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Elizabeth Mutileni

Water Treatment Technician

Water is one of the most important substances on earth. All plants and animals must have water to survive. It is important that the water people drink and use for other purposes is potable, meaning clean and free of germs.

Meet 24-year old Elizabeth Mutileni, a young lady who is passionate about water and who has made it her job to ensure that she does her part in ensuring that the water we use everyday is safe for human consumption. She is a Water Treatment Technician. This is her story.

Early Fascination

It was an early fascination with the sound of boiling of water that sparked what is today a seemingly indestructible love affair between Elizabeth Mutileni and water.

Growing up at the Oshinyadhila village, a few kilometers outside Oshakati in Oshana, Elizabeth recalls how she first heard of NamWater, when a friend told her that her father was an employee of the national water carrier. Her fascination with water and taps grew stronger from that point onwards, and it was clear to the young Elizabeth, that she would one day end up in the water sector. "Our teachers also told us about cooking water and this changed the way I thought about water. I was very intrigued about how water ended up in taps. It just fascinated me. I would walk past the dam at Oshakati and tell myself that one day I will come back and work there at the dam", she shares.



Life as an Orphan

Elizabeth lost her mother at an early age and was raised by her paternal grandmother. A product of the Omuhama Combined School and the Mweshipandeka High School, she has fond memories of a carefree and untroubled village life. However, as an orphan under her grandmother's watchful eye, the young Elizabeth soon came to realise that she one day would have to leave the village and find her place in the world.

"My grandmother really was my everything. Despite the hardships of village life, she tried everything to raise me well and had big dreams that I attend university and make something of my life. She raised me to respect others and to work hard for what I want. I continue to live by these values she instilled in me from an early age", Elizabeth says.

However, it wasn't always smooth sailing. Elizabeth wasn't happy with

her Grade 12 results, and since her grandmother's wish was that she enrolls at university, she registered at the Namibia College of Open Learning instead, in an effort to improve her results. She was also concerned that her grandmother would've struggled to keep pace with university tuition, books and accommodation fees. "My granny was really fighting for me to enroll at the University of Namibia. But, as fate would have it, I saw an advert in the newspaper by the Namwater HRDC calling for applicants for its Water Treatment course and applied. The rest as they say is history. Although I had my concerns about their aptitude test, I knew I always had a strong aptitude in Chemistry and Mathematics. I was accepted and ended up in a field that has fascinated me since childhood", she notes.

Exciting Career Path

Today, Elizabeth is a qualified Water Treatment Technician. Using

test equipment and color analysis standards measurements of water quality, she collects and tests water samples and make adjustments to the chemicals used to make water potable and safe. She records meter and gauge readings on specified forms, and add chemicals, such as ammonia, chlorine, or lime, to disinfect and deodorize water and other liquids. Other tasks include maintaining tanks, filter beds and other work areas, using hand tools and power tools; and repairing equipment.

She is now employed by NamWater, as a Water Care Assistant Instructor at its Human Resource Development Centre outside Okahandja and is recognised by supervisors and peers alike as a driven and committed individual who performs her work diligently and meticulously. As the state-owned bulk water supplier, NamWater operates dams, pipelines and water treatment plants throughout the

country. Elizabeth now shares in the responsibility of training the next generation of water treatment technicians, who in turn will be responsible for ensuring that water delivered to NamWater clients, is safe and potable. "I am really passionate about water, so it was very easy for me to embark on this career path. I am confident and happy in my choice, because there will always be a need for Water Treatment Technicians. Urbanisation and national efforts to explore and implement viable and sustainable water provision alternatives continue to boost the need for qualified and skilled technicians", Elizabeth says.

Independent Woman

Today, Elizabeth is an independent young woman, with a bright future ahead of her. As an orphan, she has faced many challenges in her young life. But, her dream for a better life and her resolve to not disappoint those who helped her along the

way, including her grandmother and her cousin, who with his wife took her in when she moved to the capital, has driven her to overcome all the odds stacked against her. “My cousin and his wife are my new parents. I am so fortunate because they treat me as one of their own and continue to encourage me to excel in what I do. I know that I can always rely on their continued support and encouragement”, she shares.

In honouring her grandmother’s wish to earn a university qualification, Elizabeth now dreams of enrolling for further studies in Water Care and Treatment at the Tshwane University of Technology in South Africa. “I am a firm believer that education empowers people. Therefore, I do not want to stop here because I want to go on and learn about all other aspects of the water care industry. The Tshwane University of Technology degree course is considered a very comprehensive and wide-ranging course and I am confident that acquiring this qualification would allow me to grow and develop as a specialist in this field. The good thing is that I am employed now, and that I can save up to enroll”, Elizabeth notes.

Rolemodel

Elizabeth encourages other young Namibians to consider qualifying themselves as Water Treatment Technicians.

“Whenever given the opportunity,

I speak to school learners to consider enrolling for water care programmes at registered institutions. I enjoyed my training and the passion of my instructors rubbed off on me and prepared me for the work I do today. So I tell them about the theoretical and practical training aspects, industry attachment at water care and wastewater treatment plants and the work we do in the laboratories. I do it because I love my work and because I believe that a career in water care and treatment is an exciting and viable choice”, she says.

“The laboratory work is especially exciting. As you progress through the training programme, you learn about chemicals and instruments and how to interpret readings. It’s

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like being a real scientist”, she adds.

Passion

Elizabeth’s inspiring story teaches us that all of us can go as far as we dream, think and imagine. The secret to her success seems to be the fact that she is taking small and realistic steps towards achieving her dreams.

“I am just happy that I can be considered a productive citizen of our country and that I can play a part in its development. I also embrace the responsibility of being a positive influence in the lives of my colleagues and the interns I works with. Because others have invested their time and energy in my growth and success, I need

to take up this responsibility of returning this gift to others, especially in my current teaching position where I can plant the seeds of knowledge in the minds of our country’s future generation of Water Treatment Technicians”, she explains.

A driven, single-minded and determined young woman whose story teaches us the true meaning of success. That success means having the courage, the determination, and the will to become the person you believe you were meant to be. That success is not only measured by what we accomplish, but by the courage with which we have maintained the struggle against overwhelming odds.

“I believe that you can actually create the life you want. It all depends on how daring you desire it. You just need to keep the faith, be patient, prayerful and work towards the fulfillment of your dreams”, she concludes.

Elizabeth Mutileni. Focusing the full power of all she is on her passion and burning desire to achieve. She is a Water Treatment Technician. She is living her passion.

