

IHS Maritime Fairplay

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Southern Africa's **fresh faces**

Securing maritime's future



Hazel

Young talent steps out



Snapshots of hotshots among southern Africa's wave of quickly accomplished mariners speak volumes about shipping opportunities in the region, **Savahna Nightingale** reports

> **With shipping estimated to be contributing up to ZAR177Bn (\$16Bn) to South Africa's GDP by 2030, the motive for its focus on the next generation of maritime professionals is apparent.**

Half of the country's population is 25 or below, and much of its rising talent is fast making a mark in maritime. Shipping already accounts for 316,000 jobs in South Africa, even while in other sectors an unacceptably high unemployment rate persists.

One academy combines industry knowledge with a secondary education to demonstrate how South Africa's maritime industry is addressing shipping's needs in a meaningful and sustainable way.

For nearly two decades, South Africa's Lawhill Maritime Centre has helped to address youth unemployment and poverty by providing students

with shipping knowledge and skills while they are still at school.

With little insight of the maritime industry, many of these students look for a shipping-focused education by embarking on maritime study programmes, along with a curriculum that is more standard at that age.

More than 300 South African students have passed through the Lawhill programme, many of them pursuing successful shipping careers, both ashore and at sea. Lawhill, which receives no government money, has won several awards since being founded in 1997.

Here, *IHS Maritime* has compiled several snapshots of South Africa's rising talent. **F**

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> Key points

- South Africa's Lawhill Maritime Centre helps address youth unemployment and poverty
- Training from an early age plays a key role in sustaining talent in the sector

> Tobela Gqabu: master mariner

Tobela Gqabu arrived as a rural schoolboy and became Lawhill's first master mariner.

At just 16, Gqabu applied for a bursary to complete his schooling. He had never seen a ship or heard anything about maritime economics and nautical science, which are offered as part of Lawhill's national senior certificate curriculum. Gqabu lived in the rural Eastern Cape, in Manzana Village near Engcobo, almost 200km from East London's port.

In 2012, at the age of 28, Gqabu became Lawhill's first internationally qualified master mariner by obtaining his Class 1

maritime qualification (master's certificate of competency). Lawhill head Brian Ingpen said, "Throughout his school career at Lawhill, Tobela showed a strong determination and commitment to succeed."

Now working ashore as the South African Maritime Safety Authority's acting principal officer in East London, Gqabu has risen quickly.

With plans of returning to sea to command a product tanker, he told *IHS Maritime*, "I aspired to command a ship for so

many years and now that I have my master's ticket, it's important that I turn that aspiration into reality."

Ingpen said, "We hope that Tobela's achievements and the success of the Lawhill partnership with the South African and international shipping industry will inspire other companies to collaborate with educational bodies to address skills development and unemployment in southern Africa."

"Africa is a young continent, and countries like South Africa need more partnerships between business and education to empower our youth to contribute positively to the future of the country."

"Together, with the support of both local and international, we can create many more positive role models, like Tobela Gqabu, for the African maritime industry," he added.



Tobela Gqabu was Lawhill's first master mariner

> For more on Lawhill and its programmes, visit www.lawhill.org

story of the week

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Fraction of South Africa's population that is 25 or younger

Nomkhitha Mbele is commercial manager of vessels contracted by SMIT Amandla

> South African maritime women to watch

An increasing number of young women have succeeded in South African shipping. Lawhill has helped to address youth unemployment and poverty by attracting students to shipping and stimulating maritime awareness.

Lawhill graduates Kelly Klaasen, Nomkhitha Mbele, Blondie Jobela, and Nicole Gouvias are four young women who have succeeded in the industry, both at sea and ashore.

Klaasen and Gouvias, both in their 20s, are on track to become Lawhill's first female chief engineer

Kelly Klaasen is on track to become Lawhill's first female chief engineer

and shipmaster, respectively. Both Klaasen and Gouvias received tertiary study bursaries from Safmarine and are sailing with AP Møller-Mærsk, the Copenhagen-based conglomerate.

Jobela, now a third engineer with Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, has inspired her two younger brothers to embark on careers at sea. Mbekeli is a navigating cadet with Unicorn, while Thando is studying marine engineering.

Meanwhile, Nomkhitha Mbele has made her mark onshore. Mbele joined SMIT Amandla Marine as a trainee operations co-ordinator in December 2007.

Eighteen months later, she was promoted to contracts manager.

In June 2013 she took on her

current role as commercial manager of vessels contracted by SMIT Amandla, and is responsible for managing third-party clients.

"The determination of these young women and the support they have received from forward-thinking companies have enabled them to embark on meaningful and exciting careers within the maritime industry," Lawhill head Brian Ingpen said.

"Ongoing industry support for the Lawhill programme has also made it possible for many young men and women, especially those from financially stressed homes, to escape the perils of youth unemployment."

That issue "continues to be one of South Africa's most pressing problems ... [and] impacts both the lives of all South Africans and the future growth of the South African economy", he added.

> Vaughan Pillay, Lawhill's second master mariner

Vaughan Pillay became Lawhill's second master mariner when he gained his master's certificate of competency in 2014.

He was one of nine students who moved to Antarctica to study aboard *SA Agulhas*, after completing his S1 and S2 courses at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

He then went to sea with Tanker Pacific, got his second mate's certificate and, after more seetime, he achieved his mate's ticket.

Pillay then spent time ashore in ship agency work before returning to sea and getting his master's certificate.

Today Pillay is a mate with Swire Shipping in Singapore.

> Young marine inspirations

Bradley Felix and Ronaldo Strauss, at just 17, left South Africa for Spain in Q414 as part of their maritime education, culminating in a sailing regatta for superyachts.

A charitable mentoring programme called Marine Inspirations led to this opportunity. The programme is aimed at exposing young South Africans from disadvantaged backgrounds to hands-on seamanship experience and possible career opportunities.

Marine Inspirations is the

brainchild of two South African navy chief petty officers, Phil Wade and Anthony Just. They said the scheme reflected how the quality of the maritime training they had

received in South Africa

contributed to their

career success

and led to their

determination

to share their

good fortune with

the less fortunate of southern Africa.

Marine Inspirations helped Bradley Felix (left) and Ronaldo Strauss