



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

FIRE AWARENESS CAMPAIGN TARGETS VULNERABLE HOMES

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WOF FIREFIGHTER WINS SLALOM CANOE CHAMPIONSHIP

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WOF RECRUITS UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

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A big thank you to all our firefighting heroes – our ground crews and pilots



The Working on Fire programme spends about R80 million per year in the Western Cape, preventing and managing large wild fires.

- Working on Fire has twenty-five firefighting aircraft currently deployed in the Western

Cape and 36 pilots, and about 70 vehicles that provide logistical and firefighting support.

- Working on Fire falls under the Department's Environmental Programmes and is

implemented through the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP).

"On behalf of our government and the people of South Africa I am extending our gratitude and thanks to all our brave firefighting warriors

in all services across our beautiful country for their continued commitment to save lives and to protect our environment," Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa.

Written by: Editorial Team

Human Rights Day celebrated

Human Rights Day is a national day that is commemorated annually on 21 March to remind South Africans about the sacrifices that accompanied the struggle for the attainment of democracy in South Africa.

The commemoration provides the country with an opportunity to reflect on progress made in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Molteno Team in the Eastern Cape celebrated Human Rights Day on the 22nd March

with learners from the Joe Slovo Freedom High School and the Molteno community.

Social Development Officer, Yvonne Nte, said that their event was aimed at ensuring that foreigners also enjoy human rights after several incidents in which they were attacked. "We realised that communities need to be educated on human rights including rights of foreigners," said Nte.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

New Chancellor for Health Sciences University

We wish to extend our congratulations to our Minister of Environmental Affairs, Dr Edna Molewa, who has been installed as the first Chancellor of the Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU).

In her inauguration speech, Minister Molewa said it was time for SMU to start dreaming of becoming a world class health sciences university using green technology. Molewa shared her vision of a university with green open spaces that uses green energy, recycles most of its waste and uses non-motorised transport. Above all, she said the university must produce health professionals of whom the country and continent could be proud.

The university occupies what was formerly the Medunsa campus of the University of Limpopo, in Ga-Rankuwa, north of Pretoria.

Written by: Editorial Team



Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa

Editorial

Dear Readers

In the March WOFire Newsletter, we highlight how Working on Fire teams across the country are preparing community members, learners and landowners for the upcoming fire season. Various teams are preparing themselves by doing refresher courses and implementing fire preventative measures across the country.

We also report on how WOF partners with government departments to facilitate fire awareness campaigns targeting high fire risk areas in different provinces. WOF also creates skills development opportunities for unemployed youth through its recruitment drives. The process sees unemployed youth participate in a number of fitness tests, interviews and health tests before the successful ones are sent to the Nelspruit Training Academy to be trained at firefighters.

We feature stories of how our participants have developed within the programme and how they use their monthly stipends to pursue their dreams. Some firefighters rise up the ranks through promotion and training in the programme, while others pursue further studies, start small businesses or support their families. We bid farewell to several participants who landed jobs in the private and government sector thanks to the skills acquired while at WOF.

Keep up with Working on Fire and its participants' activities by following us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

Happy reading!

MD Message

Llewellyn Pillay



Let me wish all the provinces facing winter fire seasons all the best with their fire season preparations and Yellow Card Training Camps.

Over the past 14 years, Working on Fire has established itself as a professional and disciplined organisation in the field of Integrated Fire Management across South Africa. Our Best Operating Procedures (BOPs) have ensured that we are consistent in delivering quality work, safely and efficiently.

Remember, it is the responsibility of every employee to protect and uphold our standards each and every day in all aspects of our operational and functional responsibilities.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new recruits who have joined the programme. Working on Fire is about changing the lives of young men and women and ensuring that, through training and development, they are able to successfully exit the programme into the formal job market. We wish you all the best and hope that being part of the programme help you make your dreams a reality.

I encourage you all to remain vigilant and continue to adhere to all safety measures on the fireline.

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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.



EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

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.

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

WOF provides leadership training to 35 young men and women





Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

Newly trained Type 2 Crew Leaders ready to lead

Working on Fire recently celebrated the completion of training of 35 new Type 2 Crew Leaders from the Free State, Western Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal at a graduation ceremony at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit.

The participants successfully completed a 45-day training programme equipping them in aspects of Integrated Fire Management, which included fire line safety, fire line supervision, fire behaviour and fire suppression tactics. Kishugu Training General Manager, Mervin Brody,

encouraged the participants to be responsible leaders and to always take ownership of activities involving their respective teams. "I urge you all to be responsible leaders and not be afraid to put your foot down when it is required," Brody said.

Crew Leader shares his experience of Western Cape fires

“A good leader is one who encourages the team to perform optimally at all times,” says Ntobeko Samla, a Type 1 Crew Leader at Tsitsikamma Base.

Thirty-five-year-old Samla says he has learnt a lot about leadership while in the Working on Fire programme which has helped him grow to be a better person, but most importantly, a better leader.

“I was recruited in 2004 as a firefighter at Stutterheim Base. In 2008 I was sent to the Type 2 Crew Leader course and I passed,” explains Samla, who later completed the Type 1 Crew Leader course.

“I became the Crew Leader for the Stutterheim, Baviaanskloof and Tsitsikamma Teams where I got to implement the leadership skills I had learned at the Crew Leader course,” says Samla.

Because of his sterling leadership skills, Samla was one of the Crew Leaders that led

teams deployed to fight fires in the Western Cape.

“Leading teams to fight fires in the Western Cape was challenging as the area is very mountainous. It needs people to be mentally and physically fit so that they are able to endure extreme conditions on the fire line,” he says.

According to Samla, the vegetation in the Western Cape burns very fast, forming huge, terrifying flames. “As a Crew Leader you have to look out for the safety of your crew while also suppressing a fire,” he says.

He adds that leaders need to be passionate about their work, implement the leadership skills they learned and keep the crews motivated.

“I would like to thank Working on Fire for the 12 years of experience which contributed to the person I have become,” says Samla.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



Fire awareness campaign targets vulnerable homes



Working on Fire officials and stakeholders visited a number of households

In preparation for the 2017 winter fire season, the Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal Team, in partnership with the KZN Office of the Premier, King Cetshwayo Disaster Management Centre and the Umlalazi Fire Department, conducted a door-to-door fire awareness exercise in the Nkanini community in Eshowe.

KZN Community Fire Awareness Officer Makhosi Dladla says, “The aim of the door-to-door campaign was to target vulnerable households such as child-headed homes and senior citizens living alone to raise awareness about the upcoming winter fire season.”

“During the door-to-door campaign WOF assists community members to identify

fire risks in and around their homes and to know how to eliminate those risks. Our aim is to reach as many communities at risk as possible before the start of the fire season,” says Dladla.

The Umlalazi Fire Department shared the emergency number to use in case of a fire with residents. The King Cetshwayo Disaster Management Centre distributed buckets to store water, beaters to extinguish small fires and groceries to the visited homes.



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

Campaign to reduce fires in communities

The Mamabolo participants in Limpopo initiated a campaign to educate and equip communities with fire safety information. The team conducted a door-to-door fire awareness exercise in communities in Maselana where they educated residents about how to protect their homes and properties during the upcoming fire season.

“Door-to-door fire awareness is important and beneficial to our society, especially as we are approaching the fire season. In winter people are robbed of their properties by the fires which start in their homes and we want to help them avoid such losses,” says Mapula Letsoalo, the Mamabolo Team Base Communications Representative.

Fire season can be devastating, especially if you are not prepared. The Mamabolo participants are making sure that their communities are safe and protected by regularly equipping them with knowledge and guidance on how to prevent unwanted fires from occurring and how to react to fire.

“Through all these campaigns we are saving lives and protecting our environment. Our goal is to have a high reduction of fires in our society,” says Letsoalo.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Mamabolo participants conducting a door-to-door campaign

#FireSafe workshop for emerging farmers

Mpumalanga Community Fire Awareness Training Officer Mbuso Siwela conducted a FireSafe workshop with a group of emerging farmers from the Sheepmoor community in Ermelo focusing on fire prevention and fire mitigation.

“The purpose of the workshop was to educate the farmers on how to prevent and manage unwanted fires on their farms,” says Siwela.

He educated the farmers about how to develop fire risk assessment plans and to draw up fire management plans.

“As the 2017 winter fire season approaches, I am targeting high-risk communities to help reduce the number of unwanted fires across the province,” says Siwela.



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga



Farmers of the Sheepmoor community learning about fire prevention and mitigation

Reivelo Team safeguards Hotel School



The North West Reivelo Team spent more than a month at the Taung Hotel School doing fuel load reduction by slashing grass, cutting trees and stacking.

“The most important factor for this project is to mitigate wildfire hazards. If the fuel load is too high there will be a higher rate of wildfires which might lead to loss of property or lives,” says the Reivelo Team Type 1 Crew Leader, Elvina Saal.

Malebo Molema, the Commercial Manager of Taung Hotel School, who worked closely with the team, thanked the Working on Fire programme’s firefighters for doing an excellent job.

“We are extremely happy and proud of their efforts and hard work. They have cleared all the grass which was too high, posing a fire and security risk to our community members and students,” says Molema.

One of the brushcutter operators, Johannes Ndiwe, says, “A brushcutter works more effectively as it’s able to cut shrubs and thick grass. That’s why we have to make sure we have at least three brushcutter operators at the base.”

Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

Community Development Workers (CDWs) attend FireSafe workshop

Following the recent fires in the Southern Cape, Community Fire Awareness Officer Rayganah Rhoda conducted a FireSafe workshop for 20 Community Development Workers (CDWs) at the Calitzdorp Spa in the Kannaland Local Municipality.

Rhoda focused on community profiling to identify fire hazards within communities, fire management plans and defensible space around properties and communities. “This forum is very important to us as the CDW is the link between the community and the municipality, as well as local government, so whatever workshops or presentations we bring to communities, our first point of contact would be the CDW. Community profiles are gathered from the CDW. Once we have these we can then put together a fire safety workshop that is customised to the community,” says Rhoda.

Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Partnerships with Fire Protection Associations key to reduce fire risks

Roelie Schilt, the chairperson of the Heidelberg Fire Protection Association (FPA), says that partnering with the Working on Fire team in the area is benefitting more landowners. He says the partnership has united landowners and has helped them confront fire challenges in the area as a unit.

“Last year the Working on Fire team assisted us with firebreaks and suppression and they have a fire truck which carries more litres of water and human resources simultaneously,” says Schilt.

Schilt says membership of the FPA was small before the Working on Fire team’s presence in the area but other landowners were seeing the activity of the team and that was inspiring them to join the FPA.

“As the chairperson of the FPA I struggled to entice landowners until we partnered with the WOF team. The landowners see that the team is productive, professional and disciplined,” Schilt says.

Schilt says his own fire nightmares on his farm were quelled by working with the Working on Fire team.

Assistant Base Manager Phineas Mphela says that it was pleasant to work with the Fire Protection Association rather than individual landowners.

“We are able to do proper plans for production. Roelie is also helpful in getting us sites where we can do work,” he says.

Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Leseding Team ensures children’s safety

With the 2017 winter fire season approaching, the Leseding Team in Vaalwater has started its fire awareness campaigns targeting learners from various education institutions. The team is using topics that are aligned to the CAPS-based school curriculum.

The Leseding participants visited Lillian Ngoyi Crèche to educate the learners about fire safety and prevention. As part of their preparations for the fire season they equipped these young minds with knowledge that could save their lives. “We conducted a presentation about personal safety for the learners at Lillian Ngoyi Crèche. We wanted to kill two birds with one stone – we are confident that the children will want to tell their parents about the firefighters who taught them about fire safety, thereby spreading the message,” says Jan Ndlovu, Leseding’s BCR.

The day was sealed with the team playing some fun games with the learners at the crèche.

Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Firefighter's positive attitude pays off

Nomawabo Saul, the Base Communications Representative (BCR) of the Tsitsikamma Team in the Eastern Cape, says that if there is one thing that she has learned about working with people, it is that it can be challenging, but your attitude determines how you make it work.

Saul joined Working on Fire in 2016 at the Tsitsikamma Base. "I matriculated in 2009. In 2012 I went to Ngqungqushu FET College to further my studies but I did not finish due to financial problems," explains Saul.

When she started in the WOF programme, she gave it her all, worked hard and was always willing to learn, which led to her being appointed as a BCR. "Working as a BCR had its challenges as the team didn't accept my role. It became very



hard and I was tempted to leave the position but I realised that the challenges were all part of growing and learning," she says.

Saul then made it her mission to ensure that her team understood her role.

"Things became better and my team supports me, now I have grown to be better at my job. I can write articles, take better pictures and be confident enough to address the team," she says. She advises all firefighters to take on new opportunities with both hands and learn from them to broaden their skills beyond firefighting.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Mpumalanga's Ground Operations Manager makes history



Thabiso Mohale, the first female Ground Operations Manager in Mpumalanga

The Mpumalanga provincial office has welcomed the first female Ground Operations Manager (GOM), Thabiso Mohale.

Mohale worked as a regional manager in Limpopo for three years and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Limpopo.

She says although firefighting is a male-dominated industry, she was "ready to take the bull by the horns. WOF remains my second home and I am happy to be joining the Mpumalanga provincial office and looking forward to working together with teams."

Mohale will manage the Highveld region while Bongani Nhlabathi, who has worked as a GOM for five years, will manage the Lowveld region.



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga

Firefighter moves up the ranks

Moipone Motaung, who is originally from Kroonstad in the Free State, became a Fire Awareness Facilitator last year after being a firefighter for five years at the Kroonstad Base. She relocated to Bloemfontein to take up the new position.

Motaung recently conducted her first fire awareness workshop in Botshabelo in the Free State. The FireSafe workshop was held to educate community members about fire through topics such as environmental education, fire and life safety education and disaster risk assessment and mitigation.

"I was initially very nervous but I quickly gained confidence when the audience

participated and engaged me about the topics that I was teaching them. I would like to thank all my colleagues, especially my mentors, for their continued support and guidance," says Motaung.

FireSafe workshops have been instrumental in getting communities to understand the causes of wildfires, how to mitigate them, how to take ownership of fire hazards in and around their homes and how to draw up a fire management plan in the event of a fire occurring.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State



Moipone Motaung, who was recently appointed as a Fire Awareness Facilitator, conducted her first workshop

Safety Camp for KZN High Altitude Teams

All High Altitude Teams (HAT) in the province recently had their first Team-building Rope Access Safety Camp at Monks Cowl.

KZN HAT's Regional Manager Henry Nene says, "The aim of the camp was to inspire teams working from bases to refresh safety standards during production and to encourage fitness by creating competitions."

Activities included a 2.4 km run, sit-ups, pull-ups, push-ups, a safety talk with the Occupational Health and Safety Officer, a driver safety presentation, rope access competition, search and rescue, equipment checks, a soccer competition and a route march.



HAT teams doing different activities

Like the Yellow Card Training Camp which prepares firefighters to mitigate veld and forest fires, the training at the Team-building Rope Access Safety Camp is tailored to prepare HAT to reduce alien invasive plants which have a negative impact on fires.

"I'm very happy with the outcome of this first-of-its-kind camp and hope it will be even better next year," says Nene.



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

Participants complete rope access training course

The KwaZulu-Natal High Altitude Team (HAT) held its rope access training from 20 February to 3 March 2017 at Shongweni Dam in Durban. Training was conducted by the High Angle Rope Access Training Company. This training must be refreshed every two years to cover any changes to the technician and certification scheme that occurred since the previous assessment.

"We work on mountains regularly removing alien invasive plants. This is why rope access training for participants is so vital. It is also important for them to know the latest developments within the field to be safe," says HAT Regional Manager, Henry Nene.

The training covered tying different types of safety knots, rope transfer, search and rescue, anchoring, fall arrest, mapping and how to handle equipment. "All these exercises are imperative for rope technicians to know in case of emergencies during their daily production. Knowing where to anchor your rope ensures that when you descend down a mountain the structure can support the weight of your body or a colleague in the case of an accident," says Nene.



KZN high altitude rope access training team

All 25 participants passed the rope access training and are ready to save our water and our indigenous trees by removing harmful alien plants. "I am very proud of all the participants that were part of the training. Some had never

even touched a rope before, but they were eager to learn and passed," says Nene.



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal

Let us all help to minimise fire risks in our communities!

The Nkomazi Team in Mpumalanga prioritised its safety by clearing dry grass at the base. This was done to help minimise the risk of fires in the surrounding areas.

“We usually visit schools and work closely with communities to educate them about ways to prevent unwanted fires. Today we implemented what we teach,” says Nhlanhla Madonsela, Nkomazi Base Communications Representative (BCR).

As teams gear up for the upcoming Yellow Card Training and winter fire season, Madonsela says, “It is important that we are safe in order for us to be able to go out and protect our communities.”

The Nkomazi Base Team has 24 young men and women, all from the Nkomazi community.



Lebogang Maseko, Provincial Communication Officer, Mpumalanga



Nkomazi Team members clearing bushes at their base to minimise fire risks (photo by Nhlanhla Madonsela, Nkomazi BCR)

Programme helps to alleviate poverty

Victor Khulwana, a Type 1 Crew Leader of the Mdala Team, says one of the most important human rights is being able to have a source of income and afford to buy food.

He says he starved prior to democracy, because programmes like Working on Fire did not exist to alleviate poverty amongst the poorest South Africans.


“WOF is here today to mitigate poverty and uplift us. The programme fulfils a fundamental human rights role for participants by skilling and paying them stipends to make a living,” he says.

“[Adequate food] is very important for many of us to survive. A lot needs to be done to get all

stages of human rights fulfilled. You can’t build a house without foundations,” says Khulwana.

“If I am not starving it means stage one of my human rights is met. It then talks to restoring dignity as a human being,” he says.

Khulwana says there is a saying that says a hungry man is an angry man. He feels the WOF stipends touch millions of lives in various households across the country on a daily basis, and that the programme plays a critical part in affirming his and fellow participants’ human rights to exist and be protected.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



WOF firefighter wins Slalom Canoe Championship



Katlheo Mahlaba, a Working on Fire firefighter from the Bethlehem Base, recently walked away with a gold medal in the K1M category of the South African Junior Slalom Canoe Championships. The annual championship was held in Clarens in the Free State on the Ash River.

Sixteen competitors, six from Germany and 10 South Africans, took turns to race against the clock with the combined time for two runs (in seconds) taken as the final points. Paddlers needed to negotiate about 20 gates hung over the river which they pass through in a specified sequence and direction – either upstream or downstream.

“I would like to thank the Department of Environmental Affairs and WOF for giving me the opportunity to be part of this programme which allows me to be physically fit on a daily basis. I would also like to thank a few individuals who assisted me in reaching my goal of winning a gold medal. I would like to thank my General Manager, Mr Willem van Aswegen, for allowing me to participate in the event and allowing me to practice leading up to the tournament. I would like to thank my coach, my Regional manager as well as my Working on Fire teammates for all their support. It truly is an honour to have won this championship and it will remain a highlight in my life,” says Mahlaba.

“We are extremely proud of Katleho. He embodies the leadership and discipline that we teach our participants and we are proud that he is using his talent to further himself in life. We will continue to support him in reaching his goals,” says Johnson Mafisa, the WOF Regional Manager.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

WOF raises public awareness about wetlands



Learners from Metsimaphodi Secondary School assisting the WOF Dewetsdorp Team to conduct a cleaning campaign

The Free State Working on Fire Dewetsdorp Team celebrated Wetlands Month in February at Morojaneng Park. Various stakeholders, such as members of the Community Work Programme (CWP), Department of Health and Mangaung Metro Municipality, attended the event.

The Working on Fire Free State Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO) and the Fire Awareness Facilitator taught learners from Metsimaphodi Secondary School who attended the event about the importance of wetlands, how they could be preserved and how they related to fire.

This year’s theme for World Wetlands Day was ‘Wetlands for Disaster Risk Reduction’. Wetlands play an important role in helping to provide communities with resilience to natural hazards such as flooding caused by storms, cyclones, storm surges and tsunamis.

Unfortunately, wetlands are often viewed as waste land. World Wetlands Month is an annual opportunity to raise public awareness and promote the value of wetlands.

“We taught Grade 10 learners what wetlands are, about their importance and, at the end of the day’s festivities, we conducted a cleaning

campaign at one of the wetlands in Dewetsdorp. The event was a success and the children enjoyed clearing litter around the wetland as they understood the importance of wetlands,” says Glodinah Mofokeng, a CFAO. Working on Fire took the opportunity to lead a clean-up campaign of one of the wetlands within the town precinct and, with the assistance of the Metsimaphodi learners, managed to remove all the litter that polluted the area.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

WOF KZN awards its top achieving fire awareness teams

The Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal Fire Awareness Department has recognised the best performing teams that conducted fire awareness programmes from the third quarter of the 2016/2017 year with awards. The Utrecht, Thurlow and Umzimkhulu Teams were recognised for doing the most fire awareness programmes in the province.

The province experienced fewer fires last year, due to the Integrated Fire Management activities conducted in the province, including fire awareness initiatives. KZN Fire Awareness Officer Khulani Zulu says, "I am very proud of my teams for striving for excellence and in seeing to the needs of their communities to try to protect and prepare them for the fire season."

Utrecht took first place for conducting 177 fire awareness activities, second place went to Thurlow for 43 fire awareness activities and Umzimkhulu with 27 fire awareness activities took third place. "We are very happy that our hard work as a team is recognised by our managers. It motivates us to identify opportunities to reduce fires in our communities," says Thurlow Base Communications Representative, Sfiso Hlela.

"We encourage communities to invite us to areas that need more attention in reducing fires in the area so that we can help them improve fire awareness," says Zulu.



Nompilo Zondi, Provincial Communication Officer, KwaZulu-Natal



Top-performing fire awareness teams

Participants should develop their skills



Gau pic-Happy Makofane benefits from inspiration talks by base manager

Base Manager Dick Skhosana of the Dr JS Moroka Team believes the crew members in the team should learn to save money and then upskill themselves by getting driver's licences or doing courses so that they don't turn to crime.

Skhosana says that 80% of the crew members in the team now have driver's licences after following his advice.

"I allocate time to talk to crew members about their personal development. It pains me to see young lives wasted. I know their backgrounds and conditions. I have a responsibility to help them," he says.

He says that he has at times helped firefighters to apply for jobs and bursaries

and wishes to see firefighters find lucrative opportunities outside the programme in future.

A Base Communications Representative, Happy Makofane, says that Skhosana motivates them a lot regarding career development. He is inspired by Skhosana's efforts to guide and advise crew members.

"He told us that the sky is the limit. We have already had three of our crew members get formal jobs in the public sector through Skhosana's intervention," says Makofane.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Young leader aspires to be more than a firefighter



Ntandazo Soko from the Limietberg Team

Fire tragedy fuels passion for saving lives

When Debbie Baloyi tragically lost her father in 2001, she used the tragedy that befell her to make a difference in her community. The memory of how her father died of smoke inhalation and burns sustained in a fire at their house pushed Debbie to work harder and to pursue a career in firefighting.

"My father got burned while we were still kids. Though the neighbours tried to rescue him from the flames he never made it to hospital alive. It was traumatic and part of me wanted to blame the fire and rescue emergency services for not coming in time. Right then I took a vow that I would become a firefighter when I completed my studies," says Baloyi.

Baloyi grew up in the rural village of Makekeng outside Mokopane, where it's a challenge to access emergency services as well as other public services. She completed her

matric in 2008. Due to financial constraints she was unable to further her studies.

In 2012 Baloyi joined WOF as a firefighter at Mogalakwena Base in Mokopane, Limpopo. Due to her hard work, passion and dedication she was appointed as the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) representative for her base in 2013, where she is responsible for the health and safety of her crew members.

"Even though I didn't have the funds to further my studies to achieve my goal of becoming a firefighter, I never lost hope. I knew that God would answer my prayers one day. Miraculously WOF was the answer that I was praying for. They gave me an opportunity to save lives," says Baloyi.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

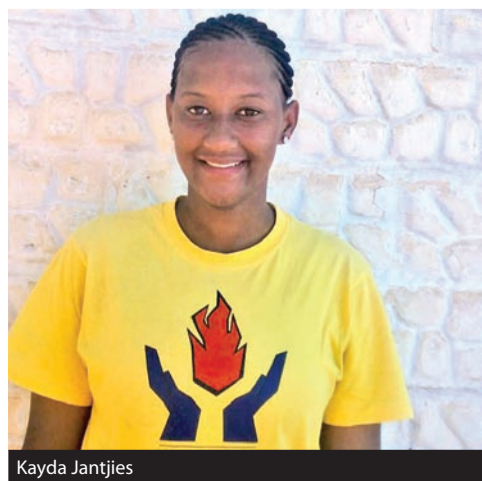


Mogalakwena SHE Rep Debbie Baloyi, who used her tragedy to make a difference in her community

From firefighter to Social Auxiliary Worker

Kayda Jantjies, a former firefighter from the Ladismith Base in the Southern Cape, is optimistic about completing her Social Science studies and getting one step closer to fulfilling her lifelong dream of becoming a social worker.

Jantjies is a single mother, living with her parents and younger sister in Ladismith. She plans to complete a Social Science course through Unisa over the next few years. Jantjies says, "I am working in Oudtshoorn for an organisation named ACVV (Afrikaanse Christelike Vrouevereniging). I love what I am doing as I meet new people almost every day and can make a difference in their lives. Working on Fire taught me a lot, and Social Development Practitioner Lusheen Britz always told us to stay



Kayda Jantjies

motivated and complete the goals we set for ourselves."

Before joining the WOF programme in October 2014, Jantjies completed her Social Auxiliary Worker studies at CEFA in 2012 and her practical training at Child Welfare in Ladismith in 2013. When asked what motivated her to join the WOF programme she says, "I never thought I would be a firefighter but I joined the programme to support my son and family, as well as to save up to complete my studies. I love working with people from diverse walks of life." Well done Kayda. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

New recruit closer to her dreams

Twenty-five-year-old Molebogeng Pelele is a successful candidate who is now at Molopo Base in the North West. Pelele matriculated seven years ago and then did a six-month learnership in disaster management with the fire brigade. That’s when her interest in firefighting was awakened.

Pelele says she struggled to get a job after her learnership ended and continued to apply without luck until she heard that WOF was recruiting firefighters.

“I came here with so much hope and I knew if I gave it my all I would succeed. Now that I’ve made it here I am planning to work hard so I

can move myself from one level to another,” says Pelele.

Pelele believes having the experience and educational background that WOF will provide will come in handy in the near future.

After undergoing training at the training academy in Mpumalanga, she says her favourite exercises were the fire wall, fitness and drilling. “I am looking forward to fighting fires and saving lives,” says Pelele.



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West



North West’s new recruit, Molebogeng Pelele

Eastern Cape teams top up in preparation for upcoming fire season

East District region in the Eastern Cape recently recruited 14 young people to be trained as firefighters. According to Regional Manager Ongezwa Nonjiji, five people were recruited for the Ugie Team while nine were recruited for the Langeni Team.

“Many young people came for the recruitment to try their luck and only those who passed the fitness standard were selected,” says Nonjiji.

She says the fitness test included 40 push-ups, 40 sit-ups as well as running 2.4 km in 14 minutes for females and 12 minutes for males.

The recruitment process forms part of preparations for the upcoming winter fire season which will start in May in the East District.

Nonjiji says that all the new recruits will be taken to the training academy in Nelspruit and will undergo a training course that includes advanced firefighting, fire safety and other specialised skills.

Recruits will receive extensive training in the essentials of integrated fire management. “Above all, the purpose of the programme is



skills development for the young men and women,” she says, adding that the recruitment will alleviate poverty in the homes of the new recruits.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Participant uses stipend to complete his studies



Thato is grateful for the opportunities at WOF


Thato Gabaya is a North West Working on Fire participant from Dithakong village in Kuruman, Northern Cape. Gabaya matriculated in 2010 but could not study further due to financial problems.

“September 2011, that’s when my life changed for the better after I joined the WOF programme,” says Gabaya. Gabaya says WOF offered him acatering opportunity at the training academy that triggered his love for hospitality. He then enrolled for the Hospitality and Tourism Management Course at IQ College.

“WOF helped me figure out how I want my life to be. I have excellent skills as a firefighter, certificates and also graduated in tourism,” says Gabaya, who now holds a two-year National Certificate.

When asked how he managed to pay for his studies Gabaya says that he arranged to pay his fees on a monthly basis for two years until he completed his studies.

Gabaya says, “I am very thankful for everything Working on Fire has done for me. I am who I am because of WOF.”



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

Skills learned at WOF pay off for former participants

Former firefighters from the Carletonville Base, Mahlomola Leeto and Gladwin Style, are using skills learned during their time in the programme at their new jobs. They are employed as brushcutter and chainsaw operators by the Amaduala Company .

“We did training in brush cutting and chainsaw operating at Working on Fire during the 25 days of training in Nelspruit. I never thought that one day I could use these skills to make a living outside of the programme,” says Leeto.

Leeto is a brushcutter operator while Style is the chainsaw operator. Their duties consist of brushcutting lawns and grass in the mine’s nature reserve and properties.

Leeto says that the company recruited them because they are qualified and experienced to operate the brushcutter and chainsaw.

Style says he has a wealth of experience in chainsaw operating and more knowledge that will be of use at his new workplace where they now earn a better income.

“We were tested before we were employed. We also shared knowledge of occupational health and safety, which we



Mahlomola Leeto says brush cutting is now his trade

also learned while at WOF, with our new employer. He was impressed,” he says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Firefighter’s perseverance pays off

Lunga Sam is a firefighter at the Molteno Team who was recruited in 2015. The 29-year-old had to leave school in 2007 after doing Grade 11 due to financial difficulties.

“Getting a job was not easy because I did not have matric, a qualification or skills. But I had hope,” he says.

Sam says that he went to every recruitment that took place for the Stutterheim and Hogsback Teams in the hope of being recruited as a firefighter, but he was not successful.

“I never gave up and I had hope that one day I would get something that would change my life,” says Sam.

It was only in November 2015 when a new base was opened in Molteno that Sam finally got his chance. Many young people pitched up on that day and did the fitness tests as well as interviews.

“The selection was very tough and everyone did their best. When I was told that I had been selected to be part of the Molteno Team I could not hold my tears,” says Sam.

He says, “We were taken for training and when we came back I promised myself that I would work hard to get other opportunities within the programme.”

After five months as a firefighter Sam was selected for driver assessment because



he already had a driver’s licence. “I was then appointed to be a driver for the team and that brought me more happiness and my life became better,” he says.

He advises young people to work hard and never give up in life.

“Working on Fire has changed my life within a short period of time and I am thankful for that,” says Sam with a smile.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape