



# SEDA INCUBATION BEARS FRUITS FOR **TEMBO ENGINEERING**

It's not everyday that you get a success story of a women owned mechanical engineering firms surviving in the highly competitive world of dirty mining and electrical generation in the sun-baked Mpumalanga highveld.

Shocky Seloane would not have been lost in glittering make up and polished nails and a designer outfit strutting her stuff in the white-collar industry in Sandton, but she chose to dabble in the road less travelled by females and tackle the giant nuts and bolts in the belly of the earth in Middelburg mines.

In 2016 she and her colleagues Mphephu Nengovhela and Justice Mokoena logged heads and registered Tembo Engineering, and in 2020 the first contract landed in her dining room table.

Armed with Bachelor of Technology degree in Mechanical Engineering from the famed Tshwane University of Technology, she chose to work in the mining sector in Mpumalanga and break the long-held gender stereotypes of females only suitable to work in offices.

"We are a growing company, from a one woman show with operations from the dining room table at home and occasionally renting small workspaces and temporary labour, to occupying a workshop in the industrial area of Middelburg, complimented with a

dedicated team of eight members. Growth presents itself with challenges, including of constrained cash flow as number of orders increase, constraints of tools, machinery and skilled resources to deliver good quality result."

"Tembo Engineering in the 2020/2021/2022 financial years found itself quite frustrated at unaffordable workshop fees as we sat with a fabrication order to execute. Under pressure, we walked into the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality LED (Local Economic Development) office. The manager introduced us to Mpumalanga Stainless Initiative (MSI) an incubator supported by the Local Municipality and by Small Enterprise Development agency (SEDA). The company signed up for the incubation program where we qualified for a subsidized workshop and office space. Renting a workshop on a lease agreement was an act of faith as we did not have an established market" said Seloane.

Tembo Engineering is a 100% Black Youth Women-owned and led Mechanical Engineering services company based in Middelburg, Mpumalanga. They innovate and design through our core which is mechanical engineering consulting work, from which we develop maintenance strategies or plans and drawings. Furthermore, do fabrication as per design and drawings to add value to the supply chain.

After a frustrating two years in operation, Tembo Engineering faced cash flow constraints to keep the company afloat amid the crippling global Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent nationwide lockdown. They sort financial assistance from the Department of Small Business Development's (DSBD). They were enrolled in the SEDA Incubation programme and allocated office space and a workshop at Mpumalanga Stainless Initiative (MSI) in Middelburg where they are currently based.

The permanent residency on MSI premises opened opportunities for them including access to business-to-business trade, supplier trust as we were locatable and accessible and had reference and permanent address.

**"Signing up, we got access to business coaching and access to government training, seminars such as export and imports which gave us information on obtaining our customs number for imports and export and introduction us to, SHETRADES".**

We acquired Presidential Awards access at 21 Sloane, SEDA pitch for funding 2022 where we were on the top 9; a highlight for us in 2022" she added.

Residency at MSI allowed for Tembo Engineering to grow and spread its wings within the mining sector in Mpumalanga and were awarded a 30% three-year steel fabrication contract with Thungela Resources.

"For me, government intervention has awarded me an access to participate in the economy, to be able to take up space in male dominated industries. The implementation of the Central Supplier Database has given us access to a wide market, giving an opportunity to the hard workers to bid and a chance to bid fairly. Local offices of Seda and incubation centres are helpful in developing us as entrepreneurs and more especially as manufacturers and real participants in the economy."

Tembo engineering is moving to being a generic company, with an established export of skills and high-quality products with trade throughout SADC, to Africa and the World.

Their vision is to be a sought-after mechanical engineering company in Southern Africa, equipped with applicable machinery to match global competition.

