

# More blacks in mining industry

## As race and gender gap narrows, focus shifts to keeping skilled labour

**By GERSHWIN WANNEBURG**  
Business Writer

The mining industry has made great strides in including more blacks and women in a once white and male-dominated sector, a survey has found.

But executive recruitment firm Landelahn Business Leaders said the challenge would be to retain skills as global demand for professionals grows.

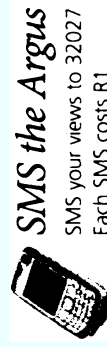
Sandra Burmeister, chief executive of Landelahn, said that global spending on infrastructure is estimated to total \$20 trillion over the next 10 years, which means employers will have a tough time hanging on to skilled labour.

South Africa, which is rich in mining know-how given its history as a mining power, has already become a poaching ground for countries like Australia and Canada, she said.

But for now, the rise of blacks and women in mining boardrooms should drive the broader empowerment of previously excluded groups, Burmeister said.

"Your board sets the tone for policy ... Your board and top management are in essence the keepers of transformation in the business," she said.

Black representation in the mining industry at top management level more than doubled between 2001 and 2006 to 30.6%, beating the all-industry average of 22.2%, according to the 2008 Landelahn Mining Survey.



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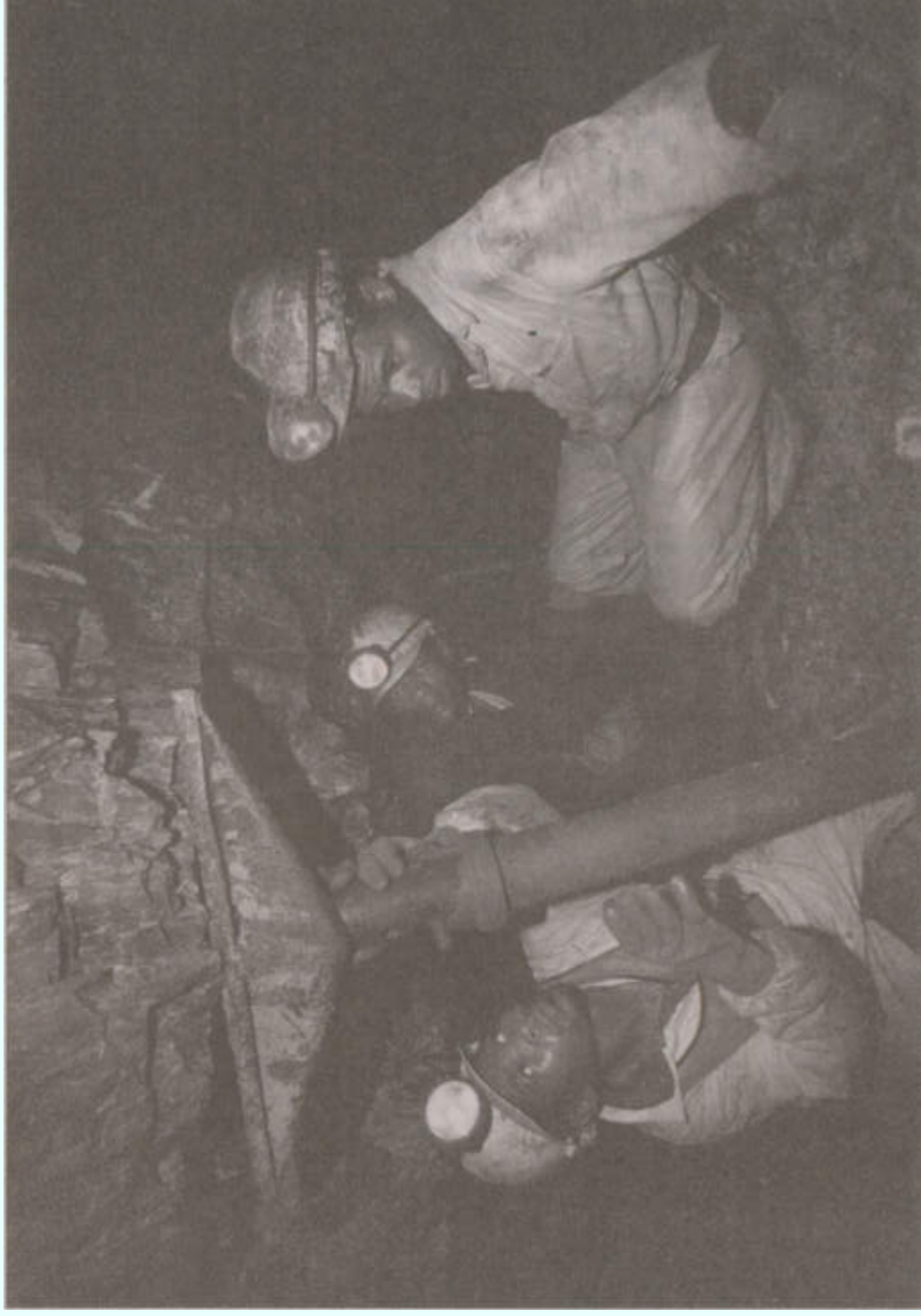
The biggest change occurred at non-executive director level - from 0.5% to 37%, the executive recruitment firm said. Significantly, there had been a greater entry of black men and women into "core" positions at mines.

Past surveys had indicated that as many as 80% of blacks and women were employed in human resources, finance, marketing and other support roles. In 2006, that fraction declined to 65%. Mining companies had also fared well in developing skills. Here it also outdid other sectors.

Burmeister said the industry needed to maintain these levels of participation by ensuring a constant stream of graduates in key fields like engineering into mining.

In 2006, 34% of top management had received training versus the industry average of 20.9%. Crucially, about 99% of unskilled workers in the mining industry received training compared to the 36.7% industry average.

"While accepting that training is coming off a low base, since skills development received scant attention from the mining industry prior to 2005, the industry deserves due recognition for its recent efforts in this area."



**HARD HAT: Miners work underground near Carletonville in Gauteng. The mining sector is now an equal opportunity employer**

Burmeister said.

More than 2 400 engineers were registered in 2007 - a dramatic increase after the rapid decline in 1998, according to figures from the Engineering

Council of South Africa.

Nearly 1 200 of those were black, which was a good omen for the country's future pool of engineers.

But only a small number of

these registered engineers are active in the industry, while the general supply of artisans has also remained low.

The survey canvassed 12 of the 18 main participants in the

gold, coal, diamond, platinum and uranium mining sectors, including big names such as Anglo American, Harmony and De Beers.

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