

## Working on Fire mourns the passing of the Minister of Environmental Affairs, Edna Molewa

It is with great sadness that we received the news of the passing of our Minister of Environmental Affairs, Dr Edna Molewa.

The Working on Fire programme, together with the other “working for” programmes reside in the Department of Environmental Affairs and had an active engagement with Minister Molewa throughout her illustrious tenure as Minister.

She was an ardent supporter of the Working on Fire programme and was always ready to participate in our activities and, most importantly, to give the recognition she believed our firefighters deserved.

Many in the WOF family will remember the annual Environmental Affairs Budget Vote where our firefighters and management participated at Parliament and were recognised by the Minister as one of government’s proud achievements.

We also recalled the day Minister Molewa came to Nelspruit to formally open the WOF Academy during of SABC 2’s Morning Live broadcast. She was tireless in her commitment to WOF, changing her busy schedule to participate in events such as the Thank You Dinner for firefighters who came from other parts of the country to assist in the disastrous fires in the Cape Peninsula in March 2015.

During the height of the Knysna fires of June 2017, Minister Molewa also visited our firefighters and showed great appreciation for the firefighters at the Knysna-Tsitsikamma fires. She participated in various events such as the appreciation ceremonies for the Knysna firefighters in June 2017, the shack fire demonstration in Stellenbosch, the launch of the Western Cape fire season, etc.



Minister Molewa was always ready to accommodate WOF’s requests for interviews, particularly on WOF TV, where she became a regular feature for her words of encouragement and recognition of WOF firefighters.

Our deepest condolences to the family of Minister Molewa as well as to her colleagues in government and the Department of Environmental Affairs. I personally wish to acknowledge the tremendous support she lent to us as

WOF management and the ease of access, often in moments when facing challenges, which made our task so much easier.

We salute a fallen hero and dedicated leader whose record of selfless service to the South African people must inspire all of us to respond to the ‘Thuma Mina’ call and make our own contribution to building a better society for our future generations.

**Trevor Abrahams: Managing Director**

Hamba Kahle dear Minister, thank you for your support and guidance to Working on Fire over the years. May Your Soul Rest in Peace



## President Cyril Ramaphosa's statement on the passing of Minister Molewa:

"I offer my deepest condolences to the family of Minister Edna Molewa as well as to her colleagues in Cabinet and across all spheres of government who had the privilege to work alongside an extraordinary leader of our people.

"This is a devastating loss to our nation and to the global community who owe a great debt of gratitude to the late Minister Molewa for her championship nationally and globally the environmental integrity of a sustainable planet Earth that can be shared and enjoyed by all nations and all people, rich and poor.

"Minister Molewa distinguished herself in many capacities and causes from her contribution to our liberation to fighting for equality of women in our society. We shall miss her greatly."

## Message from the family

The family of the late Minister Bomo Edna Edith Molewa thanks all South Africans for their messages of condolences following the untimely passing of their daughter, mother, grandmother and sister.

She has left an indelible mark in the lives of the millions of people who had the privilege and honour of knowing her.

Hers was a life dedicated to the service of the people, and to the betterment of the people of South Africa in particular.

We are comforted in the knowledge that we are not alone in this, our darkest hour.

It is a source of enduring pride for us as the family that our sister, who rose from such humble beginnings; became first a member of Parliament, then a provincial MEC, to a Premier, to a Minister. Such was the faith vested in her by our country's leadership that she was called upon to serve as an Acting President on numerous occasions. She was held in extremely high regard by international leaders especially in the environmental fraternity.

We as the family have always known that she was not ours alone, but belonged to all of South Africa.

We as those who knew and loved her should take comfort today that her Lord will say, as he did in the Gospel of Matthew: "Well



done, my good and faithful servant" - and welcome her into His Kingdom.

Our departed sister will forever be remembered, and she is already sorely missed. Robala ka Kgotso.

'Eternal rest grant unto her, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her.'

Source: Department of Environmental Affairs - Media Statement

# Free State Dispatch and Coordination

The Dispatch and Coordination Department at Working on Fire has no easy task. Teams across the provinces are busy in and out of fire season providing many integrated fire management services. Besides fire suppression, these teams conduct many other activities, such as fuel load reduction and community and school fire awareness activities.

The Dispatch and Coordination Department is the first line of communication, not only responsible for dispatching teams to the fireline but tasked with the responsibility of ensuring their safety when off the base. Dispatchers and coordinators work closely with the drivers, crew leaders, base managers and the WOF finance department.

The Free State Dispatch and Coordination Department consist of two Operational and Functional Provincial Coordinators and four Type 3 Dispatchers. Once a year they attend a refresher training course to



ensure that they are up to date with the different protocols.

"I'm proud to be a dispatcher. This is the career I chose to be in and I'm even prouder of the fact that my colleagues and I were the first group of dispatchers to be selected in the province. We work very hard, even working over weekends. Working in this department has taught me so many lessons and skills that I have applied in my own life," says Mafusi Mabula, a Type 3 Dispatcher.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

# Community almost overwhelmed by flames – firefighters save the day

Working on Fire (WOF) Limpopo's standby strategy saved the community of Melkrivier from being destroyed by raging wildfires in the area recently.

After receiving weather alerts of the Fire Danger Index (FDI) being extremely high in the province, WOF decided to put all provincial resources on standby to ensure a quick response should wildfires break out.

The WOF Leseding Team was dispatched to suppress a wildfire threatening the community of Melkrivier. Thanks to the rapid response of the WOF firefighters, aided by members of the Modimolle Fire Protection Association, the fire that had almost reached the residential area was suppressed.

Only 120 hectares of grass vegetation was destroyed. No properties or lives were lost during the Melkrivier fire thanks to the WOF firefighters and the Modimolle Fire Protection Association joining forces and responding rapidly.

The fire season is at its peak and the dry vegetation combined with high temperatures has already seen WOF responding to more than 23 fires across the province. The Waterberg area has been most prone to have wildfire breakouts.

WOF has deployed a chopper and spotter plane to assist the ground resources in the Waterberg district as more wildfires are expected in the area.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

# WOF KZN celebrates Arbor Month with Deputy Minister



WOF KZN celebrates Arbor Month with the Department of Environmental Affairs Deputy Minister

Working on Fire joined with the Department of Environmental Affairs Deputy Minister, Barbara Thomson, to celebrate National Arbor Month at Panorama Primary School in Pietermaritzburg.

Also present were Msunduzi Municipality Ward 34 Councillor, Mike Amod, and representatives of the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and Eskom.

Deputy Minister Thomson said, "Arbor Month reminds us of the importance of having and planting

trees. As a department we say no to deforestation. Trees can no longer be taken for granted. They give us oxygen, store carbon and stabilise the soil. While the industrial factories release carbon dioxide, trees help purify the air we need as humans. If communities understood that one large tree can provide oxygen for four people, more communities would be planting more trees."



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer



Aerial view of the wildfire that almost destroyed the community of Melkrivier



Highveld Team members educating learners at Resolofetse Secondary School

# School receives fire awareness lesson

Grade 10 learners from Resolofetse Secondary School in Ikageng, North West, learned lifesaving techniques when the Highveld Team conducted a fire awareness activity at the school. The learners were taught about climate change and biodiversity.

The team also demonstrated the 'stop, drop and roll' technique used when a person's clothes catches fire and the 'crawl low under smoke' technique which can be used to safely escape a burning building and avoid smoke inhalation.

The team's Base Communications Representative (BCR), Christopher Zweni, says the school had had an incident last year when two classrooms burned. "After we learned of the incident, we decided to demonstrate some techniques they can use when there's a fire and also how to properly use a fire extinguisher."

The school thanked the team for the valuable lesson and encouraged WOF to do the same at other schools.

# WOF school debates engage learners in environmental issues



One of the learners making a point during her school's turn in the debate

Working on Fire hosted annual provincial school debate competitions to educate youth on environmental issues and encourage them to become involved.

The first debate in Mpumalanga took place on Thursday, 30 August 2018, at Litjelembube Secondary School, for schools in the Oshoek and Badplaas areas. Grade 8 and 9 learners from four local schools participated in this debate: Brook Combined School, Litjelembube Secondary, Holeka Secondary School and Masakhane Combined School. The topics for this event were 'Do invasive alien plants increase the risk of wildfires?' and 'Are storms, drought, floods and wildfires natural phenomena or the result of climate change?' "By hosting these debates, we want to give learners the opportunity to learn more and

think about environmental issues that impact on them and their future," says Mbuso Siwela, a Working on Fire Community Fire Awareness Officer. "The learners participated very well and really enjoyed the opportunity to air their opinions."

At the end of the day, the Brook Combined School team was awarded first prize while the team from Litjelembube Secondary came second.

"I really enjoyed the debate. We learned a lot about being fire safe and taking care of the environment," said one of the participating learners. Debates are scheduled at a number of schools across Mpumalanga and the competition will conclude by the end of September.

Written by Editorial team

## Sparks fly at schools debate



Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sophy Dinko, explains the services offered by Working on Fire

Learners from six Gauteng schools in the Nkangala area locked horns in vigorous debate at a packed Sinenhlanhla Primary School hall in Rethabiseng township.

The topic of the debate was 'This house believes that society should look after our natural environment because it is our only means of survival'.

The competing schools were Lingitjhu, Ekangala Comprehensive, Strauss, Sitjejiwe, Zithobeni and Cultura Secondary Schools.

According to Estella Cossa, a fire awareness training officer, the learners did their homework very well before the debate. "It was mindblowing that their research proved that they had facts to debate their perspectives in very diverse ways."

Pretty Kgwete, a learner from the winning school, Lingitjhu Secondary, says that this type of debate opens their learning minds with knowledge for the future.

"It has been an exciting debate session because it addressed challenges facing our environment, now that climate change is upon us. We were able to come up with solutions here and there," she says.

Ekangala Comprehensive School came second.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## Environmental school debates highlight the risk of fire

Working on Fire (WOF) in the Western Cape, together with the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), Western Cape Disaster Management Centre (WCDMC) and the Garden Route District Municipality, hosted a provincial Environmental School Debate Competition at the Knysna Secondary School Centre, with 20 learners from various

schools in the Knysna community competing.

Grade 9 learners from Knysna Secondary, Concordia High, Percy Mdala Secondary and Murray High Schools debated topics such as fire prevention, how fire causes land degradation, preserving natural resources and how climate change impacts on fires.



Winners for best presentation - Knysna Secondary School. Winners for best content - Murray High School. Overall winners of the Environmental Debate - Concordia High School.

Adjudicators from the WCDMC, Working on Fire, WCED and CapeNature assessed the learners' presentation skills, content and communication. Aside from debating environmental issues that have negative impacts on our social and natural environments, participants were exposed to the key fire safe messages and the core focus areas of the stakeholders and WOF's fire awareness department.

Aphiwe Sonjica from Percy Mdala High School said, "We would like to thank Working on Fire, the WCDMC and WCED for this debate as we feel we have empowered ourselves and future generations to come. This has been a great experience and we have learnt a lot from this competition. I look forward to the next one and believe this project will grow even bigger."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## FS Fire Awareness hosts school debating competition

Working on Fire Free State's Fire Awareness Department recently hosted a school debating competition in Kroonstad in the Free State. The event was hosted in conjunction with various stakeholders such as the Departments of Health and Environmental Affairs. Numerous schools participated in the competition and debated the topic 'Wildfires fuel climate change'.



The school learners engaging in passionate debating

The primary objective of the debates was to create an opportunity for Grade 8 and 9 learners to debate environmental issues that have a negative impact on their social lives and natural environment. Prizes were awarded to learners who excelled in categories such as best speech and overall best.

"The event went well with the learners debating their views very well and

engaging with the topics they were provided. We are very proud of the learners and we thank our stakeholders for partnering with us to make this event a success," says Moipone Motaung, Free State Fire Awareness Facilitator.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

# Motivating leaders to take the province forward

In September, the Western Cape management hosted their 2018 Crew Leader/Base Manager Workshop.

As part of the 'Back To Basics' campaign initiated by Working on Fire Managing Director Trevor Abrahams in 2017, 45 base managers and crew leaders attended a week-long workshop where they had the opportunity to work through various WOF policies and procedures, as well as receive further training in the Incident Command System (ICS).

This platform was aimed at uplifting the crew leaders and base managers with added skills and offered them the opportunity to ask questions and suggest ways that the WOF programme could improve support to them and the participants.

Western Cape Acting General Manager Ray-yaan Majiet says, "It was a very successful workshop and I am positive that this province will move forward."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Crew leaders and base managers being refreshed by Acting General Manager Ray-yaan Majiet on the WOF policies and procedures



HAT participants attend induction training

## HAT participants learn more about the environment

Nineteen firefighters from High Altitude teams (HAT) in the Eastern Cape attended the induction training at Van Stadens from 3 September to 11 September 2018. The participants were from the Addo, Van Stadens, Baviaans, Camdeboo and Katberg HAT teams.

The Regional Manager of HAT, Susan Rall, said that the eight-day training course included plant identification, herbicides usage, company policy, basis risk assessment and health and safety procedures.

One of the participants who attended the training, Luxolo Kotsela from the Katberg HAT, says that this

kind of training will assist them in their day-to-day duties. Noting that the WOF HAT programme specialises in clearing alien plants on steep mountain slopes and ravines and thereby plays a vital role in water conservation, Kotsela says, "We work with the environment all the time and it helps to know the kind of plants we are dealing with so that we can know those that consume a lot of water and those that do not. Therefore this training will really be very useful to us."



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## Empowering WOF participants to be financially smart



Mamabolo participants attending the financial literacy talk at their base

The WOF Limpopo Social Development Department has launched a financial literacy campaign at the bases that is aimed at empowering the WOF participants as well as the provincial management.

WOF Social Development Practitioner Michael Ramatsea says, "After being approached by a representative from FNB, I saw this as a great opportunity to empower our participants, especially looking at how easy it is nowadays for a person to fall victim to debt and loan sharks."

With the assistance of FNB Limpopo Provincial Community Finance Educator, Mrs Moshibudi Letsoalo, Ramatsea did a needs analysis of how WOF participants met the challenge of managing their finances and debt.

The talk focuses on the importance of talking about money in our homes with our children and the family.

"No matter how small the salary or stipend is we must learn to save, because it comes in handy in times of need. When a person is financial stable or manages finances well, he or she is more likely to be productive at the workplace, because he/she will have fewer worries," says Letsoalo.

The presenters stressed that the position a person occupies means nothing if he or she is careless about finances. This introductory session educated the teams at the Aganang and Mamabolo bases as well as staff at the provincial office.

The objective is to run this campaign across the province and, if possible, across the whole country.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## FireSafe workshop aims to reduce fire risks

In efforts to ensure all communities are fire safe, North West Community Fire Awareness Officer Sophy Dinko and Fire Awareness Facilitator Teko Mooki conducted a FireSafe workshop for the Community Work Programme (CWP) beneficiaries at Geluksoord community in Christiana. The workshop will assist the benefi-

ciaries to be able to identify fire risks around their communities and help mitigate them.

"We are targeting CWP beneficiaries because they work in communities. So educating them will ensure that the FireSafe message does get to communities and they can help create fire-resilient communities," says Dinko.

"The workshop was a success. They had to show what they learned by drawing up a risk assessment for their communities. This will ensure that communities can assess and mitigate fire risks in their communities," says Mooki.



Fire Awareness Facilitator, Teko Mooki, presenting during the FireSafe workshop. Picture supplied by Sophy Dinko.

# Watervalboven Team volunteers spring cleaning

WOF believes in making a difference, even in little things that may seem insignificant to others. Living the values, the Watervalboven Team recently did some spring cleaning at a local old age home and primary school.

“We often visit this old age home as it is close to our base. We appreciate the people there – they have lots of experience,” says Nompumelelo Mahlangu, the Base Communications Representative. “During their visits, the team always offers to help out where needed. On that day, they needed us to wash the windows.”

They also visited the local primary school. While some of the team members spoke to the Foundation Phase learners about fire safety, the others helped clean classrooms and sort broken classroom furniture.

“Both the residents of the old age home and the school’s staff were very grateful and that made us feel proud and happy as a team,” Mahlangu says.

#WOF\_MPU #Makingadifference

Written by Editorial team



The Watervalboven Team helps sort broken classroom furniture

# Working on Fire attends Kokstad Career Expo



Firefighters presenting information to learners

The KwaZulu-Natal Kokstad Team, along with the Communications Cluster, participated in the Environmental Career Expo at Kokstad Youth Centre.

The aim of the day was to empower and motivate learners when deciding what to study and to also focus on achieving academically in school to qualify to study towards careers they wanted to pursue.

Stakeholders such as the Department of Environmental Affairs, Department of Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs, the IEC, South African Weather Service and Kokstad

Municipality presented their career options to the Grade 12 learners from various schools in Kokstad.

“We had a great reception from students at our stand. This was an opportunity to also advise learners to look beyond the popular careers and to look at how they can get involved in Expanded Public Works Programmes in their communities,” says KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer, Khulani Zulu.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

# Working on Fire continues to spread the FireSafe message



Community members taught how to be fire safe

In preparation for the upcoming summer fire season, the Eastern Cape Working on Fire Community Fire awareness Officer, Thulani Mkhosi, empowered 37 community members from the Clarkson and Woodlands areas on how to be fire safe.

These areas were affected by the Tsitsikamma fire that destroyed properties and burned 2 000 hectares in 2016.

“People in these areas needed to be educated about the items that can start fires, on preventative measures as well as what should be done in case of fires,” says Mkhosi, who conducted the FireSafe workshops for them.

Mkhosi says that WOF was trying very hard to reduce the numbers of fires in the province by giving FireSafe workshops in communities so that they can assist in preventing unwanted fires.

“These kind of workshops enable community members to identify the

risks of fires in their areas and mitigate them,” Mkhosi says.

He urged community members to make sure that they always remove fuel near their houses and properties to prevent runaway fires from destroying their homes and properties.

One of the attendees of the workshop said that the workshop would assist communities when it comes to fire prevention and he promised that they would start constructing firebreaks in their respective areas to prevent fires from spreading to their homes.

The summer fire season starts on the first of December in the western part of the Eastern Cape while the winter fire season runs from June to November in the eastern part of the province.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# Healthy home-grown food

In an early start to spring this month, the Castello Team spent their spare time preparing their new vegetable garden. The team decided to start the vegetable garden to encourage healthy eating and giving back to the community. The garden sports rows of growing spinach, onions, carrots, beetroot and cabbages.

The team’s Base Communications Representative, Zukile Dhlomo, says, “As the team we decided to start the garden together to ensure we have a steady flow

of fresh healthy vegetables for ourselves, family and the community. Vegetable gardening also gives us that sense of positive feeling, knowing we have done something like this and that we can also help those in need by donating some of our vegetables.”

The team is grateful to their Social Development Practitioner, Mokoloi Tele, and the chairman of the Potchefstroom Fire Protection Association, Dr Kobus Roux, for sponsoring the seeds they needed.



Castello Team members at their newly ploughed garden. Picture by Castello BCR, Zukile Dhlomo

## Exiting to matriculate

Maphoka Thomas is exiting the programme to focus on completing her matric certificate because it is a key requirement in the hiring of structural firefighters.

"I tried to do my matric part-time but failed to finish because I was preoccupied with work," says Thomas.

"I am struggling to break into emergency and fire services because I don't have matric. This



is a serious pain. I have completed structural firefighting course level 2," she says.

She tried on numerous occasions to apply for positions where she met the requirements, with the exception of matric. Each time she spoke with prospective employers, they asked her if she had matric as required by the conditions of employment.

"I am heading back to technical college to study full-time. I am taking a giant step to turn my fortunes around by taking my basic education seriously," says Thomas.

Thomas says she gained important experience and skills during her stay in the programme. She is optimistic that by the end of the year she will complete her matric because she is giving it "100%" attention.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

National Arbor Week is celebrated annually during the first week of September. Schools, organisations and businesses participate by planting trees in communities to improve the health and beauty of the local environment. This helps develop a green future for South Africa.

Working on Fire was invited to attend Arbor Week celebrations in Petrus Steyn in the Free State, along with key stakeholders such as Elandskop Museum, Thabo Mofutsanyana Municipality, SAN-Parks, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Riemland Museum.

The event, which was hosted by the South African National Biodiversity Institute, was aimed at promoting better knowledge of trees and particularly indigenous trees. Speakers highlighted the need for people to plant and take care of the trees.

"The event was a success and highlighted the vital role of trees in our lives and how they contribute to the achievement of a green and dignified, healthy

## Free State Arbor Week celebrations



Fire Awareness Facilitator, Moipone Motaung, teaching school learners about the environment

environment in all parts of South Africa. The learners were very interested in what they were learning on the day and I trust that they will carry this lesson with them for a long time," says Moipone

Motaung, Free State Fire Awareness Facilitator.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

## Keeping his dream alive

Aspirant tour guide Gift Mangole, of the Krugersdorp Team, is saving his monthly stipend to complete his tourism management course. He commenced the course at West College in Krugersdorp years ago but dropped out due to financial strain.

Mangole is passionate about tourism and has already completed an internship programme at the Cradle of Humankind heritage site.

"I am saving money to complete my course because I have already accumulated much desired experience in tour guiding. I am left with a few modules to complete," he says.

Mangole says WOF saved his life when the future looked bleak and enabled him to feed and clothe his family.

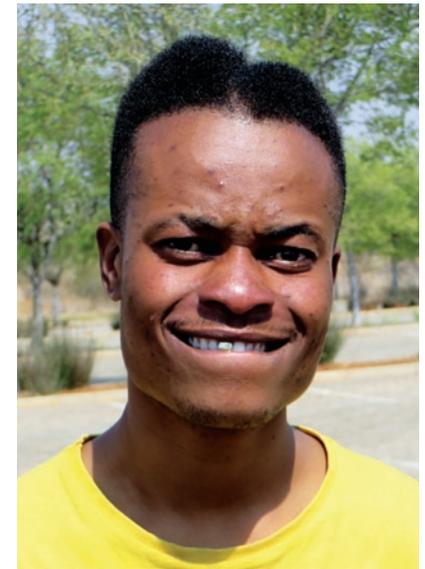
"I am the breadwinner at home. This keeps me going every day to make a difference in life," says Mangole.

He has managed to gain his driver's licence which will aid his career ambition. He says he will never give up his dream of becoming a tour guide.

"At least WOF's stipend is here to help me for now to complete my studies," says Mangole.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



## WOF Limpopo celebrates Arbor Week at Vaalwater

The Working on Fire Limpopo Communications Cluster joined the Leseding Team and other local government and private stakeholders in celebrating Arbor Week in Vaalwater.

The Vaalwater community joined hands with the Leseding Team and various stakeholders to promote a clean environment that will be preserved for the future generations.



The WOF Leseding Team planting a tree at Meetsetshehla Primary School

"It is our responsibility to ensure that we protect our environment by creating awareness among the community to ensure that everyone refrains from littering and polluting the environment," says Leseding Type 1 Crew Leader, Maria Voor.

The team planted trees at Meetsetshehla Primary School and also educated the learners about the importance of trees in our lives.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## HAT technician now serving in municipal police

Xolani Gwala, a former eThekweni High Altitude Rope Technician, was recently hired by the eThekweni Metro Police. Gwala joined Working on Fire in 2011 after his soccer club was sold and he was left unemployed.

"I was a firefighter for 11 months when my then supervisor, Simuntumnye Shange, sent me to attend the Type 2 Crew Leader training, where I was named one of the best students."

Upon returning, Gwala joined the IFMS Project team. In 2013, he attended the Type 1 Crew Leader course. After successfully completing it in 2014, he joined the High Altitude Team and served as a rope technician until June 2018.

"I learnt discipline, mental and physical strength from the programme. This has helped me establish an attitude of perseverance and to never give up. It has taught me to love and respect my surroundings," says Gwala.

He says he left the programme more confident due to working with people from different backgrounds, from communities during door-to-door campaigns, to schools, clinics and retirement homes.

"I am really grateful for the opportunity I gained from WOF. My new

job is very interesting. Funnily enough, I am using all the skills WOF taught me to shine. I am being called the FireMan, which doesn't faze me as I know it is because I make sure my presence is felt by my colleagues at the Metro Police," says Gwala.

"I am currently still studying. We do practicals, fitness tests and drills. There is a lot to learn but I am committed and enjoying myself," he adds.

Gwala hopes to be a captain in the Metro Police one day and also dreams of establishing his own property business.

"To my brothers and sisters at WOF, never stop dreaming, don't look down on where you come from, never belittle yourself and take every opportunity small and big with dedication and hard work," advises Gwala.



Xolani Gwala in his Metro Police uniform



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Firefighters making Working on Fire proud at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

WOF KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Management recently celebrated the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife passing-out parade of seven former WOF firefighters. Field rangers have to complete a 13-week intensive training course to prepare for the conditions under which they will work.

KZN Assistant General Manager Bongani Nhlabathi says, "We are extremely proud of 20 of our alumni that participated in the Department of Environmental Affairs Youth Environmental Services (YES) Programme, which afforded them permanent positions at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

"As an Expanded Public Works Programme, we pride ourselves in the firefighters who obtain permanent employment in other industries. This validates the relevance of the training and experience that WOF provides to the youth of South Africa."

Khululiwe Mathenjwa, a former Type 1 Crew Leader from Mbazwana, was recruited in 2007 and moved up the ranks in the programme. He says, "I have gained so much experience from WOF, while the challenges, fitness and discipline of being



Field rangers parade at the passing-out ceremony

a firefighter have assisted me so much in surviving my training as a field ranger."

Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife trainers work exceptionally well with WOF alumni, who also help to teach the squad the drill and encourage them to never give up.

"Working on Fire wishes its alumni all the best in their new careers. It's stories like these that motivate WOF firefighters in our province to never give up on their dreams," says Nhlabathi.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Western Cape welcomes new recruits

The lives of 65 young men and women from the Western Cape will never be the same again as they have bid farewell to being unemployed.

In July and August, Working on Fire Western Cape conducted a recruitment drive across the province to fill vacancies at a number of bases. More than 700 youth responded to the call and gathered for the physically demanding recruitment evaluation.

The recruitment assessment included completing a 2.4km run, and doing 40 push-ups and 40 sit-ups within set time limits. The youth were eager to secure a spot and gave it their all but fewer than 10% met WOF's exacting standard. The successful recruits were taken to the Nelspruit Academy to be trained in advanced firefighting.

Some will also be trained as first-aiders and SHE representatives or undergo other courses. This recruitment drive enabled WOF to once again contribute to the reduction of unemployment and poverty in marginalised communities. Khanyile Situli, a new recruit in the Newlands Team, says, "I'm excited to be a part of the Working on Fire programme. The training is difficult but it went



Male recruits doing pull-ups at the Limietberg Base during recruitment

well. I'm looking forward to fighting my first fire this coming season and getting to know my colleagues from across the province."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Ayanda Mboniyane thanks the programme for paving her way to better opportunities

## Former firefighter gets a better job

"Know your goals in life and work hard to achieve them," says Ayanda Mboniyane, a former firefighter from the Joe Gqabi Team in the Eastern Cape.

This enthusiastic young woman says the Working on Fire programme played a major role in equipping her with skills that assisted her to get a better job at Old Mutual.

She joined the programme as a firefighter in 2012 and hard work led to her being appointed as the Base Communications Representative (BCR) of the team in 2016.

"Being a BCR was a life-changing opportunity as I had to be the one writing the articles for the base, organising awareness, covering events at base level and doing many more activities," says Mboniyane.

She said that the position came with a lot of challenges but that did not pull her down. Instead she became very strong.

"I got better communication skills, presentation skills, events coordinating skills, leadership skills, firefighting skills and other skills that made me

a better person while I was in the programme."

Mboniyane got the new job in early September. "Getting this job made me so happy. I want to thank WOF as I am where I am today because of the programme," Mboniyane says.

She advises other firefighters to work hard, be patient and always have a goal in their lives as that would take them far.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer