**PRESS RELEASE**

ASP Fire turns up the heat on gender diversity and inclusivity

**Theme for International Women’s Day on 8 March is #BreakTheBias**

**7 March 2022:** [ASP Fire](http://www.aspfire.co.za) has made great progress in empowering women and providing opportunities in the male-dominated field that is engineering consulting. This is according to Fire Engineer **Nanzi Bika**, who specialises in consulting and projects.

“Our work environment is structured so that all voices are heard, and great ideas recognised and credited, with the engineers having the opportunity to engage with senior management and senior stakeholders,” she comments on the occasion of [International Women’s Day (IWD)](https://www.internationalwomensday.com/) on 8 March. The IWD 2022 campaign theme is #BreakTheBias: Imagine a gender equal world.

Nanzi’s involvement ranges from deemed to satisfy projects to rational designs in accordance with local and international standards. Having commenced her career at ASP Fire four years ago as a junior Fire Engineer, she has since had several opportunities to be the lead on several largescale construction and installation projects as part of a professional team.

Her most recent projects include 3 000 m2 of flammable warehouses, breweries, and explosives manufacturing plants. Through engaging with various clients, stakeholders, and local authorities, Nanzi has been able to network and build a professional rapport in the industry.

“Even though there is an increasingly large number of women engineering graduates, the engineering workforce is still very much male dominated. Companies need to invest more in women at university and graduate levels through funding, mentorship programmes, and employment opportunities, which is what ASP Fire has been actively doing,” says Nanzi. “Giving women an opportunity for their voices and ideas to be heard will do a great deal in increasing the visibility and importance of women.”

Her advice to young women just starting out on their career path is to “trust your skills and own your career choices. “Navigating a predominantly male environment is probably not new to you if you were an engineering student. Some industries may be tough when you are the minority. You will find allies along the way who will advocate for you, listen, and amplify your voice in the work environment.”

An example of a young woman making headway in a male dominated industry is **Amanda Rungano**, intern and engineer in training on a full bursary from ASP Fire. “I think the company is doing a wonderful job. I find myself in a dynamic space that I know will be an incredible milestone in my career and personal journey. One of the things I have found very enlightening is how I have been entrusted to the guidance of another young woman. I find that quite inspirational, because seeing a colleague succeed in the space makes it a lot more attainable for me.”

Amanda believes that taking the step to venture into this industry despite the attendant social discouragement and scepticism is quite an achievement by itself. “It is an achievement because when we transcend the limits that have been set for us, we set the path for other women to follow.” There has been a shift in the types of careers that women decide to pursue. However, there is still work to be done in terms of the information circulated about such industry opportunities.

“When I decided I wanted to be an engineer, most people’s first response was that it is such a male-dominated industry,” notes Amanda. “The way to encourage women to pursue such careers is not by overwhelming them with stereotypes they are trying to break. It is a difficult thing to do, but we need to stop giving so much attention to the idea of men being the driving force behind these industries, because it indirectly perpetuates the idea that women should reconsider stepping in. Not to say we should let young women be ignorant about the facts, but maybe instead say it’s a fairly new space for women or that industry could employ more women,” says Amanda.

Her advice to young women contemplating a similar career is to venture into it with an open heart and mind. “If you’re passionate about what you are doing, everything else is easy by comparison. Hard work pays off. Nothing – not even your gender, as much as the world may tell you otherwise – will stand in your way if you do your best,” concludes Amanda.

***Ends***

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**Notes to the Editor**  
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**About ASP Fire**  
ASP Fire operates across the entire African continent from its Gauteng base, providing professional, accredited fire risk management and support to its clients. ASP Fire designs, installs, and maintains a full range of fire detection and suppression equipment suited to clients’ needs. ASP Fire provides a holistic, proactive, and preventative fire solution based on integrated fire risk assessment, training, and consulting, with the installation and maintenance of fire detection and suppression systems that meet SABS, NFPA, FPASA, FDIA and SAQCC standards.

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