

Unlocking the potential of maritime careers for youth

The consistent nurturing and developing of skills among the youth is critical to future of the country's economy, with South Africa's unemployment rate at a 10-year high and half the population under 25. Chairman of Maersk SA (Pty) Ltd of Maersk Line Frederick Jacobs says that the maritime industry is a robust national asset that offers career potential.



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Industry leaders need to continually promote upskilling within the sector, thus affording South Africa's youth with opportunities to develop, network and build careers. "This is particularly applicable now, during Youth Month, as in doing so, we can help mitigate the youth skills gap that exists in the country and improve our economic growth status," he adds.

Unlocking potential

Jacobs points out that South Africa's geographical position, which is in one of the busiest and most prominent international sea routes, has also led Government to identify the oceans and maritime sector as an industry with massive growth potential. "A study recently conducted by the Department of Environmental Affairs estimated that if this potential is 'unlocked', the maritime industry could contribute R177-billion to GDP and create up to a million jobs by 2033."

He says that Operation Phakisa, a government initiative which aims to fast-track economic growth programmes and promote investment in areas such as mining, the oceans economy, health, and education, has been fundamental in unlocking this potential. "Since its introduction in 2014, the Oceans Economy component of Operation Phakisa is said to have attracted R17 billion in both public and private sector investments, creating a total of 4,500 new jobs in this segment.

"Training facilities such as Lawhill Maritime Centre and the South African Maritime Training Academy (SAMTRA) – which are both continually supported by the Maersk Group – are also essential in providing a pathway for skills development in maritime trainees, helping to meet the ever-growing labour demand in the industry," says Jacobs.

Maritime education

According to Debbie Owen, head at Lawhill Maritime Centre, young South Africans deserve a quality education – one provided by knowledgeable, passionate and committed teachers. "Safmarine, part of the Maersk Group, has for the past 21 years made it possible to provide exactly that as the founding sponsor of the school-based maritime education programme. Hundreds of young people have been given the opportunity to lift themselves and their families out of poverty and pursue

exciting and worthwhile careers in the maritime industry," she says.

Jacobs points to third engineering officer for Maersk Line, Kelly Klaasen, as a shining example of a young South African who successfully underwent training to become an engineer in the maritime industry. "After being awarded a bursary by Safmarine – a member of Maersk Group - following her studies at Lawhill Maritime Centre, Klaasen went on to become a marine engineer. She currently holds the rank of third engineering officer for Maersk Line."

In light of Youth Day, Jacobs acknowledges that the future of South Africa's maritime industry falls within the hands of its youth. "In order for the industry to grow sustainably and contribute towards economic development, it is crucial to ensure that the correct skills sets and experience are being passed down to the next generation," he concludes.

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