

# RAND WATER: WOMEN IN WATER SYMPOSIUM

## Dynamic Women in Water

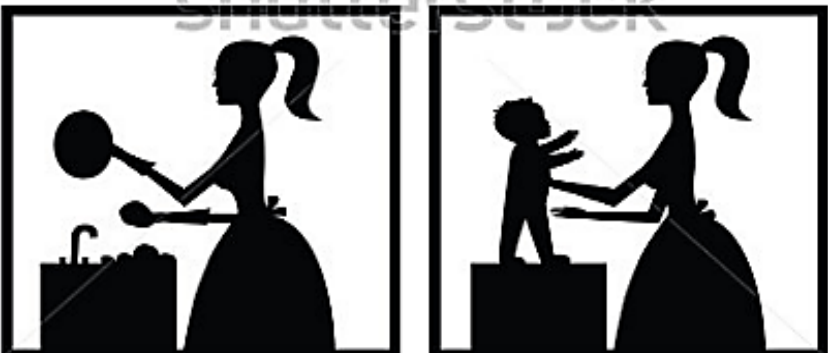
Ayesha Laher

**Date:** 27th August 2025

**Venue:** The NH Hotel (Sandton)



# WOMEN IN WATER



Women are the users of water and therefore understand the need for water better than men





## GENDER EQUALITY IN STEM CAREERS : (SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, MATH)

Worldwide,  
women make up  
11% of  
engineering  
workforce

ECSA: 70% of the  
women who  
graduated with  
engineering  
degrees left the  
sector after  
starting their  
careers because  
they felt isolated  
in their jobs

Stereotypes  
about women's  
abilities start  
early, often  
undermining  
their confidence  
in their  
mathematical  
and technical  
skills.

Women don't  
have nearly as  
many role  
models  
or potential  
mentors as men.  
And this problem  
is even worse for  
women of color.

Women  
consistently earn  
less than men



# Careers in Water

Scientist	Researcher	Engineer	Data Capturer	GIS practitioner
Instrumentation Technician	Software developer	Maintenance Technician	Laboratory Technician	Process Controller
Plant supervisor	Municipal employee	Accountant and Economists	Project Managers	Government Officials
Educator	Community worker	Entrepreneur	Activist	Farmers

# Scientists

Name and surname	Leanne Zdyb Coetzee
Qualifications	MSc Agric (Microbiology)
Current position	Specialist Consultant (Waterlab)
Area of expertise	Water Quality Water Treatment and public health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The WASTEWSTER4COVID project: Develop and implement a method for early detection of the coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) by sampling and analyzing wastewater from urban water systems.</li><li>• Implementation of Solar Bees at Rietvlei to improve water quality and reduce effect of eutrophication</li></ul>	



Name and surname	Esta van Heerden
Qualifications	PhD
Current position	CEO and technical Director iWater and CEO of iLab
Area of expertise	Microbiology, Subsurface biogeochemistry, Bioremediation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Developed and successfully implemented large scale bioremediation in reactors tanks to remove carcinogenic compounds to innocuous forms. This has paved the way for more industrial and mining projects with biological systems.</li><li>• Development and marketing of iLab Water testing kits: to promote credible water quality tests for citizens</li></ul>	



# Activist

Name and surname	Ferrial Adam
Qualifications	PhD (Citizen Science and Environmental Justice in South Africa's Water Sector)
Current position	Executive Director of WaterCAN
Area of expertise	Water Activist, water quality
<p>WaterCAN was founded in 2022 to provide a bold, grassroots-driven response to the water crisis. As a civil society initiative, WaterCAN empowers communities to hold authorities accountable through <b>citizen science</b>, advocacy, and organised civic action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mobilised citizens through three National Water Testing Weeks.</li><li>• Trained <b>1,152 individuals</b> and registered <b>1,818 citizen scientists</b>.</li><li>• Distributed <b>2,721 water testing kits</b> to communities and schools.</li><li>• Supported water testing in <b>95+ schools across six provinces</b>.</li><li>• Enabled communities to upload <b>1,830 test results</b> to a national open-access <b>Water Security Map</b>.</li><li>• Partnered with civic organisations, schools, farmworker associations, biosphere reserves, and municipal forums to promote water rights.</li></ul>	



# Chief Operations Officer

Name and surname	Perina Bridgmohan
Qualifications	Master in Biochemistry
Current position	Chief Operating Officer
Area of expertise	Client Relationship Management (Water and Wastewater)

Over period of 12 years, Perina moved from Junior Process specialist to being part of the Executive team as a Chief Operating Officer.

- AI Driven solutions: data analysis, remote operations, plant optimisation, digital scenarios
- Promote Water conservation and demand management for private clients: implementing efficient water treatment systems, promoting reuse strategies, and embedding sustainability into operational decision-making.
- eThekweni beaches water quality information



# Farmer

Name and surname	Violet “Mam Vi” Mabaso
Qualifications	Interior designing
Current position	Member of Molobanyane Co-operative, Alexandra township
Area of expertise	Urban Farmer

She farms about 47 herbs including basil, thyme, lemongrass, parsley and five different types of mint, which she sells to restaurants and markets around the Sandton area.

She has ventured into pickling, processing and packing on site after having gone on a six-month course with the Department of Social Development on value added products.



# Entrepreneur

Name and surname	Dr Phindi Msomi
Qualifications	DBA, MBA Certified Director (IODSA)
Current position	Group CEO Hazile Group (Pty) Ltd Non-Executive Director of WISA and ECSA
Area of expertise	Hydroponics, Water Reticulation system
Installation of a full grey water and rain water harvesting system for ESK Meats in PMB, KwaZulu Natal	
Custom built DIY Drip Irrigation system for Charles Mopeli Centre, Qwaqwa, Free State	
Veuve Cliqout Bold Future Woman 2025:celebrates bold and visionary women in business who lead with innovation, resilience, and a desire to create positive change in their communities and industries	



# Process Controllers are my hero's!



## WOMEN IN WATER



Suzie Nkambule  
CEO of Nafasi Water, Previous  
Director of Aveng water



**Dr Esper Ncube:** Water Quality  
Specialist at Rand Water, Manager  
Process Technology

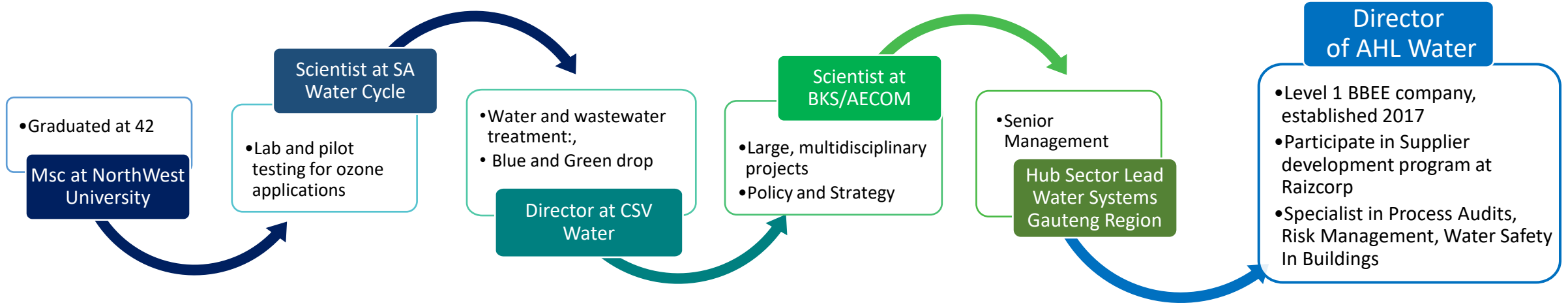


**Dr Michele Kruger:** General Manager  
Water Infrastructure at SMEC, FIDIC  
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council,



**Dr Jennifer Molwantwa**  
CEO of Water Research Commission

# THE STORY OF AHL WATER



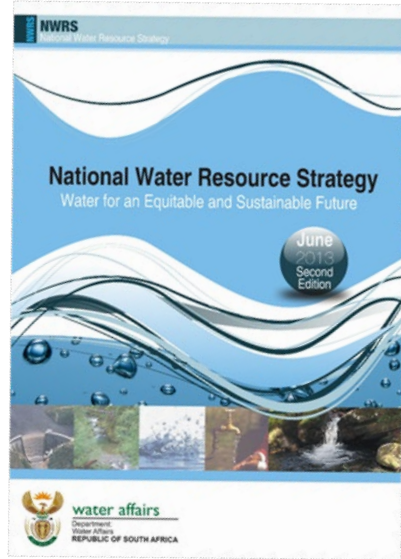
You are never too old to rewrite your life story

Qualifications are meaningless without experience

Management is not the holy grail of success

I am an Entrepreneur, Manager and Scientist

Honesty and integrity are key values

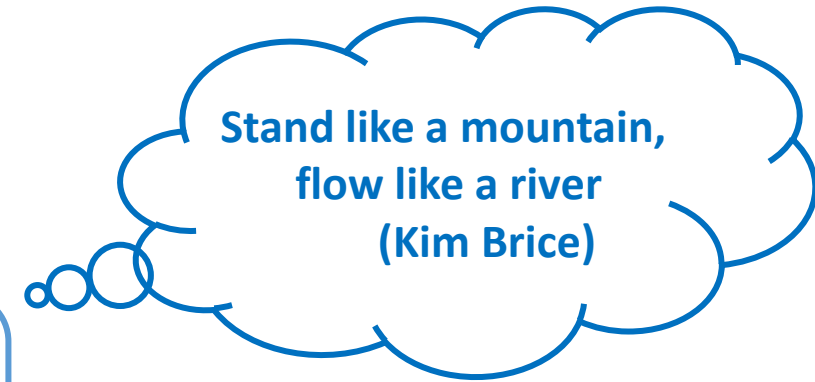
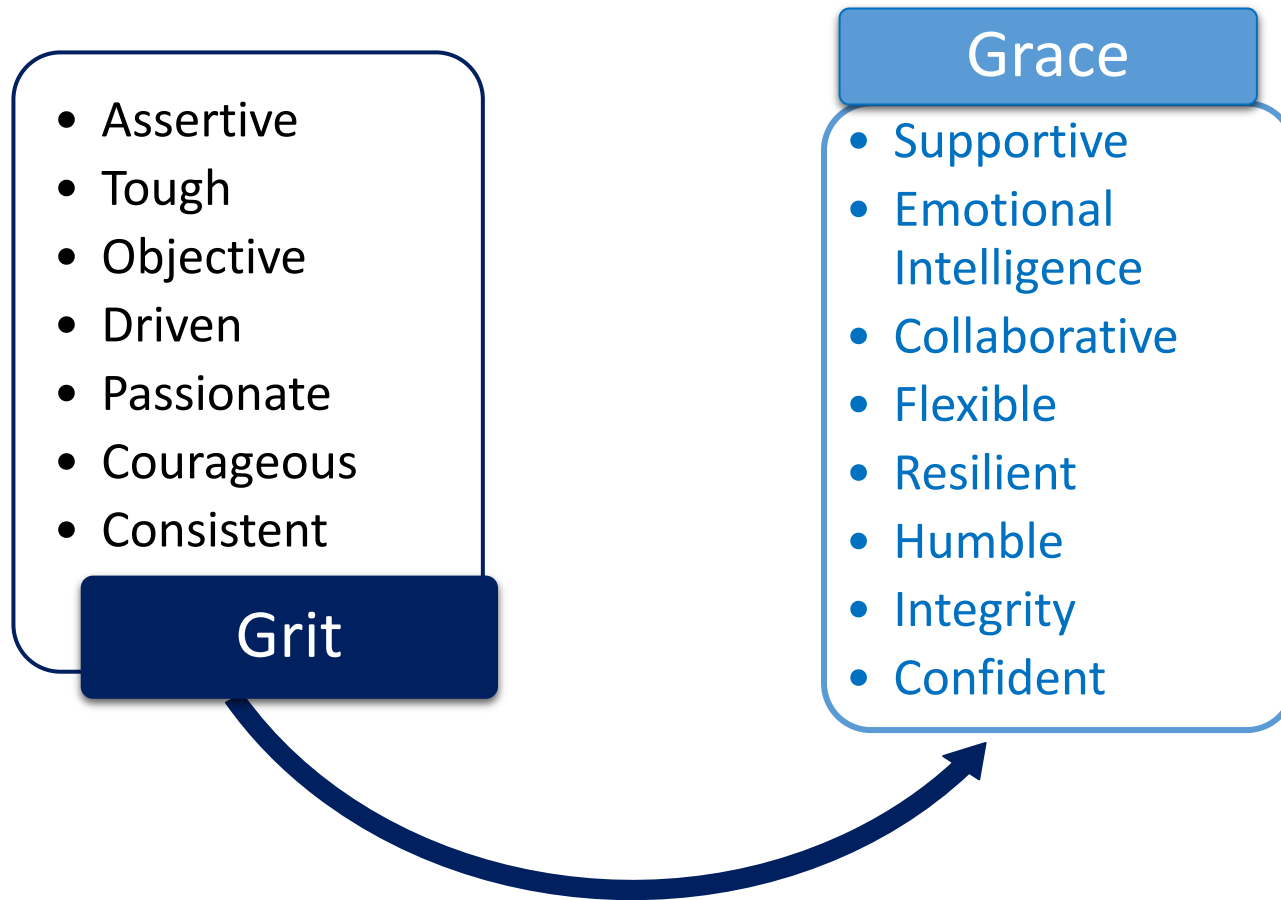


## LIFE VINCENT PALLOTTI HOSPITAL BEATS DAY ZERO WITH WATER FILTRATION PLANT





## Finding the balance between Grit and Grace

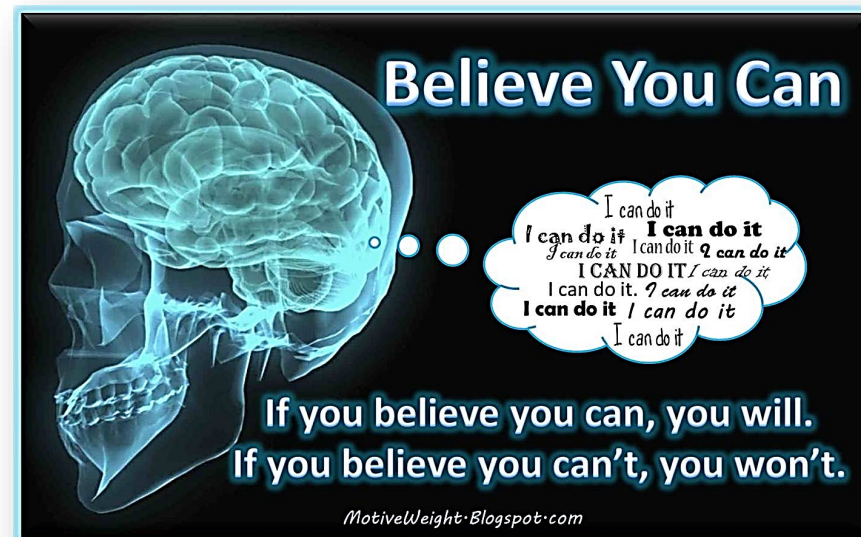


*When leaders leverage both of these principles within themselves, their actions are balanced, versatile and sustainably effective.*

# What do you believe about yourself?



Wind or Leaf?



Hammer or Nail?

Instagram is  
not real life



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**Strong women don't  
put others down; *they*  
*fix each other's crowns*  
*and lift each other up.***