

## 41 ICT graduates from DCDT and Cisco partner programme in rural EC

The Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), in collaboration with a host of partners including Cisco, Software AG, the International Labour Organisation, The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), MICT SETA, and the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa, celebrated the graduation of 41 students from the Lindamahle Innovation Centre.



Lindamahle Innovation Centre graduates.

The students were part of a successful pilot programme aimed at imparting essential information and computing technology (ICT) skills to individuals in unconnected rural areas. The graduation ceremony, held at the centre, was attended by representatives from all the partners, along with other dignitaries from various government departments and the private sector.

Mlindi Mashologu, Deputy Director General Information Society and Capacity Development at DCDT, expressed his excitement at the tangible results of the collaboration between Cisco and Lindamahle.



SA is a cyberattack hotspot and SMEs are most at risk

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"These young people play a crucial role in our national digital transformation agenda. It's through initiatives such as the Cisco Networking Academy that they receive effective training and upskilling to take them and their communities forward," he said.

"We congratulate them and wish them well on the next stage of their career journeys."

The pilot programme, which spanned a 12-month period in the OR Tambo District, Eastern Cape, saw students receiving industry-recognised certifications in networking, programming and cybersecurity.

Remarkably, of the 41 graduating students, 32 are unemployed young women and mothers from the surrounding community.

## **100% pass rate**

These determined individuals excelled in the Networking Academy courses, achieving a 100% pass rate and 96% cum laude achievement rate, despite the challenging socio-economic conditions faced by rural youth.

"These young women and our team at Lindamahle worked extremely hard to reach this important milestone for our community," said Zine Nkukwana, CEO of Lindamahle.

"Working with Cisco Networking Academy and in alignment with the government's efforts to connect communities to the internet, we created a program to equip our students with the skills they need to build digital and economic connections here in the Eastern Cape."

Lindamahle's program was designed to enable students to follow two specific career pathways that will foster economic empowerment and digital connectivity in their rural communities: Network Maintenance Officer (NMO) and Community Capacitation Officer (CCO).

## **Community capacity**

Network Maintenance Officers are responsible for keeping the internet connection, be it fibre or wireless, optimised throughout the village.

Meanwhile, community capacitation officers introduce and equip communities with emerging technologies and help community members use their connectivity safely and effectively.

*“ NetAcad enabled us to realise our dream of contributing to future job opportunities by providing essential training in this digital transformation era - ICT graduate ”*

"It's notable that Lindamahle's graduating class is primarily comprised of women. Female representation in the technology skills sector is paramount," Smaengele Nkosi, Cisco's local GM commented.

"Aligning with the national government through the Cisco Country Digital Acceleration, Networking Academy and Talent Bridge programs, we are dedicated to fostering education, innovation, and female representation in the ICT sector, laying the groundwork for a digitally inclusive future."

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