

## **Retailer tackles youth unemployment head-on**

More than two thirds (68%) of the Shoprite Group's workforce is under the age of 34, and this together with the Group's focus on skills development and training illustrates its commitment to addressing the scourge of youth unemployment in South Africa.

A staggering 55% of young people in South Africa are unemployed. The general unemployment rate increased by 1.4 percentage points to 29% in the second quarter of 2019.

Retail was among the few sectors registering employment growth in the first half of 2019. In the first quarter the number of jobs in the sector increased by 0.8% compared to the same period in 2018. In the second quarter the wholesale and retail sector created a total of 84 000 jobs.

In the 2018/2019 financial year, the Shoprite Group created 3 175 jobs of which 90% were filled by people under the age of 34. The largest private sector employer in South Africa, the retailer has more than 147 00 people on its payroll.

Not only is job creation high on the Group's priority list, it is committed to ensuring job security and career development for its employees. Its philosophy of promoting from within boosts morale and helps keep productivity high, as employees who are promoted in this way are more likely to understand the organisation, its history and core values.

This philosophy is underpinned by a strong focus on skills development, as training empowers employees, develops their skills, and keeps the workforce abreast of changing industry trends. "This is especially important as technology catalyses quicker change and disruption in the already-disrupted retail industry," says Zakhele Sibiyi, Chief Human Resources Officer.

Executive director Ram Harisunker celebrated 50 years with the Shoprite Group in a distinguished career which he started as a receiving clerk. "If you want a standard job, don't come here. But if you want a career, then join Shoprite," he says.

The Group's substantial training and development programmes include compliance, job-based, artisanal, and management and leadership development programmes. They include accredited training programmes for deaf learners, assisting youth to gain work experience, training unemployed people in retail skills, an assistant chef skills programme, retail readiness programme, bakery training, a trainee accountant programme and providing bursaries in various fields in the retail sector.

Furthermore the Group is committed to employment equity and is working hard to improve its equity and transformation objectives.

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## PHOTO CAPTION

More than two thirds (68%) of the Shoprite Group's workforce is under the age of 34. From left to right: Lydia Ramohadi, Norman Rekhotso, Florah Lithole, Phillistus Maubane, Baniele Tobela and Mabasa Nyiko at the Group's Checkers Hyper Mall of Africa supermarket.