

MORUPULE COAL MINE LABORATORY ACCREDITED

Morupule Coal Mine (MCM) is a coal mining company located on the outskirts of Palapye in the Central district of Botswana. The MCM is 100% owned by the Government of Botswana under the Minerals Development Company, Botswana.

The Morupule Coal Mine laboratory has recently been accredited by SADCAS in the scope “Chemical Analysis” of coal in accordance with the international standard ISO/IEC 17025:2017. The MCM laboratory has been assigned a unique accreditation number TEST-5 0050. The laboratory which is set within the Morupule Coal Mine has been accredited for sample preparation and in seven (7) test methods for coal as follows: Particle Size Distribution; Determination of Phosphorous; Determination of Total Sulphur; Determination of Calorific Value; Moisture in analysis sample; ISO Ash; and Determination of Volatile Matter. The accreditation certificate which was issued on 19 June 2020 is valid for 5 years until 18 June 2025.



Morupule Mine Plant

The certificate was handed over during a ceremony held on 14 July 2020 at the MCM Recreational Club, Palapye, Botswana. The ceremony was attended by MCM senior managers and laboratory staff and started off with a prayer, followed by a SHE (Safety Health and Environment) moment during which safety issues were highlighted. An overview of the Mine’s mission, vision and values were presented by Mr D Sentsho. Values of MCM are embedded in a statement as “We are **passionate** about **Safety** as we **work together** in a **caring** environment **growing** our business into a centre of **excellence**.”

The Production Manager Mr Elvidge Radithongwe gave welcome remarks and acknowledged the growth that the MCM has experienced and shared how priorities had shifted over the years from quantity which was the then celebrated measure in the mining industry, to quantity underpinned by quality as assured through accreditation.

Mr Radithongwe informed about the upcoming project Motheo where MCM intends to export Coal to international markets where accreditation is poised to play the important role of assuring MCM customers of the quality of the product. He further stated that quality through accreditation assures safety, assures revenue and eliminates risks. He congratulated the Laboratory for the hard work that resulted in this major achievement and pledged Management continued support to the Laboratory so as to ensure continued compliance with standards and accreditation requirements. He shared the plans to extend the Laboratory’s scope of accreditation.

Ms Refhilwe Tshipa, a Process Engineer, Head of Laboratory and the Nominated Representative shared a moving story on “The Journey to Accreditation”. She narrated the process from the time when she made contact with SADCAS to enquire on accreditation to the time when the SADCAS assessment team presented a recommendation report at the end of the assessment that was conducted on 25-26 March 2020. She defined it as a story of success, excellence and passion that was not without challenges, hard work, sweat and tears. She cited the challenges encountered and thanked her team for their passion and hunger to achieve. The objective to accredit the laboratory was achieved. She stated that the team’s work ethics

had to change, a change that has seen the laboratory output increasing from testing 15 to 70 samples a day then from 30 to 300 samples after introducing a 24-hour shift. The Head of Laboratory thanked MCM Top Management and the IT Department for the support. She stated that the laboratory will be extending the scope of accreditation to include water and oil testing.

Next to give a speech was Mrs Maureen Mutasa, the SADCAS Chief Executive Officer who was accompanied to the ceremony by Mrs Pinkie Malebe, the SADCAS Technical Manager Designate. In her address Mrs Mutasa stated that Morupule Coal Mine is the 50th testing laboratory and the 22nd facility in Botswana to be accredited by the SADC Accreditation Service (SADCAS). She informed the gathering that SADCAS is the first multi economy accreditation body in the world is signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Mutual Recognition Arrangement (ILAC MRA) for the testing, veterinary, calibration and verification laboratories accreditation schemes as well as the International Accreditation Forum's Multilateral Recognition Arrangement for certification bodies accreditation schemes. Accreditation enhances the confidence and is the basis of trust amongst trading partners and that with this achievement, the MCM laboratory accreditation certificate is recognized in 103 countries worldwide thus removing the need for repetitive conformity assessment checks. "Effectively this means that through internationally recognized accreditation SADC Member States serviced by SADCAS have better access to 103 foreign markets – A truly global reach!"

She stated that the Morupule Coal Mine Laboratory accreditation process took a record 10 months from the application to granting of accreditation attributed to the highly responsive Nominated Representative, Ms Refhilwe Tshipa and her team. Touching on the importance of accreditation specifically to MCM Laboratory, Mrs Mutasa gave statistics of mining explorations of minerals in the SADC region specifically citing that Botswana is endowed with minerals such as Diamonds, Copper, nickel and large coal deposits making Botswana the 2nd largest producer of coal after South Africa. She further said that the mineral processing sector is identified in the SADC Industrial Policy as one of the priority sectors for development. Testing Laboratories play a critical role in the mining and mineral processing sector in that they conduct mineral assays in support of exploration, research, grade control in the processing plant. Laboratories are also involved in environmental monitoring of mining activities. Mining companies make decisions about exploration and grading based on the data generated by these analytical laboratories. "The MCM Laboratory is responsible for giving support to production and commercial Departments by availing information of coal qualities and ensuring that the teams responsible for the production and selling of coal have valid and accurate information to work with", she said. Mrs Mutasa encouraged MCM Laboratory to maintain their accreditation throughout the validity period of the accreditation certificate during which SADCAS would undertake periodic assessments to ensure continued compliance. Mrs Mutasa handed the accreditation certificate to the Production Manager Mr Radithongwa and congratulated MCM laboratory for the great milestone.



From Left to Right: Mrs Mutasa, SADCAS CEO; Mr Radithongwa, MCM Production Manager; Ms Tshipa, Head of Laboratory; and Mrs Pinkie Malebe SADCAS Technical Manager designate



MCM staff proudly displaying the accreditation certificate

The vote of thanks was given by the Worker's Union Representative who congratulated the workers (Laboratory Staff) and indicated that with accreditation will assure the sustainability of their jobs. The ceremony was closed with a prayer and the SADCAS delegation was invited to lunch with MCM staff.

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