

COURTNEY BERTHA MASUKU:

NUST - Environmental Science and Health



My name is Courtney Mbalenhle Masuku, I am a lady aged 20 pursuing a degree in Environmental Science and Health at the National University of Science and Technology. I stay at New Luveve, Bulawayo. I grew up in Matebeleland South living with my grandparents at J.Z. Moyo High School where my grandfather was employed as a bus driver and my mother was working in Botswana. I attended West Nicholson Primary School and later UMgusa Primary School when we moved to Bulawayo. I proceeded to Eveline High School where I did my form one to upper six and my aunt was paying my school fees.

I was raised by a single mother and I have never known my father. My mother started struggling to make ends meet when she stopped working in Botswana and my grandfather retired. My aunt also lost her job when I was in upper six. I later proceeded to university. The department of education at my church pledged to pay my school fees.

I got a place to be a duty teacher at Langdon Hostel, Eveline High School in the CBD. The duties include ringing the rising bell for boarders, supervising them when they do their chores,

inspecting them when they leave for school, supervising study in the evening and receiving parents on weekends and visiting days. This opportunity helped me cut down on transport costs to school. I also gained skills such as time management, working under pressure and being able to work with everyone.

At the end of my first semester for part one, the Education department Head at my church informed me that they were unable to pay my school fees. I started searching for part time jobs and worked at ZITF and OK Mart to pay my school fees but the money I got was not enough to clear all the areas. I later applied for the Mthwakazi scholarship at the end of my second semester first year and my application letter was approved. From my first semester second year, Mr. Mpofu introduced me to Ms Thokozile Mkwanazi who later introduced me to Mrs Hlengiwe Sibanda who has been working tirelessly to ensure that my school fees are paid. My understanding is that Mrs. Sibanda has kindly extended herself in memory of her late Husband, Mr. Benson Sibanda. I would like to thank them for the sacrifice they are making for me to continue my education.

Since I got the sponsorship, my life at university has been easier with less pressure to look for part time jobs to pay schools fees. I have managed to acquire knowledge in the field of Environmental Science and Health. Through field trips I have encountered practical problems such as the invasion of UMguza Dam in Bulawayo by water hyacinth, an invasive species of a water weed. This has been a result of the inability of the city council to maintain the nearby sewage treatment plant and since then, raw sewage has been discharged into the dam and accelerated the growth of the water weed.



Water hyacinth has also been a cause of concern in Harare where it has completely covered Lake Chivero and used up oxygen, suffocating other aquatic organisms such as fish. The water hyacinth multiplies geometrically every day and this has resulted in scientists being unable to destroy it. The fear has been that the use of herbicides could affect non-target species. This has been a source of motivation to me as a prospective environmental health technician to find solutions to the problem as it has compromised water supply and sanitation in Bulawayo.

I have also been involved in community service through clubs such as the NUST Environmental Society and the Rotaract Club. I am also a member of the NUST Peer Educators club and this has helped me gain knowledge on Sexual Reproductive Health issues such as HIV and AIDS and cervical cancer and to share the knowledge with other people. Being at university has also gave me an opportunity to meet foreign students and learn more about their languages and culture.

I would like to pursue a Master of Science Degree in Public Health and a PhD in a relevant field in future so as to increase my competence as an Environmental Health Technician and to solve problems in Zimbabwe and Africa at large. I would also like to run an Environmental Consultancy company that will solve environmental problems, at the same time creating jobs for other youths. I would also like to have a scholarship fund that will sponsor students in Zimbabwe to get educated and solve problems in the African context as Africa is projected that it will be the youngest continent by 2050 with the majority of the population being youths.

