

# It's a women's world too!

The story of amazing Basotho women who break gender stereotypes and shine in 'manly' careers



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As we delve into the Africa Women's month celebrated in August throughout the continent in various initiatives geared towards recognition of women's contribution towards the upkeep of society, at **FINITE** we do that by recognizing women's special abilities and strengths. We choose to focus beyond just their abilities as nurturers who can manage and maintain homes by serving scrumptious meal or readily providing a clean house to live in with clean clothes or adhering to any domestic requisites.

We focus on women who have defied the limitations of a patriarchal society where it is only men who can do some tasks and or occupy positions of influence and ooze great power. These are the women who have decided to chart their future by delving into those career routes which have in the past been traditionally occupied by men, from engineering to mining to security to top management these are females with a heart of steel. They are ready to deliver regardless of their sex and to actually prove that, after all this is a women's world too that beyond giving birth to and nurturing babies women can and are ready to take charge of their lives totally.

Read on to learn what drive these great women of value. Our aim is to inspire the new wave of female innovators to step forward and positively influence future development.

What follows are excerpts from conversations with these women as they share with us what it takes to be who they are and survive in the male-dominated industries. Most

of them work among a plethora of men with some instances where they are the only woman.

# Setsoto Hlohlomi (25)- IT Specialist, Vodacom Lesotho

## About yourself

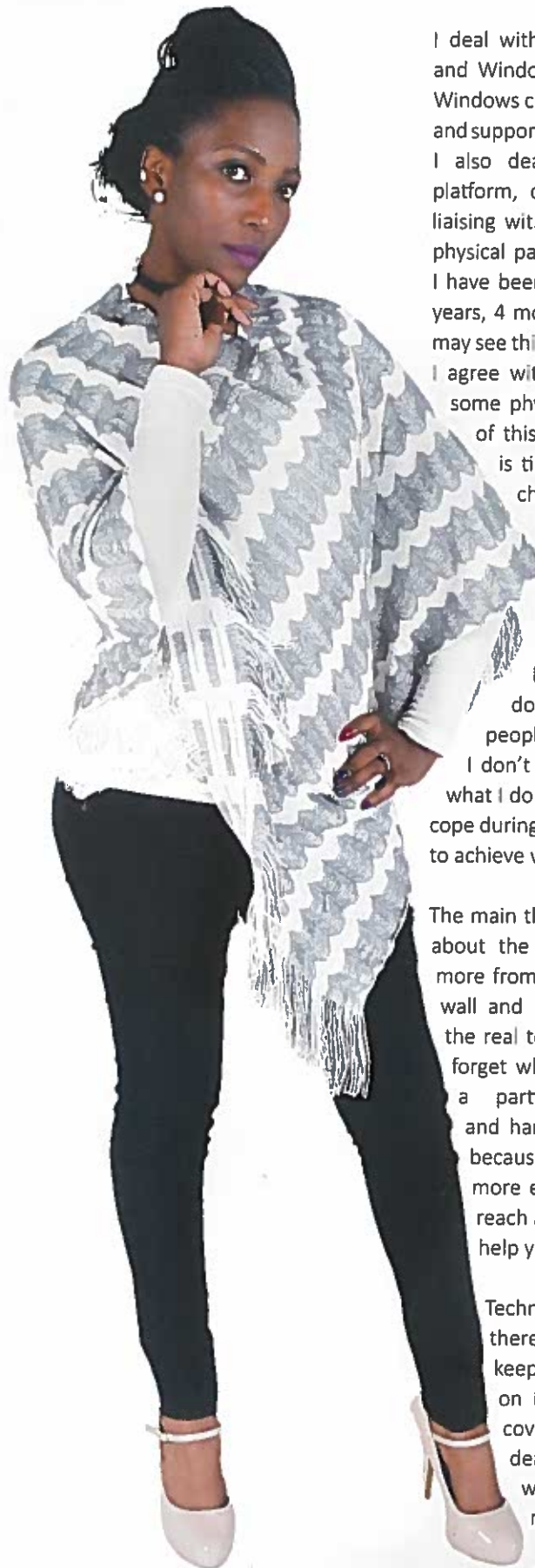
Setsoto Hlohlomi is a young strong-minded Mosotho woman aged 25, a code girl, a techie, who was raised by a single mother Selloane 'Maliako Hlohlomi and is married to Mohale Molieleng. I grew up in Ha Matala outside the capital city Maseru. I was inspired by my mother to join the technology field from a very young age, she was a Technician at the Police Head Quarters then and it used to fascinate me how she was able to fix all the electrical equipment.

## Career

I went to St. James Primary, then St James Secondary and later transferred to Ts'akholo High School for my form D and E where I was among the Top 4 students in Lesotho in the year 2009. I then went to the National University of Lesotho to study Engineering in Computer Systems and Networks where I was the only female.

My upbringing had a lot to do with me being in the Technology field. At first I wanted to be a Doctor but later on realized that Technology was more exciting as I grew up and watched my mummy do her job, it was amazing. I graduated top of my class taking all awards for being a great performer in the course at graduation in 2015. Programming was also a passion, it led to me winning 4th and 1st place at the NUL Hackathon 2014 and 2015 respectively. This was an overnight competition where we had to develop useful software, there were very few females and I was the only female winner in both years.

I joined Vodacom Lesotho in 2015 as a fresh graduate intern. I progressed through the channels of promotion. The position I'm in today is a result of meeting targets, hard work and dedication. I have been lucky and found positions in Vodacom Lesotho, which have suited me and spurred me on. I moved up from System Administrator Billing and Information Technology, to IT Operations, which led me to my current role as Specialist (IT Operations) at Vodacom Lesotho.



I deal with support of Windows Servers and Windows Client PCs, responsible for Windows configuration and administration and support of some Windows applications. I also deal with the Virtual Machine platform, commissioning of servers and liaising with suppliers for replacement of physical parts that have failed and more. I have been in the Technology field for 2 years, 4 months and counting now. Many may see this as a field of strong tough men, I agree with them this industry requires some physical ability, males have more of this than we do. One other thing is time, as females we have more chores to perform than males and therefore that makes it more difficult to balance the personal life and professional life for females.

IT is stereotyped as male dominated industry and to some people it can be difficult to cope. But I don't see it like that because I love what I do. This is what makes it easier to cope during hardships to just keep pushing to achieve what I want.

The main thing experience has taught me about the industry is that I've learned more from experimenting, hitting a brick wall and having to get past it. That is the real teacher because you will never forget what you had to do to get past a particular problem. Dedication and hard work also play a huge role because when necessary to apply more effort and invest more time to reach a breakthrough, dedication will help you go the extra mile.

Technology keeps evolving and therefore to keep up one needs to keep learning. For now I am focusing on Microsoft Certifications which covers a large proportion of what I deal with daily and I'm doing very well so far. This is how I improve myself professionally.

The one thing that I would like to do for Lesotho's technology industry is



*“...I love what I do, this is what makes it easier to cope during hardships...”*

that I would like to mentor a few girls that would love to be in this industry, make them aware of what to expect and how they can cope. I would also like to teach a few how to program, it is a very useful skill as one can use their skills even when unemployed or even freelance.

### **CHALLENGES**

I think the one challenge is physical ability, dealing with heavy technical equipment; having to unscrew bolts to have broken parts replaced.

### **CAREER ACHIEVEMENTS**

One of my achievements that I am grateful for is my transition at Vodacom. In just two years and four months I have moved from an Intern: Service Desk to a System Administrator in IT and eventually Specialist: IT Operations a position that I am currently holding and hope my dedication and hard work will move me further.

The Second achievement is becoming a Microsoft Certified Professional (MCP) which I acquired with the large support of Vodacom for Installing and Configuring Windows Server 2012 and working towards becoming a Microsoft Certified Solutions Associate (MCSA).

One other achievement was becoming a member of a Professional IT body called The Institute of Chartered IT Professionals (ICITP) which has also helped me advance in my career in the Technology field

### **LEGACY**

I would like to be a woman who played a large role in motivating young women, to make them aware that they too can do it if they really want to. To help them overcome the intimidation and to let them know that it is not easy but it can be done.

### **ADVICE**

To someone who aspires to join the technology industry, I would say be prepared to work very hard, prepare for sleepless nights and sometimes even physical labor depending on which element of technology.

My word of encouragement for FINTE readers and all Basotho women is go on and pursue your dreams and do not be intimidated. For instance, technology requires a lot of hard work and having to go an extra mile as opposed to our male counterparts but if you want it hard enough, this should not be a problem. Dream It, Believe It and You can Achieve It.