



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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WOF ASSISTS IN BIG FIRES AS SUMMER FIRE SEASON BEGINS

Working on Fire ground and aerial resources were instrumental in the suppression of big fires in the western region of the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape. This was as the two provinces battled runaway fires on the cusp of the Summer Fire Season, which began on 1 December 2022.

Clarkson Church fire

Teams from the western part of the Eastern Cape - Lottering, Blulilies, Humansdorp, Witelsbos, and Kromsriver - together with aerial resources (Two Huey helicopters, two bombers, and a spotter plane) - were busy assisting in the suppression of five fires.

The first fire started on Monday, 28 November in the Clarkson area, around Tsitsikamma, where the Witelsbos and Kromrivier teams worked around the clock

to ensure the fire was suppressed after raging on for four days. WOF was assisting Ocean to Mountain.

Seaview fire

The second fire was the Seaview fire which started on Wednesday, 30 November in Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). The fire was fanned by strong winds and affected residential structures around the area. Gift of the Givers contracted Kishugu Aviation and Working on Fire aerial resources to assist in this fire. The Longmore, St Francis, and Humansdorp teams were on the ground.

The high Fire Danger Index (FDI) in most parts of the Eastern Cape resulted in the other three fires around Kareedouw East and Stinkhoutberg, which are also located in the Tsitsikamma region.

22 fires in Western Cape

Teams in the Western Cape assisted partners in fighting and containing 22 fires in November. This is the highest number recorded in the month before the fire season begins. The fires destroyed more than 50000 hectares of vegetation across the province.

Aerial resources consisted of a Huey Chopper, an Air-Tractor, and a spotter plane that flew for more than 100 hours assisting ground crews in dropping thousands of litres of water to douse the flames.

Fountain Ravine fire

Some of the fires included the Fountain Ravine fire that broke out on the slopes of Camps Bay in Cape Town. The intensity of the fire required the assistance of aerial

resources which were dispatched from George. The fire burned toward the top of Table Mountain and the cable cars were suspended for a few days. The Newlands team assisted with mop-up operations ensuring there were no possibilities of a flare up.

Riethuiskraal fire

The other fire that burned for over a week was the Riethuiskraal fire that swept through Still Bay, following a controlled burn that got out of control when sudden galeforce winds erupted. The fire was quickly brought under control through aerial resources but flared up at night and continued to burn for a couple of days. WOF teams in the Hessequa region were all deployed to assist and the fire was officially contained after eight (8) days.



SEASON'S GREETING FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR

I look back on the year with a great sense of pride, for our resilience, determination, and perseverance, during a time of uncertainty and constraints.

We held on steadfastly to our values of Accountability, Teamwork, Excellence, Adaptability, and Making a Difference as the A-TEAM, despite limited budgets and job insecurity.

Most of you soldiered on and continued to excel, as we have over the past 19 years, while a small number decided to part ways.

During the year, we lost beloved colleagues who passed on. We miss them and will always remember the valuable contributions they made to the organisation.

Our firefighters assisted valued partners and stakeholders in a total of 1 725 fires between January and 5 December 2022, with August being our busiest month in which we attended 474 fires. We have without a doubt saved lives and made a difference.

As is usual at this time of the year, we turn our attention and resources to the Western and Eastern Cape for the Summer Fire Season.

However, more and more, we are attending fires outside of the typical fire season months, a clear indication of the impact of climate change on wildfire activity. Our firefighters assisted in combatting 22 fires in the Western Cape in November, a month before the summer fire season which starts on 1 December.

Climate Change is an important subject for all of us at Working on Fire and we must continue to arm ourselves with knowledge and draw on the expertise of our country's foremost researchers and scientists on the subject.

As temperatures rise and wildland fires increase, Working on Fire will be at the forefront of not only fire suppression, but fire education, fire awareness, fuel load reduction and all other activities which encompass Integrated Fire management.

I have faith that we are well on our way to fulfilling our vision of being a recognized leader in rendering Integrated Fire Management Services to South Africa, the continent and internationally too.

We proudly collaborated with Gift of the Givers in the recent Seaview fires in Gqeberha in the Eastern Cape, supplying our aerial and ground resources in firefighting efforts there.

One of the year's highlights for me was our participation in the International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF) Fire & Climate 2022 Conference in Pasadena, California, USA. My topic, "Poverty Alleviation through Integrated Fire Management: Creating Platform for Global Collaboration in Combating Unwanted Wildland Fires" attracted much interest from delegates and my attendance broadened the existing international network that Working on Fire has developed over the past 19 years.

On the local front, we recently participated in and attended the 13th Fire Management Symposium hosted by the School of Natural Resources Management at the Nelson Mandela University's George campus. While I addressed delegates on "Wildland fires and climate change, emerging trends, challenges, and imperatives," in his presentation, our Operations Manager Piet Van Der Merwe focused on the importance of practising Integrated Fire Management.

Another highlight has been our Ground Operations management obtaining international accreditation from the



Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre in the Principles of Fire Behaviour.

The future of Working on Fire is promising. We received a pre-award letter from the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE), accepting our tender submission in response to the bid to implement the Working on Fire Programme for the next five years. We are currently in negotiations with the Department regarding the terms of the agreement of the contract. We look forward to concluding that process successfully so that we may continue with our good work.

I am especially privileged for the opportunity for Working on Fire to provide much-needed employment to young people in South Africa, and to play an instrumental role in their journeys towards full-time employment. Our success as a programme is only achievable with the support of our firefighters, management, stakeholders and partners. I thank you all.

I wish you all and your families the best over the festive period. Be safe.

Happy Christmas to all celebrating and wishing you all good health, joy, peace and prosperity in the New Year.

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT MEGA FIRE EVENT - CLIMATE CHANGE AND GLOBAL WARMING, THE TWIN THREATS



South Africa will not escape the “Mega fire events” experienced recently in Europe, North America, and Australia. The impact of climate change and global warming will become more intense as temperatures continue to rise. With intermittent droughts expected, wildfires will become more prevalent over the next ten years, and South Africa must prepare itself to mitigate and prepare for these fire risks.

This overwhelming message emanated from the 13th Fire Management Symposium hosted by the School of Natural Resources Management at the Nelson Mandela University's George campus from 23 to 25 November.

Natural resource managers, engineers, fire managers, scientists, and local fire specialists from the CSIR, Working on Fire, SANParks, Montigny Investments, Sappi, Mondi, and Cape Nature gathered at the symposium. They made telling presentations of their experiences and insights with one message - everyone involved in wildfire management needed to work together to prepare and plan for a better-coordinated wildfire management response through an integrated approach.



Working on Fire Managing Director, Trevor Abrahams spoke on the first day on the topic centred on: “Woodland fires and climate change, emerging trends, challenges, and imperatives.

Abrahams sounded a clear warning that the expected rise in global temperatures will increase the intensity and frequency of wildland fires. “The change of fire seasonality in South Africa has already resulted in wildfires outside the fire season, and wildfires are getting more compacted and more frequent.

Extreme weather events characterised by flooding, droughts, and runaway wildland fires are experienced with increasing regularity. Of concern is the projections in the developing world, which is likely to experience the brunt of these negative impacts of climate change,” said Abrahams.

“South Africa has not and will not be spared and the recent unprecedented flooding experienced in KwaZulu-Natal has been widely attributed, in part, to it.

The 5 000 firefighters in the government-funded Working on Fire Programme have been frequently dispatched to “major fires” and these incidents take place outside the traditional seasonal boundaries for fires in South Africa's Winter versus Summer “fire seasons.”

These developments are a clarion call for a concerted approach to mitigating this negative impact of climate change and should include specific provisions for developing mitigation strategies and initiatives for addressing such.

“This should include more effective disaster management response, community preparedness, community education, and communication. The constraints on the fiscus would also point to a Public-Private-Partnership framework because the current WOF Programme's aviation capacity is evidence of private sector investment and knowledge of this specialised area of wildland fire management.



To focus primarily on the fire suppression capacity - as critical as is in combating wildland fires - would fail to address the comprehensive response the UNEP calls for and which WOF has practiced through its Integrated Fire Management approach to wildland fire management,” said Abrahams. He also spoke about the need to ensure effective community awareness and education programmes such as the WOF Fire Awareness programme, which reached 1,7 Million learners, and 57 000 teachers from April 2011 to Feb 2022.

Working on Fire has grown from 850 participants in 2003 to 5300 in 2022. It is not enough to respond to the challenges of climate change and global warming because more intense wildland fires are anticipated. Working on Fire has determined that South Africa needs some 17,000 firefighters to effectively address the wildland fire threat across all the jurisdictions within South Africa.”



Piet van Der Merwe, WOF Operations Manager, presented on the third day and appealed to all stakeholders involved to develop and implement an integrated approach, in line with the WOF's successful model, of practicing Integrated Fire Management. He emphasised this approach would include five

key elements, Risk Reduction, Risk Readiness, Risk Response, Risk Recovery, and Risk Research.

“Through education and awareness, we need to educate communities, schools, and tribal authorities, and have community involvement. Landowners, through their respective Fire Protection Associations, must ensure fire breaks and fuel load reduction measures are implemented. The use of technology in early detection will become critical and an Incident Command System must be implemented during major fire disasters,” van der Merve said.

He also stated the important convergence that needs to take place between wildfire managers and researchers because research will become a key vehicle for everyone to understand current and future wildfire risks. “Wildfire management is a science and Integrated Fire Management should have all the elements needed to embrace a scientific approach. Research is a key element of Integrated Fire Management.”

Internationally renowned fire scientist, Professor Pete Fule (School of Forestry - Northern Arizona University) also stated wildfires will, unfortunately, continue to increase and everyone involved in wildfire management, including scientists, will need to collaborate to respond to this global threat.

Greg Forsyth, a former fire specialist researcher at the CSIR, spoke about the need to improve land usage management within the context of urbanisation as a key wildfire risk mitigation factor. “Poor urban planning around the Wildland -Urban interface and not properly assessing the risks inherent in where people choose or are allowed to live, often leads to disastrous fires. This was witnessed in Knysna in June 2017.”

A NOD FOR CONTRIBUTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Community Fire Awareness Officer, Rayganah Rhoda, received recognition as a valued contributor to Western Cape's environmental education.

Rhoda received a certificate due to the contribution she made to fire awareness topics and other environmental topics covered in the forum's curriculum.

“I was very surprised that my hard work was recognised. This means a lot,” she said. Rhoda is an active member of the Western

Cape Environmental Education Forum and is dedicated to strengthening stakeholder relations and conceptualising resources, training, and creating content within the forum.

The forum was established in 2014 and serves to share resources, and assist with implementing environmental education in the curriculum and workshops on various topics. Stakeholders from the environmental education sector meet quarterly, and these include the Department of Education.



Rayganah Rhoda receives a certificate from the forum's Ron Makunya and Khuthala Swanepoel.

BE CAUTIOUS ON THE ROAD

Eastern Cape Transport Officer, Xolile Gulwa, says drivers play a major role in the Working on Fire Programme because they transport ground crews to conduct Integrated Fire Management Services. The former participant wishes all the province's drivers a safe summer fire season.

"Being a driver is not easy because the lives of passengers are in your hands. It needs one to be passionate, cautious, sober-minded, and positive all the time," explained Gulwa.

He added that drivers who operate company vehicles are the face of the company so they must always be dedicated, punctual, and obey the rules of the road at all times.

"Fire season is unpredictable and you must expect the unexpected. Drivers need to ensure their vehicles are in good working condition."

Gulwa is a former participant for the Ngcobo team and was promoted to driver before taking the position of Transport Officer.



Xolile Gulwa warns drivers to be careful this fire season.

KZN SEASON OFFICIALLY ENDS



Bomber demonstrating aerial suppression at KZN FPA Shafton Dispatch Centre.

KwaZulu-Natal concluded the winter fire season and reported no fatalities on the fire line. Acting General Manager, Phumza Dyantyi, said: "We appreciate the dedication and discipline our participants displayed. We credit the success of the season to the support from our base partners and the collaborative partnership with the Fire Protection Associations."

Teams were dispatched to a total of 200 fires, burning 9 204.91 hectares, with 17,82 hours flown by aerial resources.

KwaZulu-Natal Umbrella Fire Protection Association General Manager and Fire Protection Officer, Simon Thomas, said: "The season was calmer because there were few windy days, and fire behaviour was not as extreme compared to previous years."

Thomas says the highlights of the season were the quick response to fires and the

relatively low losses to property. "No lives were lost during the season. Low lights were the few cases of malicious damage to the property."

Provincial FPA's attended to a total of 1147 timber fires and 672 grass fires with four fires reported to the South African Police Services for arson.

Working on Fire has three running dispatch centres during the fire season, mainly in Howick, Vryheid, and Shafton to ensure efficient dispatching of resources to fires throughout the province.

"In preparing for the 2023 fire season, I encourage landowners and communities to join their local FPAs. More fire awareness campaigns should be done both in all communities and schools," concluded Thomas.

REDUCING THE RISK OF WILDFIRES



The Leseding team protecting the environment through fuel load reduction.

Climate change is a global concern that influences continuous changes and unusual weather patterns. Limpopo has been covered with fuel after continuous rainfall and the Leseding team was hard at work mitigating the risk of unwanted fires through fuel load reduction - block burning.

Vegetation can be reduced using different measures. Apart from grazing, it can be done through Integrated Fire Management Systems - Block Burning - and this also controls the population of Alien Invasive

Plants. The two-day project took place at a farm near Vaalwater. On the day of arrival, the team prepared overnight accommodation and held a planning session.

"The project was successful because we worked together as a team and did a great job. This was not only about burning, but also lending a helping hand in reducing the risk of unwanted fires. We do this to protect the environment and to save lives," said Jones Masalesa, crew leader Type 2.

HAT TEAMS SET UP CAMP TO CLEAR ALIEN INVASIVE PLANTS



HAT participants clearing invasive species above Helshoogte.

High Altitude Team members from Franschhoek and Stellenbosch have been working on a 15-day project above Helshoogte, near Stellenbosch.

The team of 16 set up camp to ensure they save time from hiking to the site because it is quite a stretch.

The team's Assistant Regional Manager, Thulani Khumalo said the team arrived on-site on 14 November 14.

"The most common alien invasive species in this area are pine adults and seedlings, as well as hakea. The team will likely spend less than the stipulated time if they are able to cover the targeted areas in time," said Khumalo.

The High Altitude Team Project clears alien invasive plants mostly near water because they are notorious for consuming large amounts of water.

SENIOR CITIZENS RECEIVE FIRE SAFETY TIPS

The Warden team in Free State visited the Siyazubusa Luncheon Club, an old age school in their community, where they educated the elderly about the “Inside the house safety and personal safety” topics.

“We also taught them the safe way of using a candle in their homes and encouraged them to keep matches in a safe place and away from children,” said Dieketseng Maduna, the crew leader Type I.

The team saw it beneficial to educate the senior citizens to ensure they take precautions in their houses and to eliminate anything that poses a hazard that might cause an unwanted fire.

The message was welcomed by the elderly who asked the team to visit again with more educational topics they can share with their grandchildren at home.



The Warden team at the Siyazubusa Luncheon Club.

PREPARING TO HOST TOURISTS

In preparation for hosting visitors during the festive season, the Suikerbosrand team reduced the manual fuel load at the nature reserve.

The team removed tall grass which was cumbersome to burn during the fire season. This is to ensure the visitors who come to the nature reserve have a clean and friendly place.

Base Communication Representative for the team, Njabulo Nzimande, said the fire season is over but some sides are covered by tall grass. The team did not want to damage the signboards and poles during the season, by doing fire breaks, and the grass did not pose a fire threat. “We are mindful of the fact there will be visitors in December. Therefore, the place needs to be clean and habitable,” explained Nzimande.

Since the reserve is a tourist attraction, the area is visited by many people to unwind with friends and families. The guests, he said, will love the well-maintained reserve.



The participants from the Suikerbosrand team clear fuel load at the reserve.

WATER AND SANITATION STAFF ASSISTED WITH FIRE SAFETY



Community Fire Awareness Officer, Estella Cossa, engages with staff members of the Department of Water and Sanitation in Mbombela.

The Mpumalanga Fire Awareness team continues its relationship with the Department of Water and Sanitation and once again honoured an invitation to conduct a Fire Safety Workshop for its staff in Mbombela, Mpumalanga.

Community Fire Awareness Officer, Estella Cossa, delivered an interactive workshop on Fire Safety education. She taught the staff the various causes of fire, personal safety, fires in the home and workplace, the

evacuation procedure, and the importance of an assembly point. The Nelspruit team accompanied the Fire Awareness Officers and performed a fire drill.

Working on Fire Mpumalanga is a familiar face at the DWS series of fire safety workshops which are usually held in the latter part of the year, and is always invited to teach DWS staff members about fire safety.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION



Community Fire Awareness Officer, Makhosi Dladla, presenting to the community of Mkhambathini Municipality.

KwaZulu-BNatal celebrated the International Day of Disaster Reduction (IDDR) with the uMgungundlovu District Disaster Management and the Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and Mkhambathini Local Municipalities.

IDDR acknowledges the progress made towards preventing and reducing disaster risk and loss of lives, livelihoods, economies, and basic infrastructure. This is in line with the international agreement for reducing global disaster risk and losses.

Community Fire Awareness Officer, Makhosi Dladla, said: “IDDR is an information-sharing day on fire tips, how to protect homes and properties against wildfires and how to play a role in reducing unwanted fires. This day is initiated by a community that has received FireSafe workshops or presentations.”

Through these initiatives, WOF aims to promote community participation in fire management and prevention, assist communities in fire risk identification and mitigation, and encourage local partnerships for improved decision-making communities.

“A senior citizen’s household was identified during this day and Gogo Ngubane - who lives with her two great-grandchildren - is too frail to conduct a line construction around her home. So the Albert Falls team, together with municipal volunteers conducted a fuel load reduction activity and the Mkhambathi Local Municipality donated blankets and other household items,” said Dladla.

WOF is also set to conduct fuel load reduction in the Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma Municipality and at the Khazimula Children’s Project, in honouring IDDR.

A NEW JOURNEY AWAITS FOR NEW RECRUITS

It was song, drums, traditional dancing and big smiles during a pass-out parade at the Kishugu Training Academy, Nelspruit, when another crop of New Recruits graduated on Friday, 25 November. Working on Fire continues to provide job opportunities to the marginalised and a total of 94 previously unemployed youths are now specialised veld and forest firefighters.

They came from KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, Limpopo, Western Cape and Mpumalanga. Some will top up the existing WOF teams, while others will join teams in the Forestry Support Programme (FSP). They went through a New Recruit 24-day training course facilitated by Kishugu Training Academy instructors, who are former firefighters.

They were tested mentally and physically in theoretical and practical exercises and through the WOF values of Accountability, Teamwork, Excellence, and Adaptability, they triumphed and join the more than 5 000 firefighters in this award-winning Programme. The best students received accolades for outperforming their peers and a recently-introduced award of the best recruit - voted by the peers - was given out.

In his keynote address during the graduation ceremony, Bongani Nhlabathi (Mpumalanga Assistant General Manager),

congratulated the graduates on their achievements. A former firefighter himself, Nhlabathi shared how hard work, self-discipline, and determination will determine their journey within the Programme. "I was where you are standing today. I know the emotions you all are feeling. I know the journey ahead of you."

Nhlabathi thanked Kishugu Training Academy for their continuous great work in training and guiding the recruits and wished them well as their career begins. "Your name will be called. You must respond to the call and walk tall. It is time to go out into the world and make a difference in saving lives and protecting the environment."

Former firefighter and Kishugu Training Campus Manager, Thando Sambokwe, shared the same sentiments. He assured all in attendance this skilled group will go out and successfully conduct integrated fire management services. "They got their yellow cards and not only will they make a difference in the world but in their communities as well."

The event was also graced by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment's Collen Martheze (Deputy Director: Training and Development), Aderi Reyneke (Operations: National Admin and Logistics), Hermie van der Berg (FSP: Operations Manager), and Kishugu staff members.



FORMER PARTICIPANT GAINS MORE SKILLS

Free State's Christina Kalane is a former participant who believes that hard work combined with vision and passion are the tools for a successful life.

Kalane joined WOF in 2016 at the Kroonstad base. She was given an opportunity to do practicals in Business Management as a Finance intern at the provincial office from 2017 until 2018.

She said the support she got from WOF made her career journey a smooth one. "After getting a feel of the office environment, I knew this is where I belong. I told myself I would work hard to ensure I impress with my skills and commitments," said Kalane.

That propelled her to her current position as

a Human Resource Assistant at the provincial office. Her big break came in 2020 and was also given an opportunity to study a short course in Human Resources through the University of Cape Town.

"I thank WOF for making my dream come true. With the little I get, I am able to make a difference in my life. My biggest motivation is my beautiful baby girl and she is the reason I am able to achieve everything I set my eyes on."

Kalane is currently registered with the Motheo FET College where she is enrolled in a Human Resources Management course. She believes everything is possible if one puts one's mind to it.



Christina Kalane is chasing her dream in Human Capital Management.

VETERAN STORE PERSON'S GARDEN HELPS TEAM

South Africa celebrated National Disability Rights Awareness Month from 3 November to 3 December and Mpumalanga celebrates Robert Magagula, the Nelspruit base store person. Magagula is celebrating 16 years of service within the Working on Fire Programme and his resourcefulness is benefiting his team in these difficult economic times.

With the help of his crew leader, Sithembiso Mhlanga, the veteran store person began a vegetable garden at the base and it had its first harvest. Magagula shared how it was his love for gardening and spirit of sharing that led to this initiative. "I developed it at a young age and used to plant flowers and I realised I may have a green thumb."

Magagula bought seedlings of onion and spinach early this year, in May, and decided to begin a vegetable garden. He

worked the soil with Mhlanga and planted the seeds. The garden bore fruit in late October and he shared some of the produce with his team members and took the rest for himself.

"It took me five months of patience, nurturing, and gentle care and I am extremely proud of myself. The onions look so good. It is fresh, organic, and definitely a healthy produce."

Magagula joins the many teams within WOF who have adopted a garden or have one at the base. He was recruited on 15 September 2006 for WOF's oldest base, Nelspruit, and is a person living with a disability. Mpumalanga salutes him for his years of service and this great initiative.

"It has been a long journey with many highlights. I hope to expand this garden so I can grow a variety of vegetables."



Nelspruit base store person, Robert Magagula's garden benefits his team.

TEAMS ENJOY HARVEST

KwaZulu-Natal teams with vegetable gardens at their base are enjoying the rewards because they are harvesting their produce. The teams of uMzimkhulu, Winterton, and KwaGubeshe teams are sharing the vegetables among themselves, which will assist during the festive period.

The food security initiative was implemented to assist participants, to lessen the financial burden of monthly groceries, and to also donate to identified disadvantaged households in their communities.

Winterton crew leader Type I, Thulasizwe Gasa, said: "We take turns in maintaining our

garden because it assists us during the month when we need to buy vegetables for our families."

The garden consists of spinach, cabbage, spring onion, and lettuce. They recently introduced strawberries.

Employee Assistant Practitioner, Sthembile Dubazana, said: "The aim of the food gardens is to ensure safe, nutritional, and organic food is made accessible to our participants. It also empowers them because we arm them with skills and resources to establish and maintain these gardens."



KwaZulu-Natal teams enjoying their harvest.

FOOD SECURITY PROGRAMME ASSISTS LOULA FOURIE LEARNERS



North West management are making a difference to the learners of Loula Fourie Primary School.

North West management started a vegetable garden for the Loula Fourie Primary School to make a difference to their learners.

The team prepared the area, removed weeds, and prepared the soil for the various seeds, that included spinach, lettuce, beetroot, carrots, and tomatoes.

"I am thankful to WOF for creating this garden because it is really helping us to

provide sustainable and healthy lunches to our learners during school hours. The school has also gone the extra mile to pack lunch boxes for learners to take home after writing their exams," said Poppy Maseko, the school principal.

Maseko said the school is a farm school and most of their learners are from disadvantaged families so the garden will go a long way.

PREVENTION IS THE ONLY CURE

HIV and your friend Aids
While working together you have terrorised my soul
You made me an outcast in the society
You brought segregation to my life
Those who claim to love me left me

My life became dry like the Sahara desert
My life is flooded with problems
Like water flowing from the Atlantic to the Indian Oceans

I wish whoever you are, wherever you are
If you are HIV positive
Know there is still life and life in plenty
It is not the end of the world
You can do so much more
I wish you know you can support yourself and anybody
Because it is you who need you more than anyone else

Aids is a disease we now face affecting the human race
Whether black or white do not be misled
Aids is a fact, have a test done for HIV
Do not say no, not me
It is best to protect each other against this factor
We lost young souls to this disease
It is enough

Use protection for your safety
HIV is not a death sentence
Take your medication
Together we can beat this



Sello Mapoulo, chainsaw operator for the Aganang base in Limpopo.

GIVING HOPE TO THE MARGINALISED YOUTH

“Unemployment is one of the biggest stumbling blocks to success for many young people in the rural areas of Eastern Cape and most of them end up using drugs,” said Anele Blom, a new recruit for the Molteno base.

Blom said everything changed and his efforts paid off when he was selected as a recruit. The wildland firefighter had been knocking on doors for opportunities with no success which caused unwanted stress and pressure.

He says the Programme is playing a major role in his life and he can now support his family and change his life for the best. He advises every young person to be positive and never give up. “Never give yourself to drugs just because you do not have a job.”

Working on Fire prides itself on changing the lives of young people, restoring dignity, and alleviating poverty.



New recruit, Anele Blom, thanks the Programme for adding value to his life.

EDUCATION IS THE KEY



Njabulo Nzimande is writing his matric exams.

Base Communication Representative for the Suikerbosrand team, Njabulo Nzimande's early decision to enroll in grade 12 was inspired by his belief that education is the key to success.

The BCR wrote his final exams in six subjects. “I noticed there is no tomorrow without education. I will not be held back by a lack of matric qualification because that is my key to opportunities and bettering my life,” he said.

“I spent sleepless nights studying and the rewards will be worth it. This journey meant less of a social life and all about my

books. I was studying on my own and I believe this will benefit me in the long run.”

Nzimande was studying while on standby during the fire season and is grateful that crew leaders have been very supportive. He said he needs a matric certificate to start applying for various positions in the formal sector.

Regional Manager, Sipho Dhladhla, said others should take inspiration from Nzimande and consider enrolling to complete their matric certificate. “I wish him well,” Dhladhla said.

ASPIRANT ENTREPRENEUR



Andries Thukwane is fired up by the spirit of entrepreneurship.

A New Recruit at the Vaal Marina base, Andries Thukwane, is determined and fired up by the spirit of entrepreneurship. He regards himself as a professional handyman and is skilled in painting. He is also licenced to operate a Tractor Loader Backhoe, and Excavator and is a trained security officer.

A young Thukwane has been doing all these functions for the past four years with his ex-employer. Due to COVID-19, the company he was working for had to close. “I am grateful for the skills I gained. My erstwhile employer invested a lot of money in training me and I will use this current opportunity

to explore positively,” said Thukwane.

His mission is to register his company with the stipends he earns in the Working on Fire Programme. “I am raising money to buy some of the equipment used for tiling and painting. I have excellent skills in these functions. I have worked in many homes in the Midvaal area.”

Thukwane said the work opportunity offered by WOF gave him a lifeline to move forward and provide for his family because he is the sole breadwinner at home.

JOINING HUMAN CAPITAL MANAGEMENT

Jeremia Sehwana is a former participant who has climbed the ranks and now occupies the position of Human Resource Administrator.

Sehwana completed his National Diploma in Marketing Management through MSC Business College and tried to navigate the job market in different formal sectors without any luck. He joined WOF in 2016 and was later appointed Base Communication Representative (BCR) for his base.

“I have always been a dedicated individual and always strived to set a perfect example and become a role model in my community. I had to take whatever opportunity that comes my way,” he said.

Before joining the Programme Sehwana volunteered at Bjatladi Youth Development Centre to get exposure and experience. He was responsible for the development of the youth in the community through activities relating to sports, arts, and culture.

His venture into management began in February 2021 when he served as a receptionist at the WOF Limpopo office. This was followed by a promotion to Human Resource Admin in August 2022.

Sehwana believes wherever one works, one needs to work hard and learn continuously. “It is always possible to break through the glass ceiling, only if you are stronger than the glass.”



Jeremia Sehwana is excited to become a Human Resource Admin.

CREW LEADER JOINS SAPS

Former participant for the Sarah Baartman team, Gcobisa Sardine, has exited the Working on Fire Programme to join the South African Police Service (SAPS) as a Police Officer.

Sardine was recruited in 2017 and completed HIV Awareness, veld and forest firefighting, and first aid level 1 and 2 training courses offered by the Programme.

Her proudest moments came when she was selected for training for the Crew leader Type 2 course and led her team in major

Tsitsikamma Fires.

She joined SAPS in 2019 and went through a series of fitness training. Her formal training started on 22 September this year and she had to leave WOF.

“Getting this job made me very happy and I want to thank WOF for being a huge stepping stone,” she says. Sardine encourages other participants to work hard, be patient, and set goals for themselves.



Eastern Cape Alumni, Gcobisa Sardine.

SUCCESS COMES THROUGH HARD WORK



Alpheous Ndou thanks Working on Fire for restoring his dignity.

Former participant, Alpheous Ndou for the Makhado base left the Working on Fire Programme for permanent employment at the Mapungubwe SANParks. He is working as a general worker.

Ndou joined the Mapungubwe team in 2010 after he had been navigating the employment sector with no success. He was later transferred to the Sekororo team, and subsequently the Makhado team while serving in the same position.

The former crew leader believes an idle person can never achieve success and that

anything is possible with hard work. This mantra saw him gain a promotion to crew leader Type 2 in 2012 and Type 1 in 2013.

“I am grateful to Working on Fire for granting me an opportunity to acquire working experience. I still believe the Programme paves a way for youth to reach their goals. The stipend received can make a huge difference if used wisely.”

Before joining WOF, Ndou obtained tertiary qualifications - Electrical Engineering NQF Level 2 and a Diploma in End-User Computer through Nzhelele Business Technologies.

PURSuing MY DREAM



Joe Morolong participant, Ketshepileone Galobewe is living her dream as a make-up artist.

Ketshepileone Galobewe is a former participant for the Joe Morolong team and is the owner of a successful beauty and make-up business called Mega's Beauty & Glam, located in Mothibistad, North West.

Galobewe shared how she has been saving some of her stipend to buy make-up equipment and products to start her business. She also attended a make-up course in August.

She said her passion was always to have a beauty and spa business which will assist her in earning an extra income in these difficult economic times. “The plan is to get a proper place to operate my business because I am currently attending to my clients in my home.”

The make-up artist was recruited in 2014 and encourages all women to pursue their dreams and follow their vision to reach their mission.

SKILLED FORMER FIREFIGHTER LANDS A FIELD RANGER ROLE



Marcellino Cedras credits WOF for his conservation career.

Working on Fire was indeed a stepping stone to a nature conservation career for a former participant for the Mamre team in the Western Cape.

Marcellino Cedras is now employed by Quemec Africa as a field ranger. The company does nature conservation compliance serving various nature reserves.

“I got this job because of my experience at Working on Fire. The company was specifically looking for WOF firefighters

because of our firefighting and alien plants clearing,” he said.

Cedras was recruited in 2017 and when he exited the Programme two years ago, he was a Base Communication Representative (BCR).

“I thank Working on Fire for giving me skills that helped me land this job. The Programme turned me into the man I am today and I will forever be grateful.”