**NEWS ARTICLE**

Embracing diversity, equity and inclusion at Zutari #InspiresInclusion on International Women’s Day

**04 March 202****4:** A global celebration that recognises the achievements, contributions, and challenges women worldwide face, this year’s theme for [International Women’s Day](https://www.internationalwomensday.com/) (IWD) on 8 March is #InspireInclusion. It is based on the idea that when we inspire others to understand and value women’s inclusion, we forge a better world.

“At Zutari, we are committed to fostering diversity and inclusion, recognising the invaluable contributions that individuals from diverse backgrounds bring to our organisation,” comments **Senzekile Mdluli**, Head: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & CSI at [Zutari](http://www.zutari.com). “We are actively pursuing increased representation of women by setting targets, demonstrating our commitment to inclusivity and gender diversity.”

She adds: “As we continue to refine our overall strategy, we reflect on our dedication to creating a workplace that values and champions diversity at every level.” The leading consulting engineering and infrastructure advisory practice showcases four women taking great strides at the company.

**Isabelle** **Meyburgh, Revit Modeller |Built Environment, Zutari**

“In my experience, it should not matter If you are male or female. If you love something and are good at it, you should have the opportunity to prove that to the world,” says Isabelle, a Revit Modeller in the Built Environment, Bloemfontein office team. Her role is to model all structural components for projects and compile all construction drawings.

While only at Zutari for a year, Isabelle is already involved in ongoing projects. “The highlight for me is to complete my drawings, have my name cited as the author, and then see those drawings come alive at sites. It makes me so proud to be doing what I am,” says Isabelle, adding it is a journey that has made her much more confident in herself and her skills.

Her advice to young women just starting their careers is: “Go for it! Nobody gets to tell you what you can and cannot do; prove them all wrong. Being a woman working mainly in a male-dominated industry is hard, but keeping your head up and being your best gives you a sense of pride. I am proud of my hard work, where I am today, and where I am going,” asserts Isabelle.

**Petronella Taljaard, Technical Specialist |Water, Zutari**

“I applaud Zutari’s various initiatives like its bursary programme, partnering with Protec, and its leadership development courses like Ascend, aimed to develop female leadership. Zutari is being deliberate about making changes to advance women at all levels. I think all sectors in the engineering industry can do more to create awareness and support for youth, especially girls, to join the industry,” comments Petronella.

She is a professionally registered civil engineer in the East London office, forming part of the water team. At present she focuses on project controls, design reviews and management and assists in delivering water projects for government clients.

“An important consideration that keeps me motivated is the belief that my contribution matters and has value, and having this belief validated by my team. I love that I am constantly exposed to new challenges and that no two days at work are ever the same. The wealth of knowledge, expertise and resources within Zutari excites me. I feel privileged to be able to share this knowledge with others,” says Petronella.

Each phase of her career has had its own highlights and challenges. She had a stint on a construction site as a NEC-3 construction supervisor in the Port of East London to refurbish a sheet pile quay wall. “This was an exciting, one-of-a-kind type project and a beautiful outdoor work environment that I remember fondly,” adds Petronella.

During her time as a line manager, she really enjoyed the opportunity to support and mentor others in their careers. “It is definitely still a work in progress – by no means have I arrived at the end of my journey!” she points out.

**Lize Brand, Technical Director: Business Communication | Management and Sustainability, Zutari**

“It brings me immense pride to have played a role in creating a new team that adds value to Zutari’s services,” says Lize. What is even more gratifying, she adds, is that Zutari has embraced the idea of building a communication team amid the traditionally engineering-centric environment.

This not only underscores the importance of effective communication in its projects, but also highlights Zutari’s commitment to adapting and evolving to meet the diverse needs of its clients and stakeholders.

The Business Communication team is one of a few advisory teams in the Management and Sustainability Market in Zutari. At its core, it drives a human-centred approach to support project impact. “We blend the old with the new and have moved beyond traditional ways of communication and work collaboratively to integrate technical and creative thinking,” comments Lize.

A team of strategic and visual communication experts uses best practice methodologies to support project implementation and ensure buy-in to change. Zutari, unlike most other engineering consultancies, pairs technical experts with communication specialists to maximise the value of its projects with impacted stakeholders.

“Our work allows us to play in both the creative, human capital and strategic aspects of projects,” says Lize. This means developing smart solutions for key project and business risks linked to people that also push the boundaries of what people are used to. “It is challenging, but also rewarding, as the impact can be seen, felt and heard through stories.”

For her, the IWD 2024 theme of #InspireInclusion implies an ongoing process of self-reflection, education and a commitment to creating environments where diversity is not only acknowledged, but actively valued.

It means celebrating the uniqueness and individual contributions that each person brings to the table and recognising that diversity is a strength. The theme is also linked to recognising and challenging personal biases, a critical step to promote inclusion.

**Lwandisiwe** **Solundwana, Electrical Technologist, Zutari**

“Society and the workplace need to remember that our differences make us stronger and give companies an added advantage over their competitors,” argues Lwandisiwe. “Inspiring inclusion should not be a once-off trend but a continuous task, and it begins with you! Are you inspiring inclusion where you are?” she questions.

Lwandisiwe’s original intention was to be a doctor. However, she was drawn to electrical engineering as she hails from a rural area and knew well the struggle of not having electricity. “I wanted to better my community and could envision a rural area lit up everywhere.” She later discovered a passion for lighting design, which incorporates all the different electrical engineering components. “I can safely say I am bettering my community while inspiring young rural girls that they, too, can be in the electrical engineering world.”

As an Electrical Technologist, Lwandisiwe is mostly involved in the project management and electrical designs of buildings, infrastructure, sports fields, and street lighting. What keeps her passionate about her role revolves around several factors. Firstly, Zutari designs to bring change to local communities. Secondly, it designs not only for the present but for future generations. Thirdly, it designs in consideration of the environment. Thus, it strives for sustainable designs with minimal carbon footprint.

“Lastly, it is always nice when you can physically see a project finally completed, as it makes you strive to do more and do it better. As a woman, it feels good to bring the feminine aspect to designs, as you see things differently from men,” says Lwandisiwe.

Career highlights include designing a multipurpose hall using 3D modelling, working with architects, structural, civil, mechanical, stage, sound, and even acoustic engineers. “All these engineers were in different parts of the world, and yet we could all communicate and work well together through virtual platforms and deliver exemplary work to the client,” says Lwandisiwe.

The IWD 2024 theme of #InspireInclusion is important because it means all inputs, opinions, and feedback are valid for consideration. “It means my voice, opinions, skills and capabilities are not diminished because I am perceived as a woman. It means my femininity as a woman is not used against me but embraced and used to grow society at large,” concludes Lwandisiwe.

Zutari’s commitment to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion is commendable. By setting targets to increase the representation of women, Zutari takes a proactive approach towards promoting gender equality. The women sharing inspiring stories are role models who demonstrate that with hard work, determination and a supportive workplace, anything is possible. Overall, Zutari’s commitment is a step in the right direction.

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**Notes to the Editor**
To download hi-res images for this news article, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click the Zutari link to view the company’s press office.

**About Zutari**

As an infrastructure engineering and advisory practice, we believe infrastructure has unparalleled potential to create enduring impact.  Never more relevant, this potential can be realised only if we plan, design, deliver and manage infrastructure in ways that maximise its value.  Our work in water, transport, energy, resources, and built-environment infrastructure does just this – helping to nurture thriving communities, growing economies, and healthy environments.  At Zutari we understand that radical impact doesn’t just happen; it requires more of us to connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted.

**We connect differently**. Our broad collective of in-house experts connects across traditional disciplines to provide integrated results. We collaborate with clients, partners, and end-users, leaning into diverse perspectives to create superior solutions - together.

**We work smarter**. Our people lead the industry. We draw from deep technical skills, accrued over decades, and embrace the transformative power of digital technology to find simpler, better, and more innovative ways to deliver value.

**We stay rooted**. Few can rival our local capacity and understanding. Building on solid foundations, now 90 years in the making, we are trusted to shape locally relevant solutions through our extensive footprint in Africa and the Middle East.

At Zutari our people connect differently, work smarter, and stay rooted. Working in this way, we reliably deliver impact through infrastructure, making the world a better place – one project at a time.

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