The development of technical and vocational skills is an important instrument for improving productivity and working conditions, and the promotion of decent work in the informal economy, which represents a major employer in our country.

The Minister of Higher Education Training and Innovation, Dr. Itah Kandji-Murangi said this in her sending-off message to the Namibian WorldSkills team to compete at the 2015 WorldSkills Competition, scheduled to take place in São Paulo, Brazil, from the 11th to the 16th of August 2015.

“Skills can open doors to economically and socially rewarding jobs. Ultimately, developing job-related competencies among the poor, the youth and the vulnerable is recognised by our Government as crucial to progress in reducing poverty” the Higher Education Minister emphasised.

She also noted that technical and vocational skills are increasingly being recognised as crucial in enhancing competitiveness and contributing to social inclusion, decent employment, and poverty reduction. “Our Government views technical and vocational skills as the cornerstone of developing an employable and globally competitive national labour force. We recognise that a skilled and knowledgeable labour force improves our investment climate, because skilled workers also create an attractive economic environment for investors, technical and vocational training fraternity, but for our country as a whole. As such, these young Namibians deserve our full support”, he emphasised. Beukes also

Dr. Kandji-Murangi also called on Namibians to rally behind the team and on the competitors to serve Namibia as true ambassadors. The competitors are Rakel Amutenya (Bricklaying); Joseph Nakatumbe (Carpentry & Joinery); Fanuel Mathias (Electrical Installations) and Erkana Imene (Plumbing and Pipeheating). She also commended the NTA for its pioneering work in making Namibia’s maiden participation at the renowned event, a reality.

WorldSkills International (WSI) is an international skills competition, held in a different member country every two years. Competitors demonstrate their excellence in different skilled trades and technology contest areas. It will be the first time for a Namibian team to participate at this prestigious event.

Proud Team: Minister of Higher Education, Training and Innovation, Dr. Itah Kandji-Murangi joined by competitors Erkana Imene, Joseph Nakatumbe, Rakel Amutenya and Fanuel Mathias.
The NTA is making good progress towards the finalisation of a National Skills Development Plan. Amongst others, the plan is aimed at improved access to quality VET services; increased relevance of skills development interventions; and building stronger partnerships between stakeholders and social partners.

Manager: Research and Planning, Ernst Mbangula (photo) told The Stakeholder that although the 2016-2020 National Skills Development Plan for the VET Sector (NSDP 1), was still to be tabled to the Board of Directors for consideration and approval, the NTA was looking forward to it as a guiding framework for investing in skills development priority areas.

“For our country to achieve higher levels of economic growth and address our social challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality, we must work together to achieve a skilled workforce to support an inclusive growth path. The NSDP 1 addresses the challenges of skills shortages and mismatches that we face as a country,” Mbangula explained. The NSDP 1 is also aligned with the national development agenda, including the Government's macro-economic development strategy, Vision 2030; the Fourth National Development Plan (NDP4); the National Human Resources Plan (NHRP); and the Education and Training Sector Skills Improvement Programme (ETSIP).

“All of these strategies, plans and programmes share a common purpose. To develop partnerships between the worlds of education, training and work, in addressing unemployment and skills shortages, and contribute to competitiveness, private sector growth and improved performance,” Mbangula noted.

The plan is a product of extensive research and stakeholder consultations. It is based on twelve Sector Skills Plans (SSPs) developed by the NTA and its Industry Skills Committees (ISCs), and covers the entire spectrum of the economy. According to Mbangula, the NSDP 1, once approved by the Board, will become a blueprint for the development of prioritised skills and competencies on a national level. “We want the NSDP 1 to belong to all Namibians and to represent a shared commitment by all stakeholders in VET, to work together and improve the human potential of all our people,” he emphasised.

Greetings!

The NTA is soon to table its 2016/17 Business Plan to our Board of Directors for consideration and approval.

It is an annual plan that sets out key programmes aimed at building on achievements recorded over the past three years to deliver the priorities identified in the NTA’s rolling five-year Strategic Plan. As such, it represents a continuation of our ongoing endeavour to meet stakeholder expectations and in ensuring improved equity, access and quality in VET.

Looking forward, we are now better positioned to address those key challenges that continue to constrain our VET sector, most notably the expansion of training opportunities and programmes, and countering the persistent societal perceptions that label technical and vocational career paths as low-status, low-paying options.

We must turn these challenges into opportunity. It is a tough task but we have little option if we are to leave a stronger, better society for future generations.

Yours in Vocational Education and Training,

Jerry Beukes
Acting Chief Executive Officer

SH: Tell us more about Bernadette Sam away from the office? First a human being, then a wife and mother, and then an NTA employee. Away from the office, I like my ‘me’-time. I do nothing on Saturdays, and my family allows me to do just that. Family is very important to me, and also my social responsibilities towards my community and the church.

SH: Why Human Resources? Why is it your passion? I have a passion for people and their development. I like to see people growing, whether it is to become more confident, standing up for their rights as human beings, or to be appointed in a higher position. It is always a challenge to work with people, but it is always satisfying to know that you were able to solve a problem. Why is it my passion? I think it has to do with my upbringing to always care for the next person.

SH: What is it that you don’t like about your job and how do you deal with it? Any job has its challenges and HR is no different. I have a simple way of dealing with challenges, when they arise. I look at them as opportunities to improve, work harder and succeed.

SH: Would you describe the NTA as an employer of choice? The NTA is still young and still needs time to develop into an employer of choice. I believe that once you have confidence in the place where you work, you regard that place as an employer of choice. I have confidence in the NTA. Its achievements and successes make it an employer of choice.

SH: Any hobbies? I am an avid reader. When a book is fascinating, I will not stop reading until I have read the last page. Sometimes I will read right through the night. I also like the theatre, watching television and visiting friends and family.

This month, The Stakeholder caught up with Bernadette Sam, the NTA’s General Manager: Human Resources to find out more about this friendly and approachable lady and her portfolio.
Two technical experts from the Institute of Innovation and Applied Research for Vocational Education and Training of the Basque Country of the Kingdom of Spain (Tknika), arrived in Namibia last month to support the NTA in the development of a focused training intervention programme for local VET trainers.

Their visit follows the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the two parties on the 16th March, this year.

Kike Inxauxste Sarriegi and Pablo Marino Orthus have already undertaken site visits to four VTCs (Eenhana, Rundu, Valombola and Zambezi) to familiarise themselves with their operations. Accompanied by employees in the VET Programmes Division, the two experts engaged in individual discussions with VTC trainers and managers, focusing on their current training needs and challenges. The discussions involved analysing the current Personal Development Plans of VTC trainers and managers, and determining appropriate training interventions required by each group.

They also had several meetings with industry sector representatives to investigate the viability of establishing renewable energy and aquaponics projects.

Although the two parties are yet to agree on the modalities, it seems as if Tknika will indeed support the NTA in the establishment of renewable energy projects at Eenhana VTC and Valombola VTC, whereas aquaponics projects are being considered at Rundu VTC and Zambezi VTC.

Before they return to Spain on the 11th of August, the two experts are expected to brief the NTA’s management team and submit a comprehensive report on their findings, outlining key recommendations and defining modalities towards the full implementation of the MoU.

According to VET Programmes Manager, Amon Haufiku, the two experts also carried out a study on the overall training competencies of trainers at six public VET institutions. “We are looking forward to the findings, as it will guide the two parties in determining the appropriate training interventions required for trainers in our public VET institutions”, Haufiku noted.

Haufiku also explained that the study will inform the formulation of an implementation schedule for training interventions to execute the areas of cooperation in the MoU.

The NTA has delegated a six-member team to attend the 2015 International Vocational Education and Training Association (IVETA) Conference, scheduled for Kuching, Sarawak Malaysia from the 25th to the 27th of August 2015.

Quality Assurance Manager, Ian Gicheru (photo) Gicheru told The Stakeholder that the conference provides an opportunity for delegates to discover and learn about practical strategies from international VET speakers, and to network with global colleagues.

The annual conference is held in a different member country every year. Last year’s event took place in Melbourne, Australia, whereas the the 2014 meeting took place in St Petersburg, Russia.

Namibia has already hosted the meeting when it took place at Swakopmund in the Erongo region in 2012.

According to Gicheru, this year’s meeting is to include a strong focus on the development of competitive skills for small and medium enterprises. “We look forward to the discussions and we believe that the NTA stands to benefit a lot from the sharing of expertise on the development of industry-driven training programmes and collaboration.

Others topics include Lifelong Learning; Reskilling and Upskilling Workers; Government and Policy; and Developing Entrepreneurship in VET.

Gicheru is to be joined by Head Office employees, Subasubani Kamwi, Ruusa Itula-Hango, Samuel Ujaha, and General Manager: Human Resources, Bernadette Sam.

VET trainer, Sackeus Pohamba from the Okakarara Vocational Training Centre (OVTC) also made the journey to Kuching.

IVETA is a network of vocational educators and includes vocational skills training organisations, business and industrial firms, and other individuals and groups interested or involved in vocational education and training worldwide.

IVETA is dedicated to the advancement and improvement of high-quality vocational education and training throughout the world. Membership includes benefits designed to help members in the profession of vocational education and training.

PARTICIPATE IN OUR MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER!
Send us your Pictures, Comments & Contributions!
info@nta.com.na

NTA TO PARTICIPATE AT 2015 IVETA CONFERENCE

From left to right: Kike Inxauxste Sarriegi, Hilde Ndjoji, Amon Haufiku and Pablo Marino Orthus.
VTC MANAGER FOCUS: HINANDJOVO MUASHEKELE
EEHNANA VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE (EVTC)

This month, as part of our ongoing focus on the Vocational Training Centres and the people who lead them, The Stakeholder paid a visit to Hinandjovo Muashekele (photo), Centre Manager of the Eenhana VTC in the Oshana region.

Who is Hinandjovo Muashekele?
A man born at Tsumeb some 52 years ago. I started out in VET when I completed an apprenticeship with the South African Railways. I later went to the Cape Town College where I enrolled and completed a Diploma in Building Engineering. I came back to Namibia and has since worked for the Walvis Bay Municipality, Consolidated Diamond Mines, National Housing Enterprise and the Namibian Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT), before I joined the NTA as its Centre Manager for Eenhana VTC.

My dream now is to consolidate EVTC as a centre of VET excellence and to ultimately surpass the excellent training standards, insitutions such as NIMT, maintains. I also dream of EVTC and all other VTCs gaining full autonomy and assume full responsibility for the upliftment of skills in the communities we serve. I still have a lot to offer to the VET sector and I would one day want to be remembered as a leading reformer of VET.

What makes your job rewarding?
How VET transforms people! You'll find trainees queuing up for registration in the first year. Some look shy, scared and quiet, not knowing what to expect. Others will have difficulty expressing themselves. When you interrogate them about the courses they want to do, you will be disappointed by some of the responses. Ask the same question to that same trainee after three years of training and you'll be amazed by their self-confidence. Ask them to fabricate something in their chosen trade, and you will be amazed by how a person can be transformed in just three years of training.

Tell us about your team?
A very young, energetic, dedicated and committed group. They are the heartbeat of the centre, its backbone.

However, too many of them still need industry experience and we are working towards a programme under which they can learn from the experiences of others, some who have retired already, and improve on their own individual skill sets. We appreciate what our young trainers are doing, but they can do so much more, if they can gain the relevant industry experience and learn from retired VET veterans.

What challenges came with your appointment at EVTC?
It's seldom a seamless transition joining one training institution from another. Each institution has got its own history and culture. I realised soon that things were being done differently at EVTC - communication, examinations, holidays and internal assessment. My predecessor, Daniel Ngodji did an excellent job since the centre's inception and I had the ominous task of stepping into his shoes and take EVTC further.

I must admit. There were indeed a few issues initially, and I had to pull out all stops to ensure that the team stayed on the right track and that our shared approach of dedication, hard work, diligence and commitment in all we do, trickled down to our trainees.

In your opinion, how would the people around you describe you?
It's difficult to say. You will never know. However, I would love to think that they think of me as a compassionate, diligent, fair and resourceful leader.

What are your views on our country's VET sector?
Although the Namibian VET sector is growing at a rapid pace, we are finding it difficult to meet the demand for quality VET services. Not only do we need more training institutions, we also need to further strengthen our current institutions.

It is important to keep on engaging industry and other stakeholders. In fact, I am in a hurry to propose to our key decisionmakers the staging of a National VET Sector Conference where all roleplayers can debate priorities, programmes and solutions. Perhaps, it is only me, but I keep on thinking that our VET sector is a bit slow in implementing key programmes that will bring value to the VET sector and enrich it further.

What is your message for our country's VET trainers and trainees?
My message to our trainers is to value and appreciate the important role they are playing in the empowerment of our people. When they do, they will realise that it is a job of sacrifices, commitment and dedication. They will realise that every minute in the workshop should be well spent. They will realise that preparation and marking are done at night and training during the day. If they are not prepared to take these pressures, then they should not be involved in training. There's no place for laziness in VET.

To our trainees, I would say that they need to take their training seriously and not let those who support them, including parents, guardians and of course, their trainers, down. Drugs and alcohol will bring you nowhere. Everything has its time. Now is the time for training.

What's a common misconception some people have about VET?
That VET is for schooldropouts! No, VET is the backbone of our economy.

Tell us something people do not know about you.
Although I am nearing retirement age, I continue to harbour a dream of studying Theology. I have always been fascinated by the mysteries of the Gospel and I believe that God wants me to one day support others in sharing His message of love and peace.
PICTURE FOCUS

WORLDSKILLS EXPERTS & COMPETITORS
Experts Gabriel Shikudule, Phillip Steyn van der Merwe, Raphael Haingura and Piet Viviers joining our WorldSkills competitors for a group photo.

WORLD YOUTH SKILLS DAY
NTA staff, Laina Angolo, Rosalia Shiponeni and Rodney Gawaseb celebrated UNESCO World Youth Skills Day at NTA Village.

WORLD SKILLS KAZAN
Alina Doskanova, International Relations Director of WorldSkills Russia presented Kazan’s bid to host the 2019 event to VET Standards Manager, Sens Shoolongo.

MEETING WITH VET PARTNERS
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PROUDLY NTA
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FUTURE VET PARTNER
VET Standards Officer, Francois Strauss (right) pictured with a delegation from local mining giant, NAMDEB, at NTA Village.

QUALITY SMILES
Quality Assurance Manager, Ian Gicheru and Technical Advisor, Doerte Schneider smiling for the camera.

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SAFETY FIRST
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The NTA’s VET Standards Division is to embark on a series of consultation visits across the country to source stakeholder input into the refinement of unit standards and qualifications in the occupational domains of Clothing Production and Metal Fabrication. The input of stakeholders is also sought to support the refinement of VET Trainer/Educator qualifications.

According to the Manager: VET Standards, Sens Shoolongo (photo), a recent review of unit standards and qualifications in the aforementioned domains has resulted in a number of changes and amendments to the existing unit standards and qualifications. “The review of unit standards and qualifications must follow processes similar to those followed in the development, and thus calls for a formal consideration that is inclusive of the engagement of the relevant national stakeholders”, Shoolongo noted.

He encourages interested stakeholders, especially those at institutional level to participate at the consultation sessions and to assist the various Technical Working Group (TWG) teams. “The NTA is an engagement-driven organisation and the meaningful input of our stakeholders will not only assist us in the validation of the reviewed draft unit standards and qualifications, but also in their overall refinement”, Shoolongo explained. Participants are urged to peruse the draft documents prior to the consultation meetings. Copies of the relevant documents can be obtained on request in electronic format via the email addresses provided below or can be downloaded from the NTA website: www.nta.com.na