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Can you tell us a little bit about your job and your career journey?

I grew up in Ghana, worked for a year and moved to the United Kingdom for my masters degree and started work right after. I have worked on major capital infrastructure projects and supported non-UK projects. I manage engineering projects throughout the project lifecycle.

What did you want to be when you grew up and why? Who inspired you?

I wanted to be the first female secretary general of the United Nations. It was a desire to be a pacesetter and boundary breaker. I wanted to work with the UN and travel the world and make the world a better place.

What difference did you want to make for yourself and young people through volunteering with Inspiring the Future?

My first volunteer experience, on starting work, was a careers day at a school in East London. I learnt that there are pupils who need exposure to employers and employees with similar demographics. A real desire was born to see young girls and pupils of disadvantaged backgrounds attain the awareness that was not so readily available in their communities. It was for pupils to know that demographics do not define or influence your career paths.

How long have you been volunteering with Inspiring the Future?

Since December, 2015.

What events and activities have you taken part in?

Most activities for different classes including:

- 1 'What's my Line?' – where pupils guess careers by asking questions
- 2 Careers day
- 3 Interviewing skills
- 4 CV reviews
- 5 Exercise days – schools allow volunteers to undertake an activity with the pupils. I recently did a 'Building Bridges' competition with Year 2s which also helped with their team work and leadership skills
- 6 Launch events e.g. Year of Engineering, Women in Science, etc.

What has been the best part about volunteering?

My greatest delight has been seeing the pupils' faces light up when they come across or hear of very exciting careers. E.g. the formula One Driver, Orthopaedic Surgeon, the Environmentalist who works with plasma. Also, for some of the younger girls to know that engineering is not always about dirt, mud and grease (although that is also cool!)

What has been the strangest/funniest/best question you've been asked?

A 6th form girl asked "Do I think there is a gender pay gap?" I was pleased to know that young girls are aware of the challenges out there and are willing to learn and make conscious efforts to circumvent and improve it for themselves and others.

Describe Inspiring the Future in five words

Exemplary connection for future success.

What have you learnt from volunteering with Inspiring the Future about yourself and about young people?

There is a lot to learn from young people if we are open to listen. Most young people are quite clear on their career path either through reading or a great interest in a topic. Others are not so sure. Our style of mentoring or volunteering should be inclusive and open to these.

Who or what inspires you today and what is the reason?

I am inspired by both men and women who have ignored the naysayers and worked closely with a team (around them) to influence their companies, communities and the world. It is seeing a career or job beyond something that just pays the bills but also an opportunity to leave a legacy including helping young black women achieve and break barriers in circles that were and are still difficult to.

What would you say to other volunteers thinking of volunteering with Inspiring the Future?

The benefits may not be that tangible at your first volunteering experience until after a few years when you may chance upon a young professional who might tell you your words changed their career path. Or at career evenings, have a parent tell you, without your input they would have directed their wards/children down a different career path or avenue to getting a formal qualification. If you can, use your annual holidays or encourage your employers to support such initiatives.

What's the one message you feel is important to share with the young people you speak to?

There are several hurdles to overcome in life, however, with awareness and the right mentoring you can do it. Careers are what you make it – there is something to learn from every role you take and those always come in handy at a time in your professional life. There are different routes to a successful career if you truly want it; be open to opportunities. Ask questions!

How have you benefited from volunteering with Inspiring the Future? Please give examples to skills, knowledge, attitude and behaviour.

- 1 Improved greatly on my public speaking
- 2 Improved on my interaction with children and young people
- 3 Working closely with teachers to determine the best exercises

What difference do you think you've made to the lives of young people who you spoke with?

For the young girls it is letting them know, through your Inspiring the Woman campaign, that there are no longer careers termed 'male careers'.

Any other comments you'd like to add?

Inspiring the Future and its other initiatives are an excellent link between employers/employees and schools in bridging the UK skills shortage.

My greatest delight has been seeing pupils' faces light up when they come across or hear about exciting careers!