



# WOFIRE NEWS

Saving Lives • Protecting the Environment • Restoring Dignity

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Working on Fire



Working on Fire - WOF TV News Channel



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Working on Fire participated in various Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) Arbor Month campaigns in September.

The WOF Free State Thaba’Nchu Team assisted the DEFF and the Mangaung Metro Municipality Parks and Recreation department to prepare a site for the event where Deputy Minister Makhotso Sotyú officially launched Arbor Month.

Deputy Minister Sotyú joined WOF Limpopo’s Giyani Team at a two-day Good Green Deeds clean-up campaign with the Vuwani community on 18 September. Minister Sotyú and officials planted trees and donated shoes and sanitary towels to the learners and school desks, sanitisers, refuse bins and garden tools for their schools.

WOF KwaZulu-Natal joined the DEFF, eThekweni Municipality and the Departments of Economic Development and Tourism to commemorate International Coastal Clean-up Day (ICCD) on 19 September.

KZN Provincial management and firefighters joined more than 600 volunteers to clean six sites in the eThekweni Municipality.

## Working on Fire part of the Good Green Deeds clean-up



The WOF Giyani team join DEFF Deputy Minister, Ms Makhotso Sotyú, at the Vuwani Good Green Deeds clean-up campaign



WOF Teams at coastal clean up with DEFF in EtheKwini

The activities in Durban and Vuwani formed part of the government’s Good Green Deeds Programme launched by President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019.

WOF Gauteng’s Cradle of Humankind Team celebrated Arbor Month with the DEFF and the City of Johannesburg at Joubert Park. The team sang the

national anthem and performed the squad drill.

At the request of the City of Johannesburg Parks, WOF pledged to assist with the picking up of litter and the maintenance of the parks.

DEFF Deputy Director-General (Forestry), Morongoa Leseke, warned of deforestation in her address and encouraged the residents to plant more trees, including indigenous and fruit trees.

## Celebrating 17 years of Partnerships for Success



Community members joining in 17-year celebrations in the Eastern Cape



Mpumalanga General Manager, Ovie Sehlabela, is joined by Johan Heine and stakeholders, as he cuts the cake during celebrations

The Working on Fire Programme funded by the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF) celebrated 17 years of existence this September.

Over the years, the programme has grown from its humble beginnings, with just 850 veld and forest firefighters, to a globally renowned programme employing over 5 000

people, encompassing Working on Fire, the High Altitude Team (HAT), the Drought Relief Project (DRP), the Value-Added Industries (VAI) project and, its recent addition, the Forestry Support Team programme.

Celebrations of this milestone were held at provincial level in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, with other events still to be held in the remaining prov-

inces and at the head office in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. All these activities will be held strictly in accordance with COVID-19 regulations. The theme of the celebration is ‘17 Years of Partnerships for Success’. WOF has longstanding partnerships with the DEFF, national, provincial and local government entities, public and private landowners, and Fire Protection Associations.

Among many highlights along WOF’s growth path were the many critical interventions in major disaster fires, such as the Cape Town Table Mountain fire in 2015, the Knysna Fires in 2017 and the George fire in 2018, which show-cased WOF’s sought-after Integrated Fire Management services.

# CELEBRATING 17 YEARS OF SERVICE TO SOUTH AFRICA

Working on Fire assisted in suppressing major fires that ravaged the Western Cape, thus saving lives and protecting the environment.

## Cape Point Fire

The 2014/2015 fire season was one of the severest the province has experienced. In that fire season,



Working on Fire assisted in fighting 344 fires, aerial support flew close to 2 000 hours and fires destroyed over 700 000 ha of vegetation.

In March 2015 the Cape Point fire that burned through Muizenberg spread to Hout Bay and Noordhoek and threatened properties and lives for days until WOF ground and aerial resources assisted in extinguishing it.

A total of 425 WOF participants from the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, North West and Free State formed part of 17 teams that tirelessly fought blazes that destroyed over 1 400 ha of vegetation. Aerial support consisting of three spotter planes, two water-bombers and five choppers dropped thousands of litres of water to extinguish the flames. This fire was devastating.

WOF was quick to respond, assembling close to 500 participants from the North West, Gauteng, Free State and the Eastern Cape and deploying them in 28 teams to assist in fighting the fires in Knysna, Plettenberg Bay and the Tsitsikamma areas. Fifteen aerial resources (seven spotter aircraft, six choppers and two waterbombers) were dispatched to the fires and flew a total of 199 hours to combat the fire that raged for over two weeks.

## George Fire

In October 2018, WOF dispatched over 400 firefighters from 23 bases across the country, along with seven fire trucks and nine buses. A total of 18 aerial support staff flew in from all over the country to assist in combatting the blaze that lasted almost a month. The aerial resources consisted of eight spotter aircraft, seven choppers and two waterbombers. A total of 100 000 ha of vegetation were burned during the George fire.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

## Modimolle Team saved the day

Residents of Modimolle continue to heap praises on the WOF participants at Modimolle Base for their continued dedication in saving lives and protecting the environment.

The participants, working under the Modimolle Fire Protection Association, have built an enviable reputation in the Waterberg District in Limpopo over the past 17 years.

Letter Lehutso, Type 1 Crew Leader for the Modimolle Team, says, "Our team is famous for responding to more fires. However, that has since decreased as we have made a huge impact in the surrounding communities through our fire awareness campaigns and the implementation of Integrated Fire Management Services."

The team's heroic performance on 17 May 2016 is still well remembered. While doing their normal fitness drills and parade, they saw smoke coming from the community close to their base. Upon further investigation, they realised that it was a shack fire and immediately rushed to the scene where they joined a community member who was trying to break into the burning shack.

They were informed that there were two children trapped inside. The team assisted in breaking through the side of the shack and managed to take out the two children, who were unharmed.



Modimolle firefighters partnered with community members to save children trapped in a burning shack

"Our main objective was to save lives and we united with the community members and saved the children from being burned by the fire," says Lehutso. "Unfortunately, we could not save the shack, but we managed to put out the fire and prevent it from spreading to the neighbouring shacks."

After rescuing the children, they rendered first aid to the man who had cut his hand while trying to pull open the corrugated iron from the shack to make an escape route for the trapped children.

The children and the man were also examined by emergency medical services personnel who arrived on the site later.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## Knysna Fires

The worst wildfire experienced in the region, the Knysna fires took place in June 2017, a time when the province is outside the fire season.

## Nkomazi Team awarded for Mpumalanga flood rescue efforts

The Mpumalanga Nkomazi Team joined various stakeholders, including the Disaster Management team from Nkomazi Local Municipality and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), in assisting people in the region after the devastating floods in January 2012.

The floods followed heavy rains that caused rivers and dams to overflow low-lying bridges and cause localised flooding in the Nkomazi, Bushbuckridge, Thabachweu, Mbombela and Umjindi municipalities.

The Nkomazi Team helped to distribute relief aid from the South African Red Cross Society to affected households, in the form of food parcels, blankets and tents.



Jonas Zandamela, Nkomazi Team Crew Leader at the time, joins Disaster Management counterparts who were hailed for their rescue efforts during the Lowveld floods

The team, led by the Crew Leader at that time, Jonas Zandamela, received a certificate of excellence at the Centrum Guardian Awards for their efforts during the floods.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

## Manguzi Team built a home for elderly resident

Working on Fire lives by its objectives of 'Restoring Dignity' and 'Making a Difference' in all the communities where it works.



Gogo Gumede's home before Working on Fire's contribution

Over the past 17 Years, WOF has made a positive impact on old age homes, schools and orphanages, especially during Mandela Month. In July 2017, the KwaZulu-Natal Manguzi Team identified a vulnerable elderly resident as their beneficiary.

Gogo Gumede lived alone in an unstable house, did not receive a social grant and survived by planting vegetables in her garden.

The team decided to build Gogo Gumede a proper home and they donated money for building materials from their stipends, contributing a total of R3 700. They also received support from the WOF Executive Management and the

WOF KZN provincial staff. By November that year, after further donations, the team was not only able to hand over the



Gogo Gumede in her home three years later

new house to Gogo Gumede, but also a bed, curtains, linen, food and a solar stove.

The team's Base Communications Representative, Sanele Nsele, visited Gogo Gumede this year to see how she has been faring over the years.

"Everything I received is still here and my house is safe and secure. Thank you again for all that you've done for me. I no longer dread rainy days. May you continue the good work that you have done for me to others," Gogo Gumede said.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Family saved from fire

Working on Fire Limpopo participants have made an impact in their communities since WOF's inception, saving lives directly and indirectly, both in the line of duty and beyond the fire line.

The Vingerkraal firefighters have raised the WOF flag several times with their remarkable impact in their community and were the talk of the town when they rescued a family trapped by an approaching runaway fire at the Shakama farm.

The team was deployed to protect the farm and the vegetation from being destroyed. With their extensive experience, they worked hard and were able to control and put out the fire. "WOF equipped us with skills and extensive fire suppression training, and with the combination of the years of experience that we have, we conquered the fire without any challenges," says Vingerkraal Type 2 Crew Leader Pontiana Kuzendu.

While busy with mopping-up operations, the team heard a call for help from the other side of the area they were working in and their crew leader dispatched six participants to go and



Vingerkraal firefighters rescued children with their mother from the raging wildfires at Shakama farm

investigate. Upon arrival, they found a mother trapped in a house with her two children. The participants used their skills and rescued them, accompanying them to an identified safety zone.

The mother and children were unharmed by the fire and were declared healthy after being sent to the local medical centre for further check-ups. All thanks to the WOF Vingerkraal Team for their quickfire reaction.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF Eastern Cape partner appreciated assistance in Tsitsikamma fires

Mountain to Ocean (MTO), one of the Working on Fire partners in the Eastern Cape, says the programme did a wonderful job in protecting the environment and saving lives during the Tsitsikamma fires in 2017 and 2018.

Bradley Joemat, head of health and safety at MTO, says they really appreciate the hard work of the young men and women in the WOF Programme.

"We sing praises to the brave women and men from WOF who dedicated their lives to protecting the lives and livelihood of the communities in Tsitsikamma," Joemat says.

"We at MTO value our partnership with WOF and we wish to honour and commend every firefighter who fought the fires that destroyed over 10 000

hectares of commercial plantations in the Eastern Cape during the winter fire season of 2017."

The base manager of the Elliot Team and a member of the Sakhisizwe Fire Protection Association, Hannes Muller, remembers how hard the WOF Elliot Team worked to fight fires in the Elliot area.

Muller says that, before they had a WOF team in that area, they had experienced a lot of fires.

"These young men and women have been working very hard in conducting awareness, doing fire-breaks and constructing fire lines, which help a lot in preventing fires," says Muller.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

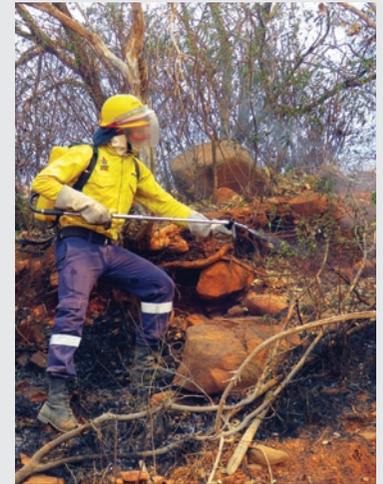


WOF partner appreciates the positive impact of WOF on the environment

## Waterberg fire in Limpopo

The Waterberg District Municipality has kept WOF participants on their toes since they began operating in the province. This, coupled with the rigorous training that WOF invested in its participants, paid off during the Dithabaneng veld fire, where more than 150 firefighters from across the Waterberg District were required to suppress the longest and most challenging fire the province has ever experienced. The multiple wildfires at Dithabaneng began on Sunday, 12 September 2017, and burned for more than 10 days. WOF participants worked tirelessly alongside landowners, municipality workers, farmers and community members to save the environment and properties from being destroyed by the raging fires. The fire raged for days due to the strong winds in the area and the changes in weather but, even though the mountainous terrain was challenging, the WOF teams were ultimately successful, thanks to their superior fitness and the support of WOF aerial resources.

Although several properties were threatened by these wildfires, none of them were lost and only the grazing



Limpopo's Modimolle firefighters partner with landowners in suppressing wildfires

areas of local game animals were destroyed.

WOF has since implemented awareness campaigns and fire prevention measures in the area to assist in preventing and minimising the risk of such wildfires recurring.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF's partnership with Table Mountain National Park still going strong



Phillip Prins during the Table Mountain fire in Cape Town in 2020

Working on Fire's 17-year partnership with SANParks and Table Mountain was its first partnership in the Western Cape to assist with Integrated Fire Management.

The park's fire manager, Phillip Prins, recalls how everyone came on board from the word go when the programme began.

"Table Mountain National Park was one of the first partners to have a team from Working on Fire, which is currently called the Newlands Team, and we have worked together with WOF in building the

base within the park," Prins says. "Since WOF's inception, we have always had a team and we do not want to imagine how it would be without the support of the Working on Fire teams."

Prins is also a chairman and fire protection officer for the Cape Peninsula Fire Protection Association, which he says was also the first FPA in the Western Cape. The FPA currently accommodates three WOF teams.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# Mpumalanga starts celebrating 17 Years of Partnerships for Success

Working on Fire Mpumalanga kicked off its month-long provincial 17 Years of Partnerships for Success celebrations on 4 September.

The celebrations took place under strict COVID-19 regulations at the Lowveld Escarpment Fire Protection Association (LEFPA), one of Mpumalanga's base partners, which hosts the LEFPA, Waterval Boven and Mlambongwane teams.

Partners and stakeholders in attendance were the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries (DEFF), Kishugu, Umpuluzi Fire Protection Association (UFPA), Platorand Fire Protection Association (PAFPA) and the City of Mbombela Fire and Rescue.

Chairman of the WOF Board of Directors, Johan Heine, read a message

of support on behalf of Kishugu, and said it was befitting that Mpumalanga began the celebrations as the WOF Programme was born in the province.

He then highlighted how the WOF programme achieved its great success in the past 17 years through strong working relationships with stakeholders and partners.

Siya Kobese (Mpumalanga DEFF), Thys Prinsloo (PAFPA), Andre Scheepers (LEFPA), Fred Ludick (UFPA) and Petros Mthiyane (City of Mbombela Fire and Rescue) spoke on behalf of their organisations and congratulated WOF Mpumalanga for reaching the milestone.

The LEFPA Team entertained the crowd with a song, poem and the Jerusalem Challenge, and a fire demonstration



Siya Kobese (DEFF), Petros Mthiyane (City of Mbombela Fire and Rescue), Thys Prinsloo (PAFPA), Fred Ludick (UFPA), Johan Heine (Kishugu and WOF Chairperson) and Andre Scheepers (LEFPA) flank Mpumalanga General Manager, Ovie Sehlabela, as he cuts the cake during the province's 17 Years of Partnerships for Success celebrations

from the City of Mbombela Fire and Rescue team concluded proceedings.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

# GOM celebrates 16 years of service at Working on Fire



New GOM, Albert Snyman, at the Heidelberg community fire awareness event

After over 16 years with the Working on Fire Programme, including 14 served as a Regional Manager (RM), Albert Snyman was appointed as the Ground Operational Manager (GOM) in the Southern Cape in September.

He was recruited as a firefighter at the Swellendam Base in May 2004. A year later, he did a crew leader training course and served as a Type 1 and Type 2 Crew Leader in 2005 and 2006 respectively.

"When I decided to join as a firefighter that day, I had only one thing in mind, and

that was the need to make a difference in the lives of others," Snyman says.

In 2006, he was promoted to RM and tasked with opening more bases in his region and also helping with the development of the leaders of his teams. He says WOF built a large part of his work ethic through training and the support of the top management, who believed in him.

Snyman says, "I am proud of my 16 years and four months within this programme and if I could still make a difference at the level of GOM, I definitely will do so. I believe if we do the basics

# Eastern Cape celebrates 17 Years of Partnerships for Success



Working on Fire Eastern Cape celebrates 17 years of successful partnerships with the community of Cata

Working on Fire Eastern Cape hosted its 17 Years of Partnerships for Success celebrations in Cata on 17 September.

The event celebrates the impact WOF has had on the environment, saving lives and providing employment opportunities for the youth.

The programme has earned several awards in its 17-year existence, excelling in reaching its goals and

transforming the lives of its beneficiaries and their families.

WOF Eastern Cape consists of 525 firefighters at 23 bases. These young men and women work hard in implementing Integrated Fire Management Services such as fire suppression, fire awareness and fire detection.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

right, we already have the winning recipe for the programme and beyond."



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# WOF Gauteng partner transfers structural firefighting skills

André Marx, principal of the West Rand District Municipality academy, says it has been his passion to inspire and impart structural firefighting and life-saving skills to WOF participants.

Marx praised WOF participants, saying they have a passion and energy to become the best structural firefighters, and adding that WOF participants' dedication, hunger and aspirations to become structural firefighters are quite amazing. As principal of the academy, he says it is vital to empower young people from his communities with the right sets of skills. "I am aging and transferring skills and knowledge to young people is at the centre of what I do best and love. We wish

to extend it to the rest of the West District Municipality's WOF teams," Marx says.

Marx is proud to have trained 11 young participants from the WOF Wedela and Carletonville teams in the search and rescue courses he offered.

"This is just a small token of my appreciation and I am happy that I was able to contribute to their personal development and growth. If I had my way, I would employ them because they have been very instrumental in ensuring our communities are protected from the veld fires," Marx says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer



Wedela and Carletonville crew members during the Fire Search and Rescue course offered by the West Rand District Municipality



Mpumalanga teams are having a busy fire season, having assisted to suppress a total of 94 fires in August

# Fire season keeps MPU WOF teams busy

The 2020 winter fire season has peaked and the Mpumalanga Working on Fire teams have been busy assisting their Fire Protection Associations (FPAs) in suppressing fires throughout the province.

A total of 94 fires were successfully contained and mopping-up operations conducted in August. Almost all the teams were dispatched to assist their

FPAs and local municipalities in fire suppression operations. In addition to the ground crews, the WOF, Umpuluzi Fire Protection Association and Lowveld Escarpment Fire Protection Association aerial resources provided aerial fire-fighting assistance and flew a total of 193 hours. Besides suppressing fires, WOF teams conducted Integrated Fire Management Services, working with their stakeholders and partners in opera-

tions conducted under strict COVID-19 regulations. In its 17 years of existence, the WOF Programme continues to partner and strengthen relationships with various provincial government departments, municipalities, private and public landowners, in attempts to minimise the dire effects of veld and forest fires.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

# Western Cape gets ready for summer fire season



The Swellendam Team during the construction of a firebreak at Marloth Nature Reserve

Working on Fire Western Cape is approaching another summer fire season and the province is preparing itself by conducting fuel load reduction exercises to protect lives, the environment and properties. These exercises include the construction of firebreaks, block burns and alien plant clearing.

Since August, participants from the Swellendam Team have been hard at work constructing firebreaks through Cape Nature's vegetation around the

Marloth Nature Reserve. Type 1 Crew Leader, Alunathi Msheya, says they have been constructing 15-metre-wide firebreaks, removing heavy fuel loads near the reserve.

"We have constructed multiple firebreaks in and around the nature reserve and we are targeting areas that pose a greater risk and have massive fuel loads," says Msheya.



Limakatso Khalianyane, Western Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# MPU welcomes new Regional Managers



Thobile Mabuza and Eudance Thethe are now Regional Managers in Mpumalanga

Working on Fire's not only restores dignity to disadvantaged youth but takes pride in the fact that many former participants now serve in management positions. WOF Mpumalanga welcomed two more, Thobile Mabuza and Eudance Thethe, as Regional Managers (RMs) in September.

Mabuza and Thethe joins the team of Sam Nkosi, Vincent Lubisi, Busi Nkambule, Welcome Nkosi and Jonas Zandamela, led by Ground Operations Managers Thabiso Mohale and Walter Khoza. The province is now at full capacity to provide quality Integrated Fire Management Services.

Mabuza is a former participant and was a Type 1 Crew Leader at the Belfast Team. She hails from Bergville in KwaZulu-Natal and is a mother of two sons.

Thethe has a long history within the WOF Programme, having been a Type 1 Crew Leader for the Mlambongwane, LEFPA and Nelspruit teams. He completed a year's stint as an instructor at the Kishugu Training Academy before returning to WOF to become an RM.

The WOF Mpumalanga management wishes them all the best in their new roles.



Amanda Mthembu, Mpumalanga Provincial Communication Officer

# Former firefighter secures Ground Operations Manager position

Nkululeko Mlanjeni, a former firefighter from the Stutterheim Team, has risen through the ranks to be appointed a WOF Eastern Cape Ground Operations Manager.

He says that prior to joining the programme, he had struggled to get a job.

Mlanjeni says, "When I heard that WOF was recruiting in Stutterheim, I saw it as an opportunity to turn my life for the best and I went there to try my luck and fortunately got the job.

"I joined the WOF family in 2007 at Stutterheim Base and the journey has not been easy, but with hard work and dedication I am where I am today. In 2008, I got nominated to attend a Type 2 Crew Leader course at the Kishugu Training Academy in Mpumalanga. I was subsequently chosen to do the Type 1 course and was successful."

Mlanjeni says, "I worked very well with my team members, stakeholders as well as the communities around our areas, and it was after this exposure that I was appointed as the Regional Manager in 2014."

Mlanjeni says that working around the province with more than two teams created a conducive environment for professional growth in him.



Working on Fire continues to open up opportunities for hardworking young people

"I saw myself moving from firefighter to Crew Leader to Regional Manager to being an auditor for four provinces in 2015, an achievement on its own," he says.

In March 2018, Mlanjeni was appointed as the Health and Safety Officer for WOF Eastern Cape. His hard work was rewarded when he was selected as the province's second GOM.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

# North West sees more fires due to weather conditions

It has been a very busy winter fire season for Working on Fire North West teams hard at work implementing various Integrated Fire Management Services to mitigate the risk of unwanted fires.

WOF North West continues to partner with landowners and Fire Protection Associations and has attended to 106 wildland fires that burnt a total of 29 024 ha.

"We had more fires this season than the previous year, due to the rainy season that came a little late this year," says Louis Kruger, the Provincial Dispatch Coordinator. "This led to firebreaks not being constructed in time due to the grass still retaining some moisture."



The Working on Fire North West Mamusa Team assists partners in suppressing wildland fire



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer

# WOF KZN joins International Coastal Clean-up campaign

Working on Fire KwaZulu-Natal, the Department of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries, the eThekweni Municipality and the Departments of Economic Development and Tourism worked hand-in-hand during International Coastal Clean-up Day recently.

Many coastal countries mark International Coastal Clean-up Day (ICCD) on the third Saturday of September by partnering with communities and non-profit organisations to clean beaches and areas near the ocean.

This year's ICCD brought together 700 volunteers to clean six sites in the eThekweni Municipality, with the 2020 theme being 'Keep our country clean. Throw trash in the bin'.

The activities in Durban formed part of South Africa's Good Green Deeds Programme launched by President



WOF firefighters and provincial management clean at Blue Lagoon Beach and Durban harbour

# Grocery club formed to mitigate food prices

Nine female participants at the Working on Fire Gauteng De Wildt Base have formed a buying club to mitigate the cost of living and high food prices.

Chairwoman of the club, Tsholofelo Ramfate, says the club is five months old and has a written constitution.

"Members contribute on a monthly basis and provide a list of the food items they need to protect their children from starvation," says Ramfate.

The club pools members' contributions to buy bulk groceries that are distributed to the members to feed their families. Some of the money saved from bulk buying discounts will go towards the education of their children.

"Desperate times call for desperate measures and given what we earn, we are obliged to do something to cushion the skyrocketing cost of living and food prices," says Ramfate. "We are saving a lot and working as a team has helped immensely, instead

# Castello Team joins Food Security Programme

The Working on Fire North West Castello Team, working with Social Development Practitioner Peter Mampuru, has joined the WOF Food Security Programme and started a vegetable garden at their base.

The team prepared their garden at the start of spring this month,

Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019, which seeks to mobilise South Africans to become more environmentally conscious and to promote behavioural change towards stopping littering and illegal dumping.

The reasoning is that every piece of carelessly discarded litter will eventually be transported to our oceans, whether by



under the theme 'Action Against Poverty'. Some of the vegetables will be donated to the disadvantaged communities in their area.

"We are very excited as a team and we will be saving a lot of money

by getting vegetables from our very own garden," says Nceba, the base First Aider.



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer

our rivers, wind, sewers or human action, so any act to reduce litter contributes to reducing ocean pollution.

"Working on Fire prides itself in not only protecting the environment by suppressing unwanted fires but also

encouraging our communities to keep it clean," says KZN Fire Awareness Training Officer, Bongumusa Nyathi.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

# Free State highlights Gender-Based Violence

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) appears to be thriving in our society, and there are many reasons why this has occurred.

Women are disproportionately affected by GBV, with global statistics showing one in three women will be a victim of physical or sexual harm in their lifetime.

In the light of these shocking statistics, Working on Fire teams across the Free State have decided to highlight this societal ill by creating platforms where victims and potential perpetrators can speak out, be educated and receive counselling concerning this problem.

Openly discussing GBV will help to remove the shame and embarrassment victims of GBV live with and the stigma



Members of the Clocolan Team created posters highlighting GBV

that goes along with the abuse. Hopefully, this will assist society to rid itself of this scourge and restore the human right to protection in law, regardless of gender.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer

# Free State bases pay respects to COVID-19 victims

Millions of South Africans have been adversely affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa.

Many have lost their lives to the deadly virus, leaving their loved ones destitute and broken. Our brave and selfless frontline workers have diligently served the nation to lessen the effects of the pandemic.

Working on Fire in the Free State recently observed a 'moment of reflection and unity' at all its bases, for participants to take time to pay their respects to those who have succumbed to COVID-19 and the loved ones they left



Firefighters from the Kroonstad Team observe a moment of reflection and unity

behind, to honour all frontline workers, and to pray for protection and healing for all of humanity.

Participants and management staff recited beautifully written poems, lit candles in remembrance and observed a moment of silence to signify humanity uniting in the midst of this frightening and dark moment in our lifetime.



Wayne Mokhethi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



of the grocery club at De Wildt Base

of struggling as individuals." Ramfate adds that the club helps their dire situation and goes a long way to fight hunger, to which many are already exposed.

She says that although the club was open to everyone joining, only women participants had joined.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

# ABET programme a success in the Free State

Education is a critical part of the development and upliftment of communities in South Africa. As part of its effort to facilitate employment opportunities for its participants, Working on Fire has provided an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) programme.

ABET is a flexible way for adults to obtain formal, nationally recognised qualifications and marketable skills and knowledge to access the job market.

A total of 20 Working on Fire participants from across the Free State

completed the first step in their ABET journey.

“The whole journey was tough but fair. We gave our all and I think this is a great initiative. The exam was difficult but we managed to apply what we learned. I would like to thank the Programme for this training and I hope, moving forward, they will give everyone a chance to complete it,” says Jeffrey Mosala, a participant from the Bloemfontein Base.



Wayne Mokhehi, Free State Provincial Communication Officer



ABET learners from Bloemfontein have completed their ABET programme

## WOF establishes exit plan opportunities for participants



WOF participants enjoy a fun moment with KwaZulu-Natal management

Working on Fire is a stepping stone for unemployed youth in the journey to their future careers. The Programme not only provides practical skills training but offers participants entry into various fields of study, such as SHE Rep, Base Communications Representative, construction, herbicide applicator and First Aider.

Members of the KwaZulu-Natal Umngeni and Karkloof Teams recently received their BCCI and ABET certificates at a graduation ceremony at their base.

The graduates were part of the adult basic education and training (ABET) programme which gives participants who did not complete grade 12 an opportunity to do so.

Through the province’s Fire Awareness Training Officer, Khulani Zulu, the

BCCI had a five-day training workshop with the teams in March on Health, Safety and Environmental Principles, Basic Firefighting Level 2 and First Aid Level 1, for which the participants received their certificates.

“We are grateful to WOF for giving us these opportunities and learning some new skills because they will open doors for us to explore other careers in the future,” says Karkloof participant, Londeka Msomi.

The happy teams were encouraged by the General Manager, Sifiso Kheswa, to never stop learning or reading.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## Gauteng Stock Controller celebrates 15 years of service

Working on Fire Gauteng Provincial Stock Controller, Bokang Malebatso, celebrates a remarkable 15 years of service in the WOF Programme.

She joined the programme in 2005 after recruitment as a participant. Malebatso’s base was initially in her hometown at the Sebokeng fire station, which was moved to Suikerbosrand Nature Reserve.

“I had to leave with the team to the new base because I did not have a job, and even though the stipend was not much, I had no option but to accept the offer because the unemployment rate was already high,” Malebatso says.

As a single mother of four, she had to make ends meet with her stipend.

“That was the beginning of my new life. Today I have a place of my own, and it’s all thanks to the Programme.”

Malebatso became a Stock Controller in 2007.

She urges fellow participants to study further or upskill themselves.



“They need to work hard to change the condition of their plight,” Malebatso says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## The journey of Limpopo’s first female Regional Manager

Born and raised in the village of Ga-Sekororo, outside Tzaneen, Barbra Seokoma always dreamt of being in the leadership of a reputable company such as Working on Fire.

She joined WOF as a firefighter for the Sekororo Base in 2004.

“We were the first team to be recruited by WOF when they opened the first base in Limpopo. I remember running the 2,4 km during the fitness test, and I gave it my all. With the support of my long legs, I sailed through and showed my male counterparts that I meant business,” Seokoma says.

The journey up the corporate ladder was hard for Seokoma, but the skills and development she received at WOF

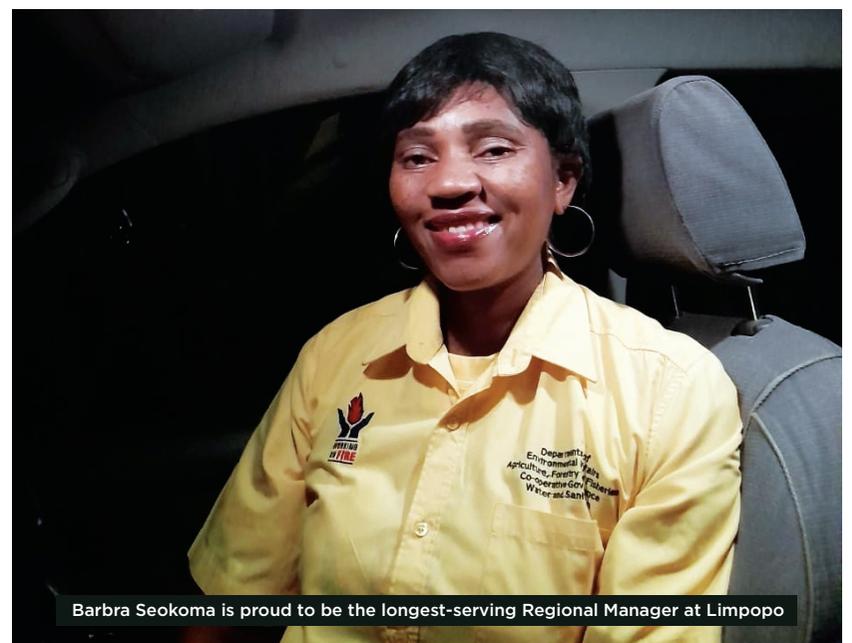
helped her to climb up the ranks. “My big break came when I was promoted to Assistant Regional Manager. In 2010, I was appointed as the first Regional Manager.”

Seokoma is currently the only female Regional Manager in Limpopo, where she manages four bases.

“Looking back over the past 16 years that I have been with WOF, I have no words to express how I feel about the impact this programme has on my life and those of my family. Today, I have a family and I can support my siblings without any challenges,” Seokoma says.



Matema Gwangwa, Limpopo Provincial Communication Officer



Barbra Seokoma is proud to be the longest-serving Regional Manager at Limpopo



Hellen Monyaise, a former WOF participant, is now serving as a field ranger

# Former Pilanesberg participant now a field ranger

WOF's mandate is to restore dignity by creating job opportunities for young women and men from disadvantaged communities.

One such example, former Working on Fire North West Pilanesberg Team participant, Hellen Monyaise, continues to sing the praises of the Programme in

her new career as a field ranger at the Pilanesberg Nature Reserve.

"I am very thankful to WOF for giving me the necessary skills. The discipline and respect they taught me made me who I am today and I have taken those lessons into my new career," Monyaise says. "I am a very fit field ranger

today due to the fitness training I did at WOF that laid the foundation for my everyday fitness in my new job."

Monyaise joined WOF in 2011 and left for greener pastures in 2014.



Maria Letsholo, North West Provincial Communication Officer

## Gauteng participants train as rangers to save wildlife

Three Working on Fire Gauteng participants from the Ditholo and Dinokeng teams are serving as trainee rangers in the Dinokeng Nature Reserve in Hammanskraal.

Mathews Mabotja, Innocent Thobane and Samuel Sethosa say the WOF Programme introduced them to nature conservation. The three were trained as rangers at the Kishugu Training Academy in Nelspruit.

"As participants, we helped the rangers and veterinarians in the reserve with game counting and it made my love for nature conservation grow," Mabotja says.

Noting the passing of World Ranger Day on 31 July, Mabotja says, "It is befitting that we celebrate World Ranger Day because it is vital to raise awareness."

WOF Gauteng General Manager, Stephen Boyes, says the participants



The three trainee rangers at Dinokeng Nature Reserve are grateful to WOF for introducing them to nature conservation

are gaining valuable work experience and will be marketable in future.

"Their advantage is they work in a renowned Big Five nature reserve and I am certain this opportunity will assist in opening doors for them," Boyes says.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer

## WOF 2013 Enterprise candidate business going strong

A former Working on Fire Type 1 Crew Leader, Sandile Mthembu, who joined the WOF Programme in 2007 at the Vryheid Base in KwaZulu-Natal, was one of the first KZN participants to receive the WOF Enterprise Development Training and funding.

After receiving the much-needed funds, Mthembu left the programme and established his own tuck shop and shisa'nyama. Seven years later, his business is going from strength to strength.

"The business is doing well despite the ups and downs," Mthembu says, noting that he had to close the business in 2018 and restart.

He says he has faced various challenges and running a business is not easy because you make a lot of mistakes.

"I made some mistakes on my own but challenges were training me because now I am stronger than before. I implement what I have learned from WOF, which is leadership, persistence, discipline and managing a business," says Mthembu.

Mthembu says his business has expanded to also selling live and slaughtered chickens.



Sandile Mthembu shows off his chicken coop

"Anything is possible if you put your mind into it, so I encourage my brothers and sisters to give themselves time to research about any career or business they want to pursue.

"Although I am still growing, they are more than welcome to come to me for information and guidance. But most importantly, they must associate themselves with people who are in the field they want to pursue," Mthembu says.



Nompilo Zondi, KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Communication Officer

## EC Regional Manager appreciates WOF gender equity

Ongezwa Nonjiji, the Working on Fire Regional Manager of the Rolihlahla region in the Eastern Cape, says unemployment and poverty are the biggest stumbling blocks for many young people in the rural areas of Eastern Cape, and particularly affects women.

Nonjiji says WOF has played a major role in employing women in what is generally said to be a male-dominated industry.

"I passed my grade 12 in 2000 and I did two years of Electrical Engineering at King Sabatha Dalindyebo FET College, but could not find any job after that," says Nonjiji, who grew up in the Mpasane Location near Mthatha.

She says being unemployed was difficult as she had to support her children as well as her family.

"In 2006, when WOF was only three years old, I got an opportunity to join the programme as a firefighter at the Langeni Base. The following year, I successfully completed a Type 2 Crew Leader course and became the crew leader."

She says her passion and commitment to her work persuaded WOF to send her on the Type 1 Crew Leader course in 2008.



Eastern Cape Regional Manager, Ongezwa Nonjiji, praises WOF for playing a major role in employing women

"It's been 14 years since I joined this programme and my life has changed for the better, as I have my own house and my children are getting a better education," says Nonjiji.



Nthabiseng Mokone, Eastern Cape Provincial Communication Officer

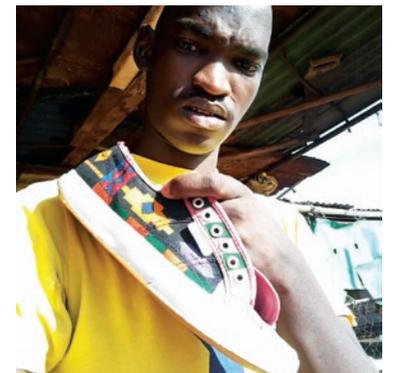
## Heidelberg participant celebrates tradition in style in Heritage Month

Working on Fire Gauteng participant, Motseki Monyamathi, from the Heidelberg team, is an entrepreneur who paints sneakers in traditional Zulu styles to generate extra income.

Monyamathi champions environmental awareness and, in addition to his sneaker business, he makes chairs from worn-out tyres.

"I saw it befitting to make people in the township celebrate Heritage Month in style with my authentic, hand-made products," Monyamathi says. Monyamathi says people are responding very well to his venture and are bringing their sneakers to be painted, which he does after work. During the day, his cousin markets his products.

The Heidelberg participant says he is formally registering his company. Businesses in his area have taken to his idea of using chairs made from recycled tyres and are renting his en-



Heidelberg participant, Motseki Monyamathi, displays one of the sneakers he painted to celebrate Heritage Month

vironmentally friendly chairs, which is helping him to market and popularise his products.



Parapara Makgahlela, Gauteng Provincial Communication Officer