

22-year-old Rumaanah Khan is blazing a trail for women in Stem

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As the world celebrates International Girls in ICT Day on 27 April, it's important to put the spotlight on those young women who are building ICT careers for themselves even in the face of major challenges. One such young woman is 22-year-old Rumaanah Khan who, having spent her life striving for excellence and working to make her close-knit family proud, is now reaping the rewards of hard work and making the most of the opportunities made available to her.



Khan is all the more remarkable as she suffers from fibromyalgia, a condition which causes musculoskeletal pain, accompanied by extreme fatigue, and disrupted sleep and mood patterns. Despite her health challenges, she is committed to learn and grow every day and to inspire others, just as she has been inspired by her tutors and mentors.

After trying her hand in a number of different industries, Rumaanah earned herself a place on Huawei's skills development learnership programme for people with disabilities. On completing the course and after her lecturer saw that Khan would be ideally suited to working in a cyber security environment, Huawei facilitated an external internship within the Wits University cyber security department. Twelve months later and Khan has landed a fixed term contract position at Wits as an IT consultant.

“ We need to promote and harness brilliant minds coming together to create more inclusive society that is also human-centered. ”

– Rumaanah Khan

“I realised that I have an unquenchable desire for information technology,” says Khan “and Huawei has fueled that passion. The programme radically changed my life, providing me with the education, skills, ability and belief in myself to go into the working world and seize every opportunity.”

This kind of advancement is a powerful reflection of the theme for this year's International Girls in ICT Day, which is 'Digital Skills for Life'.

Huawei's programme has been running successfully for six years. Khan was taken on to the 2022 programme in April 2022

and worked at Wits whilst studying simultaneously for her CompTIA 1101 qualification (which she achieved) and is currently working on 1102.

Thomzama Matlhapa, Huawei's Skills Development facilitator says: "This learnership programme identifies young, talented people with a passion for the technology sector. The programme upskills them and opens doors to opportunities to which they would not otherwise be exposed. We are proud of Rumaanah and how she used this opportunity to go much further."



Rumaanah Khan



Thonzama Matlhapa

In South Africa, there is both a general skills shortage in technology, as well as a massive gender gap – one which Khan hopes to fill. She says: “I see myself as an IT professional in the cyber environment and hopefully moving up to a more managerial position eventually. I want to be able to lead with confidence, towards a common goal of making technology safe for everyone.”

Khan sees herself in the future at the vanguard of protecting communities and individuals through a safer application of these technologies. She believes that she should do her utmost to educate herself to assist with the transition of other women into the world of ICT and Stem related careers. She believes that in doing this she can add value to her community and to society at large. She hopes to inspire others and to innovate in her field.

Khan says the fourth industrial revolution is a massive growth opportunity for herself as well as for South Africa and the African continent. “The 4IR has kicked us into a higher gear and involves a number of disruptive technologies.”

Digital transformation is offering organisations the opportunity to create value not only through technological advancement but by enabling women, including disabled women, to take a leading role in shaping a more inclusive future.

“We need to promote and harness brilliant minds coming together to create more inclusive society that is also human-centered,” Khan says.

International Girls in ICT Day seeks to bridge the gender digital divide, to observe the achievements of women in ICT and Stem careers to date and to encourage more young women to become passionate about technology and all it has to offer.

Huawei, through its skills development and learnership opportunities, is committed to closing the gender skills gap, and helping young women like Rumaanah Khan to forge their own path towards a fulfilling career in the ICT industry.

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