skills of economically active people seeking employment. High unemployment sits alongside high demand for skilled workers.

There are about 140 462 youth that are NOT in EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT and TRAINING (NEET). There is a need to make provision for this category to have access to training opportunities through a major expansion of the VET sector.

## 3. FORCES OF CHANGE

Forces driving change in these industries include unemployment, poverty, skills shortages and national competitiveness.

Industry specific forces include the following:

- Mining and Quarrying (Industry growth outlook, small mining and occupational health & safety);
- Construction (Labour-intensive job growth, decent work and training of road builders and artisans); and
- Electricity and Water (Power shortages, water scarcity, water cost recovery, sanitation accessibility and labour-intensive job growth).

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The plan recommends for unemployed adults to access skills programmes and employment, particularly in the rural areas of the country.

Currently, VET institutions are accommodating approximately 9 000 students which is inadequate to need.

Furthermore, considerable expansion is needed in the VET sector by establishing more VET institutions, increasing current enrolments, exploring private-public-sector partnerships and foreign investment.

A number of occupations that are in high demand have been identified in the MCQEGWS sector. There is an urgent need to review supply-side training infrastructure to address these demands.

## 5. STRATEGY

The VET sector is an important instrument to improve graduate access to socially and economically rewarding jobs, reduce poverty, redress income inequalities, promote decent work, retrain retrenched workers, encourage entrepreneurship, develop small businesses, secure college-to-work transitions for youth and dropouts and develop skills for the poor, vulnerable, historically disadvantaged and marginalised.

The NTA’s Strategic Plan is aligned to key national strategies and plans emanating from various agencies of the Namibian government. Alignment with national strategies and plans is vital to ensure that different agencies of government are working towards a common set of aims and objectives to ensure that skills development is relevant and legitimate to the needs and aspirations of all Namibians.

These findings call for serious investment in human resource development to meet national and industry requirements. Efforts to expand VET provision and improve quality should be intensified as there are considerable supply-side constraints. The identified strategic framework should facilitate the development and realisation of an approach that should see the sector address its scarce skill requirements.

The SSP is intended to be strategic in as much as it outlines actions that can be incorporated into existing planning structures where ongoing improvement is the aim. It is also dynamic in that it should be reviewed and enhanced in further versions should other issues and challenges arise.

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Considerable progress is being made towards upgrading the physical infrastructure at two existing Vocational Training Centres and constructing a new centre in the Omaheke region.

Following a public procurement process for alterations and new additions to the Rundu Vocational Training Centre, the Jiangsu Zhengtai firm was awarded the tender with a contract value of N$ 35.9 million. The scope of the RVTC project involves alterations to existing buildings and the construction of new buildings, including a dining room, a new kitchen, a new welding workshop, external works including roadworks and stormwater and soil drainage reticulations.

The NTA anticipates the project to be completed within 15 months. The construction site was officially handed over to the contractors in March this year and it is expected that work will be completed by June next year.

A similar expansion project has also started at the Eenhana Vocational Training Centre in Ohangwena. Phase one of this project involves alterations to existing buildings and the construction of a new administration building, a bulk store room, classrooms and external works, including water and sewer reticulations and electrical and mechanical installations. The contractor for the N$22.7 million project is ID Building Contractors. The 12-month project is expected to be completed by April 2015.

A third project is the construction of a new Vocational Training Centre at Gobabis.

The NTA’s Manager: Capital Projects, Gad Kangueehi told The Stakeholder that the construction of a centre at Gobabis was in line with the NTA’s Expansion Plan. “We want to bring training opportunities to Namibians in all parts of the country. Very soon, the people of Omaheke will have a centre where they can receive training in vocational and technical areas”.

The NTA plans to stage groundbreaking ceremonies for each of the three projects soon.