



WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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Working on Fire



Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



@wo_fire

Shoprite Checkers support to firefighting efforts



Working on Fire Western Cape management representatives receive food donations from Shoprite Checkers

After Working on Fire deployed 250 firefighters with aerial support and a seven-day battle, the Franschhoek Fire which started on 18 February 2019 was contained. Approximately 6 800 hectares of veld were burnt.

This incident saw Shoprite Checkers, the leading disaster relief supplier, donating food supplies to the Working on Fire firefighters camped in Wemmershoek for the duration of the fire. The containment of the Franschhoek fires was aided by the Cape Winelands District Municipality's (CWD) Fire Services and partnership CapeNature and Winelands FPA.

Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, says, "We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt appreciation towards Shoprite Checkers for the support provided during the Franschhoek wildfires. Your willingness to provide food donations to our teams during their fire suppression efforts in Franschhoek is highly appreciated. Thank you once again for having made your contribution to our quest to save lives and to protect our environment."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

We are proud of the Working on Fire Programme - President Ramaphosa

President Cyril Ramaphosa bestowed praise on the Working on Fire programme during his reply at the State of the Nation Address (SONA) in Parliament on 14 February 2019. President Ramaphosa said that the success of WOF shows the positive impact the Expanded Public Works Programmes (EPWP) have had, not just on job creation for our youth, but on the country's development.

"The work being done by the EPWP provides income relief and skills training to young unemployed South Africans. Across a range of sectors, they are carrying out socially useful activities such as road maintenance, construction, land and water use management, waste management and community crime prevention," said the President.

"It is with a great sense of pride that we were recently able to witness the teams of the EPWP-funded



File Image

Working on Fire programme battling the fires across the Cape mountain range," President Ramaphosa continued. "These young men and women were exemplary

in both their professionalism and the manner in which they were a reassuring presence to the afflicted communities."

Crew Leaders graduate

Thirty-nine Working on Fire participants recently graduated from the Type 2 Crew Leader Skills Programme at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. The participants - 19 from Free State, 10 from North West and 10 from Limpopo - started their intensive 43-day training course on 11 January 2019.

The course, which is worth 64 credits as accredited by the Fibre

Processing and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA, focuses on developing leadership and people management skills. The new Crew Leaders, who came from different provinces, will now be subject to a three-month probation period. After probation, they may be appointed to help lead their crews during Integrated Fire Management activities.

This training creates a development path for our firefighters who aspire to lead a team of firefighters in fire suppres-

sion. The life skills components of the basic training provide participants with a platform for personal growth. Many participants in this training become managers in the programme while others have been employed in permanent positions outside WOF.

Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, attended the passing-out parade along with his Executive Committee members. He said, "This graduation is a proud moment. WOF is a development programme, developing our future leadership."



New Type 2 Crew Leaders at the passing-out parade with management

To be the leading global integrated fire management agency, making a sustainable difference in our environment and people's lives

The development of this new vision took centre stage at a three-day Working on Fire strategy workshop held from 20-22 February 2019 in Mbombela, Mpumalanga.

The Working on Fire Executive Committee, Heads of Departments, General Managers, Assistant General Managers and the Board Chairperson, Johan Heine, held intensive discussions on how the programme could become a global leader in integrated fire management while also make a significant contribution in changing people's lives.



integrated fire management on a global platform becomes a reality. In addition, our responsibility to ensure that we make a significant contribution towards the skills development of our country in general, and to ensure the upliftment of our youth in particular, remains high on our priority list over the next couple of years," Abrahams said.

With a new vision of becoming 'the leading global integrated fire management agency, making a sustainable difference in our environment', Working



Managing Director Trevor Abrahams told the workshop that everyone in WOF, from participants through to management, needed to understand and embrace the new vision which is ultimately aimed at ensuring the future sustainability of the programme towards 2021 and beyond.

"Working on Fire is the most successful Expanded Public Works Programme in South Africa and we all need to work together to ensure that our service offerings of being the best implementers of



on Fire's Senior Management will be engaging with all staff, from provincial management to the participants, over

the next eight weeks to ensure that there is buy-in and support to implement this new vision over the coming years.



KEY INITIATIVES - HIGH PRIORITY

- Develop a Framework to deliver an extended Service Offering.
- Develop an External Marketing and Fundraising Strategy.
- Review, Streamline and Innovate Systems for increased Business Agility.
- Agile Shift: Project for Bureaucratic Red Tape Reduction.
- Review the Partnership & Funding Model.

MD PRIORITY LIST

- Develop a Structured Exit Strategy.
- Develop a new Skills Development Framework (Academy Course Outline) aligned to the Structured Exit Strategy.
- Social Impact Studies.

ADDITIONAL INITIATIVES

- Policy/Procedures Awareness Drive
- Develop a new/updated Human Resource Information System.
- Technology (existing) Refresh & Innovation.
- Enhance the Fire Awareness & Education Programme (looking at sponsored/funded, accredited training, linked with the Academy, with new career journeys).
- Develop an updated Academy Course Outline (based on updated training requirements and value add to FF for structured exist and course accreditation).
- Communicate Personnel Stories & Profiles.
- Internal Talk Shop: getting to know each other.
- Partnership Shift Change (the way we manage/relate to partners) Project.

Best performing candidates at crew leader type 2 training



TOP PERFORMERS: Best Male Student in Practicals, Mohau Jantjie Malimabe, Best Student in Fitness in Males, Zanendinga Zakariya, Best Male Student in Fitness 2,4km run, Meko April Pitso and Best Female Student in Fitness 2,4km run, Tlhatlosi Diatile Emely.

KwaZulu-Natal

KwaZulu-Natal is recovering from a major drought. The Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA)

reserved funding to assist with the Drought Relief Project in which two teams are responsible for clearing alien invasive plants.

The aim is to improve water run-off into the Department of Water Affairs-

managed Nagle and Inanda dams.

High Altitude General Manager, Dave Williams, says, "The two teams will be working at the Fountainhill Estate, Donovale Farming Company, Cumberland Nature Reserve and EH Gevers, which comprise the Central Umgeni Conservancy (CUC)." Antony Edmonds, a farmer from Donovale Farm, says, "Water resources are of huge importance when owning land, but this intervention from DEA, assisting us with invasive alien plants removal, has taken a huge load off our shoulders."

These landowners have set aside some 3 000 hectares as conservation land, most of which is currently being considered for a Biodiversity Stewardship Programme.

"The annual plan of operations (APO) for the first team is for six months, total-

ling 75 hectares at 17 units per hectare due to densities, accessibility, tree size and rope access requirements. Since the start of production in December the team has cleared 16 hectares," says Williams.

The second team's APO is currently 135 hectares, but a more realistic target is 427 hectares over five months, based on 8 units per hectare. Thus far, the team has cleared 47 hectares.

"The landowners/users forwarded a request to have WOF HAT continue the project into the new financial year. It is good to know that landowners see the contribution we are making to improving the water supply in their area," says Williams.



The Umgeni Drought Relief Team ring-barking an alien invasive tree



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Eastern Cape

Drought is a natural disaster that occurs when below-average precipitation results in a prolonged shortage of the water supply in a given region.

The Eastern Cape established a drought relief project in August 2018 in response to the threat of drought.

In September, 88 young people were trained to clear unwanted vegetation as part of the this project.

ect. According to the High Altitude Ground Operations Manager, Rob MacQueen, the trained team started with the clearing operation in October.

"We have the 88 people in the intermediate teams that are doing flat land clearing around Van Stadens Wild Flower Reserve and in the Elands River Valley close to Baviaanskloof and about 52 high altitude-trained participants in Soetkraal in the Southern Cape," MacQueen says.

He says that close to 750 hectares have been cleared by the intermediate



Job opportunities were created through the drought relief project in the Eastern Cape



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

teams to date and about 160 hectares by the HAT team.

KZN celebrates the importance of Wetlands Day

On 1 February, Working on Fire in KwaZulu-Natal joined Liberty NPO to participate in the World Wetlands Day celebration which took place at Greater Edendale Mall, the location of the only healthy wetland in the area. Wetlands are vital to the ecosystem. They are able to reduce the severity of droughts and floods by regulating the stream flow. They also help to purify water and provide a habitat for many different plants and animals. Wetlands also provide many direct benefits to society. They provide resources such as plant fibre for use in crafts, create jobs and recreational opportunities for the community and

promote tourism. "Learners from the Zamazulu, Fundokuhle, Siqongweni, Amakholwa, Siyahlomula and Georgetown High Schools were taught the importance of preserving and protecting wetlands in their communities and how they can be beneficial," says Mlungisi Ntuli, Liberty NPO's founder.

Ntuli says he was very grateful for the support he received from stakeholders that participated in celebration, including GroundTruth, Duzi-uMngeni Conservation Trust (DUCT), the Endangered Wildlife Trust, the Department of Environmental Affairs, Umgeni Water, Working on Fire and Enviro-Champs.

The wetland at Greater Edendale Mall is the only healthy wetland out of 40 in the Greater Edendale area and was revived by Liberty NPO. The organisation is working towards establishing an eco-hub which will include a rehabilitated wetland, recreational park as well as an eco-library/centre.



Learners listening to a presentation



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Wetlands Day marked in Riversdale



The team and the learners of Panorama Primary School

The Riversdale Team hosted a Wetlands Day event, together with the Gouritz Cluster Biosphere Reserve (GCBR), to educate local learners from the Panorama Primary School on the importance of wetlands and the role of fire.

"The team had informative sessions at the bridge over the Vetter River, as it is important that our children learn about why wetlands should be preserved," says James de Kela, the Riversdale Base Manager.

"If we don't preserve our wetlands now, there will be nothing left for our children's children. If the wetlands burn at the wrong time of year, the peat layer is destroyed. It also destroys the habitat of small animals and birds," says De Kela.

According to Rhett Hisemann of the GCBR, "Three-quarters of the palmiet wetlands in South Africa have already been destroyed. It is important to prevent the removal of palmiet, because the plant is the glue that keeps wetlands together in times of floods. I would like to thank the Riversdale Team for their hard work during the past fires and for taking the time to educate learners across the municipality in fire awareness."

Following the educational talk, the team, learners and members of the GCBR conducted a clean-up around the wetlands area.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Nkomazi Team educates children on fire safety

Like many other Working on Fire teams located in the northern region of South Africa, the Nkomazi Team in Mpumalanga is hard at work with pre-season fire awareness activities.

These included a visit to the Makecia Educare Centre to do a fire awareness activity with the children. The team also conducted a door-to-door fire awareness campaign in a local community.

“The principal of the centre, Miss NP Shabangu, was extremely happy about the knowledge we planted in the children’s minds,” says Nhlanhla Madonsela, the team BCR. The team also did some fitness exercises with the children to start training ‘future firefighters’.

Awareness forms part of WOF’s proactive approach to fire management. A community that is fire safe will have a greater ability to help prevent



Members of the Nkomazi Team enjoy teaching children the practical elements of fire safety

wildfires during the dry winter season months.

Written by Zania Viljoen

WOF partners with Health Department to protect the community

Working on Fire Limpopo’s Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sello Matlhare, conducted a fire safety workshop for the community members at Bela-Bela clinic.

WOF partnered with the Department of Health in Bela-Bela with the main aim of educating the community members about the evacuation plan.

“Knowing the evacuation plan is one of the most important aspects of safety in our society, especially if people are on public properties. When a person enters the building, the first thing to look out for is the



Sello Matlhare conducts a presentation to community members at Bela-Bela clinic

evacuation plan that will give information about the emergency exits and the safety zones of that place,” says Matlhare.

The community members were also educated about understanding wetlands and veldfires as well as personal safety.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



HAT General Manager, Dave Williams, congratulates Cynthia Twala on completing her SAMTRAC qualification

HAT OHS Administrator overcomes challenges

“I’ve been so happy and excited since I’ve received my SAMTRAC certificates, I’ve almost not been able to sleep!” says Cynthia Twala, a single mother of two daughters and OHS Administrator for the High Altitude Teams (HAT).

“Studying for this qualification has taught me valuable skills and it opens so many doors,” says Twala, who was involved in an accident in 2003 that left her with a disability.

“I have an artificial knee which causes me to move much slower than I normally would but I have adapted to it and don’t let it hold me back,” she says. She has been working for Working on Fire since 2011 and says she has grown professionally since being part of WOF.

“WOF has given me so many opportunities, like helping me with SAMTRAC. I can’t thank WOF management enough for investing in me,” Twala says.

Dave Williams, the General Manager for HAT, says that Twala’s SAMTRAC achievement is testimony to her dedication, hard work and commitment to her job and her family, while Twala regards positivity, dedication, hard work, passion and employers who believe in her as some of the stepping stones on her journey to success.

SAMTRAC is regarded as one of the world’s leading courses in occupational risk management.

Written by Zania Viljoen

Team targets learners to reduce fire risk

The Castello Team together with various government department including the JB Marks Disaster Management, Traffic Safety, Environmental Health, Social Development and Dr Kaunda District Disaster conducted a FireSafe campaign as part of their risk reduction campaign.

The team together with the different government departments addressed the learners on the various risk reduction measures while our team taught 200 grade R learners from various schools in Potchefstroom about Fire behavior and personal safety.

The team presented on the two topics to ensure learners understand

how fire behavior works in order to prevent future fires and the disaster they bring and personal safety to reduce the number of children who lose their lives or sustain injuries due to unwanted fires.

The team along with other Working on Fire teams in the province will be conducting fire awareness activities in communities, schools and for landowners with the aim of getting everyone ready for the coming fire season and while also encouraging communities to take ownership of their risk and find way to mitigate those risks.

Written by Editorial team



Castello team members address Grade R learners from various schools during the risk reduction campaign

The Working on Fire OHS Department team recently attended a three-day Root Cause Analysis Technique (RCAT) training course and a two-day ISO 45001 training course conducted by IRCA Global at the Nelspruit Mercure Hotel.

According to OHS Executive Jacob Singo, the training was well worth it. "The team learnt many valuable skills necessary if we were to get WOF ISO certified in the near future."

RCAT will help with incident investigations. It will enable the team to identify root causes of incidents so that correct measures can be implemented to prevent recurrences. The ISO 45001 course imparted skills pertaining to the development and implementation of an OHS Management System that is aligned to international standards.

"This course was extremely informative," explains Akhona Magcakini, OHS Officer (Free State).

"It is based on internationally recognised standards for health and safety and will enable

OHS Department upskills to better serve WOF



The OHS Department team strives for excellence and recently completed Root Cause Analysis Technique and ISO 45001 training

us to dig further when conducting OHS and misconduct investigations and help the company stay accountable and strive for excellence."

Khutso Mokoto, OHS Officer (Limpopo), says, "I would like to thank management for giving us the opportunity

to enrol in this course. We have really learnt a lot."

Congratulations to the WOF OHS Department. We trust these new skills and knowledge will help them serve the company.

Written by Zania Viljoen

Skills development for High Altitude Management Team

Fourteen Regional Managers and Assistant Regional Managers from the Western Cape High Altitude Teams

(HAT) underwent a chainsaw management course hosted at the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve by Practical



High Altitude Team management representatives who completed the chainsaw management course

Training Solutions, to improve their skills and knowledge of chainsaw operation.

The training covered statutory requirements, components of the machines, health hazards, personal protective clothing (PPC), safety requirements, transportation, felling and crosscutting, the cutting attachments and chainsaw maintenance.

Ground Operations Manager, Jason de Smidt, says, "The course was conducted by a very experienced operator and it was very informative for our developing staff as well. I'd like to thank Practical Training Solutions and my staff for taking this course and completing it with much enthusiasm. I am sure the skills learnt during the course will be filtered down to Crew Leaders and participants. Well done Team."



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

More work opportunities

The Gauteng Department of Economic Development has committed to providing work opportunities to 75 firefighters in the Working on Fire programme. The teams affected are Dinokeng, Ditholo and the Cradle of Humankind.

General Manager of WOF in Gauteng, Stephen Boyes, says the signed agreement is an indication that the provincial government was serious about the fight against youth unemployment.

"The young people will continue to learn skills and protect the environment while in the Dinokeng Game Reserve," he says, noting that the host nature reserve had employed two of his former firefighters on a permanent basis.

Proceeds of financial prudence



Tisetso Mokoena has been able to buy two cars thanks to financial probity

Tiisetso Mokoena, a driver at the Vaal Marina Team, attributes his success in purchasing two cars to the financial management skills he acquired in the WOF programme.

"It is about how one manages one's finances," says Mokoena, who owns a Ford Ikon and a Renault Clio.

"I never thought that one day I would buy a car of my own," he says.

Mokoena says that his area is improvised and jobs are scarce. He had struggled to find jobs until the programme arrived in his town. The WOF programme is the one formal company in the area that employs young people.

"I also managed to build a house for my family. New lives are forged in this programme," says Mokoena.

Even a firefighter can afford to buy what he wants. All it takes is financial discipline.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

The GM says this gives hope and courage to pessimistic youth in the community and firefighters.

"They have stepped up to the plate to rescue work opportunities for the youth. This must be applauded and commended," says Boyes, as the agreement with the GDED means that many of these youngsters will continue to feed and clothe their families.

Boyes says the work opportunities mean a lot to those in the programme and that the teams will be topped up soon.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Cradle of Humankind team will also benefit from the work opportunities

WOF awards long-serving employees



Albert Raganya celebrates his long service in the programme with his team mates at Mogalakwena

The Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire programme was established in 2003 to uplift and empower the youth of South Africa with skills. Today, WOF employs more than 5 000 firefighters stationed in 200 bases across the country, including 25 bases in Limpopo.

WOF has been awarding long-service 15-year awards to the employees who have been with WOF since it started.

Albert Raganya is one of the Limpopo participants (along with three in Makhado and four in Sekororo) who have been with WOF for 15 years.

Raganya joined WOF as a firefighter when Sekororo Base was opened and, through his hard work and discipline, was promoted to the driver's position at Mogalakwena in Mokopane.

"It's a privilege to be awarding this long-service award to Albert. What's so

Free State recognises 15 years of service

Working on Fire Free State celebrated the programme's 15th anniversary at the provincial and regional offices and at every base across the province last year, singing the national anthem, hoisting WOF flags and reading the WOF values. More activities took place with various partners to celebrate WOF's many achievements and to celebrate the young men and women who have taken

good about it is the fact that he has grown within the company. As WOF we encourage the WOF participants to gather skills and experience that will enable them to exit WOF for better opportunities," says Samora Gusha, WOF Limpopo General Manager.

As a skills development programme, WOF encourages its participants to up-skill so that they can exit the programme to take up better jobs and to create opportunities for others.

"WOF has successfully exited its participants to organisations such as SAPS, SANParks, DAFF and municipalities," says Gusha.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



The Free State General Manager presents Operations Management staff with their plaques

the programme from strength to strength.

Many participants and management staff have been part of the programme since the very beginning and were awarded with beautiful plaques to honour them for their loyalty towards the programme and to celebrate their con-

tributions to making this programme a roaring success.

"It is with great pride that I received my plaque for my many years of service and for the dedication I showed towards the programme at base and management level," said David Mofokeng, Regional Manager.

"Thank you for your contributions to this programme, your dedication and commitment that serve as a vital link in the chain which drives our operation," said Willem van Aswegen, General Manager. "People are and always will be our greatest asset. I would like each participant to know that they are all important members of our team and that their abilities and contributions will be an important part of our continued success."



Wayne Mokheithi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

WOF rewards exceptional performance

WOF Limpopo was welcomed into the new year with multiple projects that had very tight deadlines. Though it seemed like a mission impossible, the Ground Operations teams proved that no mountain was too big for them.

"We were faced with a tough challenge of recruiting 40 firefighters and sending them to training in Nelspruit within a period of a week. These firefighters were to be recruited from different areas," says Tshepo Malatji, WOF Limpopo General Manager.

All Ground Operations teams dropped everything to prioritise the recruitment project. Those who were on leave had to sacrifice their personal commitments to ensure the success of the project, which was well executed.

"We saw it beneficial to award our employees who worked hard around



Provincial staff awarded for exceptional performance

the clock to ensure that we succeed in this project," says Malatji.

Those involved in the special recruitment project were awarded with certificates of appreciation and gift vouchers. A great team spirit was demonstrated by the staff.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Shongweni Team donates shoes to learner

The Working on Fire Programme remains committed to saving lives, protecting the environment and restoring dignity in various communities in South Africa. The mandate has filtered down to firefighters in our teams, who have initiated various community outreach projects targeting vulnerable households.

While going to work, one of the Shongweni firefighters saw a shoeless young boy walking to school. When he got to work and informed his colleagues, the team decided to help little Ayanda Ndlovu by donating school socks and shoes.

Type 1 Crew Leader, Maxwell Shange, says, "We contributed money as a team and went to Ayanda's home where he lives with his four-year-old brother and his grandmother. This is when we learnt more about his situation."

The Shongweni Team decided to adopt Ayanda and his little brother until their situation changes, as they are currently not receiving any government grant.



The team hands over the shoes to Ayanda's grandmother

"After receiving our own gifts for our kids and seeing him with no one to buy him shoes, we were really touched by this boy. We will try to help with clothing or food where necessary," says Shange.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Elliot Team makes a difference in the community

Lundi Public School has become the latest beneficiary of the kind-hearted Working on Fire Elliot Team.

Elliot Base is one of the Eastern Cape WOF teams that have garden projects. When harvesting some of their vegetables earlier this year, they decided to donate to Lundi Public School, one of the schools in the nearby community.

After the school received the heads of cabbage from the Elliot firefighters, the principal of the school, MO Voyiya, said that they appreciated the fact that the team thought about their learners.

"We really acknowledge this endeavour to give a nutritious meal to our needy learners," said Voyiya.

Crew Leader Pumzo Gulwa says that they were very happy to see the impact of their project on their community.



Lundi Public School thanks the WOF Elliot Team for their donation

"We also donated to the community support initiative where old people get their lunch on a daily basis," says Gulwa.

He said that the team plans to expand production and donate to some of the schools and areas that are needy.

"One of the Working on Fire objectives is 'making a difference', so we as the Elliot Team live according to that value. That's why we are working hard to make sure that we make a difference in the lives of people around us," says Gulwa.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Thabo Moilola graduates from the University of the Free State Business School

Working on Fire provided a path to higher learning

Thabo Moilola, the Ground Operations Manager in the Free State, has achieved another milestone in his journey of self-improvement and learning. He credits Working on Fire for much of the progress he has made.

"Before I joined WOF, I was part of the high unemployment youth statistics. In 2004, I joined WOF and since then I have been able to provide for my family, I have travelled abroad and now I have completed and

obtained my tertiary qualification," says Moilola.

Moilola enrolled to do the Management Development Programme at the University of the Free State Business School at the beginning of 2017. He hopes to bring all the knowledge he gained back to the programme that has changed his life and to help improve the effectiveness and efficiency of WOF.



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Marathon medalist makes us proud

Azola Bangani, an Assistant Regional Manager from the Eastern Free State, has proven himself as a veteran in long-distance running. He recently competed in the annual Kloppers Marathon which took place this year in Bloemfontein in the Free State. While the race marks the start of the local season, it also helps athletes to begin shaping up for forthcoming marathons across the country.

The event consists of a 5 km and a 10 km race, a 21.1 km half-marathon and a 42.2 km marathon. Bangani participated in the half-marathon, which started at the Bloemfontein Achilles Sport Centre in Willows.

Competing against seasoned road runners, Bangani finished the half-marathon with a creditable time under 01:47:00.

"The weather was on my side with nice cloudy conditions, the route was enjoyable yet demanded a lot from me. I'd like to thank Working on Fire for the continual support in all my races," says Bangani.

Bangani represented Working on Fire in the race and well embodies the values that WOF holds high.



Azola Bangani (right)



Wayne Mokhethi, Provincial Communication Officer, Free State

Teams topped up in preparation for fire season

Since the beginning of February, North West teams have been busy recruiting participants to top up their teams in preparation for the upcoming fire season.

Many of our participants move to more permanent employment outside the programme. This results in vacancies at our bases which must be filled before the fire season starts to ensure the teams can perform at maximum capacity to save lives and protect the environment.

Over 100 unemployed youth attended the recruitment drive which took place at the Naledi, Madikwe and Molemane bases.

The hopeful young people participated in the fitness test which included the 2,5 km timed run, 40 push-ups, 40 sit-ups and 10 pull-ups, after which the top-performing young men and women were selected. Fifteen unemployed young men and women were recruited and will be attending firefighter training at our Nelspruit Training Academy.

Written by Editorial team



Scores of hopeful unemployed youth took part in the fitness test during the recruitment drive

WOF helps father fulfil his greatest wish

Katleho Lebitsa, the storeperson for the Ongeluksnek Team in the Eastern Cape, thanks Working on Fire for playing a major role in his life.

Thirty-eight-year-old Lebitsa joined the programme in 2016 as a storeperson. He worked as a security guard prior to that. "I was not born with a disability but I got sick and my leg had to be amputated," says Lebitsa.

He says that it had not been easy to get used to the situation but he always had hope that things would change for the better.

"In 2016, Working on Fire advertised the storeperson's post at Ongeluksnek and I tried my luck. Fortunately, I got the post and tears could not stop rolling from

my face when I realised that I could still work for my kids," says Lebitsa.

He says that since he joined the programme, his life had changed as he has acquired skills in storekeeping and can afford to support his children.

Lebitsa also appreciated the programme's initiative of giving packages to the participants' children.

When the Social Development Practitioner distributed the gift packages to the team earlier in February, a grateful Lebitsa said, "My kids are always happy as they know that their father is working and can provide for them."



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Storeperson Katleho Lebitsa thanks WOF for empowering his life



Ben Mothiba used WOF as a stepping stone towards his future

WOF taught former participant to take opportunities

Ben Mothiba joined Working on Fire as a firefighter at Mapungubwe Base on 10 February 2010. Due to financial constraints, Mothiba wasn't able to build on the matric certificate that he obtained in 2015.

However, he made good progress in his career at WOF. In September 2016, he was appointed as the SHE representative for Mapungubwe Base. In November 2018, he was recruited by SANParks Mapungubwe

Nature Reserve as an Environmental Officer.

"I would like to thank WOF for making me a hero in my community and for always encouraging us to grab all opportunities presented to us with both hands," says Mothiba. "The fitness,

discipline and experience that I acquired at WOF contributed to my appointment at SANParks."



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Former Dullstroom Team member believes in dreaming big

"Never give up on your dreams or lower your dreams, no matter how hard life gets or how unreachable it seems. Just raise your efforts."

These are the confident words of Petrus Sthembiso Choma, a former Working on Fire Participant. Sthembiso left the Programme at the end of 2018 to take up a full-time position in maintenance and gardening at Brown's Luxury Guest House in Dullstroom, Mpumalanga.

Sthembiso joined the WOF Programme in 2014 as a firefighter at the Dullstroom base. There he learned a lot about teamwork, being patient with others, being disciplined and staying fit – all qualities which are now helping him succeed at this new job.

"I am enjoying this new job. I completed a plumbing course after school, and those skills are also now coming in very handy." Sthembiso explains that he plans to work hard at his new employer, but he knows that it is not the end of his professional road. He hopes to one day become a lawyer or musician.



Former Dullstroom base participant, Sthembiso, does gardening and maintenance at his new employer

Sthembiso is thankful for the opportunities he was given in WOF. He now encourages others to have dreams and to pursue it. Sthembiso, we wish you all the best with your future endeavours.

Written by Zania Viljoen

Western Cape welcomes new recruits

The lives of 70 young men and women from the Western Cape will never be the same again. They have bade farewell to being unemployed.

Working on Fire Western Cape conducted a recruitment drive across the province, seeking 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 the usual 2.4 km timed run and doing 40 push-ups and 40 sit-ups within a minute. The youth were all eager to secure a spot in the new team and tried hard. The 70 successful recruits then headed to the Nelspruit Academy to be trained in advanced firefighting.

Some will also be trained as First-Aiders and SHE representatives and others will undergo other courses. With



About 70 young men and women have been recruited to top up Western Cape teams

this recruitment drive, WOF has once again contributed to the reduction of unemployment and poverty in marginalised communities.



Lauren Howard, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Fired up by entrepreneurship

Decio Dlamini of Suikerbosrand Team exited the programme in February to join the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as a general worker.

When asked why he opted for a contract job in the reserve he says he needed to raise capital to expand his interior design business. Dlamini says he started the business with the stipend he earned as a firefighter. "I was doing the work while a firefighter. I worked at night after hours and during time off," he says.

Dlamini installs wardrobes and kitchen units, among other services, and has already registered his business with the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission.

By the time the contract expired in four months, he would have gathered enough capital.

"The money is good, to help me purchase more material and equipment to expand," he says, adding that



Decio Dlamini exit to raise capital for his interior design business at GDARD

no one would lift him out of poverty except himself.

Dlamini says his departure will give someone else a chance to get a work opportunity in the programme. He says that, as the business is expanding on a month-to-month basis, there was a good chance that he would soon be able to employ an assistant.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Working on Fire continues to show commitment to restoring dignity

The Department of Environmental Affairs' Working on Fire programme to help fight veld and forestry fires is committed to carry out the government's mandate of providing job opportunities for unemployed youth in disadvantaged communities in the Eastern Cape.

This month, WOF Eastern Cape recruited more than 40 young men and women in eight WOF teams. Five people were recruited at Cata Base, five in Hogsback, four in Tsomo, five in Elliot, five in Joe Gqabi, eight in Addo, four in Baviaanskloof and six in Kromsriver.

Every candidate had to undergo a fitness test during the recruitment process and only those who passed were selected.

The WOF fitness test includes a 2.4 km run in under 12 minutes for males and 14 minutes for females, 40 push-ups, 40 sit-ups and 8 pull-ups for both males and females, in just a minute each.

Successful candidates will soon undergo training at the Nelspruit Training Academy, where specialised



Unemployed youth get job opportunities in WOF teams

veld and forest firefighting training will be facilitated.

These recruits will be taught extensively about the essentials of integrated fire management. This is part of WOF's objectives to develop skills for the young men and women in the province.

Ground Operations Manager of the province, Antoinette Jini, says that they are topping up all teams so that the teams can work at full strength in their day-to-day fire prevention work like fuel load reduction and community awareness.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer