

**Women empowerment the highlight at 10<sup>th</sup> Eskom contractor academy graduation ceremony**

An overwhelming 12 of the 16 graduates at this year's Eskom Contractor Academy graduation ceremony for KwaZulu-Natal were young, black women who are all either Eskom contractors or suppliers, or entrepreneurs who've participated in this Eskom initiative.

The ceremony, hosted at Sica's Guesthouse in Berea on Friday, 09 November 2018, fittingly accentuated women empowerment by also recognizing Ms. Nompilo Vilakazi, who topped the overall 2017/18 class of the Academy by achieving an 89% average. Vilakazi is the owner of Sibani Holdings, a company based in Hillcrest, near eThekweni that does electrical connections, MV/LV line construction, pole changing/installations, electrical maintenance as well as safety campaigns.

The Eskom Contractor Academy is a programme that equips emerging contractors with relevant business management competencies to grow and sustain their businesses. It was established in 2008 as a specific corporate social investment initiative aimed at developing and empowering contractors and suppliers, as part of Eskom's support for government's job creation, skills development and poverty alleviation programmes. The programme is a partnership between Eskom, the University of Limpopo and Edupark – a Non-Profit Company (NPC) of the University.

Now in its tenth year, the programme remains the flagship SMME Development initiative of the Eskom Development Foundation, where Eskom invests in excess of R100 000 in each candidate to ensure the provision of world class facilitators and course material. With a 97.6% success rate, the programme has produced a total of 1311 graduates since its inception, with close to 15% of those coming from KwaZulu-Natal.

Eskom General Manager for the KwaZulu-Natal Operating Unit, Mr Monde Bala, said the programme presents opportunities for tackling burning issues like unemployment in the country. "By taking you through this course, we are able to contribute meaningfully to coming up with solutions to problems facing our country," he said as he reaffirmed Eskom's commitment to skills development, job creation and poverty alleviation.

Chief Executive Officer of the Eskom Development Foundation, Mr. Cecil Ramonotsi congratulated the contractors and suppliers who had completed the eight-month Academy course. "We are happy to have travelled this journey with you, both as a supporter and an equal partner in the development of the country. We are confident that the financial, legislative,



management, leadership, safety, health and technical skills you have acquired through this programme will enable you to grow and sustain your businesses,” said Ramonotsi.

Another remarkable highlight of the 2017/18 programme was the KZN group of graduates achieving the best group accolade nationally. KZN topped the group performances of all groups across the country while also producing the top national student. The group award winners are judged on facilitators’ evaluation and feedback on class interaction, professionalism, punctuality as well as the Steering Committee’s input on group performances.

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#### **About the Eskom Development Foundation NPC**

The Eskom Development Foundation is tasked with implementing Eskom’s CSI strategy and operates as a Non-Profit Company in sectors including enterprise development, education, environment, agriculture, healthcare, social and community development.

*Issued on behalf of Eskom by*

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