

Expanding into Africa

SA Shipyards couples ship-building technology with training to increase their African footprint

SA Shipyards describes themselves as the largest shipyard in southern Africa and believes that they have the largest artisan programme in the shipbuilding industry. By combining these two strengths, SA Shipyards is aiming to enter into joint venture partnerships with a number of other African countries, through the company's packaged offerings of skills development, training and technology transfer programmes.

It is a win-win scenario that the company believes is key to ensuring long-term and sustainable partnerships with their clients across the continent: supply ships to African countries and then empower them to maintain and repair their own vessels.

SA Shipyards' approach leans on the Af-

rican Maritime Transport Charter of 2009, which made provisions that ships for Africa should be built, repaired and maintained in Africa.

The Charter has since provided SA Shipyards with an opportunity to sign memoranda of understanding with Angola and Nigeria to develop ship-repair yards in the two countries using as much local labour and skills as is feasible.

In addition to a marine engineering technology transfer between South Africa and Angola, initial training for the ship-repair workforce will be provided in Durban, which will develop into the provision of trainers to be based in Nigeria and Angola for local training.

The ship-repair yards will service Africa's offshore oil and gas industry. This is in line with SA Shipyards' vision of developing an African footprint with a strong focus on the offshore oil and gas market.

Technical assistance

As SA Shipyards secures further partnerships with African countries, the company is increasingly viewed as not only a ship builder but a technical partner to develop

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African marine engineering industries.

This is primarily enabled by SA Shipyards' strong training ethos within the company. Their artisan training programme, which is also one of the largest such programmes in KwaZulu-Natal, currently trains 37 apprentices – 10 of whom are black women.

SA Shipyards is also involved in a joint partnership with eThekweni Municipality to sponsor unemployed youth as apprentices who will undergo a trade test with the Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority.

The goal is to train up to 60 apprentices in the marine engineering field – 10 of which have already passed their trade test, to date. The company has further initiated in-service training programmes for guest apprentices from SAPREF and Sasol of non-technical backgrounds.

Recent African contracts

Over the last year, SA Shipyards has certainly plugged into Africa's powerboard. The company signed a R70 million contract in December 2010 to build 15 new pontoons for the Moma mineral-sand mining project in northern Mozambique. Approximately 1800 tonnes of steel will be used to build the 15 pontoons, each with a length of 48m, a width of 5m and a draft of 2.7m.

SA Shipyards also undertook a conversion job on the hospital ship, *Africa Mercy*, last year. It is the largest non-governmental floating hospital in the world and is currently docked in Sierra Leone to bring medical relief to the country's poor and medical training to local doctors.

SA Shipyards removed three small Frichs generators and the two larger harbour generators, replacing them with four new MAN 1 000-kilowatt generators, and conducted extensive electrical modification. This will not only result in massive savings for the vessel but will also reduce the vibration in line with the noise levels required in a hospital vessel.

Most exciting is SA Shipyards' design of a unique 45-metre patrol vessel to help counter piracy in Africa. The vessel is reportedly inexpensive to acquire, maintain and operate, and has received substantial interest from various African navies.

The company has a history of naval shipbuilding, having built the SAS Drakensberg, six naval strike crafts and mine hunters, but will be entering into co-operation agreements with international naval shipbuilders for its naval shipbuilding programme.

By Jodie Davies-Coleman

