**NEWS ARTICLE**

AECOM embraces equity, diversity and inclusion to deliver a better world

**02 March 2023:** Globally trusted infrastructure firm [AECOM](http://www.aecom.com) is committed to equity, diversity and inclusion, enabling it to better anticipate clients’ needs, understand the challenges facing the communities it serves, drive innovation that propels the industry forward, and realise its purpose of delivering a better world. In celebration of [International Women’s Day (IWD)](https://www.internationalwomensday.com/) on 8 March, we profile various inspirational women from AECOM.

**Donnalee Schroeder**

Active in the industry for about nine years to date, but only joining AECOM in October 2022, Donnalee is a structural engineer in the Centurion office in the Buildings + Places division. “As structural engineers we get to build exciting projects that endure. There is also a great sense of accomplishment and validation when seeing completed projects, as well as a reflection on what you can achieve as a team.”

Donnalee’s experience to date has seen her involved with bridge design projects, including upgrades to national highways and new local pedestrian bridges. “That obviously has a massive impact on our whole country and uplifts communities.” She also has experience in the commercial and industrial sector and was involved with a project that won an award for steel construction, and says it is important for the work of engineers to be acknowledged in this manner. Even though her stint at AECOM to date has been brief, there is a drive for international exposure that opens up a world of opportunities for young women engineers.

“There are no limits to what you can achieve as a woman.” – Donnalee Schroeder

Commenting on the IWD 2023 theme of #EmbraceEquity, Donnalee says: “What it means for me is that the future is exciting. It means there are no limits to what you can achieve as a woman.” Looking at societal change to bring about greater diversity and inclusion, she says raising awareness has to start at school. “Ensuring strong women leaders of the future not only means training them for the industry roles they will eventually grow into, but to understand complex issues like unconscious bias, and thereby change their situation and make themselves stronger for it and make companies better for it as well.”

**Khanyisa Mabasa**

Khanyisa is a mechanical candidate quantity surveyor in the MEPF team in Cape Town. Tasked with producing bills of quantities, she is mostly involved with African and Middle East projects. Her career saw her start in general building, but she quickly focused on mechanical engineering and HVAC in particular.

Working at AECOM allows her to be part of a team “where you are valued and your value in the team is, in turn, acknowledged.” From being involved with small HVAC installations to the complex projects AECOM is renowned for has challenged Khanyisa to venture out of her comfort zone.

“It is about addressing social imbalance in the system.” – Khanyisa Mabasa

“Every project is different, unique and comes with its own challenges. We have to be able to strategise, plan and ensure we can deliver, as the client relies on us for the successful outcome of a project. My transformation in this process has been career wise and personal because I am discovering myself every day,” says Khanyisa.

To her, the IWD 2023 theme emphasises there is no one-size-fits-all. “#EmbraceEquity starts with acknowledging we are unique human beings with different needs. Everyone should be able to access resources and opportunities, with an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages facing each person. It is about addressing social imbalance in the system. My desire is for society and the workplace to embrace, implement and practice equity, with an understanding that we are unique individuals with unique needs.”

**Darashana Naidoo**

Darashana worked at AECOM from 2013 to 2017 as a technical designer before leaving to join the mining industry. From there she transitioned into project management and returned to AECOM in June 2022 as a member of the project management team in Centurion. She manages numerous environmental sustainability projects nationally for a client that is a respected healthcare provider.

As a project manager, she manages multiple client expectations and deliverables. “We are proactive thinkers because it allows us to focus on the potential risks that could be detrimental to the success of our project if not identified at an earlier stage. As a project manager, you are a member of numerous teams made up of a variety of experts with various skills. It is my responsibility to oversee these individuals so that we meet the objectives of our clients.”

“Women lead with empathy and compassion to achieve the greatest results with the teams they manage.” – Darashana Naidoo

 Being a woman who manages a complete team of professionals through a project lifecycle is incredibly empowering to Darashana because “women have the capacity to lead with empathy and compassion to achieve the greatest results from the teams they manage. Being in a male dominated sector, you must assess your contractors and consultants and their personalities and learn how to adapt to manage them successfully.”

#EmbraceEquity means equal opportunity to all, says Darashana, and making an active effort to address conscious and unconscious bias by creating an awareness. “The advantage of being with a global organisation such as AECOM is that you already see how we have embraced equity globally.”

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**Notes to the editor**

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**AECOM Contact**

Lucy McLane

Communications Manager, Strategy & Growth, Middle East & Africa

Phone: +971-58-575-6364

Email: lucy.mclane@aecom.com

Website: [www.aecom.com](http://www.aecom.com)

**Media Contact**

Thobile Ndlovu

Account Executive
NGAGE Public Relations
Phone: (011) 867-7763
Fax: 086 512 3352
Cell: 073 574 2931
Email: thobile@ngage.co.za
Web: [www.ngage.co.za](http://www.ngage.co.za/)

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