

# The mining industry needs more young leaders, says the Minerals Council's Katlego Letsoalo

 By Nicci Botha

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Katlego Letsoalo is a rising talent in the South African mining industry, and he would like to see more young people playing a role in the future direction of the sector. He is currently the monitoring and evaluation specialist with the Minerals Council South Africa,



Katlego Letsoalo, monitoring and evaluation specialist, Safety and Sustainable Development Department, Minerals Council South Africa. Image: Mning Indaba

## 🔱 *Tell us how you landed up in the mining industry?*

I matriculated at a time when the mining industry was growing and there was a particular focus on Africa. I had the opportunity to either study accounting or engineering but found that the accounting bursaries were mainly aimed at supporting female students. I ended up getting an engineering bursary with a mining company.

## 🔱 *What transformation would you like to see in the mining industry?*

There is often conversation around creating a new mining industry, but there is limited representation of young people in executive decision-making roles despite the African population being 60% youth. The key transformation I would like to see in the industry is more young people being entrusted with the opportunity to influence the strategic direction of mining companies and the sector.

## 🔱 *What are the lessons you've learnt from the pandemic and the lockdown?*

The importance of mental health and creating a healthy work-life balance. One of the disadvantages of technology is how we carry work around with us 24/7.

## 🔱 *What are some of your career highlights?*

A key highlight is forming part of a team that compiled the International Labour Organization (ILO) plan of action on youth employment 2020–2030 that was endorsed in November 2020. This action plan is key given the current youth unemployment figures in Africa. Another highlight was being identified as one of 23 future leaders in extractives and

African development by the University of Cape Town.

▣ ***Where do you want to be in five years?***

I want to be considered as a thought leader within the mining sector.

▣ ***Who inspires you?***

Dr Gordon Smith (Anglo American Platinum) and Billy Mawasha (Kolobe Nala). Dr Smith was instrumental in the turnaround strategy for Anglo American Platinum, while Billy Mawasha is known for breaking age barriers – he is one of the youngest executives in the mining industry.

▣ ***What is top of your bucket list and why?***

I would like to go on a silverback gorilla tour in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as I feel like the experience would immerse me in nature and the overall cultural offering of the DRC.

## ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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