

MAŠUPATS
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17 February-21 February
REPORT TO
VALTERRA PLATINUM

Mašupatsela Training Report (Mokopane, February 2025)

The Mašupatsela training programme, conducted in Mokopane between 17 and 21 February 2025, represents a significant intervention in equipping community youth facilitators with the knowledge, skills, and values to deliver prevention education to learners in local schools. Designed by HETTAS in partnership with Valterra Platinum (formerly Anglo American Platinum), the programme forms part of a corporate social investment strategy to build local capacity, strengthen community resilience, and mitigate the risk behaviours that undermine health, wellbeing, and educational attainment among young people.

This synthesis expands the report highlighting the core elements of the training, the learning journey of the participants, and the broader significance of the intervention for youth development. Central to this analysis is the recognition of the benefits of the training — not only for the facilitators themselves, but also for the learners they will engage, their families, and the community at large.

Context and Objectives

The Mašupatsela series is structured as three age-specific life skills programmes:

Mašupatsela 1 for Grades 6 and 7

Mašupatsela 2 for Grades 8 and 9

Mašupatsela 3 for Grades 10 and 11

Each consists of eight structured sessions plus two reflective sessions, deliberately designed to graduate in complexity and align with the developmental stages of young people. The sessions revolve around fictional characters who provide relatable entry points into discussions about sexuality, relationships, choices, and risk behaviours.

The training in Mokopane was intended to prepare a cohort of young facilitators – recruited from the surrounding communities – to deliver the Mašupatsela programme in schools neighbouring the platinum mining operations. The dual purpose was clear: to empower the facilitators themselves, many of whom were unemployed youth with limited exposure to structured facilitation, and to ensure that learners gain access to accurate information, critical thinking skills, and life skills that can help them navigate the difficult social terrain of adolescence.

The facilitators were therefore not only being trained to deliver a curriculum but were themselves part of a social investment strategy that aims to foster community leadership, improve educational outcomes, and reduce vulnerabilities to HIV, gender-based violence (GBV), and unplanned pregnancies.

The Training Journey

Day 1: Orientation, Expectations and Youth Realities

The first day was devoted to orientation, trust-building, and establishing expectations. Participants entered the training with little prior experience of facilitation or structured community engagement. Many expressed anxiety about managing emotions, understanding young people's vulnerabilities, and dealing with sensitive issues.

Through participatory exercises, the group explored how they perceived youth in the three target age categories. They described young people as difficult to guide, prone to exploration, and often resistant to adult advice. Yet they also recognised the need for guidance, encouragement, and exposure to accurate information. This duality became a recurring theme: facilitators acknowledged the challenges of adolescent behaviour while also recognising their own responsibility to provide supportive, empowering spaces.

Key exercises introduced the concept of risk and protective factors at the individual, family, school, and community levels. Participants struggled initially to grasp what "risk" entailed but eventually came to understand their own potential role in strengthening protective factors in young people's lives. The blindfold activity vividly illustrated the confusion young people feel when navigating competing voices and values, underlining the importance of facilitators guiding rather than dictating choices.

The first day enabled facilitators to reframe their view of young people – from being problems to be managed to individuals with capacities that can be nurtured. It also instilled the principle that prevention education is about creating safe, participatory spaces where learners can think critically and arrive at their own informed decisions.

Day 2: Values, Bias and Knowledge Gaps

Day 2 deepened the focus on values, attitudes, and knowledge. Through the sexuality timeline activity, participants confronted their personal opinions on issues like the appropriate age for first sexual activity, parenthood, or divorce. Strongly held beliefs surfaced, including outright condemnation of behaviours such as smoking, masturbation, or oral sex. This presented an invaluable teaching moment: facilitators had to recognise that their role is not to impose personal values but to share accurate information in a non-judgemental way.

The discussions emphasised that facilitators must separate personal belief from professional responsibility, ensuring that learners are empowered to form their own values based on accurate information and reflective dialogue. This was a difficult but necessary lesson, as unexamined biases could undermine the credibility and inclusivity of the programme.

The day also revealed significant knowledge gaps, particularly in sexual and reproductive health. Many facilitators had limited understanding of the female reproductive system, menstruation, ovulation, and pregnancy. Misconceptions abounded, such as attributing menstruation to “egg breaking.” Knowledge about HIV and STIs was similarly weak, with myths about transmission via toilet seats and confusion between UTIs and STIs. These gaps underscored the urgent need for continuous knowledge support, as facilitators cannot effectively guide learners without a sound factual foundation.

Day 2 ensured that facilitators began the process of self-reflection about bias and were exposed to accurate, science-based knowledge. This not only benefits their professional development but also safeguards the integrity of the programme – ensuring that learners will not be misinformed or judged in ways that perpetuate stigma.

Day 3: Facilitation Skills and Learning Theories

The third day focused on facilitation practice and educational theory. Facilitators were introduced to Social Learning Theory (Bandura) and Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb), both of which underpin the participatory design of Mašupatsela. By understanding that young people learn best through observing role models, reflecting on experiences, and testing out new behaviours, facilitators gained theoretical tools for structuring sessions.

The Mašupatsela manuals were distributed, and teams prepared practice sessions. The first attempts revealed predictable challenges: over-reliance on reading, limited eye contact, rushing through content, and difficulty managing divergent opinions. However, they also demonstrated enthusiasm and willingness to learn. The practice sessions highlighted the importance of preparation, teamwork, and clarity of facilitation.

Introducing facilitation theories and giving facilitators practice in real sessions built confidence and practical skills. Even if imperfect, these attempts marked a shift from passive learning to active demonstration, fostering ownership of the curriculum.

Facilitators	Session	Feedback
Shereen and Mogau	Session 2: The Value of Values	<p>The facilitators struggled with the session. It was the first time they were having to present and facilitate a session in such a way, and it was evident. They did not introduce the topic but quickly jumped to sharing their own views which exposed their personal standpoint on certain issues. They asked questions such as 'why would you support a same sex marriage?'; without thinking about how the beneficiary will perceive the question. They were supposed to expand on a conversation related to good or positive human qualities and the team needed considerable assistance for them to move forward with the session. They did not read instructions well enough to be able to understand what they needed to ask. They struggled to facilitate some skewed views on human qualities, changing ideas based on how other people engage with them. Most of the facilitators could not internalise that good human qualities are embedded values often which cannot and should not be changed by other peoples' behaviours towards us. The facilitators will need to improve on summarising discussions, allowing participants to answer freely without pushing them to answer what they want them to say. The team worked well together and helped each other clarify each other's questions and statements. They will need help to ensure that they have a clear understanding of the session content and flow before implementing with youth groups.</p>
Lawrence and Kamo	3: Decision Making	<p>The facilitators opened the session well by asking participants what they thought of the topic. They need to work on supporting the topic and ensuring that they help participants understand why the topic will be discussed. They were reading from the book and struggled to maintain eye contact with the participants. They were distracted by participants' thoughts, which resulted in them skipping some instructions like explaining the chill out or anticipating responses. They struggled to follow up with groups after instructions were given. They were able to carry out instructions for the rest of the session, getting through the decision-making steps.</p> <p>The team will need to work on engaging in conversation, anticipating responses to questions to help group reach consensus when some of the ideas are not similar.</p>

Mapula and Fortunate	4: Green for Go	<p>The facilitators were enthusiastic about the session. However, they struggled to understand the goal of the session, they explained that it was a session about decision making, whereas the session was about helping young people recognise harmful situations and be able to make choices that will keep them out of harm's way. The session is complex, and the group was highly inquisitive which resulted in them being unsure on how to promote a stance without being dismissive or aggressive. They would need to use more clarity questioning skills, like: what you are saying is?; does that mean this? As a way to rather help clarify instead of dismissing their comments. The beneficiary group generally agreed that in difficult situations, it would be ok to behave or respond in an unethical way, a comment which the facilitators should have engaged the beneficiaries further, by asking questions such as, 'do we think other people can dictate our values or personality?'</p> <p>There was some dialogue that ended up being a back and forth, with the responses from the participants not leading to a final solution or conclusion. The group believe that when someone has upset us or has hurt us we can choose to not engage them and rather show anger towards them, which resulted in not being able to resolve or deal with issues maturely, but by behaving badly gets the other person to feel their anger.</p> <p>This gave us multiple issues to discuss during the debrief, such as: if we feel offended, should we always fight? There were multiple dynamics in the room, and it was clear there was a lot of discomfort about the discussion and about how to handle situations where we feel offended.</p> <p>The facilitators will need to work on showing neutral feelings when dealing with complex issues. They will need to learn how to help the group navigate their own ideas and solutions without their over-involvement and learn how to ask the right questions to challenge thinking and help beneficiaries learn how to confront situations that they are not comfortable with.</p>
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<p>Caroline and Lehlogonolo</p>	<p>5: Consent</p>	<p>The facilitators were well prepared for the session. They helped participants explore attraction, and it was clear that participants initially thought attraction was just sexual, however through activities they were able to explain that attraction doesn't necessarily mean people should have sex. There was an opinion that when attracted to someone, you need to act on sexual feelings or that it's impossible not to engage in sex. The topic resulted in the initiation of a lively discussion on the right to start talking about sex and when consent for sex should be given. They struggled to take some instruction on the consent activity. They were helped so that there was some good conversation. They struggled to facilitate conversations of consent being essential to give despite the circumstances, they could not agree on the fact that consent cannot be given under the influence of alcohol or dangerous substances. The group needed clarity and facts on what healthy relationships are and how it was important to communicate consent and that saying NO always means NO.</p> <p>Some of the ideas the group as a whole needed to be educated on why being in intoxicated is not a healthy state of mind where one could enjoy sex, even if they may be agreeable. They needed to understand that communication does not mean there will be an agreement. They needed to know that we can say not even if we value a friendship or relationship.</p>
<p>Lerato and Lucas</p>	<p>7: Gender Based Violence</p>	<p>The pair conducted the session well. They introduced the session well; they gave clear instructions and were able to explain the activities well. They supported the group work well by walking around ensuring that everyone understood the task. The team was however unclear on some of their definitions, and it made it difficult to help the group place their cards accurately. There were side comments about gender related issues and confusion around how people identify with gender. We had to spend considerable time discussing and understanding the discriminatory views which participants shared and what was said during the activity and how the comments and opinions could potentially make people feel insulted or disrespected. We explored some of the words which were used which come across as derogatory. We clearly defined the differences of sex and gender and sexual orientation.</p>

Stephen and Veronica	Methods	The team was eager to get to facilitate the session. They introduced the session well and explained what was going to transpire in the session. They understood what the features of the methods were and they were able to help group understand the first activity well. They explained the quiz game well and started to play a few rounds but they struggled with this activity as they had not properly labelled the cards to reflect and remind them of the correct methods. The session took place later in the day and we summarised the session and allowed opportunities for questions related to certain methods for clarity.
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Day 4–5: Practice, Feedback and Thematic Challenges

Some facilitators imposed personal views rather than guiding discussions neutrally. Others misunderstood the aims of sessions (e.g., confusing decision-making with recognising harmful situations).

Sensitive issues like consent and GBV revealed deep-seated biases, such as the belief that intoxication does not negate consent or derogatory views of gender diversity.

Debriefs provided opportunities to challenge these misconceptions, clarify concepts, and reinforce the need for neutrality, respect, and inclusivity. The practice sessions were a turning point, revealing both the fragility of the facilitators' knowledge and the transformative potential of the training.

These sessions gave facilitators real-time feedback and correction, ensuring that harmful misconceptions are addressed before implementation. They also prepared facilitators for the complex realities of working with adolescents, where discussions often surface controversial or sensitive opinions.

By the end of the week, the facilitators had:

- Gained exposure to prevention education principles, participatory learning methods, and facilitation techniques.
- Begun to confront their own biases, values, and knowledge gaps, recognising the importance of neutrality and accuracy.
- Understood the importance of preparation, teamwork, and mentorship in implementing sessions effectively.
- Developed initial skills in guiding discussions on sensitive topics such as consent, gender, and healthy relationships.
- However, the report also made clear that the facilitators remain at an early stage of professional development. Their limited prior experience,

entrenched cultural attitudes, and weak knowledge base require ongoing mentorship, additional training, and strong supervision if the programme is to succeed.

Benefits of the Training

For Facilitators

Empowerment through skills development, confidence-building, and exposure to professional facilitation methods.

Knowledge acquisition in critical areas like HIV prevention, sexual health, and GBV.

Personal growth through reflection on biases, values, and the importance of respect and inclusivity.

Opportunities for social mobility and employability through participation in structured, paid community work.

For Learners

Access to accurate, age-appropriate prevention education that challenges myths and promotes healthy decision-making.

Development of critical thinking skills, resilience, and protective factors against risk behaviours.

Exposure to relatable, near-peer facilitators who can bridge the gap between adult authority and adolescent experience.

For the Community

Strengthened capacity to address social challenges like HIV, GBV, and unplanned pregnancies.

Creation of local role models and youth leaders who embody healthier behaviours and promote social change.

Improved relationships between schools, communities, and the mining company through visible social investment.

For Valterra Platinum

Demonstrated commitment to corporate social responsibility, aligning mining operations with community wellbeing.

Enhanced reputation as a partner in development, not just an extractor of resources.

Contribution to long-term sustainability by investing in the human capital of neighbouring communities.

Recommendations and Next Steps

The synthesis confirms the report's call for:

- Continued mentorship and supervision, especially to address biases and ensure accurate knowledge transfer.
- Ongoing training, particularly in sexual health, gender, and facilitation skills.
- Stronger emphasis on teamwork and communication to build cohesion among facilitators.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to ensure fidelity of implementation and capture impact on learners.
- The planned three-day online follow-up training is essential to consolidate learning, address gaps, and reinforce key concepts before full implementation in schools.

Conclusion

The Mašupatsela training in Mokopane should be seen as a critical first step in a longer journey. The facilitators left the training more skilled, more knowledgeable, and more self-aware than when they arrived. They also left with a sense of responsibility: to be neutral, informed, and respectful guides for young people navigating the complexities of adolescence. The benefit of the training is therefore not simply in the immediate acquisition of knowledge, but in the creation of a ripple effect: facilitators become agents of change, learners gain tools to protect themselves and thrive, communities become more resilient, and the mining company strengthens its relationship with the people in whose land it operates.

If implemented with fidelity, supported with mentorship, and continually strengthened, the Mašupatsela programme promises to be a cornerstone in youth development, prevention education, and community upliftment in Mokopane and beyond.