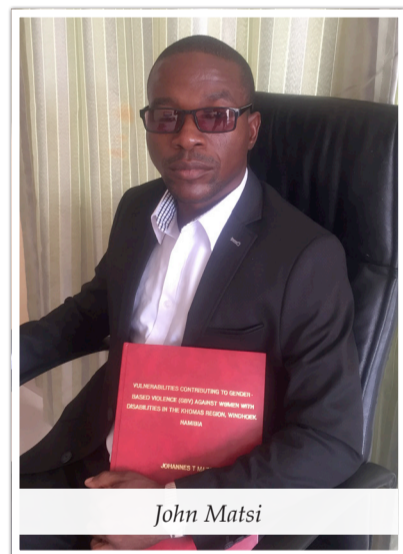


Larger than sight

Blind Student Graduates with Master Degree

Born and bred in the small northern town of Ongwediva, John Matsi, a student with visual impairment, has achieved what very few people ever do - obtain a Masters from the University of Namibia. He specialized in Gender and Development Studies.

Intrigued by his larger than life story, UNAM Forum asked John to narrate his journey. My academic journey began in 2004, when I was admitted into the University of Namibia to pursue the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology. I had just completed my grade 12 at Gabriel Taapopi Senior Secondary School, in Ongwediva.



John Matsi

Since I was the second student with visual impairment to ever enroll at UNAM, the first few months were difficult. The University was not equipped with all the teaching aids

for students with special needs. I had trouble just moving around, let alone finding sufficient material that I could read. However, with the support from the Department of Special Education, particularly Dr. Cynthy Haihambo and Dr. Mostert, I adapted and gradually picked up.

Despite multiple challenges along the way, I vowed to never give up on my academic dreams. I knew that inclusive education is around the corner and preferred that its arrival would find me hobbling forward and not sitting by idly.

Instead, to make it through the degree, I had to make use of tape recorders and cassettes to capture every lecture. By the end of every semester I would have accumulated a whole box of cassettes that often doubled by the end of the year. What's more, I had to endure the cumbersome exercise of having to listen through all these cassettes to prepare for exams.

I envied other students as they spoke of summaries, and short notes, a luxury I could not afford. In 2006, whilst in my 3rd year, things changed for the better. The University established the Disability Unit with the assistance of Volunteers from Canada (VSO). The unit was soon equipped with computers with speech software, internet and Braille transcribers. That was a turning point in my woes. I was happy inclusive education finally arrived. As a consequence, the last two years of my study were less challenging compared to the first two.

In 2008, I graduated with the Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology.

After a few years in the corporate industry, I resolved to get a higher qualification, knowing full well that more challenges lay ahead. So, in 2014, I enrolled for the Master of Arts in Gender and Development Studies, at UNAM.

The Master's programme required extensive reading - a challenge for students with visual impairment. I recall tough presentations and the proverbial research project. However, with self-belief, passion and the will to succeed, I completed the course and am set to graduate in April this year. I feel that my performance could have been better, but passing well, is not the real aim of education, learning should be the reason we actually seek an education. I am glad to say that I have learned a lot, about the subject, and about myself.

I am humbled to have become the first student with visual impairment to attain the Master's Degree from UNAM and equally grateful to all lecturers that have played a meaningful role in my academic pursuit.

Lastly, I would like to encourage prospective students with disabilities to never surrender their aspirations in life on the ground of their respective impairments. Disability does not mean inability. Thus, it should not predetermine who you become.

Himba girl with a passion for making food

Mbapeua Karutjaiva is one of the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources' top performing students scheduled to graduate this year, with a degree in Food Science and Technology.



Mbapeua Karutjaiva

Born in Opuwo and raised in Swakopmund, she describes herself as a social person fascinated by making things.

Mbaperua's final year research investigated how to make juice from Mutete, the Hibiscus Calyces. She says her passion lies in adding value to traditional food, and hopes to work on projects that focus on related subjects.

Her childhood dream was to become a Pharmacist, but this soon

changed when she discovered that apart from making medicine there are professionals who make food.

When asked what her secret is for performing well, she said "Know your pace". Further adding that, "If you know that you are slower than your friends, put in more effort, don't rely on your friends and classmates' pace, we are all different".

Tanaka vows to change Africa's financial system



Tanaka Makuva

UNAM'S best Financial Mathematics grandaunt and actuarial scientist in the making, Tanaka MAKUVAZA, has set his ambitions on changing the finance landscape in Africa.

Born and bred in Harare, Tanaka is one of three children. His mother is a primary school teacher, while his father is a university lecturer.

Tanaka is the best performing student from the Faculty of Science this year, graduating Cum Laude! He credits his excellent academic performance to sheer hard work

and optimism and a high school teacher who once told him "You don't need a job or a career, you need a purpose".

Tanaka's ambition currently see him working on several projects, aimed at revolutionising existing banking models, with hopes to make funding and financial services more available to the poor. "Many people live in poverty, when they shouldn't, and I want to change that", he says. He works with South African partners in the area of Financial Technology and is positive about the outcomes.

GRADUATION Dates 2019

Katima Mulilo Campus

02 April

Katima Mulilo Campus, Main Hall

Windhoek Campuses

11 - 12 April

Safari Hotel & Conference Centre

Southern Campus

25 April

Keetmanshoop Show Ground Hall

Rundu Campus

04 April

Rundu Trade Fair Centre

Northern Campuses

17 April

Trade Fair Centre, Ongwediva

#UNAMGraduation2019