

WORK BASED EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME



10 Students and 11 Mentors

Two weeks at GIZ

29 June 2015 to 10 July 2015



Implemented by:

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
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Students join GIZ workforce for Work Based Experience Programme



From left: Mveliso Ntaba, Andile Notsholeka, Mapule Malefeke, Relyzer Ribisi, Sinethemba Nonkala, Amukelekani Maluleke, Katlego Tshipu, Caroline Mazeka, Rebiditswe Senyatsi and Siyamcela Willem.

Ten students from the Ekurhuleni West TVET College (Tembisa campus) joined GIZ for a two week Work Based Experience Programme (WBE) from 29 June until the 10 July 2015. Initiated by the GIZ's Skills Development and Employment Programmes, the WBE offered the participants an opportunity to gain first-hand experience in an office environment. The students were each placed in the GIZ office and various GIZ projects under the guidance of one, and in some cases two GIZ mentors, staff members selected to empower them with practical skills in office administration.

The selection process for the programme was similar to a normal job application: students submitted their applications to GIZ and were chosen for the opportunity by a panel which included Human Resources Manager Dorothee Taaibosch. The selected students were also given a stipend to cover their daily travel from Tembisa to the GIZ offices in Hatfield/Pretoria.

Background information on the students

The students are currently enrolled on a National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) Business

Studies Programme. The NCV is a three year qualification that results in a NQF level 4 certificate in a particular vocational field and is equivalent to a grade 12 senior certificate. It includes theoretical and practical training at the college.

The students that GIZ hosted all came from the Business Studies Programme of Office Administration.

Objectives of the WBE

WBE is about learning and allowing students to apply what they have learnt in theory within the context of a real workplace.

The objectives of WBE are to:

- Develop student understanding of employers and employees that work in their vocational area and the career they are training for.
- Improve student competence and work-readiness.
- Improve the alignment between college programmes and employer needs.

Meet the mentors of the students in the Work Based Experience Programme



From left: Giovanna Catalano-Mathelemuse, Gerda Pape, Lebogang Matsbate, Tanja van Gund, Anthony Maepa, Caroline Karugu, Nirasha Dbuloo, Karabo Masekwameng, Naledi Seageng, Mpumi Setsbedi and Shirley Masemola.

WBE is about providing students with short periods of exposure in a workplace and the opportunity to work alongside employees doing jobs related to their field of study. The success of the WBE however, depends on the student receiving support and direction from a workplace mentor. These workplace mentors, selected to take on this capacity-building assignment, are staff members within GIZ with operational and administrative functions. These mentors made sure that the students were able to make the most of their two weeks in the workplace by equipping them with an array of office administration skills. Each mentor designed a skills transfer programme, tailoring tasks to what the students studied at college. Tasks for the students thus revolved around taking minutes, receiving visitors, procurement, bookkeeping procedures, boardroom preparation and other general administrative tasks.

“Mentoring Sinethemba made me think about what my work entails. I’ve been able to reflect on my duties, which are intense especially now that I’m imparting the knowledge to someone else. It’s a great experience for GIZ to transfer skills to the youth,” said Valencia Phahlane, contracts administrator for the Governance Support Programme (GSP).

The mentor’s role however was not to be the sole person looking after the student, but to coordinate

that various colleagues in GIZ administration would take part in the WBE by also involving the students in their respective fields of activity and expertise.

Karabo Masekwameng, Project Administrator from the South African German Energy Programme (SAGEN), said the experience has been wonderful: “I’m glad to impart knowledge to someone who is so willing and eager to learn. I hope the practical experience and skills will help guide Amukelekani in her future pursuits.”

“I’m glad to impart knowledge to someone who is so willing and eager to learn.”

The students came to the office with a WBE task book which not only offers guidance and structure to the student’s workplace experience, but also comes with tasks that they have to complete, all of which will go towards their final mark at college. The tasks ensure that the student is not only an “observer” but actively becomes involved in the activities in the workplace. The task book was developed by the Swiss South African Cooperation Initiative (SSACI) and authorised by DHET. The mentors tailored their individual work schedules to meet the requirements of these task books, providing students with opportunities to complete activities listed in the book while also exposing them to how things are done in an office. The design of a carefully thought out work schedule is thus crucial to the student’s learning and it ensures that the student is able to assist the project in its daily activities and become a real part of the team.

Why did GIZ choose to take part in WBE?

Besides its core business of international cooperation for sustainable development, GIZ takes on the role of a “local employer” in South Africa. As a local employer GIZ has a responsibility to invest in the country’s future workforce which involves providing opportunities for young students. It therefore quickly seized the opportunity to participate in the Work Based Experience Programme, especially because GIZ implements technical cooperation programmes in the field of inter alia skills development and employment promotion. This is just one of many ways of being able to give something back to the community - at the induction meeting, GIZ management encouraged the students to grab the opportunity wholeheartedly and learn as much as possible. Unfortunately, private and public businesses in this country are often reluctant to offer training or workplace possibilities beyond their day-to-day business activities. Many young people graduate from educational institutions but are unable to access the job market because they lack this crucial work experience. By taking the initiative and hosting the students, GIZ therefore wanted to be a role model to other companies by actively demonstrating that WBE can work!

‘The ultimate goal of GIZ is capacity development, which starts both on the individual as well as the organisational level. The WBE Programme is a very valuable investment for both the students and the companies involved. Even though WBE means additional workload for staff, GIZ has an obligation and desire to contribute to and to foster a programme like WBE.’ *Christiane Kalle, GIZ South Africa country director.*

Why did the Skills Development and Employment Programmes initiate WBE at GIZ?

The programme names already say it all: Skills Development and Employment Programmes.

The nature of the work of the Skills Development and Employment Programmes sees them working very closely with the Department of Higher Educa-

tion and Training (DHET) and Science and Technology (DST), the Department of Small Business Development (DSBD) as well as with many different public TVET colleges throughout the country. One of these colleges, the Ekurhuleni West TVET College, approached the Skills for Green Jobs (S4GJ) and Skills Development for Green Economy (SD4GE) Programmes with an idea to send students from the college for a two week Workplace Based Experience (WBE) Programme to companies in Gauteng.

As S4GJ and SD4GE both entail the development of skills, the opportunity to partner with the college and host these students at GIZ was quickly seized. South Africa has one of the highest unemployment rates in the world, yet industry struggles to fill their vacancies with adequately skilled and work-ready applicants who have any practical workplace experience at all. New training pathways are desperately needed to ensure that the skills of future students are properly matched to the requirements of industry. The S4GJ and SD4GE Programme see WBE as one small step in the right direction: it links the theory taught at the colleges with practical experiences and examples of the real workplace, while also enabling the colleges to regularly adjust their learning materials to stay relevant in the ever-changing working world.



The Skills for Green Jobs (S4GJ) team also had a “personal” message it wanted to send out to the community via the student placed within their project, Caroline Mazeka.

**Go Green!
Recycle!
Be energy wise!**

For this the team enlisted the help of Helen Mabitsele, a member of the “green patrol” within GIZ. Helen gave Caroline a briefing on how and what to recycle and the S4GJ team gave her tips on how to save electricity. The S4GJ team is hopeful that Caroline will make those changes in her own life, as well as teach others by spreading this message far and wide in her community in Tembisa.

What's in it for GIZ?

The WBE not only benefitted the students of Ekurhuleni West TVET College, it was also beneficial for GIZ's own staff! Apart from being able to share their own knowledge with the students and teach them new skills, the mentors and all those involved in the WBE gained many valuable experiences themselves. Mentors from across the programmes worked together as a team to ensure that the WBE was a successful and pleasant experience for the students. They conducted feedback sessions after the first week to exchange ideas, discuss any surfacing challenges and to prepare for the second week of the programme together. The general consensus was that they all thoroughly enjoyed the cooperation and interaction between the staff in the different programmes. WBE also gave the staff involved in WBE a chance to reflect not only on their own work, but also on their own competencies and skills. "By assigning a task to someone unfamiliar with the workplace here at GIZ also sparked a new appreciation for my colleagues, our team and the high level of competency we have within our department", says Tanja van Gund (S4GJ). "These things are often simply taken for granted."

In order to explain their work and responsibilities to the students, mentors and staff involved in WBE had to take a conscious look at their everyday activities and reflect on all the things they are actually responsible for. This was seen as a positive experience. Giovanna Catalano-Mathelemuse, Finance Administrator for the Centre for Cooperation with the Private Sector Programme (CCPS) found that the programme "wakes you up to your daily duties, thinking about what you do daily and having to explain it is

more complex than going through the processes in our head." The programme encouraged staff and mentors alike to practice their ability to share their knowledge and explain things in a structured and logical way. Even though this might sound like something very simple, this is not an easy task – it is a very valuable skill to have, and WBE has allowed the staff to practice this skill substantially.

From a mentor's perspective, to sum up the experience:

"WBE was a very rewarding and enriching experience, as well as a wonderful opportunity for reflection and personal growth." Shirley Masemola (GIZ Office).

And the result?

The head of department of the Ekurhuleni West TVET campus, Connie Maleka gave GIZ some very encouraging feedback at the closing session of the WBE: The WBE had after the two weeks already made a visible impact on the students. There has been a noticeable increase in their motivation and self-confidence. The two weeks in the workplace enabled them to see the theory they have learnt implemented in practice, giving them a fresh outlook and a new incentive to successfully complete their studies and do well. The short time spent at GIZ has made the prospect of joining the working world after their studies a lot less daunting - it has in a way taken some of the "anxiety and fear of the unknown" away. They have seen and been part of the working world and are now excited to finish their studies and become productive members of society.



Briefing session with students and mentors.

Student profiles

Mveliso Ntaba



Age: 24
Programme: Procurement Unit
Mentor: Mpumi Setshedi and Shirley Masemola

I had a great experience working with the team. I've seen a lot of things that I learnt at school. I was nervous initially but the team made me feel welcome. I've learnt how to write e-mails, file, make copies, draft contracts on SAP and switch-board. I've enjoyed interacting with different departments, making deliveries and communicating with staff members.

"Mveliso has been very helpful and has met all the expectations we raised on the first day. He is eager to learn, relaxed with the team and gets his work done quickly."

-Shirley Masemola

Katlego Tshipu



Age: 25
Programme: Finance Unit
Mentor: Anthony Maepa and Naledi Seageng

I've learnt the importance of punctuality and working in a team. The GIZ employees and manager have been so helpful and accommodating. They are supportive and patient making us feel appreciated. I've been helping with sorting out the filing and archiving; receiving e-mails and making phone calls. When I finish with this course I will look for a job or study further.

"It was a good experience. The challenge was dealing with some of the tasks in the workbook which were not aligned to what we do at GIZ. Katlego has been cooperative and she does her tasks willingly. She also completes them in good time!"

- Anthony Maepa

Student profiles

Andile Notsholeka



Age: 21 years old
Programme: Violence and Crime Prevention Programme (VCP)
Mentor: Lebogang Matshate

I've learnt bookkeeping, filing, making copies, manning the reception and taking inventory. This has been a good experience from day one. Everyone in the team has been good to me and welcoming. I'm hoping to get a decent job when I finish at college, maybe become a warrant officer.

"It's been good. We tried to divide the tasks to cover admin and finance responsibilities. We were not sure if we were sharing too much, so we included a bit of everything. I've personally learnt to be patient through the process of the experience!"

- Lebogang Matshate

Amukelani Maluleke



Age: 26 years old
Programme: South African German Energy Programme (SAGEN)
Mentor: Karabo Masekwameng

I'm enjoying the experience; Karabo has been teaching me a lot of things like booking flight tickets, telephone etiquette, travel claims, booking venues, entertainment claims, cash book, petty cash and filing inventory.

"I'm glad to impart knowledge to someone who is so willing and eager to learn. I hope the practical experience and skills will help guide Amu in her future pursuits."

- Karabo Masekwameng

Student profiles

Caroline Mazeka



Age: 24 years old
Programme: Skills for Green Jobs (S4GJ)
Mentor: Tanja van Gund

It's going great, everyone is welcoming. The things that we learn at college we get to now do practically. So far I know how to manage incoming and outgoing calls on the phone while sitting at reception. I also learnt about the importance of recycling. I've helped with preparing material for a workshop and sorting text-books, pamphlets and CDs. I checked with Tracker whether all vehicles are covered for road side assistance. We did an invoice check to see if dates and amounts correspond.

"It was a pleasure to have Caroline work as part of our team. Every day she was eager to help and to learn new things – no task was too big or too small for her to tackle, she assisted wherever it was needed. We are happy to have been a part of her experience at the workplace and we wish her all the best for the rest of her studies and the start of her own professional career!" - **S4GJ Team**

Mapule Malefeke



Age: 23 years old
Programme: Centre for Cooperation with the Private Sector (CCPS)
Mentor: Giovanna Catalano-Mathelemuse

It's been an awesome experience learning different duties from inventory, invoice checking and contracts. I've been asking a lot of questions and Giovanna explains and helps me with everything. I've also interviewed some of the staff to get answers. After finishing with this course I would like to register with UNISA for an Human Resource course and also get a job or bursary to pay for my fees.

I personally love working with interns, as part of a development aid company, it's great that we can give back to society in a tangible way."
- **Giovanna Catalano-Mathelemuse**

Student profiles

Sinethemba Nonkala



Age: 23 years old
Programme: Governance Support Programme (GSP)
Mentors: Caroline Karugu, Botlhale Diale and Valencia Phahlane

This is my first work experience and something new. I've volunteered before for a school helping with their data capturing. Here I was taught to file, man the reception desk and switchboard, check invoices and work on Microsoft Office.

"It has been an amazing experience. A bit challenging at the beginning but Sinethemba came out of his shell. I encouraged him to be proactive and be a go-getter. He's easy to work with, independent, willing to learn and contributed a lot. If he continues like this he will have a bright future ahead of him!"
- **Caroline Karugu**

Siyamcela Willem



Age: 22 years old
Programme: Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP)
Mentor: Phuthi Mphahlele

I've had the perfect time learning how to reply to and send emails, fax, make photocopies and be a stand-in at reception. This is a smaller department and the staff is friendly – they make me feel like part of the team. I've learnt a lot from my mentor and how to keep myself busy.

"I found it good. Since I have a background in education, the methodology was not a problem for me. We should engage more students as a way to give back to our communities. Siyamcela has shown interest, always takes initiative and is creative. He is hands-on!" - **Phuthi Mphahlele**

Student profiles

Rebiditswe Senyatsi



Age: 20 years old
Programme: Multisector HIV and AIDS Prevention Programme (MHIVP)
Mentors: Nadia Coltman and Gerda Pape

Being placed at GIZ was a great decision, I've learnt a lot of things within a short space of time. I've learnt about petty cash, invoicing, booking shuttles and how to inspect a workplace from a safety perspective. I wish I was already working, I've never been exposed to a workplace environment. It was for the first time and a huge exposure for me.

"It's been a good experience for the learners to be exposed to the workplace. Learning in black and white is different from when you have to do things practically. Rebiditswe is a fast learner who asks a lot of questions."

- **Nadia Coltman**



Relyzer Ribisi



Age: 23 years old
Programme: Good Financial Governance in Africa (GFG)
Mentor: Nirasha Dhuloo

I wish to work at similar place to GIZ because I've been taught good communication and respecting others. The team has been understanding and we work well together. I've learnt how to do photocopies, send e-mails with attachments, document management by shredding confidential documents and switchboard. I was also introduced to Microsoft Office programmes e.g. MS Word and Excel.

"The first week was a challenge but on the fourth day Relyzer came out of her shell and started interacting with the staff. I've helped her with her computer skills. We set up a desk with a computer for her. She got on well with the other interns. We covered additional tasks besides the ones in her workbook!"

- **Nirasha Dhuloo**

The students in action



We would like to encourage any companies interested in hosting students for the WBE to contact us, we will gladly share our experience of the Work Based Experience Programme with you. Please see our contact details below.

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