

THORBURN SECURITY SOLUTIONS APPROACH TO INCLUSIVE PROCUREMENT IN THE MINING SECTOR



The Thungela-Thorburn partnership is an example of how South African businesses can work together to meet impressive sustainability and Environmental Social Governance targets and leave a legacy in the communities in which they operate.

For Thungela, a leading South African thermal coal exporter, working to advance the communities around its six remote mining sites is integral to operations. The mining house believes in proactively engaging all stakeholders and upholding human rights, part of which involves partnering with communities to understand and help deliver on their priorities. With a vision of “Responsibly creating value together for a shared future”, Thungela shares a core belief with the Tsebo Solutions Group that by creating opportunities for individuals and small and medium businesses in the communities they serve, the private sector can help to positively transform the economy for the benefit of all.

As Tsebo’s security division, Thorburn Security Solutions shares these values as well as a wealth of experience and expertise in securing and protecting remote mining sites, which is why it became the obvious choice when Thungela put its security services out for tender.

Says Lucas Kotsoane, Thungela’s Inclusive Procurement Manager, “We strive to enhance opportunities to our host communities so that they can benefit from Thungela’s value chain activities. When our previous security supplier’s contract was coming to an end, we decided to go to market and find a new supplier that would align with our ethos and values as well as meet our security requirements. We are happy to say that Thorburn, with their pricing, abilities and agility came out as one of the best in the evaluation.”

With an in-depth understanding of the unique conditions and operational requirements, Thorburn prides itself on providing risk-adjusted solutions to the mining sector where challenges run the full gambit from theft and perimeter breaches to illegal mining and protest action. Within 900 hours of receiving the Thungela contract, Thorburn had rolled out an integrated security management solution, which included manned guarding, tactical response teams, control-room operators, a fleet of security response vehicles and a leading-edge TBiMs platform tailored to Thungela’s tactical, operational and strategic requirements.

Additionally, and of importance to this contract, Thorburn was well placed to work with Thungela to create meaningful enterprise supplier and development (ESD) relationships and roll out corporate social initiatives (CSI) in the communities surrounding Thungela’s mine sites.

“I believe that if we look at business, we have to look at our communities, especially within South Africa,” says Thorburn Sales and Marketing Director, Ranesh Ranjith. “At Tsebo and Thorburn we pride ourselves on driving inclusive procurement. We’ve seen our communities and our businesses yearning for inclusive procurement from a sourcing as well as a partnership point of view. This has been a journey in the making, and with help and guidance from Thungela, we’ve managed to hit most of our milestones. The partnership is critical for us as a business in terms of sustainability as well our environmental social governance [ESG] and has allowed us to facilitate learnership programmes, CSI initiatives as well as SMME development.”

Having started the contract in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, Thorburn began by handing out 4600 face masks and 200 litres of sanitiser to seven schools in surrounding communities. But that was just the beginning.



With a commitment from Thorburn to spend 1% of its annual contract on ESD, social economic development and skills development, a dedicated social performance team was established to identify and vet potential projects that would add value to the communities. Ithuba Protection Services was subcontracted by Thorburn to train and upskill security officers from the Witbank and various learnerships were established to empower youth from Thungela's doorstep communities.

Thorburn believes that the true strength of any social outreach programme is to create meaningful changes in people's lives by investing in sustainable skills that enhance community potential.

According to Jackie Mehlomakulu, Tsebo's Group Transformation Executive, "Our Group ethos has always been aimed at creating long-term stakeholder value through implementing a business strategy that focuses on the ethical, social, environmental, cultural, and economic dimensions of doing business.

"Our sustainability framework, an umbrella under which we perform our ESG initiatives and commitments, forms part of our approach as a responsible organisation. Tsebo is able to measure and improve on our ESG commitments as part of our core business practices," she says. "The ultimate goal is to achieve increased economic participation of small businesses through collaborative initiatives and efforts with our clients. We share a common goal with Thungela of creating a legacy of upliftment and a prosperous future for generations to come."



It's such a pleasure working with Thorburn, wherever we go, we go together and there have been lots of initiatives where we contributed as a united front. From the start of this relationship, we haven't had any issues, Thorburn keeps their promises and we keep to our promises

- Leonard Sidumo,
Thungela's Inclusive Procurement Specialist.



Partnering for Positive Change

In the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, Thorburn started a contract by distributing 4600 face masks and 200 litres of sanitiser to seven schools in the surrounding communities. However, that was just the beginning of their efforts. Thorburn and Thungela have also contributed to other CSI initiatives such as:

Becca Farming: Becca Farming strongly believes in creating job opportunities and aims to become the best peach and vegetable supplier in their community. Thorburn contributed R75,000 to help them purchase a grass-cutting machine, chemicals, and a charcoal oven, which opens up opportunities for the venture to expand into charcoal production.

Izithelo Zezandla: This farming project aims to commercially farm vegetables, pigs, and dry beans, which will significantly contribute towards alleviating poverty for families in the community. To safeguard their crops, Thorburn contributed R75,000 to install a fence around the project's property.

Mabande Comprehensive High School in Ogies, Mpumalanga: Furthermore, Tsebo contributed school furniture worth R15,000 to the school. The 18 chairs and 9 double desks were donated to assist in ensuring that the school atmosphere remains conducive to teaching and learning.



Enterprise Supplier Development

According to Leonard Sidumo Thungela's Inclusive Procurement Specialist, various local suppliers had applied for the security tender, however, none had the necessary skills and experience to take on a contract of this magnitude. The solution was to source a community supplier with the potential to grow and develop under Thorburn's guidance.

As part of the Tsebo Solutions Group, Thorburn could draw on over 50 years' experience in successful ESD initiatives across Africa, where countless SMMEs have benefitted from Tsebo's knowledge, mentorship and group buying power.

Ithuba Protections Services was subcontracted to provide security officers from the Witbank community for manned guarding services at Thungela's Mpumalanga mines. Potential officers are professionally vetted, undergo a learnership, and receive the requisite certification to perform their duties to the highest standards of excellence for which Thorburn is known.

As part of Tsebo's ESD programme, which is designed to support the growth and ensure the sustainability of SMMEs through knowledge and skills transfer, Thorburn ensures that high levels of compliance are achieved and provides mentorship to Ithuba by including the smaller company in its processes and offering solutions to any challenges that may arise.

"We are excited to collaborate with Thorburn," says Grace Moshesh, Ithuba Client Relationship Manager. "We have learnt so much from Thorburn, they've become like a bigger brother to us. They have empowered us through knowledge and experience that we wouldn't have received elsewhere. It has been a very valuable relationship for us."

Says Sidumo, "When it comes to Thorburn it's not just about ticking boxes, they actually make sure that they impact on the development of the smaller company. They go the extra mile to make sure that the SMME has the correct documentation, that they follow the right processes and that they receive funding to develop the business."

Empowering Youths through Learnership Programmes

Part of Thorburn's ESD commitment is to provide youth development opportunities to doorstep communities. Thorburn offers a General Security Practices Learnership programme, NQF Level 3 an accredited training programme which takes place over 12 months, three months of which are theory based and nine months are practical. This qualification enables learners to easily enter the security industry.

"Thorburn's learning approach is unique in that during practicals learners are placed with mentors who help them to fine tune their skillsets. The learners are mentored on soft skills as well as functional training which gives rise to learners performing exceptionally well on the programme so that they are absorbed into permanent employment as security officers across Thungela sites," says Poovendree Govender, Thorburn's National Learning and Development Manager.

The goal is to set learners up for success and to absorb them into permanent employment as security officers across Thungela's sites.

"We just don't develop individuals we prepare them for succession planning roles for future career opportunities in the industry," says Govender. "The goal with our learnerships is to partner with companies like Thungela that want to provide a holistic learning approach to disadvantaged communities. The added advantage for Thungela is that they meet their social corporate responsibility mandate by driving community development projects."

A partnership "made in heaven"

The Thungela contract is living and evolving proof of how Thorburn Security Solutions can provide solutions that benefit their partners sustainability, ESD and ESG goals.

"This is a match made in heaven," says Sidumo. "The relationship we have with Thorburn makes it easy to recommend them. We don't struggle with anything, they are always consistent and always go above and beyond their scope of duty, not matter whether you are looking at CSI, learnerships, information [or security] they will always go the extra mile."

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