



WOFIRE NEWS

SAVING LIVES • PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT • RESTORING DIGNITY

FIREFIGHTERS ON HIGH ALERT

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SPREADING HER WINGS ON RADIO

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TRANSNET PROJECT COMPLETED

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Working on Fire women continue to grow and excel



The contribution of women participants and management in sustaining and growing the Working on Fire programme continues to astound many people. Women participation currently stands at 31% of participants employed in the programme. This is the highest ratio of

women to men compared to similar firefighting sectors across the world.

Working on Fire also has a long history of women participants who have grown and developed in the programme and who today are part of the management corps of WOF.

Many other women also successfully exited the programme and today are employed at institutions such as the South African Police Services, the South African National Defence Force and South African National Parks. They all credit the training and mentorship which

they received in Working on Fire as having been instrumental in their growth and development.

We salute the women in Working on Fire for their tireless contribution to saving lives and protecting our environment.

Firefighters working hard to save lives

The Suikerbosrand Team in Gauteng recently received high praise for their hard work and dedication in helping to suppress a deadly fire which ravaged the Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve in the East Rand.

The fire claimed six lives and burnt more than 1 000 hectares off the reserve. Were it not for the quick response of our firefighters there might have been more damage.

According to the crew leader for the team, Vusi Nkabinde, they managed to save the animals and prevent further loss of life. "Our plan to suppress fire worked quite well. The terrain is quite mountainous but we managed to control the fire," he says.

The Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development reported that rescue teams were activated, including medical assistance and SAPS. One person died during the rescue operation. The rest of the injured were taken to hospital whereafter the number of fatalities grew to six." Agriculture and Rural Development MEC Lebogang Maile has conveyed his condolences to the families and friends of the deceased.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



Vusi Nkabinde points at the background of the aftermath of the deadly fire in Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve

Mpumalanga firefighters received high praise for their commitment and dedication after bringing recent fires which broke out in the Sabie, Graskop and Hazyview areas under control.

According to Martin Bolton, General Manager for Working on Fire in the province, the Lowveld Escarpment Fire Protection Association (LEFPA) initially dispatched six WOF teams, a total of 100 firefighters, before adding three more teams.

"Our main priority was to save the lives and properties of the people in the surrounding communities and towns," says Bolton.

Komatiland Forests, a subsidiary of SAFCOL, also extended its gratitude and thanks to WOF for the superb work of the teams during the fire at Bergvliet.

In a letter to Working on Fire, Annalize van Wyk, Fire Risk Officer at Komatiland Forests, thanked the teams and all the project managers and crew leaders for the long shifts that they worked to contain the horrific fire.

"From Komatiland Forests' point of view we are satisfied with the service that WOF delivered to us and we hope that we will indeed make use of WOF's services in the future," Van Wyk said.

Written by Editorial Team



Editorial

Dear Readers

Having just celebrated Women's Month, this edition of WOFire News is appropriately focused on the women participants in Working on Fire.

We have several feature stories of women excelling in the male-dominated fire industry, despite having to also juggle motherhood, support parents and grandparents and help siblings and family to improve their lives, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty.

WOF gave young and desolate women the platform to raise their voices and equipped them with skills that enable them to build a future for themselves and their communities.

We thank Working on Fire for working for women and we salute all the women who are making use of the opportunities given to them.

Happy reading!

MD Message

Llewellyn Pillay



I would like to extend warm greetings to all our dedicated participants and staff across all provinces and in particular to all the women in Working on Fire.

The national theme for Women's Month this August was, "Women United in Moving South Africa Forward".

To this end we are extremely proud that the programme is one of the government's most successful EPWP programmes, which has created work opportunities for many women across the length and breadth of South Africa.

Thirty-one percent of our participants are women, which continues to be the highest ratio of women to men employed in this sector.

Many of our women participants have evolved from being firefighters to becoming administrative and management personnel in the programme. Our women participants are proud of who they have become thanks to the continuous training and development which they receive at Working on Fire.

We are in the midst of our winter fire season and our teams in Limpopo and Mpumalanga in particular were kept busy with some big fires. We have received positive feedback from our partners about the hard work and dedication which our participants showed during these fires.

I urge you to remain vigilant and safe on the fire line.

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



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.

TRAIN TO BECOME A PILOT FOR FREE

KISHUGU AVIATION TRAINING ORGANISATION (ATO) (NELSPRUIT AIRFIELD)



Kishugu, in association with the Transport Education and Training Authority (TETA), is offering Kishugu and Working on Fire employees the opportunity to become pilots.

Kishugu ATO is a recognised flight school known for its quality training. Instructors are professional, engaging and dedicated to helping their students succeed.

This remarkable offer will give 10 successful applicants the chance to graduate with a recognised Private Pilot Licence (PPL) and Commercial Pilot License (CPL). This qualification could ultimately give you the opportunity to fly for a global company as a charter pilot, a bomber pilot or spotter pilot.

Process:

Submit your CV with two references and a letter of application (motivating why you want to become a pilot) to ato@kishugu.com.

Qualifying Criteria

- WOF or Kishugu Employees
- Grade 12 (passed)
- Grade 12 Mathematics and Science (passed)
- N3 – N6 / any certificate or diploma (preferred)
- No criminal record
- Partial or completed PPL (optional)

Closing Date:

Friday, 9 September 2016

If you have not heard from us within 21 working days after the closing date, please consider your application as unsuccessful. Kishugu reserves the right not to make a selection.

Applicants who comply with the criteria will be required to attend an interview and complete psychometric and psychological tests. Successful applicants will be notified telephonically.

Starting Date: Training will commence as soon as all documentation has been completed.

Location: Nelspruit Airfield, Mpumalanga. Accommodation, food and group transport will be provided to successful applicants.

KZN teams on high alert as fires sweep through province



KwaZulu-Natal WOF teams have been battling numerous fires in areas across the province since the beginning of August. The teams

managed to prevent the fires from spreading and limited the damage to the environment and property. The fires occurred in areas such as

Blue Mountain Farm, Jericho Farm and Hattingh Farm, where the fire spread damaging about five houses near the farm. All the fires were

suppressed and the teams remain on high alert as the fire season is ongoing.

Written by Base Communication Representative

Western Cape teams protect the environment

Teams have been hard at work throughout the Western Cape to reduce fuel loads and hazardous materials in preparation for the 2016/17 summer fire season.

Working on Fire takes pride in addressing the prevention and control of wild fires through the implementation of Integrated Fire Management (IFM) practices, which includes

fire awareness activities, prescribed burning, resource sharing and coordination, fire detection, fire suppression and fire damage rehabilitation.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



The Kleinmond Team together with the Overstrand Municipality Fire & Rescue Services conducted a stack burn in Camphill, Hermanus



The Kluitjieskraal Team conducted a clean up in the Wolseley community. The team cut long grass and overhanging branches, as well as cleared hazardous material surrounding homes in Wolseley



The Genadendal High Altitude Team cleared alien vegetation and hazardous materials surrounding the Berea Moravian Primary School to reduce the risk of fires around the school and homes in the Berea community



The Craggs Team cleared fuel loads in the Craggs community



The Tulbagh Team cleared a 50-metre long firebreak in the Bosdorp community

More firebreaks to protect landowners

Three months into the winter fire season in Limpopo, the number of veld fires has dropped significantly compared to the previous year. This is despite the expected increase in fires due to drought in the province.

The Mamabolo Team in Limpopo is one of the WOF teams that have been working around the clock, assisting landowners with Integrated Fire Management Systems, whereby they create firebreaks, and conduct fuel load reduction, stack burning and fire awareness activities.

"We are happy to be working with landowners to help protect our environment from veld fires and also reduce the number of fires in the province. Our communities are also responding to our calls when we invite them to our fire awareness activities," says Mapula Letsoalo, the Base Communications Representative for Mamabolo Base.

Even though there have been fewer fires, the province is still heading to the peak of the fire season. But with the impact the WOF firefighters are making in various communities and landowners in the province, we are hoping for minimal damages to land.



Mamabolo firefighters installing firebreaks as protection against wildfires

The communications team is also helping the ground teams in spreading fire education to the people through community radio stations where they are running their fire awareness campaigns for the community members who are unable to attend the workshops and presentations.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Normandien Team conducts fuel load reduction

The Normandien Team and its partners conducted fuel load reduction at the Woodburn Farm to help prevent potential fires from spreading.

The team also cleaned the road near the farm and cleared trees which were making it hard to use the road. Normandien Base Manager, Paul Saaiman, said they cleared the road to ensure that the area is easy to access in an emergency.

Content and images supplied by Normandien Team Base Communication Representative, Bonisiwe Nkosi





Fighting fires gave her another chance

For Noludwe Zali, not finishing her civil engineering studies turned out to be a blessing in disguise. At first glance, one would not associate the tiny 30-year-old with firefighting, but as they say, 'dynamite comes in small packages'.

After she finished her matric in 2004 in a village in the Eastern Cape, Zali's dream was to do civil engineering but she had to drop out of university due to financial challenges.

She said life was hard as she was not working then and looking after a child. "I chose to sell fat cakes at a nearby school so that I could support my child," she says.

In 2011, Zali heard that WOF was recruiting unemployed youth to be trained as firefighters

at Dwesa. After passing the fitness test and interview she was recruited as a firefighter.

"I was over the moon when I got the job. I realised that this was the start of a better life," she says with a smile.

Zali worked hard and learned as much as she could. "In 2012 I was taken to the Type 2 Crew Leader course and I passed," she says.

She was transferred to Mkhambathi Team in 2013. "In 2015 I was given a chance to go to the Type 1 crew leader course which I also passed," she says. "Being a leader has not been easy but with passion, hard work and understanding the people I work with, everything works out very well."

Zali has not only been able to provide for her child, but has been able to complete a short course in Human Resource Management at IQ Academy last year.

"I am currently doing N4 in Human Resource Management at Oxbridge Academy," she says with pride.

Zali thanked WOF for providing women with a platform to grow as leaders in a male dominated industry. She advises women to work hard, set themselves goals and know that the sky is the limit.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

Sophy's job is a journey

"Leadership skills, confidence and hard work are what brought me here." These are the words of Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO), Sophy Dinko, of the North West province. Dinko got promoted to Community Fire Awareness Officer after five months as a Type 2 crew leader.

She has been a CFAO since February 2015 and has enjoyed the experience thus far. "Being in this position has been a great journey as it gave me an opportunity to work in different communities, travelling and growing as a person," she says.

"What makes me happy is seeing my work being appreciated and bringing change in people's lives through fire education,

even though there are challenges here and there." When asked what her future plans are, Dinko says she is still very happy being a Community Fire Awareness Officer and would like to grow further in the department.

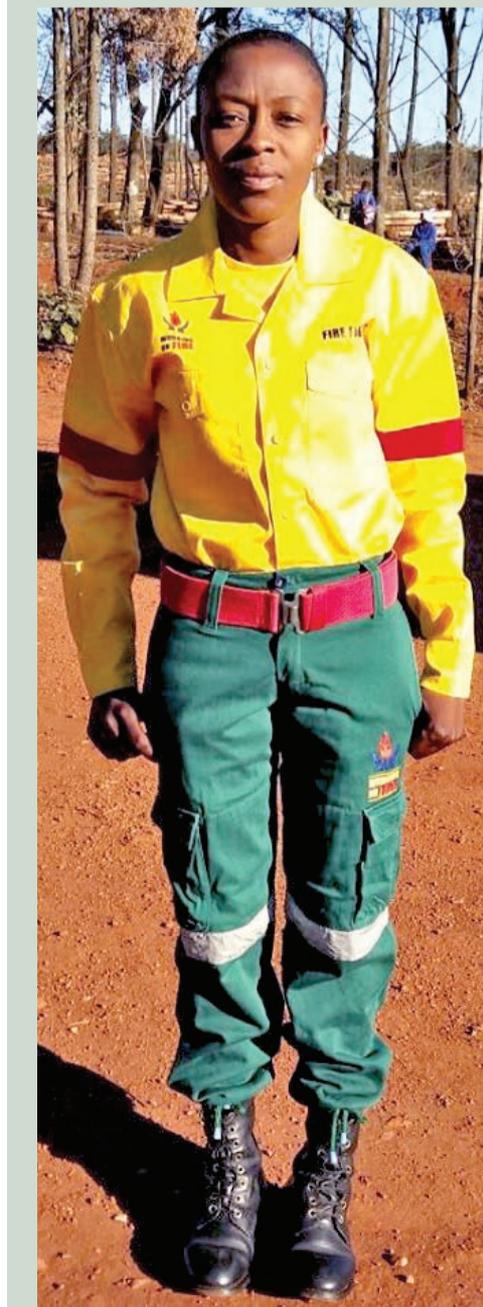
"I must say my job is a dream come true because I always wanted to engage in community activities, travelling and meeting people from all walks of life," she laughs. From a firefighter to junior management and now in the Provincial office, as a woman this experience has taught me that the sky is the limit at Working on Fire."



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West



Sophy Dinko presenting Fire Safe workshops



Brave enough to lead

Tsakani Lizzy Baloyi is one of many strong and brave women in the veld and forest firefighting field. She has dedicated her life to saving the environment and protecting lives.

Prior to joining WOF, she was unemployed. She joined WOF in 2011 at Giyani Base in Limpopo as a firefighter and showed her leadership skills when she fought her first fire in 2012 like a true warrior in battle.

"The nature of the environment we work in is very dangerous, but knowing that I will be saving lives and protecting the environment is what motivates me to go to work daily and to look forward to the challenges," says Baloyi, who was promoted to a Type 2 crew leader at Giyani Base in 2013.

Baloyi is motivated by her mother and her two kids, who encourage her to work harder. Climbing the corporate ladder appeals to Baloyi as she is a hard worker and is always willing to go the extra mile.

Though the fire service industry is still male dominated, Tsakani and other women have found their feet and work as equals with their male counterparts.

"My goal is to become a ground operations manager at WOF. All I need to do is work hard towards my dream. I know it's not going to be easy but at the end I will conquer because I have laid a solid foundation for myself," says Baloyi.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

Tsakani is giving men a run for their money in a field that was male only

Confidence needed to reach her goals

Noluvuyo Mpande is a single mother to a son. She grew up in Khayelitsha in Cape Town and joined the programme as a firefighter. She has worked her way up to becoming a Health and Safety Administrator in the Western Cape.

After being recruited in June 2011 as a firefighter, she was promoted to Health and Safety Representative of the Fisantekraal Team in May 2012 and became Health and Safety Administrator at the WOF Western Cape Provincial Office in 2013.

"My confidence and brave demeanour has opened many doors for me within Working on Fire. I can say that I am a strong woman who overcame many physical and mental challenges that came my way. The training within WOF



has helped me live my passion to promote health and safety among our teams."

Mpande says she joined the WOF programme as it recruits many young individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who have no skills for the job market.

"WOF has given me, the youth and the women of South Africa a chance to say that if we are given the platform to learn and develop ourselves to be strong women we can

accomplish anything we put our minds to. Thank you Working on Fire for the good work you are doing."



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

A worthy mother

Refilwe Makola, a 47-year-old mother of five children and an ex-offender who became a firefighter tells her story of how Working on Fire restored her dignity.

She says after being paroled by the Department of Correctional Services, she didn't think she would ever be employed again.

"If you have a criminal record, chances of getting a job are very slim. Luckily I was placed at the nearest team of Leeuwfontein in Moloto, east of Pretoria," she says.

Makola says she passed a fitness test in a recruitment drive at a Correctional Centre in Pretoria in 2014.

"For me, this job opportunity meant a second chance. I was now known for being a firefighter and that brought me dignity. Today I can tell you how the opportunity has empowered me as a mother."

Makola is currently supporting her child who is studying at a college in Johannesburg with the help of the monthly stipend she gets from the programme.



"I am able to purchase clothes and food for her while studying," explains Makola.

Makola says it is because she can provide for her children that she feels she is worth being called a mother. "That makes me proud and happy as a woman," she says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Working on Fire paved journey to success

Unemployment and poverty are the biggest stumbling blocks to success for many young people in the rural areas of the Eastern Cape, says Ongezwa Nonjiji, the regional manager of Rholihlahla region in the province.

Nonjiji, who grew up in Mpasane Location, is one of the young women at Working on Fire who work hard to move up the ranks within the programme.

"I passed my matric in 2000 and did two years of Electrical Engineering at King Sabatha Dalindyebo FET but I could not find a job," says Nonjiji.

Being unemployed was difficult as she had to support her children as well as her family.

"In 2006 I got an opportunity to join Working on Fire programme as a firefighter in Langeni base," says Nonjiji.

She says people back then didn't believe women could survive being firefighters but she and many other women in the programme proved them wrong by working hard on the fire line.

In 2007 she attended and passed the Type 2 crew leader course and became a crew leader. Because of her passion and commitment to her work, she was taken to the Type 1 crew leader course in 2008.

"Tears of joy rolled down my mother's face when I told her that I got another chance to

become better within the programme," she says with pride. Being promoted meant she could support her family and provide a better education for her children.

The mother of three was promoted to Regional Manager in 2012. "It's been ten years since I joined this programme but my life has changed for the better, from being unemployed to being a manager. I have acquired many skills in the programme," Nonjiji says.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



Marathon running led to WOF



Barbra takes charge in the male dominant industry

As a child in the deep rural village of Ga-Sekororo in Limpopo in the Maruleng Municipality, Barbra Seokoma never dreamed that one day she would be fighting fires for a living.

Prior to joining WOF, Seokoma was unemployed for several years and couldn't further her education due to financial constraints. She joined WOF as a firefighter at Sekororo Base in 2004. Due to her hard work and discipline, she was promoted to Type 2 crew leader at the same base.

In 2010 Seokoma was appointed as an Assistant Regional Manager at the Limpopo Provincial Office.

In 2014 the Aganang Team in Limpopo was started and in 2015, Seokoma was appointed as the Base Manager. Her team is one of the most hardworking teams and has created a

good impression for WOF in the community due to its discipline, hard work and dedication. The Aganang Team has been awarded two Batho Pele awards by the Department of Health.

"Our team is one of the most disciplined teams in the province, and we are true ambassadors of WOF," says Seokoma, a mother of three.

"Being a breadwinner at home motivated me to work harder and to never give up. At times things were tough to a point where I thought, maybe this industry was not for women like me. But I told myself that I didn't want to disappoint my parents," says Seokoma.



From a fire fighter to a Base manager, Barbra has a good story to tell



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo

A second chance at a new journey

Babalwa Mphabaniso, an ex parolee and single parent to a son, joined Working on Fire in 2014 at the False Bay Base, in hope of a chance at a new beginning and a better lifestyle.

"I was unemployed and thought that I wouldn't be able to get a job as I did not have a Matric certificate or any work qualifications. When the recruitment opportunity came at WOF, it was very difficult but I was recruited and it meant so much to me."

Babalwa lives with her sister and two brothers in Mitchells Plain, and provides for her family and son.

When speaking to WOFire News, she mentioned that she never thought that she would be a strong, confident woman who was able to work hard for what she wants. The programme helped her to speak in front of a



Babalwa Mphabaniso speaking at the Department of Environmental Affairs Knowledge Fair

crowd and share her story in the hope that it would help others.

"The programme has helped me gain confidence. I am now a Base Communications Representative and I aspire to be a Fire Awareness Training Officer as I am passionate about awareness and motivating others," she says.

"Thank you Working on Fire for the training I have received and to my crew leaders and management for motivating me everyday to do my best. Thank you for giving me and many women of South Africa the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others."



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape

"Being a female firefighter requires being strong, passionate and focused," says Philiswa Mbuku, a 40-year-old Type 2 crew leader from Tsomo Base in the Eastern Cape.

"After passing matric in 1998 I was unemployed for years until I joined the programme," she explains.

What helped her keep a positive attitude was her passion for running. She has participated in marathons in the province and has won several medals.

"I've always loved running since I was in primary school. So when Working on Fire was recruiting in Langeni in 2010 I went there to try my luck. I passed the entire fitness test and got the opportunity to be a firefighter," Mbuku says.

Her hard work as a firefighter opened doors for her and she was selected for the Type 2 crew leader course in 2012 which she passed.

"As a crew leader, I lead my crew when we are on the fire line, when we are doing fire awareness or community work. Most importantly, I encourage fitness as it is important in firefighting," says Mbuku.

"My advice to all women out there is that they must always trust themselves, be positive, be strong and know that everything is possible," she says.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

A poem dedicated to all women

Let me air my views regarding a woman in this Women's Month.

A woman changes her name,
Changes her home,
Leaves her family,
Moves in with you,
Builds a home with you.
Even the kids she delivers bear your name.
Everything she does – cooking, cleaning, taking care of the family, everything that benefits you is all of a woman.

Dear men,
Appreciate the women in your lives always.

Because it is not easy to be a woman.

Women were in the forefront of the fight for removal of all laws that restrict free movement of humankind in all respects;

The right to vote and be elected to all state bodies without restriction or discrimination;

The right to full opportunities for employment with equal pay and possibilities of promotion in all spheres of work;

Equal rights with men in relation to property, marriages and children.

Being A WOMAN IS PRICELESS.

Wonderful mother,

Outstanding friend,

Marvellous daughter,

Adorable sister,

Nicest gift from God.

**HAPPY WOMEN'S DAY TO YOU ALL
WONDERFUL WOMEN**

By Teko Mooki



Maria Letsholo spreads her wings on radio

Maria Letsholo is a 24-year-old hardworking young mother of two from Carletonville. Maria joined the WOF in 2011 as a firefighter. She was later promoted to being a firefighter first aider. In 2013 she employed as a Type 3 dispatcher and office first aider in the North West provincial office.

In 2015 Maria started working as a volunteer radio presenter and journalist at Aganang Community Radio Station in Potchefstroom where she is currently an Afrikaans Radio newsreader, news writer and news researcher.

“As a radio journalist I go to the scenes - courts and wherever there’s a newsworthy event. I then take photos or videos, write a story and present it live on radio. I love radio because I am good at working with people, talkative, flexible and love challenges,” Letsholo says. When asked how she is able to cope with

everything, Maria says, “I am able to cope with working as a dispatcher, radio presenter and also as a mother, and I still manage to be good in everything I do because WOF taught me how to be disciplined. WOF gave me confidence to believe in myself.”

Letsholo says she is the person she is because of what she has learned at WOF and she is grateful because, if it was not for Working on Fire she wouldn’t have had the opportunity to be a radio presenter.

Maria is currently studying Media and Journalism with Boston College and her future plan is to become a Communication Officer in the Working on Fire programme.



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West



Maria Letsholo at Aganang FM doing her radio show

Female Crew Leader aspires to be a nurse

Type 2 Crew Leader, Mpho Kgole, of Ditholo Team in Hammanskraal is now a qualified auxiliary nurse after completing her theatre training at Louis Pasteur Hospital recently in Pretoria.

Mpho used some of the monthly stipend she gets from the WOF programme to pay for her studies at Jubilee Hospital.

“I took unpaid leave to complete my training. I am really determined to become a health practitioner in future,” she says.

“My parents could not take me to a tertiary institution because of financial difficulties,” she explains.

Being a firefighter was Kgole’s first formal job opportunity. “I had applied for other job opportunities which would help me achieve my goal of breaking the cycle of poverty in my family,” she says.



Kgole says she encountered a number of challenges as she pursued her studies but she persevered.

“Doing the course was demanding. It cut on my budget as my family also depends on me, as I am the main breadwinner at home. I had to pass fitness tests and study at night. That was strenuous for me but I pushed forward,” says Kgole.

“I’m grateful to WOF for providing me with the job opportunity but now I’m looking for opportunities in the health sector. I want to be able to provide a better future for my child,” says Kgole.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

Sinah sails through marathon

“I grew up having challenges at school which led me to throw in the towel in Grade 10. It was not an easy decision but I couldn’t cope because my peers were making fun of me,” said Sinah Malatjie, a firefighter at Sekororo Base.

Malatjie had it tough while growing up in her community. She tried by all means to study towards Matric but in 2012, she made a decision to drop out as she felt that at 21 she was too old for high school. But she didn’t let her failure at school determine her future.

Malatjie grew up with a passion for running and playing soccer. She started competing in the Marathon in Phalaborwa in 2010 but unfortunately never won.

When she heard that WOF was looking for physically fit young people to employ as firefighters, she went and tried out.

“The thought of working as a firefighter made me outrun all my opponents and secure

myself a spot. I wanted to prove that even though I failed at school, I could still be of importance in society,” says Malatjie.

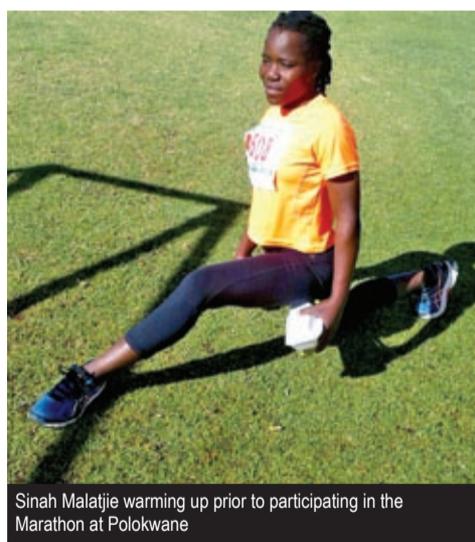
She joined WOF as a firefighter on 12 February 2012. Being appointed as a firefighter boosted her confidence and restored her dignity. The fitness training that she does frequently at WOF gave her the courage to go back to competing in marathons.

Malatjie competed in the 10 km race at the Maruleng Mayoral Marathon in 2013 where she took third place. In 2014 she took second place in the same race.

“WOF has changed me into being a role model to youngsters. I salute WOF for giving me the platform to shine as a young woman of South Africa,” says Malatjie.



Matema Gwangwa, Provincial Communication Officer, Limpopo



Sinah Malatjie warming up prior to participating in the Marathon at Polokwane

Education is my only weapon left

“Finally I am writing my matric examinations later this year. It has been a turbulent and trying journey. My mother does not have matric. I am honouring her by completing what she always wanted me to do,” said Elsie Molahlegi, a Type 2 Crew Leader at Roodeplaats Team.



Molahlegi said that from childhood her mother always encouraged her to study so that she could have a professional career.

Molahlegi said there was no school in her area. “I had to walk a 15 kilometre return trip to the nearest high school. It was painful that I couldn’t go to school anymore,” explains Molahlegi.

She was recruited by Working on Fire in 2010.

She did Grade 10 at the Adult Basic Education and Training centre in Hammanskraal. She passed, dropped out in 2014 and returned in 2015 to do Grade 11.

“Completing my studies was not easy. My hard work is about to pay off. Education is the only weapon for me to change life for me and my family,” she says. “I’m a single parent juggling work, studies and family responsibilities but I am studying hard to make sure I pass my final examinations. I have never been this optimistic in life; it is exciting.”

Molahlegi says that she is grateful that she can earn a living while studying.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng

WOF brings hope and direction

“Working on Fire has renewed my hope. At the time Working on Fire recruited me, I had given up on life because I had tried so many things to bring purpose in my life without success,” says 21-year-old Christianah Hlatshwayo of the Roodeplaats Team.

Talking to WOFire News upon her return from 25-day basic firefighting training at the Academy in Nelspruit, she said she felt her life was gathering momentum and had a sense of direction.

“I have no parents and my siblings are not working. This pains me a lot,” explains Hlatshwayo.

After passing matric in 2014, she could not secure a National Student Financial Aid Scheme loan to study social work or find a job to earn a

living. Boredom characterised her life in a very negative way.

“I could have resorted to bad behaviour if this opportunity did not arise. I could have gone into drugs,” says Hlatshwayo.

When asked about her recruitment, she said a friend alerted her to the recruitment at the Roodeplaats Base.

“That day I was quite excited because for the first time I was going for a job interview. I was one of the best who were recruited,” says Hlatshwayo, who still wants to study further in the future.



Parapara Makgahlela, Provincial Communication Officer, Gauteng



WOF women enjoy Women's Month celebrations

Working on Fire provincial staff and participants celebrated Women's Month throughout the country. Women came together to reflect on their accomplishments while also connecting with other women at WOF. North West provincial women staff spent time together interacting and

advising one another on the issues women face. They also encouraged one another to live a healthy lifestyle by doing aerobics and ended the day with massages at the Tina Scholtz Spa Treatment Academy. Functional staff member, Lydia Sereo, said she felt truly appreciated and

was happy to reconnect with other women from the office.

The Northern teams at Kgaswane, Pilanesburg and Vaalkop, together with Bojanala Public Safety, celebrated Women's Month at the bases by running a women's soccer league.

All the players received medals as tokens of appreciation and the three best players from different teams received trophies.



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West



WOF eThekweni Municipality Project

The Working on Fire eThekweni Municipality Project stand was a bright yellow presence at the Sustainable Living Exhibition, held in Durban from 19 to 21 August 2016.

The Exhibition was hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, the eThekweni Municipality and the Botanical Society of South Africa to showcase climate change and environmental solutions.

The WOF eThekweni Municipality Project was started in April 2009, to service the conservation of threatened grasslands in the eThekweni Municipal Area. The Project employs 50 crew members through the contract with the Municipality with a WOF-DEA High Altitude Team supporting operations from above. The Igagasi Hotshots Crew service a Fire and Invasive Species Control (FISC) programme, which controls invasive plants, and includes an Early Detection and Rapid Response Unit to deal with emerging weeds.

Through the years, the WOF eThekweni Project has contributed to people development, with many crew members moving into the private sector rope access industry, invasive plant control businesses and WOF management structures.

Written by Hendrik Homman



Transnet Project successfully completed

Working on Fire successfully completed work on the Transnet Project which included clearing 561 kilometres (4 000 ha) of land between Ermelo in Mpumalanga and Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal.

We made full use of the Incident Command System (ICS) during this inter-provincial burning operation for Transnet. Whenever we encounter an incident one of the first things that has to be put into place is a management system to control and manage all personnel and equipment on site.

Hennie Homann, Provincial Operations Manager, WOF-KZN, took command of the incident with the support of Mike Dehrman, assistant IC for the Mpumalanga section and Ken Taylor, assistant IC for the KwaZulu-Natal section. Hennie van Wyk, Project Manager MPU, was the Operations Section Chief for the two Mpumalanga teams from Ermelo and Balfour that operated from Iswepe base. The Regional Managers who assisted were Sam Nkosi, Paul van der Vyver and Talfryn Harris. These teams did the main break burning of some 250 kilometres between Maviristad near Ermelo to the Pongola River between Piet Retief and Paul Pietersburg.

The KwaZulu-Natal section was managed by Jaco Maritz (PM) who was the Operations Section Chief for the KZN section. He was



One of the Camping Sites at Zunwini

assisted by SG Gumede (RM) and Adrian Taylor (assistant PM). They managed to complete the 300 kilometre section in the record time of less than 20 days.

Every section had to do their own logistics with one of the Regional Managers taking charge. As safety is paramount on a project of

this size and nature we had to rely on the crew leaders and local SHE reps to keep everyone safe. In future, additional assistance from Occupational Health & Safety will be required to assist with this function.

Good cooperation with the local Fire Protection Associations, our client Transnet and

adjacent landowners were maintained which contributed to the success of the project. All future projects and incidents will be managed on safe and secure ICS principles to manage integrated fire management to its full potential.

Story and Images: Hennie Homann

HAT participants receive specialised rope training

Fifty High Altitude Team (HAT) participants from the Eastern Cape were given specialised rope training.

The training took place in Van Stadens from 4 July to 5 August 2016 where all seven High Altitude Teams – Baviaanskloof, Lusikisiki, Cata, Katberg, Van Stadens, Camdeboo and Addo – participated.

The Ground Operations Manager of HAT in the Southern Cluster, Rob McQueen, said that all the participants worked very hard during this training and were awarded the following certificates: High angle wilderness search and rescue, High angle wilderness rope access level 1, and Work at Heights.

“All the certificates awarded to the participants are accredited with SETA,” McQueen said.

One of the trainees, Pelisa Somya from Addo HAT, said that she was excited to have

attended the training as it would help her in her daily work.

“Most of the time we work in hazardous environments where we have to use ropes to access certain areas, so this training gave me skills that will be of much help in such areas,” Somya said.

She said that it took a strong and dedicated woman to do the job that they do as HAT participants.

“With this training we can also get other opportunities outside the High Altitude Team,” she added.

Somya thanked the programme for empowering participants with useful skills and knowledge.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape



WOF participates in Knowledge Fair

The Western Cape Communications Cluster attended the Department of Environmental Affairs Knowledge Fair on 29 July at the V&A Waterfront, to share information about the Working on Fire programme with other environmental programmes in attendance.

Programmes such as the South African National Parks Biodiversity, Environmental Protection and Infrastructure Programmes, Isimangoliso and Working for Water were among those sharing information about their programmes and how each programme was linked to one another.

Community Fire Awareness Officer, Rayganah Rhoda, and Fire Awareness Training Officer, Rudi Lucas, spoke about the WOF programme as well as the relationship between various EPWP programmes and stakeholders. Base Communication Representatives Babalwa Mphabaniso (False Bay Team) and Gcobisa Ngubombi (Newlands High Altitude Team) shared their inspiring journey in WOF.



Lauren Howard, Provincial Communication Officer, Western Cape



From left to right: False Bay BCR Babalwa Mphabaniso, FATO Rudi Lucas, Newlands HAT BCR Gcobisa Ngubombi and FATO Androlene Killian at the Working on Fire exhibition stand at the Department of Environmental Affairs Knowledge Fair

North West basic firefighting training and fire awareness workshop

The Tsholofelo Disability Centre in Tlokweng hosted training in basic security from 11 July to 22 July 2016. About 50 unemployed youth had been identified to take part in this planned activity that required Working on Fire's assistance in basic firefighting training and the Community Fire Safe workshop.

The WOF programme provided the youth with a two-day training and workshop programme. The North West Provincial Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sophy Dinko, conducted a fire safe workshop on fire prevention and protection, the negative impacts of fires and fire behaviour.

On the second day of the fire safe workshop youth took part in group discussions, doing risk assessment tasks whereby they had to identify areas at risk of fires. After assessing the area, they presented their findings which were followed by the fire management plan task. The purpose of this task was to come up with a plan on how to mitigate fires in the identified areas.

The Provincial Training Officer, Lydia Sereo, facilitated basic firefighting training consisting of fire behaviour, fire line safety, initial attack strategy & tactics, and the use and care of hand tools.

Isaac Moatshe from Public Safety in Bojanala thanked Working on Fire for their



Training Officer Lydia Sereo facilitating basic firefighting training

effort in empowering unemployment youth. “The community has experienced a number of protest actions in villages and in all of these protests, the burning of tyres seems to be at the centre. In Tlokweng Village areas this has been a very serious challenge and we are putting up a team of youth who will be trained in basic firefighting, crowd control and security, so they will be able to protect themselves and the community in future. We appreciate WOF's help,” Moatshe said.

One of the youth members said: “I thank WOF for the education on firefighting. We learnt a lot and we will also teach others.”



Patricia Maanelo, Provincial Communication Officer, North West

Former firefighters celebrate World Ranger Day

More than 10 former firefighters from Working on Fire in the Eastern Cape were among rangers that were acknowledged for their efforts in conserving natural resources on World Ranger Day.

The day was celebrated by Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency (ECPTA) on 12 August at Thomas Baines Nature Reserve in Grahamstown.

The MEC for Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, Sakhumzi Somyo, said that World Ranger Day was about

acknowledging field rangers who risk their lives to protect nature.

“Field rangers are very important people who are brave, dedicated and hard-working,” Somyo said. He added that the day was also meant to honour and remember rangers who lost their lives in the line of duty.

The MEC was welcomed at the WOF stand by Zola Hans, the Fire Awareness Training Officer, who explained the important role played by WOF participants in nature conservation and fire prevention.

“WOF participants do fire prevention by going to schools and communities to educate the school learners and community members about what to do to prevent unwanted fires,” Hans explained.

One of the former firefighters who is now a ranger, Nolethu Mcatshulwa, said that being a field ranger was not an easy job – it needed one to be brave, dedicated and passionate about nature.

The celebration included a 2.4 kilometre run and a drill by Working on Fire participants

from the Hogsback Team. Rangers also performed some songs and drilled for the audience. Rangers received awards acknowledging their contributions in categories such as best field ranger, best conservation practitioner and best science, research and technology practitioner.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Provincial Communication Officer, Eastern Cape

