

## EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING



» Siphithemba Bhalintuli, Electrical Apprentice at Duferco.

**H**e failed his medical while trying to secure a Production Technology NQF Level 2 Learnership and thought his dreams of launching a career were diminished – little did he know that fate had better plans for him!

"I failed the eye test and was told that I would never become an electrician, but I did not let this derail my ambitions," explains Siphithemba Bhalintuli.

Bhalintuli is now a merSETA-funded Electrical Apprentice at Duferco in Saldanha Bay in the Western Cape. He is responsible for the repair and maintenance of motor conveyor belts, including everything to do with electricity.

Upon completion of his matric, Bhalintuli acquired a Production



» Bhalintuli explaining how some electrical equipment in the newly built electrical workshop at Duferco work.

Process Certificate at Saldanha Steel in 2013 and went on to complete his N3 in 2017.

Originally from the Eastern Cape, Bhalintuli struggled to find a job for nine years.

"This was a stressful period for me, especially because I am my family's only hope. I could not even afford to buy myself a proper phone and in many instances, I would miss important employment-related calls because I was using a phone that did not function properly. I thought I just had bad luck, until this merSETA apprenticeship opportunity came along," he explained.

Through trials and tribulations, Bhalintuli kept his eyes on the ball, with the sole purpose of becoming successful and helping his family out of poverty.

"Everyone must find the motivation in life to succeed. For me, it was building a better life for my family. I initially wanted to do a millwright course but because my family could not afford to pay for it, I opted instead to study for electrical, and

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this is where I found my passion," he explained.

Working at Duferco, Bhalintuli says he learnt that success in this line of work requires patience, determination and team work. "I find it easy to perform my duties and grow professionally at Duferco, because I get the opportunity to unleash my full potential. There is mutual respect amongst everyone, regardless of the position one holds, which makes it easy for me to apply my mind and learn from others," says Bhalintuli.

He explained that the merSETA-funded apprenticeship training and experience he acquired at Duferco had a huge impact in his life as he is now not only employed, but is able to do freelance work for his community. He fixes electrical power in people's houses and is also able to do some construction work.

"I have become a versatile worker since I started working at Duferco. I need to bring in as much income as possible to support my family, so no work is ever insignificant or hard for me," he added.

Bhalintuli's plans for the future is to complete his apprenticeship training and qualify as an electrical artisan. He also wants to build a house for his mother.

"My mother is about to turn 70 and she does not own a proper house. We are seen as poor in the community, always asking for help. She has always been my biggest supporter and motivation. Building a house for her would be my way of thanking her for all the sacrifices she has made in life so I could have a better life," he concluded.



» Bhalintuli (right) with his colleague, Ashton Mason (left) and supervisor, Graham Ally (centre).