

NEW MINE BRINGS JOY



WE'VE DONE IT! Saki Macozoma and Brian Gilbertson at the launch of the Tshipi Borwa project in Northern Cape. PHOTO: MOHAU MOFOKENG

'Launch a dream come true'

Penwell Dlamini

IT was a dream come true and a glimmer of hope for the community of John Taolo Gaetsewe district municipality in Northern Cape when the sod-turning ceremony began marking the development of the Tshipi Borwa Manganese mine.

Tshipi Borwa is the flagship project of Tshipi è Ntle, a South African black-owned manganese mining company.

Together with its Australian partners Jupiter Mines and Pallinghurst, the new mine is expected to bring opportunities to the local community.

Tshipi Borwa will be involved in prospecting for manganese ore that lies 70 metres beneath the sand of the Kalahari Desert.

The open-pit mine will be capable of producing 2.4 million tons of top quality manganese ore, sufficient to ensure a 60-year-life of the mine at this production rate.

Manganese is used for,

among other things, batteries, beverage cans and also to reinforce buildings and in the manufacture of ships and cars.

Cynthia Mogodi, 58, a former mayor of Kgala-gadi, who heads the John Taolo Gaetsewe Developmental Trust, could not hold back her excitement when Tshipi è Ntle chairperson Saki Macozoma started up the tractor and threw the first rocks of manganese to the ground.

"For years we have been struggling with issues of unemployment and poverty and this mine will go a long way to addressing these challenges," Mogodi said.

She said with contributions from the new mine and other donors, a clinic had been built and the mine was expected to create 500 jobs; this figure was expected to increase next year when the mine was in full operation.

"This is one of my biggest dreams coming true today," an elated

Mogodi said.

She said the idea of a new manganese mine was spawned at the beginning of the new millennium in conjunction with then-minister of Minerals and Energy Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka.

"In the past we had been forgotten because we live in the rural areas but now things have changed," she said.

Her trust has established a bursary scheme that has funded 108 students from the area in various academic fields; 58 of them have graduated and are now working in different parts of the country.

Macozoma said while he was aware of the challenges ahead, he wanted to thank all stakeholders who had "helped to see yesterday come true".

"There will be challenges to come, but we are determined that we will make the mine work both for the shareholders and the community," said Macozoma.