

EC entrepreneurs to learn from Germany

Five self-starters to network with like-minded executives

TED KEENAN
BUSINESS CORRESPONDENT

For three East London entrepreneurs — Lerato Mbomboyi (Limise Promotions), Pumeza Ceshemba (Afriwaste Group), and Max Mabhuti (Flat Foot Engineering) — the business world has got smaller, more intimate but laden with networking and job-creation prospects.

The trio will be spending the next month in Germany, brushing shoulders with like-minded executives from international companies, spreading the word about the success of their ventures, the opportunities for foreign investment in East London and selling their concepts internationally — all of which will translate into jobs in SA.

They are part of a 20-strong group of SA companies invited by the German federal ministry of economic affairs & energy to undergo management training.

Two other Eastern Cape entrepreneurs in the party are Ian Moore (Mend-A-Bath International) and Mnoneleli Geshaa

(Laser Mould and Die), both based in Port Elizabeth.

The three were nominated to participate by the Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC), after a request from the German Agency for Technical Co-operation to help select companies who meet entrepreneur-driven criteria.

The objective of the programme is to ready and enable managers to develop trade and business ties and economic partnerships with German firms.

Max Mabhuti, the founder of Flat Foot, said the company was excited to be part of the programme.

“We are a mechanical engineering firm specialising in the production of boilers, kitchen and industrial laundry equipment as well as temperature sterilising equipment for hospitals.

“We should gain valuable insights during the course of the programme on how to do business with Germany and other countries.

“Hopefully this should lead to trade opportunities between our firm and their market, and with it growth in SA.”

He said his key objective dur-



OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS: Entrepreneurs, from left, Lerato Mbomboyi (Limise Promotions), Ian Moore (Mend-A-Bath International), Pumeza Ceshemba (Afriwaste Group), Max Mabhuti (Flat Foot Engineering) and Mnoneleli Geshaa (Laser Mould and Die) will spend the next month in Germany. SUPPLIED

ing the four weeks was forming a partnership with a boiler manufacturer in Germany for a product Flat Foot had recently invented and patented.

“The product is called the ‘boiler in-line filtration system’, which is designed to help the boiler industry cope with emissions legislation.”

He said the company was also the exclusive supplier of coal to hospitals in the Eastern Cape and the biggest service provider for the provincial department of health for mechano-electrical maintenance.

“Our role is looking after 300 medical facilities in the

province. We count Pragma, Eskom, local and district municipalities, Sun International, Barclays, the department of public works and Coega Development Corporation among our key customers.

“We are a large company so size should also be a selling point to businesses who wish to form partnerships in this sector in the Eastern Cape.”

Lerato Mbomboyi is a founder of Greenwood, the charcoal manufacturers falling under Limise Promotions.

The company sets up community co-ops that clear invasive black wattle and turn it

into high-quality charcoal.

Many villages in the mountainous areas of Eastern Cape are plagued by the invasive wattle.

Turning it into charcoal can create 40 sustainable jobs in each village, with the long-term potential of employing thousands of people in their own businesses.

Mbomboyi recently won the emerging entrepreneur class at the regional Business Women of the Year awards.

Pumeza Ceshemba, a “wastepreneur”, is the founder and owner of Afriwaste Group.

The company buys plastic

We should gain valuable insights on how to do business with Germany and other countries.

waste, employing more than 100 part-time waste “pickers” and turns the waste into plastic pellets to be sold to manufacturers of plastic products.

The success of the programme, launched in 1998, can be measured by the 13,000 executives who have already participated in the training.

The programme offers generic advice, but also focuses on sector-specific aspects.

The range covers renewable energies, health care, waste and water management, energy efficiency and food processing.

Linda Lubengu, ECDC trade promotion adviser, said the manager training programme was aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

“The programme supports companies to define and develop their foreign trade potential and it offers a demand orientated set of business skills,” he said.

He said among the many spin-off opportunities was relationship building with like-minded German businesses as well as access to a network of successful executives from countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and Latin America.