

Staff Talk

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**agriculture &
rural development**

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HOD Foreword

Colleagues as many of you are already aware, our Provincial Agricentre building has been officially closed by the Department of Labour following a compliance inspection that revealed significant health and safety issues. This outcome is a necessary step to ensure that our workplace meets the required standards to safeguard everyone's wellbeing.

The closure has undoubtedly brought disruption to our usual routines. Several communiques have been issued so far about how we are now operating, and some officials are working remotely. As difficult as it is to adapt to the demands of a home environment we need to continue to deliver on our responsibilities.

We are actively working with all relevant authorities and stakeholders to address the issues raised and to fast-track the process of remediation. Our goal is to return to a compliant, functional, and safe workspace as soon as possible. A task team including all stakeholders headed by the Chief Director Corporate Services has been established to come up with an implementation plan and we will keep all stakeholders informed.

I encourage each of you to remain connected with your teams, maintain open lines of communication with your supervisors, and prioritise your mental and physical health as we navigate this period.

In the interim, the Department has decided to continue providing services through the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Office as well as the Mahikeng Local Office, and we remain committed to keeping both our staff and the public informed as we work tirelessly to identify a new, compliant, and functional space for our operations. The process of securing a long-term solution is ongoing, and we are exploring all available avenues to ensure that our next home reflects the values of professionalism, safety, and accessibility.

As you engage with this issue of Staff Talk, which features inspiring stories of youth excellence, community outreach, mental health awareness, and technical achievements- I urge you to continue embodying the principles of service excellence, empathy, and innovation. Together, let us ensure that even amid uncertainty, we remain a department that delivers.

Your continued dedication does not go unnoticed, and I thank you for your commitment to excellence even under challenging conditions. *Thupi Mokhatla*



June is celebrated as Youth month in our country to honour many young people who laid bare their lives by taking part in the struggle against oppression and ultimate emancipation of the majority that gave rise to the dawn of democracy.

And equally as a publication that is looking at forging and shaping relationships between fellow colleagues through publishing matters and news that are of interest to them, we find it more opportune to dedicate this edition to the young people in the department who against all odds have raised the bar to lofty and dizzy heights.

This is we hope in a certain way serves as an inspiration to other young persons who have qualities and are ambitious enough to claim their mantle that will elevate them more and more in realising their dreams.

We feature a young woman who is at the helm of the South Africa Association of Animal Health Technicians in the province as the provincial chairperson a position that she was elected into in 2024.

We are also delighted as a publication to highlight remarkable milestones our inspiring youth in the department has reached. We feature three special young trailblazers as they share their unique journey and passion as the youth.

Young dads are now ready to embrace fatherhood with dedication and responsibility, breaking the stereotypes of absent fathers and shining a spotlight on them was more than enough to fully exemplify the true meaning of fatherhood.

As we look into the audit period, we are being taken through the important process of what actually happens during the audit process to pave the way in preparing the ultimate audit report and findings.

And as part of standardizing training for public health and surveillance related to epidemic preparedness and response, identified as one of the key challenges identified in the province, a three month training course was organized for animal health professionals.

In raising road safety awareness a staff member opens up about a car crash that almost claimed her life and the lessons she has learned and cherishes.

As an internal publication we are still striving for consistent contribution of articles of interest relating to a particular unit and still urge other units to join the effort to make this publication to always remain inclusive. Have a fun and good read.

Young, Bold & Ambitious



Dr. Charlotte Mokwele

As the country commemorates Youth Month, Staff Talk is delighted to highlight remarkable potential and milestones of our inspiring youth in the Department. In this special feature, three young trailblazers share their unique journey and passion as the youth with **Katlego Thejane**.

"Seeing animals happy and healthy especially in a rural setting where most people cannot afford private veterinary services", remarks Dr. Charlotte Mokwele, a young State Veterinarian based in Dr. Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District, when asked what she finds most rewarding about her profession.

Hailing from a small town of Dendron in Limpopo, her dedication to animal welfare began early in her life. As a child, she developed the love, care and compassion for her domestic animals. However, her desire to pursue a career in veterinary was ignited after witnessing the special care a veterinarian gave to their family dog after it was injured after a car accident.

Dr Mokwele obtained a Bachelor of Veterinary Science at the University of Pretoria and completed her Compulsory Community Services in 2024. As of this year, she's been working hard to add value into veterinary services, as well as make a difference and inspire the next generation of veterinarians.

As a young veterinarian, Dr Mokwele hopes to achieve the most highly effective primary animal health care to everyone regardless of their background and financial situation.

In addition, she strives to empower the small-scale farmers with the necessary information regarding farming and veterinary care so that they can grow and become independent.

"I want to enhance the concept of One Health which focuses on the health of animals, human and the ecosystem. This way we don't focus only on diseases that are related to animals but also diseases that can pass to humans from animals and vice versa", she asserts.

In her line of work, the young professional has made quite an impact. Apart from saving lives and improving the health of animals, she has done a lot of community outreaches and school talks where she spreads awareness on various diseases that need utmost attention. "Since then", she shares, "a lot people attend. They are more interactive, and they do call us for advices from time to time. So far we're doing a great job because they trust us and rely on us".

As we commemorate Youth Month, Dr Mokwele urges the youth to be brave enough to follow their dreams. "There's a saying, 'The biggest adventure you can ever take is to live the life of your dreams'. With that being said, you should never limit yourself and the dreams you have. It's better to try than not try at all. So give it a shot".



Dr Lubabalo Bila

Dr Lubabalo Bila is an award-winning academic and lecturer at Potchefstroom College of Agriculture. At just 30 years old, he has accomplished more than one impressive feat. From collaborating with international scholars to presenting at international conferences, his academic and professional journey has been nothing short of inspiring.

Born in the Eastern Cape and later moved to Stilfontein in North West where he completed his secondary school education, Dr Bila never envisioned himself as a teacher.

He describes teaching as a calling – one he tried to ignore for a long time. Fortunately, that changed in 2019 when he was headhunted for a part-time lecturer position at Central University of Technology. Since then, he's been serving his purpose and enjoying every moment of it.

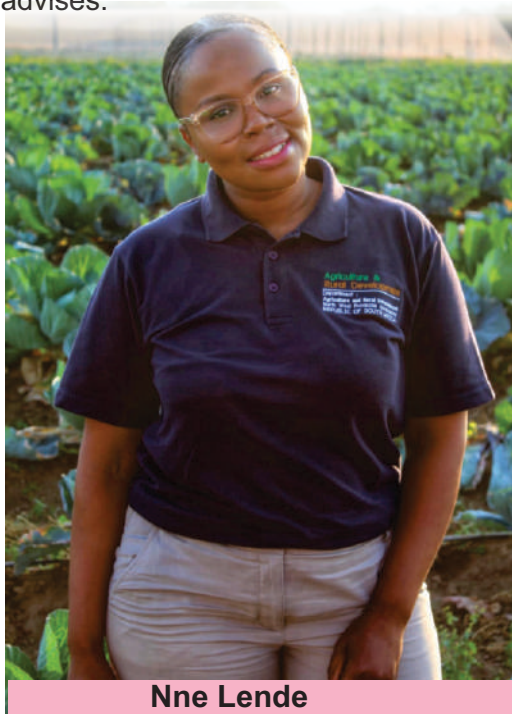
Like any other dedicated teacher, Dr Bila finds immense pride and satisfaction in seeing his students walk across the graduation stage and securing employment not only in South Africa but also outside the country. When asked if he had an impact on the students he had taught, he says: "Absolutely, I'm even in touch with some of them and they are doing very well in their respective fields. They also call me for advices - be it personal or professional. Not so long ago I received a call from a former student who received a better offer from a reputable company and needed my input."

With a strong work ethic that is driven by a deep desire to bring change and contribute to academia and empower farmers, Dr Bila has presented several papers in both local and international conferences, and further published over fifteen scientific articles in peer-reviewed international journals. In addition to his long list of accolades, he has won numerous awards from various institutions, including international stages. With a PhD in Animal Breeding and Genetics under his belt, he's currently supervising Master's students.

Beyond academia, Dr Billa is an active sports enthusiast who's devoted to cycling and marathons. A highlight of his athletic journey includes crossing the finishing line of the Comrades Marathon in 2024. "That's the ultimate human race," he shares, "I finished that race in less than 10 hours and earned a Robert Mtshali medal. This year I did much better and earned myself a Bill Rowen medal. It was a 90km down run from Pietermaritzburg to Durban."

As a young person who continues to make an indelible mark in his field, Dr Bila believes that human beings are unlimited and that nothing is impossible through hard work, discipline and commitment. "Life is not linear. There will always be setbacks along the way,

so you should be prepared to get up and dust yourself and keep fighting", he advises.



Nne Lende

When it comes to public project management, Nne Lende a Senior Agricultural Advisor from Madibeng Lao in Brits has mastered the art of planning, executing and managing successful projects. Her expertise is clearly reflected in the thriving projects she plans, monitor and oversee, which are a testament to her passion and dedication to helping farmers and enhancing their agricultural practices.

Born and raised in Venda, Limpopo, Lende's decision to pursue a career in agriculture was highly influenced by her general worker aunt who idolized extension officers. "My aunt always spoke highly of extension officers and the crucial role they play in communities. So, when it came time to apply for universities, I didn't hesitate to apply for agriculture.

I knew from the onset that's what I wanted," she recalls.

With a BSc. Agriculture-Africa University, a BTech. Agriculture Tshwane University of Technology, and a Project Management qualification from Weiheinstephan-Triesdorf University, Lende combines academic excellence with a strong dedication to empowering farmers through advisory and hands-on project implementation.

She has contributed to several projects, including the Madibeng Combine harvester, Madibeng Soyabean input support, NSN Layer production expansion, Gaman67 Citrus, various horticultural projects, and support to the Taung Irrigation Scheme projects.

When asked what she finds fulfilling about her work, Lende gives an inspiring answer: "Seeing government-funded projects come to life and graduating smaller-scale farmers to commercial. It brings me immense joy to see farmers grow.

Transitioning to the topic of achievements, Lende shares that her greatest highlight in her career was being able to implement a community project that benefited a large number of people at once. "It was the combine harvester project," she says, "I had to bring together a group of farmers and listen to their problems. Then we developed an application which I presented for them. Just the success of that gave me thrills, and a belief that group projects are possible if planned and managed well with full participation of beneficiaries."

So what pushes her to excel in her field? The 33-year-old attributes her drive and dedication to the Dard, which stems from a sense of purpose and desire to make an impact. She recognizes the potential that Agricultural Advisors have in creating jobs and putting our country on the map by helping farmers unlock their growth potentials. "Extension uplifts communities and empower farmers, while ensuring food security in the country. Our role matters in the grand scheme of things," she adds.

As the country is in a celebratory mood of Youth Month, Lende has an inspiring message for young people in the department. "We won't be young forever, so make your mark while you can. Absorb as much knowledge and technical expertise as possible, especially from older colleagues, because they have great knowledge which is still relevant and critical in the work that we do."

Meet young dads who are redeeming fatherhood



The new generation of fathers has taken the world by storm. Whether it's at school events, sports day or doctor appointments, young dads are embracing fatherhood with dedication and responsibility, breaking the stereotypes of absent fathers. In honour of Father's Day, Katlego Thejane thought it befitting to shine a spotlight on them who exemplify the true meaning of fatherhood.

Ernest Kgethile – Admin Clerk

Ernest is a father to an 8-year-old boy and a 4-year-old girl

What's the best thing about being a father?

Being a father comes with a lot of challenges and sacrifices, but those challenges cannot take away that special feeling of being a father to someone. For me, the best thing is knowing that my children can always rely on me for everything. I'm a proud dad today because of my kids; they are my pride and joy.

What has fatherhood taught you?

It has taught me to be a provider and a responsible father. I once came across a quote that says, "Any man can be a father, but it takes a real man to be a dad". This quote resonates with me because it highlights how fatherhood goes beyond just being a biological father but being present and fully involved in your child's life. I know that in real life there is no such thing as being a perfect person, but when it comes to my children I strive to be a perfect dad for them. I just don't want them to live the life I had when I was their age.

How do you spend quality time with your children?

It's unfortunate that I don't live with my kids every day, but the little time I get to spend with them I make sure that we have the best of moments together. Sometimes, we visit the zoo, watch soccer together and go for ice cream dates. My wish is to take both of them to the movies, parks and have mini family vacations.

What valuable lessons do you wish to impart to your children?

Family comes first, and you cannot always rely on relatives. They ought to prioritise education as well. However, they should know that there are other options besides the traditional path to success. For instance, they can be their own bosses and avoid being swallowed by the system.

What can you say to absent fathers out there?

Not being there for your children can present major setbacks on their development and wellbeing. It's also not justified to abandon your children due to financial instability. Children need our love, care and guidance. They need to rely on us as we brought them to this life.



Ipeleng Molale – HR Clerk

Ipeleng is a father to a 4-year-old boy

What do you love most about being a father?

The fact that I'm fully present in my son's life. Seeing him grow, being playful, free and enjoying life puts a smile on my face.

You were raised by the old generation. Is there a distinct from how you were raised to how you're raising your child?

There's not much difference. My parents were very strict when it comes to school, house chores, curfew and choosing friends, but I allow my son to make his own decisions under my guidance, of course. From a young age I was taught respect and to say please and thank you, and I continue to pass on these values to my child.

What do you want your child to learn from you?

Being a father to a boy child, I strive to be a positive role model and influence positive behaviours that will shape him into a great man in the future. I want my son to know that nothing comes easy, and that he has to work hard for whatever he wants. He should also never give up easily and go after his dreams.

We seem to have a considerable high rate of deadbeat dads. What do you think could be the reasons for their absenteeism?

Reasons vary, and so do situations. Some men might be scared of responsibility, while some may feel they are not financially and mentally ready for kids. However, that doesn't justify their absence. In some cases, the mother of the child may deny the father access to their child as a way to punish him, which I find totally unfair on the child.

What's your advice for first-time dads?

Be the best friend that your son or daughter will ever wish for. Your child should feel comfortable to talk to you about anything and ask for advice.



Pious Moraka – System Administrator
Pious is a father to a 13-year-old boy and a 7-year-old girl

Tell us about your parenting style.

Being a Christian and growing up in a Christian home, I strive to keep my kids closer to God. I'm also strict when it comes to the friends they keep. However, I try to let them be exposed to different kinds of friendships so that they can make informed choices about the type of friends they want to keep in their circle. In a nutshell, I'm a strict father, but my strictness is out of love and protection. And having a girl child I'm even overprotective of her, bearing in mind all the GBV incidents happening in our country.

How do you navigate the challenges of raising your kids in a digital age where they often get exposed to harmful content?

Being in the field of ICT, I don't allow my kids to be on social media unsupervised. I have created a YouTube Kids channel for them, whereby each and every content they view we get an email from Google. So, it limits the content they want to be exposed to. Whatever they do now, it is always supervised. That's how I ensure that they don't get exposed to inappropriate content.

Why is it necessary for fathers to be present in their kids' lives?

Before my mother got married to my stepfather who has been a wonderful father figure to me, I lost my biological father at the age of three. Within that period of not having a father figure, I told myself that this is not what I want my kids to experience. And whatever I missed during that period, I made sure that I'd fill that void with my kids. Although there's no such thing as a perfect parent, my promise has always been to shower them with love and hope that they pass on whatever lessons I share with them to their children.

How do you set a good example for your kids?

As a parent I try to maintain values that I want to instill in my kids. However, I believe that they sometimes have to make their own mistakes and learn from them. It's unfortunate that our children tend to be exposed to vulgar language and content based on their environments or friendships, but it is our role to guide them and warn them about their behaviours.

What do you think can be done to break the cycle of absent fathers?

It starts with us, men. We need to start taking responsibility the moment you are aware that someone is expecting your child since children do not choose to come to this world by themselves. And denying them access to their ancestry doesn't do them any good. It's even worse for men who grew up with absent fathers because they know the feeling of being abandoned by their own. Men need to stop running away from their responsibilities and give their children what they truly deserve. Raising children is not money but love, and that love cannot be replaced with materialistic things.



Youth at the helm of SAAAH

For Bonolo Molefi leadership is a natural occurrence. She is an epitome of excellence, ambition and her bravery and unrelenting attitude assist her to accomplish whatever she desires. And as part of honouring youth with exceptional qualities in the department during Youth Month, Bonolo gives us a low down of what makes her tick.

Bonolo, an Animal Technician at Taung State Veterinary office is at the helm of the South Africa Association of Animal Health Technicians in the province as the provincial chairperson a position that she was elected into in 2024.

“I was democratically elected during the association's Provincial Biannual Congress in August 2024 held in Rustenburg. The election is conducted according to the constitution where the Provincial Executive Committee is elected by secret ballot and the tenure of the position is two years up until the next congress,” she explains

“And as the provincial chairperson, with the encompassing leadership role that demands the ability and aptitude to provide guidance and ensure that the association's goals are met, my main duties include presiding over all meetings, serving as the chief negotiator in all interactions with important stakeholders”.

This ensures that the association's strategic plans are implemented successfully, giving members feedback at the annual general meetings, and making sure the association's vision and mission are realised.

Although younger than some of them, Bonolo is of the thought that she got the nod and was elected to this position because her colleagues noticed and recognized her abilities to lead, organize, and communicate effectively.

“In addition I do not shudder in making a decision whilst at the same time remain resilient and ethical in whatever I am doing. I have adapted to working under pressure, while wholly performing my duties in the animal health community as a whole, not just as a profession.

“When the announcement was made that I will be assuming this position I was ecstatic especially when considering expectations of my colleagues while at the same time filled with mixed emotions. But I was confident of the new role and being aware that that my role and responsibilities would change significantly after serving as a Liaison Officer in the association.



“I do not allow my ambition to come across as conceited”

She says she was able to acclimatise quickly because she put more effort in executing her new responsibilities efficiently and was just a matter of time for everything to fall into place. I was accustomed to the role as my previous position allowed me to work closely with the previous chairperson where I rubbed shoulders with the executive and also was accustomed to the

As a young person she admits that the responsibilities of this position requires more than desire but an open-mindedness and she is not short of inspiration due to the constant learning of new sets of leadership roles, and the support that she receives from the team and departmental management.

As the association's chairperson, I relate very well with my colleagues although some are older than me and have the forged very cordial relationships with them and I do not allow my ambition to come across as conceited.

“But rather, I let my leadership and management skills take over and besides I do not make unilateral decision but rather seek for opinions and suggestions instead because members are more experienced than I am”.

In juggling this responsibility with her full time job she asserts that time management is one of the most crucial things she have learnt as a busy professional seeking to prosper in today's fast-paced environment.

My role and obligations in the association are not particularly onerous because it is part of my career, I work with a cooperative team, and I receive support from management”.

In this youth month my advice to young people and my peers who aspire to occupy leadership positions and are prospects of whom I represent should be cognisant of leadership abilities which are crucial in today's rapid changing world not only of politics, business but in every aspect of

On a parting and personal note, she states that she relaxes and chill out from what seems a hectic schedule in her daily activities by spending time with my family, going to church, and giving a help hand in community activities.





Another chance, navigating life after accident

Jane had to miss work for two years due to the injuries. She sustained an injury on her left hip and knee which forced her to use crutches to walk. Besides, doctors had to remove glass splinters from her eyes as a consequence to hitting the windscreen with her head.

Three years after the ordeal, Jane is still recovering albeit with a limp, largely because her hip pain tends to worsen during the cold weather. However, she refuses to be treated differently and use her condition as a disability. "I'm still that Jane I was before the accident. I don't want to rely too much on crutches and ramps. I'll just continue walking on stairs like before", she jokingly says

The jovial and free-spirited Jane says she is grateful for life and for the overwhelming support from both family and colleagues. "I'm truly grateful for being granted another chance at life. It's not every day that people make it out alive especially at my age. Some have lost their eyes, while others are bedridden and wheelchair-bound, but I made it and thus consider myself very fortunate".

As road safety continues to be an issue of concern in the country, Jane urges drivers to always be cautious and vigilant on the road. "The accident taught me that life is too short - and so we need to be appreciative of it. I cannot stress enough how necessary it is to always wear your safety belt and obey the rules of the road. Be always considerate of other road users.

In a bid to raise road safety awareness, Jane Mosiane, Senior Personnel Practitioner affectionately known as Fonda, opens up to Katlego Thejane about a car crash that almost claimed her life on 26 November 2022.

It was a fun-filled day that ended in disaster when Jane had just celebrated a close friend's birthday before heading home to relax when on her way home, things took a dark turn when she was involved in an accident as car smashed into the front passenger side of her car whilst allegedly trying to beat the traffic light.

The impact of the accident caused her head to fit the windscreen forcefully causing a permanent scar on her forehead. Fortunately just before losing consciousness, she managed to notify her friends who responded promptly, provided assistance and summoned which took her to hospital. "I stayed there for a month receiving treatment and undergoing multiple examinations before I got discharged towards Christmas", she recalls.



Animal Health Professionals undergo Frontline Epidemiology Training



Following a need to build capacity of Animal Health Technicians, particularly in standardized training for public health and surveillance related to epidemic preparedness and response and thus identified as one of the key challenges identified in the province, a three month training course was organized for them.

The Department then selected 14 veterinary officials to attend a 3-month Field Epidemiology Training Programme, Frontline Training Course which was conducted in the province. These officials underwent standardized epidemiological training that specifically address public animal health surveillance, collection, analysis, and interpretation of surveillance data, outbreak investigation and response, and report writing.

1. Epidemiological gaps/needs in the province, district, and programme.

This has come about after the need for workforce capacity building, particularly in standardized training for public health and surveillance related to epidemic preparedness and response was identified as one of the key challenges identified in the province.

To address this, several potential solutions were explored, including the development of specialized training courses, utilizing existing SAFETP frontline programs, leveraging provincial training platforms, district-based train-the-trainer initiatives, and induction programs for public health practitioners involved in epidemic response.

“Although the province has expertise in surveillance systems and technology,” explains Dr Lerato Kgatswetswe programme convener,

“there is however a lack of standardized public and animal health and epidemiology training for veterinary officials, and in addition the province does not have dedicated epidemiology and surveillance staff at the district level and this would ideally benefit the presence of district field epidemiologists”.

Key Areas of Focus were:

- Disease Surveillance
- Disease Outbreak Investigation
- Data Integration and Sharing

2. Anticipated benefits of implementation of the FETP-Frontline Course

The FETP-Frontline course will equip veterinary officials with the skills needed to effectively manage and respond to disease outbreaks at the district and sub-district levels. By combining and analysing data from multiple sources, these officials will develop comprehensive disease management plans, enhance surveillance of animal health conditions, and improve outbreak detection and investigation. This focus on workforce development will lead to better disease tracking, more accurate data collection, and more informed decision-making.



3. FETP-Frontline Course Graduate contributions to change in surveillance and response.

On completion of this programme graduates will become skilled public health professionals who will drive improvements in these three key areas.

- Streamline and upgrade data gathering methods to strengthen surveillance networks.
- Spearhead outbreak investigations using epidemiological tools to trace infection sources, manage response teams, and assess intervention success.
- Transform raw surveillance data into actionable insights, guiding resource allocation and policy decisions through clear stakeholder communication.

During the certificate presentations officials who completed the course, comprising of animal health technicians and state veterinarians 'were put to the test when they presented papers to the audience invited to the event.

The papers were based on different topics while focusing on data gathering, integration and analysis with remarks and comments from the audience and veterinary managers in the department.

Congratulating the officials and giving a brief outline of the training, Ms Emelda Ramutshila of the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) said that this was in fact a culmination of a good job that was done over the three months of training. And from the first encounter, colleagues outdid themselves with a lot of progress done covering case identity, follow up while utilizing epidemiological principles.

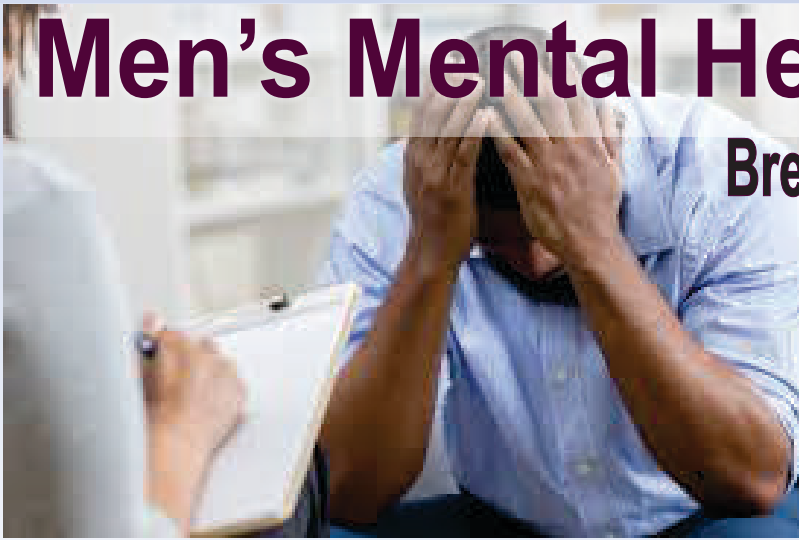
Remarking on behalf of the trainees, Dr Muape said that initially they did not know what they got themselves into when they initially registered for the course but consequently achieved what they intended to. She further hoped that the collective will be able to apply effectively what they learned particularly epidemiological principles in their encounters in the field.

“We hope in anticipation that after completing this course, our technicians' expertise will strengthen epidemiological capacity at provincial, district, and sub-district levels, leading to more effective management of public health incidents and disease outbreaks. And beyond their technical roles, they will further serve as mentors and knowledge-sharing champions, training colleagues and building expertise within their districts and sub-districts”, concludes Dr Kgatswetswe.



Men's Mental Health Awareness

Break the Silence, break the stigma!!!



Confronting Trauma and Redefining Masculinity This Men's Mental Health Awareness Month, writes Oratile Kgotle.

June marks Men's Mental Health Awareness Month, an urgent call to spotlight the struggles many men face in silence. This initiative seeks to promote emotional wellbeing, tear down the harmful stigmas surrounding masculinity, and encourage men to seek help, open up, and confront trauma without shame.

At the heart of this awareness campaign is a raw and deeply personal testimony from Anonymous, who bravely speaks out about his journey from an inherited pain and destructive behaviours to healing, growth, and transformation. His words reveal the urgent need for men to break cycles of violence, challenge outdated beliefs about masculinity, and rediscover what it means to be whole.

"As men, we're told not to cry. Not to speak about abuse. Not to show weakness. It took me years to unlearn that. I grew up in a toxic household my father would beat my mother, and we as children listened helplessly from the other room. I carried that pain and it turned me into a monster."

That pain followed him into adulthood. He fought teachers, peers, and eventually partners. He admits to becoming a perpetrator of the same violence he once feared and hated. "I thought violence was love. I thought controlling someone meant I mattered. One day I beat my girlfriend so badly she nearly died. I was arrested. And in jail, I cried because for the first time, I saw my life crumbling. I saw myself becoming my father."

But that moment became a turning point. He entered rehabilitation, confronted the wounds buried deep inside, and committed himself to becoming a better man. "Rehab unlocked the pain I'd been hiding. It was hard. But it was the first time I saw the version of me who could really love without hurting. When I held my daughter for the first time, I knew it had to end with me. I wouldn't let her grow up in fear the way I did."

He shares this journey not to excuse past actions, but to highlight how cycles of abuse and trauma must be interrupted by accountability, by healing, and by choosing softness over silence. This story is not rare. Many men suffer in silence, bottling up pain behind alcohol, aggression, and distorted views of love and masculinity. But true strength lies in vulnerability, in talking, in seeking help.

"We need to stop glorifying endurance and start honouring healing. Cry. Scream. Talk. Your family deserves the real, healed version of you. So do you." It's time to redefine what it means to be a man. Not someone who dominates but someone who protects, nurtures, and feels. We need to teach boys that being kind doesn't make them weak. That real men talk. Real men heal. Real men love without hurting.

Let's break the silence and the stigma!





DARD commemorates Library Week

By Oratile Kgotle

The Knowledge, Information and Records Management Services (KIRMS) commemorated library week at Kgora Farmers Training Centre under the theme “Libraries for Sustainable Communities” with various stakeholders and schools around Ramatlabama.

The 2025 theme was aligned to South Africa's commitment to sustainable development and equality and further reflects on the libraries contribution to sustainable development goals of 2030 under goal number 11 which states sustainable cities and communities and goal number 4 which is about quality education for all.

According to the organizer Mpho Malatji, the purpose of library week was to encourage students, farmers and various stakeholders about the importance of reading, the vital role libraries play in fostering literacy, promoting access to information and its contribution to social cohesion and while endorsing sustainability, inclusivity and resilience in communities.

Mr Mokete Kolojane, Director of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) explained that students need functional libraries to do research and be knowledgeable for future employers. He further added to say that libraries without internet are like a dead engine because our world is more dependent on technology for research and communication.

Mrs Granny Ross former Arts and Culture librarian and guest speaker, explained the importance of libraries in communities, their role in fostering sustainability, resilience and accessibility in communities, and that they are places where all races and gender can access information without any subjection to abuse.

“Libraries should adapt to the changing needs of their communities, ensuring that everyone has access to information and opportunities for growth because they are built to help us eradicate poverty and elevate our social status,” emphasised Mrs Ross.

President Ramaphosa during his state of the nation address this year stated that the immediate focus is to expand access to early child development for every child and this will be achieved through registering and formalising early child development (ECD) centres. It be ensured that they have the facilities, training and material they need to provide quality early learning, and “ensuring that every child can read for meaning in the foundation phase to set them up for success for later years”.

Activities of the day also included a tour around Kgora Famers Training Centre where learners had an opportunity to learn about the different planting techniques and different irrigation systems to use for different vegetables and at the end tested their farming skills by transplanting vegetables. On the day students and farmers on training participated in a quiz challenge where they received prizes of kind form the department.





It was an array of gleeful moments for the college staff, parents, and guests as thirty-three graduands were conferred their Diplomas in Agriculture with specialisation in Irrigation during the graduation ceremony of Taung Agricultural College held on Friday, May 30, writes Katlego Thejane.

The atmosphere was saturated with laughter, tears, and joy as graduands celebrated the completion of a successful academic journey full of workload, long hours of study and sleepless nights. Furthermore, this momentous occasion marked a significant step forward into sustainable agriculture of South Africa.

Addressing the class of 2024 as a guest speaker, Professor Sylvester Mpandeli of Water Research Commission commended the graduates for their resilience and further encouraged them to make an impact. "Our country is transecting towards knowledge based economy, which means that we need you guys to advise the government and make sure that we address challenges that we are facing," he said, adding, "Do not wait for someone to offer you employment. Some of you have the ability to become entrepreneurs and start your own establishments."

As agriculture continues to evolve, AgriSETA representative Frikkie Fouche urged the graduates to embrace change and turn challenges into opportunities. "Today you graduate into a world that is changing faster than ever, and technology is shaping our farms. Our markets are now global and producers

are selling internationally with the click of a button. With that being said, you've become patients of change. Your generation will take additional knowledge and blend it with innovation," he said.

One of the graduates, Orefile Mongale from Zeerust in North West, expressed his profound gratitude for graduating in record time. "It wasn't easy. There were plenty of setbacks along the journey, but I'm truly grateful for the overwhelming support from my family and lecturers. I'm extremely excited and looking forward to making an impact in the agricultural sector," he said.

As a highlight of the ceremony, the Water Research Commission and its strategic partners will collaborate with Taung Agricultural College to further strengthen its training, research and development capacity. Through this collaboration, students will have the opportunity to attend international events and conferences.





Efforts to improve agriculture production intensified

In a quest to improve service delivery by strengthening and farmers and the community whilst strengthening the operation within the department, the North West Department of Agriculture and Rural Development hosted a two day Provincial conference aimed at “Improving Agricultural Productivity Through Quality Extension Services”.

11th advisory and extension conference held at Dr Kenneth Kaunda District, Ngwenya hotel,

Quality extension services are crucial for improving agricultural productivity. By providing farmers with access to relevant information, training, and advisory support, extension services can help farmers adopt best practices, manage risks, and increase their yields.

Effective extension services can also facilitate the adoption of new technologies and innovations, enabling farmers to stay competitive and sustainable in an ever-changing agricultural landscape.

Speaking during the conference Head of the Department, Thupi Mokhatla emphasised that the gathering here is duly informed by the need to keep strengthening the sector towards desired professional principles, to build an attractive correspondence to the sector; to compare notes and reflect on how far the Department has come, and to learn and grow skills and knowledge.

“To breed personnel that is passionate and driven about extension calling. We need Extension Officers that are productive, results driven and quality orientated”. To achieve this, the Department aims to adopt 4 Transversal indicators (group extension that is easy to reach more farmers at once,

The use of digital E-extension for more fast, efficient and effective technology and innovation in support of farming.

Getting relevant people and institutions involved and placing them correctly and accordingly whilst getting the extension officers to acquire critical relevant skills).

The conference drew important stakeholders that included the South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) and its role in supporting scientific standards, The South African Society for Agricultural Extension (SASAE) and its contributions to advancing extension services, The Agriculture Research Council presenting Bio-slurry living labs in the North West Province as innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture and in discussions, the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Extension and Advisory Services (EAS) at farm level to improve farmer support and agricultural productivity.

MEC Madoda Sambatha highlighted the crucial role of supporting extension services, stating: “Establishing a strong moral support in support of extension services is key, by providing resources such as transport, habitable office space, personal development programs, absorption into the workplace, compatible salary levels, and acceptable management support and communication, all geared towards finding solutions to challenges.”

He gave clear directives that officers must be equipped with trade of tools, as they cannot support farmers effectively without proper resources. He also reminded delegates that extension officers are the backbone of farmer support and must be recognised, empowered, and supported.

“Be there when you are needed. Farmers depend on you,” he further alluded.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month: Together we act United we change



By Oratile Kgotle

April marks Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), a time dedicated to breaking the silence around sexual violence and building a collective movement for change. This year's theme, "Together We Act, United We Change," highlights the importance of solidarity in preventing sexual abuse, assault, and harassment.

The campaign seeks to educate communities, learners, and employees on recognizing, preventing, and responding to sexual assault. SAAM empowers survivors to speak their truth and encourages society to create safe and supportive environments.

This year, we reflect on the courage shown by survivors like Anonymous, who bravely shares her experience during her time at university a painful reminder of why this movement matters. "What began as a celebration after exams turned into a night I'll never forget," she recalls. "A trusted friend lured me into his room under the pretence of collecting study materials. Once inside, he tried to assault me. Despite my resistance and cries, he overpowered me until I found a knife nearby. I don't know how I reached it, but it gave me the chance to escape."

She did not report the incident. Her attacker held a high position in a political party, and fear of retaliation silenced her. They crossed paths often, forced into uneasy interactions by shared classes. She was left with trauma; he was left with only a scar.

Even worse, she was asked what she wore that night. Her confidence in her body a skirt, a simple outfit was twisted into blame. And that's where the real problem lies.

We must stop policing what women wear and start educating boys from a young age that no one is entitled to another person's body. Consent is not negotiable. Being in a relationship, being married, being male, none of these justify force or entitlement. Too often, girls are taught how to protect themselves, but boys are not taught how to respect women. We need to shift the conversation girl children are not the problem. Toxic masculinity, entitlement, and unaddressed trauma lead many boys down harmful paths, but we must also stop excusing bad behaviour. Past trauma is never a justification for assault.

South Africa faces a sexual assault crisis. Daily reports of abuse by partners, family members, even authority figures are shown on the news. Women are not safe in their homes, on the streets, or in schools. Though all genders can be affected, women and girls are mostly targeted. According to statistics 63% of women who are sexually abused never see justice, 15% of victims are under 12 years old and 80% of female victims know their attacker. These numbers are a cry for change.

We must do better. We must talk about it. Shout about it. Demand change until we're heard. It's time to teach our brothers and sisters that No means No. We must promote healthy relationships, open dialogue, and most importantly, consent. Just one reckless decision can ruin lives, and we can prevent that by raising awareness and encouraging women to fight for their rights. Let this month not be a moment, but the beginning of a movement.



The ABC of the Audit Process made easy

The ABC of the Audit Process made easy simplify

Every year prior to the announcement of the audit report and findings and what seem oblivious to most of us of what happens when the Department and the Auditor General convene and consult on predetermined objectives as the audit process gets underway.

Motshidisi Seate from the office of the Chief Financial Officer office takes us through this important process as she provides an inside of what actually happens behind closed doors during the audit process which in principle paves the way in preparing an audit report and findings.

The office of Auditor General is a Section 29 Institution within the Republic. The office operates under the Public Audit Act and plays an oversight role that ensures that all public funds are used and accounted for in line with their allocation mandate.

In addition to ensuring that the public funds are accounted for, the AG also ensures that the public receive services that have been planned for by the department.

The audit process starts when auditors arrive in the department in February every year and during this time, the auditors will perform a state of records review whereby all Policies, Operating procedures approved and applied during the financial year, are collected by the auditors to plan for the execution of the audit.

The auditors will also request to be provided with all approvals of the budget the Annual Performance Plan (APP), the approved structure and projects approved for implementation. The financial year of the department ends in March each year and in line with Section 40(1)C, the Accounting Officer of the department must submit Financial Statements two months after the end of the financial year.

It is for this reason that the Chief Financial Officer must oversee that all components in Supply Chain Management and Financial Administration submit all required schedules in time to meet the deadline of 31 May.

During this time all managers in SCM and DFA will be focussed on their work and at times leave their offices late in the evening. Once financial statements have been finalised, they will be packaged in a prescribed format and submitted to the Auditors together with Annual Performance Report, heralding the start of the actual audit.



The audit process subject all processes and transactions that occurred during the year to all audit standards as prescribed in the Public Audit Act as well as International Reporting Standards and any noncompliance to financial laws, regulations and guidelines will lead to possible qualification.

During the subsistence of the audit, auditors at times will make findings due to not having got proper explanation on processes and that is when the CFO will convene a discussion between the auditor and the manager in the department where such issue is raised to provide all clarities required and while some of these issues are resolved, there are those that will remain un-resolved and will be taken to the concluding report.



“ The Audit outcomes during the years 23/24, 22/23, 21/22 we received Unqualified Audits in the financial statements and for the Annual poerformance Plan... ”

The nature of the issues picked by AG during the audit are classified into to two categories being those that affect the audit opinion and those that are highlight weaknesses in the controls within the department.

The issues that affect the audit opinion are said to be material in auditing terms and for the recent past the following have been such issues as raised by AGSA; Failure by management to prevent the occurrence of Irregular Expenditure as well as failure to investigate previous cases of Irregular expenditure . Failure to spend budget allocated to the department, Material misstatements of in the Financial Statements.

While the above are the main issues reported previously, management through the CFO has addressed most of the issues and currently only Irregular Expenditure is the only remaining issue. With the Post Audit Action Plan (PAAP) of the audit of 2023/24 the department addressed all issues raised in that audit year and prospects of an improved audit during the 2024/25 audit look good.

The audit outcomes during the years 23/24, 22/23 and 21/22 we received Unqualified Audits in the financial Statements and for the Annual Performance on APP, programme 3 has proven a challenge with qualification of certain aspects of the reported indicators.

An audit is said to be unqualified if the Auditors are satisfied with the presentation of the Financial Statements and management does not make material adjustments to the submitted Financial Statements to incorporate issues raised during the audit. This opinion is the second-best opinion to a clean audit (that we aspire to achieve) and maintaining this opinion for the last three financial years is no mean feat.



Celebrating academic excellence of our staff



Mirenda Menwe
BCom (Hons) Supply Chain Management
MANCOSA



Lebone Dithate
Postgraduate Diploma in Management
with Distinction
North-West University



Kgosietsile Mojahi
Postgraduate Diploma in Management
North-West University

Staff Talk proudly extends its heartfelt congratulations to our remarkable staff on their recent milestones. Each of them has demonstrated outstanding dedication and resilience in balancing their work and studies. We are truly inspired and looking forward to seeing all great things they'll accomplish in their future.

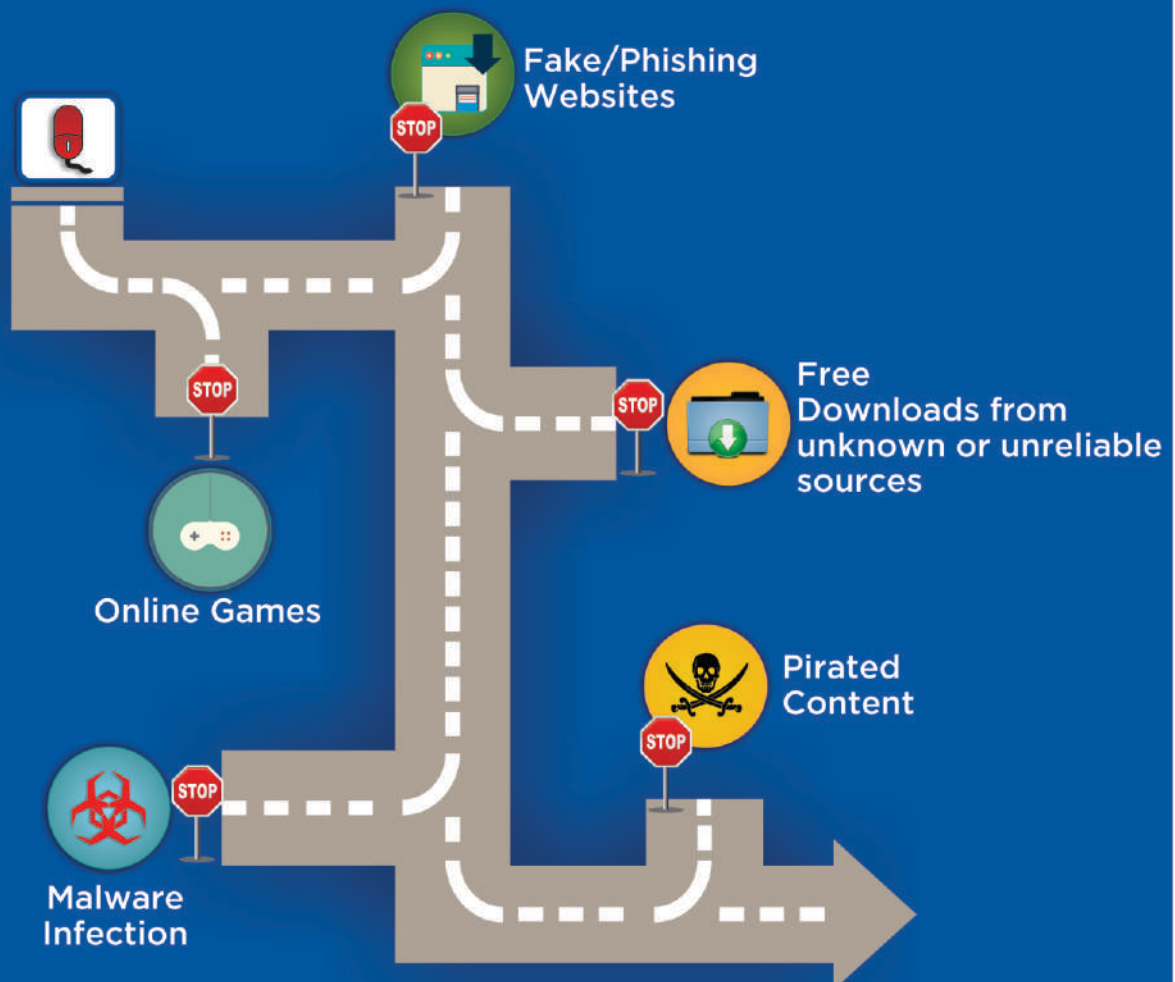
NEW APPOINTEES FROM APRIL TO JUNE 2025

Name	Rank	Station	Appointment Date
KGOMO TE	STATE VETERINARIAN	STATE VETERINARY OFFICE NALEDI	2025/04/01
BOTMA MC	STATE VETERINARIAN	STATE VETERINARY OFFICE MOSES KOTANE	2025/04/01
GABOPEWE KL	AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIST	PRODUCTION ECONOMICS SERVICES	2025/06/01
MOKOTO PB	AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIST	AGRO-PROCESSING	2025/06/01
SETOU BA	AGRICULTURAL ADVISOR	AGRIC EXTENSION & ADVISORY SERVICES MATLOSANA	2025/06/01
KHOZA BM	ARTISAN INSTRUCTOR	POTCHEFSTROOM AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE	2025/06/03
SEEKARO V	ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER	ANIMAL DISEASE CONTROL & EPIDEMIOLOGY DR RSM	2025/06/01
MEDUPE OC	PERSONNEL PRACTITIONER HUMAN RESOURCE	HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA	2025/06/01
MOSWEU GJ	GENERAL WORKER	SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA	2025/06/01
LOLWANE CJ	GENERAL WORKER	AGRIC EXTENSION & ADVISORY SERVICES DITSOBOTLA	2025/06/03
MOGOMOTSI NC	CLEANER	SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA	2025/06/01
GAOBONEGWE KC	CLEANER	TAUNG AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE	2025/06/01
RADIKGWEJANE EL	CLEANER	SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA	2025/06/01
BOPALAMO KO	CLEANER	TAUNG AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE	2025/06/01



CYBER SECURITY AWARENESS

AVOID UNSECURE ONLINE **DIVERSIONS**



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Information security is everybody's responsibility!



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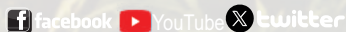
INTERNAL NEWSLETTER



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WE BELONG



WE CARE



WE SERVE

LEAVE **NO**
ONE BEHIND