



INTERNET ARTICLE

"Empowering the Next Generation of Water Professionals": Shongile Chauke's Journey

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As we celebrate Women's Month, we honour the achievements and contributions of women in various fields, including the critical sector of water and sanitation. Shongile Chauke, a 22-year-old Candidate Scientific Technician at the Department of Water and Sanitation, is a shining example of young talent making a difference. Her journey is a testament to the power of passion, hard work, and dedication in driving positive change.

Born and raised in Xigalo village, Malamulele, Limpopo Province, Shongile's passion for water and sanitation was ignited by her community's struggles with access to clean water. This sparked her desire to pursue a career in the field, leading her to enrol in the University of Limpopo's Bachelor of Science program in Water and Sanitation. Graduating in April 2023, she joined the department as a graduate intern, eager to apply her knowledge and skills in real-world scenarios.

Shongile's role involves assessing water supply systems and monitoring wastewater collector systems for compliance with regulatory standards. Her work takes her to various parts of the North West Province and Vaal Catchment, where she collaborates with colleagues to ensure sustainable water management practices. This hands-on experience has not only honed her technical skills but also deepened her understanding of the complexities surrounding water resources.

Ms Chauke's experience in the department has been enriching and educational, with opportunities for continuous learning and growth. She appreciates the collaborative environment and the chance to contribute to the sustainability of water resources, which is crucial for communities. Her responsibilities have also taught her the importance of adaptability, effective communication, and problem-solving in a fast-paced work environment.

Shongile hailed DWS's training programmes and workshops that create opportunities for youth and young water professional. "Young professionals need to be empowered through access to continuous professional development, research, and innovation projects. These opportunities not only enhance their skills but also foster a sense of shared purpose among young professionals. Most importantly, young women in the department need to trust in their abilities and need to voice their ideas. They should strive for excellence, embrace their unique perspectives, and never underestimate the value of their contributions. By doing so, they can help drive change in the field of water and sanitation, ensuring a more sustainable and equitable future for all", said Chauke.

Beyond her work, Shongile is passionate about environmental conservation and community service. She participates in local clean-up drives and educational programs promoting sustainable living

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practices, reflecting her commitment to creating a positive impact. Her dedication to giving back to her community serves as a testament to the power of compassion and empathy in driving meaningful change.

As we celebrate Women's Month, Shongile's story serves as a testament to the power of empowering young women in the water and sanitation sector. Her journey demonstrates the importance of investing in the next generation of water professionals, who will shape the future of sustainable water management and ensure a brighter future for all. By sharing her experiences and insights, Shongile inspires others to follow in her footsteps, creating a ripple effect of positive change in the world.

Shongile Chauke's journey is a shining example of the impact that young professionals can have in the water and sanitation sector. Her passion, dedication, and commitment to creating positive change serve as a beacon of hope for a more sustainable future. As we celebrate Women's Month, let us honour Ms Chauke's achievements and recognize the importance of empowering young women in STEMs (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) fields. By doing so, we can create a brighter future for all, where everyone has access to clean water and sanitation.

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