

# She Is Forestry SA

2022/2023 – An Award Winning Year





**“Forestry is as much about people, as it is about the trees they plant, grow, harvest and transform. Life is about celebrating the small wins, acknowledging the slightest of accomplishments and taking gratitude from each and every day. For the Forest Sector Charter Council, She Is Forestry SA does both these things. It acknowledges, celebrates and bestows gratitude on the amazing women we have both in our Sector and looking to join it. The empowerment of women is prioritised in the Amended Forest Sector Code, so She Is Forestry SA and the ideology it promotes could not have come at a better time. It is perfectly aligned to FSCC aspirations and will undoubtedly continue to validate the need for enhancing the empowerment of women across the Forestry Sector.”**

**– Forest Sector Charter Council**



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# Shining a light on women in forestry



**Khosi Mavimbela**

**T**he road to gender equality in South Africa is still longer than it should be, however, Sectors like ours have made huge

steps in recent years to close the gap and ensure an end is in sight. Nevertheless, the Forestry Sector in many respects is still a man's world, only it is one that embraces, celebrates and promotes the inclusion of women. There is something special about women who excel in a man's world. They often possess an inner strength, confidence and open mindedness that ensures a resilience and will to succeed that goes above and beyond that of women working in careers where the gender ratio is more proportional. The value of such women needs to be recognised, these are the women driving our Sector forwards and are role models that inspire the next generation to push boundaries, challenge expectations and go above and beyond in the pursuit of excellence.

Our successful 2022 webinar, themed "Be the best you can be", not only reminds us of the importance of celebrating and acknowledging the immense contribution women make across the Forestry Sector, it also illustrated the impact generated by women coming together. What made this webinar so powerful was that all the guest speakers were successful, exceptional and motivational women sourced from our own Sector, and all shared their thoughts on how we can be better versions of ourselves in our unique worlds. Their inspiring thoughts and messages placed an emphasis on attributes and qualities for professional development and growth, as

well as bravery and thoughtfulness, which should in turn assist the next generation that plans to take Forestry to another level.

Those who joined us for the webinar would probably agree with me, that this webinar built on the success of the previous two. The inclusive nature of the topics covered ensured the webinar appealed to men as much as it did to women and was as useful to graduates and entrepreneurs as it was to researchers and those in executive positions. For this we can thank the planning team, led by Forestry South Africa's Dr Katy Johnson, whose commitment, hard work, purpose-led planning and excellence in this field ensured this webinar surpassed all expectations.

The continued unwavering generosity and support of our sponsors, and the

Industry have been lifted out of 'period poverty'. Period poverty has been found to be one of the biggest barriers to education for girls, with three in ten girls missing days of school every month because of not being able to afford sanitary protection. For these 1 622 girls, those days are in their past and we have helped change their future for the better.

The positive shift in the way Industry embraces and acknowledges the role of women within our Sector is encouraging. It was reflected in the wide array of outstanding nominations we received for the first ever She Is Forestry SA Awards. Each one of our nominees was worthy of being heralded the winner and while only four could be crowned, it perhaps should be said that the real winner on the night was our Sector for having such a myriad of phenomenal women at its disposal.

*“...embraces, celebrates and promotes the inclusion of women”*

entire Forestry Sector, was overwhelming and proved beyond doubt the Sector's commitment to gender equality. The money received has provided a life changing experience for more than 1 600 girls, from Limpopo to the Eastern Cape, who thanks to the generosity of our

I would like to finish by encouraging all those across our Sector to strive to make Forestry a better place for all and to continue to build fulfilling relationships and networks for the benefit of all.

Happy reading!

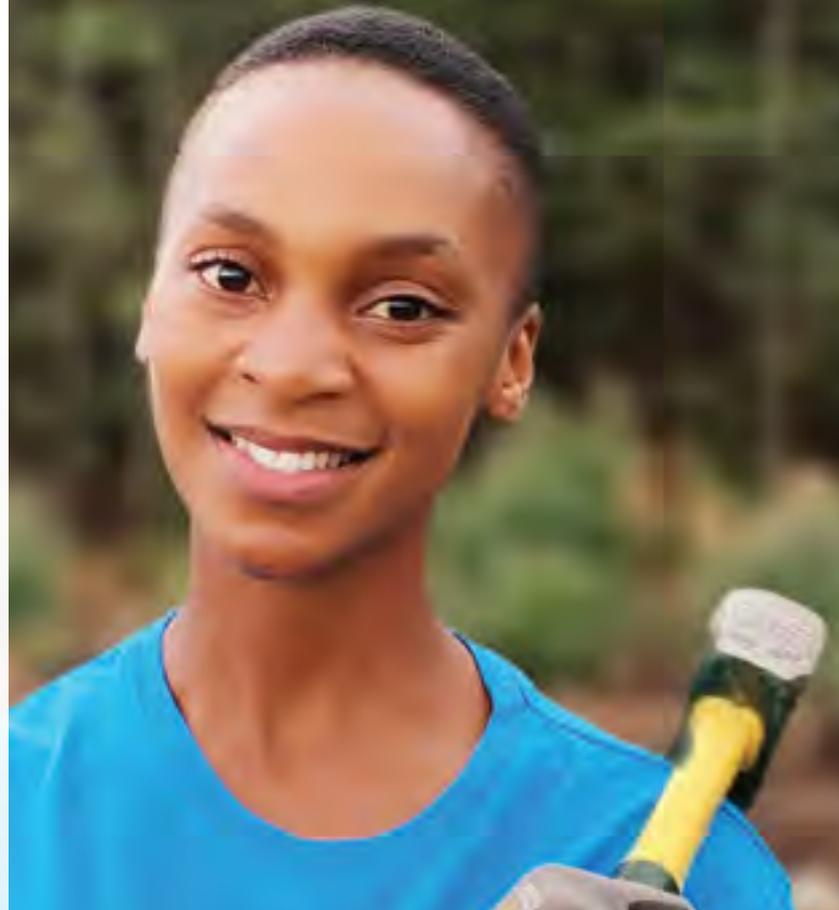
**Khosi Mavimbela**  
**She Is Forestry SA Coordinator and Forest Sector Charter Council Executive Director**



FORESTRY SOUTH AFRICA™

**“Forestry South Africa is a proud supporter of She Is Forestry SA and the work they are doing to engage, uplift and celebrate women across the forestry value-chain. As an organisation, FSA works tirelessly to address the gender stereotypes that may be preventing women from considering the Forestry Sector as a viable career path, supporting She Is Forestry SA endeavours like their webinar, awards and school visits that align with this goal. Women play an integral role within our Sector, and we should be doing more to promote and celebrate this to ensure future generations of women follow in their footsteps, which is why FSA will continue to support the brilliant work being done by She Is Forestry SA.”**

**– Forestry South Africa**



**“Times have changed and NCT understands that a Forestry Industry, dominated by a specific gender, culture, or age group, is not tenable. We need to move away from past stereotypes and recognise the undeniable strengths, attributes and contributions of women previously denied access due to many unfounded albeit engrained reasons. Forestry is not just about manual work in a plantation, but about planning, research, management and service, all of which open up many as yet unexploited opportunities for women. NCT is an integrated organisation and accordingly encourages women to follow whatever career path that they choose. We support the She Is Forestry SA initiative for this very reason.”**

**NCT**

NCT FORESTRY AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

**– NCT Forestry Agricultural  
Co-operative Ltd**

# She Is Forestry SA challenges women from across the Sector to “Be the best you can be!”

“**C**arving out time for personal development and investing in yourself is becoming increasingly important for those wishing to move up the career ladder, yet sadly women are notoriously bad at doing this. Many simply do not have the time, as the juggle of busy home and work lives is holding them back. This year, She Is Forestry SA wanted to shift the emphasis of our webinar to focus inward, giving back to the women already in our Industry and opening the doors to those wishing to join it. That is why this year’s She Is Forestry SA webinar was packed full of career advice and personal development opportunities, featuring Industry speakers who could draw from their own experience to help lift others up”, explains Ms Makhosazana Mavimbela, Forest Sector Charter Council (FSCC) Executive Director and She Is Forestry SA Coordinator.



The Webinar lived up to expectations from the word go, with Opening Speaker Iris Fynn, Communication Manager at Mondi South Africa, sharing her exceptional story which has been made into a documentary by the United Nations. Iris’s is a story of hope, self-belief and resilience. She has faced hardships few can imagine and come out stronger and more determined, which makes her the perfect role model for women and girls alike. Iris’s willingness to share her story in the hope of uplifting others makes her a beacon of light within our Sector, an individual who should be commended and provided with platforms upon which to inspire the next generation of women in forestry. Iris’s contribution to both the webinar and the Sector was perfectly summarised by She Is Forestry SA Chairwoman, Bathobile Ntshingila, who dedicated her reading of Maya Angelou’s Phenomenal Women to Iris and the other guest speakers.

“It was hard to imagine how we could follow Iris’s incredible talk. The messages flooding the Chat were of people sitting in tears, touched by Iris’s story and her belief in herself. Women who had found their own strength in Iris’s words. Certainly, there was not a dry eye in the greenroom where the rest of the presenters were



waiting for their turn to 'be the best they could be'. However, follow it we did with what turned out to be an incredible act of humanity", recalls Dr Katy Johnson, Forestry South Africa Communication Consultant and She Is Forestry SA Webinar Coordinator.

For the 2022 Webinar, She Is Forestry SA had partnered with Move Africa, an NPO aiming to eliminate period poverty by providing girls at high school with a reusable menstrual cup, ensuring they never have to miss another day of school. A subsequent article will go into more detail about this incredible movement and how you can get involved. Before the talk by Move Africa CEO, Lesego Mpanya, She Is Forestry SA launched a 'BackaBuddy' initiative, which ran the duration of the webinar and raised an additional R20 000 for menstrual cups!

Lesego then spoke from the heart about her passion for the project and the impact period poverty is having on the education of the girl child in South Africa. Her words touched the hearts of all those listening, and her story reinforced the message from Iris that if you believe it, you can live it. Finishing her talk with a powerful video that showed just how simple it could be to eliminate period poverty and ensure future generations of girls have this huge barrier to education lifted, provided another flurry of messages of support on the Chat and pledges to the 'BackaBuddy' campaign. In total, over R125 000 was raised for menstrual cups, ensuring every girl from Grade 8 to Matric in the five high schools She Is Forestry SA supports, were provided with a menstrual cup and directions on how to use it.

*"The current economic climate makes asking for money especially difficult, however, I think this year's cause made it easy for companies to say yes. They saw the need and wanted to be part of the solution. We were bowled over by the online donations during the webinar, especially as we thought asking for an additional R10 000 might be ambitious. The generosity of*

*individuals, companies and organisations was overwhelming and made the whole webinar organising committee incredibly proud to be part of such a caring Sector,"* says Ms Julia Rees, Dargle Poles Director and She Is Forestry SA Treasurer.

The main body of the webinar comprised of four presentations given by women from across the Sector. Two of these were discussion panels hosted by Forestry South Africa's Katy Johnson, which involved women at the top of their respective fields reaching out to others at very different ends of the career ladder. The first panel was pitched at graduates looking to enter the Sector, with MTO Group Chief People Officer, Rushda Sulaiman and SAFCOL Group OD and Talent Officer, Zama Gamede, providing a Master Class in CV and cover letter writing as well as interview technique.

*"The session received brilliant feedback and it is definitely something we will look to include again in future years, perhaps providing a seminar specifically aimed at helping bridge the gap between graduate studies and employment. CV writing and interviews can be incredibly daunting, especially when you*

*are starting out in the industry. To use the words of one student attending the webinar, 'to have two Sector recruitment specialists providing insights about what to do and what not to do was fantastic, where else would we get this level of insider information and help!' It is feedback like this that makes all the hours we put into this worthwhile",* explains Dr Johnson.

The second panel discussion involved three C-level ladies who need no introduction, NCT's CFO – Kerry Moffat, Mondi Zimele CEO – Nelly Ndlovu and Sappi's CFO – Pramy Moodley. Three women whose determination, hardwork and self-belief has seen them smash through any gender-based glass ceiling and prove no position is out of reach.

*"There was not a dry eye in the house during the C-level panel discussion. The women were so honest and engaging when discussing an often guilt-ridden topic of balancing work/home life, a challenge that all working women experience. Hearing women in executive positions saying, "I struggle too", "I often have to make sacrifices", "I don't always get it right" is vindicating. We all must make tough decisions, juggle the people we love the most with the careers we adore, and we don't always get it right, to know we are not alone in this is both comforting and powerful,"* says Ms Mavimbela.

Sandwiched between the two panel discussions was an inspirational talk by FSCC Executive Director, Khosi Mavimbela entitled 'being a woman is not enough'. Navigating the tricky subject of gender equality, Makhosazana placed emphasis on how women looking to compete with male colleagues for positions within the Sector need to place a high value on their skills, experience, values and ideas. That they should be seen and valued for these and not as a token gesture to their gender. Her ultimate take home message 'that hard work, courage, grit and determination are what it takes to succeed, and we need to take responsibility for our own destiny' is an affirmation every woman should follow.

The webinar was concluded with a brilliant motivational talk by Forestry Consultant and Life Coach, Jacqui Meyer, who was such a huge hit at the previous webinar that she was asked back this time to speak on the elusive life/work balance. Jacqui's talk reinforced many of the messages given by the other guest speakers, with her actionable tips and tricks providing a 'to do' list that the webinar audience loved. We firmly suggest you take the time to watch Jacqui's presentation and the rest of the webinar if you didn't manage to catch it the first time around. The whole recording can be found on the FSA website.

The She Is Forestry SA Awards was a new addition to this year's webinar and added a bit of "Hollywood magic" to the proceedings, as videos showcasing all the nominees were shown prior to the winners being announced. An article detailing the Awards can be found later on in this magazine.

The webinar was attended by almost 300 guests, up on the previous year. Audience members ranged from students to government to industry representatives and included several international attendees from the United States, Europe and African countries. Articles on the webinar were published in Industry publications in South Africa and internationally, with the webinar praised by the FAO's Forestry Communication Network.

Women's Month is really a time to reflect on the role women now play at work, at home and for our community in general. They are the pillars of our communities, the glue that holds us together, the multi-taskers who somehow manage to keep every ball in the air. They are our mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, bosses, leaders and partners. However, She Is Forestry SA wants to extend its recognition of women beyond Women's Month, beyond the borders of our plantations and into the homes, communities, businesses and hearts across South Africa, every minute of every day of every year. We want every woman to know – they are special, they are valued and they are seen.



**“As a company that exists to build a thriving world by unlocking the power of renewable resources to benefit people, communities, and the planet, our South African forestry business is vital for us to attain this goal. Sappi is a proud sponsor of She Is Forestry SA, as this important showcase highlights the role that women play in the Forestry Industry in our country; both within our own organisation – where women hold pivotal positions in all spheres – and reaching into our communities; where women are benefiting from being active forestry value-chain participants, supported by our training and development programmes.”**

**– Sappi Southern Africa**

**“The South African Sawmilling Sector recognises that women certainly play an important and meaningful role from trees to timber. This is why we leapt at the opportunity to co-sponsor the She Is Forestry SA initiative. We believe that this is one of the more significant developments in our industry in many years and certainly hope that it is the start of the future. We are proud of the work of the She Is Forestry SA Team.”**

**– Sawmilling South Africa**



# Celebrating abundance in the face of uncertainty

## Julia Rees

**She Is Forestry SA Director and Treasurer and Owner of Dargle Poles**

**W**e have come off the back of three incredibly difficult years, and as a result, 2022 was a year of deep uncertainty. Would the pandemic come back with a more virulent and deadly strain? Would global economies collapse under the fiscal crisis that came in the wake of the pandemic and poor political decision-making? Closer to home, could the toll of load-shedding bring the country to its knees and would the devastating natural disasters and economic uncertainty caused by insurrections and strikes see our economy shrink further? With so much uncertainty, society's focus often turns inward, belts are tightened, focus is placed on surviving the here-and-now and charity too often becomes a luxury for better times.

This certainly was at the forefront of our minds when planning the 2022 webinar. The idea of asking companies and individuals for money, at a time when most were extremely worried about what the next quarter would bring and how they would cope with the predicted cost of living crisis, was about as appealing as sitting in a sauna in Maritzburg in February. And yet, it was something we needed to do.

She Is Forestry SA can only do the good it does thanks to the generosity and support of our sponsors. Their money had, in previous years, enabled us to

provide calculators for schools that had increased exam rates from 36% to 84.4%, an extraordinary feat that highlights the significance of both the donations and the work She Is Forestry SA is undertaking. This year our focus was on eradicating period poverty in South Africa, teaming with Move Africa to provide menstrual cups for the five forestry schools we are supporting. Our target of raising R100 000 was no small task, especially as we were also looking for four R10 000 Award Prize sponsors too. Countless skype meetings were followed with emails going back-and-forth as we tried desperately to compose the perfectly pitched letter to go out to potential sponsors.

Thankfully, weeks of concern and anxiety gave way to gratitude and immense pride as the donations rolled in. Companies who had supported the initiative from day one

were joined by new sponsors willing to come on board to "be part of something bigger". In total, a staggering R230 000 was raised through corporate sponsorship, which illustrates not only the generosity of our Sector, but also the worthiness of the cause.

This year was made even more special by the 'BackaBuddy' campaign, casually suggested by Webinar Co-ordinator, Katy Johnson, a month before 'webinar D-day'. At the time, no one would have expected the generosity that was rained down on She Is Forestry SA and the menstrual cup initiative, with individuals and organisations coming together to donate an additional R20 000 to the cause.

*"No one can prepare you for the overwhelming emotions you feel when people stand up and show such support for an initiative you deeply believe in."*



*The generosity at a time when everyone was feeling the crunch of the economic downturn was both unexpected and completely heart-warming. It showed the willingness of individuals to dig deep to support strangers. It was magical and overwhelming to read the messages of support that came through on the webinar chat and to see the money flood into our BackABuddy page. Many cited the importance of believing in abundance, especially during times of uncertainty and scarcity, never have I seen it realised until now. I feel humbled, honoured and inspired to have been part of the process and to have borne witness to the generosity of our incredible Sector and the individuals in it.” – Dr Katy Johnson, Forestry South Africa Communication Consultant and She Is Forestry SA Webinar Coordinator.*

At the webinar, R40 000 was given out as prize money to the four She Is Forestry SA Award winners. R46,425 was spent on the webinar hosting and graphic design costs. A further R114 500 went to Move Africa who matched this amount, distributing

1 622 menstrual cups to the five schools She Is Forestry SA is a proud supporter of. The schools also received a workshop, paid for with this money, where trained Move Africa employees enlightened them about the menstrual cups, menstrual cycle and the importance of eradicating period poverty. The final expense for 2022, has been the initiating of the She Is Forestry SA website, which to date has cost R3 672 in website hosting, with the populating and design to follow in 2023.

There is currently R173 000 in the She Is Forestry SA bank account. This has been earmarked for several exciting projects in 2023, including printing additional copies of the She Is Forestry SA Magazine for distribution at the schools we support as well as other educational institutions. An exciting webinar/educational initiative will also be discussed later in far more detail.

In summary, 2022 has been a year of amazing abundance in the face of uncertainty and economic challenges. She Is Forestry SA is acutely aware of the importance of spending these funds wisely to maximise the benefit they bring. The menstrual cups will help eradicate period poverty by reducing the number of school days lost to girls that cannot afford sanitary protection. The adoption of the cups and the effectiveness of this scheme will be monitored and if found to be beneficial, we intend to roll it out at other schools. With the additional money raised we intend to produce educational material that can be used at our webinar, and in schools across the country promoting the

*“Amazing things happen when women help other women.”  
– Kasia Gospo*

TABLE ONE: Money Raised from Sponsors

Cash sponsors:

COMPANY NAME	AMOUNT cash
FPM & SETA	50 000.00
FSCC (earmarked for webinar hosting)	40 000.00
FSA	25 000.00
Merensky	10 000.00
Mondi South Africa	10 000.00
MTO	15 000.00
NCT	10 000.00
PAMSA	10 000.00
PAMSA	
BackABuddy Funding	5 000.00
SAPPI	20 000.00
Sawmilling SA	15 000.00
SAWPA	10 000.00
TWK	10 000.00
	<b>230 000.00</b>

BACKABUDDY	1 219.73
BACKABUDDY	13 219.05
BACKABUDDY	613.12
	<b>15 051.90</b>

Forestry Sector to both the girl and boy child for years to come. These initiatives have been approved by the Council of She Is Forestry SA Directors and are in the process of being implemented. The effectiveness of each initiative our donations support will continue to be monitored and reviewed.

*“I want to see us continue helping and participating in the development of rural communities, supporting schools and small growers believing in themselves and see that it is possible to grow from subsistence to commercial forestry and not be deterred by fear or limitations. In addition, we want to continue exposing youth and women in all value chains of non-timber products to information and opportunities that will not only contribute but diversify income to address household food security.”*

– Ms. Irene Mathabela, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. Deputy Director: Sector Liaison and Capacity Development and She Is Forestry SA Director.

# A partnership for change: She Is Forestry SA & Move Africa



*“Availability of resources, infrastructural challenges and the lack of learning facilities all are contributing factors to why exceptionally performing schools are rare in rural areas – we want to be part of the solution that changes this.”*  
– Ms Makhosazana Mavimbela, Forest Sector Charter Council Executive Director and She Is Forestry SA Co-ordinator

## **Lesego Mpyana** **Move Africa**

*“The menstrual cups donated for all the girl pupils in my school were an eye opener about the new alternatives to traditional sanitary wear. For our pupils who have a technological mind, this could be an accelerator to build confidence on the real possibilities and avenues of technology. Undoubtedly, the training offered on the use of the menstrual cups enhanced our girls’ body literacy. Such exposure is important in minimizing the chances on unwanted pregnancies amongst pupils. Appreciation from the school and the teachers is beyond measure.”*  
– Mr Ndlovu, Phindizwe High School.

To ‘be the best we can be’ our focus should be both internal and external, looking at how we can transform our own lives, as well as the lives of others. The webinar was the perfect example of this, its content focused on enriching the lives of its audience helping them look internally at how they could improve their own situation, while the sponsorship it raised goes beyond those in the Forestry Sector and out into the forestry communities who need it the most.

This year, almost R100 000 raised through webinar sponsorship and an additional R20 000 from the ‘BackaBuddy’ campaign, was dedicated to eradicating period poverty in forestry communities. Period poverty is a huge issue in South Africa, with an estimated 3 in 10 girls missing days at school as a result of not being able to afford sanitary wear.

She Is Forestry SA believes no girl child should have to miss out on education and ultimately the career opportunities this affords, as a result of period poverty. Teaming up with Move Africa, a NPO dedicated to eradicating period poverty across the continent, She Is Forestry SA distributed 1 622 menstrual cups to the five adopted schools the organisation supports.

“Our adoptive schools are as much a part of She Is Forestry SA as the webinar or magazine is. They are a branch, from a single trunk, that extends outwards and forwards, uplifting and encouraging the next generation of foresters”, explains Bathobile Ntshingila, SAFCOL Environmental Practitioner and She Is Forestry SA Chairwoman.

While relatively new to South Africa, menstrual cups have been used for decades in other countries and offer a sustainable alternative to traditional sanitary products. Properly looked after, each cup can last between 10 and 15 years and can be worn for up to 12 hours before being emptied and cleaned. What’s more, they are considered safer than pads or tampons as they do not dry the vagina and potentially protect against vaginal infections. They are also discreet, eliminating the issues of odour which develops when menstrual fluids are exposed to air.

During September and October 2022, representatives of She Is Forestry SA, Move Africa, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Forestry South Africa, the Forest Sector Charter Council, South African Forestry Contractors Association, SAFCOL and MTO visited the five She Is Forestry SA adoptive schools to distribute menstrual cups and deliver educational talks about menstruation.

*“Education is the critical driver of social and economic change. To us, the future of our pupils matters most. We are cognizant that our pupils are faced with many challenges and may in no doubt lead to absenteeism. The reality of “Period Poverty” can be heartbreaking and sometimes overwhelming when you even bring it closer and magnify the negative influence it has to the academic performance of our pupils and unfortunate teenage pregnancies. She Is Forestry SA once again brought “hope” with the donation of menstrual cups to all our girl pupils from grade 8-12. It is our belief as the school that this hope is long term and will bring about more successes we can be proud of.” – Mr Blaai, Principal of Concordia High School.*

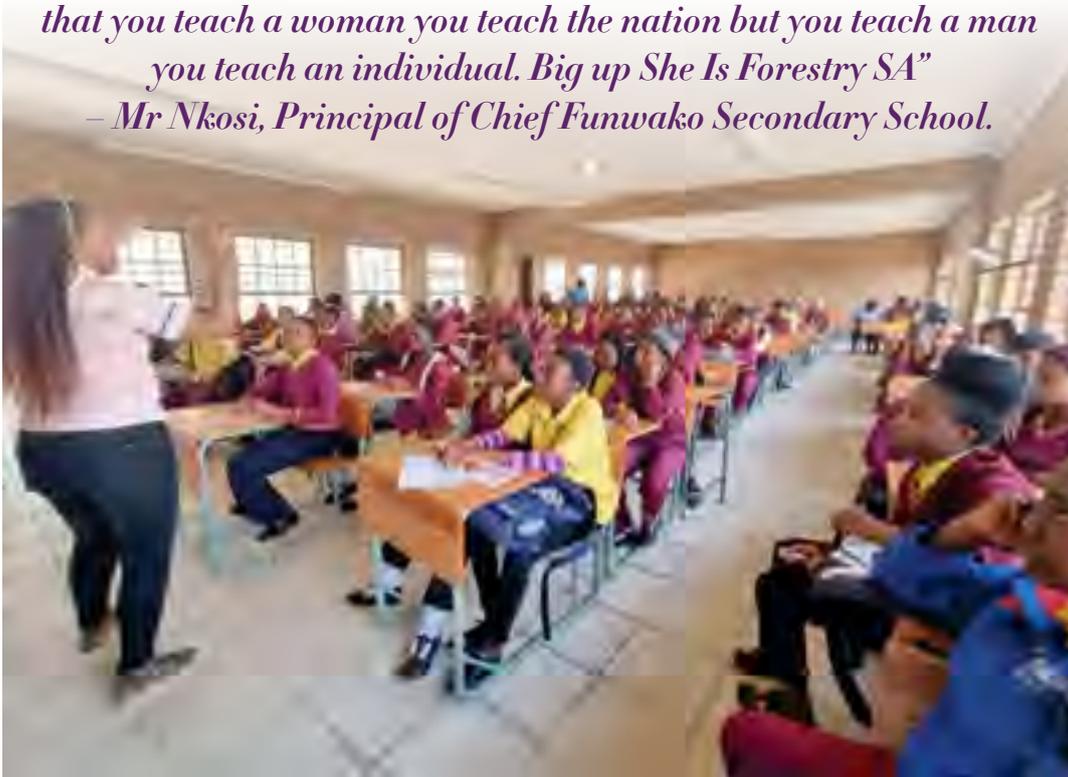
The talks provided the girls with information on how to use and look after their cups, but more importantly reinforcing the girls’ understanding of the menstrual cycle with the hope to minimise teenage pregnancies. Pamphlets were also distributed with information on the longevity, flexibility and safety associated with using a menstrual cup.

The school visits presented She Is Forestry SA with the opportunity to educate pupils about Arbor Month and the importance of planting trees to produce a renewable resource and help curb climate change. At each school a ceremonial tree planting was undertaken and a variety of trees were donated.

School	Tree
Phindizwe High School	10 <i>Warburgia salutaris</i> (Pepperbark)
Chief Funwako Secondary School	10 <i>Kigelia africana</i> (Sausage Tree) and 10 <i>Portulacaria afra</i> (Spekboom)
Mneba School	6 <i>Portulaca oleracea</i> (Little Hogweed) and 2 <i>Viburnum suspensum</i> (Kandankwa viburnum)
Mangoako School	3 <i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i> (Jackalberry) and 2 <i>Harperphyllum caffrum</i> (Wild plum)
Concordia Secondary School	2 <i>Erythrina caffra</i> (Coastal Coral Trees)



*“There are two options regarding commitment. You are either “in” or “out”. She Is Forestry SA has proven beyond doubt that they are IN The continuous and genuine support from “She Is Forestry SA” gives us the edge to encourage our pupils to be better and to see forestry beyond the trees. Remember, it is said that you teach a woman you teach the nation but you teach a man you teach an individual. Big up She Is Forestry SA”*  
– Mr Nkosi, Principal of Chief Funwako Secondary School.



In addition, other items such as sun hats, water bottles, forestry pamphlets and magazines were also distributed.

The school visits were not all about giving, they also offered the opportunity for She Is Forestry SA associates to gain a better understanding of what each school required. For some, it is educational equipment like projectors and white boards, for others basic staples such as toilet rolls and printing paper, some need help with curbing teenage issues such as teen pregnancies and substance abuse, while others require career advice support.

*“These engagements were enlightening and incredibly important as they help steer She Is Forestry SA in the right direction when it comes to the items we will donate in the future. By speaking with the Principals and Educators at each school we can ensure we provide items that create lasting impact”* Ms Mavimbela explains.

Feedback from the schools regarding both this initiative and previous campaigns has been incredibly positive and truly appreciative. While last year they were thankful for our actions and intentions, this year it cemented in their minds that we see this as a lasting partnership for change. That we are as committed to their schools, their learners and education as they are, and that together we have the potential to be a powerful drive of positive change.

*“She Is Forestry SA’s support has been instrumental in our mission. The physical visit was even more heartening as we could express our genuine appreciation. We as the Mangoako school are not only fortunate but grateful in knowing that She Is Forestry SA has been there for “US” since 2021. We are also more excited about the future opportunities that She Is Forestry SA has brought to our pupils.”* – Mr Selowa, Mangoako Secondary School.



**“The South African Wood Preservers Association as an organisation in the processing of forest products is proud to be involved as a sponsor and supporter of the She Is Forestry SA initiative. We believe that pointing the spotlight on women in the Forestry and related Forest Product Sectors, will inspire more ladies to consider a career in the Sector.”**

**– SAWPA**



**“Mondi SA is proud to partner with Forestry South Africa on the She Is Forestry SA campaign. A recent McKinsey study showed that globally it would take decades to close the gender gap and so as Mondi, we aim to support and collaborate on industry initiatives that look to narrowing the gender gaps and recognise the contributions of women, thereby building a purposefully diverse and inclusive forestry industry.”**

**– Mondi SA**

# 2022 The Year of The Awards

This year has brought much to be proud of including another fantastic webinar, the R20 000 pledged to our 'BackaBuddy' campaign by individuals in our Sector, and of course the donation of thousands of menstrual cups, which should mean no girl at the five schools we support should ever miss another day of education due to period poverty. However, if the She Is Forestry SA Directors were asked to single out a She Is Forestry SA moment, initiative, or impact that has brought the most pride, their response would be unanimous – The She Is Forestry SA Awards.

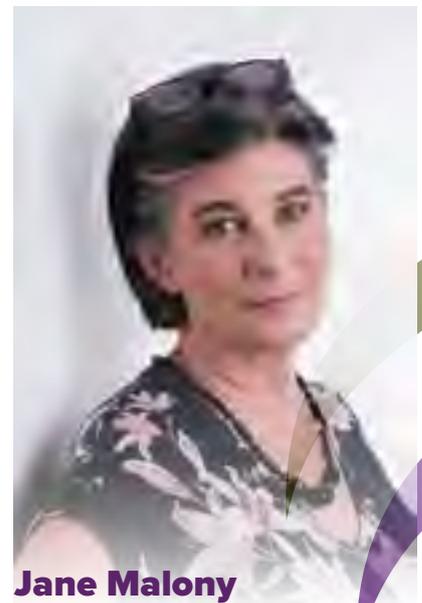
The She Is Forestry SA Awards were special for many reasons, not least because they provided an opportunity to formally acknowledge the important role women play, from the start of the forestry value chain in the many forestry nurseries

*“It was incredibly difficult being a judge! Each candidate nominated showed such determination, such positivity, and such a tangible contribution to the Sector. Ultimately, we needed an additional award for the small-scale growers that have their own unique set of challenges and need to be valued as highly as the corporate contenders.”*

– Ms. Julia Rees, Dargle Poles Director and She Is Forestry SA Director and Treasurer

to the other end where the myriad of forest products are created. However, for those involved in the organisation it was the realisation of a vision that a handful of them had collectively dreamt up during the early days of She Is Forestry SA.

It was also the moment when all the nerves associated with putting on the Award fizzled away and the self-doubt that had been haunting the Awards organisers was put out. *“It seems funny now to even acknowledge the excruciating anxieties everyone involved in the Awards felt. Initially, we were*



**Jane Malony**

*“I wish I had the words to really express the enormous sense of pride I felt to see women, from different generations, working in very different aspects of forestry, standing shoulder to shoulder and being officially acknowledged and awarded for their contribution to our Sector. The need to recognise the contribution women make to our Sector is something we all agreed on from day one, so it feels like we have achieved the most important of milestones.”*

– Ms. Morongoa Leseke, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. Chief Director Forestry Operations and She Is Forestry SA Director

concerned whether we would even get any nominations at all, not because there aren't women worthy of being nominated - there are thousands - but we weren't sure how the Sector would respond, whether the need to acknowledge women from across the Sector was one they perceived in the same way we did. Thankfully, we didn't have to wait long for the nomination floodgates to open and those first flickers of self-doubt were extinguished quickly” explains Dr Katy Johnson, Forestry South



*“The She Is Forestry SA Awards was another inspirational platform where I was excited and honoured to see the level of involvement and great work invested by the different Nominees in their respective spaces, hence the need for them to be celebrated. We hope to see an increase in the number of individuals participating in impactful initiatives and excelling above and beyond.”*

*– Ms Irene Mathabela, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment. Director: Sector Liaison and Capacity Development and She Is Forestry SA Director.*

Africa Communication Consultant and She Is Forestry SA Webinar and Awards Coordinator.

Judging the nominees was another huge source of consternation, with the quality and depth of nominees making it virtually impossible to choose between them. An additional category and sponsor needed to be sought, as it was felt by the judges that the contribution made by small-scale growers needed recognition.

Two winners were eventually selected, although every woman nominated was worthy of the prize. PAMSA Executive Director, Jane Molony, was presented with the Resounding Contribution to the Forestry Sector Award for her work as a champion of harvested wood products. While Nomthandazo Hlombe, a small-scale grower nominated by NCT Forestry Agriculture Co-operative Ltd walked away with the award Recognising the Contribution of Small-Scale Growers.

*“Next year the plan is to extend the awards by including another category,*

*Recognising the Contribution of Forestry Researchers, as there were a number of research-based nominees who certainly deserve being acknowledged for their contribution to our Sector”* says Ms Makhosazana Mavimbela, Forest Sector Charter Council Executive Director and She Is Forestry SA Co-ordinator.

The Awards were not without their challenges. One area where the organisers felt a little despondent was the lack of Student nominations, with only two undergraduate and three post-graduate students being nominated. It should be stressed, however, that this did not take anything away from the calibre of nominees received, all of whom were worthy winners. It would have simply been nice to showcase more of the student talent we know this country has at its Higher Education Institutes.

A huge congratulations must go to Nelson Mandela University student, Lelonathemba Ndaleni, who scooped the undergraduate award for her academic excellence and commitment to the Sector as Vice-Chair of



**Zimbili Sibiya**

the Nelson Mandela Forestry Association. Congratulations is also needed for Stellenbosch University Postgraduate Nominee: Zimbili Sibiya, whose academic brilliance is only matched by her enthusiasm to get involved and have her voice heard. We are certain that we will be seeing a lot more from both of these ladies, as well as the other three nominees in the future.



**Nomthandazo Hlombe**



**Lelonathemba Ndaleni**

*“Small steps matter. After each webinar over the past three years, I would receive messages from participants, but this year a WhatsApp message from a Wood Technician, Ms Nwabisa Langa, moved me the most. In her words, “in my company they didn’t know my profile, but after a fellow colleague nominated me for the awards, the company uses my profile on our magazines and integrated reports, thank you She Is Forestry SA”. Such testimonies are tangible results of the investments being made from people who have a heart to serve.”*

*– Ms Bathobile Ntshingila, SAFCOL Environmental Practitioner and She Is Forestry SA Chairwoman and Director*

# Meet the women making a Resounding Contribution to the Forestry Sector

## **Melissa Reynolds – Manager of the Forestry Molecular Genetics Programme's Precision Tree Breeding Platform**

There is no other person in South Africa that has made a more significant contribution to the development and practical implementation of molecular technologies for forest tree breeding than Melissa Reynolds. However, Melissa's contributions stretch well beyond development and implementation of molecular technologies. She has built a network of collaborations with tree breeders to ensure solutions to new problems and has trained and mentored an exceptional team.



## **Ilaria Germishuizen – Research Group Leader, Institute for Commercial Forestry Research**

Ilaria has been involved in the South African Forestry Industry for over two decades, engaged in research and projects with a strong spatial modelling component in natural systems and plantation forests. In addition to her technical skills, Ilaria is distinguished by her commitment and enthusiasm to collaborate with peers and to develop early career scientists, proving herself to be an excellent role model for other women pursuing a career in Forestry.

## **Judy Dowsett – Forestry South Africa, Office Manager and PA to Executive Director**



Judy Dowsett has dedicated 40 years' service to the Forestry Sector, her career longevity has made her a constant feature in an ever-changing industry ensuring she is always one step ahead; often identifying solutions to FSA and industry-related challenges before anyone else realises there is an issue. Judy's wealth of experience, diverse and vast array of skillsets and passion for the Forestry Sector make her an indispensable part of the FSA team. However, it is her warmth, personable nature and attention to detail that makes Judy truly irreplaceable.





**Beatrice Maphumulo –  
Assistant Nursery Manager,  
Mondi**

Beatrice is a hard-working woman who is always happy, helpful and ready to go above and beyond. Always willing to step up and take on additional responsibility, juggling a busy work/family life and part-time studies. Beatrice has the potential to go far and to be a role model and mentor for younger women coming into the industry.



**Tammy Makgatho –  
Northern Timbers  
Processing Executive,  
Merensky Timbers**

Tammy’s courage to change career and take on the role of Executive Manager in 2020 has seen her play an integral leadership role at Merensky ever since. She has provided great inspiration to male and female colleagues and students alike, navigating the past two years with resilience and agility, which in turn has enabled her to guide her team through it.



**Nelly Ndlovu –  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Mondi Zimele**

Nelly has grown into a phenomenal leader, seizing the opportunity to set up, resource and manage a R2.3 billion procurement department and accepting the exciting challenge of developing and implementing a BBBEE strategy within Mondi Forests. Nelly is a change agent for continuous improvement and the co-developer and driver of Lean Continuous Improvement across Mondi Forests, which brought about a complete culture change, where processes were reviewed to remove waste, improve efficiencies, all in a people-driven process optimisation, resulting in time, cost and productivity improvements.

**Noxolo Nokwethemba Ndlovu – Postgraduate,  
Nelson Mandela University**

Noxolo is an exceptional student with an outstanding academic record. Her academic prowess has been repeatedly displayed throughout her undergraduate and postgraduate journeys. She has published and presented her work in international journals and forums. She also recently presented her work at the Forestry South Africa Women In Forestry Research Webinar. Noxolo is not only academically driven, she is also involved in various other leadership and student support roles. In 2022, she pioneered a successful project aimed at alleviating hunger among students that come from underprivileged communities. Throughout her academic career Noxolo has served in various roles such as supplemental instructor, peer helper, academic writing correspondent, vice president of the Student Christian Organisation and is currently guest lecturer in core forestry modules like Silviculture. Noxolo is an amazing young woman, a high achiever and one who serves the community with humility.



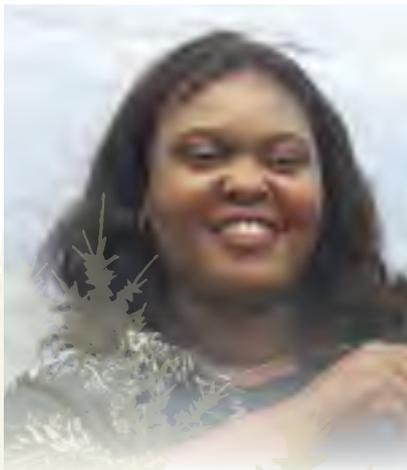
## Jane Molony – Executive Director PAMSA

Jane Molony lives and breathes paper! She is a champion of harvested wood products and the value they bring to the environment, the economy and society. Her career spans 26 years, and her experience and knowledge cover print and publishing, packaging and recycling as well as climate change, carbon tax and extending producer responsibility working with her industry counterparts and engaging with countless government officials.



## Nwabisa Langa – Certification Manager, TWK Agri

Nwabisa is passionate about the environmental sustainability around the Forestry and Agricultural Sector. Her zeal for the environment and its products led her to complete her Natural Resources qualifications and her role as Certification Manager at TWK Agri. She has been instrumental in TWK's incorporated ESG framework and we are certain that if Nwabisa is provided with sufficient opportunity, she can contribute to the sector positively for the betterment of the environment and people leaning on it.



## Nyasha Zimbodza – Risk Coordinator, Sappi KZN

Nyasha is a true custodian of Sappi's safety values and driving this culture outside of SAPPi's business. She has been remarkable in overseeing the safety focus for the Zululand Coastal region and her unbridled passion for the safety of her colleagues, contractors and their employees has paid dividends, cumulating in 5.5 million injury free hours at the end of May 2022. This achievement can be ascribed to Nyasha's dedication, commitment and professional approachable attitude.



## Londiwe Khanyile – Small-Scale Grower

Londiwe went from training as a nurse to running her parents' forestry business, obtaining her driver's licence and broadening her forestry, financial, legal, health and safety knowledge. With the assistance of her brother Thobani, they successfully run a Forestry operation, employing 220 people and operating a small fleet of vehicles. Londiwe is proud of the low staff turnover Mhlaba experiences and appreciates the loyalty of her workers. Her successes can be attributed to her strong character, her caring and kind nature, her willingness to learn, positive attitude and disciplined stance to business functions.



**Nondumiso Kheswa –  
Plantation Manager, SAFCOL**

Nondumiso has risen through the ranks from a Junior Forester to Plantation Manager. A pathfinder for female foresters, Nondumiso was one of the first females to be promoted to Plantation Manager at SAFCOL. Her career achievements were done on merit and she is a champion for women in the company. She leads by example, challenging the male stereotype forester profile and using innovative solutions to address current forestry challenges.

**Thobi Mkhize –  
Head of Stakeholder  
Engagement, Mondi Zimele**

Thobi's growth at Mondi has been stratospheric, from a Junior Clerk to the Head of the Land Department responsible for three programmes, namely Corporate Social Investment, Stakeholder Relations and Land Reform. She has led the process of mentoring 46 interns sourced from the Department of Science and Technology and Agriculture, fashioning Mondi as an oasis of training and experience for young black graduates to also build confidence.



**Lelonathemba Ndaleni –  
Undergraduate, Nelson  
Mandela University**

Lelonathemba is an academic high achiever, acquiring 10 distinctions upon graduating her Diploma in Forestry in 2022 and receiving a special award for being the top student in Fire Management during her studies. She is also involved in various other leadership and student support roles, currently serving as a supplementary instructor for Forest Management. She is supporting undergraduate students in their Diploma studies and improving student success rate. Rarely does one encounter a student with traits like Ms Ndaleni, who are academically strong and yet humble to serve their peers and community.

**Nomthandazo Illombe –  
Small-Scale Grower, NCT  
Forestry Agricultural Co-  
operative Ltd**

Mother of six, Nomthandazo was awarded the 2021 NCT Tree Farmer of the year award after taking on many responsibilities on her family farm – land preparation, accounts, marketing, planning, allowing her husband to focus on harvesting, labour and maintenance of the land – expanding it from 1ha wattle to 6ha. Nomthandazo really does lead by example, showing the community that you can make a good living from tree farming and encouraging the youth to get an education first. She is a true inspiration for future generations and a worthy nominee for the Women in Forestry award.



## Anneri Lotter – Postgraduate, University of Pretoria



Anneri completed an MSc degree focused on forest tree molecular genetics and graduated Cum Laude in 2021. In her MSc study, she made a breakthrough contribution to Forestry research in South Africa by producing the first complete haplogenomes contained in an F1 hybrid variety of *Eucalyptus grandis*. During the MSc study, Ms Lotter acquired a wide array of bioinformatics and computational biology skills, and she has shared her expertise with several other postgraduate students who are now following in her footsteps to expand these approaches to other forest trees and even to Macadamia. Anneri is also leading the further academic development of students in the research programme by coordinating a weekly Journal Club and article discussion aimed to keep the student group up to date on the latest developments in plant genome analysis and molecular breeding.



## Zimbili Sibiya – Postgraduate, Stellenbosch University

Zimbili motivates and encourages students to be the best version of themselves, and in acting as a sounding board for academic staff looking at making the SU curriculum more appropriate for the students, the industry and the social setting that is our country. She is a lighthouse that speaks the voice of the student, the voice of the woman, and especially the voice of the human being. Zimbili works tirelessly on these issues (while doing a good job with her PhD work) and is well recognised across a range of fora, both within and outside of the Stellenbosch University.

## Ndivho Manuga – Process Technician, Twinsaver

Ndivho has enhanced FAS optimization by ensuring that the FAS flow is regulated and promptly switched off as the stock preparation shuts down. The benefit is realized in the material utilisation variances reduction. She drives quality at source with her team conducting regular quality awareness in operations, as well as forest stewardship awareness and ensuring that the chain of custody is maintained as per the FSC standard by auditing the processes regularly.



## Sisanda Zondi – Undergraduate, Stellenbosch University

As chairperson of the Stellenbosch Forestry Students Association (SFSA), Sisanda has to carefully share her time and energy between her demanding final year academic schedule, the many students that she is ultimately responsible for, and her passion for soccer. Sisanda's outgoing personality and engagement, possibly strengthened through the training and personal development she has received over the years as a Mondi-sponsored student, has made her a central persona amongst the undergraduate students and staff alike.





**MERENSKY**

**“As part of our value of inclusivity, Merensky recognise the importance and contribution of females in the workplace – a demographic who is under-presented in the timber sector. We participate in She Is Forestry SA to attract more females to our industry and show our appreciation to our female employees who play a critical role in the success of our business. We are proud to be association with She Is Forestry SA and look forward to DO GOOD together well into the future.”**

**– Merensky**

**“Through its many programmes, the forestry sector greatly contributes to eradicating poverty. The FP&M SETA, through the Forestry Sector skills development initiatives, is proud to promote employment opportunities and poverty alleviation initiatives in the sector. Thanks to She Is Forestry SA, women are increasingly celebrated for contributing to the sector. Most importantly, they are being empowered to fulfil their collective potential in the Forestry Industry.”**

**– FP&M SETA**



# 2023: A new year, with new opportunities to action change



**Bathobile Ntshingila**  
SAFCOL Environmental Practitioner  
and She Is Forestry SA Director

In a world where so much change is needed, it can often be overwhelming. As a result, people stagnate, they feel small, stuck, unable to exact change.

The task in hand is often viewed as too big, and the overpowering assumption is what difference would I make anyway? It would be a lie to say these thoughts have never crossed the minds of the She Is Forestry SA organising committees, Directors or POC. They often do. The mantra “together we are stronger”, however, has proven to be true and is the secret to She Is Forestry SA’s success. It is a movement formed from the shared desire to make positive change and the belief that anything is possible when we come together. This is how an idea that started off as a seed in the minds of a few, has grown into an organisation with branches that connect a network of women across South Africa and beyond.

Last year’s webinar, awards and donations took She Is Forestry SA to new heights,

raising the organisation’s profile and the impact of its work. It also left us with a question – where to next?

Since its inception, She Is Forestry SA has placed education high on its list of priorities. In the words of Oprah Winfrey, “Education is the key to unlocking the world. It is the passport to freedom.” It is also something that starts from the day we are born and will continue until the day we die, for we are never too young or old to learn new tricks and further our own education. Sadly, in South Africa there are still many barriers to education, especially

for women. She Is Forestry SA wants to help unlock some of these, to reduce the number of hurdles being put in the way of future generations of girls.

As discussed in the webinar, often the biggest barriers are the ones we put in front of ourselves. The belief that we simply cannot succeed for one reason or another, be it gender, poverty, race or

*“The organisation is growing slowly but surely, and more importantly, it is creating change by supporting rural schools in the country. Our contributions may seem small, but the impact they are having is great. She Is Forestry SA is generating noticeable differences in the lives and grades of students. We are helping them change their futures.”*

*Ms Nelly Mjikwa, She Is Forestry SA Director*



individual circumstances. These self-imposed barriers are often the hardest to climb and the most difficult to yank down and yet, at She Is Forestry SA, we have first hand experience of how easy this can be, once you give someone the self-belief that they can surmount them. *“We have heard from webinar audience members how a lightbulb moment during one of our talks ‘flipped a switch’ and enabled them to see a raft of possibilities before them. Often these moments came because of listening to the story of another woman’s triumphs, a woman they could identify with and therefore believe they too could walk in her footsteps,”* explains Dr Katy Johnson, Forestry South Africa Communication Coordinator and She Is Forestry SA Webinar Coordinator. Through our webinars, and the feedback we received, we have witnessed the power of role models. However, it was the comments that came from one of our She Is Forestry SA schools that provided us with our own light bulb moment.

*“I was shocked to hear of the levels of substance abuse amongst learners at one of the schools we visited during the distribution of menstrual cups and saddened by the high drop-out levels it resulted in. Especially as the school believed that something as simple as motivational talks and additional career guidance sessions could pave the way for an alternative path for many of these students.”*  
– Ms Bathobile Ntshingila, SAFCOL Environmental Practitioner and She Is Forestry SA Director

This was all the motivation needed to dedicate 2023 to finding ways to provide motivational role models and career guidance, to those high school learners we were in danger of losing to the temptation of substance abuse. The question was how? Sending forestry role models into schools to speak about their experiences and provide career guidance seemed an obvious answer, but wasn't a sustainable solution. Even with the best intentions in the world and an unlimited budget, our reach would still be constrained. To maximise the impact and make this sustainable, we had to provide a resource that could be used time and time again, by schools across the country. The resource also needed to be appealing, it had to capture and hold the attention of a generation addicted to social media, and it needed to be relatable. Learners need to identify with those telling the story, they need to feel a connection, be able to relate to the individual and more importantly, believe that if this person can overcome these barriers so can I.

An idea was born. A series of videos, each one showcasing a day in the life of a woman succeeding within the Forestry Sector. In each video, the audience are taken on a journey as they follow her throughout a 'typical day as a ...', getting career guidance about the job she is doing but also learning about her backstory and how she managed to overcome the challenges many of them face. These videos will be showcased at the 2023 She Is Forestry SA Webinar before being rolled

out to the five She Is Forestry SA schools and countless others across the country.

While the main objective of the videos will provide inspiration to thousands of learners across the country, they can also be used to promote the Sector and the integral role of women within it to other stakeholder groups.

*“It is a very exciting project, which the Forest Sector Charter Council is proud to be supporting. She Is Forestry SA has the funds to produce four videos and we plan to increase that to five with FSCC funding. We also are in the process of contacting Forestry Associations and specific members to see if they too will consider sponsoring a video so we can increase the number of forestry professions we cover. I love the idea that these videos will be seen by learners from across the country, and also used during our webinar and for promoting the Sector to a wide array of stakeholders. These multifunctional initiatives are exactly what She Is Forestry SA should be facilitating”,* says Ms Makhosazana Mavimbela, Forest Sector Charter Council Executive Director and She Is Forestry SA Coordinator.

## 2023 Webinar

This year's webinar, entitled 'A time to shine', is an opportunity to reconcile and present the activities of She Is Forestry SA since its inception in 2020. In addition to present the path going forwards and where the organisation's focus will lie in the coming years.

The webinar itself will split into four sections that are in keeping with the four focus areas of She Is Forestry SA:

- An organisation for change
- Investing in our future
- Supporting an entrepreneurial mindset
- Celebrating the women in our industry

We hope to emulate the generosity from the 2022 webinar audience when we launch another 'BackaBuddy' campaign, this time raising money for an initiative entitled, the Power of Paper! Paper is a product everyone takes for granted (including perhaps us as an industry as we challenge ourselves to find new and novel uses for cellulose), however it is one of the most powerful products. It facilitates communication, education and essential hygiene. Sadly, this basic essential, an icon of our industry, is lacking in many schools across South Africa, including at our five She Is Forestry SA Schools. This year's webinar we are hoping to create a 'paper chain' – asking individuals from across our Sector to come together and donate the equivalent of a ream of printer paper or packet of two-ply toilet rolls. We are also looking for companies willing to match fund our efforts.

*“Education is a key component in eradicating poverty, hunger and inequality. It has always been a fundamental pillar of the founding philosophy She Is Forestry SA was built upon, and something very important to us all. I am excited to see the impact these videos will have, as they have the potential to combine motivational messages and role models with career guidance. They will open the eyes of the youth, particularly those in rural communities, to the myriad of opportunities the Forestry Sector has on offer.”*

*– Ms Irene Mathabela, Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment Deputy Director: Sector Liaison and Capacity Development and She Is Forestry SA Director*

### **She Is Forestry SA Awards**

Nomination forms for the 2023 She Is Forestry SA Awards will be circulated in due time. Three Industry Awards are up for grabs:

- Resounding Contribution to the Forestry Sector
- Recognising the Contribution of Small-Scale Growers
- Recognising the Contribution of Forestry Researchers

There will also be an opportunity for Higher Education Institutes to nominate a forestry undergraduate and forestry postgraduate for an award.

Again, we will be looking for sponsors for each award and hope to give each recipient R10 000 in recognition of their efforts.

### **She Is Forestry SA Website**

Another exciting announcement is that 2023 will see the launch of the She Is Forestry SA website at the webinar!



**“Just like “Mother Nature”, the forestry and harvested wood products sector is inherently nurturing, caring and life giving. The Paper Manufacturers Association of South Africa (PAMSA) is proud to be associated with the She Is Forestry SA initiative which shines a light on the many career and growth possibilities available to young women while also celebrating the successful paths and inspiring stories of women in the industry.”**

**– PAMSA**

**“As MTO we support what “She Is Forestry SA” stands for in giving women a voice and a seat at the table. In a short space of time the organization has managed to elevate the narrative about the role of women in an industry that was historically male dominated. The organisation has also managed to highlight the ground-breaking work that women are doing and contributing towards the sustainability of the industry and all that it represents. She Is Forestry SA is on the right track, and in our view, we have only scratched the surface and MTO is more than happy to be part of that journey.”**

**– MTO**



**MTO | group**



**We build and manage sustainable corporate social responsibility projects for companies looking to create a lasting impact on socio-economic development.**



Our primary objective is to find the best project for you and the community that you are investing in.

We have identified three major socio-economic challenges which affect many households across Africa and have designed ready-to-execute projects which are sustainable, relevant, and impactful. While our projects are not limited to these three, we do emphasise the need to address them with urgency!

## Period Poverty

- Menstrual and reproductive health workshop
- Menstrual cups

"It is so beautiful and impactful for us to have partnered with Move Africa on something long-term that we can get behind"

Andiswa McKeown - Continental Tyre SA

## Gender-Based Violence

- Gender-based violence workshop
- Hand-held alarm & pepper spray set

## Mental Health Education

- Mental health education workshop

Let's impact lives,  
together!

- [info@moveafricaco.com](mailto:info@moveafricaco.com)
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**SHE IS  
FORESTRY**

