

Equipping unemployed youth aboard the SA Agulhas vessel



By Ilse van den Berg

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According to *Trading Economics** the youth unemployment rate in South Africa increased to 52.40% in the first quarter of 2018 from 51.10% in the fourth quarter of 2017. It averaged 51.93% from 2013 until 2018, reaching a shocking all-time high of 55.90% in the second quarter of 2017 and a record low of 48.80% in the fourth quarter of 2014.



Image: Supplied

Luckily the maritime industry is doing its part in lowering these numbers...

A group of 20 deck and engine rating trainees and three cadets - mostly school leavers and unemployed youth - are gaining practical sea-time towards their international seafaring qualifications aboard the newly refurbished dedicated training vessel, the SA Agulhas, owned by the South African Maritime Safety Authority (Samsa).

The vessel sailed out of Port Elizabeth Harbour on Thursday on a research and training voyage that will pilot a new programme aimed at growing the pool of employable South African seafarers.



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The SA Agulhas will be sailing along the coast to Cape Town, on charter to the SA Environmental Observation Network (SAEON), a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF), to retrieve data from a number of scientific buoys deployed in coastal waters to monitor the Agulhas current and its role in climate change.

The ratings trainees are part of a group of 45 candidates in a pilot project facilitated by the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) and funded by the Transport Education Training Authority (Teta).

When asked about the pilot seafarer training, Sobantu Tilayi, chief operating officer for Samsa, said: “As part of our commitment to address the high unemployment rate, this rating training provides a wider scope of maritime training and skills development. It addresses the gap for career opportunities.

“ ***“Young people would be able to find jobs in areas such as maintenance of the vessels, its equipment and gear, in rigging and deploying equipment, and handling and securing cargo.”*** ”

The vessel has previously carried maritime cadets from Cape Town to Antarctica, to London but this new pilot project is a first and takes on board rating trainees who are able to climb the ranks from deck- or engine rating, up to able seafarer level through further onboard training, which will enable them to eventually achieve a Certificate of Proficiency.



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Hands-on aspects of maritime training

By supporting the hands-on aspects of maritime training, the project partners are contributing to skills development as outlined in the South African government's Operation Phakisa plan to fast-track the growth and development of the oceans economy.

Teta's maritime education training and development practitioner, Malcolm Alexander, notes that the project expands Teta's involvement in maritime sector education and training at a practical skill level and is a positive for the maritime sector and oceans economy growth.

Not only that, but it also grows the pool of South African seafarers available for local and global employment - which is a great need.



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The next phase of the project will entail building the capacity of TVET (technical vocational education and training) colleges to offer the training.

The current group of trainees are being managed by the South African Maritime Training Academy (Samtra) and the Sea Safety Training Group. Marine Crew Services is also a partner to the project, having agreed to place trainees in its managed fleets for further training.

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**[South Africa Youth Unemployment Rate](#)*

ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work [here](#) and [here](#). Contact Ilse through her website [here](#).

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