

NELSON MANDELA'S LEGACY LIVES ON

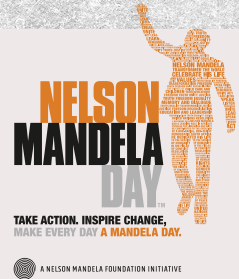
As we celebrate Mandela Month under the theme: **"It's still in our hands to combat poverty and inequity"**, we celebrate the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture for being the epitome of this year's theme by continuously making a difference in South Africa and beyond.

Environment

South Africa

Food Security

Youth



Poverty
Aliviation

IFMS



In this publication, read how we are doing our part in breaking the cycle of poverty and unemployment, whilst saving lives and protecting the environment through our globally renowned Integrated Fire Management Solutions and Food Security Project.



#ITISINYOURHANDS

#ITISINYOURHANDS



forestry, fisheries
& the environment

Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



EXPANDED PUBLIC WORKS PROGRAMME

GROWING THROUGH ASHES: WILDLAND FIRES AND THE FUTURE OF FOOD SECURITY



In recent years, South Africa has been grappling with an alarming increase in wildfires, posing a severe threat to its agricultural sector and food security. Exasperated by climate change, these wildfires have increased in intensity and frequency and spread to areas not previously threatened by wildland fires. The scale of devastation has prompted urgent calls for assistance and highlighted the vulnerabilities inherent in the country's agricultural landscape.

According to reports from Agri SA Disaster Relief Foundation, the economic toll of these wildfires surpassed over a R1 billion in the 2023 Winter Fire Season. This staggering figure encompasses livestock, crops, and infrastructure losses vital for agricultural operations. Farmers, particularly in the Western and Eastern Cape provinces, have borne the brunt of these losses, with many facing complete devastation of their livelihoods.

The statistics paint a grim picture: according to AgriSA an estimated 1,2 million hectares of farmland had been affected by the fires, impacting more than 700 farmers across the country. Not to mention the heartbreaking reality of various livestock such as sheep, cattle and wildlife that were either burnt to death or had to be euthanised. These figures underscore not only the immediate economic impact but also the long-term repercussions for food security. With crops destroyed and livestock lost, local and regional food supplies are under threat, potentially leading to shortages and **increased food prices**.

"These devastating fires have hit the agricultural sector at a time when farmers already face immense challenges, including load shedding, deteriorating infrastructure, rising labour and input costs, and threats to their rural safety. As a result of all these challenges, farmers are currently liable for an estimated R205 billion in debt – a high burden that renders those affected by the fires unable to absorb this latest tragedy. For our nation's food security, this should concern us all," said Agri SA chief executive officer, Christo van der Rhee, in a statement in 2023.



Proaction and collaboration are key to mitigating the impact

In the face of such adversity, the agricultural community has rallied, but challenges remain daunting. Small-scale farmers, who often lack insurance and resources to recover from such disasters, are particularly vulnerable. The need for immediate humanitarian assistance, including feed and veterinary support for surviving livestock, is critical to preventing further losses and restoring agricultural productivity. However, sustained support will be crucial in ensuring the long-term recovery and resilience of the agricultural sector.



WOF-Kishugu Joint Venture does its part

Beyond the immediate crisis response, experts stress the importance of proactive measures to mitigate future risks. The Working on Fire - Kishugu Joint Venture continues to advocate in communities on the importance of robust fire management strategies and implements educational initiatives such as fire awareness programmes. By investing in wildland firefighting training, early detection systems, prescribed burns, and sustainable land management practices, South Africa can build resilience against future wildfires and protect its precious agricultural resources.

The wildfires have also brought to the forefront broader environmental concerns, including the impact on biodiversity and ecosystems. The loss of natural habitats and vegetation not only threatens wildlife but also exacerbates soil erosion and water scarcity, further complicating recovery efforts.

Collaboration among stakeholders is essential and the WOF-Kishugu JV is proud to partner with organisations across the country to provide the resources, expertise, and skills to tackle this ever-growing threat.



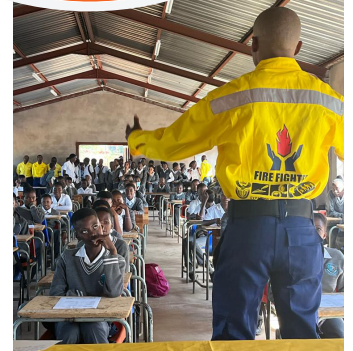
INTEGRATED FIRE MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture (WOF-Kishugu JV) fundamentally gives back to the community through its much sought-after Integrated Fire Management Solutions (IFMS). Our approach to managing fire combines prevention, preparedness, response, research, recovery, and the controlled use of fire (prescribed burning). We aim to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires on people, property, and the environment while maximizing the ecological benefits of fire. This involves public education, training of our firefighting personnel, community involvement, and effective collaboration with other firefighting agencies to ensure sustainable and balanced fire management practices. These activities embody the spirit of Nelson Mandela, promoting community service and empowerment.



Community Development with Fire Awareness Education

Besides combating blazes on the frontlines, our firefighters - led by the Fire Awareness Department - actively promote fire safety education within schools and communities through various initiatives. These include interactive workshops, school visits, and community outreach programmes that teach fire prevention, safe behaviour, and emergency response strategies. By engaging school learners and community members with practical demonstrations and informative materials, we aim to instill a culture of fire awareness and preparedness, ultimately reducing the risk of wildfires and enhancing community resilience.



Combating Poverty Through Sustainable Community Development

Through its Social Development Department, the WOF-Kishugu JV has taken a proactive approach to addressing poverty in the communities where it operates. One of Nelson Mandela Day Goals for 2019-2029 is Food and Nutrition and our Food Security Project has soared to great heights since its birth.

It has achieved impressive results, including:

- Establishing and supporting **a total of four (4) poultry farmers that are part of the WOF Programme.**
- Creating 98 vegetable gardens of which eight **(8) are organic gardens** to provide fresh produce to the participants and their communities in need.
- The food security project further encourages other means of food security i.e. non-perishable food drives, establishment, and support for nurseries and gardens for medicinal plants and are classified as 'Food Security Other'. Currently there are three **(3) activities** in this category, making a total of 105 food security initiatives to date.
- Lastly, donating fresh **vegetable produce to over 100 families** and **50** centres across South Africa.



These initiatives provide immediate support to vulnerable families and also promote long-term food security and sustainable livelihoods. By empowering communities to grow their food, the Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture is helping to break the cycle of poverty and foster a brighter future for all.

BEYOND THE FIRELINE

We continue to make significant contributions beyond the fireline with various community activities and events, reinforcing our dedication to safety, training, and community development. Our involvement spans multiple sectors, from sporting events to charitable contributions, showcasing our commitment to making a positive impact.



Giving Back to the Elderly

As part of its ongoing outreach programme, the WOF-Kishugu JV sponsored an outdoor bench for the residents of Herfsakker Old Age Home. This gesture not only provides a comfortable place for the elderly to relax and enjoy the outdoors but also symbolizes the organisation's commitment to improving the quality of life for those in need.

Reflecting on the importance of community engagement, Gerda Van Zyl, Kishugu's Senior Commercial Credit Controller, shared, "In the past, we were involved in different community projects, so this year we decided to give back to the elderly. I think it would be great if more organisations get involved in community outreach projects, as a little goes a long way. The more people get involved, the bigger the impact on changing lives."



Recreational Activities Sponsorship

The Kishugu Group demonstrates its commitment to community welfare through significant contributions via the Andre Mentis Foundation and the Lowveld Nomads Golf Club. Beneficiaries of their generosity include the St. John Care Centre, which provides care and support for orphaned and abandoned, HIV-infected children, and the Dasha Foundation, which caters to disabled children in Nelspruit.

Additionally, the organisation sponsored the Mbombela Golf Club Caddies Challenge, an annual event benefiting caddies from Mbombela and other Lowveld Golf Clubs, recognising their hard work and dedication.



Promoting Sports and Physical Activity

WOF-Kishugu JV also supports soccer and netball by donating kits for events organised by the Department of Forestry, Fisheries, and the Environment (DFFE). These donations enable numerous participants to engage in sports, promoting physical activity, teamwork, and community spirit.

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture exemplifies Mandela's legacy of service, community empowerment, and environmental stewardship. Through our Integrated Fire Management Solutions and various community initiatives, they continue to make a substantial impact, honouring Mandela's vision of a united and resilient South Africa.

CHAMPIONS OF FOOD SECURITY

Food security is the state where all individuals have consistent access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. Addressing food security has become imperative, especially amidst the rising food insecurity and the cost of living crisis. The national government's "One home, one garden" initiative embodies this effort, encouraging households to cultivate their own produce to alleviate poverty, create jobs, and provide sustainable incomes in rural areas.

The Working on Fire-Kishugu Joint Venture (WOF-Kishugu JV) is at the forefront of tackling food security challenges. Its Food Security Project ensures that employees are not only educated about food security issues but are also empowered to combat them directly. Through a variety of food security initiatives, WOF-Kishugu JV rolls out and runs numerous activities that focus on education and training in poultry farming and crop production, including vegetable gardening. These initiatives benefit not only our firefighters and management but also their families, community-based organisations, and schools.

In addition, the Social Development Department has developed a Permaculture Food Gardens module. This module equips participants with the essential knowledge and skills to start and maintain their food gardens, ensuring a sustainable approach to food security.

Through these comprehensive efforts, the WOF-Kishugu Joint Venture is making significant strides in addressing food security, promoting self-sufficiency, and fostering resilient communities.



We embody the spirit of Nelson Mandela through our tireless commitment to community development and empowerment. Nelson Mandela's legacy is rooted in the principles of service, resilience, and community upliftment. We reflect these values through its IFMS.

Wildfires serve as a stark reminder of the growing threat of the loss of food security posed by climate change and extreme weather events. Collaboration among stakeholders is essential. Nelson Mandela once said, "**It is in your hands to create a better world for all who live in it.**" Our efforts in fire management and food security projects are a testament to this.

