

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Garden Route District Municipality's Nina Viljoen now "Dr Nina Viljoen"

Nina Viljoen, Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Adaptation Practitioner at the Garden Route District Municipality (GRDM), was on 12 July 2019, conferred a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) qualification at the University of Cape Town's Department of Environmental and Geographical Sciences.



Talking passionately to the Communication and Graphic Design Unit of GRDM regarding the progress of her education over the years, she said: "I progressed from having a Grade 7 (previous standard 5) school qualification at the age of 19, to achieving my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), with specialisation in Water Resources Management".

Her thesis is titled: "*Participative water demand management as an adaptive response within complex socio-institutional systems: A City of Cape Town case study, South Africa*". However, she admitted that it could not have been done without will power, commitment and true dedication.

Dr Nina Viljoen, soon after the graduation ceremony held in Cape Town on 12 July 2019.

Referring back to her Master of Science (MSc) Degree, she explained: "I also focused on water resources management, more specifically alternative water resources, with my dissertation entitled: "*The feasibility of rainwater and stormwater harvesting within a winter rainfall climate context: A Commercial Building Focus*," for which I received a *Cum Laude* recognition".

Touching on how she persevered with so much at hand, she said: “At times I had to isolate myself from family issues and had to work over weekends and on public holidays on my thesis. I also participated in Garden Route Environmental Management related initiatives, and attended forums and workshops that took my mind off the strict routine of the PhD studies”, she added. At times when she felt despondent and felt like giving up, these initiatives helped her to get re-energised and motivated again.

Sharing briefly about her childhood years, she said she grew up in a single parent household. “I attended 14 primary schools as my family was mostly homeless and moved around a lot. Sadly, due to the psychological and physical impacts of these hardships we faced, I lost my only sibling to suicide”.

Dr Viljoen is adamant that education saved her life and has given her independence. She would like to be a role model to the youth as an example of the importance of education in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty and hardship. With regard to her immediate future plans, she concluded: “With my expertise and experience gained through my PhD studies, I will continue to help the Garden Route district with water resource planning and drought awareness initiatives”.

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