

Pushing SA's small businesses to success



Victor Nemukula (centre), director of Shumani, a Coca-Cola supplier, with staff members at last week's supplier development conference.

By **SAMMY MORETSI**

MZANSI entrepreneurs are in for a big boost of help because Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa has promised R100 million to support the growth of businesses in its supply chain.

Coca-Cola financial director Walter Leonhardt made the announcement at the company's third annual supplier development conference at Gallagher Estate, Joburg, last week.

The development conference provides a platform for small business owners and operators to network with other entrepreneurs, larger and established businesses, industry professionals, government departments and outsourced organisations.

Municipalities, corporations, non-governmental organisations, specialist financing institutions, the media and many other people and groups were also there.

The supplier fund aims to support the growth and sustainability of black suppliers by lending R20 million a year, for five years, at preferential rates to help

existing black, female suppliers deliver on new and existing contracts.

“The supplier fund is intended to fix the lack of financial access most small businesses face.”

In his welcome address, Velaphi Ratshefola, the company's managing director, said: “Over the past three years, the company diverted R3,9 billion of its procurement spend to supplier transformation over the past three years.”

Ratshefola said that the funding initiatives are part of the need to accelerate economic growth and create jobs.

Ratshefola and Busi Thusi, Coca-Cola transformation manager, who also addressed the conference, stressed the importance of working together to achieve the goal of transforming the company's procurement environment.

“Through everybody's efforts, the company can support black – and black-female-based – businesses.

“It is well on track to meet its goal of becoming a level 2 broad-based black empowerment contributor by 2021,” said Leonhardt.