


INSPIRATIONAL  
students

Idea from the initial concept stages to the actual realisation of  
initiative to change the engineering sector and establish a support  
sis from mechanical to organic shapes. The mechanical  
power-like shape represents femininity. The logo symbol  
r mentors to grow into successful engineers. It also rep  
cent stages to the actual realisation of an engineering



*Forget about the fast lane. If you really want to fly, just harness your power to your passion.*

*Oprah Winfrey*





## wela – growing women in the engineering fields

This booklet showcases our first cohort of **wela** girls and I am proud and honored to present Kerry, Claudia, Thandile, Anelisiwe, Sive, Nwabisa, Sephiwe, Princess and Khodani.

The **wela**-girls featured in this booklet represents four of the engineering disciplines (Industrial, Civil, Mechanical and Mechatronics) offered by the School of Engineering at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University.

As the **wela** project management team we are pleased to report back on a very successful first year. This project has allowed for us to be trend-setters, creative, innovative and to be closely involved with a group of dynamic and inspiration young women. During 2011 we offered several developmental and support intervention workshops and short courses to our **wela**-girls.

**Wela** was launched in February 2011 and is sponsored by **merSETA** as one of five projects under the auspices of the Chair in Engineering Community development.

## Noluvuyo Princess Kilani

Mechanical Engineering Student



My name is Noluvuyo Princess Kilani and I am studying towards a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering. My home town is Kwa-Nobuhle from Uitenhage and I love reading educational books and watching TV.

I was always interested in and fascinated with engineering, discovering things and inventions with the hopes that one day I will invent or build my own engineering phenomenon that will help to better the human life.

I have benefited a lot through my experience with WELA. I got the opportunity to socialise with the world's future Women Engineers as we gather together and share a common goal of breaking the glass ceiling. We have proved that there is no such thing as the 'man's world'. I gained a lot of motivation and met people who I can look up to and I know that I am not alone on this road, but that we are together as the Women in Engineering.

The 7 Choices of Successful Women workshop was the highlight of the year for me. I learnt that one always has a choice and whatever choice one makes it has its own consequences. I still steal a few minutes of my time and read through my 30 day Journal as it is very inspiring and you get to monitor your progress.

I have made friends, met new people, attended workshops that are very educational and have the added bonus of our own private hide-away whenever we need some alone time.

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## Thandile Ndevu

Mechanical Engineering Student

My name is Thandile Ndevu and I am currently studying towards a Bachelors of Technology in Mechanical Engineering. I am originally from Kwamagxaki in Port Elizabeth.

Most of my spare time is spent reading novels. The genres have advanced with age and currently they are more investigative in nature.

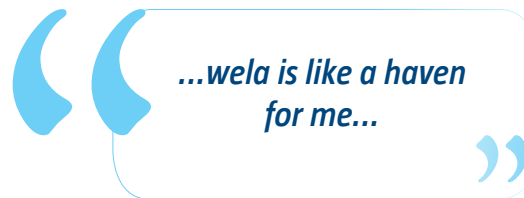


Apart from reading I engage in long walks along the beach and the occasional action thriller movie. I enjoy listening to music as it brings much needed joy and peace after a long day at work and lectures.

I am interested in listening to opera music and the composers that have wet my appetite are the likes of Bach's air on a G-string, Tchaikovsky's Nut cracker and Beethoven's Violin's romance No.2 to name a few. I have come to the conclusion that this ancient music has a way of weaving it's spell around you. Other interests are material that deal with self-discovery, be it in book form, song form or in any form. Being of service and using my time with something that is worthy, like helping people, is something that brings peace and satisfaction as well.

It had become quite apparent to me many years ago when I was a young teen that this life has many societal anomalies that boggle you into becoming a non-creative, expressionless being that follows protocol whether it aligns with your values or not. wela is like a haven for me in a very brusque environment where everyone one is in a rush and has no time to breathe let alone greet each other. I have found solace through a group of completely different individuals (whom I would not have met if it weren't for wela) who challenged my train of thought as well "except" my unique self without trying to "fix" me. I can only figure that this trait is equally rare to find in the best of relationships.

The year started off with the launch of wela and I was hooked I wanted to eat, sleep, breathe and basically exist through wela and to a certain extent I did and I still do. wela is a holistic experience which means that it deals with issues that address the academic, social, physical, and emotional being of a person. We were introduced to The 7 Choices of Successful Women workshop and that was a great eye opening experience. The two items I valued most out of that workshop were taking responsibility and staying focused, which I believe are life lessons that we all battle with at some point in our lives. wela focuses on the individual and in living their best life today, not tomorrow or next year, but now. As women we need to remind ourselves that we are strong and I will leave with this Xhosa saying: wathinta abafazi wathinti' mbokotho which means that if you strike a woman you strike a rock. Welcome to all the new wela ladies and I trust you will have a blessed year.



*...wela is like a haven  
for me...*

## Keri Plumstead

Mechatronics Student



I am a 4th year Mechatronics student at NMMU. I have lived in PE for the last 10 years but prior to that I lived in JHB and Cape Town. My hobbies mainly include sport such as swimming, hockey and taekwondo. I also enjoy reading and playing PC games.

Joining wela is a great way to meet other girls in the engineering faculty and learn from women in industry. wela provides women with the soft

skills required out there in the working world and they teach us how to hold up our own in this male-dominated industry.

This year I have made a lot of new friends. It's nice to have a group of engineering girls meet in one place and given the opportunity to get to know one another, learn from each other and help each other through the tasks we are given. After a year together we now have a nice family vibe going.

I would say that the main benefit I have gained personally is confidence from taking part in the various workshops like the Chata Romano Workshop. Here they showed us how to dress suitably with proper makeup which will all prove to be beneficial particularly in the working world. It has also been so inspiring to just be around other beautiful, confident women. Go wela!!

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## Sephiwe Dlamini

Mechanical Engineering Student

I am currently studying Btech Mechanical Engineering. I was born in Maseru, Lesotho and I love cycling, watching movies, listening to music, modelling and getting involved in charity.

The benefits of wela are numerous, from forming new friendships, becoming independent and having

the ability to make your own choice. The programme is also fun! We also focus on communication skills, our ability to manage time, get-



ting involved and giving help where it is needed.

wela is preparing young ladies to be leaders of today and tomorrow, to become independent and to believe in themselves. It also encourages us to make friends and have fun. When working together with different people and different characters, one soon realises the importance of life and the impact one can have on other people.

To have courage and confidence in male dominated areas will inspire and motivate the young females who will still pursue their dreams. Being caring, loving and giving out to the community makes me a better person. Thanks to wela, I am growing stronger day by day.

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## Khodani Ramathiva

Industrial Engineering Student

My name is Khodani Ramathivha and I come from Thohoyandou in Limpopo province. I am currently studying Industrial engineering. I am a simple, kind and ambitious young lady who loves listening to music, watching movies, reading



novels, baking and shopping. I also love going to the gym to stay healthy and fit.

Based on my experience with wela I can say that I have made a number of new friends from different engineering fields and have been given the opportunity to attend a number of workshops and in particular, those that deal with the social and psychological development.

I have gained far more confidence in myself as a young woman in a male dominated environment and I have also been given the skills to handle conflict in a positive manner.

Other tools that I have found extremely useful were the tips on how to dress for the workplace and the public speaking skills – I have overcome my fear!

The highlight of my year with wela was the 7 Choices of a Successful Women workshop because I gained more knowledge on how to make clear and practical decisions. The Chata Romano workshop showed me how to put outfits together using a variety of colour combinations and how to look great.

Personally I have discovered so many positive things about myself that I didn't know before. Work wise, I have also gained valuable knowledge on building my portfolio which I wouldn't have known without the help of wela.

## Claudia Powell

Mechanical Engineering Student



My name is Claudia Powell and I am currently studying Mechanical Engineering. Academically my interests reside within the progressive field of alternative energy production. Personally, I enjoy all outdoor sports, especially mountain biking and swimming and I have represented Great Britain at an international level.

Being part of the female minority in the engineering fields of study, I have found much support and guidance from wela pertaining not only to my current studies but also to my future career as a mechanical engineer. wela aims to preserve the feminine identity in a currently male dominated field and to encourage women to pursue careers in the engineering industry.

I have been on numerous workshops that have enriched the personal skills needed to complete my studies and develop the career skills

needed by any professional. As I am in the final stage of obtaining my national diploma, I intend to undertake the wela mentorship programme to assist our junior members while continuing my studies to BTech level.

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## Sinazo Nwabisa Nkohla

Civil Engineering Student

I was born on the 26 of November 1991 in Port Elizabeth. I lived here until I was ten years old and then relocated to East London, where I made that my home until 2009 when I finished matric at East London Science College.

I enrolled at NMMU in 2010 for BEng Mechatronics but later decided it was not my passion and with the help of family and the school I changed the

course and started my first year the following year in NDip Civil Engineering.



My interests are very broad but I intend on pursuing them one by one. I've always enjoyed problem solving and being challenged in any way possible which is one of the reasons I chose civil engineering. I also enjoy helping people and putting a smile on their face. I would love to travel and see other places and I love watching television, reading books, cooking and sports.

Throughout my time with wela I have met new people and grown as a person. I have realised that we as women can help one another and through this we can get a lot done. We attended numerous events that enhanced our way of thinking and we were able to have fun and build new relationships at the same time.

Every meeting or event I attended with wela was the highlight of my year. If, when I arrived that morning, I was not in the best of moods one thing was certain, I always left the room with the biggest smile. The wela room felt like my second home.

wela made me realise that each and every day is a blessing and that if I open my eyes and ears I can learn something new every day. It also made me realise that, although it can be difficult to be a recognised woman engineer, with sheer dedication and passion you can do anything you want and gradually get the respect you deserve.

wela showed me that having a heart is important and giving back to the young and old can go a long way and lastly, with the help of wela,

I know that I am beautiful inside and out.

Thank you wela for seeing something in me that I couldn't see in myself.

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## Anelisiwe Ntandane

Industrial Engineering Student



I am Anelisiwe Ntandane and I am currently doing my third year in Industrial Engineering (the in-service training section of my National Diploma course). I first joined wela last year when I was doing my second year studies.

I come from a small village in the Eastern Cape called Butterworth (Nqamakwe). In my spare time I like to relax and chill with friends be-

cause, as everyone knows, there is very little time to enjoy yourself in the engineering department. I also like to read novels and magazines to boost my knowledge.

Through the planned activities with wela I have gained a number of benefits both personally and in general. There have been a lot of events that I was actively involved in while some of them were things I never thought I would ever be exposed to. Being a member of wela was like having dreams come true.

The highlight of my wela experience was the Chata Romano workshop. We were taught how to mix colours from our own wardrobe and maintain a professional look.

wela has played a very important role in my life as it has helped me to gain back my confidence as a young women. This is sometimes lost when you are in a male dominated world and whilst sitting in a classroom full of men. I used to ask myself if I was doing the right course and if I had possibly made a wrong choice when I was considering my career path as it always felt like this field was intended for males only. Since joining wela however, I feel strong enough as a woman to progress in such a field. There are a number of girls from other engineering departments in the wela group and when I look around the room at all the young females I am in awe. Before I joined wela I never imagined being able to sit in a room filled with young female engineers and I am sure the same would apply in the work place. This makes me very proud of myself and proud of all of those women who have chosen engineering as their career.

## Sive Giyose

### Industrial Engineering Student

My name is Sive Giyose and I am currently studying towards a National Diploma in Industrial Engineering. I was born and bred in the mother city (Cape Town), but later relocated with my family to Port Elizabeth.

My hobbies include playing netball, watching movies, doing taeko exer-

cises and listening to music. I am very interested in reading, whether it is books or magazines and I also enjoy surfing the net.

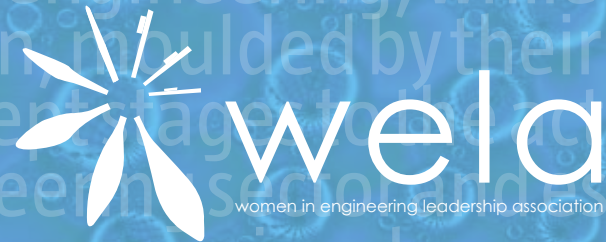
wela specifically deals with women in engineering, so I think one of the benefits of wela is knowing that you have the support of women either working in the field or studying in the field, who have had to face some of the challenges of being in a 'male dominated' field.

Most of the programs that wela offers have one goal in common and that is to mentor and empower women who are in this field on all levels.



All the wela programs and workshops were a highlight. The one that stood out for me definitely had to be The 7 Choices of Successful Women. In the workshop I learnt a lot about the choices we make, the consequences that come with each choice and the ways of dealing with those consequences. I also learnt some of my personal characters which I was not aware of and how these have an impact on my life.

Having joined wela I have gained so much. I became a member of wela at a time when I was not sure if I was really coping in my field of study. Through the programs and activities I gained so much strength and felt empowered by so many individuals. I now have a full understanding of what my strength and weaknesses are. Having gained personal awareness I have conditioned myself to continuously work on my personal, academic and professional development.



THE LOGO: A metamorphosis from mechanical to organic shapes. The mechanical shape symbolises engineering, while the organic flower-like shape represents femininity. The logo symbolises the evolution of younger women, moulded by their mentors to grow into successful engineers. It also represents the evolution of an idea from the initial concept stages to the actual realisation of an engineering project. The logo radiates the association's initiative to change the engineering sector and establish a support structure for women in engineering.

*Wela is the Xhosa word for change/transition.*

*(logo design: Milla Theron, NMMU Graphic Design student)*

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