

Contractor reaps the benefits of structural transformation

Esmarie Swanepoel | Features Reporter

South African mining contractor Shaft Sinkers has been awarded a number of new contracts.

The company underwent a structural transformation during 2006 to better facilitate the different priorities within the company.

The contractor now consists of a mining division, a shaft sinking division and an in-house design division, known as Mets.

Shaft Sinkers divisional director of corporate services **Tom Pietrzak** says that the company has a history of contract mining and has been involved in it since the early 90s.

He states that when certain mining houses no longer found it economically viable to mine, Shaft Sinkers were brought in to do the contract mining.

As the mines changed hands, over the years,

the mine's contracts with Shaft Sinkers expired and, in 1999, the company found itself in a period where no contract mining was done.

"About two-and-a-half years ago, new mining laws came into effect and new mining houses were formed.

"Some of these mining houses had a model of business where they would acquire mining rights, but the mining would be done on a contract basis.

"We have now been awarded a contract such as this, that was previously held by one of our competitors," Pietrzak says.

Pietrzak says the re-establishment of the mining division entailed putting senior personnel in charge and separating it from the sinking division.

"This was done for business purposes, for bet-

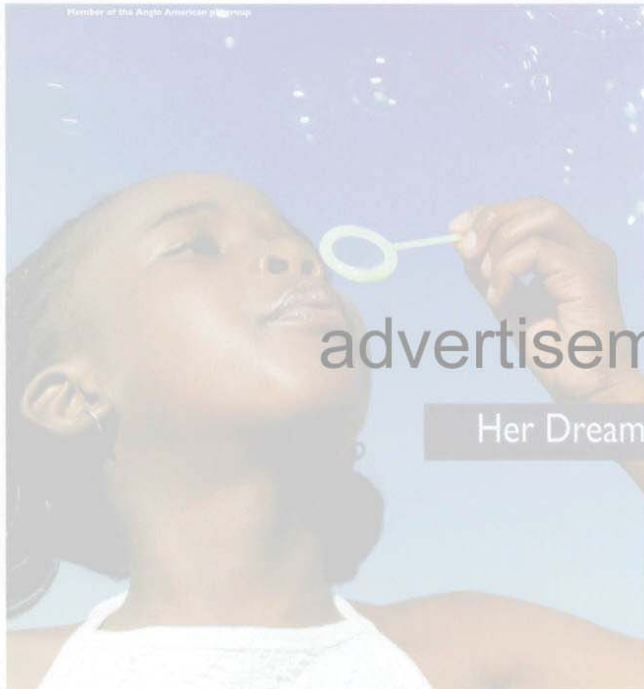


MINING DIVISION RE-ESTABLISHED
Senior personnel were brought in to separate the mining and the sinking division

ter control and administration.

"Mining requires different skills and different disciplines to run it, so we are running it as a separate entity," he adds.

Pietrzak says that the deep-level mine industry traditionally belonged to the gold industry and the



advertisement

Her Dreams. Our Opportunity.

South Africa's future is locked up in the dreams of our children with their unclouded aspirations and needs. And because their inheritance includes benefits from South Africa's mineral wealth, we think of their dreams as opportunities. That's why we uplift communities around the mines through job creation, schools, clinics and infrastructure. But we also focus on those who seek more benefits from platinum than the rest of the people.

Trust Anglo Platinum to be a good custodian of the mineral resources entrusted to it and to do everything in its power to ensure all South Africans derive benefit of what platinum has to offer.



FEATURE DEEP-LEVEL MINING



USING OLD SHAFTS

Some of the deep-level shafts, which were sunk years ago, only recently came into operation

deepest mines could be found in South Africa.

Some of these shafts were sunk several years ago, but owing to the low gold prices at the time, it was not considered economically viable to explore these orebodies, despite the fact that the shafts had been sunk.

When the price of gold went up again, the mining houses once again considered going deeper. He adds that Shaft Sinkers is currently involved in tendering for two contracts such as this.

Platinum mines are now also experiencing the need to sink deeper as shallow orebodies are being depleted, says Shaft Sinkers divisional director of sinking and international, **Louis Germishuys**, as there is a huge demand for the precious metal. "The only way they can gain access to the new ore reserves is to go in deeper."

Pietrzak says that when considering gold-mining, 3 500 m is not really deep, but in platinum-mining,

the depth of 2 000 m is extremely deep.

He says that deep-level shafts constitute major technical problems, and a technical expert is needed, who knows how to deal with the ingress of water, since the shafts go through layers of water-bearing strata.

Logistical problems present themselves when miners gain access to subshafts, and Pietrzak feels that contractors should be able to handle these challenges.

The company currently employs a staff of about 5 000 and expects a growth of a further 2 000 in the near future. Shaft Sinkers is also making an effort to employ more women within the mining industry, and not only in administrative roles.

Pietrzak says that the company already employs several women on the mining side but that shaft sinking might take a little longer.

"Not only are we encouraging the employment of women in our own company, but also in those of our subcontractors."

Pietrzak says that his company is well prepared for any eventuality that might occur and has set up a human resources department to handle any possible challenges that might arise from women entering a previously male-dominated environment. The company has a zero-tolerance policy to any unsafe acts, and Pietrzak says that all its employees receive the same training when dealing with safety issues. Twice now, the company has been recognised for its million fatality-free shifts.

"We want to meet those standards again and we are running numerous campaigns to achieve them," concludes Germishuys.

MINING WEEKLY COUPON ON PAGE 44 E105913



MODULAR BACKFILL BAG AND FILPAK GULLY

HANGING WALL



GULLY HANGING WALL



No gully side wall scaling

Features of the Filpak®

- reinforcement of the backfill at either end of the backfill bag by virtue of frictional interaction between the tensile mesh reinforcement and the granular backfill
- design procedure which enables mesh assemblies to be varied in order to meet specific stress and closure conditions in different mines and stopes
- facility to take backfill to the edges of stopes
- distribution of load on footwall and hanging wall with resultant absence of point loading; and, in particular, minimizing damage to the footwall at gully edges
- effecting savings in shaft time and in handling and transport of materials
- capable of functioning in either cemented or uncemented backfill stopes
- possible further application in dip gullies, and in any attempts at ore-pillar recovery

REMS / STITCH WISE EXCLUSIVE LICENSE AGREEMENT

Contact details
Natalie@stitchwise.co.za
Gerrie@stitchwise.co.za
 Gerrie 083 3216 530 Natalie 082 3209 188
 Office 018 788 2622



MODULAR BACKFILL BAG AND FILPAK GULLY

42 | MINING WEEKLY | April 6-12 2007 | 43

BSA
Building Sustainable Africa