



# WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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## Firefighters assist in Canada

Working on Fire, which implements the Working on Fire Expanded Public Works Programme under the auspices of the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, has again responded to requests to assist firefighting operations in Canada.

Forty firefighters and senior management members led by WOF Managing Director Trevor Abrahams landed in Alberta, Canada, on 26 June 2019 to assist with ongoing firefighting operations.

Their deployment followed a request made by the Canadian government through the Canadian

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## THIS YEAR'S YOUTH MONTH IS CELEBRATED UNDER THE THEME "25 YEARS OF DEMOCRACY: A CELEBRATION OF YOUTH ACTIVISM"

This year, Youth Month was celebrated under the theme '25 Years of Democracy: A celebration of youth activism'.

Over the past 16 years, Working on Fire has promoted youth activism by creating more than 15 000 job opportunities for young South Africans. A large number of these young men and women have passed through Working on Fire, moving on to careers

in the security industry, road traffic management, SAPS and SANDF. Others have become environmental monitors and field rangers at our national parks.

Working on Fire has contributed significantly towards creating job opportunities for South African youth. More than 85% of the beneficiaries employed at Working on Fire today are from the 18 to 35 years age group. Working on Fire does not simply provide

temporary job opportunities but fundamental rungs on the employment career ladder for these firefighters, as they gain work experience and skills required for jobs in the broader market or rise in the ranks of managing the Working on Fire programme.

In this edition, we showcase the impact Working on Fire is having on the lives of our participants as these young South Africans share their stories.



# Firefighters assist in Canada

Interagency Forest Fire Centre (CIFFC), in terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed on 24 January 2019 by representatives of the respective governments.

Abrahams said the South African firefighters are part of an international firefighting contingent who are assisting Canadian firefighters currently battling what has been described as an extreme Alberta fire season. There have already been more than 600 fires reported in the area since the beginning of the year, which were mostly caused by lightning strikes.

“The MOU’s purpose is to set the basis for providing mutual assistance for wild-land fire management and to implement



actions in other areas of cooperation for wildland fire management between Canada and South Africa. Our firefighters will be assisting with the Alberta fires for an expected period of 28 days. Everyone arrived safely in Canada and there is a good spirit among the team members,” Abrahams said.

The Minister of the Environment, Fisheries and Forestry, Barbara Creecy,

said, “This deployment is to assist the Canadian government. But it also brings about great opportunities for South African youth employed by Working on Fire. Firefighters who have been previously deployed overseas to assist in fire management have significantly benefitted from the experience.”

Noting that “partnerships between governments are extremely important”,

Minister Creecy said, “I urge the team to help to build on the relationship between Canada and South Africa. My very best wishes go with you on this important deployment. It is an honour to be asked to assist the Canadians in combatting their wildfires and a tribute to the skills, discipline and fitness in the Working on Fire programme.”



## New Portfolio Committee Chairperson for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry

MP Fikile Xasa, the newly appointed Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Environment, Fisheries and Forestry, is no stranger to the Working on Fire programme. He worked with the programme at many events and activities when he was the MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in the Eastern Cape.

Working on Fire particularly appreciated his visit to the teams during the huge Tsitsikamma fires of October 2018 when he extended the provincial government’s gratitude and thanks for our participants’ efforts. And in April this year, when Working on Fire participated in the official opening of the Eastern Cape Disaster Management Centre, the then MEC again thanked WOF for its sterling efforts in mitigating natural disasters.

We wish MP Fikile Xasa well in his new role at Parliament.



## From firefighter to fire station commander

Working on Fire remains committed to providing job opportunities, specialised firefighting skills and other skills that assist young people in this country to get better opportunities outside the programme.

Mazibuko Mbimbi is a successful product of the programme who is now working as the Station Commander of the fire station at the OR Tambo District Municipality in Mthatha in the Eastern Cape.

Mbimbi matriculated in 1995 and could not further his studies due to difficulties in his family. "I then got a job as a lifeguard and worked in places like Port St Johns and East London for more than six years," he explains.

He joined the WOF family in 2008 as a firefighter when the Port St Johns team was opened.

"I underwent highly specialised firefighting training in Mpumalanga and I got the certificate that paved the way to getting me where I am today," Mbimbi says.

Toward the end of 2008, he took an opportunity to become a firefighter at OR Tambo Municipality and later he was appointed the Station Commander.



Former firefighter thanks WOF for playing a major role in his life

"I would like to thank Working on Fire for all the skills I acquired while in the programme and I would advise young people in the programme to appreciate everything that the programme is doing for them. You should also use the money you get from the programme to study further and to get things like a driver's licence so that your lives can be better," Mbimbi says.

We are proud and honored to have been part of Mbimbi's incredible journey. WOF believes in the dreams and aspirations of the youth.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF alumna now at SAPS

Lindiwe Tsotetsi joined the programme in June 2010 and underwent basic firefighting training to become a firefighter. However, after a medical assessment was done she became a storeperson at the Memel Base in the Free State instead.

Tsotetsi exited the programme to join the South African Police Services. She underwent training in Pretoria for a period of 12 months and then served as a student constable during field training for another year. She became a constable in November 2013 and is deployed at the Gluckstadt police station near Vryheid in KwaZulu-Natal.

"Working on Fire is a great programme where I was first exposed to serving the community by fighting fires. It helped me get exposure to the world and broadened my view of the world," she says. "I continue to serve the



Lindiwe Tsotetsi

Gluckstadt community but now I do it in a different capacity to before," says Tsotetsi.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

## I will protect my country as I protected the environment

After matriculating in 2016, Sydney Rabotshabi Modutla didn't have any skills that could help him find employment. When he heard WOF was recruiting young people to be trained as veld and forest firefighters he decided to take the opportunity to gain firefighting skills.

He was one of the successful young people who were recruited after passing the fitness test and joined the Castello Team as a firefighter. He soon fell in love with firefighting and understood the important role firefighters play in saving lives and protecting the environment.

Modutla says he gained valuable skills during his time at WOF which helped him secure his new employment. "Through the physical fitness and discipline I got from WOF it was easy for me to adapt to all the activities we are required to do during our training at SANDF," he says.

"I thank WOF for the skills and experience that helped me get my current job. Now I believe I will protect my country as I protected the environment. I would like to encourage former colleagues to spread their wings outside the programme. The skills you have gained at WOF will pave the way for the future," says Modutla.

Written by Editorial team



Sydney Rabotshabi Modutla started his training at the South African National Defence Force in February and will complete training in July

## Participant join government department

Former storeperson Jabulani Zwane and Sandile Mthethwa of the Suikerbosrand Team have been employed by the Gauteng Department of Agriculture and Rural Development as groundsman at the Suikerbosrand nature reserve. They assumed their new roles in June.

"We are grateful for the work opportunity in the programme. It gave us refuge when it was hard and rough in our lives. Finally, we are moving towards greener pastures," says Mthethwa.

Mthethwa says being a firefighter was a different experience but he had endured the tough life that went with it.

Zwane says that, as a person who lives with a disability, no one

had wanted to employ him. "I first tasted the fruits of employment in the WOF programme. My income improved because the disability grant had not been enough to keep up with the rising cost of living," says Zwane.

Both men say they are looking forward to exciting challenges as groundsman at the nature reserve.

Zwane says, "It is the programme that exposed us to the new employer. Otherwise, we wouldn't have known about the recruitment here."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Jabulani Zwane, a former storeperson, has been hired as a groundsman at the Gauteng Dept of Agriculture & Rural Development

# Hard work, dedication and passion are the keys to a brighter future



Lebogang Mahlaela is living her dream of being a firefighter at the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality

Lebogang Mahlaela is another South African youth who WOF opened doors for recently.

After matriculating in 2005 at Makgwading High School, she enrolled at Avuxeni in Mokopane to do a computer literacy certificate course. She volunteered as a cleaner at WOF Zebediela from 2006 until she joined WOF in 2010 as a firefighter.

After resigning from WOF in 2013, she used some of the stipend she had earned at WOF to fund studying a Fire and Rescue course at Karnbridge FET College in Pretoria.

After completing her course, she returned to WOF in 2014. She was lucky to find a vacant firefighter position and due to her experience, sailed through the

selection process and was re-recruited. In May 2016, Mahlaela resigned from WOF again and joined the Lepelle-Nkumpi Municipality as a firefighter.

"Thank you WOF for building me to be the person that I am today. It was tough at WOF but that contributed to me being the strong woman I am," says Mahlaela.

During her time as a participant at WOF Mahlaela demonstrated a high level of discipline and was always ready to assist others. This contributed to her exposure to the municipality's personnel which helped her to seize the new job opportunity.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

# Former firefighter getting ready to serve the country

The Expanded Public Works Programme was designed to enable young unemployed people to gather skills and experience that would make them more employable. Over time, employers in certain sectors have learned to value the skill sets acquired by the participants at Working on Fire. Many WOF firefighters have found employment in nature tourism, municipal services, various fire departments, the mining industry and lately, increasingly in the security industry and the South African Police Service (SAPS).

Lungisani Mseswa is one such young man. He joined the programme in 2018 and was determined to further his life outside of WOF.

"After passing the fitness test I was sent to the training academy where I attended the advanced veld and forest firefighting training. From when I started we were encouraged to use our skills and training to look for permanent employment. Although WOF provided great opportunities for growth and skills, I was determined to not be comfortable," says Mseswa.

He started applying for jobs that suited his newfound set of skills and WOF work ethic. Earlier this year,



Lungisani Mseswa is currently undergoing training at the SAPS training academy in Philippi, Cape Town

Mseswa's application to the SAPS was successful. He has been coping well with the strenuous basic training at the Philippi South African Police Training Academy.

"Because I was used to the weekly physical training which we did in my team, I was physically fit to cope with the training we do here. And thanks to the discipline I gained at WOF, I feel I'm ready to serve my country to the best of my ability," Mseswa says.

Written by Editorial team

# Don't limit yourself in life



Sibusiso Mathenjwa in his SAPS uniform

Working on Fire alumnus Sibusiso Zamokuhle Mathenjwa is now a police officer with the South African Police Services. "Before joining the programme I used to do part-time work like gardening jobs. I was recruited in 2014 at eShowe Base," says Mathenjwa.

Mathenjwa says he enjoyed his time as a firefighter, always being fit, feeling part of a family and benefitting from great teamwork with his fellow colleagues.

"Being a firefighter helped me a lot. I learnt endurance and how to use money responsibly. I was able to get my driver's licence which helped me to be where I am today," says Mathenjwa.

"Working on Fire groomed me in so many ways to become the man I am today, like being away from home when we camped. It strengthened me so much to be able to survive and overcome so many obstacles in my life. I enjoyed being physically fit and being able to work with other people from different backgrounds," adds Mathenjwa.

In his current career as a police officer, he feels as fulfilled by helping people as when he was a firefighter. He feels this work is more dangerous since he now works with firearms, but he is learning so much as he is exposed to different situations and people. "When community members come back to me and thank me for assisting them, I feel proud of making a difference in someone's life."

Having secured a good job, Mathenjwa hopes to establish a business in five years' time, something that will sustain his family for years to come. Things are already better than before. He has built his family a home and he can now afford to pay for his younger sibling's schooling and take care of his own son.

"I never thought I'd be a police officer. To my former colleagues at Working on Fire, I say never stop applying for new opportunities and don't only stick with one option. Let us be open-minded. It all works out well in the end," says Mathenjwa.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Former firefighter Brian Boikhutso is yet another example of the thousands of youths who were able to use Working on Fire as a portal to secure formal employment.

Boikhutso joined WOF on 26 January 2015 at Marakele Base in Thabazimbi. Before joining WOF he was an unsuccessful job-seeker.

"WOF saw the potential in me and recruited me as an unskilled person and trained me in firefighting," says Boikhutso, who is grateful to WOF for paving the way for him.

In 2017, Boikhutso was appointed as the Base Communications Representative for Marakele and, later that year, as a Type 2 Crew Leader. In January 2018, Boikhutso bid farewell to WOF and joined Northam Platinum

# WOF paved the journey of life for Brian



Brian Boikhutso is a former WOF participant who is now at Northam Platinum Mine

Mine as an assistant metallurgical operator.

"WOF played a major part in me getting my current job because it motivated me to chase after my dreams. It made me passionate about developing myself and dreaming big. WOF taught me that working hard brings out excellent results," says Boikhutso, who now sees a brighter future ahead.

"All I can say is that the life that I've always dreamed of has just begun," he adds happily.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

# Mpumalanga bolsters teams with recruitment drive

Working on Fire (WOF) in Mpumalanga went on a recruitment drive recently to beef up the teams ahead of the fire season. Potential recruits gathered in Ermelo, Breyten, Warburton, Nelspruit, Barberton, Waterval Boven and Graskop.

The candidates were put through the standard WOF fitness test, which

includes timed push-ups, pull-ups, sit-ups and the 2,4 km run (under 12 minutes for males and 14 minutes allowed for female counterparts). Forty-six unemployed but fit young men and women from disadvantaged communities throughout the province were accepted into the programme to undergo specialised firefighting training. They were joined by

an additional 13 recruits who had been on standby at different bases.

Once trained, the recruits will join the 480 firefighters who recently passed their Yellow Card Training Camp and are ready and prepared for the fire season.

Once again, WOF has contributed to restoring dignity by providing job

opportunities for disadvantaged South African youth.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF participant's drive to succeed



Victoria Moolo

Victoria Moolo joined Working on Fire in 2005 and served diligently as a firefighter at the Harrismith Base for two years before she was promoted to become a driver in August 2007.

She was the first female WOF driver in the province and the second female driver nationally in the programme. Moolo has been the Free State Provincial Transport Officer since 2014 and thoroughly enjoys her work.

Moolo is a firm believer in education and advancement and jumped at the chance to complete a tertiary-level qualification at the University of Cape Town when Working on Fire offered this skills development opportunity to its staff members. She is currently completing her diploma in fleet management.

She says, "Throughout my time in the programme I was given access to many training and skills development programmes and workshops. I'm grateful for what Working on Fire has done for me. As a firefighter, I never thought I'd be where am today. But after being promoted to be a driver, I was motivated to push myself further and to keep applying for new positions."



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



Prospective Working on Fire recruits undergo the vigorous fitness test

## The future looks bright for Nelly

Many participants join WOF hoping to find a formal job after acquiring skills and work experience. After all, that is the purpose of the Expanded Public Works Programme. Others are happy to remain firefighters while a few, like Nelly Diale, are able to advance their careers in WOF itself.

Diale joined WOF in 2012 as a firefighter at Mamabolo Base in Limpopo.

After completing her matric in 2010 at Nkoshilo Secondary School in Mankweng, Diale enrolled at Tshwane University of Technology. But lack of finances forced her to drop out of her course.

"When WOF recruited me, I knew that I had to work hard as a firefighter to enable me to reach my career goal of becoming a supply chain manager," says Diale.

Her strategy paid off when she was promoted to Type 3 Dispatcher at the WOF Limpopo Provincial Office in 2014. In 2016, she was appointed as the Assistant Store Controller.

Wanting to cement her progress, Diale joined other participants who enrolled at the University of Cape Town and recently not only graduated with a certificate in supply chain management, but was awarded as the top achiever in her group.

"I want to thank WOF for giving me the opportunity for career growth. The journey will never be easy, but with the



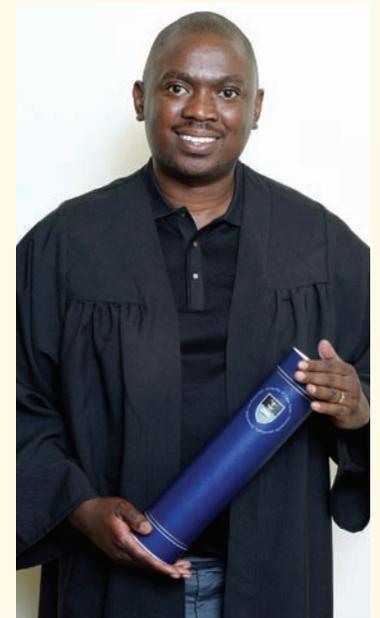
Nelly Diale can't stop praising WOF for giving her the opportunity to develop

support that I get from my management, I know that I will conquer and achieve my goals," says Diale.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## A fulfilling career at WOF



North West Ground Operations Manager, Manase Mpholoane, is one of the longest-serving WOF employees

Like all our participants, Manase Mpholoane knows well what it is to struggle in life. He was unemployed for over five years. Even after travelling to Gauteng in the hope of finding a job, his efforts proved fruitless until 2004.

That was when he heard about an organisation recruiting unemployed youth to be trained as veld and forest firefighters. He attended and passed the recruitment tests at the Krugersdorp Base and joined the Krugersdorp Team as a firefighter after completing advanced firefighting training.

Working hard and taking full advantage of the various skills development training WOF provided, Mpholoane rose up the ranks from firefighter to Crew Leader and beyond.

"I worked my way through the ranks and today I'm serving the programme as the North West Ground Operations Manager," says Mpholoane. "I would like to thank WOF for making a difference in my life. If it wasn't for the programme I don't know where I would be today. I am living testimony that the programme is making a difference in young people's lives. May WOF continue to make a difference to the youth of South Africa."

Written by Editorial team

# Challenging gender in construction

Makhozasana Nhlapo is a carpenter and tiler who works as a Type 3 Dispatcher at the WOF Gauteng Provincial Office. She recently registered her business hoping to kick-start her exit from the programme to make way for other participants.

She says it is rare for young black women to enter the construction sector. "I always did the 'man's' work of laying floor tiles and doing woodwork. I am known among the community members for my talents," says Nhlapo. "I have the skills and tools to carry out the tasks when hired to do so."

Nhlapo says she always craved to be a businesswoman in her own right which is why she is trying to formalise her business operations. She says she is still learning how to properly prepare quotes and charges for her services. She has identified niches for her business to thrive better.



Makhozasana Nhlapo

If things go according to plan, she expects to exit the programme soon.

"I will assist in job creation because I will need assistants for my task. I will go big," she says, smiling.

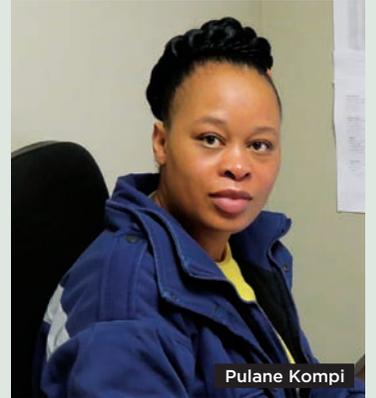
Colleague Elizabeth Mabote, a general worker at the Provincial

Office, confirms Nhlapo's talents. "I have seen her working before and I'm convinced the sky is the limit for her," she says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## Upskilling was the key to career advancement



Pulane Kompi

Pulane Kompi, who is originally from Winburg in the Free State, currently resides in Bloemfontein where she serves as the Provincial Stock Controller in the WOF Free State Provincial Office.

Kompi heard about WOF recruitment in Winburg in 2011 and decided that she would give it a try. She was among only a few youths who attended the recruitment for firefighters at the Winburg Base who passed and were recruited.

Because Kompi had prior computer training she was moved to the Provincial Office to assist with administration tasks. Her good work and potential were soon recognised and she went on to be promoted to Provincial Stock Controller. Kompi has since attended many training courses through WOF and most recently graduated from the University of the Western Cape with a qualification in supply chain management.

"I'm very thankful to the programme for developing me. My life would've been very different had I not attended the recruitment drive back in 2011," says Kompi.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

his girlfriend and colleagues for never giving up on him and always supporting him, despite the bad things he had done.

He says, "What helped a lot was admitting I had a problem of addiction and the support of the people who still had hope for me in my life. I now play soccer and go to church. I also work on weekends and have started hanging out with new friends who are a positive influence on me."

This Youth Month, Makae advises the youth and colleagues to not think only of the now but to think of their future before doing drugs. Positive thinking and healthy activities offer a far brighter future for their lives.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer



Zukile Dhlomo is saving up to pursue his love of photography

## Inspired to do and achieve more

Zukile Dhlomo, a firefighter and Base Communications Representative (BCR) at the Castello Base, is one of many young people who have been upskilled at Working on Fire. He was unemployed for almost five years between completing his matric in 2012 and joining WOF in 2017.

"After passing the necessary fitness test and interview, I was recruited and went for the advanced firefighting training," says Dhlomo. "In 2018, I was appointed as the BCR of my team. I went for the BCR training which included training in basic writing, basic photography and presentation skills. Now I can write stories, take good pictures and do

presentations at schools and for my team."

Dhlomo has been inspired by his WOF skills training to always strive to better himself. Last year he obtained his learner's licence and he is currently saving part of his monthly stipend to buy himself a good-quality camera to pursue his love of photography and to start a photography business. "Since joining WOF I have been able to change my life around. I'm constantly inspired to do and achieve more. I would like to thank WOF and hope WOF continues to empower and encourage young people to pursue their dreams," he says.

Written by Editorial team

## Participant talks about his struggle with drugs

In South Africa, 80% of male youth deaths are alcohol-related and drug consumption is estimated to be twice the world norm. The South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA) initiated Drug Awareness Week (24-28 June) to focus particularly on the risks of alcohol and drug abuse for adolescents.

KwaZulu-Natal uMzimkhulu Team participant Shaun Makae talks about his journey in struggling with and successfully quitting his drug use.

"It started off with a friend offering me whoonga. It made me feel good and at the time I was already addicted to alcohol, so I switched to whoonga as it was cheaper than alcohol," says Makae.

He realised he was addicted when he started feeling pain and withdrawal symptoms if he hadn't smoked. He began selling his own property such as clothes, TV, radio, etc. for drug money.



Shaun talks to his team about his journey in quitting drugs

"It got so bad that I started house-breaking at gunpoint and mugging people in town. I also developed a temper and I'd hit my girlfriend for no reason. When I was sober it made me feel guilty."

Makae didn't like the person he had become so he approached the Social Development Practitioner in KZN

for assistance. "The SDP advised me to see a doctor and I started getting help with medication to suppress the cravings. The doctor advised me to do certain activities when I felt the urge to smoke."

Two years later Makae is still clean. When he speaks to his team members about his journey he always thanks

# Participant celebrates a major achievement

As we approached the end of Youth Month, Working on Fire in the Eastern Cape celebrated a great success with one of the participants. Twenty-nine-year-old Athi Mtutuntha from Tsomo Base has just graduated with a Bachelor of Agriculture degree from the University of Fort Hare. Although she only joined the WOF family earlier this year, she is very proud to be part of the programme. She says that Working on

Fire assisted her a lot in preparing for exams and making it to graduation.

"If it was not for WOF I would not have done it," says Mtutuntha. "It's not easy to get a job if you do not have experience and qualifications but WOF gave me a job although I was inexperienced. I can now support my child and my family."

As a single mother who was raised by her widowed father, her life has not

been easy, but she feels all the challenges that she encountered taught her to be a better person. Mtutuntha advises other firefighters to use the money they earn to study and improve their qualifications. "Education is the key to success so everyone must try hard to better themselves so that they can get more opportunities in life," Mtutuntha says.

The firefighters of Tsomo Base and WOF Eastern Cape's management organised a small celebration to congratulate Mtutuntha on her achievement.



Athi Mtutuntha says that being part of the WOF family played a major role in her life



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# Re-investing in education

Benjamin Kotlolo, of Leeuwfontein Base, has enrolled in a Foundation Phase course in education at Nkangala TVET College. He is funding his education from the stipend he earns in the programme.

For extra income, he sells cosmetic products in the village. Along with the financial skills he was taught at WOF, this enables him to fund his education without a struggle. He believes that he may positively exit as soon as the end of the year.

"The course requires that I do practicals after completing my examination. I love working with young children because they are very innocent and fun to work with," he says.

He says investing money in education is like taking out life insurance for him and his family. Kotlolo is serving his team as the SHE Rep which he says is his second passion. He hopes to raise enough funds to be able to do SAMTRAC at NOSA in Centurion.



Benjamin Kotlolo

Because he feels the WOF programme is enabling him to achieve his goals, Kotlolo urges fellow crew members to start initiatives to uplift themselves. "After all," he says, "It is only me who can end my miseries."



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

# From fighting fires to managing firefighters

Born and bred in the dusty village of Cofimvaba in the Eastern Cape, Abelo Duna always felt that he was destined for greater heights.

After completing matric in 2010, Duna had financial challenges which prevented him from pursuing a media, communications and culture course.

"I heard about the WOF recruitment from my uncle who I was visiting in

Limpopo. I then decided to go and try my luck," says Duna.

Duna joined WOF on 7 July 2011 as a firefighter at Mogalakwena, then located at Entabeni. He was promoted to SHE Rep in November 2011. Due to his hardworking and disciplined personality, he was appointed as the Type 2 Crew Leader in June 2013 and in May 2014 he was appointed as a Type 1 Crew Leader.

"My journey was not easy. I had to work hard and prove that I deserved to be in the leadership position. My dedication, hard work, passion, discipline, dedication and determination ensured I excelled in every task that was assigned to me," says Duna.

Duna used the stipend that he earned at WOF to further his education in the occupational health and safety field. In 2015, he enrolled in the online OHS management course at Oxbridge Academy and passed with flying colours. During the same year, he also enrolled for SAMTRAC with NOSA and completed it in record time.



Abelo Duna can't wait to lead his team to a brighter future

# Ground Operations Manager groomed for success

When it comes to management, Working on Fire believes in 'growing our own timber'. A very large number of our current WOF Management personnel are former participants who have risen up the ranks within the programme.

Over the years, WOF has initiated various projects aimed at empowering ambitious employees with the skills, orientation and aptitude required to manage more responsible positions. While it does occasionally happen that management positions are filled by persons recruited from other organisations, staff are always encouraged to climb the corporate ladder.

This grooming process includes the Management Development Programme (MDP), which focusses on empowering employees with both practical and theoretical knowledge. The MDP recently saw 51 WOF employees graduate from the University of Cape Town after completing various online courses.

One of the new graduates is Alfred Boer, whose dedication, pas-



Alfred was one of 51 employees who graduated from the University of Cape Town after completing various online courses

sion and love of hard work saw him rise from firefighter to Type 2 Crew Leader, Type 1 Crew Leader, Training Instructor, Senior Training Instructor, Assistant Academy Manager, Academy Manager, WOF Accounts Manager, Training Operations Manager and, most recently, Western Cape Ground Operations Manager (GOM).

Boer says, "Graduating from UCT was one of my proudest moments! I'm very proud of where I come from and where I am now. I have worked hard and thank WOF for grooming me into the leader that I am today."

He adds, "The Management Development Programme training came at the right time. I started in my current position as a GOM in May last year. There were a few areas in which I encountered some challenges but the training gave me skills that will help me in those areas. It is now up to me to put what we have learned into practice."

Written by Editorial team



Alfred Boer with his certificate after completing report writing training

"It was very challenging juggling work and studies at the same time, especially during the fire season. I had to study every chance that I had," says Duna.

In 2018, Duna enrolled at UNISA for the National Diploma in Safety Management. His future goal is to complete the diploma by 2020 and to enrol for a BTech. Duna was appointed as the

OHS Administrator for Limpopo on 6 January 2019 and on 1 June he was appointed as the WOF Regional Manager for Limpopo.

"With hard work, dedication and perseverance, everything is so easy to achieve," Duna says.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

# Pushing safety career



Sandile Mabena

Sandile Mabena, of the Roodeplaat Team, obtained a BA Marketing degree from PC Training and Business College. After struggling to find a job he joined NOSA where he did SAMTRAC and incident investigations.

"I found a new passion for occupational health and safety. I am voluntarily acting as the SHE representative for the team since we don't have one," he says.

Mabena is looking forward to attending the course in Nelspruit. He says he is gaining work experience and skills for his career in OHS although his ambition is to work in the advertising industry.

He has put his WOF experience on his CV and has attended job interviews with companies that have shown interest. Mabena says, "I had no work

experience before. I am optimistic that I will now find a job sooner than expected."

Mabena's crew members pointed out that he lives the WOF values by providing three needy crew members with lunch every day.

Mabena says that since he began running a non-profit organisation which will soon be officially registered, he noticed the struggles of some of his crew members and decided to help.

"It is easy to bring along a daily meal for them. I am not well off but I do care about other people," he says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## Participant is improving her qualifications

Nomaphelo Mdayi, a firefighter from the Hogsback Team in the Eastern Cape, thanks the Working on Fire programme for empowering her with skills and learning opportunities.

Twenty-six-year-old Mdayi joined the WOF programme in 2013 as a firefighter and says she has been equipped with many skills and experiences.

"I am living a healthy lifestyle because of the fitness training we do in the programme and with the little money I get, I have managed to register at a college where I am studying office administration," says Mdayi.

She says that she is doing this course because she wants to improve her qualifications as that will enable her to get better opportunities outside the programme.

"I am very proud to be part of this programme which continues to be committed to changing the lives of young people in many ways," says Mdayi.

Aside from having acquired various skills, Mdayi says she is also able to support her family and her son.



Firefighter uses the stipend to further her studies

"Working on Fire has really changed my life for the better. I also got an opportunity to be in the group of firefighters that went to suppress fires in Canada," says Mdayi with a smile.

She says that once she is done with her studies she will obtain her driver's licence. She advised all firefighters to do something similar at WOF as that would change their lives.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## Never stop trying to achieve your dreams

Former Type 1 Crew Leader Siyanda Ncube spoke to WOFire News about his journey in the programme to his current position as a Type 3 Dispatcher for WOF KwaZulu-Natal.

"Before joining the programme, I worked as a salesman at Home Build in Richards Bay and decided to leave as being a firefighter was always a dream of mine growing up," says Ncube.

After joining the WOF Programme in October 2008, Ncube was trained in veld and forest firefighting, then later became a SHE Rep. He moved up to a Type 2 and later a Type 1 Crew Leader position and led various teams in the Zululand coastal region.

"I am proud to say I also have a national qualification in Information Technology Level 4 and a Code 10 driver's licence. I have a trade certificate and started my own video and photographic production company called Siyanda Media," Ncube says.

Ncube says, "Being a crew leader prepared me a lot for my current position as I knew the importance of communication with base partners, fire crews, WOF management and the Dispatch Centre in terms of getting authorisation and movement numbers."

He says that being in leadership automatically exposes one to provincial management personnel and he feels it



Siyanda Ncube

was an honour for him to be promoted to Provincial Dispatcher.

"I plan to learn from the experienced Type 3 Dispatchers and Provincial Coordinators, as they will continue grooming me until I am the best in my new position."

Ncube says he wants his former base colleagues to know that they have contributed a lot to him.

"No man is an island. I am from the rural community but today, I recognise and share my experience as a leader. Don't stop trying in life. Let's all have a safe fire season," says Ncube.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Former WOF firefighter now Kishugu Training Academy chief instructor

Working on Fire continues to live by its objective of restoring dignity to marginalised youth by creating jobs.

These youth are equipped with skills as they are integrated into various skills development projects and they often show determination and growth by moving up the ranks to occupy positions in management.

This has been evident with instructors based at the Kishugu Training Academy in Mbombela, who started as firefighters at WOF and now hold management positions at the Academy.

One such example is Jimmy Nkosi, a former firefighter from the Graskop Base.

Nkosi began at WOF in 2003 and worked his way steadily through the programme, becoming a Type 2 Crew Leader in 2005 and a Type 1 Crew Leader in the same year.

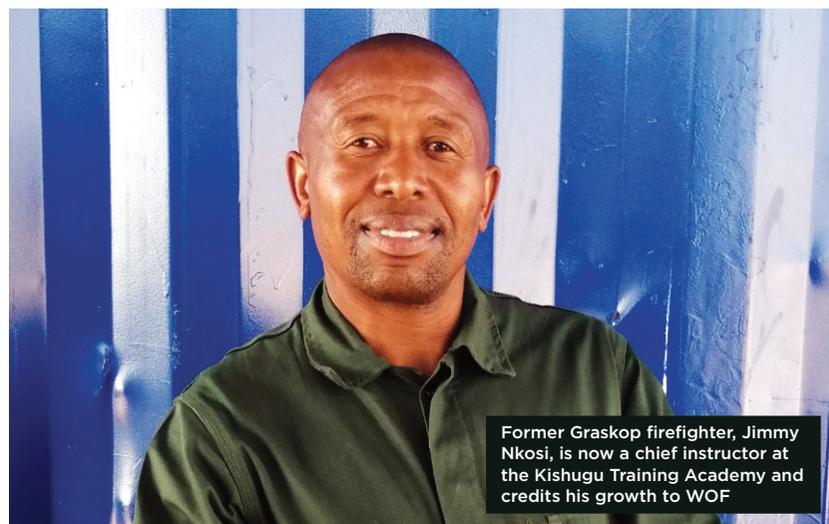
By 2007, Nkosi was a Base Manager in Nelspruit and was elevated to Instructor at the Academy in 2008.

Nkosi is now a Chief Instructor at the Academy and credits his success to Working on Fire.

"We entered the Working on Fire programme with hope and they developed our lives and gave us numerous opportunities to grow, so they really restored our dignity," Nkosi says.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer



Former Graskop firefighter, Jimmy Nkosi, is now a chief instructor at the Kishugu Training Academy and credits his growth to WOF