

Tata Motors Enriches Lives Of Youth With Intensive Skills Training Programme

Johannesburg, South Africa, January 2020: Tata Motors, India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, has launched an initiative to train under-privileged youth from Africa under the SkillPro program, in an effort to enhance employability for the African youth. Judas Tlou Kobo and Lesego Faith Banda were the two students selected under the programme and were invited to participate in the company's intensive nine-month SkillPro training, in India.

Attending the training programme, gave Judas and Faith the chance to build their skill set and advance their careers in the automotive industry.

"After completing my studies, I did an apprenticeship programme at Tshwane Municipality for three years," says Judas. "Here, they train students and offer them learner-ships in trade skills. I was at home for a while, and was looking for work; that is how I stumbled upon Tata Motors. It so happened that there was an opening for SkillPro students at the time, and I was the first candidate to be selected."

Faith Banda was one of only two girls from Africa to be selected to join the group of 24 trainees. *"I always had an interest in cars, from a young age," she says. I was applying for a job at the time, and Tata Motors reached out and informed me about the SkillPro programme. I was keen to partake because I wanted to grow my knowledge. I knew that Tata Motors manufactured cars, but I didn't know that they also manufactured trucks and buses."*

The Tata Motors SkillPro programme is a unique, all-expenses paid, skills development initiative, which involves both theory and practical knowledge on commercial vehicles, including different types of engines, gearboxes, axle systems, and repairing of trucks. It includes a 10-day visit to the dealer workshop, where students attend to actual problems of real customers as part of their training.

"I really enjoyed the electrical training, because I went there with some knowledge of mechanical engineering. I knew nothing about electrical engineering, so I acquired a new skill," says Judas.

"We got a chance to train on all parts of the machinery – whether it was assembling an engine or working on a gearbox," says Faith. "Everyone got a chance to work on everything. I really enjoyed the on-the-job practical training."

Over and above the technical knowledge acquired, students are also given language classes to improve their English, as well as yoga and music classes. There is also a weekly visit to one of Tata's CSR projects in and around Jamshedpur, India.

Once back in their home countries, the students join the local Tata distributor network for a further three to six months of training. Based on their performance during this period, they may be offered a job. The student is, however, not contractually bound to Tata once they complete their training, and is free to pursue their own career path.

Faith and Judas are no strangers to adversity, and their advice to other young people eager to acquire marketable skills and enter the job market, is to keep believing and to never give up on one's dreams.

“For us as a company, this programme is a step towards delivering better customer satisfaction,” says Len Brand, CEO of Tata International Africa. “As our students become professionals, who have been trained on Tata’s latest products and technology, so they will become better equipped to handle our local customers’ needs. It is also a wonderful window to different cultures for the students. As a result, they become more receptive to different sets of people and situations, and more global in their outlook. These students also become our biggest brand ambassadors.”