

Namdeb Southern Coastal Mines ramp up

Diamond pioneer gets kitted out for the future as employee housing is spruced up.

AUGETTO GRAIG

While operations at the Daberas diamond mine in Mining Licence Area 42 (ML42) wind down on Friday, 21 July 2023, Namdeb will not re-trench but redeploys its skilled workforce to its Southern Coastal Mines (SCM). Since 1999 Daberas, one of Namdeb's Orange River Mines (ORM) 50 km from the Orange River mouth, has presented its ancient diamond-bearing gravel terraces for open-cast mining. Mining started in 2000, with the projected end of the life of the mine in 2013.

ALWAYS GETTING BETTER

Continued improvement initiatives steadily reduced mining costs per tonne, enabling the operation to mine low-grade ore economically. According to ORM operations manager Charlton Kurz, these initiatives contributed an additional 10 years to the original life of the mine. Over the years, Daberas has contributed over N\$2.5 billion in profits to Namdeb's coffers, according to him.

The Daberas deposit is positioned in an area of high environmental sensitivity, largely because of the occurrence of many plant species restricted to the lower Orange River valley.

A unique assemblage of plant species is associated with the gravel terraces east of the road, while grass-covered sand plains prevail in the western section of the deposit. Dolomite outcrops in the project area are of particular conservation value because of the range of restricted plant species and prehistoric rock edgings. There are also some prehistoric graves in the project area. Some of the most valuable sites have been fenced off and remain out of bounds. Geological sites worth preserving have been identified at Daberas.

REHABILITATION WORK

The majority of the manmade landscape of fine residue disposal facilities, overburden dumps, tailings dumps, exposed bedrock and other areas disturbed by mining and associated infrastructure at Daberas are to remain.

Only areas visible from the public road will be reshaped to some extent. Some landscaping will take place where infrastructure is to be removed, while the environmental clearance for mining at Daberas stipulates that the belt of greenery along natural water routes is to be reconstructed. Access roads will be scarified, while the haul road will also be breached at two places to re-establish natural water flow. The mine closure is part of Namdeb's Long Term Plan (LTP), which was approved last year.

WORKERS REDEPLOYED

The Daberas closure is aligned with the production ramp-up in the other Namdeb mining operations, as the organisation elaborated last week. The 80 people currently employed at the Daberas mine are being re-

Hello, the long term



Namdeb employees from the Daberas diamond mine on the banks of the Orange River will be redeployed to the company's Southern Coastal Mines when Daberas closes on Friday. PHOTO'S NAMDEB



The ancient diamond-bearing gravel terraces along the Orange River have delivered N\$2.5 billion in profits to Namdeb over the extended life of the Daberas mine.

deployed. The company embarked on a re-deployment exercise as per its redeployment guidelines to ensure that no employee would be left without a job, considering vacancies and similar job categories. The majority of the Daberas employees will be absorbed into Namdeb's Southern Coastal Mines (SCM) operations.

Many of the contractor employees will also be redeployed to Namdeb's SCM operations, which are currently ramping up in activities, while contractors are further encouraged to redeploy employees to their operations on other sites, the company said. The plant will be preserved in its current state for future operational requirements, and spares applicable to fellow ORM mine Sendelingsdrif will be reallocated to that plant for use.

The Earth Moving Vehicles (EMVs) with many hours of use will be decommissioned

due to structural challenges, and the low-hour machines will be repurposed for other business requirements within ORM and Namdeb as a whole. The remaining low-grade ore can be mined later at a lower operation cost if a method currently being tested at Sendelingsdrif is successful, the organisation elaborated.

ACCOMMODATION NEEDS

The process of redeployment requires that Namdeb provide accommodation to employees in accordance with the new long-term housing strategy. According to Namdeb spokeswoman Shangelao Ndadi: "The Namdeb life of mine extension and ramp-up plan necessitates new operational requirements and an increase in the labour force needed for Namdeb operations to run efficiently. Accommodation needs and the availability thereof remain a critical need within the town of Oranjemund, and the current housing does not address the demand for accommodation."

As part of the process of finding a solution to provide affected employees with accommodation in Oranjemund, Namdeb identified the Cluster units to be refurbished and house the employees leaving the Daberas Hostel.

The Clusters are Namdeb-owned accommodation units that have been earmarked to accommodate employees. The units are leased out to the public, community members, and contractors. In an effort to ensure the availability of the units, Namdeb commenced engagements with the 43 affected tenants and issued notice of termination of contracts on 1 February this year, ahead of the redeployment and in time for refurbishment work to commence.

The standing lease agreements make provision for a 30-day notice period. The eviction has been delayed, which impacts the process of redeployment for the end of July, according to Namdeb.

Specifically, Cluster blocks A and B consist of 10 single units and 10 double units, while Cluster block C and D are now intended to have the same number of rooms as A for both blocks. Each block shall yield four two-bedroom units and six single flats when completed, explained Project Manager Patrick Hamman.

LOCAL KNOW-HOW

The blocks have also been renamed to historical diamond mining area sites. Cluster A becomes Obib Courts, Cluster B will be known as Aries Drift Courts, Cluster C is renamed Mamora Courts and Cluster D will be called Grillenthal Courts, said Hamman.

Various local contractors were deployed to facilitate the refurbishment of the earmarked units.

Mostly Oranjemund-based contractors were used for the upgrades of Clusters A and B, while the main work on Cluster C was done by an outside contractor after a fair procurement process. All electrical work is done by Namdeb-registered service providers, and specialised plumbing is done by Namdeb-registered plumbing service providers. All spending is Namibian-based, he said.

Namdeb's LTP was made possible when the government agreed to a royalty remission until 2025 late last year. Namdeb belongs to Namdeb Holdings, which is an equal partnership between the Namibian government and international diamond giant De Beers.



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