

# SHAFT SINKERS MINING 500 000 TONNES/MONTH

One of Africa's most experienced mining contractors, Shaft Sinkers Mining, is contracted to produce 500 000 tonnes per month for its extensive list of clients. Involved in all stages of mine development – from feasibility to execution – Shaft Sinkers acts as a 'one-stop shop' for mining companies. Its biggest contract is at the new Everest platinum mine.



Shaft Sinkers personnel at Lonmin Platinum's Saffy Shaft.

Shaft Sinkers Mining, a division of Shaft Sinkers, is able to undertake metalliferous and coal mining on behalf of clients, including taking over the complete responsibility of the mine, from shaft head to delivering ore at the mill. Conventional and mechanised mining methods are applied successfully at deep and shallow underground coal, platinum, gold and diamond mines.

With more than 3 000 employees, the company has successfully won tenders for a number of unique and challenging projects for its clients. With these projects underway, and new projects in the pipeline, Shaft Sinkers Divisional Director, Mining, Johann Lubbe, recently gave *Modern Mining* a detailed break down of these developments.

In 2004, Shaft Sinkers was awarded a contract by Aquarius Platinum to produce 250 000 tons of platinum ore per month from the UG2 reef at Aquarius' Everest mine. The contract is in month 14, and Shaft Sinkers Mining is

currently producing in the region of 100 000 tonnes per month. The project is long term and will come to completion in month 60. In total, Shaft Sinkers has been contracted to mine some 12 Mt at the mine.

Lubbe says that this is Shaft Sinkers' flagship contract and that it currently has 1 000 employees working on the project – of these, 25 % are sourced from the local community.

Shaft Sinkers Mining aims to complete the project fatality-free. Lubbe explains that the division hopes to achieve this through Shaft Sinkers' Behavioural Based Safety System, which encourages members of staff to take control of safety underground, and look out for not only themselves, but those around them too.

Everest is a completely trackless mechanised project. Lubbe explains that with mechanised mining, the contractor makes use of trackless equipment, such as LHDs and conveyor belts, rather than conventional rail bound locomotives underground. Shaft Sinkers decided to make the project trackless due to the fact that Everest boasts a much flatter reef structure and a higher stoping width than many of the more established platinum mines, which makes it possible to access the stopes with vehicles.

Shaft Sinkers Mining has implemented a local employment policy, which ensures that 50 % of the labour force from a project is sourced from the local community. This policy not only provides members of the local community with valuable skills from the project, but they are also given extensive training from Shaft Sinkers' internal training department – SHEQT – which further empowers the community, providing them with knowledge,

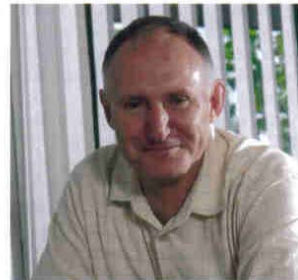
skills and hands-on experience.

Shaft Sinkers Mining has built a strong relationship with Lonmin, and is currently operating at the company's Saffy, Hossy and Rowland shafts. Shaft Sinkers was recently awarded a contract to develop and construct new infrastructure to open up replacement ore reserves at Lonmin's Rowland shaft. Lubbe states that the project was awarded in June this year, and that Shaft Sinkers started work on 4 July, with the expected completion date set for April 2007. Thereafter, phase two and three of the project will follow.

At the Saffy and Hossy shafts, Shaft Sinkers Mining is involved with Lonmin on a project to trial mechanised ultra low profile equipment. Lubbe boasts that the Saffy Shaft project has been operational for six years without any fatalities.

In other developments, Shaft Sinkers Mining is involved in a tunnelling contract that entails opening up ore reserves at Moab Khotso for AngloGold Ashanti. Shaft Sinkers Mining is developing at a rate of 1 500 metres per month. Lubbe notes that Shaft Sinkers currently has more than 1 000 employees working on the project.

Safety is of paramount importance in every project in which Shaft Sinkers is involved. However,



Shaft Sinkers' Divisional Director, Mining, Johann Lubbe.



*The Australian High Commissioner to South Africa, Philip Green, detonates the ceremonial 'first blast' marking the official opening of the Lesedi Shaft at IFMSA's ferrochrome operation in North West Province. The opening function took place earlier this month (July). Shaft Sinkers is part of the SDM consortium appointed as mining contractor by IFMSA (photo: Arthur Tassell).*

er, Lubbe says that Moab is a particularly risky project because it is mined at depth. To combat this risk, a great amount of focus is placed on unique methods of supporting the surrounding rock mass to minimise the risk of falls of ground.

In the chrome field, Shaft Sinkers Mining is working on the International Ferro Metals (SA) (IFMSA) project near Mooi-nooi in North West Province. It is a member of a joint venture, known as SDM, which also includes Deilmann-Haniel and Mmakau Mining. The project includes the management

and operation of all mining activities underground and the associated infrastructure on surface. Work on the project started in November last year, and the first part of the contract will run for a period of 16 months, with the completion date set for February 2007. After month 16, the contract will hopefully be extended for a further 44 months. The chromite mine at the project, previously known as Buffelsfontein, is now known as Lesedi ('place of light').

The total tonnage planned for the first phase of the project is

## underground mining contracting and equipment

290 124 tons, which consists of 158 976 tons from the stoping, 124 310 tons from run-of-mine product and 6 837 tons of waste. The joint venture is currently developing 420 m a month, and stoping operations at the mine have begun, with the first three stoping panels being mined at this stage. The shaft providing access to the underground orebody – the Lesedi Shaft – was officially inaugurated earlier this month (July). While the beginning phase of the project only employs some 296 people, the staff complement will be increased to 550 before the end of the year, of which 50 % will be sourced from the local Brits community. Lubbe adds that the project is fatality-free to date, and SDM hopes to maintain this safety record throughout the course of the project.

"Shaft Sinkers Mining aims to produce 1 million tonnes per month at a Safety Disabling Injury Frequency rate of below 0.8. The division is currently half way to achieving the production goal," Lubbe concludes. ■