

## woman to woman

## I have worked my way to the top

**Miriam Ngolo is the Plant Manager at Bamburi Cement. The BSc degree holder tells Lifestyle about her career journey and the challenges she faces**

**Q: Who is Miriam Ngolo?**

A: I am very warm and young-at-heart person. I am a mother, a wife and career woman and a Muslim.

**Tell us about the international award you received recently**

I thank God for bringing me this far and thank Women and Girls Lead Global (Kenya Branch) for this recognition. I was a finalist among many other deserving women in the category of 'No limits Breakthrough leadership.' This award fetes women who have excelled in fields traditionally considered male-oriented fields.

I was also recognised for my efforts in mentoring girls and encouraging them into the field of science.

**What are you most proud of?**

I am proud of the learning curve that I have gone through in the last 14 years; literally rising through the ranks while being moulded into transformational leadership and the fact that Bamburi Cement supports the development of female professionals.

**How do you manage a position believed to be male oriented?**

Dedication, passion, experience.

**Challenges you encounter?**

Managing people and driving for results is one of the most challenging things to do but this job gives me the opportunity for personal growth. I become more self aware and stretch myself outside my comfort zone.

**What does your job entail?**

As plant manager, my first concern is health and safety of employees, contractors and customers. This entails rigorous implementation of all LafargeHolcim's Health and Safety Standards and advisories, ensuring the plant is in full compliance to the Kenya Health and

Safety regulations; and ensuring health and safety culture is upheld. I also ensure that annual targets for production and dispatch have been achieved.

**What are your successes?**

I take pride in my achievements as the Chief Chemist at the Mom-basa Plant. The plant laboratory was rated the Best Laboratory amongst the LafargeHolcim Africa Plants



in 2004! And off course, my move to Nairobi Grinding Plant as plant manager is my greatest achievement given that there are not many female plant managers in LafargeHolcim.

**What gives you the greatest fulfillment and encouragement?**

My spirituality, my family and all the people who surround me with unconditional love.

**How has the career journey been?**

Growing into management is the end result of your hard work and willingness to excel in every role that you perform. In my last 14 years at Bamburi, I have risen through the ranks and during this journey I have been undergone a lot of management trainings.

As a manager, I believe my greatest strength is in working with people and listening. I have a very effective management team.

**What motivates you to work hard?**

Passion to excel and to ensure everyone around me excels too!

**What food do you associate with your family?**

I love trying out assorted recipes, but biriani, fish and sponge cakes

**Do you have children?**

I am a mother of one, Ahmed is 11 years old.

**Who are your role models?**

Michelle Obama — for her balance in career and family, for her focus on Girl Child empowerment and education as well as her style sense.

The late Miriam Makeba — Her sensational music spoke and still speaks to many. I loved her courage and straight talk.

**Dream holiday destination?**

I love Kenyan holidays. They are simple and not costly. You are either at the beach, enjoying nature or at the farm.

**Which car are you?**

I am a Mercedes! A stylish per-



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former that embodies sophistication, intelligence and safety.

**What don't most people know about you?**

I am very conservative and lead a private life.

**How do you unwind?**

With family members playing indoor games or catching up with old friends over a drink. I love singing and I do Karaoke in my house! I share this hobby with most of my siblings so we have a good time when we are together.

**What are you most passionate about?**

I love gardening and interior decorating.

**What plans for the future?**

To break the glass ceiling and to continue being a remarkable woman in all aspects of my life.

**Your parting shot?**

On career: Choose a career you love. You are on a continuous learning journey whatever career you embark on. Embrace it with all your heart and be patient, taking time to prepare yourself for the next level.

On life: Enjoy life to the fullest, be happy and appreciate the people around you!

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## Looking forward to thrill-filled new year

The last 12 months have yielded some memorable cultural events. Fans of theatre, dance and music were treated to unforgettable performances from local and international artistes.

Navrang Fine Arts Foundation lived up to its promise to provide authentic classical shows. Its shows of Indian classical dance form Kathak dubbed *Ghungroo* earlier in the year and later "An Evening with Kaushiki" featuring an all-female musical group were entertaining and enlightening experiences.

Bollywood's heartthrob, actor, singer and director Farhan Akhtar mesmerised Kenyans with his *Zinda Ho Tum* musical promoted by radio station East FM.

Ranee's Production brought us Bollywood's Badshah Mika Singh spiced up with Baby Doll love portions and served by singer Kanika Kapoor.

The singing siblings Saleem and Suleiman always leave fans asking for more and their return visit in 2015 was no different.

Comedies all the way from Mumbai lead by Gujarati thespian Siddharath Randeria and promoted by Sailesh and Mehul Savani have an ardent fan following here. Their presentations were received heartily.

Shows put up by our own artistic, creative and enterprising entertainers were equally unforgettable.

Hoodwink9 Theatre's innovative *Simba*, based on the immensely successful animated movie and Broadway musical *The Lion King* was a perfect blend of music, drama, romance, comedy and theatrical thrill. It certainly was a local production to be proud of. The other Kenyan theatrical event worth mention was Aperture Productions' *Out of Order*, a British comedy by Ray Cooney exquisitely handled and directed by Amar Desai with a local angle. It was a winner.

Classical and traditional dance expositions by Kamini's School of Dancing and Nritalaya featuring Kenyan talent were also thrilling.

In a special tribute to our local singers, dancers and musicians, you have propagated and kept our heritage alive in a grand manner for which I salute you.

Picking up cue from an entertaining 2015, show goers can be assured of yet another year of exciting and loveable activity this year. I wish you happy and enjoyable show going in 2016.

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## Road safety a direct result of our value system

If a pedestrian steps out into flowing traffic without looking, whether the vehicle that hits him is doing 30, 40, 50, or 60 kph, the collision is the pedestrian's fault.

However, science confirms that if the vehicle is travelling at 30kph, the pedestrian almost certainly lives. If the vehicle is travelling at 60kph, the pedestrian almost certainly dies.

So while the pedestrian is to blame for the collision, who might be to blame for his death? That's a question street and traffic planners, law writers and courts should ponder. And motorists, too.

It is a question that lies behind a much under-rated aspect of road safety: the moral attitude of people to road laws and traffic behaviours. Both those who make the rules and those who break them.

Rules are a direct reflection of our so-called "value system" — what we

consider right or wrong, important or trivial, what we condemn and what we condone. And the degree to which we find a behaviour acceptable or abhorrent.

For example, are rape and stealing a chicken comparable offences? For many years, and not very long ago, our courts imposed remarkably similar penalties for the two crimes.

Whether you find that outrageous or reasonable says much about your "values". And the consensus of our personal opinions represent the values of our society. And those, presumably, are what guide our national laws, punishment levels, and enforcement priorities.

So what "values" do our current road laws, punishment levels and enforcement practices represent — what message do they send to every road user? Do they tally with your personal values, or what you believe are our

cumulative social or national values?

And if not, why not, and what should be done about that? By whom? It is a universal truth, now widely acknowledged, that a law must be "respected" in order for it to work. And to be respected, the framing and application of the law must resonate with our values.

Is causing death by dangerous driving the moral equivalent of manslaughter? A key answer is whether court sentences treat the two offences equally.

Ergo, if society does not (sufficiently) condemn lawless or dangerous behaviour on the road, the law will not be respected. And until it is, the laws will not be universally obeyed. And until they are, the roads will not be safe.

Through education and punishment, perhaps vehicle owners and drivers need stronger reminders that

they owe a duty to the public; that a licence to drive is a privilege — the public is "trusting" motorists to obey the rules and exercise due care, and if they betray that trust the privilege will be removed and they will be treated and punished as "criminals".

And if they kill someone through negligence, they will be punished as severely as society would demand if, say, a grocer sold arsenic in a packet accidentally marked "sugar".

In absolutely equal measure, it is incumbent on those who make and enforce the laws to properly represent (and decently guide) social values with a degree of clarity, consistency, competence, diligence and equitability that will earn "respect".

Does our social value system do enough to make both "sides" equally and adequately accountable?

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