

Q & A WITH

DEB MARINE NAMIBIA



HYDROGRAPHIC
SURVEYING
SPECIALIST

JACQUELINE
KAULUMA





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We had the pleasure of interviewing Jacqueline Kauluma, Hydrographic Surveying Specialist from Debmarine Namibia. Jacqueline is the epitome of a trailblazer! From the start of her academic journey to her professional career, she continues to break the glass ceiling in a very male-dominated industry. Read the article below on her career and academic journey.

1. HOW DO YOU START YOUR DAY?

I am naturally nocturnal and therefore more energised between 8 pm and 2 am. This means I am slower than most people to find my bearings in the morning but I always manage to ease into the day unfazed. At sea, am normally up for the 7 am safety talk, after which I would catch a quick breakfast just before 8 am. I would then head to my desk, to work through my emails and to run over my activities for the day. No day is ever the same at sea - technical issues requiring attention abound and if they are potential showstoppers, these are attended to first. When things quiet down, I use this time to focus on alternative uses of our instruments/systems, including identifying potential optimisation areas in order to derive greater benefits from our surface and underwater positioning investments.

2. HOW DID YOU GET INTO MINING?

I was fortunate enough to be afforded an opportunity to apply my skills in the mining sector, although I had no training in any of the traditional mining fields. I joined the mining industry as a Namdeb bursar in 2003. As part of their post study conditions, I was required to work and that was how I landed a job at a mining company. It is worth mentioning that I applied for a field that was not listed under the bursaries on offer but I applied nevertheless and was extremely fortunate to be called for an interview and was subsequently awarded a bursary to study towards a BSc in Geomatics at the University of Cape Town.

3. TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER JOURNEY?

I started my formal employment in 2007 as a Geomatics Coordinator at Namdeb. My role was to provide vital geomatics support to the inshore and dredging projects, as well as to other professionals in the Mineral Resource Department. I briefly left Namdeb in 2009/2010 to pursue a full-time Masters of Science in Hydrography as a Chevening Scholar. I returned to Namdeb late in 2010 as an Offshore Surveying Specialist to join a four-person team that was entrusted to kick-start the exploration activities required to develop the Namdeb Midwater Resource. My role was to provide offshore surveying expertise to the sampling and geophysical campaigns. In 2012 I transferred to De Beers Marine in Cape Town, where I was part of a team responsible for providing offshore geophysical services to Debmarine Namibia. I returned to Namibia early in 2015 to take up my current role as a Hydrographic Surveying Specialist at Debmarine Namibia.





4. WHAT DOES YOUR JOB ENTAIL?

As a chartered Hydrographic Surveyor, I am currently responsible for the offshore survey function and lead a team of three Hydrographic Surveyors. My role reports to the Chief Surveyor, and my client is the Vessels and Mineral Resource Unit Section Heads. In this role, I ensure that the Debmarine Namibia fleet comprising four marine mining drillships, one crawler and one sampling vessel meet statutory offshore survey requirements. The main responsibilities include offshore survey assurance, contractor liaisons and compliance and hydrographic capacity building. I am also responsible for planning and scoping for dry-dock survey works, harbour trials, system trials and commissioning, equipment calibrations and vessel dimensional offset surveys, including conducting ad hoc research required for positioning and geophysical system improvements. Furthermore, I compile annual offshore surveying strategies and the amendment or drafting of new operational procedures/guides. Together with my team, we ensure smooth mining operations.

5. WHAT CHALLENGES DO YOU FACE IN THIS INDUSTRY?

I work in a male-dominated industry, where one is more likely to get cooperation from your male counterparts only once you have earned their respect. The people that I liaise with for work-related matters are all men, from vessel managers, captains, chief engineers, technical superintendents to senior technicians, including my line manager and his manager. This structure has remained the same for the past 11 years while I've been employed within the group. This extends to the entire mining and offshore sectors, where the management structures are predominantly or strictly male. These kind of management structures create an environment where our male counterparts have an advantage in terms of growth prospects, mainly because these environments spurs unconscious bias. Accordingly, a lack of female leadership and mentors who, if strategically placed, could help identify and develop the brilliant talent that we have got and thereby help transform these industries in terms of gender equality.



6. WHAT HAVE BEEN YOUR BIGGEST LESSONS IN THIS INDUSTRY AS A WOMAN? WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT A WOMAN IN MINING?

The lesson that I've learnt is that as soon as you are more qualified than your male counterparts, some may try to hamper your development. This is true for some but not all men. Some are diplomatic about how they go about doing this and others actually tell you that you are not going anywhere and that they won't share their knowledge with you. I have experienced that in some form or another in my career. These experiences have taught me to spend time reading manuals and reading up the theory on the operation of the equipment that I use in my work, in order not to depend on others, to assist with technical issues. I've always done this in order to troubleshoot more effectively and to turn around situations faster and thereby avoiding long delays should we experience system failures. Also, in the offshore environment, we are slightly disadvantaged in that we do not have the luxury of available technical support and therefore, it helps to be industrious. The offshore environment teaches you to be innovative and to think outside the box, especially since time is money at sea.

7. WHICH OF YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF AND WHICH HAVE BEEN THE MOST MEMORABLE?

Generally, I am proud of everything that I have been able to achieve in both my academic and professional careers. In terms of academics, I feel accomplished in terms of all the academic qualifications that I have amassed so far, including some yet to come. I have also worked really hard to impress those who thought it worthy to sponsor my studies. To date, I have held at least three scholarships/bursaries, including a Namdeb Bursary that paid my undergraduate studies, and I am an honoured former Chevening Scholar. Recently, I have been admitted to the world-renowned Imperial College, rated among the top 10 universities in the world, where I am currently pursuing a part-time MBA.



8. WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST MOTIVATION?

The ability to be the best I can be in my trade and in life and to have a positive impact on those around me. I am also inspired by the narratives of those who have overcome adversity to achieve great things in both their personal lives, their careers and the lives of others. Recently, I was overwhelmed by the achievements of my current MBA class, which comprises a cohort of 71 highly accomplished individuals from 35 different nationalities. Among those, we have an Advisor to the Vice President of the United States and soon to become Policy Advisor for the Secretary of Defence, a Director of the Bank of Singapore (woman candidate), Senior Vice President Advanced Technologies, Enterprise Ireland (woman candidate) and a Plasma Physicist (Iranian woman candidate) working as a research scientist on the Joint European Torus (JET), just to name a few. JET is regarded as the largest European thermal fusion reactor experiment ever embarked on, with temperatures hotter than the sun. They are ordinary folk who came from humble beginnings to make a name for themselves. I have never, not once in my wildest dreams thought that these are the calibre of people that I would have syndicate meetings with and squabble over which points to include/omit and/or which economic graphs to submit for group assignments. Having engaged with some of these highly accomplished individuals was good exposure since I have realised that 'nothing' really sets them apart from me but an enabling environment and, one that recognises and develops talent. The fact that they reason and act like I do gives me the motivation to be even bolder than I currently am and to develop my potential to do so much more.

9. WHO HAVE YOUR MENTORS BEEN?

For the past 11 years I have been driving my own development and have so far been solely responsible for the career choices that I have made. The reason for this is that there is a shortage of established technical female mentors in both the mining and offshore industries. Not so long ago, I was fortunate enough to have met someone who has agreed to act as my mentor but we have yet to schedule our first meeting as mentee and mentor.



10. WHAT TIPS CAN YOU OFFER GIRLS THAT MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THIS INDUSTRY?

Firstly, before you choose a field of study, always think about what the studies mean in reality and what the practical application could be. Is there a gap in the employment market, would you be employable and are you flexible enough to relocate in order to put your trade to good use, would it pay the bills? Those are some of the considerations that you need to keep in mind when deciding on a career. To answer this question, the offshore environment requires a special type of lady, someone who is resilient, a team worker, focused and dedicated enough to be in it for the medium to long haul. I say this because offshore qualifications are highly specialised courses and are not offered locally. They would therefore require you to travel overseas to gain a qualification, of which tuition supersedes the tuition of 4-year degree obtained from the most expensive Namibian institution. As such, you need to be committed enough to make sure that qualification works for you and your employer. I would say it is rewarding to work at sea and would gladly encourage young ladies to join provided they have the heart for it, right attitude and aptitude.

11. BEING AN OFFSHORE WORK, WHAT DO YOU GET UP TO ON YOUR DOWNTIME?

When I am not at sea and working, I travel whenever time and resources permit. My favourite pastimes are learning about new cultures and attending food, film, literary and music festivals. I am mostly fascinated by the Middle East and Eastern Europe. When not travelling abroad, I would normally go on road-trips which could take me all the way from Swakopmund to the Garden Route or to the nearby Skeleton Coast.

12. WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY READING?

For leisure, I have just completed *The Museum of Innocence* by Orhan Pamuk and was straddling it alongside *Istanbul Architecture* by Murat Gul and Trevor Howells. On the academic front, I am currently reading *A primer on Strategic Games* by Krzysztof R., and supplemented by a chapter dealing with *Game Theory in Economics*, by Lipsey and Chrystal, a chapter on *Pricing Strategies*, and lastly an *Introduction to Corporate Sustainability, Social Innovation and Ethics*.



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13. WHAT'S NEXT FOR YOU, CAREER-WISE?

My short-term plan is to complete my management qualification and in the next four years, I anticipate to be a couple of steps up the Debmarine Namibia corporate ladder. Ideally, I see myself as taking up the role of Anglo Lead for Offshore Surveying Projects.