New kid on the block, HB Botswana to disrupt diamond industry

☛ Will pay attractive salaries

☛ Plans to open Academy to train local diamond polishers soon

Ernest Moloi
BG Reporter

The trending story this week is the setting up of local operations of the Belgium-based diamond company HB Antwerp in Gaborone, Botswana at the Diamond Technology Park.

Known only as HB Botswana, the company will go full swing this December with the initial 15 new recruits and eventually grow to become hi-tech facility of 485 people by 2025.

This is the company's ambition as articulated by HB Antwerp's Public Affairs Director, Margaux Donckier in an interview with **Botswana Guardian** this week.

The company is currently on a recruiting campaign promising well-paying jobs for chain coordinators, block chain specialists, data scientists, and for people in marketing, legal, human resources (HR), communication, logistics, security, as well as rough planners, gemmologists, maintenance operators, robot operators, laser specialists and ICT specialists to mention but a few.

The early recruits are beneficiaries of a gruelling training programme that comprised five months with WomHub, a pan African boutique incubator and co-working space supporting female-led innovation in STEM, and finally three months at the Antwerp-based HB Antwerp Innovation Lab. Donckier emphasises the thinking behind this model, saying integral to HB Antwerp's mission is empowering local communities to benefit from the diamond industry and have a more significant stake in its future. In Botswana, this has meant investing in the country, ensuring a fairer price for its diamonds, and creating new opportunities for its people.

The HB Antwerp Innovation Lab opened in Botswana in 2021 to train engineering and technology graduate students, particularly women, for careers in its facility there. In fact, HB Antwerp will "soon open an academy in Botswana to train local diamond polishers", says Donckier.

This is just how good it gets. In fact, one of HB Antwerp's co-founders and Managing Partner, Rafael Papismedov is in town with his advance party to set up the specialised equipment that has so far arrived including to sell the company's plan and vision to Batswana through various media – both electronic and print – as well as speaking at the Global Expo.

According to Donckier, HB Antwerp has created an infrastructure to transform minerals based on fairness and honesty. She says the company is redefining how natural diamonds are sourced, crafted and sold. Working from a conviction that minerals are natural resources that belong first to the country of origin, Donckier says they have created a mineral infrastructure based on fairness and that for the first time in the 'opaque' mining industry, miners and governments "get an insight into the complete post-production retail value of their resources and reap the financial benefits". To achieve this simplified supply chain, HB Antwerp has entered into a Game Changing Partnership with the government of Botswana and yet another trendsetter, Lucara Diamond Corporation - a Canadian diamond mining company that owns and operates the Karowe mine in Botswana, one of the world's foremost producers of high-quality diamonds larger than 10 .8 carats.

Donckier says that this partnership creates the opportunity to structurally embed a more transparent and sustainable way of working in the diamond value chain by creating better alignment among all participants and establishing a healthier, more efficient global diamond supply chain.

"For the first time, there is no conflict of interest between the producer and the mine. Instead, the various supply chain partners are fully aligned, sharing profits, complete data, and other information throughout the diamond's journey. "Every participant in the value chain benefits. Additionally, the fact that there are no secrets in the value chain equates to true transparency for the consumer," Donckier assures.

Further, HB Antwerp holds an exclusive partnership agreement with Lucara, which grants HB Antwerp access to all of the +10 .8 carat rough diamonds recovered from the Karowe mine in Botswana. As a result, HB Antwerp's partnership with Lucara has led to HB's acquiring several significant stones, including the 1,758-carat Sewelo and the 549-carat Sethunya in 2020, and an 1,175-carat diamond – the world's third largest diamond to ever be found – in 2021. On the technology side, HB Antwerp, which was founded in 2020 with the goal of using technology to bring visibility to the traditionally opaque diamond industry, has partnered with Microsoft

Ready to work: Some of HB BOtswana's first recruits that have gone through the company's 8-month long training programme

Corporation. "Our aim is to establish a new standard for diamonds by providing an end-to-end picture of each stone's trajectory, from mine to consumer, while ensuring more significant equity for diamonds' countries of origin," Donckier explains.

She says these efforts centre on using block chain technology and the Microsoft Cloud to create a digital ledger of each diamond's story — starting with where the stone came from, down to the precise excavation location, and following it as it is sorted, analysed, transformed from rough stone to sparkling diamond and finally, delivered to the consumer. "Those 'moments of truth,' as we call them, will enable diamond-mining countries to see how much value their stones generate and conscious-minded buyers to know where their diamonds come from. We create an enormous amount of data — over 3,000 verification points for each stone," she says. Realising the need for a partner capable of scaling the solution to any country, HB Antwerp turned to Microsoft. The companies worked together to develop a block-chain ledger built on Microsoft Azure and an enterprise resource planning system using Microsoft Dynamics 365. Donckier explains that under this system, data from each diamond is stored in a proprietary IoT (Internet of Things) device, essentially a mini vault that cannot be opened without documenting that action in the ledger. The data is then uploaded to Power BI, Microsoft's data visualisation platform, to provide governments and mining companies with a real-time view of their diamonds' value appreciation. Ultimately, the goal is to make the truth of each diamond available to consumers through a link to the ledger. Donckier says they are constantly working on the development of new technology and that most of their tech is used exclusively in-house, ensuring that their state-of-the-art ecosystem utilises the most advanced, cutting-edge technologies to track, analyse, saw, cut, laser, and polish our diamonds. And thankfully, HB Botswana will also use the same ecosystem including its specialized equipment. Among HB Antwerp's proprietary technologies some of which have been shipped to Botswana, are:

SIGNUM DROID

The Signum Droid is the world's only fully-automated diamond polishing robot. The technological breakthroughs integrated into the Signum Droid enable HB Antwerp to process a diamond 10 to 30 times faster than a traditional Diamond polisher alone. The Signum Droid, paired with expert artisans, allows the company to compete with the speed and cost of other factories that require hundreds of traditional polishers.

HYPERLOUPE

Our HyperLoupe system further refines the planning process, raising it to a new level of accuracy, precision, and efficiency, enabling us to unlock additional value. This proprietary technology enables HB artisans to explore and analyse the inside of the world's largest diamonds. Armed with this innovative technology, even the largest, most complicated diamonds can be cut, taking a highly individualised approach according to a client's wishes.

HB CAPSULE

The HB Capsule is an Internet of Things (IoT) device that travels with the diamond, using blockchain technology and data analytics to track every stage of a natural diamond's journey, from its birth to the atelier until it's sold to an end consumer. The HB capsule is a scalable solution for tracking each diamond to ensure governments get compensated fairly based on the polished price of a stone.

Donckier confirms that setting up in Botswana would not have been possible without the facilitation of the country's premiere investment agency – Botswanan Investment and Trade Centre. "We met BITC when we wanted to start operating in the country. We found a great platform unique for Africa, and we enjoy learning and integrating into the Botswana ecosystem with the help of BITC," she says.

As for their participation at this year's Global Expo, which they also co-sponsored, Donckier says they did it because the theme of the expo 'Re-imagining our economy for a better tomorrow through digitalisation and the application of robust export-led strategies', "is fully in line with HB's vision and strategy".

IN THE HIGH COURT OF THE REPUBLIC BOTSWANA
HELD AT GABORONE (Before Motswagole J.)

CASE NO.: CVHGB -002780-21

In the matter between:
WESTERN INDUSTRIAL ESTATE (PTY) LTD — **PLAINTIFF**
and
PFUMI FOODS (PTY) LTD — **1ST DEFENDANT**
GALETHAME PHUTHEGANG — **2ND DEFENDANT**

NOTICE OF SALE IN EXECUTION

BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE THAT pursuant to a Writ of Execution issued by this Honourable Court in the above matter, the following movable property of the above-mentioned Defendant will be sold by means of public auction to the highest bidder by Deputy Sheriff **DITIRO PRIGER GABOBAKWE** as follows:

DATE OF SALE: 25th November 2022
TIME OF SALE: 1030 hours
PLACE OF SALE: Plot 2001 (G-West Industrial)

PROPERTY TO BE SOLD: 1 x Fully automatic production line for frozen French fries fully installed tested and commissioned, 1 x 6m x 6m cold room and 3m x 6m blast freezer, 1 x SAAB GS Sedan grey of Letters and Registration No. B 949 BAT, 1 X SAAB 93 Convertible white of Letters and Registration No. B129 BEC, 1 x Double cab white Land cruiser of Letters and Registration No. B 612 BJP.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: Cash or bank guaranteed cheque otherwise details and conditions of sale may be inspected at Deputy Sheriff's offices situated at Plot No. 6193, Unit 4 Broadhurst Industrial, Gaborone, contact numbers 72409161 / 73095125.

DATED AT GABORONE ON THIS 28TH DAY OF OCTOBER 2022.
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