



Working for Water

E-News

Welcome to the *Working for Water* electronic newsletter. This publication is aimed at keeping staff and stakeholders informed on the progress made towards controlling invasive alien plants (IAPs), the challenges encountered during implementation and the achievements of *Working for Water* nationally.

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July/August 2009

Working for Water- Working for Women

August, a month devoted to women and a celebration of their achievements. In this edition we explore the current issues of gender mainstreaming and how to improve the quality of life for these pillars of our communities.

Working for Water has always been at the forefront of Social development and the promotion of women within the programme by actively targeting, 60 % of beneficiaries are women. One of the major aspects of the programme is the focus on poverty relief. *Working for Water* considers the development of people as an essential element of this environmental conservation. Short term contract jobs are created through the clearing activities undertaken, with the emphasis on women, youth and the disabled.

In our continued efforts for Gender Mainstreaming, we ask questions such as, are we complying with the Employment Equity, the Gender Mainstreaming Policy or what gender imbalances, if any, are impacting on our beneficiaries and management? We also explore factors that are limiting women from being contractors and the development of gender projects i.e. food gardening, crèches, etc.

Working for Water is indeed Working for Women.



Above: The Women of KwaMhlanga proudly display their work

TMNP- Central WfW teams 'DOWN TOOLS' in celebration of Women's Day

By: Xolelwa Lusithi

In spite of the typical cold, icy winter weather of Cape Town, on Friday 07th of August 2009, the Westlake community hall was abuzz and filled with warmth as the *Working for Water* Central teams bustled in to down tools and celebrate the 53rd National Women's Day in memory of over 20 000 women who marched towards the Union building in Pretoria to protest against pass laws that proposed further restrictions on the movement of women.

The teams wore traditional clothing, each portraying their beautiful culture. There were also different cultural displays in the hall, where later on in the programme, they were rated and the best display and were awarded with a prize.

The event started at 10:00am with a powerful prayer from the audience members, followed by the inspiring motivational speeches from Mrs. C. Mdunyelwa an exited contractor, who highlighted her success within the TMNP (*WfW* project) and was followed by Mrs. R. Du Plessis, who shared her story with the audience about her abusive past and the tragedy that occurred in her previous marriage. Both these phenomenal women stressed the importance of this day and encouraged other women to stand together and always believe in themselves, despite all odds. Also spotted at the event were Mr. A. Ketile and J. Jantjies, Westlake representatives of the TMNP Advisory Committee.

The audience was entertained by the Alien Clearing teams with drama, dance, music, poetry and cultural exhibitions.

"Strike a woman, strike a rock"

We Deny

By: Rowan Lamont (WfW National Office)

What is it about you woman that we cannot grasp
Why is it so mystic that we dare not to even try

We deny you what precedes your human rights
We deny your very you-ness, your innermost being
For we cannot comprehend and dare not even try

We dare not see you as equal
For it was you woman on that day in the garden
It was you woman during war assisting as a singing bird
It was you woman in the black robe taking care
of the lost souls

It was you woman who refused your seat on that bus
Woman it was you on that day you proclaimed
that a Rock was now struck
It is you women that take that step on what men
ponder on but dare not engage
And yet take the glory for

For we might loose our forefront pleasure
And deny you with;
"This is a man's world",
"Agter elke man"
And even religion

Our ignorance and denial even cause our very
mother earth to near its end
A woman in itself

Yet you take your place so gracefully
Like a thread creating masterpieces out of none

You pull the plug and clean up after our useless efforts
And finish what we said we would
And not deny us what we feel we must be
Even if you do not agree

Is it then because you are so perfect that we deny
Is it that we fear you might lead
And we might lose our place and sanity

Do we not realize that by not allowing you
We deny ourselves
And that without you there is no us

Therefore know that we know and that
we know that you know too
The unspoken truth
That we deny,
But even this WE DENY.

Women of KwaMhlanga weave poplar baskets

By Kay Montgomery

The Silondoloza Amanzi ('We are saving water') Community Development Initiative was established in 2002 in the marginalized community of KwaMhlanga, 70km north-east of Pretoria. Since then, a group of 20 enterprising women and one physically challenged man have perfected the weaving of the stems of invasive alien grey poplar into baskets, décor accessories and toys.

Led by Lebogang Mokoena, this successful Value Added Industries (VAI) group was originally formed as a *Working for Water* invasive alien plant clearing unit. However, as the work dwindled in their area, an exit strategy had to be developed. Using the team's invasive alien plant clearing equipment (brush cutters, chainsaws and clippers), the women remove young sapling growth from grey poplars flourishing in the local wetlands of the Nkangala District around KwaMhlanga.

The poplar stems are brought back to a workshop in Phola Park, KwaMhlanga, where they are stripped and used for weaving baskets, trays, toys and décor accessories. The women have also set up a showroom at the workshop and over a period of four years have experimented with painting the poplar stems in different colours as well as developing a range of products. During this time, they have established that poplars provide superb wood for creating basketware products as the stems are unpalatable to bugs and get harder and stronger over time.

In February 2009, this VAI team was introduced to the *Working for Water* Nurseries Partnership Programme (WFW NPP) who developed and encouraged them to use the 'Poplar Products' brand for the Gauteng marketplace. Over a period of months, promotional material such as z-folds, informative calling cards, an order form and illustrated product catalogue have been created.

In March, 2009, the KwaMhlanga team exhibited under the Poplar Products brand for the first time at the South African Nursery Association (SANA) Autumn Trade Day in Midrand and a month later at the 2009 Gardenex & Green Living Expo at the Northgate Dome in Randburg.

Using contacts in the gardening media, Poplar Products was featured on The Gardener television programme (DSTV Home Channel), Tuine & Tossels (DSTV Kyknet Channel) and in the Saturday Star newspaper. This spring, the Poplar Products team will also be exhibiting at Decorex 2009 at Gallagher Estate Convention Centre in Midrand. Their baskets are also on display at a National Woman's Day celebration in Retreat, Cape Town (August 7-10) and they have a stand at the SANA Spring Trade Day on August 12 at Knoppieslaagte, Midrand.

Going forward, two Value Added Industries marketing strategies are being developed for Poplar Products:

(1) Invest in South African 'fair trade' basketware

The aim is to ask consumers to become ecologically aware, and in so doing, support ecologically ethical social enterprises such as Poplar Products. Invasive poplar trees dry up wetlands because they need large amounts of water to survive. By removing poplars from our wetlands, the community at KwaMhlanga have established themselves as an ecological ethical social enterprise and are therefore worthy of our support.

(2) Supplying large orders of basketware to local growers with established links and distribution into the retail market

Distribution to the retail market place has been one of the biggest challenges for the KwaMhlanga project. For this reason, the aim is not only to supply baskets directly into the consumer markets and floriculture industry, but to also supply growers in the green industries.

Three growers that supply the retail market on a weekly basis have signalled a commitment to order poplar baskets that will be planted up with succulents, chrysanthemum and indoor plants respectively. The country's largest indoor plant grower has also offered to approach the larger retail chains to stock poplar baskets planted up with indoor plants and marked with ecological 'fair trade' labels in their retail centres. Point of sale material is being prepared and baskets are being developed to the exact specifications required by the growers.

For more information, contact Lebogang Mokoena on 084 648 5310 or Isaac Mothapo @ *Working for Water's* Value Added Industries (mothapo@dwaf.gov.za) on 083 763 9326.

****NEWSFLASH****

New development in the Kwamhlanga project is the partnership with the Dept of Social Development where they have negotiated with the team to house a young person who is coming from a rehabilitation process, to spend his time in the project getting the in-house training, as part of retaining the social grant which was due to expire because of his involvement in criminal activities. When we visited the project he was with the team and nothing negative was reported.

A crèche has been opened closer to the project to take care of the projects babies, currently 13 babies from the project ages 4 months to 4 years are cared for. The facility will later be opened to the community at large.



DWAFS NATIONAL INAUGURAL AQUA ENVIRONMENT YOUTH SUMMIT 28 JUNE 2009 – 4 JULY 2009
Feedback received from delegates at workshop

As an educator, I was really amazed and ashamed that I didn't know that our country was in such danger because of these invasive alien plants. Attending the Youth Summit was indeed a privilege for me because I'm now informed and I can go spread the message to millions of kids out there. These kids are indeed the future and it all lies in their hands. This week has transformed me to being a great South African because as I'm heading back home, I will make sure that I start campaigns and workshops to make people aware of this issue. I will also run the WeedBuster Week awareness campaign in my community with your help. I thank and honour you for the great work that you guys are keeping up!

From: Paballo Nyathi (Educator: Tsolo Secondary School)



Deputy Minister Ms Rejoice Mabudafhasi spends time with guests at the Youth Summit



Well I have to say that this was indeed an awesome week because it surely had and left an impact in my life. And amazingly, at first I just thought that Eish!!! We're going to do all those boring life sciences and geography chapters. Not until you stood before me, explained and made me understand every key word about these invasive plants and indigenous plants. I got touched again and felt guilty when I paid a visit to the rivers and dams because I felt that I haven't played a part in being a great South African by helping control these invasive plants. But of all, I have to compliment that it was a great, thoughtful and an informative week. It has indeed unleashed my potential in every key aspect. And I really hope that this is just the beginning because I'm anxious and looking forward to working and uniting with you to help save our nation. I love you guys for the great job that you're doing. Keep it up and declare victory as yours because you are more than the conquerors.

From: Vince

Before I attended the exhibition I was conscious about the plants and trees of our environment but I did not have more information about them i.e. their names, uses and their originality. Every plant to me was just a flower and every tree was just a tree. Now all has changed after attending the exhibition, I learnt a lot about the endemic plants, our indigenous plants and about invasive alien plants which are dangerous and a threat to our land. I gained a lot as the results now I know which plants should be kept and which should not be grown and also I know what to do when I see the invasive alien plants as I'm taught the controlling methods.

I was aware of plants that grow on rivers, dams and lakes and I thought they were indigenous to South Africa, knowing nothing about the impact they cause in aquatic lives and to our lives we as humans and animals because some of us have set their living upon rivers.

Currently I'm doing grade 12 and next year I intend to do entomology because I have natural curiosity towards insects, but now since I have experienced the problem that unbalancing our ecosystem I will study Botany so that I help our environment in future. Another thing that changed slightly in my career was when we visited the Botanical Garden, those indigenous plants woke up my spirit and touched me because of them I feel much living South African and my living is to live for them.

From: Zileni Asanda (EC, KWT)





It is not easy to change a person's mind especially in a short period. But believe me when I say my life has changed differently. William Wordsworth has a poem entitled "The world is too much with us", in which he tells us about the fact that people do not appreciate nature. In this summit his poem touched me a lot as I was given knowledge on different plants that we find here in South Africa, indigenous and exotic. Seeing how these plants have invaded our waters was just touching especially the Water Hyacinth. I believe that I am responsible for teaching others what I have been taught starting in my home as there is a garden. My school is surrounded by Black Ironbark and these trees are multiplying and I believe that I should do something about that. Career wise I have chosen to study something involving water and plants so that I can make a difference in my country. Coming to this youth summit was a good and perfect experience. The only thing left now is for me to spread the gospel. My promise or pledge is that whatever it takes, no matter how hard it will be the people around me will be educated about invasive alien plants and change will come. In these words I thank my teacher if I may say Mrs L Williams, for giving me such a good experience on life itself, not forgetting her team too. Let's get together and fight those unwanted plants in this country of ours.

From; Sizwe Xotyeni (Nonceba SSS K.W.T) – Eastern Cape

The *WfW* programme has given me a lot of information on alien invasive plants (Aquatics). Everything was explained in detail especially the origin, reproduction of different invasive aliens. For me it was indeed a learning curve about the factors that affect our water bodies negatively. From here I will ensure that the awareness programme is done in my community together with the officials from my area. The department should put more effort in ensuring that this problem is dealt with in a big way. I will start at my school informing fellow educators, learners as well as my community. As from now, I will play my role in ensuring that these invasive alien plants do not continue affecting South Africa tremendously.

From: Nomthandazo Zulu (Educator – KZN)



Please forward contributions to

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For more information contact the *Working for Water* toll free information line on 0800-005-376

or visit our website www.dwaf.gov.za/wfw/ or send your queries to: wfw@dwaf.gov.za

To see pictures of invasive alien plants go to <http://www.agis.agric.za/wip/>