

Multimillion-rand lab installed in the DRC

ILAN SOLOMONS | WRITER

Johannesburg-based mining laboratory services provider Tramecon in October completed the installation of a multimillion-rand container laboratory at mid-tier diversified miner Metorex's Kinsenda underground copper mine, located in the Katanga province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tramecon MD Dr Hannelie de Beer tells *Mining Weekly*.

The laboratory comprises four containers designed by Tramecon, which also oversaw the container conversions and the acquisition of laboratory testing equipment, spares and consumables. The project also requires Tramecon to train the mine's staff on how to use the laboratory.

"Commissioning of the facility, as well as the training of staff, will be carried out early next year," states De Beer.

The Kinsenda project contains declared mineral resources of 20.7-million tonnes at a

grade of 5.6% copper.

De Beer notes that the coordination of logistics to ensure that everything required by the client was delivered and on site as the greatest challenge for Tramecon on this project.

She explains that, owing to the remote location of the mine, all the major supplies had to be trucked directly to the DRC from South Africa.

De Beer further highlights that Tramecon has committed itself to ensuring that the facility runs in accordance with ISO 17025 – which standardises the general competence required of testing and calibration laboratories – from the outset.

"We will, therefore, ensure that proficiency testing (PT) schemes are undertaken at the laboratory through our subsidiary Qotho Laboratory Services," she says.

Qotho facilitates PT schemes among mining laboratories and is running a copper concentrate scheme, which is well supported by Zambia-

based clients, as well as those in the DRC, Botswana, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

De Beer explains that the primary aim of the copper PT scheme is to enable mining production and certification laboratories to monitor their performance against other industrial laboratories, thereby ensuring the continuous improvement of the quality of their analytical data.

The copper PT scheme involves providing samples of copper concentrate, which are milled, crushed and homogenised, to participating laboratories, which, in turn, will test and analyse these metal concentrate samples. The participating laboratories will also report their results and methods used to Qotho.

"Qotho focuses specifically on education and technical support for quality systems, staff training, as well as overall laboratory improvements. While some of our clients are progressive and willing to invest in the laboratory and their staff, others are more reluctant."

However, De Beer adds that the general trend is for mining companies to empower their staff members, thereby also improving the quality of tests undertaken on site.

She concludes that Tramecon is assisting clients in Zambia, the DRC and Eritrea in quality-related auditing and with the continuous improvement of their laboratory services. ■

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