

Zibulo Colliery named runner-up in Nedbank Capital Sustainable Business Awards

Anglo American Coal's Zibulo Colliery was named the runner-up in the Resources and Non-Renewable Energy category at the prestigious 2014 Nedbank Capital Sustainable Business Awards held in Johannesburg recently. Zibulo was recognized for what it has achieved through its Phola sanitation and waste management initiative.

The awards honour companies that are able to balance economic profitability with truly sustainable business practices. This competition has become a vehicle to challenge African companies operating across all major industries to ensure they deliver sustainable value, in all its forms, to their stakeholders.

Zibulo colliery operates an opencast pit near the town of Ogies in Mpumalanga, which incorporates the Phola township. Even before operations began at the mine in 2011, Zibulo management recognized the dire need for sanitation and waste management interventions in the local community. Two separate projects were initiated as part of the mine's social and labour plan to improve the safety and health of residents and to mitigate the adverse environmental impacts. The two projects were informed by the needs of the local municipality and have become part of its integrated development planning process.

The sewerage infrastructure project has upgraded the Phola township's entire sewerage network and doubled its existing capacity in anticipation of the area's future growth needs. The project involved increasing the existing capacity of the Ogies outfall sewer line, the complete refurbishment of the pump station and treatment works, expansion of the treatment works to cater for an increase in wastewater flow, implementation of mechanisms to ensure the efficient operation and maintenance of the system, as well as provision of ongoing monitoring and evaluation.

The refuse removal project began with the clearing of more than 20 informal dumping grounds, after which 32 refuse containers were placed at strategic sites across the township. To provide a sustainable solution to the eMalahleni Local Municipality's transport constraints, the Zibulo team acquired two refuse collection trucks that will be transferred to local government once the transfer of skills is complete.

The Phola sanitation and waste management initiative also involved capacity-building and employment creation, successfully creating nearly 40 jobs for full-time project employees and 'Enviro teams' to run refuse collection activities.

'As we are not in the business of managing waste, it was vital that a partnership-based approach be taken to initiate the project and to ensure that the municipality will ultimately be able to run these services independently, making use of the improved infrastructure and skills imparted through the venture,' says Themba Mkhwanazi, CEO of Anglo American Coal South Africa. 'We're also committed to ensuring that both projects extend beyond the life of the operation and that community members continue to benefit from these essential services once operations have ceased.

'We're proud that this initiative has significantly enhanced the quality of life of the township's 37 000 residents, who now benefit from a safe and efficient sewerage system and refuse collection services. The project also succeeded in strengthening the mine's partnership with the municipality.

'An exciting spin-off has emerged from the leadership role we assumed in identifying a range of challenges around municipal capacity, which has prompted other mining houses in the area to invest in similar institutional capacity projects.'

M. Mofokeng