

## Celebrating Namdeb Gems: Building on a Shiny Legacy

**Pauline Thomas-Kahupi shares her story of embracing a lifetime of positive impact inspired by Namdeb's 'shiny stones'.**

**P**auline places her primary focus on seamlessly connecting the crucial new intersections between external brand positioning, internal cultural integrity, and alignment, while also striving to build a net positive corporate legacy for the organization. She has worked at a senior managerial level within the fields of HR, Public Relations, Branding and Sustainability, with over 18 years of managerial duties for Namdeb. In 2019 she was afforded an opportunity by Namdeb to join the De Beers UK Corporate Affairs team for two years on secondment as the Building Forever Programme Manager – a sustainability framework for De Beers Group. She returned to Namdeb in 2021 as the company's Head of Corporate Affairs and Sustainable Impact. Pauline achieved Chartered Public Relations Practitioner (PRISA) status in 2017 and is currently a full scholarship candidate for an Executive MBA, Class of September 2024. She is fuelled by two beliefs that keep her energised: - "Life is a journey – not a destination" and "to live a creative life we must lose the fear of being wrong".

### **How did you first hear about Namdeb?**

I am a product of the Namibian diamond world having lived in Oranjemund from the age of 3 months until I was in grade 12 as my parents worked for Namdeb's predecessor – Consolidated Diamond Mines (CDM). It was inevitable that I would know about the national mining icon formed in 1994.

### **How did you get your first job at Namdeb? When was that?**

Namdeb was one of the many companies I applied to as a young graduate of the University of Namibia (UNAM). Destiny brought me back to my diamond roots when I was hired in 2001 over 23 years ago. I applied and competed against other candidates in an interview for a Namdeb HR role and was fortunate to have been awarded a permanent contract as an HR Graduate Trainee.

### **What memory stands out from those early years?**

I felt an immense sense of pride in joining the company associated with my family's history of employment, and I instantly felt a strong sense of belonging at Namdeb. My dedication and enthusiasm to serve have been consistent ever since. As a Graduate, I recall bumping into Namdeb's General Manager one day – and although I froze, he smiled and said, "Hallo Pauline - I have heard great things about you..." I was inspired and still smile when I recall that memory more than twenty years ago when I was acknowledged. I was filled with so much pride and desire to continue making lasting impressions.

### **When did you realize that there was an opportunity to grow and develop yourself at Namdeb from more than someone with a job into someone with a career?**

During my tenure as a Graduate Trainee, I



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quickly grasped that a job is merely defined by its title and associated pay scale. What truly distinguishes one's trajectory, relevance, and career development is the unwavering passion, dedication, and personal investment put forth – not solely relying on others to pave the way. These factors play a pivotal role in shaping a meaningful career.

### **Please describe the company at the time when you joined Namdeb and how it has changed over the years?**

I joined a Namdeb that employed over 5,000 permanent employees and like most mining firms, it was male dominated with very few previously disadvantaged individuals occupying professional roles. Safety was not a value and being a responsible and sustainable business was limited to global standards back then. The Namdeb of today has had to reduce employee numbers for various strategic reasons which include being more sustainable and mitigating closure risks. Furthermore, Namdeb has embarked upon town transformation efforts to enhance our future. The Company is still one of Namibia's largest employers with a long-term future. Affirmative Action plans and Bursary schemes over the years have resulted in a much more diversified workforce. Today, sustainability is one of our core values and it is beyond applying standards because we are genuinely authentic about practically ensuring a better tomorrow for the communities and generations to come.

### **What is your current position at Namdeb and which responsibilities have you taken on over your time at Namdeb?**

I hold the position of Head of Corporate Affairs and Sustainable Impact,

where I oversee initiatives and interventions aimed at fostering a lasting positive impact and building trust in natural diamonds. Through the leverage of the Namdeb Brand, I work to strengthen stakeholder buy-in and alignment. This includes leading the company's Communication/Brand/PR, Social Performance, and the Sustainability teams. Over the years I have worked in various Corporate Affairs and HR roles and served on several committees as well as being a Namdeb representative on Boards.

### **What about working for Namdeb makes you proud?**

Namdeb has an incredibly rich history and continues to build on a positive legacy beyond Mining. I have been fortunate to be both a recipient of and a contributor to Namdeb's positive legacy.

### **How has your career at Namdeb changed you as a person?**

I met so many wonderful people through Namdeb and the opportunities afforded by Namdeb have and continue to grow me immensely.

### **How did Namdeb help you with your career development?**

Namdeb is by nature an enabler and an organization centred on innovation, learning, and growth opportunities. Our employees are truly empowered to take charge of their career development through the avenues provided for by the business. This development includes both

**Namdeb Head of Corporate Affairs and Sustainable Impact, Pauline Thomas-Kahupi.**

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practical exposure and academic enrichment. Most employees including myself make use of the Namdeb Self Study Assistance Scheme, whereby Namdeb reimburses employees with 87.5% back of the money used to study. The company has also been instrumental in providing me with opportunities to attend various professional development programmes, as well as lead on HR and Corporate Affairs related projects. Further to my career development is the two-year developmental opportunity to work De Beers UK co-facilitated by Namdeb and De Beers.

### **Which of your colleagues helped mentor, motivate and inspire you through your career at Namdeb?**

There are several individuals that continue to coach and support my career, because one's career takes on dissimilar turns and growth paths over the years. However, I would like to single out 3 inspirational women in my life – Melissa Shanjengange, Mee Inge Zaamwani-Kamwi and Ophelia Netta. In addition, my family; comprising my daughters, Tarohole, Ayshah, and Melissa, along with my parents, siblings and my incredible husband, Inamutilla Kahupi, whom I met during his tenure at Namdeb, continue to be my greatest source of encouragement and unwavering support.

### **What advice would you give to young Namibians looking to start their own careers?**

My advice is simple, "you are the master of your destiny – other factors may exist as enablers, however, you need to believe in yourself first, take accountability for shaping your career and remember that "life is a journey – not a destination, don't burn your bridges with people you meet on your journey and to live a creative life it is important to lose the fear of being wrong."

### **When was the first time you saw a diamond?**

I cannot pinpoint the exact day; however I vividly remember seeing the 'shiny stones' and acknowledging their significance and profound positive impact they have had on countless lives throughout Namibia, including my own life.



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