



# 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

## WOF continues to serve as an essential service

The Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries' Working on Fire participants have been kept busy fighting fires across the country since the start of the 2020 winter fire season. Teams have assisted WOF partners (Fire Protection Associations, local mu-

nicipalities and landowners) and have contained 265 fires since the start of this fire season, limiting the economic harm unwanted fires can cause.

These fires were reported across the winter fire season region, which includes large parts of the Eastern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo,



Aerial resources were dispatched to assist in firefighting operations in the Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga



WOF teams across the country responded to more than 200 fires in the first month of the 2019/2020 winter fire season

Mpumalanga and the North West. When not on the fire line, most teams were involved in fire prevention measures such as fuel load reduction activities, block burns and prescribed burning.

Our Community Fire Awareness and Fire Awareness Training Officers have been conducting fire awareness through local radio stations to raise awareness about the risk of unwanted fires and how fires can be prevented this winter fire season.

All our operations are conducted while adhering to the WOF COVID-19 workplace safety measures, which include screening, sanitising of equipment, wearing masks and observing physical distancing where possible.

We thank all the managers and participants who play their part in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in the WOF workplace so we can provide essential services to the country.

Just over 4000 Working on Fire firefighters stationed at 160 bases across the country have concluded their Yellow Card Training and will remain on high alert throughout this winter fire season. WOF aerial resources, which include 13 spotter planes, 4 AT 802 water bombers, 11 Huey helicopters and 17 Aircraft Fuel Support vehicles, are also on standby to assist with firefighting operations during this winter fires season.

## Youth Power in the time of COVID-19

This year, Youth Month was celebrated under the theme 'Youth Power - Growing South Africa together in the period of COVID-19'. Over the past 17 years,

Working on Fire has promoted youth employment by creating thousands of job opportunities for young South Africans in the environmental sector as

veld and forest firefighters. Many have graduated from the WOF programme to permanent career positions in the private and public sectors.

However, these young men and women do not only have a passion for protecting the environment and lives. Over the years, they've condemned social ills and conducted many awareness campaigns addressing various problems in society.

*Continued on page 2*

16 JUNE  
Youth Day Virtual Commemoration

YOUTH POWER:  
GROWING SOUTH AFRICA  
TOGETHER IN THE PERIOD  
OF COVID-19

#YouthDay2020 #YouthMonth2020 #YouthPower

President Cyril Ramaphosa





# Youth Power in the time of COVID-19

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As essential service providers, our participants are serving the country during these difficult times as the world battles the coronavirus pandemic. Our young firefighters also help flatten the curve by daily implementing COVID-19 safety measures in and outside the workplace.

They've shown creativity in helping to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among their colleagues by using recycled material to make face masks, face shields and water dispensers. They have also reached into their own pockets to assist those in need by donating food parcels in their communities.

On June 16, these young men and women marked Youth Day through placards, song and poetry, standing together to make their voices heard as they condemned the recent hike in gender-based violence (GBV) in the country and called for men to act against GBV and for victims to speak up.

## Working on Fire manager shares his experience with COVID-19

"I never thought it was possible. I thought COVID-19 was for other people, not me. But I then tested positive and my whole world turned upside down."

That was the first reaction of Assistant General Manager for the Western Cape, Ray-Yaan Majiet, when he tested positive for the COVID-19 coronavirus. Majiet says he didn't expect to contract the virus since he followed all the COVID-19 safety measures: he wore his mask, regularly washed his hands and sanitised products and surfaces.

"Even when I had to do shopping, I would carefully sanitise the bags and everything, but somehow, I got it," he says.

He had to stay home and isolate for 14 days, which meant no physical contact with others and not leaving home. He found not being with his family the most difficult thing about isolation.

**"I tested positive and my whole world turned upside down."**



Western Cape Assistant General Manager, Ray-Yaan Majiet, has fully recovered from the coronavirus

"I went for the test and was told to isolate myself, but it was too late as my wife had already started showing symptoms. You won't know how the virus is going to affect you because it affects people differently. I couldn't be with my family during Eid and that was a hard time for me, I was really broken," he says.

One of the things that really helped him during his isolation was the support he got from his personal and WOF families. This helped him stay emotionally strong. "People were video calling me and that made me feel good, and delivered groceries to my door," he says with a smile.

Majiet is encouraging everyone to adhere strictly to the COVID-19 precautions. "We at WOF are strong, we are firefighters and we overcome things. To anyone battling this virus, stay positive, have a routine and be strong for yourself and your family," he says.

## COVID-19 can be beaten, says survivor



Siyamkele Yokwe says he missed the taste of food

Siyamkele Yokwe from the Working on Fire Table Mountain High Altitude Team (HAT) was shocked when he tested positive for COVID-19. He says he did not believe COVID-19 would ever affect him.

"My family was very concerned when I told them. My mother thought I would die and they would not even be able to bury me because they are not in the Western Cape," he says.

During isolation, Yokwe missed the taste of food as one of his symptoms was that he lost his ability to taste. He also missed friends and colleagues.

"Because I was spending so much time alone, my emotions were all over the place. I thought about death a lot, which made me feel depressed," he says.

He says WOF played a big role by supporting him during this difficult time. His manager brought him food and constantly checked in with him. "The Social Development Practitioner also called daily to find out how I was feeling and managing isolation. She helped me a lot, especially with dealing with constant thoughts of death.

"I'm fine now and back at work. To other people dealing with COVID-19 and isolation, I want to say hang in there. This disease is beatable. To those who have not had it, please make sure you adhere to government regulations and WOF workplace safety measures. Sanitise and maintain physical distancing at ALL times," says Yokwe.

## My experience in quarantine



Ayanda Kedama

My name is Ayanda Kedama, a store person at Concordia Base in Knysna. A doctor ordered me into self-isolation after my girlfriend was in direct contact multiple times with someone who tested positive for COVID-19.

This was very stressful because I was not sure if I had the virus or not and the fact that I could not see my kids and family members drove me up the wall. It felt like the end of the world. It was just a lot to digest and accept.

During this time, we sometimes had to pay people to get us essentials. At times the family would get us essentials but it was very heart-breaking to see them leave the goods at the

gate because they were scared of us. Working on Fire supplied us with fruit and vegetables and the social development officer kept in regular contact with us to ensure we were in the right state of mind throughout the process.

This was a lifetime experience and it showed me who is really with me in times of need.

I thank God for keeping me alive and WOF for assisting me when I needed them the most, and all my family members who showed me love and my girlfriend who stuck by me through it all.

My girlfriend tested negative and we breathed a sigh of relief. We are glad we took the precautions nonetheless.



# KZN teams respond to fires



A team suppressing a fire

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal firefighters have been responding to wildfires in various regions of the province.

KZN General Manager Sifiso Keswa says, “We are gradually seeing an increase in fire call outs since the start of the winter fire season. Thus far, teams were dispatched to six fires from 1 – 9 June.”

The eThekweni, Vryheid, Royal Natal, Kokstad and eDumbe teams were dispatched to suppress the fires.

Keswa says, “There is no specific region to watch out for but fire call outs are spread throughout the province. It is imperative that we continue Integrated Fire Management in our communities to protect their communities against wild-

fire, while still adhering to the COVID-19 safety regulations to ensure our essential firefighters are safe.”

Communities are urged to be vigilant and report fires to the relevant authorities as soon as they see them. This will help reduce the amount of damage to properties and the environment and save lives.

We are pleading with the communities to refrain from starting fires in open areas that might cause runaway fires and to report all the fires that they see in their areas to their local fire brigade immediately.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal  
Provincial Communication Officer

# North West fire season kicks off to a busy start



North West teams responded to more than 20 fires in June

Several North West teams have been dispatched to attend runaway veld and forest fires. The firefighters are taking the necessary precautions to ensure that all the activities are done safely in line with the COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations.

“I would like to thank all the teams for their dedication to serving the country during these difficult times as the country faces the coronavirus pandemic. I have received several reports from our partners about the good work that the firefighters have done and the way in which they have conducted

themselves,” says North West Working on Fire General Manager, Nolvuyo Mashologu.

In the first month of the winter fire season, teams responded to more than 20 fires to assist various landowners and Fire Protections Associations. Their efforts limited the damage these fires caused to a total of about 400 hectares burned.

More than 500 firefighters at 16 bases spread across the province remain on high alert as this fire season promises to be a busy one.

Written by Editorial team

# Limpopo landowners gearing up for fire season



Mogalakwena firefighters assist landowners by creating firebreaks for the fire season

Working on Fire Limpopo’s participants are working hard to prepare landowners for the 2020 winter fire season in the province.

Participants across the province are assisting the landowners with the implementation of the integrated fire management systems that include creating firebreaks, manual fuel load reduction through block burns and slashing.

“Though we’ve started late due to the COVID-19 lockdown, we will surely be able to assist everyone who needs our assistance. We are ready to assist all landowners with firebreaks and all other implementation of fire prevention measures,” says Lebo-gang Maletle, Type 2 Crew Leader for Mogalakwena Base.

Mogalakwena participants are working under the Mogalakwena Fire Protection Association and have been dispatched several times to create fire belts since they came back from the COVID-19 lockdown.

The National Veld and Forest Fire Act, Act 101 of 1998, requires land-owners to prepare a firebreak on their side of the property boundary where there is a reasonable risk of veld fires.

A firebreak serves as a barrier to protect properties from wildfires, although not all fires can be stopped by firebreaks.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo  
Provincial Communication Officer

# Mpumalanga teams are ready for the winter fire season



The Salique Team participate in a firewall exercise during Yellow Card Training at their base

Working on Fire Yellow Card Training Camps took place in Mpumalanga under strict lockdown protocols and regulations.

The Yellow Card training is aimed at assessing the mental, physical and firefighting skills of participants as the province prepare for the winter fire season, which occurs between June and October in Mpumalanga.

Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus, WOF could not convene the Yellow Card Training Camps in the normal format, which included three-day camps with four teams in a region. This prompted WOF management and Kishugu Training Academy instructors to conduct assessments at team bases.

WOF Mpumalanga has a total of 24 teams made up of more than 500 firefighters. Teams from the Highveld region include Piet Retief, Wakkerstroom, Volksrust, Ermelo, Breyten, Badplaas, Warburton, Mayflower, Belfast and Sasol, while the teams in the Lowveld are Dullstroom, Nelspruit, Barberton, Sterkspruit, Lefpa, Nkomazi, Wilgeboom, Salique, Injaka, Graskop, Mlambongwane and Waterval Boven.

WOF ensured that firefighters and management adhered to COVID-19 precautionary measures during the training to minimise the risk of exposure.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga  
Provincial Communication Officer



# WOF youth gives back to communities during COVID-19 lockdown

Sello Matlhare is one of the dedicated youths of South Africa who have been rendering essential services during the COVID-19 lockdown.

"Most of the unwanted fires that are reported within our communities are caused by human negligence. That's why we are targeting the communities during this winter fire season to equip them with knowledge," says Matlhare, Working on Fire Limpopo's Community Fire Awareness Officer.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, Matlhare has had to put on hold the community fire awareness presentations that he offers the communities. However, that has not stopped him from educating the society about the

impacts of wildfires and sharing fire safety tips with them.

Matlhare has partnered with community radio stations in the province to educate their listeners about the Do's and Don'ts of fires.

"This is a difficult time for all of us, but if we join hands, we will be able to save lives and protect our environment," says Matlhare.

Through partnerships with community radio stations and landowners, WOF hopes to reach many people with fire safety information even while under lockdown restrictions.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



Limpopo's Community Fire Awareness Officer, Sello Matlhare, empowers communities with fire safety tips during the COVID-19 lockdown

## Being Fire Safe during the coronavirus pandemic



Fire Awareness Officers conduct a Fire Awareness radio presentation

Working on Fire North West Fire Awareness Training Officer, Martha Tepo, and Community Awareness Training Officer, Sophy Dinko, have conducted fire awareness through a radio presentation at a local community radio station based in Potchefstroom in the North West.

The radio was used as an ideal medium to communicate with community members and the youth about how to be fire safe and how to prevent wildland fires in the winter season.

Despite the difficult times caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fire Awareness Training Officer prioritised educating the community about the programme's Integrated Fire Management Services as well as making them aware of fire risks in communities and homes.

Tepo and Dinko also raised the importance of identifying and mitigating fire risks and the need to speedily report unwanted fires.



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer

## Preparation for winter fire season continues



Firefighters burning firebreaks

As teams in KwaZulu-Natal have completed their Back to Work Induction and Yellow Card Assessment, they have begun integrated fire management activities to prepare landowners for the winter fire season, while observing the heightened safety protocols to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 coronavirus and ensure the safety of participants and base partners.

Teams have been creating firebreaks and removing alien invasive plants to reduce the risk of fires in this winter fire season and also to save water.

KZN Regional Manager Sanele Mkhize says, "The Drakensberg Region has been busy since the beginning of June, conducting firebreaks and trace belts along the Lesotho border and the areas bordering QwaQwa and Free State to ensure the fire risk for landowners and nature reserves is reduced. The Drakensberg Region consist of partners such as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Fire

Protection Associations and Municipal Fire and Rescue services.

"I recently had a meeting with all the Drakensberg Base Managers, to discuss how we could protect the KwaZulu-Natal border areas this winter fire season to ensure the safety of our indigenous wildlife and our communities," says Mkhize.

Working on Fire believes it is possible to make a difference in our communities by protecting them from wildfires through collaboration and partnerships.

Controlled burns were done to reduce the risk of unwanted wildfires and to promote the beneficial use of fire. Controlled burns are vital for our biodiversity and agricultural ecosystems and essential for the propagation of many indigenous plant species.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Fire prevention measures pay off

Working on Fire Eastern Cape teams recorded the lowest number of fires during a busy first month marking the start of the 2019/2020 winter fire season. The teams responded to 16 fires across the province and attribute their reduced number of fires to the integrated fire management services they implemented in the province, specifically targeting communities with high fire risks.

The teams have been conducted manual fuel load reduction through slashing, removing long dry grass and overhanging dry tree branches. They also constructed firebreaks to help limit the spread of unwanted fires.

WOF Eastern Cape General Manager Phumza Dyantyi says they've always believed prevention is better than cure and this formed the basis of their strategy.

"From early in the year, one of our strategies was to implement integrated fire management so that by the time of the winter fire season, we have already limited the risk of fires.

"Unfortunately the coronavirus outbreak delayed us a little but we have since adapted our operating procedures to ensure we continue to provide integrated fire management services even during these difficult times," she says.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



The Matatiele team in the Eastern Cape is one of the teams that has been conducting fuel load reduction and firebreaks to mitigate the risk and impact of fires



## Giving back to the community to beat COVID-19

Working on Fire firefighter Moremi Tsamai, based at the North West Boskop Base in Potchefstroom, demonstrates youth power as he takes action to prevent the spread of the coronavirus in his community.

Tsamai is not only helping South Africa by providing essential services during the national lockdown but also plays a big role in preventing the spread of the coronavirus.

Tsamai researched how the COVID-19 coronavirus attacked its victims and came up with the idea of designing strong leather face masks in order to help flatten the COVID-19 curve. "I am so proud of Moremi. Since I got one of his designed masks, I am more comfortable with my mask and the fit is perfect," says Eric Makube, his Regional Manager.

Tsamai also donates some of his masks to give back to those in need in his community and help to ensure that the most vulnerable people such as children, the elderly and those with underlying health issues are protected against the pandemic.



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer



Boskop Team firefighter, Moremi Tsamai, makes face masks

## Shields to save lives

"We are providing the solutions in mitigating the novel coronavirus," says Frank Kutu, a storekeeper at the Rust de Winter Team who is making face shields out of plastic bottles. He says the concept is environmental friendly and can reduce pollution in communities.

"We are encouraged by the GM and the operations team to come with ways to make face shields especially since we are labour intensive. The face shields will help during our 2,4 km run at the bases and during burnings."

Kutu says he has made 10 face shields so far to reduce the risk to his fellow firefighters.

GM Stephen Boyes says he is impressed with the creativity of the firefighter.

"This could have been his commercial enterprise, but instead his better nature and humanity suggested otherwise. We are grateful that other teams are following suit.

"Dangerous times require that we pay more attention to the safety of the lives of our employees. I commit provincial management to support the initiative all the way," Boyes says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Frank Kutu, a storekeeper at Rust de Winter Base, displays his face shield

## Kleinmond Crew Leader assists Municipality feeding scheme



Crew Leader Wiseman Mbele

The coronavirus COVID-19 has engulfed South Africa and the Western Cape has been its epicentre thus far. Due to the pandemic, most breadwinners have been unable to provide for their families as usual.

Crew Leader Wiseman Mbele, of the WOF Western Cape Kleinmond Team, assisted the Overstrand Municipality to distribute food aid to the community of Kleinmond, which has been crippled by the pandemic in terms of putting food on the table. Mbele says he was honoured to have been asked to

assist as he likes serving his community.

"During this pandemic, many people are unable to work and are running low on food. So I am glad to have been part of this initiative," he says.

Mbele is also a musician and recently released a song with other artists titled 'Keep your distance' to encourage adherence to the COVID-19 lockdown regulations.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## Youth Day commemorated in the Free State



The Heilbron Team during the Youth Day celebration

The month of June is considered Youth Month, where we, as one of the leading organisations in youth employment in South Africa, celebrate and commemorate the youth of the present day as well as the youth of 1976 who stood up against the apartheid government and laid down their lives fighting for freedom and the right to equal education.

Working on Fire Free State teams commemorated Youth Day in various ways, such as creating

poems and plays reminding us of the tragic events that occurred on 16 June 1976.

"We performed a play to show our appreciation for what the youth of 1976 did for us. We commemorated the day while applying social distancing, wearing masks and regularly sanitising, all while have fun doing it," says Tshokolo Moroeng.



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer





Philippi and Khayelitsha High Altitude Team members on Devil's Peak

# HAT teams keep Devil's Peak free of invasive plants

The Philippi and Khayelitsha High Altitude Teams have been hard at work on Cape Town's iconic tourist destination, Table Mountain, since the country moved to lockdown level 3. They have been working on clearing Devil's Peak of alien invasive species.

The teams have been cutting down and destroying alien species such as black wattle, blackwood, blue gum, bug weed and pines, all species known for consuming large amounts of water and, therefore, aggravating the possibility of drought returning to the

city and the displacement of indigenous vegetation.

While playing their part in saving water for the residents of Cape Town and protecting the city's natural heritage, they have been cautious in observing the lockdown regulations to curb the spread of COVID-19.

At all times, the HAT participants wear face masks and their vehicle gets disinfected daily to ensure their safety.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

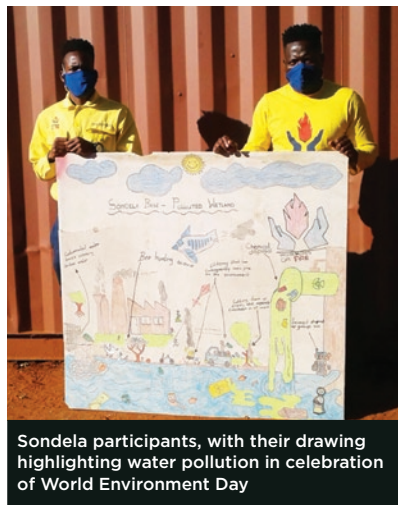
## WOF participants uses art to raise environmental awareness

WOF Limpopo took a creative approach to celebrate World Environmental Day when the Fire Awareness team challenged the participants to artistically portray the environmental challenges that they experience in the areas that they live in.

World Environmental Day is celebrated on 5 June annually across the globe and this year the theme was 'Time for Nature'.

"The reason we came up with such a campaign is because we want our participants to own up and commit themselves to protecting their environment and preserving the biodiversity," says Phenny Phukubye, the Fire Awareness Training Officer for Limpopo.

Research shows that human negligence is the main factor that leads to littering and water pollution, and unnecessary burning causes air pollution. Water is still scarce in many parts of our country, where the communities rely on water supplied from the streams, wetlands and rivers for survival. When water is polluted, people can become ill through diseases such as cholera, typhoid and diarrhoea.



Sondela participants, with their drawing highlighting water pollution in celebration of World Environment Day

"Our people still need awareness on environmental issues such as deforestation and protection of the wetlands. We need to unite as the society to protect our beautiful environment," says Phukubye.

WOF ran the #TimeForNature campaign throughout the month of June.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## KZN firefighters mark Child Protection Week

Child Protection Week is aimed at raising awareness and educating communities on children's rights and highlighting the issue of child abuse. Communities are encouraged to take responsibility for all children and to ensure children's rights are not violated.

KwaZulu-Natal Social Development Practitioner Sabelo Buthelezi says, "Amid the coronavirus pandemic, firefighters are limited in what they can do in their community to educate children about their rights, but there were teams that could work around it."

The Mbazwana Social Buddy, Nomfundo Zulu, safely gathered her daughter, nieces and nephews and taught them more about the significance of Child Protection Week.

"The children from Mbazwana created a poster to portray what they learnt from the Social Buddy. The Social Development Department also distributed the Child Protection Week circular to encourage other teams to educate their children," says Zulu.



The children standing with their posters

The Shongweni Team created a video about their stance against the abuse of children while the Kokstad Team had a discussion about how they could curb abuse as members in their communities.

Children's rights are the responsibility of everyone, as children are dependent on all of us to be safe and protected. The saying, 'It takes a village to raise a child' must be applied in communities to ensure children are brought up with love and care.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Participants make time for World Environment Day

On 5 June this year, World Environment Day, the world was reminded to make 'Time for Nature'. Working on Fire teams in the Eastern Cape chose to raise awareness about the importance of preserving our environment through environmental discussions, poetry and posters.

During the discussions held at various bases, participants discussed the role they play in protecting the environment and how they could get more people to understand that protecting the environment is everyone's responsibility, to preserve the

environment for future generations. They also promoted recycling as a way of reducing litter that can be harmful to the environment and called for action by community members to clean nearby rivers and forests.

The Base Communications Representative of the Elliot Team says, "The sooner everyone realises that we all have a part to play to protect our environment, the faster we will improve the state of our environment."

Written by Editorial team



The Elliot Team made posters that promote recycling and preserving the environment



# Inspiring Women in leadership in the WOF programme

Antoinette Jini was recently appointed Working on Fire General Manager in the Free State, becoming the fourth female General Manager in the programme. Working on Fire has consistently recognised and fostered the leadership skills possessed by women in the programme, including entrusting them with leading provinces.

Jini started out as a Fire Wise project manager in Piet Retief in Mpumalanga in 2012 and joined the programme as a Regional Manager in 2014 in the same province. She later relocated to the Eastern Cape. After three dedicated and hardworking years of service, she became the Acting Ground Operations Manager in the Eastern Cape, overseeing 26 bases. She did such a phenomenal job that she was promoted to Ground Operations Manager.

Jini notes that she endured many challenging situations in that role that moulded her leadership style.

"I feel good about my promotion and I am looking forward to taking the province to new heights. I would like to thank the EXCO for entrusting me in this capacity and I am thankful for their positive feedback which makes



Antoinette Jini, Free State General Manager

me think that they chose the correct person for this position! I would also like to thank the partners and staff in the Free State for joining hands with me and for the warm welcome," says Jini.



Wayne Mokheithi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

## Participant is also an emerging farmer

Jimmy Mbele joined the Working on Fire Warden Team in 2010 as a firefighter after volunteering at the Phumelela Local Municipality fire station because of his passion for firefighting. He went on to become a Herbicide Applicator assisting commercial farmers in the area to rid grazing land of invasive plant species.

Many colleagues may not know that Mbele himself has a passion for agriculture and is an emerging farmer in his community.

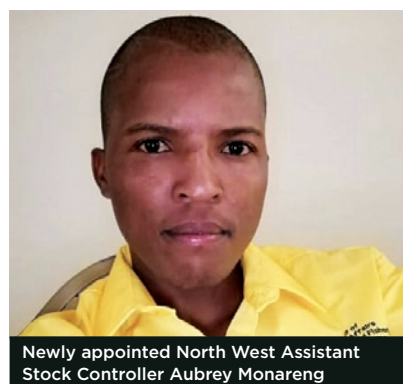
He started farming in 2008 and currently farms with cattle, broiler chickens and chickens for eggs. Mbele sells the livestock and eggs to members of his community as another stream of income in addition to the stipend he receives from the programme.

Mbele also preaches at the local Zion Church and somehow manages to juggle his many responsibilities. He plans on expanding his farming operation and has recently moved his livestock to a bigger piece of agricultural land. He is trying to source funding to purchase the necessary equipment and infrastructure to complete this expansion and go into farming full-time.

"Even if you are in WOF you can still start a small venture that will provide additional income for you and your family," says Mbele. "With the discipline we are taught, it will be easier for us as firefighters."



Wayne Mokheithi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



Newly appointed North West Assistant Stock Controller Aubrey Monareng

## Crew Leader moves to stock control

Aubrey Monareng was recently appointed as the new Assistant Stock Controller for Working on Fire North West after serving for some time as Type 1 Crew Leader. Monareng joined the WOF programme in 2010

when he was recruited as a veld and forest firefighter at Pilanesberg Base.

Monareng says he never knew his father and his mother passed away when he was very young. As the eldest, Monareng had to learn at a very young age to be responsible and to provide for his siblings.

"Because I was motivated, disciplined, and physically and mentally fit, WOF believed in me and gave me an opportunity to become a

Type 2 Crew Leader first and then I became the first Crew Leader for the North West province in 2011," says Monareng.

"I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Working on Fire for giving me the opportunity to join the programme. Today I am grateful that WOF changed my life to be a better person and made me what I am today," he says.



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer

## Firefighter about to spread his wings

Donald Malekuto from Mohale township in Magaliesberg works as a Flying Crewman for Kishugu Aviation department in Gauteng. He says that he has been interested in aviation since childhood.

"I want to attain a professional pilot's licence through Kishugu's Aviation Training Organisation in Nelspruit, he says.

He hopes to become the first qualified pilot to come out of his township. "I will not squander this golden opportunity afforded me to train as a pilot," he says.

Malekuto is not a novice to aviation. He was trained as a glider pilot in Magaliesberg while in high school. He says that there will be an opportunity to do his pilot's licence soon.

"I struggled to complete the glider pilot's licence due to money issues. I am grateful that the Aviation Training Organisation is offering a chance to work and gain experience in the aviation industry," he says.

Working on Fire Gauteng General Manager Stephen Boyes says the initiative is a good one for skills development.

"Our participant can utilise his skill in aviation to advance his career," says the GM.



Donald Malekuto is a Flying Crewman at Kishugu Aviation



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Jimmy Mbele from the Warden Base



## Former firefighter is grateful to WOF for firefighting skills

For 17 years, Working on Fire has recruited and skilled young people, most of whom had never worked before. The skills and experience they acquired at WOF have enabled many participants to progress to greener pastures over the years.

More Williams, a former WOF firefighter at the Limietberg Team in the Western Cape, is one such success story. Williams is now rendering firefighting services at CapeNature. He was recruited in 2011.

"Today, due to the skills and experience I got at WOF, I'm leading the Cape Nature ground team on the fire lines and in every task that we do in the field.

"Working on Fire played a big role in where I am and who I am. I would like to thank WOF for the skills they gave me," he says.

Williams says although he had also worked with the High Altitude Team, his love of firefighting attracted him to the job at CapeNature.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer



More Williams is now fighting fires for CapeNature

## Base partner skills youth

Wedela Team Crew Leader Lawrence Motsepe says the programme enabled him get a scholarship to do a structural firefighting course through the West Rand District Municipality Pality training academy in conjunction with Lotantsi College.

He says his exit strategy is perfect because he intends completing fire level 1 and 2 and will qualify as a structural firefighter soon.

"GM Stephen Boyes encouraged us as firefighters to upskill ourselves. The first milestone was when WOF paid for 11 firefighters to do the first course in fire and rescue and that is what we drew inspiration from," says Motsepe.

Although he lacked critical skills, Motsepe says, "But we have experience, hence we accompany the fire rescue team to some of the call outs. Credit needs to go to WOF management for supporting the initiative of skills development and transfer."

Motsepe says the base partner played a significant role by not charging exorbitant fees for the courses offered as firefighters could not have afforded the fees of private training academies.

Andre Marx, the principal for West Rand District Municipality Pality training academy, says it is his pleasure to help sharpen and develop the skills young people.



Lawrence Motsepe has been offered a scholarship to do a structural firefighting course



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## Perseverance and hard work pays off

Sibusiso Makhwasa was one of the first recruits during the establishment of the Working on Fire programme. After having been unemployed, he was really excited to join the WOF family when he was recruited in 2003 at the KwaZulu-Natal Shafton Base.

"I started as a firefighter at Shaf-ton Base in Howick. Then in 2004, I was trained to be a Type 2 Crew Leader and in 2005, I was selected for the Type 1 Crew Leader course," he says.

Makhwasa took the opportunity to mentor incoming recruits when opening up bases in KZN, Eastern Cape and the Free State.

"In the same year, I was promoted to Regional Manager. In 2008, I left to explore other opportunities and later returned in June 2014 as a Rope Technician with the High Altitude Team," he says.

In September 2017, he was promoted to driver and in May 2020, became a WOF Forest Support Project Base Manager.

"I would like to thank all the people that I have worked with, especially Mr Nene, the HAT Project Manager, for the chance and support that he gave me.

"Special appreciation also goes to my HAT colleagues from the Injisuthi and Monk's Cowl Teams. To



Sibusiso Makhwasa

all my former colleagues I say, everything is possible in life. If you work hard and work towards your goals, you should achieve positive results," says Makhwasa.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Firefighter is completing disrupted education

Thami Mseleku of the Maropeng Team was grossly affected by political violence in his home town of Nquthu in KwaZulu-Natal in the late 1990s. He says his right to education was denied, as he was in Grade 6 when violence broke out.

"I used to hear lots of gunshots during the day and night. It was a war zone," says Mseleku, who says it became too dangerous to walk to school.

"It robbed me of a rewarding life without decent education. I didn't have any formal training or education to be employable. It was WOF that rescued me when I needed an opportunity the most," he says.

The programme has not only imparted skills and knowledge but the stipend enabled Mseleku to get his drivers' licence and build a house for his family.

"This work opportunity has restored my dignity as a young person and I am doing ABET subjects at the moment," says Mseleku.



Thami Mseleku thanks WOF for the working opportunity offered to him



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer