The NTA has identified a team of four competitors who have been entered to compete at the 2015 WorldSkills Competition, scheduled to take place in São Paulo, Brazil, in August.

They are Rakel Kagwedha Ndinowike Amutenya (Bricklaying); Joseph Nhudiohomba Nakatumbe (Joinery); Fanuel Mathias (Electrical General); and Erkana Imene (Plumbing and Pipeheating).

Amutenya is the only female team member and is a trainee at the NamWater Human Resources Development Centre outside Okahandja. Nakatumbe is enrolled at the Namibia Institute for Mining and Technology (NIMT), whereas Mathias and Imene are enrolled at the NamPower Training Centre and the Rundu Vocational Training Centre, respectively.

The competitors told The Stakeholder that they were all humbled by the opportunity to represent their country and that they looked forward to competing against their peers from other countries.

NTA Manager: VET Standards, Sens Shoolongo, who is also the Technical Delegate for WorldSkills Namibia, said the competitors were soon to depart for South Korea and South Africa, where they will train with members of the South-Korean and South African teams, in each of these trade areas.

**WorldSkills Leader: NTA Manager - VET Standards, Sens Shoolongo, is the Namibian Technical Delegate to the WorldSkills São Paulo 2015 Competition.**

“Skills experts in each of the trade areas are also to accompany the competitors to South Korea and South Africa for their preparation and eventually to Brazil for the WorldSkills competition itself”, he noted.

Shoolongo calls on Namibians from all walks of life to rally behind the team. “Our maiden participation is indeed a proud moment, not only for the local technical and vocational training fraternity, but for our country as a whole. As such, these young Namibians deserve our full support”, he emphasised.

WorldSkills International (WSI) is an international skills competition for youth that is held in a different member country every two years. Competitors from 17 to 22 years old demonstrate their excellence in a number of different skilled trades and technology contest areas. Through competitions held every two years, WSI attempts to raise awareness about technical and vocational professions to encourage youth to explore such training and career opportunities.

The 43rd WorldSkills Competition will take place at Anhembi Parque, São Paulo, Brazil, from 11 to 16 August 2015.
Greetings!

Namibia’s maiden participation at the bi-annual WorldSkills competition in Brazil in August is indeed a huge milestone, not only for the NTA, but also for the whole training fraternity.

Our competitors are now to test their skills against the best in the world. We have confidence in these young Namibians and we are sure that they will do us proud!

Whilst their participation demonstrates how far we have come in establishing a truly relevant VET regime for our country, it also elevates the importance we need to assign to growth and prosperity.

The NTA will, therefore, continue to raise awareness about technical and vocational careers. The 2015 Skills Expo, which took place in the capital in February this year, has been a huge success and we look forward to the whole training fraternity.

Our competitors are now to test their skills against the best in the world. We have confidence in these young Namibians and we are sure that they will do us proud!

The NTA’s advocacy team joined another 112 exhibitors who participated in the event, including various Government ministries, state-owned enterprises, private companies and local small and medium enterprises.

Advocacy Team Leader, Luisia Shikongo told The Stakeholder that local teachers, learners and parents demonstrated an eagerness to learn about career paths in the technical and vocational stream. “The teachers really welcomed our efforts to educate learners about technical and vocational career options open to them, whereas parents appreciated the information we shared on those training institutions currently registered with the NTA, and who offer quality-assured training courses and programmes”, Shikongo noted.

According to Shikongo, several stakeholders who visited the NTA stand implored the organisation to do its utmost to also expand technical and vocational training services to the people of the Kunene region, and to consider establishing a technical training centre at the northwestern town. “Although many learners demonstrated a genuine interest in some of the technical and vocational career options available to them, they were disappointed that such services were not on offer at their town, or in their region. Many feel that they simply do not have the means to afford training and accommodation costs elsewhere”, she explained.

Meanwhile, the NTA’s Manager: Public Relations, Marketing and Stakeholder Engagement, Mornay Louw highlights the good progress the NTA has been making in taking its career advocacy message to all parts of the country.

“Since the beginning of the current financial year, we have already participated in career promotion events at Otavi, Lüderitz, Oshakati and Gobabis. Our partnership with the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, under which the NTA participates at career fairs organised by the fourteen regional education directorates are also yielding fruits and the appreciation rural communities show for our efforts is always encouraging”, Louw added.

SH: Tell us more about Richard Ndjahera away from the office? I am just an ordinary gentleman, a loving husband, a caring father, a passionate farmer and a good friend. Those who know me well will tell you that what you see is what you get, although I think I can be a bit stubborn, sometimes.

SH: What are you main responsibilities as Senior Procurement Officer? I am responsible for ensuring that all procurement activities are conducted in line with the NTA’s Procurement Policy. Furthermore, I need to ensure that we nurture and maintain good relations with our wide range of suppliers and service providers.

SH: You also serve as Secretary to the Tender Committee - How demanding is this part of your job? It has indeed proven to be very demanding, as the NTA has been very active in procuring products and services over the past three years. A lot of work goes into the preparation of tender documents and the subsequent evaluation processes can be equally demanding. However, this is what I love doing and I guess that is what matters most!

SH: How would you describe the NTA's relations with its main suppliers and service providers? We have made excellent progress in establishing a procurement environment that is conducive for our suppliers. In my experience, once client and supplier value the importance of effective communication and engagement in sustaining good relations, such relations can only continue to thrive.

SH: What makes your smile? I smile a lot. But, I smile more when I see my cattle! Yes, I am passionate about cattle farming and have over the years managed to build up a sizable stud.
The NTA is inviting proposals from reputable, experienced and qualified service providers, who specialise in Entrepreneurship Training, for the provision of entrepreneurship training and mentoring support to selected Level 3 VET graduates.

According to the NTA’s VET Programmes Manager, Amon Haufiku (photo), the overall objective is to identify, select and empower VET trainees in specific occupations with business and entrepreneurial skills; facilitate a process whereby they are enabled to start up their own sustainable enterprises; and provide coaching and mentoring support to the beneficiaries.

He told The Stakeholder that the NTA’s Strategic Plan calls for the implementation of a focused and targeted approach to entrepreneurial development in the VET sector through skills development programmes and support to VET graduates.

"It needs to be emphasised that within this context, Entrepreneurship Training should not be confused with general business or economic studies, as the goal is rather to promote creativity, innovation and the self-employment of VET graduates", Haufiku explains.

Proposals must clearly outline the methodology to be employed, key activities and concomitant deliverables, proposed timelines and cost implications.

The service provider is to raise awareness of self-employment and entrepreneurship opportunities among trainees and graduates and will support vocational training institutions in developing criteria for selecting occupational areas for piloting Entrepreneurship Training.

The project anticipates a target group of 180 trainees for six institutions. The service provider is also to provide training and mentoring to selected Level 3 graduates, focusing on specific business skills and knowledge on how to start and successfully run a company.

Haufiku encourages individuals and entities that meet the criteria to submit proposals. “We are looking for a partner with a proven track record of establishing and operating businesses and who are experienced in entrepreneurship mechanisms and opportunities currently available in Namibia. Experience in the establishment and management of small business incubation centres would serve as an added advantage”, he emphasised. “I should highlight that we have indeed invited proposals from qualified bidders before. However, the proposals received under the first round did not meet technical requirements and expectations, and as such, we decided on a second round of proposals”, Haufiku explained.

Interested bidders can access the Request for Proposal Invitation and the Terms of Reference from the ‘Downloads’ section on the NTA’s corporate website. Bidders can also attend an information sharing session and presentation on the 17th of June 2015 at the NTA headquarters in Khomasdal, Windhoek.

The closing date for submission of proposals is the 22nd of June 2015.

Manager - VET Programmes:
Amon Haufiku

PARTICIPATE IN OUR MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER!
SEND US YOUR COMMENTS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND PICTURES!
info@nta.com.na

STAKEHOLDER DIARY:

- 15 June 2015
  Tender Closing Date: Development & Implementation of E-Performance Management System
- 17 June 2015
  Entrepreneurship Training Coaching and Mentoring Support, Request for Proposals Presentation Meeting, NTA Village, Windhoek
- 18 June 2015
  NTA Board of Directors Meeting, Windhoek
- 20 June 2015
  VET Levy Monthly Payment Deadline
- 22 June 2015
  Tender Closing Date: Request for Proposals - Entrepreneurship Training Coaching and Mentoring Support
SH: To what return rate be attributed?
JM: I would say a combination of factors, including a strong advocacy campaign; targeted stakeholder engagement; the provision of technical support to employers; and the commitment of employer representative bodies and employers to this process.

We owe our gratitude to employers and employer bodies that invited our teams for presentations about the VET Levy and the employer training grant claims submission process. We had excellent cooperation from key employer bodies such as Namibia Employers Federation, Namibia Manufacturing Association, Chamber of Mines, Namibia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, to mention a few.

SH: What arrangements are there to allow employers that could not submit their applications before the cut date of 1 May 2015?
JM: In line with the VET Levy Regulations, all employers meeting the criteria set out in the Government Gazette No 5 of 2014 should have submitted their applications 31 days at the end of the financial year. Employers that could not submit within the 31 days should have submitted requests for extension within the 31 days. No extensions are allowed outside the 31 days.

SH: What are the challenges that you have received in the process of employers submitting applications?
JM: The challenges varied per the stage of the claims applications process. In fact, only two applications were received after two weeks of claim submissions, following the commencement of the applications deadline period. One could ascribe the slow start to some technical difficulties with the online claims submission system; employers experiencing difficulties understanding or operating the system; and in the compilation of the relevant support information and evidence. However, through visits to employers, we were able to mitigate most of these challenges.

We have now proceeded to the validation of evidence submitted with the applications. Again, a common challenge being encountered at this stage is the lack of evidence (e.g. attendance registers and course outlines) to support the applications. The lack of evidence causes further delays in approving individual employer claims as the NTA has to go back to employers to request for the resubmission of valid evidence. We are also encountering some instances where supporting evidence does not match the scope and duration of training interventions.

SH: When can employers expect to receive payments on the applications that they have submitted?
JM: The NTA has made a commitment to disburse the funds within ninety days from the closing date of receiving applications. In honouring this commitment, we have embarked on an intensive desktop evaluation exercise to determine if those employers who have submitted applications are indeed up to date with their levy payments, do not have outstanding penalties or interest, and that their training interventions are indeed in line with the approved NTA policies. Employers are alerted as soon as non-compliance is detected and the employers are allowed to re-submit their applications.

SH: What activities are you planning for the remainder of the financial year to support VET Levy-paying employers in understanding the Regulations?
JM: The NTA is currently developing a Guideline of Good Practice to be used as a reference document for conducting training, especially in-company training. This document will be made available to employers at the beginning of August 2015.

Another key activity will be to migrate from the computer-based submission system to a fully-fledged and compatible web-based system. The two will be integrated and we will therefore encourage employers to continue capturing their training interventions on the computer-based system.

SH: A final message to VET Levy-paying employers?
JM: We want to thank all the employers for their support and patience and we want to reassure them of our commitment to ensure we respond to their needs.

Going forward, we call upon our employers to continue their support and to respond to our invitations to information sharing sessions. Effective engagement is of utmost importance in ensuring that they stay abreast of the latest developments as far as the VET Levy is concerned.
VET OPINION: INCLUSION AND EQUAL ACCESS IN VET FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN NAMIBIA

Access to education is a right for all Namibians, but disabled people continue to encounter many obstacles in exercising that right. In this opinion piece, Marijke Overeem (photo), Section Manager at the Promotion of Vocational Education & Training (ProVET) Project elevates the plight of Namibians with disabilities in accessing high quality technical and vocational training services.

Meet Daniel Trum, who is currently enrolled in the very demanding Level 5 Occupationally Directed Education, Training and Development practice (OD-ETD) course, which is offered through the ProVET project, and facilitated and adapted to the Namibian context by VeryCoolIdeas (VCI), from South Africa.

Daniel has a visual impairment. The barriers he face to be learning successfully are many: Registering for the training course, reaching the training venue, and accessing the training material, which he cannot read. Daniel has access to a computerised reader that translates Word documents into spoken text. However, the materials for the OD-ETD course are not in Word, but in PDF format, which Daniel’s computer programme can’t read. The training provider, living up to their commitment towards inclusion, converts the documents from PDF into Word and makes available to Daniel a memory stick on which all the training materials are in Word format.

comes the next barrier. The Word versions are still not readable by his computer.

The problems Daniel encounter in qualifying as a trainer, assessor and moderator are not because he cannot learn or because he doesn’t want to learn, but because the current VET system is organised in a way that ‘excludes’ him, and so many other disabled and differently-abled Namibians.

The international human rights framework recognises citizens with disabilities as having the same rights as citizens without disabilities. Indeed, the rights-based approach also recognises that equal treatment, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination provide for inclusive opportunities for women and men with disabilities in mainstream society. Furthermore, the rights-based approach recognises that barriers and prejudices are the most disabling for both individuals and society, particularly when these barriers impede access to skill development and decent work.

Skills development is central in enabling and empowering differently-abled to join the labour force. Those who have had the opportunity to acquire marketable skills are more likely to obtain decent and productive work, and demonstrate their potential to earn a living and contribute in the world of work. Yet, access to appropriate skills training is not available to a significant number of differently-abled women and men for differing reasons.

Where indeed, training is provided in dedicated centres catering only to people with disabilities, the training curriculum and equipment are often and frequently outdated and is less likely than the general training programmes, to reflect the requirements of labour market or self-employment opportunities.

People with disabilities in developing countries mainly attend training programmes in such centres, or do not attend any training at all, resulting for many in social exclusion and in poverty. The result is a loss of potential, with implications for individuals and for societies.

While legislative and policy measures are necessary for change, they are not sufficient to give effect to the enjoyment of rights. Many countries have identified the need for systematic information regarding the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in vocational training and employment in the open labour market. The need for more information will require countries and international organisations to network and systematically gather the information required to move forward.

It is indeed our responsibility as training planners, managers, and service providers to make sure disabled and differently-abled Namibians like Daniel are included. In other words, we need to remove the barriers to learning, one by one. Then people like Daniel can confidently access technical and vocational training opportunities.

The international paradigm shift, from a medical and charity based welfare model of disability, to today’s rights based model, indeed acknowledges the movement to link disability issues to a full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

Also, evidence already shows that rights-based framework for looking at disability has increased social and economic development in many countries.

One of the key objectives of the ProVET Project is to support policy development on inclusion of disabled and differently-abled people in VET.

To this end, the project is soon to undertake a situational analysis on inclusion in VET of disabled and differently-abled people, with the ultimate goal of promoting best practice and sound knowledge management in this area.

Under this initiative, the ProVET Project is also to render support to selected inclusion programmes in at least two courses offerings at two different locations, possibly Windhoek and Rundu, based on the principle of synergising with, and taking advantage of existing initiatives.

In the final analysis, however, it becomes important that all stakeholders in technical and vocational training embrace the principle of inclusivity, if indeed we are to mainstream the VET sector to become more accessible for disabled and differently-abled Namibians.

We must be innovative and ‘walk the talk’!
Training Institutions Welcome Nationwide VET Curriculum Monitoring and Advisory Visits

The NTA’s Vocational Curriculum Implementation Division embarked on a series of monitoring and advisory visits to a number of Vocational Training Centres and private training institutions from the 3rd to the 27th of March 2015.

According to the Manager: VET Curriculum Implementation, Ernst Eixab (photo), the rationale behind the visits was to execute and consolidate the deliverables outlined in the NTA’s Business Plan and give effect to recommendations made by the Standards, Assessment and Certification Council (SACC).

“The SACC has raised concern in the past and has emphasised the importance of routine monitoring and advisory visits to ensure the efficient implementation of the VET curriculum”, explains Eixab.

“During these visits, the teams observed that trainers welcomed the initiative and showed interest in taking up short courses in line with their job descriptions, to ensure that they are better empowered and capacitated. Although trainers are experts in their fields of teaching, several pedagogical, assessment and moderation courses were identified as the most crucial in the upskilling of trainers throughout all training institutions, public and private”, he noted.

Teams looked at classroom and workshop monitoring checklists and also conducted interviews with trainers and managers. Personal files, daily lesson plans, internal assessment tools, and attendance registers were also checked for consistency.

Manager: VET Curriculum Implementation Ernst Eixab

Training Institutions Welcome Nationwide VET Curriculum Monitoring and Advisory Visits

The NTA has embarked upon a series of intensive training workshops for trainers from the various Vocational Training Centres (VTCs), under its supervision and other private training institutions, on the Vocational Education and Training Management Information System (VETMIS).

The VETMIS is a specialised computer software programme that has been designed for the NTA to facilitate the efficient and effective storage, organisation and retrieval of information.

The NTA’s Manager: Research and Planning, Ernst Mbangula told The Stakeholder that it was essential for trainers to familiarise themselves with the usage of the system.

“In theory, having information that is current, accurate and well-organised will help our managers and trainers to make better and well-informed decisions for the benefit of the organisation. The VETMIS allows for information to be gathered, organised, processed and analysed more efficiently as managers, administrators and trainers can now feed information automatically into the system”, he explained.

Mbangula said the workshops also focused on a training institution-based module that has been designed to facilitate the efficient exchange of data between such providers and the NTA. “We are confident that once the training institutions embrace this module, we should be able to rely on accurate and reliable data on the status of VET programmes and initiatives, including enrollment numbers, certification statistics and training outcomes”, he noted.

Mbangula also highlighted that the VETMIS was a response to the Regulations for the Registration of Training Providers, which require that registered training institutions generate and submit accurate data and information on training outcomes to the NTA.

“We realised that our small local training market did not necessarily have the capacity to live up to this expectation and as a result decided to take the lead in the establishment of a fit-for-purpose management information system for the VET sector”, he said.

An initial workshop in the capital focused on Vocational Training Centre (VTC) staff exclusively, and is to be followed by more regional workshops in July and August for staff from private training institutions. The Windhoek workshop was attended by about thirty managers and trainers from the various VTCs.

The VETMIS has been developed by a South African Information and Communication Technology service provider, RemoteNet.

The same company has developed similar systems for several of the Sector Education Training Authorities (SETAs), in that country.