



WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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Working on Fire

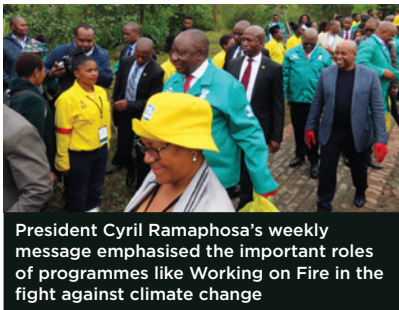


Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



@wo_fire

Programme contributes to SA's fight against climate change



President Cyril Ramaphosa's weekly message emphasised the important roles of programmes like Working on Fire in the fight against climate change

After announcing the reduction of the national lockdown to level 2 recently, President Cyril Ramaphosa stressed the importance of the recovery of our economy which has been seriously impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

In striving to rebuild the economy, the country is looking at creating opportunities to build a new, inclusive economy that creates employment and fosters sustainable growth.

In his weekly message, the President clearly placed the care of the environment in the centre of this vision of a new economy, stating that it must be able to withstand the effects of climate change.

"We already have a National Green Fund, the Working for Water and Work-

WOF unites to recognise and honour frontline workers

On Friday, 28 August, Working on Fire staff, participants and partners throughout South Africa observed a 'Moment of Unity and Reflection' to acknowledge and honour frontline workers for their commitment and sacrifice.

Participants used the opportunity to also pray for protection against COVID-19, give thanks for the healing and relief of those who are affected and pay their respects to those who have succumbed to the pandemic.

Teams gathered at bases and provincial offices, while those who were unable to physically attend dialled into the online event during which the Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams, addressed the attendees.

Abrahams discussed the current COVID-19 status in the country and its effect on the extended WOF family.



"Even though the statistics regarding the infection rates seem to be going down, the virus is still out there," he warned.

He encouraged staff to stay vigilant, adhere to the necessary health precautions and take special care of their mental health. He also honoured

frontline workers and paid tribute to those negatively affected.

He concluded by saying: "This is a very unique and trying time. I ask us all to pull together our mental strength and determination to work together to defeat this pandemic."

ing on Fire public employment programmes and the National Treasury's Cities Support Programme," President

Cyril Ramaphosa said. "The additional benefit of positioning our country as a significant global player in this

space is that we will be able to draw on these green funding sources and instruments."

Women's Forums empower WOF women

With August being Women's Month, Working on Fire provinces held their annual Women's Forums, with the focus and theme of this year being 'celebrating women leadership'.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, some provinces held the forums virtually. KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng held in-person workshops that strictly adhered to COVID-19 regulations.

The main objectives of these forums are to empower women within the WOF organisation, to celebrate and arm them with leadership skills, share achievements and challenges, especially during COVID-19, and discuss ideas and suggestions for helping WOF women start businesses.



WOF Gauteng women discuss various topics during their Women's Forum

WOF Mpumalanga kicked off the forums on 7 August with a WhatsApp group discussion on various topics, including gender-based violence (GBV) and possible projects the women could begin as a province.



Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal participants stand strong after their annual Women's Forum

WOF Limpopo also held its forum virtually on 12 August, inviting 30 women to discuss topics that had been proposed, and a new programme of monthly conferences, to assist WOF women to discuss approaches to dealing with challenges specific to women.

WOF Eastern Cape's virtual conference on 14 August featured Farida Myburgh from the Masi-manyane Women's Support Centre, who educated the women on GBV.

KwaZulu-Natal held their forum at the WOF provincial office. The guest speaker was Nqobile Xulu Nene, Editor-in-Chief of Beads Magazine and Group CEO of BLAN Group. Topics discussed: ways that actions could be taken against GBV and possible ways of getting women into business.

WOF Gauteng held its forum at the provincial office on 18 August, which hosted guest speaker Busisiwe Mzandolo, a social worker and motivational speaker from the Women of Power organisation.

GET TO KNOW OUR WOMEN PROVINCIAL GENERAL MANAGERS

August is Women’s Month and this year’s theme was ‘Generation Equality: Realising Women’s Rights for an Equal Future’. Did you know that Working on Fire has four women General Managers, the same number as their male counterparts? We asked these phenomenal women to tell us more about themselves and reflect on what matters to women who work.

PHUMZA DYANTYI
Eastern Cape General Manager



- Q:** Tips on managing motherhood and work?
- A:** Make sure you do as much of your work in the office as you can so that when you get home your attention is on your children.
- Q:** Advice to women aspiring to enter leadership?
- A:** Never lose sight of your goals and your dreams. You will encounter obstacles along the way. Some of them will make you want to give up, but keep on and hold on. You will overcome the obstacles and reach your goals.
- Q:** How do you relax after a long day of work? What do you do in your free time?
- A:** My relaxation time is spent with my family. I love my children and whenever I am home with them, we talk and tell stories. We laugh a lot and tease each other. My children and my husband are like my friends – we talk about everything.
- Q:** What keeps you going when the going gets tough?
- A:** Prayer and knowing that my children look up to me keep me going. I want to be a role model for them, to make them understand that they can achieve anything.

ANTOINETTE JINI
Free State General Manager



- Q:** Tips on managing motherhood and work?
- A:** I put my work achievements and goals above that of my personal life. I would say I am 90 percent focused on work and 10 percent on my family life, which is difficult to balance. However, my kids have learned independence through it all.
- Q:** Advice to women aspiring to enter leadership?
- A:** Young women must take the baton and run with it and never give up. Rise up above all obstacles and walk tall. This job needs a lot of courage and bravery, so never underestimate the power in you.
- Q:** How do you relax after a long day of work? What do you do in your free time?
- A:** I enjoy yoga and I do some running. It keeps me in shape and healthy. Keeping mentally and physically fit is important in our field of work. I also go on hiking trails and enjoy reading leadership books by John Maxwell.
- Q:** What keeps you going when the going gets tough?
- A:** I find strength in prayer. I also take a walk in a quiet environment and connect with nature. Listening to worship music revives my spirit and gives me inner strength and peace.

MELANY DUTHIE-SURTIE
Western Cape General Manager



- Q:** Tips on managing motherhood and work?
- A:** Managing two children is not easy, especially since they both enjoy my attention. Luckily, I have a very good support system; my husband and some of my family and friends. So, when I have to leave for work-related trips they come into play, which allows me to juggle both.
- Q:** Advice to women aspiring to enter leadership?
- A:** In order to be a manager, it is very important that you stay focused and be disciplined. You need to have a goal in mind and work towards it. Dream big because if you don't, you will not go anywhere in life. Having goals and dreams structures your journey in life.
- Q:** How do you relax after a day of work? What do you do in your free time?
- A:** I love outdoor activities. I like to go hiking, camping and I am a motorbike rider. I also like reading and spending time with my family.
- Q:** What keeps you going when the going gets tough?
- A:** My primary values are to trust my gut and to depend on what I know is important. The support from colleagues and family also keeps me going. My determination to reach the desired goal, even if it seems far, motivates me.

NOLUVUYO MASHOLOGU
North West General Manager



- Q:** Tips on managing motherhood and work?
- A:** The key is planning and prioritising your duties and managing your time. I must say some days are more hectic than others, but as a mother, you need to stay focused and make time for your family – they need you.
- Q:** Advice to women aspiring to enter leadership?
- A:** Leadership means leading by example, so it is important to note that you are leading a team and you need to have them walking the same path with you. Your team needs to know your plans and where you are leading them. Open yourself to other team members’ ideas and make informed decisions. Hence, communication is key. You cannot do it alone, so remember that you are still a woman. Therefore, manage with empathy, without necessarily sacrificing your values and the quality of your work.
- Q:** How do you relax after a long day?
- A:** Our jobs are challenging, especially as women, so we always have to hit the ground running. As long as the days are, when I get home I become a mother to my four kids. I watch television with them. Oftentimes, I find myself watching cartoons with them without even noticing. At the end of the day, I am a mother.
- Q:** What keeps you going when the going gets tough?
- A:** It is knowing my purpose. Keeping focused, and most importantly, seeking strength and wisdom from the Almighty. Being mentally and physically fit is important in our field of work. Like Antoinette, I also go on hiking trails and enjoy reading leadership books by John Maxwell. I draw strength from prayer and find listening to gospel music revives my spirit and gives me peace. Engaging physically with nature and taking walks in quiet places also helps.

Free State celebrates Arbor Week with DEFF

The country annually celebrates Arbor Month in the first week of September and this year, the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) will launch Arbor Month in Thaba 'Nchu, Free State, with a number of stakeholders, including Working on Fire.

The WOF Thaba 'Nchu Team and the Mangaung Metro Municipality Parks and Recreation department are preparing the site where the launch will be hosted by clearing the area of litter and weeds. The team

will thereafter plant indigenous trees to promote sustainable environmental management.

DEFF Deputy Minister, Ms Makhotso Sotyu, will dedicate the site as a special COVID-19 memorial in honour of those who have succumbed to this deadly disease. The site will serve the town as a green space. The event kicks off a week of Arbor Month activities across the country.



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



The Working on Fire Free State Thaba 'Nchu Team prepare the site for the National Arbor Week Launch event

KwaZulu-Natal teams combat 64 fires

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal teams have seen a peak in fires since the start of the 2020 winter fire season.

The teams assisted in combatting 64 fires, in which 12 689 hectares of vegetation were burned. WOF aerial support flew a total of 15.41 hours during these suppression operations.

WOF KZN General Manager, Sifiso Keswa, says, "We responded to 22 more fires in the month of July compared to June and in some regions, teams had to split up to attend to multiple fire call-outs

in one day." Keswa says some teams worked around the clock to suppress the Msunduzi Dump fire that raged for eight days.

"On a more positive side, compared to the previous year's fires, we have seen and are happy with the decrease of unwanted fires," he says.

WOF KZN is on high alert, with over 700 firefighters at 30 bases on standby to assist in combatting unwanted fires.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer



Firefighters at the dump fire

Limpopo participants prepare for fire season peak



Limpopo's Modimolle participants assist landowners in suppressing wildfires

More than 600 Working on Fire participants, stationed at 25 bases throughout Limpopo, are on standby and ready to be deployed to assist in fire suppression activities during this winter fire season, which could last to the end of November 2020.

During the April to July 2020 period, WOF Limpopo was called out to suppress 64 fires and managed to limit the damage to 1 982 hectares of burnt vegetation and forests.

According to Matema Gwangwa, the Provincial Communication Officer, the province faces two dangers this fire season: in wildfires and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"The safety of our participants is important, in both firefighting and making sure they do not catch the COVID-19 virus, and we have a responsibility to keep them safe on both fronts," Gwangwa says.

COVID-19 safety rules and regulations are applied and adhered to across the province at all WOF bases and on the fire line.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Mpumalanga WOF teams suppress 74 fires in July



WOF Ermelo participants in good spirits after successfully suppressing a fire

The 2020 winter fire season is at its peak and the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries' Working on Fire firefighters in Mpumalanga worked with several Fire Protection Associations to suppress 74 veld and forest fires during July.

A total of 20 teams were dispatched to assist their FPAs and local municipalities in fire suppression operations.

WOF aerial resources provided aerial firefighting assistance to the ground crews and flew a total of 108.21 hours during the operations.

Teams are experiencing a challenging fire season due to the unpredict-

able weather patterns and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, WOF continues to partner with provincial government departments, municipalities, FPAs, private and public landowners, to minimise the dire effects of veld and forest fires.

When not combatting fires, the teams are hard at work conducting Integrated Fire Management services with various stakeholders, including fire prevention measures in the form of firebreaks and fuel load reduction.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

HAT participants reduce invasive alien plants at local nature reserve

Invasive alien plants are a common problem in nature reserves throughout the country. The Working on Fire High Altitude Teams (HAT) play an important role in protecting the environment by clearing the invasive alien plants from rough terrain and the Limpopo HAT team works closely with local nature and game reserves.

The team was recently requested to assist with clearing pine and black wattle from the famous Wolkberg Wilderness Reserve.

"Upon our arrival, we set up camp and began by mapping the area, a total of 364 hectares, to enable the team to work according to a plan and also focus on the target," says



HAT Limpopo participants clear invasive alien plants at the Wolkberg Wilderness Reserve outside Tzaneen

Charlotte Netshivhuyi, HAT Regional Manager in Limpopo.

Netshivhuyi says the area the team worked in was infested with 80 percent

Limpopo prepares communities for the peak in fire season



Limpopo's CFAO, Sello Matlhare, equips landowners with veldfire suppression techniques

The peak of the 2020 winter fire season is approaching, with an increasingly high probability of wildfires.

Working on Fire Limpopo Community Fire Awareness Officer (CFAO), Sello Matlhare, partnered with the Modimolle Fire Protection Association and Rooiberg Bewaria Sector Fire Protection Association and embarked on a campaign of workshops to prepare landowners and communities for the peak of the winter fire season.

"During these workshops, I train the farmers and farm workers on the basic veld and forest firefighting techniques as this enables them to control the fire from spreading faster while they wait for assistance from our firefighters or the municipal teams," Matlhare says.

Farmers and workers from the Nyathi Game Farm and Mpatamacha Wildlife Centre outside Leseding, together with landowners at Vingerkraal, were active participants in the workshops, showing their determination to protect their environment and properties.

"Our main aim is to transfer firefighting skills to all members of the Fire Protection Associations as well as the communities at large, with the intention of making sure that their fire season preparedness is up to scratch," Matlhare says.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

density of pine and five percent of black wattle.

HAT participants treated the vegetation with Kaput gel (a herbicide) and only cut down small trees.

"It took our team a period of two weeks to complete this project and although there were challenges, such as the extremely cold weather, my team did a great job," Netshivhuyi says.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

Take COVID-19 seriously, says firefighter

Krugersdorp firefighter, Mpho Mokgosi, recently tested positive for the COVID-19 coronavirus and is grateful that she survived to share her story.

Mokgosi says she experienced severe symptoms, it was difficult to breathe and she completely lost her appetite for food.



Krugersdorp firefighter, Mpho Mokgosi, has recovered from the COVID-19 coronavirus

"It felt like I was going to succumb to the deadly virus given my history with tuberculosis. I know some people are scared to test but we need to change the attitude towards the virus and the testing thereof," Mokgosi says, adding that the virus does not know race or economic class.

"Let us observe the World Health Organisation's guidelines and the protocols of wearing masks, social distancing, avoiding touching the face, washing hands with soap and sanitising regularly," she says.

She also urged colleagues to refrain from going out unnecessarily after hours.

"I appreciate how WOF helped me in ensuring my health was taken care of, especially during the testing process. Provincial management really gave the support I dearly needed," says Mokgosi.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

WC participants and management progress in ABET programme



Western Cape GM, Melany Duthie-Surtie, with False Bay participants after they received their certificates

Fifteen participants and management staff in the Western Cape, who are improving their education as part of the ABET programme, have received their certificates in the subjects of Mathematics and English.

These participants and management members were forced by circumstances to disrupt their education to work and provide for their families. The programme is giving them a second chance to complete their basic education.

One of the recipients of the certificates, Faith Bacela from the False Bay Team, says the programme was helpful and they all passed because they had

worked together as a group and assisted one another.

WOF Western Cape, General Manager, Melany Duthie-Surtie handed over the certificates to the False Bay Team participants and congratulated them on successfully completing the ABET programme.

"Well done to all of you! I am very proud of your will to continue the educational journey. Continue with the good work and congratulations," Duthie-Surtie said.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Rest in power Lucia Rantase

Poem by Portia Ntsala

We lost a soul,
You are to be laid to rest.
But you know what they say,
"God only takes the best"
If someone had to describe you, so many words come to mind.
Beauty and grace, a heart so kind.
You radiated warmth like a blazing fire,
You were courage and wisdom itself,
A true inspiration.
You shone like a diamond ring,
In your imperfections, you sparkled,
You lit up a room every time you walked in.
You knew how to be a comforter,
You were elegant and charming,
You knew right from wrong.
The sound of your laugh was like a sweet melody from a beautiful song.
Rest in power, FEARLESS LEADER!
Rest in peace, MENTOR!
May your spirit live with us and never leave us.

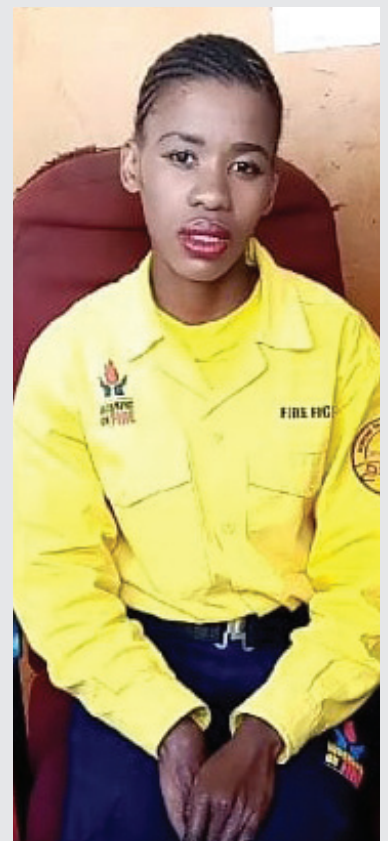


Type 2 Crew Leader Lucia Rantase has passed away

I lost myself in your hands

Poem by Onalenna Phelma Jantjies, WOF Naledi participant (NW)

I lost myself.
I lost myself in your hands,
I have given in, have fallen in love.
Oh what a gentleman you are,
You creep oh so softly through my skin.
Your skin is made of velvet and silk.
I lost myself in your hands,
I saw no lion nor a beast,
I felt no violence in your heartbeat.
Bruises punched through my face,
Oh so hard, you hit my face.
I lost myself in your hands,
Tears were rolling down my cheeks,
From the bruises of your hands.
I am now like a mourner at a funeral,
I tried saving the relationship,
I went through all the trouble saving our relationship.
Yet, I ended up killing myself.
In your hands, I lost myself.



Onalenna Phelma Jantjies

Gauteng crew leader makes good of her second chance

An ex-offender who is now a crew leader at the Working on Fire Gauteng Abe Bailey Team, Maleeto Mabe, has turned her monthly stipend into a business opportunity by building rooms to rent out.

"I observed how other people in Bekkersdal township make money and I took the chance," she says.

Mabe says it took a sacrifice to save money in a building materials store account, but her efforts are beginning to bear fruit as she has completed six rooms.

"All of the rooms are currently occupied with tenants and the money is good because people always need places to stay," Mabe says.

She intends to expand by acquiring new plots of land on which to develop more rental stock.

"It is a lifetime investment for me and my family as I am making money to make ends meet," Mabe says.

General Manager Stephen Boyes says it was inspiring to have participants who can initiate such innovative projects and do things by themselves. The crew members should draw wisdom and inspiration from



Abe Bailey Crew Leader, Maleeto Mabe, is making serious moves, building rooms for rentals to source extra income

what Mabe has done for herself and family.

"It means she has a purpose for a better life," Boyes says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Former BCR becomes the only woman driver in MPU

Working on Fire Mpumalanga recently appointed Nompumelelo Mahlangu as its only woman driver. Mahlangu was recruited at the Waterval Boven Base in 2015.

"I went to the recruitment process hoping to get selected and get a permanent job because, before that, I used to do casual work during the weekend," Mahlangu says.

Mahlangu was selected and went to work as a participant at her base until her appointment as a Base Communication Representative (BCR) in 2016.

She credits WOF for contributing to her career path and home life, as the money she earned helped her further her studies and get her driver's licence.

"With the money I got, I studied and am now a certified Basic Ambulance Assistant. But the ultimate goal is to further my firefighting career by studying further, which I hope will open many doors and opportunities," she says.

Besides being appointed as a driver at her base, her first passing out parade was one of her most memorable moments in the organisation.

"There have been women drivers before me in the province. However, at this moment, I am the only one and I hope



Nompumelelo Mahlangu was appointed as a driver at her base in Waterval Boven

I inspire my fellow women colleagues that anything is possible," says Mahlangu.

WOF Mpumalanga wishes Mahlangu all the best in her new role.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

RM thanks WOF for recognising her potential

"Hard work, dedication and patience is key in making someone a better person in life," says Balise Rozane, a former Working on Fire firefighter who is now an Eastern Cape Regional Manager, one of more than 300 firefighters who have moved up the ranks within the organisation.

Rozane joined the WOF programme in 2011 as a firefighter and was given the opportunity to further her training in a Type 2 Crew Leader course, which she happily took. "With dedication and hard work, I was subsequently

nominated for the Type 1 Crew Leader course, which I completed," Rozane says.

In 2015, she became the Regional Manager for the Joe Gqabi, Molteno and Elliot teams. Rozane was one of the RMs to lead teams at the infamous Tsitsikamma, Joe Gqabi and Lottering fires in the Eastern Cape, which took days to contain and caused massive devastation.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Eastern Cape Regional Manager Balise Rozane is grateful to the WOF programme for empowering her

Life improved after joining WOF

The Working on Fire programme takes pride in empowering young women and changing their lives for the better. Phakama Asavela Rasi proudly counts herself as one of those women.

"I joined WOF in 2010 at the Ntywenka Base at the age of 22," Rasi says.

Life had been hard for her and her three siblings after their parents died when they were young.

Rasi recalls, "We only had the foster care grant to survive and it was not easy. Until I joined WOF, where my life changed for the better."

Thanks to the WOF stipend, she could put food on the table for her family.

Rasi was chosen for the Type 2 Crew Leader course in September 2011 and, after she successfully completed it, moved from the Ntywenka Base to Langeni Base, where she serves as a crew leader.

A mother, Rasi says it is not easy to balance motherhood and work but because of the strength of being a woman, she always manages to overcome and endure.

"It is true when they say WOF restores dignity and I am living proof of this as my family is now living a better life because of me being in the programme," says Rasi.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer



Type 2 Crew Leader Phakama Rasi says WOF helped her overcome difficult times

Mpumalanga appoints women as Type 2 Crew Leaders



Over the past 17 years, Working on Fire has recruited the highest number of female firefighters than any similar fraternity worldwide, with women comprising 33 percent of its firefighting force and more than 50 percent of management staff.

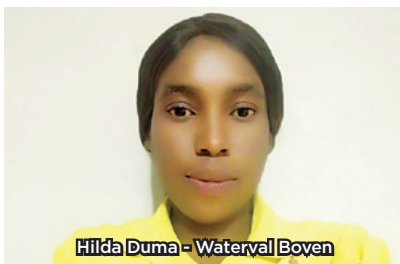


WOF Mpumalanga continued to contribute to the upliftment of women with the appointment of five women participants as Type 2 Crew Leaders.

Vuyisile Zwane was appointed in Warburton, Ntombikayise Duba in Waterval Boven, Dudu Mabuza in Belfast, Ellane Chiloane in Lydenburg and Tebogo Serage in Graskop.

The five former participants have been armed with skills and knowledge after taking the Type 2 Crew Leader course at Kishugu Training Academy, and will assist their Type 1 Crew Leader counterparts to lead crews at their respective bases.

The women thanked WOF for the opportunity and agreed that their next goal will be to grow within the organisation



and earn the opportunity to be Type 1 Crew Leaders and further their careers.

The WOF Mpumalanga provincial management wishes them all the best in their new roles and will provide all the necessary support.



Free State restores dignity to 64 new recruits



Community members from the Winburg vicinity undergo fitness tests during the recruitment drive

Working on Fire has been steadily implementing its mandate of creating employment opportunities and restoring the dignity of thousands of unemployed youth across the country.

A recent recruitment drive in 26 cities and towns across the Free State created employment opportunities for 64 deserving candidates who displayed the physical and mental readiness to become veld and forest firefighters.

The new recruits will be sent for training at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit, where they will be taught highly specialised skills in basic and advanced firefighting, First Aid and Integrated Fire Management.

"I am very pleased with the high number of hopefuls who attended our recruitment drives, which were conducted under extreme COVID-19 regulations. I am impressed with the calibre of the young men and women who proved they deserved being selected," says Bongani Mashiane, Free State Ground Operations Manager.

Mashiane says he commends all those involved in the recruitment drives and wishes the new firefighters all the best in their career journey.



EC reduces youth unemployment

Working on Fire Eastern Cape continues to show its commitment to restoring dignity, alleviating poverty and saving lives, after recently recruiting more than 180 young people to be trained as firefighters.

According to the Ground Operations Manager (GOM), Nkululeko Mlanjeni, four new Forestry Support Teams were opened in the province in July at Manzamnyama, Ntywenka, Baviaans West and Nomadamba and some of the new recruits would serve there.

"The fifth base was opened on 20 July in Dotsa, and 38 young recruits were selected for that team," Mlanjeni says. Mlanjeni says the province has also topped up existing teams, recruiting 15 participants for Ugie, 13 in St Francis Bay, 10 in Tsitsikamma, seven in Lottering, four in Langeni, three in Mhlahlane, five in Nqadu, eight in Addo and 21 in the Longmore and Sarah Baartman bases.



"The teams are topped up to maintain the team strength so they can work at full capacity in their day-to-day firefighting and prevention work," Mlanjeni says.

The successful recruits passed the fitness test and interview stages and will now be trained in advanced firefighting, fire safety and other specialised skills at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit.



Mpumalanga tops up teams with new recruits



Potential Working on Fire recruits undergo the vigorous fitness test, which included pull-ups and push-ups

Working on Fire continues to restore dignity by providing job opportunities to South African youth.

With the 2020 winter fire season currently under way, WOF Mpumalanga conducted recruitment drives in Warburton, Mayflower, Mlambongwane, Graskop, Wilgeboom, Dullstroom and Belfast to ensure the full capacity of teams in the province.

The new recruits were taken through the standard WOF fitness test, including males running the 2,4 kilometre race in under 12 minutes (14 minutes for their female counterparts) and timed push-ups and pull-ups.

KZN opens second Forestry Support Team in Qhudeneni

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal has recruited 25 unemployed youth in the Qhudeneni region to establish the recently introduced Forestry Support Team, which works in conjunction with the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF).



Prospective recruits doing sit-ups during a fitness test in the Qhudeneni region

This team will be involved in the preparation and burning of firebreaks, prescribed burning, invasive alien vegetation clearing, fire suppression, general silviculture activities and fighting wild veld and forest fires.

"With the COVID-19 pandemic creating a lot of job losses, recruits were very happy for the opportunity to protect their communities whilst also putting food on the table for their families," says Precious Mshengu, WOF KZN Human Resources Practitioner.

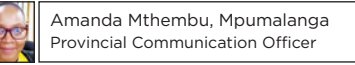
As an Expanded Public Works Programme, WOF is mandated to recruit youth participants from marginalised communities who will be trained in fire awareness and education, prevention and fire suppression skills.

"The new recruits will undergo a medical check-up and thereafter attend a 25-day veld and forest firefighting training course at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit," Mshengu says.



A total of 21 previously unemployed young men and women from disadvantaged communities throughout the province were chosen to undergo specialised firefighting training.

After training, the recruits will join the existing 550 firefighters on standby to assist their base partners, Fire Protection Associations (FPAs) and landowners with Integrated Fire Management services, including fire prevention and suppression services.





WOF Free State staff members wearing their DIY face shields

Free State management creates masks for participants

With the advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic, creative solutions to the severe lack of Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment (PPEs) are needed to ensure that this highly infectious disease does not spread out of control. Rising demand and skyrocketing prices of PPEs have left

many who cannot afford these essential items exposed and vulnerable to infection.

Working on Fire Free State has responded to this challenge by creating DIY masks and protective face shields for all participants in the bases in the province.

Participants were then challenged to replicate these DIY masks and face shields from recycled materials, at their bases and in their communities. This creative approach could ensure that PPEs are available to the most vulnerable members of communities so that this deadly disease doesn't disproportionately affect poorer communities in society.



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

Table Mountain HAT Team helps search for trail runner



The Table Mountain HAT Team after the search on Table Mountain

The Western Cape Table Mountain High Altitude Team (HAT) assisted in the search for a trail runner who went missing while running on his own on the iconic tourist attraction in Cape Town.

The team joined the Wilderness Search and Rescue and formed part of a 500-strong ground crew that volunteered to search for the runner. This was the biggest search ever conducted on the mountain.

Crew Leader Lwandiso Mgodeni says his team had gone to assist as they work on the mountain on a daily basis

and are familiar with each part of the mountain.

"We searched between Platteklip Gorge and the Platteklipkloof area, while other rescue volunteers explored the other parts of the mountain," Mgodeni says.

The trail runner, Ken Stephen, was unfortunately found dead and was suspected of having fallen to his death while running on the mountain.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

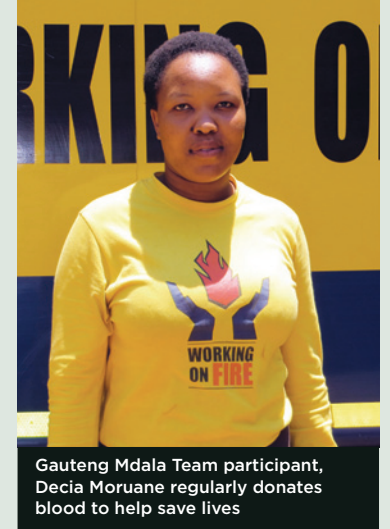
Mdala Team participant's blood type saves lives

A participant from the Working on Fire Gauteng Mdala Team goes beyond the fire line and saves lives by donating blood.

Decia Moruane's blood type, type O negative, is not a scarce blood type, but is the most sought-after type for blood donations because it is the only blood type that can be given to anyone needing a transfusion of red blood cells, regardless of their own blood type. A person like Moruane is known as a universal red cell donor (the universal donor for plasma has type AB blood).

Type O blood is in high demand for emergency blood transfusions to save people undergoing operations or those injured in car accidents and is always in short supply. Doctors asked her to donate after she gave birth to her first child.

"I made a commitment to be a blood donor to save lives. This is altruism at best," she says. "I am glad I am somehow saving someone's life on a daily, monthly and annual basis. That makes me feel grateful and human."



Gauteng Mdala Team participant, Decia Moruane regularly donates blood to help save lives

Moruane, a mother of three, says saving lives and contributing to the well-being of people are her passions. She encourages fellow crew members to donate as well.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

Boskop Team female participants take a stand against GBV



Boskop female participants learn self-defence techniques to protect themselves from GBV

President Cyril Ramaphosa highlighted the significant increase in cases of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and children, even as the country prepared to ease its COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

August is Women's Month and the Working on Fire North West Boskop Team's female firefighters decided to take action to protect themselves against GBV by participating in a self-defence lesson.

"I saw the importance of giving back to my fellow colleagues by sharing

with them my skills of self-defence, as there is a high rate of cases from this GBV pandemic," says Moremi Tsamai, a Boskop Team participant and self-defence instructor.

A participant, Mosele Thekiso, says, "We learned a lot from this training, which taught us to be mentally and physically fit, and we are now able to protect ourselves if we ever find ourselves at the receiving end of GBV."



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer

Strand duo aim to join WOF Food Security Programme



Strand participants, Nyameko Maphithiza and Nathan Tyatyeka, work on their garden

Western Cape Strand Team members are on a mission to join the Working on Fire Food Security Programme and have selected an area at their base to turn into a vegetable garden.

The project, spearheaded by Nyameko Maphithiza and Nathan Tyatyeka, began modestly.

"We began with a small area where we planted spinach and the plan

is to get a bigger space, where we will expand the garden and plant more vegetables," Tyatyeka says.

The duo plans to produce enough vegetables to donate to disadvantaged communities in their area.



Limakatso Khalianyane, WC Provincial Communication Officer

WOF first-aid training gave former participant the edge

Former Western Cape Newlands Base participant, Asekwa Madikiza, says Working On Fire's skills played a major part in her securing greener pastures.

The young woman recently underwent military training where, thanks to the first-aid training she got from WOF, she was the only trainee with a First Aid Level 1-3 certificate.

"Whenever we went into the field, I would be called to assist if first-aid duties were required and I am thankful to WOF for giving me that skill and teaching me team spirit," Madikiza says.

She also found that the fitness routines she regularly did at WOF as a firefighter helped her cope with the tough physical activities at the military camp.

Madikiza joined WOF in February 2019 and left the programme in the middle of 2019 to join SANParks at the Table Mountain National Park. She was recruited to join the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) this year.



Asekwa Madikiza says the WOF first-aid course helped her stand out from her peers during her military training



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

Former KZN firefighter pursues her dream career

Former Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal eDumbe firefighter, Noxolo Nomfundo Shoba, is now doing her Early Childhood Development learnership at Durban University of Technology (DUT).

"Before joining the Working on Fire programme, I had just passed my matric and was an unemployed job-seeker because I could not afford to study further," Shoba says.

Shoba was recruited at the eDumbe base in 2012 and was trained and developed in various skills, including firefighting and first aid.

"One of my favourite moments at WOF was the 10-year celebration I attended in Newcastle, and the annual Yellow Card Training Camps, although I won't miss the 2,4 km run."

WOF changed so many things in Shoba's life and with her stipend, she provided for herself, her children and her family.

"I used to struggle with managing my money at first, but I was helped by the Social Development Practitioner, Hloniphile Ndlovu, and I learned a lot from all the financial literacy workshops she did at the base," says Shoba.

Shoba says, "My goal is to complete my education and become a teacher and I encourage my former colleagues to never take the skills learned from WOF



Noxolo Shoba is doing her Early Childhood Development learnership at Durban University of Technology

for granted because other organisations need experienced workers like them.

"I am enjoying my studies because I am pursuing my dream career as I have, for the longest of times, longed to become a teacher."



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

Suikerborand participant aims for the stars



Kedibone Qhinebe keeps on furthering her education and has put herself through school, obtaining an OHS qualification

Kedibone Qhinebe, a participant from the Working on Fire Gauteng Suikerbosrand Team, says education is the weapon she has used to break the shackles of poverty.

Illustrating that she lives by this belief, she recently completed a course in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) and is now pursuing an Office Management qualification through correspondence, at the Oxford Bridge College.

Qhinebe is the sole breadwinner in her family and hails from Vosloorus in the East Rand. As the country celebrates Women's Month, she says her achievements showcase how the programme helped change her life for the better.

Qhinebe was one of the firefighters deployed to Canada in 2015 to help put out raging wildfires. After her deployment, she was able to register for some computer courses and obtain a driver's licence.

As the SHE Rep for her team and base, Qhinebe became interested in improving her qualifications to pursue a health and safety career.

"I have no one but myself to elevate me and this is why I study, so I can further my career," Qhinebe says.



Parapara Makgahlala, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

From firefighter to Provincial Admin Controller

The Working on Fire programme continues to develop, promote and support women employees. Veronica Sereo was recruited by WOF in August 2010 to the North West Boskop Team.

Her work ethic saw her rise through the ranks to be a SHE Rep and First Aider at base level in her team. Thanks to her hard work and determination, she was appointed at the provincial level as the Admin Assistant.

Sereo was later promoted to her current position as an Admin Controller for the North West provincial office, where she has completed serving 10 years in the programme.

"I thank WOF for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to grow, as today, I am able to put food on the table for my children and raise them as a single parent. I encourage all women out there to not give up in life because I am living proof that anything is possible," Sereo says.



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer



Former firefighter Veronica Sereo is now a Provincial Admin Controller