

AMEU WiE PRESENTATION

“A tree has roots in the soil yet reaches to the sky. It tells us that in order to aspire we need to be grounded and that no matter how high we go it is from our roots that we draw sustenance. It is a reminder to all of us who have had success that we cannot forget where we came from.

It signifies that no matter how powerful we become in government or how many awards we receive, our power and strength and our ability to reach our goals depend on the people, those whose work remain unseen, who are the soil out of which we grow, the shoulders on which we stand” — **Wangari Maathai**

Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Lomile Modiselle and I am an employee of the City of Tshwane Municipality.

Surely you are all asking yourselves, why I am making reference to a quotation that is centered around the life of a tree in this conference.... a technical conference?...The theme of which so aptly testifies as such “The Impact of the Energy Revolution on Power Utilities in Africa”

Let me provide an answer. I spoke about the tree in my introduction simply because I always compare my career path and growth with that of a tree in that I should not forget my roots..... as in I should remain grounded

I am one of few women who grew up in the industry from as below as FET College. I was appointed as an Apprentice (Electrician) in the afore-mentioned Municipality in 1998, from which I went on to qualify as an Artisan (Electrician) in 2001; from which I acquired the National N Diploma in 2004. I then got engaged in different disciplines as an Artisan; and in 2007 (by way of assistance from the City's bursary scheme) I took a resolute decision to improve my qualification from being a skilled worker to a professional one. Today I stand here in front of you as a qualified Certificated Engineer holding the degree in Power Engineering and Government Certificate of Competency (GCC) for Electrical Engineers, an achievement for which I am immensely proud and thankful. I am currently in a leadership position within a Technical Environment.

I joined the AMEU Women in Electricity immediately after it was launched in 2015, In the last years WIE has collaborated with Affiliates and members to deliver and participate in various skills development programmes of which I became part of. WIE did not die but was quietly building a pool of competent women who are not positioned to take up leading roles within municipalities. I am proof of that, I am the industries' testimony of WIE, These Mentorship and Leadership programmes greatly assisted me in my career as a woman in the leadership position that I hold within the municipality.

Despite increased interest in engineering among women currently, there is still a lot to be done to ameliorate numerous challenges that contribute to continued gender inequality in the industry. I hope everyone agrees with me on that one.

It is regrettable, Chairperson, that some of us women in the industry suffer from what I call "imposter syndrome". We always feel that we are not good enough or our surroundings make us feel like we are not good enough. The question is, "When shall we be adequately good enough?" I know that one barrier that often gets pointed at as a cause in this regard, is lack of female role models in the field. Whilst it is a fact that there are few female leaders in engineering, this cannot forever be peddled as reason enough to deprive future generations of female engineers of worthy mentors who they can relate to.

My conviction is that the more women take up prominent roles in the industry, the more the workplace environment shall be adaptable and appropriately welcoming to up and coming, younger female engineers. Logically so, of course.

While female engineers may still be in the minority, there are many women who have become very successful in the industry. These women are breaking stereotypes and showing others that engineers can succeed in the field, no matter their gender. I would like to mention the following women who always inspire me to become competent person in this industry, regardless of challenges I might be facing, mind you not all of them are engineers, but their commitment to advancing gender equality in the Energy Sector in South Africa and beyond is admirable:

1. Ms. Neli Magubane- Chairperson of Matleng & Eskom Board member
2. Ms. Sy Gourrah – Former and first woman President of the AMEU, Currently a Senior Vice President at SAIEE in which she will be taking over as President in 2020
3. Ms. Bertha Dlamini – Ambassador of Women in Africa – Initiative South Africa, and Head of Utility Segment at ABB for Southern Africa.

4. Ms. Refilwe Mokgosi- The newly inaugurated President of AMEU & a colleague in the City of Tshwane

When Ms Bertha Dlamini opened WiE session of the 2017 AMEU Conference, she said, and I quote “Driving transformation and fast tracking women’s advancement in the sector is a collective undertaking that requires all role players to fulfill their part in ensuring that women participation in the sector is meaningful and is advanced”

On that note I want all the ladies in this conference room to know that the time is now! We must have the courage to stand up, show up, excel and collaborate with our male counterparts to change the face of electricity in South Africa. Diversity brings performance, high performance will change our communities, our economy and all South Africans will benefit.

There are some pretty phenomenal men, some which are right here with us today, fighting hard to make sure that WIE achieves its goals.

Together we will be an industry where nobody ever has to say “me too” again.

In closing I would like to thank everybody who played a role in my successes, my mentors (Both male and Female), the WIE committee members for the support they give to all the women in this industry

And lastly; I would like to thank Senior Management of Energy and Electricity Division of the City of Tshwane for always creating an enabling environment for us as women to participate in this male dominant industry.

I thank you