

# Sustainable Facilities Management: The Support System In Modern-Day Mines



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**F**acilities Management encompasses two primary sectors: Hard Facility Management Services and Soft Facility Management Services. The former pertains to technical & maintenance-related services, while the latter covers people-centric solutions such as cleaning, reception services, landscaping, and catering tasks to name but a few. Notably, academic literature on Facilities Management predominantly emphasises hard services, along with the continuous enhancement across a facility's lifecycle, often neglecting soft services. This article centres around providing soft services, aiming to alleviate occupational stress in mining and industrial settings, thereby allowing a heightened concentration on operational efficiency, sustainability, and achieving production objectives.

Facilities Management is still a new field; though introduced in the 1980s in Europe, it's still a largely misunderstood profession in Africa. In the 1980s, Facilities Management across Africa was more defined and limited to designing, constructing and managing buildings and structures within industrial and mine sites. With the waves of change, the focus on design, buildings and structures shifted more to engineering departments. Facilities Management is currently delving into soft services such as catering provision, cleaning & hygiene services, reception and

administration duties, waste management, landscaping, pest control, accommodation housekeeping and health & safety sometimes referred to as 'EHS' being environment, health & safety. Facilities Management may more recently be termed Workplace Management Services or Solutions in modern-day workspaces. Workplace Management Solutions in a mining environment can provide comfort for employees, including wellness, whether healthy living or social and/or psychological being. It is encapsulated in providing healthy, balanced meals, working in safe well maintained & well-ventilated/air-conditioned and clean spaces, and providing social amenities within an industrial site, mine site or mine village to create a 'home away from home'.

In the 21st century, Africa embraced the rapid spread of Workplace Management Solutions/Facilities Management as an industry through internationally managed companies, associated with significantly improved efficiency in mine/industrial operations within the continent of Africa; the rapid increase was especially significant in countries like South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda. In Southern Africa, South Africa is usually the headquarters of most internationally recognised institutions. Well-known global brands work closely with leading pan-African Workplace Management Solutions brands such as Tsebo Solutions Group.

Tsebo significantly contributes to streamlining operations and achieving production goals in multiple mines and industries. This is accomplished through their range of Facilities Management soft services, which include catering, cleaning, hygiene, pest control, housekeeping, and health & safety management.

Furthermore, the Group takes proactive steps in coordinating logistics for remote mine sites located far from major Central Business Districts (CBDs), aiming to rapidly reduce inefficiencies in mining operations. Additionally, Tsebo extends its impact by engaging with and upskilling local communities, thereby ensuring a more sustainable future for all stakeholders involved.

Today, Facilities Management plays a critical role in navigating the intricate interplay of people, processes, and physical spaces across various industries and mining operations. This discipline excels in harmonising and interfacing diverse systems, effectively bridging gaps, and pinpointing issues, particularly in environments characterised by a diverse workforce and operational risks. Consequently, streamlining processes and simplifying management practices is essential in Facilities Management, ensuring efficient and safe operations.

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Moreover, its role extends to championing Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles, which are crucial for promoting sustainability in mining and industrial environments. This involves implementing strategies that minimise environmental impact, uphold social responsibility, and adhere to robust governance standards, thereby contributing to sustainable operational practices.

In Zimbabwe, Tsebo is the leading solutions provider for mines and industries, striving to resolve gaps and address complex systems within the unique workspaces. Platinum Group Metals was one of the first major mining companies in the country to introduce Facilities Management in their workspaces. In the last two decades, Platinum Group Metals Mines worked with Tsebo Zimbabwe to tackle complexities in managing soft services and processes within mining villages and sites. The primary focus extended towards soft services being catering, cleaning, pest control, house-keeping, health and safety etc.

With Africa's political economies shifting the balance of trade to the East. Most

Eastern investors conducting mining activities in different parts of the continent struggled to manage facilities within mining sites and mine compounds, including the welfare of the workers. These investors managed to ease workplace service complexities through tendering Facilities Management to brands like Tsebo Zimbabwe to provide professional support services. Eastern Lithium Investors have come to understand the importance of tendering for Facilities Management companies to look after the welfare of the mine workers. Despite limited assistance in infrastructure development for mining companies, significant support has been provided in the areas of asset management and soft services support systems.

Facilities must provide essentials such as clean accommodation & restrooms, drinking water, and dining areas delivering healthy and nourishing meals in mining and industrial work environments. Tsebo Zimbabwe ensures access to safe drinking water by operating purification plants and distributing it in 20-litre bottles for on-site dispensers. They also offer food & beverage services for both management staff, including coffee machines that dispense

various hot drinks and cost-effective premix tea for larger workforces along with healthy balanced nutritional and nourishing meals, highlighting their commitment to both efficiency and employee welfare.

In conclusion, Facilities Management/Workplace Management Solutions play a crucial role in accelerating ESG goals in mining and industry operations, including safeguarding the well-being of people by providing essential services, information, training, and supervision to mitigate health and safety risks. The collaboration between the Quality Control and Health & Safety departments is instrumental in enforcing and implementing procedures that uphold stringent governance standards, such as food safety management systems. Given the heightened risks at mining sites, which can significantly impact operations and production, most companies strive for a zero-tolerance policy towards incidents. Tsebo Zimbabwe, in this regard, is an ISO 9001-certified, ISO 22000 certified organisation committed to maintaining high service quality standards as stipulated by the Standards Association of Zimbabwe.



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