



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

Congrats President Cyril Ramaphosa



Working on Fire congratulates former Deputy President, Cyril Ramaphosa, on his appointment as the President of South Africa. The news of his appointment was celebrated by many with hopes of seeing change in the country, especially regarding youth employment.

During a Public Employment Programme–Inter-Ministerial Committee (PEP-IMC) tour to Thaba 'Nchu in the Free State on 13 October 2007, the then Deputy President expressed his gratitude towards the firefighters from Working on Fire for serving the country in such an excellent manner. Deputy President Ramaphosa, who led the PEP-IMC structure at the time, was accompanied by several Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Ministers and members of the PEP-IMC, who included senior government leaders.

He commended the firefighters for the discipline and high fitness levels visible in their work saying, "The international community knows about South Africa's Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP), of which the Working on Fire programme forms part. It is internationally recognised and thus a very important programme."

The then Deputy President said that the EPWP aimed to uplift participants – mostly unemployed young people – and equip them with the skills that would make them more employable in the private sector.

Editorial Team



President Ramaphosa speaking to firefighters in Thaba Nchu during Public Employment Programme visit (Oct 2017)

Creating work opportunities for youth

On Friday 16 February, President Cyril Ramaphosa made his first speech as the President of the country, during the State of the Nation Address (SONA), and reaffirmed government's commitment to youth development.

He stated that government's public employment programmes had created more than 3,2 million work opportunities since the start of the current Parliament. In the midst of widespread unemployment, these programmes continue to provide much-needed income, work experience and training.

Working on Fire is part of the government's public employment programme, which resides under the national Department of Environmental Affairs.

"We are one people, committed to work together to find jobs for our youth, to build factories and roads, houses and clinics, to prepare our children for a world of change and progress, to build cities and towns where families may be safe, productive and content," President Ramaphosa said.

President impressed with Working on Fire Programme

As Deputy President, President Ramaphosa had several encounters with Working on Fire, and was impressed with the Working on Fire Programme.

In September 2015, speaking at the official opening of the 14th World Forestry Congress at the Chief Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre in Durban, Deputy President Ramaphosa praised Working on Fire for instilling the commitment and passion in young people to love and ultimately take care of the environment, and reminded the gathering that Working on Fire played a key role in protecting the forests. He thanked the firefighters for their hard work. "Working on Fire is one of the South African Government's marquee programmes to create work opportunities for young men and women," he said.

The following year in May, he paid a surprise visit to the Working on Fire Newlands Base in Cape Town, where he found the base abuzz with activities.

Mr Ramaphosa was amazed by the firefighters, who were busy completing their fitness training, including pull-ups, push-ups, sit-ups and



President Ramaphosa during a visit to the Newlands Base in 2016

the 2,4 km run. "Thank you, Working on Fire, for a sterling job in protecting the country's environment and saving lives. I am very impressed by the high team spirit, discipline and respect and most importantly your excellent fitness level," he told the firefighters.

We look forward to hosting Mr Ramaphosa again, this time as President of the Republic.

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HELPING THE TINY TOTS

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

Welcome to our February Newsletter and thank you for taking the time to read our latest edition. In this edition you will read about the Working on Fire teams that joined scores of environmentalists across the world to commemorate World Wetlands Day on 2 February. This year's theme was 'Wetlands for a sustainable urban future'. In support of this theme, teams educated schools and communities on how wetlands benefit human beings and the environment.

While the Western Cape teams continue to battle fires as they near the end of the summer fire season in April, Working on Fire teams are reaching out to landowners, community members and learners in other provinces to get them ready for the upcoming fire season. Fire prevention measures are in full swing to prevent the spread of wildfires, with more focus on fire-prone areas. Our teams have vowed to help communities decrease the number of fires by encouraging residents to address fire risks.

We again celebrate participants who exited the programme to take up positions at the South African Police Services, nature reserves and the private sector. Read the inspiring stories of how they used the programme to learn and mature in the nurturing environment of Working on Fire.

We are proud of every one of them and wish them all the best on their new journeys.

Happy reading.

MD Message: Putting wildland firefighter fatalities into perspective

Trevor Abrahams



During the month of February we suffered the loss of two long-serving staff members. On 5 February Cedric Seokoma, a Base Manager, succumbed during firefighting suppression efforts at the Simonsberg mountain near Klapmuts in the Western Cape.

The second fatality occurred on 9 February 2018 during a fire in the Kammanassie mountains near Uniondale in the Southern Cape. While trying to move his Fire Truck (FT) to a safe zone, Gert Wilskut, a Working on Fire driver, sustained burns to his face and hands and also suffered internal respiratory injuries. Gert later passed away while receiving treatment in hospital.

These deaths have once again put the spotlight on how dangerous wildland firefighting in South Africa is and whether enough is being done from an occupational health and safety perspective to reduce risks and thus to minimise, if not eradicate, loss of lives.

The Working on Fire programme is now in its fifteenth year of existence, having been established in 2003. Our firefighters are called out by conservation agencies, municipalities, landowners and fire authorities to attend to an average of 2 500 wildfires every year.

What has become apparent over the course of the past few years is that the nature and intensity of these fires have increased. Globally, we have seen how unusually large wildfires ravaged Alaska and Indonesia in 2015. In 2016 and 2017, Canada, California, Portugal and Spain were devastated by uncontrolled wildland fires.

What is also sadly notable from these trends, is that these wildland fires are resulting in increasing number of fatalities, of both civilian and firefighters. In 2017, massive fires devastated regions of Chile and a deadly blaze in Portugal

MD Message continued on page 3

Profile: Ancil Lee, Executive Manager – IT

Ancil Lee is Working on Fire's highly competent Executive Manager for IT.

Education highlights

Lee is certified in various technical training courses in his field and holds a National Diploma in Management from Unisa and a BCom Honours degree in Business Management from Regent Graduate School of Business.

Career highlights

Lee's interest in computer technology began in 1989 while working as a collections clerk at Syfrets Ltd (later Nedcor Investment Bank), a subsidiary of the Nedcor Group. After accepting a position as a computer operator in the IT division, he rose through the ranks until promoted to regional network manager in 1995. Lee moved to Johannesburg in 1998 to establish the IT division of the South African Civil Aviation Authority and was instrumental in the development of the Business Data Solutions offices to support the Gauteng online project. Prior to joining WOF, he had worked at Bytes Technology Solutions, Telkom South Africa and, from 2011, the FFA Group (now Kishugu Holdings).

"I am extremely passionate about people, promoting equity and providing opportunities, as well as entrepreneurship and how technology can assist business owners in streamlining their businesses to achieve their objectives," says Lee.

Strategic Technology Vision

"Teamwork is definitely the approach we have to follow from this year forward so as to improve the overall performance of the Working on Fire programme for the benefit of all our employees. This perfectly ties into the 'for the greater good' motto of Kishugu Holdings. There is a need for increased and improved productivity output and the input of the required information through enhancing our in-field mobile application capabilities. This enables rapid information sharing and data processing for invoicing and reporting."

Personal Interests

Lee is married to Renee and they have two daughters, Jenna and Cassidy. He enjoys spending time with his family, and loves seeing and travelling to new destinations. Lee is a keen sportsman and has represented his province and country in volleyball as both player and coach. When possible he tries to play some golf and cycle.

Lee confides that his active lifestyle wasn't always restricted to sport. In his youth he was a breakdancer and a member of the Jam Rock Crew!



"In a world where information is easily available our challenge is to get the future generations to become more creative – creativity will be the differentiator for our kids."



Our premium news products, WOFire News and WOF TV, have the single objective of being informative!

They are there to keep our participants informed about what's happening in WOF across the country.

WOF TV News and WoFire News are dedicated to the hard work of our participants and aim to focus on their stories, not only in relation to their work in WOF but also how they have grown and developed in the Programme.

Furthermore we feature many stories of participants who took responsibility for their own lives and also extended their compassion to others.

Readers are welcome to send us their stories in their home language and we will assist with translation and editing.

Please e mail your story to news@wofire.co.za or submit them via your local Provincial Communication Officers, Regional Managers, Base Managers or Crew Leaders.

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Working on Fire is an Expanded Public Works Programme which resides within the Department of Environmental Affairs.



Creating more career opportunities for our youth



President Ramaphosa with Minister of Public Works Thulas Nxesi (right) and Deputy Minister of Public Works, Jeremy Cronin during a visit to the Newlands Base in May 2016

The Working on Fire programme was launched in September 2003 as part of the South African government's initiative to create jobs and to alleviate poverty. The greatest achievement of the Working on Fire programme is that it has changed the lives of the 5 000 participants in the programme today, as well as that of the estimated 25 000 other dependants who have benefited from this programme.

As many of them have testified in this newsletter, there is no doubt that the biggest success stories of the Working on Fire programme are the many former participants who have found work outside of the programme in the formal employment sectors, including the police, the army and nature conservation agencies across South Africa.

Over the past few years we have covered these exit stories extensively in our WOFIRE Newsletter, on our online Facebook and Twitter pages and in our WOF TV news episodes.

We're always amazed that there are people who decry the government's public employment initiatives as inconsequential and meaningless in the fight against poverty. The stories of our former participants who have found gainful employment in the public and private sectors

through Working on Fire expose these criticisms as baseless nonsense.

Our success story does not only lie in our firefighters' heroic defence of the environment and communities but also in the many cases where firefighters were able to use WOF resources to improve their formal qualifications and skills and enhance their employability, while putting food on the table and educating their communities about safeguarding their environment.

In his inaugural State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that government will continue to focus on creating work opportunities for our youth. Over the next months we will capture stories about how Working on Fire has impacted on our youth and especially those thousands of young people who have moved on to formal employment.

The Working on Fire Alumni Project will tell their stories of hope and growth within the programme. We also want these former firefighters to visit their former bases and motivate not only current firefighters to also follow their dreams but to continue to inspire other local youth as role models of what can be achieved when opportunity combines with determination and dedication.

MD Message cont inued from page 2

claimed dozens of lives as well as caused extensive damage to homes and other property.

Recent global studies, and this phenomenon has also been experienced in South Africa, show that the wildfire seasons – meaning seasons with higher wildfire potential – have become longer over the past 40 years.

We have seen notable fires in regions like Mpumalanga and Limpopo well into the summer fire season, something which we did not see in previous years. In the Western Cape, the summer fire season is starting much earlier than the expected month of December and continues well into the autumn months.

The health and safety of the firefighters who are called out to fight these wildfires remains the overridingly important factor to consider.

According to studies in the USA, between 2002 and 2014, 18 firefighters on average died each year. Officials list six main causes of death, including aerial firefighting, burnovers and hazardous trees.

These statistics from the USA put into perspective the seven deaths in wildland firefighting experienced by the Working on Fire programme during the past 15 years. Four of these deaths were related to aviation accidents (two involving a helicopter and one a bomber)

and three were related to ground firefighting operations. To our credit, Working on Fire's record of fatalities on the fireline has therefore been well below that experienced in other countries.

Considering the annual average of 2 500 wildfires fought by Working On Fire every year and the fact that Working on Fire dispatches firefighters to fires daily, including deployment to other provinces to help with fire suppression, the number of potential fatalities has been greatly minimised through the implementation of stringent occupational health and safety measures, firefighter fitness and annual yellow card assessments.

No firefighter may go to a fireline without a valid yellow card and the prescribed personal protective clothing and equipment. Crew Leaders must also hold daily briefings on fire safety measures at their bases. When deployed to a fire, safety is the primary point of discussion throughout the day for those assigned to these fires.

Wildland firefighting remains a hazardous line of work. Talking about and practising fire safety all the time help to reduce inherent risks and ensure that everyone, from firefighters to Crew Leaders, is empowered to speak up if they feel something is unsafe. The goal has always been to have everyone come home safely from every fire.

Working on Fire is a Department of Environmental Affairs success story

Working on Fire is part of the Department of Environmental Affairs Natural Resource Management programme. The programme has enhanced participants' insight into their responsibility towards themselves and others.

Today they are well known and respected in their own communities. With their bright yellow outfits, which they wear proudly, they are active and very visible in communities, whether conducting their fire awareness and social development drives, performing a drama to address issues like sexual abuse and drug abuse with scholars or performing their primary function, preventing and suppressing fires.

Many participants only became aware of the positive value in their lives of discipline and working cooperatively through the training and positive senior role models provided by WOF. Most participants were struggling to get

food on the table, to furnish their homes or continue their education. For some, even the cost of printing their cv or paying for transport to look for work was too high. Today they can afford the basic material things in life. With the stipend they proudly earn, some are able to study further, others to get their driver's licences and a few even manage to save capital to start small businesses.

The Working on Fire programme not only enables participants to do these things and to support family members materially. It provides another benefit that allows them to dare to dream of a better future. In short, Working on Fire gives them hope.



Minister of Environmental Affairs, Dr Edna Molewa and her Deputy Minister, Barbara Thomson with firefighters at Parliament

WORKING ON FIRE

The Department of Environmental Affairs, Working on Fire:
Creating career opportunities for our youth

ALUMNI JOURNAL FEBRUARY 2018



Environmental Affairs
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
Co-operative Governance
Water and Sanitation



EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

Western Cape Summer Fire Season continues

Western Cape Working on Fire firefighters have been hard at work during the past few weeks fighting multiple fires across the province. During February 2018, Working on Fire assisted partners in suppressing 39 fires, utilising more than 250 firefighters as well as firefighting aircraft. WOF firefighters will remain on high alert and a team of firefighters from the Eastern Cape and Free State is ready to be dispatched to the Western Cape should the need arise.

Managing Director of Working on Fire Trevor Abrahams says, "I would like to thank Shoprite Checkers for its heartfelt donations of food and beverages to our firefighters during the times that they needed it most. You are a model corporate citizen."

 Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



In some cases, fires affected residential property



Firefighters conducting door-to-door fire awareness to community members around their base

Participants take fire education to communities

The Joe Gqabi Team in the Eastern Cape has been conducting door-to-door fire awareness in and around communities in Joe Gqabi district since the beginning of this year.

According to the Base Communications Representative (BCR) of the team, Asanda Mboniyane, the aim of the door-to-door awareness campaign was to educate community members and make them aware of how to identify and reduce fire risks around their homes.

"We taught them about the dangers of fires and how to keep themselves safe in case of any fires," Mboniyane explains.

She said that it is more effective when they interact with community members face to face

to make them understand better fire prevention behaviour and also to assist them identify dangerous fuel loads surrounding their homes.

"We are currently in the fire off season in the province, so we are using this time to educate as many community members as we can as it's only a few months before we approach the coming winter fire season," Mboniyane says.

She says they also taught community members about safety inside their homes, which included risks such as overloading electrical plugs, leaving stoves unattended and placing candles near curtains.

 Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Teams train for the upcoming fire season



The Mamusa Team conducting a stack burn during the Production Optimisation training

Aiming to get teams in top shape and optimum performance mode, the North West Working on Fire teams have been attending a two-day training programme on Production Optimisation since early this year. The aim is to ensure that all firefighters are fit and ready for any fire suppression after returning from the December holidays.

The two-day training camps were conducted by instructors who focused on the theory and practical work of integrated fire

management activities, which includes stack burns, fire breaks, alien invasive plant removal, fire walls and equipment and the personal protective clothing check.

Firefighters who attended the training said the training was more of a refresher as it basically trained them in all the aspects of integrated fire management.

Among the teams attending the training camps were the Mothibistad, Mamusa, Highveld, Castello and Boskop teams.

Kokstad Team prepares community for the winter fire season

In preparation for the 2018 winter fire season the KwaZulu-Natal Kokstad Team has been conducting door-to-door fire awareness activities in the Bhongweni community in Kokstad.

Kokstad Type 1 Crew Leader, Ayanda Tshangase says, "The aim of the door-to-door was to target as many households as possible to raise awareness about the upcoming winter fire season and show how community members can be safe."

The team is partnered with Kokstad Fire and Rescue and they attend many fires in residential areas. As residents face a higher risk of fires during the winter fire season due to negligence and lack of information, the team also shared their emergency number in case of a fire.

"Door-to-door campaigns assist community members in identifying fire risks in and around the home and making sure they understand how they can protect themselves. All these activities are done for us to reach as many communities at risk as possible before the start of fire season," says Tshangase.



The Kokstad Team conducting a door-to-door fire awareness activity

The team plans to do more fire awareness exercises to raise awareness about the danger of fires in their community, and hope this will help to reduce the number of fire call-outs this winter fire season.

 Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

Team conducts extensive fuel load reduction

The Working on Fire Brandfort Team has been conducting extensive fuel load reduction in the Brandfort area as well as on surrounding farms. The team is preparing for the winter fire season so that the general public and farmers do not have any hazardous vegetation growing on their properties or dry vegetation that could help start or spread fires.

The Brandfort area experienced large fires during the previous fire season and the WOF team is being proactive in ensuring that all parties involved are better prepared this winter. Jimmy

Lefikanyana, a Brandfort Type 1 Crew Leader says, "We are conducting fuel load reduction in and around Brandfort using equipment such as chainsaws, brush cutters, slashers and saws to remove dry and overgrown vegetation, overgrown tree branches, alien invasive plant species as well as removing these fuels from the properties. We believe that by doing this we will reduce the number and intensity of fires in our area."

 Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State



A Brandfort Team firefighter removing hazardous dry vegetation

Badplaas Team lead clean-up campaign as part of World Wetlands Day

In commemoration of World Wetlands Day (WWD), the Working on Fire Badplaas Team in Mpumalanga visited Imbali Primary School in Tjakastad at the Gert Sibande District Municipality on 2 February 2018.

The visit was aimed at creating and raising public awareness of the value of wetlands and their vital links to human well-being.

The team also led a clean-up campaign in a wetland identified at the school, and spoke to Grade 6 and 7 learners about the benefits and importance of wetlands.

World Wetlands Day is celebrated annually



The Badplaas Team cleaning a wetland near the Imbali Primary School

on 2 February, the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands in 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. Also known as the Ramsar Convention, it is supported by most of the members of the United Nations.

"It is important that we take care of our

wetlands because they are able to purify water and provide habitats for many different plants and animals," says Mxolisi Mbuli, the Badplaas Base Communications Representative (BCR).



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

Team conducts fuel load reduction



Makhado firefighters doing manual fuel load reduction at their base

Makhado Team firefighters started the year with fuel load reduction, practicing what they preach to landowners.

The manual fuel load reduction was part of the team's implementation of integrated fire management systems at their base.

The rain experienced in the area during December and early January caused the grass to grow tall and dense.

"Our area is one of those areas that are famous for dense and thick bushes and tall grasses due to the amount of rain that we always receive," says a team member.

The Makhado Team is also working hard to prepare landowners for the upcoming fire season.

"This year we are prepared to work twice as much, as we want to help the landowners reduce the number of wildfires that we experience in the area," one firefighter says.

Last year the team started preparing for the winter fire season early in the year and that strategy impacted positively as the number of fires in the area was reduced.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Eastern Cape Working on Fire, in partnership with Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism, the Department of Economic Affairs, SANBI, DEA, Kleva Nkeva Organisation, Ingquza Hill Local Municipality and other stakeholders celebrated World Wetlands Day (WWD) at Mxhume Secondary School early in February.

WWD is commemorated on 2 February annually. The aim of the day is to raise awareness in communities and schools about the importance of wetlands and how to look after wetlands. The 2018 theme is 'Wetlands for a sustainable urban future'.

More than 300 learners from 14 schools formed part of this celebration. They were taken to a nearby wetland and educated on the importance of wetlands, how to identify wetlands as well as the types of wetlands.

Environmental Officer Luyolo Sheyitold the learners that wetlands were able to reduce the severity of droughts and floods by regulating stream flow, they replenish drinking water, filter waste and improve water quality.

"Wetlands act as a giant sponge that absorb water from floods," he said, adding that people should not turn wetlands into dumping sites but protect them as valuable resources for the community.

Onesimo Mthobela from the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) encouraged schools to do more on-site wetlands education as that

Eastern Cape Working on Fire marks Wetlands Day



Wetlands awareness was done for more than 300 learners around Lusikisiki

would open the minds of learners. She added that learners should share the information they learned to widen the level of knowledge and understanding of the environment.

Working on Fire Community Fire Awareness Officer of the Eastern Cape, Thulani Mkhosi, said that one of the disadvantages of fire on wetlands is that it can lead to the loss of seeds

which could endanger the propagation of certain species.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Teams learn more about Wetlands



Clarens Team attending the Wetlands Day event in Phahameng Village

World Wetlands Day is an annual opportunity to raise public awareness and promote the value of wetlands.

The Working on Fire Clarens and Memel teams participated in Wetlands Day events in their respective towns. The Clarens Team celebrated the event in Phahameng Village in Clarens. The event was attended by stakeholders such as the Moreteng Wa Thuto High School, Combined Primary School, Dihlabeng

Municipality Disaster Management Unit and Clarens Village Conservancy.

Thabiso Simase from the Clarens Team says, "The Wetlands Day event was very informative and taught me many things about how climate affects wetlands as well as what actions we can take to conserve our wetlands."



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Learners taught to value wetlands



Working on Fire and various stakeholders taught learners about the importance of wetlands

North West Working on Fire celebrated World Wetlands Day at Barberspan Bird Sanctuary with the North West Parks Board, the Barberspan Team, Doornbult Primary School and other stakeholders.

The WOF communication cluster organised the event with the North West Parks Board to educate community members and learners about the importance of wetlands.

Learners were taught the history of Barberspan bird sanctuary, which is one of the largest waterfowl reserves in South Africa. It was also one of the first wetlands in SA to be declared a Ramsar Convention-accredited wetland of international importance for migratory birds and waterfowl.

Community Fire Awareness Officer Sophy Dinko taught the learners about how communities benefit from wetlands and how communities can take care of wetlands. She said, "Wetlands help us in water purification through the slow release of underground stored water so it is important for us to work together to save our wetlands."

Describing a practice that has to be carefully managed to safeguard the environment, she said, "Wetlands are burnt to improve the grazing value for livestock by removing old dead plant material and increasing productivity."

Wishing to give back to the community the cluster organised lunch for everyone in attendance funded from their own pockets.

Written by – Teko Mooki

Wedela Team's storeperson, Simphiwe Xelithole, who lives with a disability says that Working on Fire's job opportunity helped to restore her confidence and dignity. Xelithole, who struggles to walk, quit school in Grade 9 because fellow learners laughed at her.

Confidence a bonus for participant

"On my first day at work, crew members sat me down and told me that I am a complete person, therefore I must not be shy to engage them. I was able to confront my shyness and overcome it through the help of my colleagues," she says.

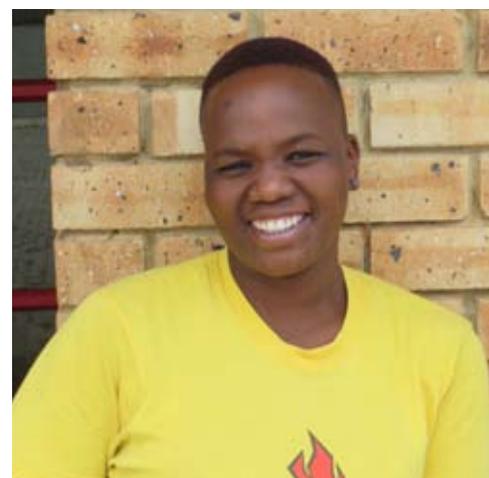
Part of her responsibilities in the team is to count and manage uniforms and equipment. The programme has enabled her to live a happy normal life and she no longer fears being around people.

She is also happy that the work opportunity and the stipend helps her to support her family. "I used to rely solely on the grant, but with the stipend I am able to save money for the education of my child and am currently studying Abet level 5."

She says people with disabilities are always overlooked for job opportunities especially when not well educated. But the programme, which gave her her first job

opportunity, treats people with disabilities with the dignity they deserve.

She says she enjoys the support of the crew members and management. "I never thought one day I would be hired and receive a pay slip at month end."



Simphiwe Xelithole, a storeperson at Wedela Base, says WOF helped to restore her confidence

Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Helping the Tiny Tots



The Vaal Marina Team has donated mattresses to Mamello Tiny Tots crèche which was destroyed by a tornado in mid-December last year. Mamello is a small informal settlement alongside the Vaal Dam.

Crew Leader Alfred Mpinga said community work was initiated by the team as part of the social development project. "The donation is going to give hope and puts smiles on kids' faces at the crèche," he says.

Mpinga says the management of the crèche was very impressed with the contribution. The structure of the crèche was destroyed along with Vaal Marina community members' homes. Alfred says the team also helped in the rebuilding of the structure.

"As the year commenced the kids were happy that things were back to normal. It was heartwarming to help this crèche," he says.

"We are part of this community, that is why we intervened. The destruction directly affected all of our families."

Mpinga says he worked with Midvaal Emergency Services during the time the tornado struck the area. He helped to deliver food parcels to community members while he was on leave.

Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Participants race for Madiba



From left to right, Nicolene Dampies (5km runner), Andre April (5km) and Ashwin Abrahams (10km)

WOF firefighters participated in a race in honour of the 100th year birthday celebration of former President Nelson Mandela. To commemorate the 28th anniversary on 10 February of former President Nelson Mandela's release from Victor Verster Prison (now known as Drakenstein Correctional Services), the Drakenstein Correctional Facility partnered with the Drakenstein Municipality and the Cape Winelands District Municipality to stage the seventh annual '27 For Freedom' Race. Runners from across the Peninsula and the world were there. The race saw local and international athletes participating.

Firefighters Nicolene Dampies came 5th among the female runners in the 5km race, Ashwin Abrahams was placed 10th in the 10km

race and Andre April finished in 6th place in the 5km race.

Area commissioner Jeremy Matheyse said the event lived up to expectations in honouring the great statesman as walkers and runners followed in Madiba's path when he took his historic first steps to freedom.

Cape Peninsula Marathon

Congratulations to the Working on Fire False Bay Crew Leaders, Tumelo Mokoatsi and Masisbulele Pascal Joseph, as well as the NCC Wildfires Hotshot crew members in completing the 42km run at the 2018 Cape Peninsula Marathon.

Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

Sister programme participates in FireSafe workshop

In a bid to help raise fire awareness in communities prone to wildland fires, Mbuso Siwela, the Community Fire Awareness Officer in Mpumalanga, and Fire Awareness Facilitator Estella Cossa, conducted a FireSafe workshop for Working for Water (WFW) participants in eMkhondo, outside Nelspruit.

Aimed at educating WFW participants about ways to mitigate and prevent the impact of unwanted fires, participants learned about fire management plans, fire risk assessments and fire behaviour.

"As we are approaching the winter fire season, the fire awareness department will be visiting fire-prone communities across Mpumalanga, providing fire safety tips to community members," says Siwela.

Working on Fire manages an Integrated Fire Management Programme which includes fire management planning, detection, prevention, suppression, dispatch and coordination, and community fire awareness activities.

Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga



Fire Awareness Facilitator, Estella Cossa, conducted a FireSafe presentation for WFW participants

Participant is using his second chance



Tebogo Kgonyane, a participant who joined WOF through the parolee programme

Kgonyane grew up in Seshego where life was more about having money and luxury things. He was raised in a family that was affected by domestic violence as his father abused him and his siblings.

“My parents separated while I was young and my mother left with my younger sister, Later my elder sister left to stay with her. I was left with my father and that affected me negatively as I never knew nor experienced parental love,” says Kgonyane.

He was recruited into the life of crime at the age of 21 while doing Grade 9 and later quit school as he saw no progress.

“Being involved in crime seemed right at the time as I had no-one to assist me financially. Through crime I was able to provide for myself,” says Kgonyane.

In 2010 he was arrested for the first time after a theft but was found not guilty. This made him believe that a life of crime was very easy. He continued criminal activity until he was arrested in June 2013 and was sentenced to jail for five years.

“My world collapsed and reality sunk in. All my friends got out and I was left to pay for their sins. I was hurt and disappointed,” says Kgonyane.

While in jail Kgonyane reconnected with his mother who gave him the will to change his life. His mother was committed to his rehabilitation process and was very supportive.

He joined WOF through the parolee programme in 2016 and has demonstrated a positive attitude towards life.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Participant works hard to better her life



Androlene Killian, Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO)

Androlene Killian joined the Working on Fire programme in 2011 as a general worker at her home base in Tsitsikamma after being unemployed for a long time. In 2012 she became a High Altitude Team (HAT) rope technician and after months of training, became the first HAT female Type 2 Crew Leader in the province in 2013. She aimed higher and learned as much as she could.

In 2015 Androlene became a Fire Awareness Training Officer (FATO) for the Western Cape, training firefighters in fire awareness and life skills and gave motivational talks.

She has now been in the programme for over six years. “I told myself that I had to work hard to become something better in life.

Coming from a big family and being a single mother, situations were unbearable at times, but I have learned a lot over the years and I appreciate every opportunity that has come my way within the programme,” she says.

She has high ambitions and hopes to grow further within the programme.

“My encouragement to all is to believe in yourself, aim higher than the flames and never look down on yourself. The WOF programme holds true to its objective of ‘restoring dignity’ as I have seen the positive effect the programme has had in my life.”



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

Participant serves as Soccer Official



Modisa Moroetsi from Bloemfontein Base

Modisa Moroetsi, a firefighter from the Working on Fire Bloemfontein Team, joined the programme in 2012 and served as a chainsaw operator and a Base Communications Representative (BCR). Apart from the skills he gained during this period Moroetsi developed his skills in the sport that he loves, soccer.

Moroetsi started refereeing while he was still in school and gradually advanced to refereeing in leagues such as the SAB league and the ABC Motsepe League. He now travels the country as a referee and linesman in the Multichoice Diski Challenge as well as national tournaments.

“Being a referee requires the same discipline, respect, loyalty, punctuality and physical and mental capabilities as a firefighter needs so it makes it easier for me to do both. I have had the privilege to travel across the country and meet many professional soccer players. The latest soccer game I served as a linesman in was the recent game between Bloemfontein Celtics and Kaizer Chiefs,” says Moroetsi proudly.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Thaba 'Nchu firefighter thankful to Working on Fire

Tshepo Malumisa joined the Working on Fire Thaba 'Nchu Team in September 2016. Malumisa was unemployed before joining the programme and spent his time in Mapetsana Location without any vision or hope for his future.

He was approached by one of the local ward councillors and was informed that Working on Fire would be recruiting in Thaba 'Nchu. He attended the recruitment along with 980 other hopefuls and he was selected to be part of the team of 28 new Working on Fire participants.

Since joining Working on Fire Malumisa has become the only breadwinner in his family and supports his grandmother, mother, stepfather and younger brother who are all unemployed. Malumisa is able to provide the family with basic needs such as groceries, electricity and water. He said that one of the challenges his community is facing is unemployment which increases the abuse of drugs by young people.

“Through Working on Fire I was exposed to new experiences such as travelling out of my hometown to go and assist in fire suppression activities in the Western Cape. I was also part of the group of firefighters who assisted in the fire suppression activities in the disastrous Knysna wildfires. I would like to thank Working on Fire for restoring my dignity and enabling me to take care of my family with the stipend that I receive,” says Malumisa.



Tshepo Malumisa from the Thaba 'Nchu Team



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Former participant lands job at SAPS



Xolani Mko thanks the Working on Fire programme for his skills and experience

Work hard, be passionate about what you do and aim high. This is the motto of Xolani Chris Mko, a former firefighter at Cata Base in the Eastern Cape.

"Prior to joining the programme I was not working and finding a proper job was a challenge as I only had matric with no university qualification," he says.

Although the lack of funding kept him from furthering his education after completing matric in 2007 he says, "That did not get me down. I never lost hope in life and I told myself that aiming high will be my motto."

After joining the programme as a firefighter in February 2015 he worked hard as he knew

WOF could be a stepping stone to something better. His hard work saw him rewarded with passing the Type 2 Crew Leader course.

With his CV thus strengthened, Mko was recruited into the SAPS. After completing training he was assigned to Langa police station in Cape Town. "I could not believe it when I was told that I should be starting at my new job this month," says the delighted Mko.

He says he appreciates the opportunity of being at Working on Fire and is grateful that it assisted him to get skills and experience.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Participant starts a new journey in nature conservation



Vusi Nkabinde has been hired as a Nature Conservation Assistant at the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's (GDARD) Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve.

He was a Type 1 Crew Leader for the team in the reserve. Nkabinde says his WOF team aided the reserve to suppress deadly fires which in some instances killed people.

"The programme kept me away from unemployment when things were quite difficult and I had difficult times in life," he says, adding that it had been a hard journey to where he is today.

Nkabinde says, "I applied for the position like any other person and went

through interviews. I am happy that I got the new job."

He said the skills he learned in the programme will continue to be relevant and important in his new position. "Fire is a huge risk in the nature reserve and my experience will be critical as a conservation assistant," says Nkabinde.

East Rand-based Nkabinde says he is prepared to learn new things in the new position, which he views as a promotion. He urged WOF participants to remain optimistic about a better future.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Participant thanks WOF for the career foundation

Working on Fire is a parent that nurtures and uplifts the youth of South Africa through its skills development programme.

Hendrick Napo is a former WOF firefighter who used WOF as a stepping stone towards his career. After completing his N6 in Human Resources Management at Lephalale FET College, he joined WOF as a firefighter at Lephalale in September 2012.

"Joining WOF was the best decision I've ever made, as I didn't want to wait for a job opportunity in the HR field. With the high rate of unemployment, I knew it was going to be a long journey," says Napo.

Through the career and self-development workshops that are conducted by the Social Development Practitioner, Napo was able to develop his confidence and skills.

He left WOF in 2014 after landing an HR internship at Ellisras Hospital in Lephalale. In November 2015 he was hired as an admin controller at Wild Africa Security. In January 2016 he joined Avis Lephalale and subsequently was appointed as a rental sales agent and payroll administrator at Avis Polokwane.

"All I can say is that my journey was very smooth, and I owe that to WOF for instilling discipline in me and for grooming me to be the person that I am today," says Napo.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Former firefighter Hendrick Napo can't stop thanking WOF

Former storeperson enjoying his new job in the Western Cape



Former storeperson secured a good job at Dicks Aluminium

"Hard work and dedication will always take you to a better place," says Yanga Krutani, a former storeperson at the Langeni Team in the Eastern Cape.

Krutani said that getting the job at Working on Fire was a blessing. After passing his matric in 2015 he could not further his studies due to financial problems.

"After finishing high school I started looking for a job but it was not easy. Then I heard that WOF was looking for a storeperson in Langeni," explains Krutani.

He applied and was offered the position in April 2017. "I was very glad as I could manage to support my two kids and my family," says Krutani.

"I used Working on Fire as my stepping stone to get skills and experience and I am really happy to say the programme assisted

me a lot in getting me ready for my current job," he says.

Still only 23 years old, Krutani found a position as a storekeeper at Dicks Aluminium in Cape Town, where he started early in February.

"The experience I got at WOF is helping me a lot in my current job. I would advise all firefighters to appreciate what the programme is doing for them and to also use the little they get at WOF to better their lives which will assist them in getting to green pastures," says Krutani.

He said that he would particularly love to thank his former regional manager, Ongezwa Nojinji, and his teammates for always supporting him.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape