**PRESS RELEASE**

Women engineers at AECOM play a key role in uplifting local communities

**22 June 2021:** If you are passionate about improving the day-to-day lives of communities by delivering great design solutions, then engineering is both a challenging and rewarding career to follow. Key to this is adopting a multidisciplinary approach to complex projects, which is a particular strength of infrastructure consulting firm [AECOM](http://www.aecom.com).

“I am a firm believer that diverse teams are successful teams. Focusing on International Women in Engineering Day (INWED), I can say that I work with great, bright and professional women on a daily basis. The success and quality of some of our projects are directly linked to their ability to focus on a lot of tasks all at once. I don’t know how, when and where, but they get it done,” comments **Louise Buys** (Pr. Eng. PMP), Executive, Transport Lead: Western Cape, Civil Infrastructure, Africa at AECOM.

Taking place annually on 23 June, INWED is an international awareness campaign celebrating the work and achievements of women engineers. Launched initially in the UK by the Women's Engineering Society (WES) as a national initiative, INWED has grown year by year, and has since achieved global reach and UNESCO patronage.

**Nikita Budree**, a Senior Structural Engineer in the Durban office, explains that the multicultural nature of the KwaZulu-Natal region is a good reflection of the core values of diversity and inclusivity as embraced by AECOM. “It is important to base your understanding on different perspectives, as this impacts on our thinking when responding to specific client requirements.”

Louise notes that she is part of “a great team that makes it easy, exciting and fun. I am very passionate about project management, and therefore actively managing various roads and civil infrastructure projects.” Her duties include managing project teams, client liaison, stakeholder liaison and schedule, cost, quality, risk and scope management. She is an active member of the transportation business development team, assisting with various proposals and tenders.

Nikita’s main role as a design engineer is to assist the lead manager to plan the weekly workload for a team of eight engineers. This not only encompasses traditional engineering, but project management as well. “I am fascinated by design management, as it entails coordinating all of the different engineering disciplines involved on a typical project, including architecture and quantity surveying.”

Louise starts her working day touching base with clients “to find out how they are doing and to see how we can assist in making their lives easier. Then I have quick check-ins with various team members, before the day gets really busy. AECOM has afforded me a lot of great opportunities to not only grow my career, but also to push myself out of my comfort zone.”

Both women cite achieving their professional qualification as a career highlight. For Louise, this was her PMP registration. “Creativity was my main inspiration to join the industry. The thought of being part of design teams that create infrastructure to improve the quality of life for local communities has always made me very excited.”

Nikita achieved her professional registration with the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA) in 2015. “Being a well-rounded engineer is a major achievement, because sometimes as an engineer you can get stuck in a rut of just doing engineering or calculation type work. Fortunately, due to my experience and the projects I have been exposed to, I have an engrained multidisciplinary approach to my work, which is very much part and parcel of the AECOM culture and ethos.”

When Nikita joined AECOM, there were already many other female engineers and technicians. “I did not really feel out of place. However, when visiting a site, which is invariably male-dominated, you do feel a little bit insecure and unsure of yourself. We just need to stay strong in order to gain the respect of everyone. Keep your head high and treat everybody equally, and then they will learn over time that you have as much right to belong as anyone else,” points out Nikita.

A guiding maxim for Louise is that ‘your attitude determines your altitude’. “Guide your team by leading with a positive attitude or, if part of a team, be that team member who inspires everyone around you to be the best they can be. My message to any young woman contemplating engineering as a career is that there are a lot of things that can distract you from your end goal, but stay focused. Woman are sometimes put in a very specific box, but do not allow anyone else to shape your future except you.”

Nikita concludes: “I think any woman, no matter what field they want to enter, should be concerned about any preconceptions as to their specific roles. We just need to be strong. AECOM has a strong culture of support for inclusivity and diversity, and mentorship is readily available. There are numerous opportunities to grow and excel, which is as exciting as it is rewarding.”

***Ends***

**Notes to the editor**

To download hi-res images for this release, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click on the AECOM link to view the company’s press office.

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