



## INTERNET ARTICLE

### **Former female footballer pursues PhD in Water Resource Protection funded by the Water and Sanitation Department**

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As the country observes Women's Month, which coincides with the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) Women's World Cup and the Netball World Cup, a former female football extraordinaire and sports fanatic, Koleka Makanda has set her eyes on completing her PhD in Environmental and Water Sciences specialising in Water Resource Protection.

The 38-year-old, originally from Buffalo Nek, Mount Frere in the Eastern Cape, is in her final year at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and has maintained that through the bursary made available by the Department of Water and Sanitation, not even the sky can limit the hopes and dreams that she has set for herself.

"I am one of the very few people in South Africa who are able to reach this academic level in their lives. Studying on its own is hard, it takes a lot of discipline, commitment, and a whole lot of money. Money which I did not have, until I became aware of the bursary programme of the Department of Water and Sanitation," said Makanda.

Makanda was awarded a bursary to further her studies in 2009 while she was still pursuing a Postgraduate Diploma in Integrated Water Resource Management at UWC. "I must be honest, back then, I did not think that I will reach this level of my studies, but as fate would have it, I am here," she said.

When quizzed about what sets her heart on fire besides her passion for the water sector and her plans of contributing to finding lasting solution in addressing the impact of water pollution, Makanda enthusiastically said "football is my absolute love!"

"If I were not in the sector, I would probably be a soccer player. I have been playing football all my life and I am pretty good at it too. Before I joined the Department, I represented the country in international tournaments in Bangkok, Serbia and Uganda with the national student team through the University Sports South Africa (USSA)," she cheerfully said.

Makanda has been with the Department since 2010 where she joined as a graduate trainee and currently works as a Production Scientist responsible for the coordination of water resource classification projects. She currently has three published research papers with a special focus on policy implementation for water resources protection, assessing feasibility of water resource protection practice at catchment level as well as assessing the role of water resources protection practice for sustainable water resources management.

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Besides having her hands overflowing with water classification projects, the cheerful Makanda believes young people, especially women, have what it takes to turn tide in the water sector.

“My advice to them would be that they should not allow themselves to be confined by their communities and to always dream big. While dreaming big is of essence, working hard is very important to ensure that your dreams become a reality. Education is the master key to achieving all that you have set for yourself,” she concluded.

**Lebogang Maseko**

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