

## MD Message

By Trevor Abrahams



Upon my return to Working on Fire in May 2017, members of the Executive Committee and I engaged with participants and management. We observed at that time that we were

not providing the kind of working environment for our participants as we had in the past, which put them at the heart of what this programme sought to achieve.

We re-established the Executive Committee to take responsibility for the overall leadership and management of Working on Fire. It has become the structure through which I am able to obtain input in managing the company and hold the EXCO members to account for their specific portfolios.

Since May 2017, Working on Fire has embarked upon a 'Back to Basics' programme which is founded on our values of Accountability, Teamwork, Excellence, Adaptability and Making a Difference, driven by our commitment to Respect and Discipline. We wish to reiterate some of the essential features which govern our relationship.

The 'Back to Basics' campaign was kicked off with the company's commitment to repaying the public holiday pay due to all firefighters which had not been paid since mid-August 2015. That repayment process was concluded in the 2016/17 financial year.

Back to Basics also meant we reverted to our company's old system of working eight hours a day for seven days per week (standby on weekends) for five months of the fire season and eight hours per day five days per week for the seven months out of the fire season. This system has been welcomed by our firefighters, even as the pattern of our fire seasons may need us to review the periods for which they apply to the summer and winter rainfall regions.

This year, Working on Fire celebrates its fifteenth year since its inception in 2003. The greatest achievement of the 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 dependants who have indirectly benefited from this programme.

There is no doubt that the biggest success stories of the Working on Fire

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## Working on Fire's excellent work acknowledged by Minister

Minister Edna Molewa and Deputy Minister Barbara Thomson recently presented their department's key priorities for 2018/2019 in Parliament. They also reflected on the progress made in the previous year. The Minister said that the 2018/2019 budget was an affirmation of the Department of Environmental Affairs' commitment to meeting the country's developmental needs, transforming and growing our economy, creating jobs and conserving the environment. During the Budget Vote, the Deputy Minister lauded the Working on Fire firefighters for their role during the Knysna Fires. "In 2017, the Working on Fire Programme was confronted with the devastating fires along the Garden Route, most notably in Knysna," she said, adding that advocacy and awareness programmes must continue, to minimise the risk of fires in areas where highly flammable alien invasive vegetation was present.



Minister Edna Molewa and Deputy Minister Barbara Thomson at the 2018/2019 Budget Vote

In an interview with WOF TV News, Minister Molewa said the firefighters had "helped South Africa put down a great many fires and saved forests and ecosystems. We are again looking forward to you working hard in this coming season to fight fires across the country. Please take care of yourselves and know that we love you."

The Minister added, "We have always known that the firefighters who enter this programme will not stay in it forever. You are here to improve your skills and your capacity. Many have already entered the space of the SAPS, other industries and entrepreneurship opportunities. For this we are very proud of you."

## Early start to winter fire season

Just a few days before the winter fire season gets into full swing, with Working on Fire teams intensifying their preparations across the province, the North West was hit by a number of early fires in May.

Four teams attended to fires from 15 to 25 May 2018. These fires were at the Highveld Block 2, 3 and 4 and the town of Schweizer-Reneke. The



North West teams were kept busy by early fires before the start of winter fire season

Highveld Team responded to three of these fires to assist the North West Parks Board, while the Mamusa Team assisted

the Schweizer-Reneke Fire Protection Association.

The teams' quick response reduced the economic and environmental damage that might have been caused by these fires. Teams will stay on high alert and warn communities to keep an eye on the Fire Danger Index and not start unnecessary fires, especially on dry, windy days.

Community members are also encouraged to remove overhanging tree branches and remove dry leaves in gutters. Those living close to wildlands should also create defensible space to prevent fires from spreading.



# Passionate about transforming lives of the unemployed youth

## Trevor Abrahams - Working on Fire Managing Director

Trevor Abrahams was born and raised in Retreat, a poor working class community in Cape Town. After an excellent education at South Peninsula High School, a permit to study at UCT was refused by the apartheid government and he enrolled at Safmarine as a merchant seaman. He later succeeded in getting the study permit and enrolled at UCT in 1972, graduating with a BA degree in 1975 and BA Honours Psychology in 1976. He enrolled for an MA in Psychology in 1977, but left on a Fulbright Scholarship for doctoral studies in the USA in 1978.

He obtained his MA in political economy in 1983 and completed his residency requirements for his PhD before he left the USA in 1985 for work in an international organisation in Geneva, as the executive manager responsible for its operations in Africa from 1986 to 1991.

Trevor served stints as Associate Professor in Sociology at the State University of New York and Broome Community College in New York, and visiting lecturer for the City University of London in its MSc Air Transport Management programme in Nairobi. He has published numerous articles on political economy, aviation and development.

Trevor lived in the USA during 1978-1985 and in Switzerland and Africa in 1986-1992. He visited more than 66 countries in the course of his duties and vacations and met with world leaders in the course of his duties in Geneva and as part of the new democratic government after 1994.

On his return to South Africa, Trevor served as the National Director of SACHED Trust. After 1994 he served as Special Advisor to Ministers Bhengu (Education), Manuel and Erwin (Trade and Industry) and Commissioner for Civil Aviation under Ministers Maharaj and Omar (Transport). After 2003, Trevor provided consultancy services in aviation and assisted NAC as a charter and aircraft manager. He served as the chairman of the Aviation Training Development Fund in 2000-2003.

Trevor joined FFA Holdings as a non-executive board member in 2007 and subsequently served as executive chairman of WOF, MD of WOF, Chairman of Kishugu Aviation, board member of WOF, and returned as WOF MD in May 2017.

Trevor is a single parent to his 14-year-old adopted daughter, Cintia, and has a daughter in the USA and two granddaughters (13 and 19 years old) who regularly beat him up at golf. In April this year, Trevor watched his granddaughter Kasey Maralack finish second overall in the fifth annual Drive, Chip and Putt National Finals at the Augusta National Golf Club. The event preceded the start of the US Masters Tournament.

Trevor has been active in many sports and is a qualified scuba instructor. He obtained a commercial flying licence and flight instructor certificate in the USA and a Small Vessel Skipper licence from SAMSA.

Trevor is passionate about WOF and its ability to transform the lives of unemployed youth while providing a valued service to communities. He would like to expand WOF's capacity to place participants in formal employment in government and the private sector and is focussed on obtaining private sector contributions to support the programme as government funding for the programme stagnates.

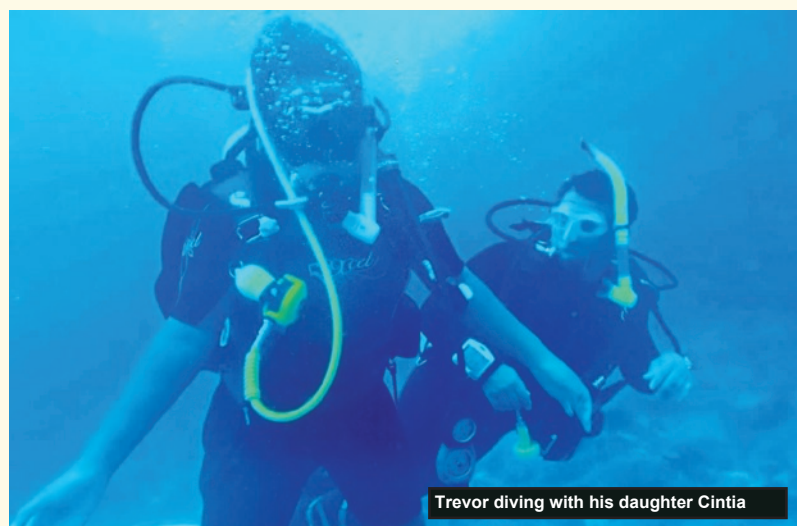
As the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela approaches, Trevor says that he was fortunate to have met and worked with this great world icon on various occasions, including



Trevor with his granddaughter and SA golfer Louis Oosthuizen at Augusta



Trevor with his daughter Cintia



Trevor diving with his daughter Cintia

just after his release from prison and during his Presidency from 1994 to 1999.

"As so many have recounted over years, each encounter left me with profound recollections of the absolute resoluteness of this incredible leader, his warmth as well as his mischievous sense of humour," says the MD.



Trevor with Nelson Mandela at the UN

## Editorial

Dear Reader.

Welcome to our May Newsletter. In this issue we report on the Minister of Environmental Affairs' Budget Vote in which Minister Molewa praised Working on Fire's role in protecting the environment.

You can read about the Fire Awareness Campaign launches and the Yellow Card Training Camps conducted in several provinces in preparation for the upcoming winter fire season.

Observing National Burn Safety Awareness Week, Working on Fire teams across the country educated people about fire safety and how to deal with burn injuries.

As always, we share the stories of how our participants continue to use Working on Fire as a stepping stone to further their education and create better opportunities for themselves.

We also celebrate former participants who have used the skills development training at Working on Fire to land permanent employment opportunities outside the programme.

We wish them all the best in their new positions.

Happy Reading!

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

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





# First wildfires hit the province

The winter fire season runs from 1 June until the end of October. However, wildfires paid an early visit to Zebediela and Modimolle.

Limpopo's Lepelle-Nkumpi and Leseding firefighters responded to the two fires. Two teams of firefighters were dispatched by WOF Limpopo to respond to the call for fire suppression in both areas. Due to the early response by the WOF teams there was minimal damage – six hectares burnt at Zebediela and five hectares burnt at Modimolle. The causes of both fires are unknown.

"We are pleading with the communities to report all fires in their areas to their local fire brigade immediately and to refrain from starting fires in open areas that might lead to run-



Lepelle-Nkumpi firefighters suppressing the fire at Zebediela

away fires," says Limpopo's General Manager, Tshepo Malatjie.

Motorists are urged to refrain from throwing cigarettes butts from their vehicle windows while driving as this might cause wildfires that could destroy the environment if uncontrolled.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

# Fire awareness campaign to create vigilant communities

The Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire (WOF) programme launched the Community Fire Awareness Campaign in partnership with the Impendle Local Municipality, Provincial Disaster Management Centre and Mngungundlovu District Disaster Management Centre, at the Impendle Community Hall.

In February, following the fires they experienced in 2017, WOF proposed launching the Fire Awareness Campaign with them to raise awareness of the dangers of fire and how to reduce the risk of fire.

The Mayor, Councillor SG Ndlela says, "Through the campaign, we hope to change the behaviour of community members for them to be more vigilant during this fire season and not to start unnecessary fires, particularly during dry days."

WOF firefighters demonstrated their firefighting skills by constructing a firewall. "We will continue to partner with various stakeholders to achieve the objective of creating resilient and fire safe communities in KwaZulu-Natal," says Nhlabathi.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer



Community members came out in numbers to attend the launch

## MD Message *cont. from page 1*

programme lay in the personal testimonies of many former participants who have found work outside of the programme in formal employment sectors such as the police, the army and nature conservation agencies across South Africa.

Putting our firefighters at the heart of what Working on Fire should achieve, i.e. developing the skills of these young men and women to be able to become employable in the formal economy, remains paramount in our objectives.

To this end, our key focus for this year will be on further enhancing the ability of our firefighters to exit Working on Fire for the formal employment sector. This will ensure that the programme can create more work opportunities for young men and women as those exiting create space for new entrants.

To achieve these objectives, we are implementing life skills initiatives such as teaching our firefighters how to prepare proper CVs, handle job interviews, search for vacancies, apply for published internships and negotiate placement agreements with employees.

Furthermore, we will implement programmes to develop the entrepreneurial skills of our firefighters, such as business and technical skills training. We will also pilot brickmaking and house construction skills and revive our beekeeping and solar lighting projects.

It is important that we all (firefighters and management) understand that the key objectives of Working on Fire as an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) of government is to provide immediate poverty relief, work and skills development opportunities for the most vulnerable.

Some of the training and skills development components will therefore be geared towards enabling firefighters to graduate into self or formal employment. This will increase Working on Fire's impact on increased sustainable labour market absorption and participation.

I recently returned from Canada where the South African and Canadian governments are close to finalising a formal inter-country agreement on wildland fire exchanges when the need arises.

# Free State firefighters ready for winter fire season

Working on Fire in the Free State has completed its annual Yellow Card Training Camps at Moolmanshoek, near Ficksburg, and Jimmy Roos School, near Dewetsdorp in the Free State.

The intensive Yellow Card Training Camps from 3 to 11 May 2018 were attended by 560 Working on Fire firefighters from 22 teams in the province. The

camps were in preparation for the coming winter fire season. In the 2017 winter season, firefighters were dispatched to 314 veld fires, a drastic increase from previous years.

The firefighters had to check that they had the right personal protective clothing and equipment and also had to undergo fitness training (2,4km run,

push-ups, pull-ups and sit-ups) and advanced firefighting training. Upon finishing the training, firefighters were issued with Yellow Cards which indicate that they are ready to fight fires.

"This year our Yellow Card Training Camps were very successful and our firefighters proved that they came prepared and exceeded our expectations in terms of their physical performance and their levels of discipline. I would like to wish all our participants all the best for this fire season," says Willem van Aswegen, the WOF General Manager in the Free State.



Wayne Mokheithi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



# 600 firefighters ready to be deployed

WOF veld and forest firefighters successfully completed the eight-day Yellow Card Training Camp that was held at the Tzaneen showground and Vaalwater Airfield from 2 to 9 May 2018.

During the training camp, the level of fitness of more than 600 firefighters was assessed through a 2,4km run, and timed sit-ups and push-ups. Fitness forms a huge part of WOF training because the terrain that our firefighters work in is tough and requires mentally and physically fit firefighters.

Apart from attending the fire lectures and writing assessment tests, participants



Limpopo firefighters going through the firewall during the Yellow Card Training Camp

also did practical exercises to implement what they had been taught.

"The rigorous training that our firefighters have to go through is very intense but of high quality. It also contributes to

improving the team spirit among our firefighters," says Tshepo Malatjie, Limpopo's General Manager.

As part of the personal safety activity, firefighters had to run and walk through fire to simulate using an escape route through a live firewall. This method is usually used when firefighters are encircled by a wildfire.

"Our firefighters are now ready to be dispatched across the country and beyond, to save lives and protect the environment," says Malatjie.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



# Firefighters remain on high alert this winter season



Firefighters assisted the Southern Cape FPA in suppressing the recent fires

Working on Fire kicked off its winter fire season with multi-day fires in the Southern Cape. At the end of the 2017/18 fire season, firefighters in the Southern Cape had remained on high alert in the southern sector of the Western Cape, as they experience a year-round fire season.

During the previous summer fire season, more than 1 000 firefighters from Working on Fire assisted partners and local fire authorities to suppress 235 veld and forest fires, limiting the areas burnt to 186 600 hectares. Aerial support flew just over 1 300 flying hours to save the lives of citizens and protect the environment. Our pilots' precise water bombing skills were the key to containing a number of fires.

The past two years have seen a decrease in the number of fires, which

# Drivers undergo training as part of fire season preparation

Just over 150 participant drivers from across the country attended driver refresher training at the Nelspruit Training Academy from 9 April to 1 June 2018.

Covering fire line safety, pump operations and maintenance, pre-trip inspections and vehicle administration, the training aimed to prepare drivers



Working on Fire drivers at the Nelspruit Training Academy, ready to hit the road

to safely transport firefighters during the upcoming winter fire season.

Amor Adlem, Transport Manager in the Working on Fire programme, lauded drivers as the refresher training got under way. "You guys are incredible; yours is a duty that plays a major role in the bigger spectrum of things within our programme," Adlem said.

"Not only do you have a responsibility to manage vehicles, you are also tasked to ensure the safe transportation of up to 25 firefighters as well," she added.



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

can be attributed to the extensive fire awareness programmes and workshops hosted by many firefighting authorities and agencies, as well as volunteer organisations carrying the fire safety message to many school learners and educators.

Preparations for the 2018/19 summer fire season continues and our firefighters will conduct presentations to highlight the danger of fires and how to reduce fire risks in communities, as well as demonstrate how to construct firebreaks and do fuel reduction to help prevent fires from spreading.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# KZN commemorates International Firefighters' Day

International Firefighters' Day (IFFD) has become one of the most important symbolic days on the WOF calendar, when we join the world in recognising and honouring the sacrifices that firefighters make to ensure the safety of their communities and environment.

The KwaZulu-Natal Eshowe Team commemorated IFFD on 4 May 2018 with the uMlalazi Local Municipality. The event commenced with a march which started 1km from the Town Hall of Eshowe, with the firefighters displaying drills and creating awareness of WOF.

KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer Khulani Zulu says, "As a former firefighter myself, I know the risks these brave young men and women put themselves through. They dedicate their lives to the protection of life and property."

The Deputy Mayor of uMlalazi Local Municipality, Councillor Bongiwe



Firefighters marching in town and having a moment of silence

Simelane, led the municipal delegation which participated in the event and also delivered the keynote address.

"It takes more than just skills, but it needs heart and selflessness in a human being to dedicate countless hours volunteered over many years while with others, it is many selfless years of working in the industry," says Zulu.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

# Working on Fire commemorates IFFD

When people around the world celebrate International Firefighters' Day (IFFD) annually on 4 May, all eyes turn to firefighters to honour them and remember those who died in the line of duty. Working on Fire in the Eastern Cape partnered with Joe Gqabi Municipality, provincial disaster management, and the Departments of Roads and Transport, Agriculture and Health to ensure that the community also gained value on this special day.

On 4 May, more than 100 community members from different villages attended the celebrations at Mangolwaneng in Mount Fletcher where they learned how to be fire safe in preparation for the upcoming winter fire season.

Community members were urged not to leave burning candles and stoves unattended, to open defensible space around their homes and make firebreaks in order to prevent fires from spreading to their properties, and also to ensure that children do not play with flammable items.

IFFD is celebrated worldwide to honour the sacrifices that firefighters



International Firefighters' Day puts a spotlight on fire safety

make to ensure that their communities and environment are as safe as possible. It is also a day on which communities can thank current and past firefighters for their contributions.

The Head of Disaster Management in Joe Gqabi Municipality, Patrick Moko, says, "Firefighters should be appreciated by all communities as they dedicate their lives day and night to fight and prevent fires, saving communities and the environment."

He added that these brave young men and women are always available when needed. Other Working on Fire teams and the provincial office in Eastern Cape also observed a minute of silence to honour fallen comrades.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# Monk's Cowl High Altitude Team works to save water

As a result of the drought experienced throughout the country, smarter interventions had to be implemented to ensure communities receive a continuous water supply. The KwaZulu-Natal Monk's Cowl High Altitude Team (HAT) has been hard at work for the past two months at Monk's Cowl Mountain in an attempt to protect the water source.

HAT Project Manager Henry Nene says, "We have been frilling pinus patula, eucalyptus & acacia plants in order to clear the catchment of the Mphofana River."

Due to the landscape limiting vehicle access, the team has been camping in Hlathikhulu Cave, as it takes them four hours to reach the operation site. They camped for 12-day periods, resting for four days and using horses to transport food to their camp site.



Rope technicians on horseback and hiking to the camp site

"We are aware that alien invasive plants drain more water than indigenous plants. Frilling is the process of debarking a portion of the trees. We then apply a chemical that will kill the tree without cutting it down, ensuring that we increase the water supply to the Mphofana River," says Nene.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer





The WOF SDP and the Aganang Team share safety tips with patients at WF Knobel Hospital in Limpopo

## Limpopo launches burn awareness campaign

With the fire season around the corner, WOF Limpopo extended its services by launching the National Burn Safety Awareness Week Campaign in the communities that it serves.

The Aganang Team joined the hospital staff to conduct a safety awareness presentation for the patients at WF Knobel Hospital in Aganang.

National Burn Safety Awareness Week is marked between 6 and 12 May.

During the awareness presentation, the children and parents were given tips on how to react if someone has caught fire and also how to escape from a burning house without sustaining burn injuries.

"We hope that with the knowledge that was shared, the statistics of burn patients will also reduce," says Ramatsea.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## Prevention is better than cure says WOF Free State

As part of Working on Fire's commitment to saving lives and protecting the environment, WOF's Fire Awareness and Social Development staff in the Free State visited the Pelonomi Hospital Burn Victims Ward in Bloemfontein to support and empower the burn victims. Staff members from the Department of Health also visited the WOF provincial office to teach staff there how to respond when a burn incident has occurred in the home or office

environment. This was done to observe National Burn Safety Awareness Week from 6-12 May 2018.

Aware that most burn injuries happen at home, WOF staff and participants conducted door-to-door fire awareness campaigns among local community members, educating them about hazards inside their homes. "I believe that by doing this awareness we'll be working towards keeping our communities free from burn-related injuries. As the saying



Fire Awareness and Social Development staff visited the Pelonomi Hospital Burn Victims

goes, prevention is better than cure," says Selaelo Mathokwane.



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

## KZN educates communities about burn awareness



In observance of National Burn Safety Awareness Week from 6-12 May, the KwaZulu-Natal provincial office and various teams conducted community fire awareness and visited a children's home to raise awareness about burns.

KZN Social Development Practitioner Hloniphile Ndlovu says, "A burn is one of the most devastating injuries. It leaves both physical and mental anguish on a child. We felt it was important to educate our communities."

Many burn injuries are accidental and are a common cause of unintentional injury. Preventative care can reduce the likelihood of an accident. The Nkandla and Ladysmith Teams

visited nearby households to share information they researched to educate parents to be careful when using appliances at home.

As the winter months approach, the use of candles, paraffin stoves and open fires increases, placing children at even greater risk.

"In partnership with the Fire Awareness Department we visited the Sunshine Home in Pietermaritzburg, where we taught children about the dangers of fires and they practised what to do in case of a fire. We also stressed the importance of an evacuation plan," says Ndlovu.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Uniondale Team gives back after family tragedy



A group picture of the Uniondale Team and Ms Jacobs behind her newly constructed fencing

In a bid to give back to the community and assist those in need the Uniondale Team, together with the Western Cape Social Development Practitioner, Lusheen Britz, assisted a resident who had lost her home and family during a shack fire.

Britz says, "A burn is one of the most devastating injuries that leaves both physical and mental anguish. Sarah Jacobs, a community member from an informal settlement in Uniondale, tragically lost her three-year-old daughter and husband in a

shack fire two days before Christmas last year.

"She sustained burns to her face and arms and lost all her belongings. Fire Awareness Training Officer Androlene Killian, the Uniondale Team and I visited her. The Team fixed the fence of her newly built shack. I counselled Ms Jacobs regarding psychosocial health while the FATO focused on fire awareness education."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer





Ready to spread their wings, WOF firefighters' children at the Lowveld Airshow

## Firefighters' children attend Lowveld Airshow

It was all fun and games at the Kishugu Lowveld Airshow's Scholars Day on 11 May 2018, as Working on Fire (WOF) hosted about 30 of our participants' children. This was done as part of the WOF's Kids Initiative programme, which seeks to instil the virtues of hard work and resilience at a tender age, as exemplified by many firefighters in the programme.

Speaking to WOFIRE News, Mbuso Nkosi, who has been a participant in the programme for over five years, says he was pleased the WOF Kids programme was initiated.

"This has given my children a first-hand opportunity to experience what I do on a daily basis, as a WOF driver," says Nkosi. "For the first time, my boys were in a WOF chopper. They were so happy, they can't stop talking about it," he says.

This is one of the many ways the Working on Fire programme ensures that the programme not only benefits firefighters but their immediate families as well.



Lebogang Maseko, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

## Clarens Team awarded for its contribution



Clarens Team received individual medals and a team trophy

The Working on Fire Clarens Team recently received an award for its contributions to the Clarens community. The team was commended for all it has done to provide the community and surrounding schools with information regarding veld fire safety through conducting door-to-door fire awareness campaigns and community fire awareness in preschools, community centres and schools.

"I am very happy that the Clarens team is being recognised for all the hard work that it is doing in the surrounding communities and farms. It proves the old saying that hard work pays off," says Johnson Mafisa, the WOF Free State Regional Manager.



Wayne Mokhehi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

## eThekweni Team assists Zibambeleni Old Age Home

The KwaZulu-Natal eThekweni Project Team recently visited the Zibambeleni Old Age Home which it had adopted years ago. The team wanted to show its appreciation of the senior citizens living in the establishment and fulfil WOF's commitment to restoring dignity.

The team sang and performed a drill for the elderly. They distributed gifts to the seniors that they had funded from their own pockets and also bought toiletries for the home. Mathebula says, "We adopted this home years ago. We usually come to conduct fuel load reduction by slashing and removing alien invasive plants as we also did today." The elderly were very appreciative of being visited by the young men and women of Working on Fire and thankful for their continued support over the years.



The eThekweni Team drilling and doing the old age home's gardens

"It was heartwarming to see our elders so happy and excited about our visit. They were getting worried about the overgrown bush that also attracts snakes. We will continue to assist them where we can as a team," says Mathebula.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Working on Fire joins Move For Health Day

Working on Fire is committed to promoting a healthy lifestyle that will increase productivity and improve the health of all employees. Move for Health Day aims to promote physical activity as essential for health and well-being. The annual initiative is marked on 10 May and promoted by the World Health Organisation.

Because Working on Fire firefighters often face dangerous conditions when battling fires, fitness training forms a crucial part of their day-to-day activities. Working on Fire firefighters and management personnel across the country got moving on this day with some teams demonstrating fitness training by doing various exercises, some took a walk around their areas and others tackled the 2,4km run.



Working on Fire firefighters and management across the country got moving to mark Move for Health Day

The event gave employees an opportunity to remind one another about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

## Educating participants about freedom in the workplace



Rooiberg participants attended the freedom day workshop

As South Africa celebrated Freedom Day on 27 April, Limpopo Social Development Practitioner (SDP) Michael Ramatsea conducted presentations in the province for provincial staff and participants at the bases about Freedom Day.

Ramatsea believes that most of the time we fail to have empathy or share others' success. Instead we try hard to find mistakes in their achievements rather than to congratulate them. This is seen in the workplace where colleagues

work against each other instead of supporting one another. The company suffers as teamwork is affected negatively.

Ramatsea asked whether as native members of society they were free if they constantly tried to find fault in the achievement of others. Ramatsea says that the freedom of a person starts in the mind and that can be seen by how one conducts oneself.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



# Turning wood into works of art

Lucky Qalinge of the Krugersdorp Base has successfully completed a one-year learnership in carpentry with Services SETA that was organised by Working on Fire. Qalinge says he was trained and

certified in machine operation, furniture making and woodwork.

He says the learnership was a success because he gained extra skills.

"We were paid a stipend by the service provider at the SETA. I opted not to look for employment but instead to develop myself," says Qalinge, who says he learned quite a lot from the learnership which was an exciting opportunity.

"I have registered my company with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission because my intention is to focus my business around producing school furniture," Qalinga says, although he is currently producing animal sculptures and artefacts.

He says, "Art is at the centre of my mind. On weekends I do woodwork. I buy wood materials, sandpaper and glue for the production of the art works."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Lucky Qalinge completed a one year learnership training in carpentry

## Female driver thrives in male-dominated field



Maggy Radebe is excited to hit the road this winter fire season

Maggy Radebe from Bethlehem in the Free State is thriving as one of the few female drivers in the Working on Fire programme who, even when the odds are stacked against them, continue to reach for greater heights.

Sharing her experience as a female fire truck driver, 34-year-old Radebe says she is often bullied by rude drivers on the road but draws her strength from her supportive team members.

The mother of a six-year-old, Radebe joined the programme in 2013 as a firefighter, a short while after giving birth to her daughter.

"What I love the most about my job is that it allows me to travel across the country and explore different cultures and languages," says Radebe.

Radebe was among the participant drivers who recently attended the driver refresher training in Nelspruit from 9 April to 1 June 2018.



Lebogang Maseko, Mpumalanga Communication Officer

## Firefighter pursues Occupational Health and Safety studies

Phindile Zondi from the Albert Falls Team in KwaZulu-Natal has embarked on a new journey to further her studies in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) at Damelin.

"I believe through hard work and dedication you can achieve anything you put your mind to," says Zondi.

After joining Working on Fire in February 2016, Zondi became the breadwinner of her son and family. She is grateful to Working on Fire for giving her an opportunity to change her life for the better.

"I never thought I would become a firefighter, but after receiving my Yellow Card, I saw I was capable of



Phindile Zondi doing her assignment during her free time

accomplishing anything. WOF has shown me that when you are focussed, you can achieve your dreams," says Zondi.

She believes going through her training in Nelspruit and being a firefighter has disciplined her enough to pursue a career in OHS.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Participant grateful to Working on Fire

Mercy Tyume, a 41-year-old former firefighter from the Stutterheim Team, joined the Working on Fire programme in 2014.

Tyume says that she fought different fires, which included power lines burning in Knysna and Free State and has been in projects such as block burns in Adelaide and Simo, and tracer belts in Karberg and Parys. A tracer belt is the 'outlining' of the area that will be demarcated for a firebreak, control burn and slashing to ensure that fire does not spread.

She said that some of the intense fires she attended were in Joubertina in 2007, Addo Elephant Park in 2008, Karberg in 2009 and Tsitsikamma in 2009.

"The Joubertina fire took about two weeks, burned the property, a hotel and animals. Facing those flames was terrify-



Former firefighter celebrates 14 years in the programme

ing. The sound of flames made everyone shiver and even fear for our lives but the love we had for our work made it easy to deal with every situation we came across," Tyume says.

In 2010, Tyume was appointed a general office assistant where her office

## Firefighter launches music career



Thando Wambi at the Limietberg Base

Firefighter Thando Wambi from Mbekweni in Paarl is a deep house deejay and music producer. Professionally known as Lutho De Deep, he joined Working on Fire in September 2016 at the Limietberg Base.

He says, "The stipend I receive has helped me support my mother and buy equipment for my studio that I am currently building, and also instilled the discipline in me to work hard and make the most out of my career. Thank you WOF for helping me achieve my dream of becoming a music producer."

"I've always had a passion for music and I started producing music in 2014 with the help of a friend. It was one big challenge to learn to produce when you have nothing but the love of house music. The support from work colleagues, family and friends kept me going."

Wambi released his first three songs in February 2018 titled "Lutho De Deep - Reflections EP", under the Black Jazz Digital label, which is available worldwide at all digital stores. Wambi has a strong presence on social media including:

Facebook: Lutho De Deep  
Twitter: LuthoDe\_Deep  
Instagram: Lutho\_De\_Deep  
Soundcloud: Lutho De Deep  
Lutho De Deep-Reflections  
Song Link - <https://www.traxsource.com/title/943761/reflections>



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

duties include making sure that the office environment is clean.

She celebrates 14 years in the programme this year. "I do not have any qualifications, but I have a good job and can support my kids because of Working on Fire," she says.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer





Former Kromrivier firefighter uses her skills in the new job

## Participant secures good job opportunity

Born in the small town of Humansdorp in the western part of the Eastern Cape, Lindelwa Kololo has worked very hard to be where she is today.

This young lady's journey started when she joined Working on Fire as a firefighter in 2016 at the Kromrivier Team.

"When I dropped out at university during my final year due to financial problems I felt like my life was over. I heard about the recruitment and I went there to try my luck as I was desperately in need of a job. Once I joined the WOF programme everything changed for the better," she says.

Kololo says that she used the stipend from the programme to repay the money she owed the university.

"Working on Fire empowered me with many skills, experiences, discipline and the support from social development officers and I am thankful for that," she says.

While working for WOF she was hit by a car. It was a very difficult time for her but the support she got from her team members and management always gave her hope.

Recently, 28-year-old Kololo got a new job as an interpreter at the Humansdorp Magistrate's Court.

"I am applying the skills and experience that I got from WOF in my new job. I would like to advise all firefighters to be patient, work hard and always aim high in life," she says.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## Inspired by others to move



Ezekiel Khunyedi has exited the programme

Ezekiel Khunyedi, who was a firefighter at the De Wildt Team, has exited the programme to take up a position as a security officer at the Game store in Jubilee Mall in Hammanskraal.

"After many years as a firefighter, I realised I needed to take a step further in life. I then started to save money to do security training in Garankuwa," he says.

Khunyedi felt duty-bound to make an effort to exit the programme. "All that I know is that Working on Fire is a poverty relief programme. Therefore, after exiting it means someone will come in," he says.

The work opportunity served as a stepping stone for him. He challenged

others in the programme to follow in his footsteps and try new opportunities. "They need to wake up and do things by themselves," says Khunyedi, noting that he has not seen many positive exits among the ranks lately.

He says he was inspired by stories of other firefighters who exited the programme. Their example offered him a positive mindset in the face of hopelessness. "Now here I am," he says, pointing to his new position of security officer. "I am aiming for greater things again."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## Participant finds dream job

Nhlakanipho Nhlapo is exiting the programme to do internship training in fitting and turning at one of the leading steel companies based in Heidelberg.

Nhlapo completed a diploma in mechanical engineering at Sedibeng College before joining WOF. After his graduation, he was unemployed until he got a work opportunity in the Working on Fire programme.

Joining WOF helped him to keep his career dreams alive after the difficult times of unemployment.

Nhlapo, who was formerly with the Heidelberg Team, says he could not underestimate the impact of the programme on his personal development. He highlights occupational health and safety knowledge as one of the things he was taking into the internship.

"This was my first job and I learned quite a lot of things. It was an eye opener for a novice like me in the work environment. I trust this internship will turn my fortunes into reality," he says.

Nhlapo says he does not have any regrets at having been part of the award-winning programme. "I am really grateful for the experience and skills acquired in the programme which will be with me forever."



Nhlakanipho Nhlapo follows his dream of becoming a mechanical engineer



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## Storeperson exits programme to join Labour Department

Working on Fire participants continue to use the skills and experience they acquired while in the programme to gain better employment. Recently two North West participants were permanently employed by the North West Department of Labour as general workers. The pair will start in their new positions in June.

One of the exiting participants is Koos Luccy Masigo, a storeperson at Castello Base who joined Working on Fire in July 2014.

He says, "While in the programme I learned skills that will assist in my new employment such as stocktaking, storage plans and dispatch orders, store

documentation, material identification, stock records and control. But most importantly, teamwork, which will help me build good relationships with my new colleagues."

Masigo advises his peers to save as much of their monthly stipends as they could to help them achieve their goals. "My advice to former colleagues is, motivate yourself, work hard and be patient with God as only He knows what tomorrow brings. Also understand that if you want something, you must save for it and not be tempted to move away from your plans."

Written by Teko Mooki



Storeperson Koos Luccy Masigo at the neatly packed storeroom at the Castello Base