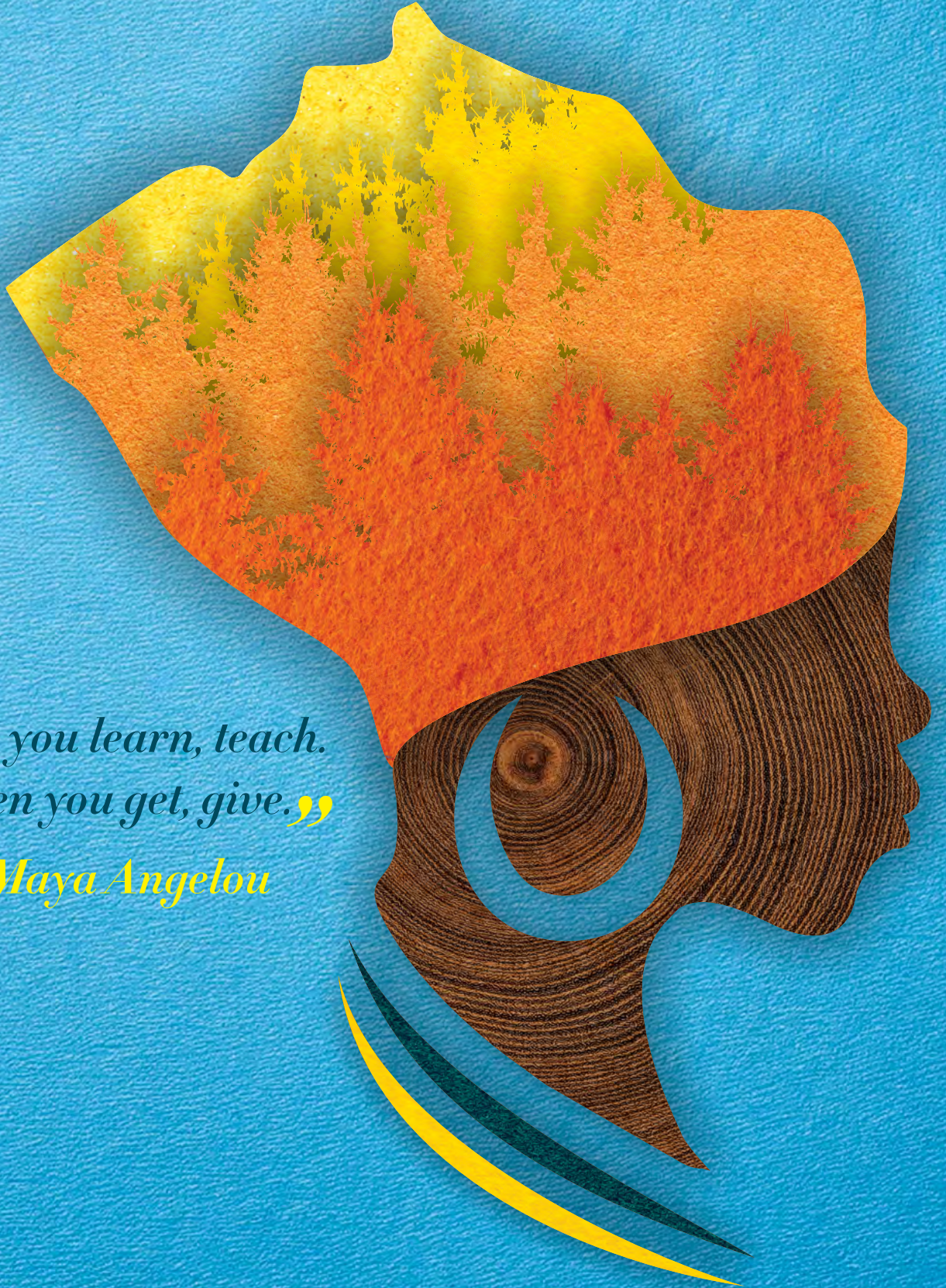


# She Is Forestry SA

2024/2025 – Shining our light on others



*“When you learn, teach.  
When you get, give.”*

*– Maya Angelou*



FORESTRY SOUTH AFRICA™

**“She Is Forestry SA has exceeded all expectations by providing a vital platform for women. The organisation highlights the extraordinary contributions of women across the sector, acknowledging their integral role in driving the industry forward. This recognition not only fosters an inclusive environment but also creates role models for current and future generations, inspiring young women to pursue careers in forestry. Moreover, the incredible charitable work undertaken by She Is Forestry SA, on behalf of the forestry sector, underscores their commitment to uplifting communities and reinforcing the importance of diversity, making a profound impact that will resonate for years to come. To think all this has been achieved in five short years is simply remarkable, and all those involved should feel incredibly proud.”**

**– Michael Peter, Forestry South Africa Executive Director**

**“The inclusion of women in South Africa’s sawmilling sector is steadily gaining momentum. However, achieving true gender diversity in this traditionally male-dominated industry requires sustained commitment and intentional action from all roleplayers. There is still much work to be done to break down barriers, expand opportunities, and cultivate an environment where women can not only participate, but thrive and lead. Encouragingly, we are seeing a growing number of female architects championing the use of timber in the built environment.”**

**– Roy Southey, Sawmilling South Africa Executive Director**



**SAWMILLING  
SOUTH AFRICA**  
We saw the future

She Is Forestry SA Magazine 2024/2025  
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Contact Makhosazana Mavimbela  
makhosazana@forestsectorcharter.co.za

Content Production: KatyComms  
katylouise.johnson@gmail.com

Layout and Design: Beatrice Bosch  
beatrice@abcd.co.za

# She Is Forestry SA: Letting others shine

**“A remarkable milestone of 5 years is indeed a true definition of commitment and dedication. She Is Forestry SA was birthed in a dark hour, during the Covid-19 pandemic, where uncertainty was eminent. I humbly salute the visionaries behind the dream, who saw what seemed impossible at the time, and made it happen. A combination of men and women who continue to serve behind the scenes ensuring the success of this organisation. Lastly, I would like to compliment the Directors for volunteering their skills and time, special acknowledgment to FSCC through Mrs Khosi Mavimbela, and the engine of She Is Forestry SA Dr Katy Johnson.”**

**– Bathobile Ntshingila  
SAFCOL, Practitioner:  
Environmental and  
She Is Forestry SA  
Chair of Directors**

**Bathobile Ntshingila**



**E**very year, the team behind She Is Forestry SA grapples with the same question, “How do we surpass last year’s performance?” As we prepare for the She Is Forestry SA webinar, we often find ourselves doubting our vision and our capacity to deliver it. Yet, every year, we are overwhelmed by the success of the webinar, which consistently exceeds previous records. This cycle of self-doubt makes me wonder why we don’t simply embrace the belief that “we’ve got this! History has shown we improve every year, and this year will be no different!”

Part of me believes that this self-doubt and the drive to prove ourselves fuels the success experienced by She Is Forestry SA. Another part recognises that this is a common experience for most women, who often feel compelled to continually demonstrate their worth.

Regardless of the reason, our doubts push us to expand our

horizons and recognise how others perceive us. This self-awareness inspires us to share our light with the world, a theme we embraced in this year’s webinar. By shining a light on others, we broaden our collective vision, and I believe our 2024 webinar captured this perfectly.

Stepping beyond our original focus often invites questions. As a Black woman from a rural community, I know firsthand that historical disadvantages stem not only from gender but also from multiple forms of inequality – be it race, religion, sexuality or access to education, to name a few. To truly represent the women in our sector and beyond, we must advocate for equality on all fronts, not just gender.

Access to education has been a critical issue for She Is Forestry SA. This year, alongside our role model videos, we raised enough funds to donate math workbooks for core math and maths literacy to both male and female students at the five schools we support. We firmly believe that achieving gender equality cannot come at the expense of men; we cannot uplift our daughters by diminishing our sons. Moving forward, we aim to initiate more programmes that address various forms of inequality. While gender will always be our primary focus, we must remember that many women face multiple intersecting challenges.

Shining a light on others is not just a broad organisational level concept; it also involves creating space at an individual level for those around us to shine. This year’s webinar showcased new faces taking on hosting and presenting roles, with directors stepping aside to allow others to present awards and lead discussions. The audience responded positively, providing encouragement that helped settle nerves and build confidence.

Despite our self-doubt, this year’s webinar was a record breaker, attracting over 420 attendees, raising nearly a quarter of a million Rand, and garnering significant positive media coverage. After four years of webinars, She Is Forestry SA has evolved into more than just an annual event; it has become a blueprint for transformation. Our initiative serves as a model for positively facilitating change within the sector, particularly in management control. There’s no reason why this framework can’t be applied to other areas as well. She Is Forestry SA stands as a testament to what can be achieved with the collective support of the sector, highlighting the importance of promoting women and gender equality.

As we approach the fifth anniversary of the She Is Forestry SA webinars, I look forward to reflecting on our successes while laying the groundwork for the next five years. I anticipate that in the lead-up to August 2025, we will again experience nerves, self-doubt and second-guessing. I’ve come to accept that this is part of the journey and take comfort in the knowledge that I am not alone in this undertaking, but am part of a motivational sisterhood of exceptional women, who together, can achieve anything.

**Bathobile Ntshingila**  
**SAFCOL, Practitioner:**  
**Environmental and**  
**She Is Forestry SA**  
**Chair of Directors**



**“Sappi is committed to empowering women and fostering their growth in the forestry sector. We are proud to be at the forefront of the industry with women in all spheres, including research, logistics, silviculture, and harvesting. Many small growers, particularly women, gain entry to the forestry value chain through our Khulisa ESD programme. For this reason, we applaud the ‘She Is Forestry’ initiative, launched by Forestry South Africa (FSA) and the Forest Sector Charter Council (FSCC), and support the wonderful work being done to highlight women’s essential role in the forestry landscape.”**

**– Duane Roothman, Sappi Forests Vice President**

**“Over the past five years, She Is Forestry SA has transformed from a small initiative into a nationally recognized platform that is making waves in the forestry sector. What began as a vision to recognise, encourage, and promote women in a traditionally male-dominated industry has grown into a movement – one that is changing lives, fostering connections, and inspiring the next generation.**

**For many women in forestry, including myself, this platform has been a game-changer. From feeling isolated in the industry, She Is Forestry SA has given me the opportunity to meet extraordinary women, form lifelong friendships, and build a support network I didn’t even realise I needed. The sense of community and empowerment that this organisation fosters has been truly life-changing, proving that we are stronger together.**

**Beyond networking and mentorship, She Is Forestry SA has remained deeply committed to outreach.**

**Our work with five schools has been both humbling and eye-opening, underscoring the need for ongoing efforts to educate and inspire young minds about the opportunities in forestry. Seeing the impact of even the simplest resources, has reinforced just how much work still lies ahead. Yet, it has also been a powerful reminder of the real, tangible difference we are making.**

**As we look to the future, the mission of She Is Forestry SA remains clear: to uplift, support, and advocate for women in the sector. With every event, initiative, and conversation, we are shaping a more inclusive and diverse forestry industry – one where women are not only welcomed but celebrated. And that is something truly worth being proud of.”**

**– Julia Rees, Owner of Dargle Poles and She Is Forestry SA Director**



# Shining Our Light on Others to Create a Brighter Future



**Katy Johnson**  
FSA Communication Consultant and  
She Is Forestry SA Webinar Coordinator

Light, like any energy source, is transferable. It can move from one form to another, sometimes through complex chemical processes like those in photosynthesis or solar panels that convert light into a stored energy form. Other times, light acts as a catalyst to initiate the transfer of stored energy to the kinetic kind, like the impact of sunlight on our circadian rhythm.

Over the centuries we have learnt to harness light energy, using it to advance our society beyond anything recognisable to even our not-so-distant ancestors. The beauty of light is that it is abundant, residing around us but also within us too. While the light from within will not fuel photosynthesis, batteries or climatic change, it can be converted from one form to another as an idea is generated and then actioned. It is also a great catalyst for change, especially when we choose to shine our light on others, creating an environment that cultivates growth, transformation and the potential to uplift individuals, groups and whole communities.

This is a concept that resonates with She Is Forestry SA, aligning with our core objectives and thus, resulting in the theme of our 2024 webinar “Shining Our Light On Others”. Interestingly, almost every guest speaker at the 2023 webinar – “Our Time To Shine” – mentioned in some form the need to look beyond our own personal growth and at how we can bring others along with us on this journey of upliftment. The She Is Forestry SA role model videos are a perfect illustration of this, the impact of which was seen firsthand by those visiting the She Is Forestry SA schools

and hearing how these passionate, dedicated young women who were willing to share their personal journeys, have inspired future generations of disadvantaged high school students.

“Our role models are already shining their light on others and as Directors, we felt it was time we did the same”, explains She Is Forestry SA Director and Coordinator, Makhosazana (Khosi) Mavimbela, Forest Sector Charter Council Executive Director. “We represent an industry that goes beyond its borders when it comes



to environmental stewardship and social investment, as women we need to do the same. Over the four years since our inception, we have created a huge spotlight and platform for promoting gender equality. It's time to share the space we have created by raising awareness of the barriers created by inequality in all its forms."

Keynote speaker Pamela Naidoo, Executive Director of the Forestry and Agriculture Training Organisation (FATO) was the first to do this, focusing in on inequality in accessing education and training. A proud proponent of gender equality, responsible for providing training for over 27 000 women during her career, Pamela spoke of the transformation that has happened in the training sphere over the past fifteen years. "Pre-2009, training opportunities for forestry workers in elementary occupations were simply unavailable, as the focus had been on furthering the careers of those in professional, technical and managerial positions. Now learning and development interventions that have enabled forestry workers in elementary occupations to access opportunities for career growth and development, are an integral part of our Sector's employee learning and development offerings and a key component of its transformation story. I am proud to be

part of the journey of hundreds of forestry workers in elementary occupations who had entered the Sector with little or no skills and through learning and development offerings like the Supervisors Development Programme, gained qualifications. The Forestry Sector is opening doors for individuals from South Africa's poorest rural communities to transform not only their lives and livelihoods, but also those who depend on them too. This is something we should all be proud of and inspired by."

Another area where the Sector is shining its light on others is through the various Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) programmes run by most of South Africa's corporate forestry companies. A panel of women, including SAFCOL's Hazel Banda, Sappi's Beryl Traore and York's Jabu Kuhlase, who are heavily involved in ESD, discussed the importance of developing entrepreneurial initiatives for both the communities surrounding South Africa's plantations and the Forestry Sector itself. The impact these ESDs are having was brought home in a short video featuring just a few of SAFCOL's initiatives. These ranged from vegetable gardens that were putting grandchildren through varsity, honey harvesting operations that has enabled people and pollinators to prosper, contractor enterprises where women have

**“It's time to share the space we have created by raising awareness of the barriers created by inequality in all its forms.”**

**SHE IS FORESTRY SA**  
*Shining the spotlight on others*  
WEBINAR 2024

*Panel Discussion with the women driving entrepreneurialism in a forestry context*

- Hazel Banda**  
SAFCOL  
GM: Transformation and Enterprise Development
- Beryl Traore**  
Sappi Southern Africa  
Social Impact Lead
- Jabu Kuhlase**  
York Timbers  
Group Training & Development Manager

**SHE IS FORESTRY SA**  
*Shining the spotlight on others*  
WEBINAR 2024

**Pamela Naidoo**  
Forestry and Agriculture Training Organisation  
Director

**Keynote Speaker**



# SHE IS FORESTRY

## WOMEN IN FORESTRY WEBINAR 2024

become major employers in their communities and wood working businesses born out of skill development opportunities.

*“Viewing just a handful of the ESD opportunities created by the Forestry Sector was incredibly moving, many of them had no direct benefit to the company itself but made a huge difference for the communities involved. It was very powerful to watch, and humbling to know that I am part of this amazing community!”* explains Bathobile Ntshingila, She Is Forestry SA Director and Chairwoman.

The highlight of the webinar for many viewers, based on the comments received, was the short video following the She Is Forestry SA team as they delivered toilet rolls, printer paper and the role model videos to one of the schools they support. It is hard to picture the isolation, poverty and lack of opportunities many rural communities face. Certainly, this is true for the learners at Phindizwe High School, located in the rural hills near Nkandla in KwaZulu-Natal. Broken windows, missing ceiling boards and crumbling paintwork only paints part of the picture. It was the Headmaster's plea for help, admitting lacking resources meant at times learners are forced to rip pages from exercise books to use as toilet paper, that highlighted the unimaginable challenges these schools face. A team of glaziers paid for by She Is Forestry SA set to work fixing windows, as the team handed over the printer paper and toilet rolls and settled down to watch the four role model videos that had been filmed the year before, an initiative which was instigated after deep conversations with the schools regarding the need for relatable role models and careers advice.

*“There have been many special moments created by She Is Forestry SA, however, being able to bear witness to the impact our videos had on the young women watching them was truly special. Listening to the learners state how inspired and excited they were after seeing the achievements of women who faced similar*

*challenges to them was deeply emotional, vindicating the cost to make these videos and the need for many, many, more”* explains She Is Forestry SA Director and Treasurer, Julia Rees.

It is not just at Phindizwe where maths grades have gone up from 30% to 70% that She Is Forestry SA is creating change. Maths grades have gone up significantly at all five of our schools thanks to the donations of calculators, while absenteeism due to period poverty has reduced because of the menstrual cups handed out two years ago. This year, we hope to cement this positive change by providing a maths study guide for every Matric, male and female, at our schools. *“Part of shining our light on others, is realising that in the quest for gender equality for our girl child we should not create gender inequality for their male counterparts. When it comes to inequality, it should not matter what prefixes it, as inequality in any form is detrimental to transformation and needs vanquishing”*, continues Khosi.

Another area where She Is Forestry SA is already shining its light on others is with its Awards, where this year we had our largest number of nominees to date. In keeping with the theme, the She Is Forestry SA Directors handed over their presenting role for the student awards to previous winner of the postgraduate award, Dr Noxolo Ndlovu. Noxolo gave a moving speech, detailing the impact of being an award winner and forestry role model has had on her. This is a tradition we will look to continue going forwards. This year's winners included:

**Jacqui Meyer** – Resounding Contribution to the Forestry Sector Award

**Dr Ilaria Germishuizen** – Resounding Contribution to Forestry Science Award

**Busi Mnguni** – Small Scale Grower Award

**Mbali Moratwa Hlabane** – Undergraduate Award (University of Mpumalanga)

**Scovia Akello** – Postgraduate Award (Stellenbosch University)

This year's webinar really did exceed all expectations, with over 442 individual audience logins, many streaming to classrooms full of varsity students. Like previous years, our audience included representatives from various government departments, nine industry associations, all thirteen corporate forestry companies in South Africa, 18 South African and 4 International forestry businesses, six South African and two international universities and three international NGOs as well as seven NPOs. It raised over R235 000 in sponsorship and an additional R32 084 through the Back-a-Buddy initiative. The webinar resulted in 17 published articles, reaching upwards of 246,000 individuals and worth just under half a million rand of advertising revenue, which is simply incredible.

The big question now is... where to next!

**“What began as an idea five years has turned into a fulfilled dream. It was meant to be a one-time event and a moment to celebrate at the time and little did we know it would turn up to what it has become. We knew each other by either names or the companies or institutions we worked for, but little did we know that we had the potential to come together and not only create networks but to discover and acclaim our worth as women in the forest industry.**

**I remember the first webinar we planned in less than a month. It was like we had a blank page that was waiting to be filled with adventures. While the planning was overwhelming, the energy was palpable. It was fun also but beyond that, it was and still is the spirit of coming together for a greater good. The She Is Forestry SA initiative has reminded us of and reinforced in us the power of unity and collaboration to make a difference in many significant ways.**

**The five year marks a monumental step into our journey of acknowledging the contribution of women in forestry. When we look back we can only celebrate the achievements mostly being the art of giving to our five schools, caring, believing and creating a sense of belonging, an accolade we plan to continue with. Our transformation objective and aspiration is to support more schools in the future and continue to be a light as we have the power to uplift one another and that would be more **REWARDING!**”**

**– Makhosazana Mavimbela, FSCC Executive Director  
and She Is Forestry SA Director**



**NCT**

**NCT FORESTRY AGRICULTURAL CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED**

**“Women, since the very beginning, have held the inherent and oft proven strength of being guardians over their children, families and all else they hold dear. Having now established key and vital roles in the forestry industry, that natural caring instinct permeates the workplace rendering our ladies irreplaceable assets and guardians over much that the industry values. She is definitely **Forestry!**”**

**– Rob Thompson, NCT Forestry  
Assistant General Manager**



# Spreading Hope Beyond Our Borders

**Julia Rees**

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

*“True growth happens when we invest in communities beyond our own borders; by uplifting others, we strengthen the foundation for a thriving future for all.”*

*– Anonymous*

**T**he hardest part of my role is going ‘cap-in-hand’ to ask for money, but the sponsorship secured through the She Is Forestry SA webinar not only enables us to host the event but, more importantly, supports our five forestry schools. Over the past four webinars, She Is Forestry SA has raised R902 154.00 from our generous sponsors, providing essential resources such as calculators, motivational videos, menstrual cups, windowpanes, toilet and printer paper to learners in schools ranked among the lowest in their provinces. These schools are predominantly located in rural areas, where many parents are unemployed, and

numerous female students cannot envision a future beyond early pregnancy and marriage. By supporting these schools, we offer not just financial assistance but also a message that someone outside their community cares – this gesture embodies a hand of hope. While I could elaborate for hours on the importance of this support, you will soon hear directly from the Head Teachers about the positive impact your generosity has made.

This year, we faced challenges as some of our regular supporters had to withdraw due to severe financial constraints. We fully understand and respect their decisions, as 2024 has been a difficult year for many, particularly in certain sectors of our industry. Fortunately, the generosity of FP&M Seta, with a sponsorship of R100 000, helped us create four additional role model videos. The power of these videos is undeniable; I witnessed firsthand how seeing successful women from similar backgrounds who have overcome relatable challenges, inspired female learners at our KZN school.

**TABLE ONE: Money Raised from Sponsors**

COMPANY NAME	AMOUNT
FP&M Seta	R100 000.00
FSCC	R40 000.00
FSA	R25 000.00
Mondi South Africa	R30 000.00
MTO Group	R20 000.00
NCT Forestry	R10 000.00
PAMSA	R10 000.00
Sappi	R20 000.00
Sawmilling South Africa	R10 000.00
SAWPA	R10 000.00
Back-a-Buddy Individual Donations	R31 683.26
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>R266 683.26</b>

I want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank every business, group and individual who has supported She Is Forestry SA. Over the past four webinars, we have donated an impressive R578 990 on behalf of the forestry sector to our five schools (see Table Two). Additionally, we have awarded R140 000 in prizes to our She Is Forestry SA Award winners, many of whom have used these funds to further their personal development. We also invested R14 182 to support a female crafting initiative started by a group of enterprising small-scale growers featured in our 2023 webinar. Their request for industry support to generate alternative revenue streams, allowing them to leave their trees in the ground longer, was met with action from She Is Forestry SA,

which now uses their services to supply small gifts for our keynote speakers and award winners. In addition, R123 780 has been spent on producing the She Is Forestry SA webinars, magazines – 2021/2022, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 – and the website. All of these are important channels used by She Is Forestry SA to raise support, sponsorship and promoting their primary objective of highlighting the integral role women play within the forestry sector.

**TABLE TWO: Money Donated by She Is Forestry SA to the Five Schools**

YEAR	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT
2021	COVID-19 masks	R18 183.00
2021	120 Casio scientific calculators	R27 000.00
2022	Menstrual cups and workshops	R114 500.00
2023	Role model video production	R192 743.00
2024	Paper drive and stationery	R91 688.00
2024	Replacement windowpanes	R7 490.00
2024	Maths study guides	R127 386.00
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>R578 990.00</b>

Currently, there is R35 241.28 in the She Is Forestry SA bank account earmarked for several exciting projects in 2025, including the launch of the She Is Forestry SA mentoring initiative. As always, we will remain acutely aware of the financial responsibility that comes with such generosity. The She Is Forestry SA team will continue to work tirelessly with the schools we support to ensure that funds are spent wisely and yield tangible results.



**“The South African pulp, paper, packaging, and tissue sector is seeing a positive shift, with more women stepping into leadership roles at our member mills and excelling in chemical and process engineering, as well as research and development. It is encouraging to see more young women participating in the PAMSA Master’s in Engineering Bursary and Research Programme, helping us to build a strong pipeline of female talent. Initiatives like She Is Forestry SA play a vital role in showcasing the success stories of women from diverse backgrounds who are powerful role models that inspire girls and young women to see a future for themselves in the pulp and paper industry.”**

**– Jane Molony, PAMSA Executive Director**





# The Importance of Ac

## By She Is Forestry SA Directors:

Nelly Mjikwa, Irene Mathabela, Susan Morongoa Leseke and Nonhlanhla Buthelezi-Onverwacht

### Nelly Mjikwa, She Is Forestry SA Director

**T**he She Is Forestry SA Awards provide a platform for the organisation to achieve one of its core mandates – the upliftment of women from across the forestry sector.

They shine a spotlight on all the nominees, not only the winners, illustrating the integral role of women across all forestry career paths and at every managerial level.

2024 saw female scientists, foresters, accountants, HR professionals, engineers, contractors, communications officers, educators, small-scale growers, CEOs and recent graduates sharing the spotlight and recognised for their astounding contributions both within our plantations and along the various value chains. They are now part of the She Is Forestry SA legacy, an ever-expanding rollcall of women nominated for their passion, contribution and endeavours that prove beyond any doubt that women are thriving across our sector and shaping its future.

*“The Awards are an opportunity for the forestry sector to show that it is doing far more than simply paying lip service to gender equality. They prove beyond doubt that women are ingrained into every aspect of forestry – from growing and harvesting the trees to making a wealth of forest products. Each of these women deserve their moment in the spotlight, which is why we are committed to featuring them all and not just the winners. Each has an inspirational story, each plays an important role in the sector’s ongoing success, each is a winner in her own right”,* says Nelly.

We have said it before, but it is worth repeating, the real winner is the forestry sector having such a wealth of dedicated and inspiring women in its midst. The She Is Forestry SA Directors had the unenviable task of selecting the five ultimate winners, who would be taking home a beautiful beaded earring and necklace set created by enterprising craft women She Is Forestry SA supports and R10 000 donated by the award sponsors.

*“How do you select between undergraduate students who have excelled at their studies and dedicated themselves to the upliftment of their fellow students and the promotion of our sector? Selecting one, from a wide selection of equally incredible candidates, was extremely tough, it was impossible to distinguish between them in terms of their value and contribution to the sector. Ultimately, it came down to the smallest details – a single candidate with multiple nominations from different organisations, or one whose backstory told of numerous challenges the individual had overcome to be where they were today”,* explains Irene.

The award for **Resounding Contribution to the Forestry Sector and Value-Chain**, sponsored by NCT Forestry, went to Timber Industry Pesticide Working Group Coordinator, Jacqui Meyer. Her leadership of TIPWG enabled the entire forestry sector to navigate the truly challenging implications of the Forest Stewardship Council’s new Pesticide Policy. Without Jacqui’s leadership, diligence and knowledge, many of the pesticides the industry relies upon would be unavailable and this would have dire economic consequences and employment ramifications.



Dr Ilaria Germishuizen, Director of Research at the ICFR, walked away with the **Resounding Contribution to Forestry Research and Science Award**, sponsored by the MTO Group. Three independent organisations recognising her contribution at the forefront of forestry research, but it was her passion to upskill and uplift the next generation of forestry researchers, who no doubt will follow in her trail blazing footsteps, that sealed it for the judges.

# knowledging *the* Contribution *of* Women

The final forest sector award, the **Small-scale Forest Enterprise Award** sponsored by Mondi, was won by Ms Busi Mnguni, as a small-scale grower, community group entrepreneur and Forestry South Africa small-scale grower representative and past chair. Mama Busi, as she is fondly known by many, has championed small-scale growers through her role as an FSA representative, giving them a voice and ensuring their stories are heard. However, it was the pivotal role she has played in uplifting the women in her community, by forming crafting networks and enterprises, that saw the judges vote in favour of Busi.

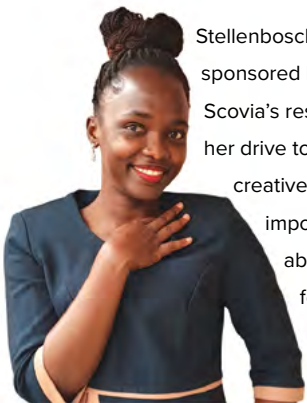


In the spirit of shining your light on others, the suggestion was made to ask Dr Noxolo Ndlovu, the 2023 Postgraduate Award winner, to present the two student awards. Noxolo spoke passionately about how the award had impacted her life and the importance of being a forestry role model. She was commended for her powerful words by industry stalwarts in the audience, who immediately got onto the chat and congratulated her for such an inspiring speech. Going forward, inviting the previous postgraduate winner to present the student awards will become a tradition.

The Sappi sponsored **Undergraduate Award** went to University of Mpumalanga student Mbali Moratwa Hlabane. The judges were inspired by her backstory, and how she had overcome limited access to information and educational resources thanks to her innate curiosity and determination, which has set her on a forestry pathway. They also admired her role in founding the university's Forestry Student Association, and the remarkable leadership and organisational skills she must have to achieve this.



Stellenbosch University student, Scovia Akello, walked away with the SAWPA sponsored **Postgraduate Award**. Like Mbali, the judges were impressed with Scovia's resilience and ability to overcome her backstory. They also admired her drive to make her dream of studying at Stellenbosch a reality and the creativeness shown in developing her own equipment when costs of imports made them unfeasible. However, it was her enthusiasm to go above and beyond in supporting undergraduates and promoting forestry education that clinched her the award.



"While our winners should quite rightly be celebrated, it is important to give each of our nominees a chance to shine. They

are the faces of gender equality in forestry, the role models women looking to enter the sector should be inspired by, and a reminder to everyone that with passion, determination and drive, anything is possible", concludes Nonhlanhla.

*“The Awards are an opportunity for the forestry sector to show that it is doing far more than simply paying lip service to gender equality. They prove beyond doubt that women are ingrained into every aspect of forestry – from growing and harvesting the trees to making a wealth of forest products.”*

## Nominees for Resounding Contribution to the Forest Sector and Value Chains



### Lilian Ndhlovu, Owner and Founder of Marian and Lilian Transport Pty Ltd

Since founding her company in 2016, Lilian has excelled in forestry, offering diverse services and creating over 75 jobs. She promotes sustainable practices and exemplifies women's empowerment in the industry.

### Erika du Toit, Owner of Kaleca Agency Pty Ltd

Erika transformed from a cost controller to a successful sawmilling entrepreneur, thriving in a male-dominated field. Her commitment to sustainability is evident as she achieves nearly 100% recovery of materials, turning waste into valuable products.



### Hlengiwe Ndlovu, Divisional Environmental Manager, Sappi Forests



Hlengiwe addresses environmental challenges in forestry, including water usages and biodiversity and champions small grower inclusion. Her leadership in key committees amplifies her impact beyond Sappi, promoting environmental stewardship across the sector.

### Amanda Pretorius, SASDEA

Amanda has been instrumental in the SASDEA and SALDEA since the 1980s, ensuring their survival as vital skills development authorities for the sawmilling industry – Saw Doctor and Kiln Drier. Her dedication has significantly benefitted the sector over three decades.



### Angel Sibisi, District Manager – NCT Richards Bay

Angel quickly rose to District Manager at NCT, showcasing strong leadership during the 2023 Richards Bay fire. Her bravery and strength during the disaster was remarkable. She kept members informed during the rebuilding process and worked closely with management to secure new markets.



### Tarryn Smith, TWK Management Accountant

Tarryn plays a crucial behind-the-scenes role at TWK, ensuring the success of the timber department. Her contributions are essential for operational efficiency and have inspired a new award category for 2025.



### Happy Ndwalane, SAFCOL Silviculture Forester

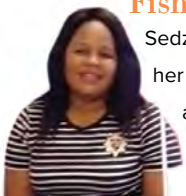
With over 12 years in forestry, Happy ensures compliance and operational performance at SAFCOL Ngome Plantation. She effectively manages contractors and focuses on improving productivity while ensuring safety and fire protection.



## Resounding Contribution to Forestry Research and Science Award

### Sedzani Nemukula, Senior Forester Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment

Sedzani's dedication to forestry science and passion for her work has earned her international recognition. She actively supports colleagues and takes on leadership roles, consistently delivering exceptional results when put to the test.



### Jolanda Roux, Sappi Programme Leader Pests and Disease

Professor Jolanda Roux leads Sappi's Pest and Disease programme, managing and monitoring extensive forestry areas. With over 563 publications, she ranks among the top researchers and showcases exceptional endurance in fieldwork.



### Samantha Choles, Communication Sawmilling South Africa

Samantha has driven the success of the WoodApp and Talking Timber Webinars, promoting solid timber use efficiently. Her hard work has transformed these initiatives into significant contributions for the industry.



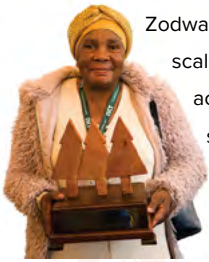
### Princess Dlamini, NCT Forestry Nursery Assistant

Princess embodies humility and proactivity in her work, ensuring smooth operations at the nursery. Her dedication and enthusiasm make her a role model and an inspiration to her colleagues.



## Small-Scale Forestry Enterprise Award

### Zodwa Zihle Bhengu, Small Scale Grower



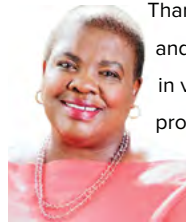
Zodwa has established multiple businesses as a small-scale grower, employing up to 20 people. She actively participates in community projects and has successfully acquired equipment for transporting timber and improving local infrastructure. She clearly demonstrates that with determination and consistency, one can move mountains.

### Buyisile Maureen Mdungu, Small Scale Grower and Non-executive Director NTE Company

Buyisile manages a sustainable 129 hectare timber farm, employing 42 locals and funding education for her children. As a board member, she advocates for small-scale growers and is a strong woman who never lacks courage to stand up and the determination to deal with challenges as they come in various forms.



### Thandi Cynthia Mokoena, Director Matsino Business Enterprises



Thandi Mokoena began her forestry career in 2007 and now manages a 679ha farm, employing locals in various roles. She supports her community by providing firewood and vegetables to schools and partnering with local businesses.

### Dianne Randall, Sawmilling South Africa's Skills Development Programme

Dianne has led the sawmilling skills development programme for five years, overcoming challenges to advocate for skills recognition. Her dedication ensures that all mills receive support for development and growth, no matter how far or remote.



## Undergraduate Award Nominees

### Inathi Kwezi, Undergraduate, Fort Cox



Inathi is an exceptional third-year forestry student determined to overcome the challenges and inequalities that come with growing up in a rural community. She actively engages in student leadership, contributing to the Fort Cox Forestry Students' Association, the International Forestry Students' Association and South African Students' Congress.

### Simphiwe Chauke, Undergraduate Student, Nelson Mandela University

Simphiwe is a dynamic forestry student in her first year, known for her leadership and community involvement. As Chair of NMU's student association she organises training for first-year students and environmental campaigns, making a significant impact. She is also the first 1<sup>st</sup> Year student NMU has nominated, which says a great deal for her abilities and character.



## Postgraduate Award Nominees

### Ntyatyambokazi Khwlea, Postgraduate Student, Nelson Mandela University



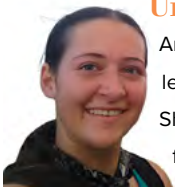
Ntyatyambokazi has overcome a difficult upbringing to excel in her studies, through a SETA bursary, earning 15 distinctions. She is pursuing an Honors in Natural Resource Management, with plans for a Masters in Forest Engineering.

### Ntsako Mtenjane, Postgraduate Student, University of Mpumalanga

Ntsako is researching forestry water use for her MSc, defying norms in a male-dominated field. Despite experiencing early funding challenges she remained committed to her studies, working from home with limited internet availability to successfully submit her MSc proposal, demonstrating great resilience and determination.



### Anneke Joubert, Undergraduate Student, University of Stellenbosch



Anneke, a final-year student, excels academically and leads the Stellenbosch Forestry Students' Association. She actively organises activities and social opportunities for her fellow students and aspires to advance her career in forestry management.

# Supporting Schools to Open the Eyes, Hearts and Minds of Learners

**By Makhosazana Mavimbela, Bathobile Ntshingila  
and Julia Rees**

**She Is Forestry SA Directors**

*“We are very proud to be a She Is Forestry SA beneficiary, it is an organisation that not only nurtures young minds with essential school material but also cultivates confidence and resilience in our girls, and boys, empowering them to grow into successful and fearless leaders.”*

*– Mr Majozi, Headmaster Nkosohlanga Senior Secondary School  
(previously Mnceba SSS), Eastern Cape*

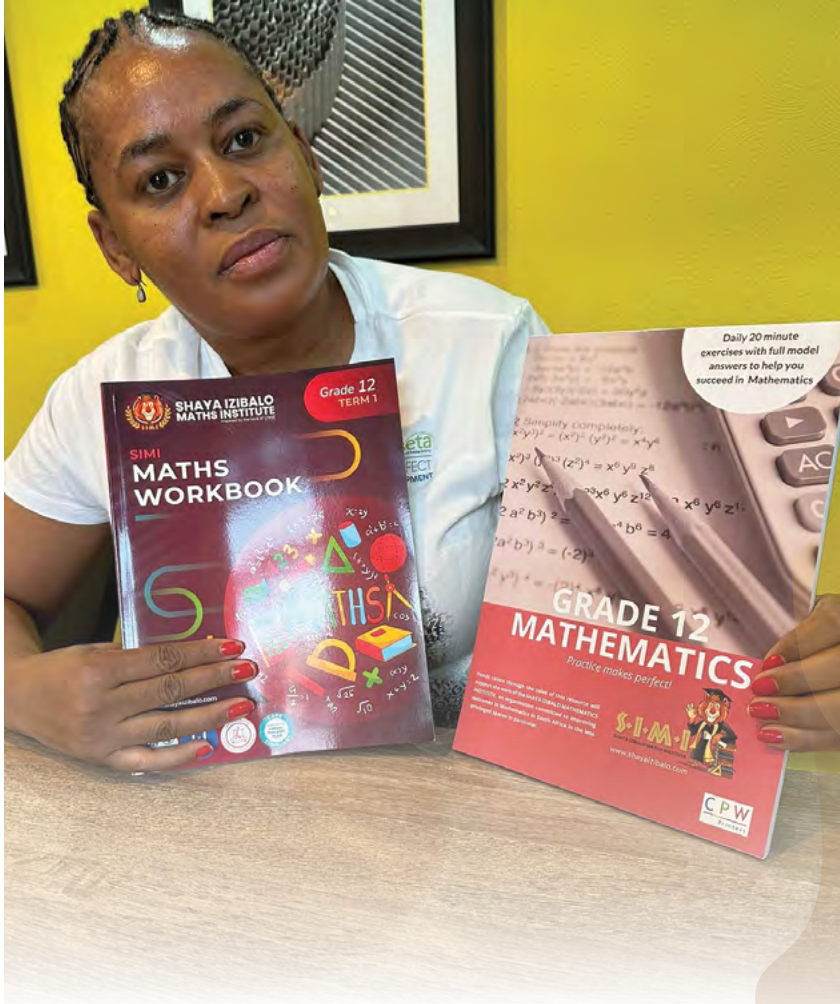
**T**hroughout our journey with She Is Forestry SA, certain moments stand out, especially during our school visits, which highlight both urgent needs and hopeful potential. Julia shares, “At Phindizwe High School, the most remote of our partner schools, I was struck by the broken windows and the Headmasters plea for help. It’s heartbreaking to hear children are using schoolbooks as toilet paper, and that most parents unemployed so unable to contribute to dwindling supplies. Phindizwe is not alone, many schools in rural communities face similar challenges, emphasising the vital nature of the work we do.”

Khosi adds, “The joy expressed by both pupils and staff as we delivered donations of toilet paper and printer paper was almost euphoric. Children danced with paper on their heads, as if we had provided a lifetime supply, and their gratitude was overwhelming.”

However, it was the role model videos that left the deepest impression, Bathobile explains. “While the windows and paper met immediate needs, the videos opened a new horizon for the girls. They realized that if women from similar backgrounds can succeed in forestry,

*“She Is Forestry SA has been the greatest pillar of support for our school. We will be forever grateful for all the support received over the last four years and it has been the greatest source of motivation for our pupils and our teachers. The results shown are a testament that the support is encouraging. We always look forward to the visit from the team as that provides us with an opportunity to learn and show our appreciation.”*

*– Mr Mashapa, Headmaster Mangoako Secondary School*



*“I am empowered by the strength and resilience of women who dared to dream and have unleashed my own potential to become the unstoppable force to also inspire generations to come through excellence.”*

*– Learner, Nkosohlanga Senior Secondary School, Eastern Cape*

*“Watching the videos made me realise the importance of education. This has encouraged me to work hard towards achieving my goals and one day I hope to be a role model myself.”*

*– Learner, Chief Funwako School, Mpumalanga*

so can they. This realisation is transformative, as many see limited career opportunities and often feel resigned to traditional roles, being wives and mothers. By showing them possibilities – like being machine operators or starting forestry businesses – we’re delivering hope.”

Over the past four years, She Is Forestry SA has invested over R500 000 in five schools, providing calculators, menstrual cups, workshops, role model videos, building materials, masks and sanitisers. Teacher feedback highlights the positive impact, with improved pass grades and reduced absenteeism, demonstrating our success.

*“I was not only proud to watch the role model videos that were presented by She Is Forestry SA, but was also excited as these videos brought the forestry careers to life for our pupils. I am only hoping that our pupils will be inspired to become future role models in forestry.”*

*– Mr Blaai, Headmaster Concordia High School*



**Table One: Matric Mathematics pass grades since She Is Forestry SA's involvement**

	School Year				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Chief Funwako (MP)	36%	84%	52%	66%	56%
Nkosohlanga (Mnceba) Senior School (EC)	48%	42%	75%	54%	81%
Concordia High School (WC)	21.4%	55%	38.9%	57.9%	84.2%
Mongoako High School (Limpopo)	55.6%	50%	85.2%	64.3%	52.9%
Phindizwe High School (KZN)	54%	66%	86%	100%	67%

The donation of calculators significantly impacted mathematics performance between 2020 and 2021, with maths being an essential subject for most forestry careers. In 2024, we will provide core maths workbooks and revision guides to further enhance student understanding and pass rates.

*“She Is Forestry SA has brought a sense of mutual responsibility to education and to life for our pupils. With the support of She Is Forestry SA we have been able to improve our school’s academic performance and reduce absenteeism. The support received over the years is testament that it takes a village to raise a child.”*

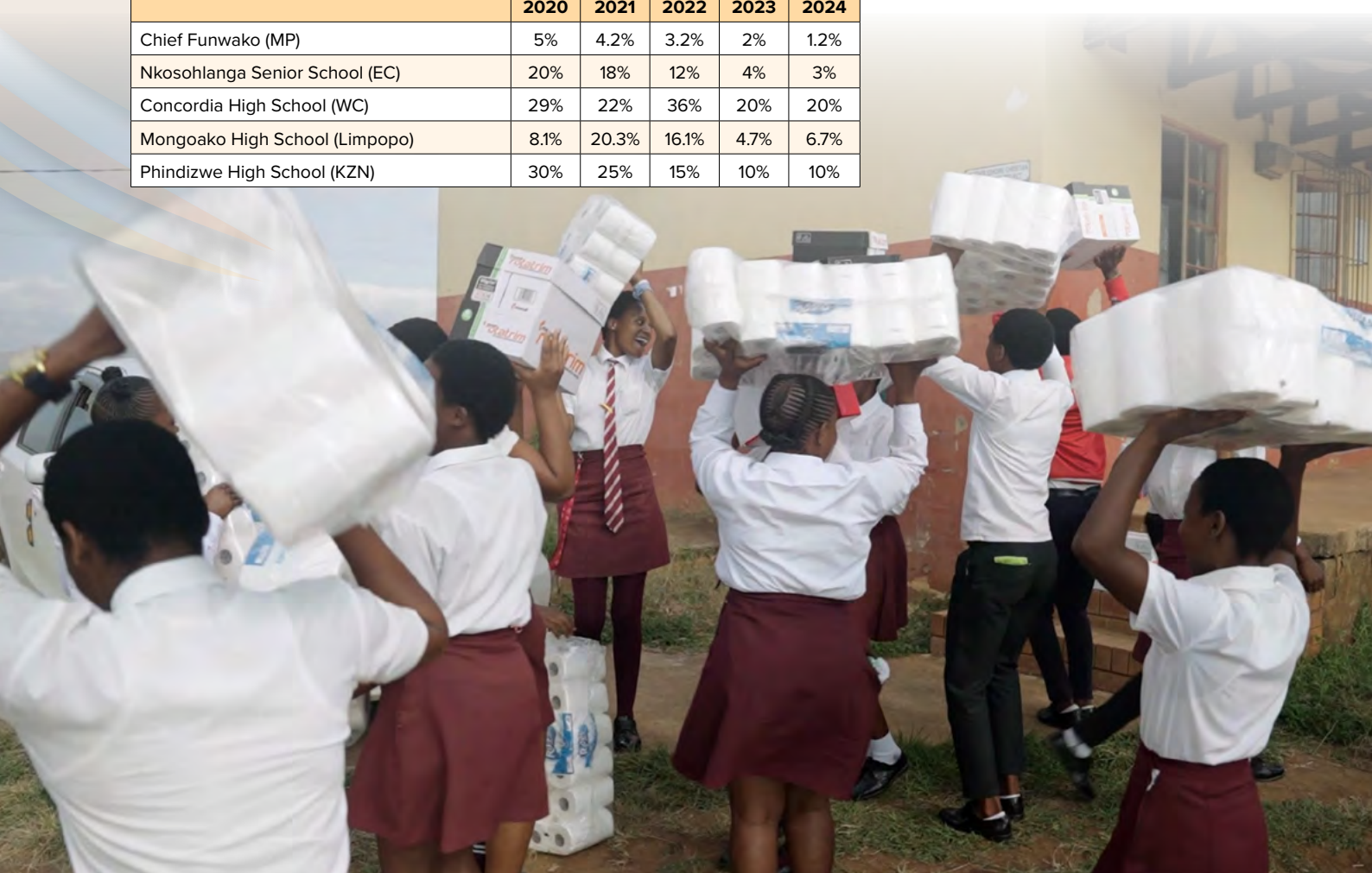
*– Mr Nkosi, Principal, Chief Funwako School, Mpumalanga*

*“For our pupils motivation is crucial and, in this era, it comes in all forms. The She Is Forestry SA role model videos were a marvel to watch and brought the message of self-drive and determination for success closer to our pupils. They have absolutely no reason to play the ignorance game as far as exposure to forestry careers is concerned.”*

*– Mr Mashapa, Headmaster, Mangoako Secondary School*

**Table Two: Absenteeism at the five She Is Forestry SA schools since 2020, Role model videos were initiated in 2022 and first shown in 2023**

	School Year				
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Chief Funwako (MP)	5%	4.2%	3.2%	2%	1.2%
Nkosohlanga Senior School (EC)	20%	18%	12%	4%	3%
Concordia High School (WC)	29%	22%	36%	20%	20%
Mongoako High School (Limpopo)	8.1%	20.3%	16.1%	4.7%	6.7%
Phindizwe High School (KZN)	30%	25%	15%	10%	10%





*“I can confidently say that I have learnt not only about forestry careers from these beautiful She Is Forestry SA role model videos, but also about what it means to being a role model.”*

*– Learner, Mangoaka Secondary School*

All schools sought help with absenteeism, and interventions like menstrual cups and role model videos have been key in reducing these rates over the past five years. *“It’s hard to express the pride we feel upon hearing the impact of She Is Forestry SA from both learners and Head Teachers. Seeing the tangible results in pass rates and absenteeism reduction confirms our ability to change lives in communities often overlooked by traditional support systems. We are committed to continue on this positive pathway with our five schools, and hopefully in the future, many more”*, Khosi concludes.

**“She Is Forestry SA plays a vital role in empowering women across the forestry value chain, regardless of their background. It serves as a dynamic hub where ideas are exchanged, knowledge is shared, and individuals are inspired to unlock their full potential.**

**She Is Forestry SA’s transformative impact has restored dignity to women who were previously overlooked in their workplaces and communities. The platform provided by She Is Forestry SA has allowed previously untold stories of personal triumph and resilience to be shared.**

**Women are recognised and celebrated for their personal growth and significant contributions to both the forestry sector and broader societal structures. Their perseverance is rewarded.**

**Looking ahead, I hope She Is Forestry SA continues to instill a spirit of empowerment, encouraging women to embrace their potential and make their mark wherever they are planted. I envision She Is Forestry SA continuing to offer opportunities to those who may have never thought recognition was possible.”**

**– Irene Mathabela, DFFE Deputy Director:  
Sector Liaison and Capacity Development and  
She Is Forestry SA Director**



# Forestry Enterprise Development in a Corporate Context

**Article adapted from She Is Forestry SA  
Corporate Enterprise Development Video  
Hazel Banda SAFCOL GM: Transformation and  
Enterprise Development**



**F**or this year's webinar, She Is Forestry SA commissioned a video to highlight how corporate forestry companies are fostering entrepreneurial development in rural communities.

Hazel Banda, SAFCOL's GM for Transformation and Enterprise Development, emphasises the importance of supporting community enterprise creation to combat unemployment. *"Forestry operations are situated in deep rural areas where unemployment and poverty are prevalent, and literacy levels are typically low. It is essential for us to facilitate skills transfer, create jobs and improve*

*livelihoods in these communities, ultimately integrating them into the forestry sector and its value chain."*

SAFCOL focuses its enterprise development initiatives on businesses that align with the forestry value chain and are located near its operations, while also remaining open to a variety of entrepreneurial opportunities. *"While we encourage individuals to present viable business plans, the businesses we support take many forms. We have agroforestry operations, furniture-making enterprises and even beekeeping ventures!"* says Hazel.



## Supporting Small-Scale Farmers: Zothando Agri-Cooperative and Dudulani Cooperative

SAFCOL has provided land, seedlings and irrigation equipment to numerous communities, enabling them to establish community gardens that benefit households and entire communities.

*"We harvest vegetables to sell and support our families. We also help orphans in our community who are struggling, and this initiative allows us to educate our children. SAFCOL saved us! We applaud SAFCOL and celebrate their support!"*

— **Mama Ntuli, Dudulani Cooperative.**



## Beekeeping Businesses

SAFCOL has granted beekeepers access to their plantations, providing bee boxes, personal protective equipment (PPE), training and all necessary tools for safe honey harvesting. *“Through these initiatives, we have equipped community members like Lenious Malapane with training and skills, creating business opportunities that enable them to support their families and their communities,”* Hazel adds.

## Amsterdam Furniture Cooperative

This enterprise initiative began as a skills development programme for unemployed youth. Hazel explains, *“SAFCOL provided furniture making training and mentorship. As part of our exit strategy, we recognised the need to help participants develop the additional skills required to transform their training into viable businesses. Once they acquired these skills, we supplied the materials, tools and PPE necessary to start their enterprises. As a result, seven individuals became self-employed woodworking artisans, and independently providing for their families.”*

*“SAFCOL has given us the skills and training to succeed. We take great pride in our work and are immensely grateful to SAFCOL for their support,”* says **Simele Dhladhla from the Amsterdam Furniture Cooperative.**

These examples of corporate enterprise development programmes demonstrate SAFCOL’s commitment to investing in communities beyond its direct operations. *“We witness the smiles and the positive changes that stem from these initiatives. They are productive investments made by SAFCOL that benefit individuals, families and entire communities surrounding our forestry plantations,”* concludes Hazel.





# Pamela Naidoo

## Setting the Stage for She Is Forestry's Keynote Speech

Article adapted from **She Is Forestry SA 2024 keynote webinar speech by Pamela Naidoo, FATO CEO**

**“**In 2023, I turned 50 – although I do not look it!” Pamela proudly announced at the start of her keynote address to an audience of 420. *“I promised myself that I would embark on a new chapter and become a business owner. Fortunately, the SAFCA board recognised my potential and allowed me to take over the training arm of the organisation, provided it was rebranded. Thus, the Forestry and Agriculture Training Organisation (FATO) was born. This July [2024], we celebrated our first anniversary, and I could not be prouder. We are an all-women-run, Level 1 B-BBEE NPO with a wholly female board.”*

Pamela’s achievement is one she has every right to celebrate, as are the 29,670 women who have benefitted from the learning and development initiatives she has facilitated over the past eight years. *“While being in the spotlight is a glorious feeling for any leader, there is a deeper joy in sharing that spotlight with someone whose journey you have helped facilitate. For me, knowing that I am part of uplifting others creates a far greater glow than any spotlight can provide.”*

In her keynote address, Pamela posed a thought-provoking question to the audience: *“Have you ever wondered how, in this vast universe, we have all come to be connected at this specific moment in time?”* The answer, she explained, is simple: *“Connection arises from shared interests, positive energy, trust and the feeling that your voice is heard. For women in our sector, and men too, She Is Forestry SA provides this platform. They shine a light on all of us, and we must do the same by stepping aside and allowing others to shine.”*

### Act One – Life is a Stage

Pamela set the scene for her call to action by inviting the audience to imagine life as a stage, complete with cameras, lights and action! She urged them to envision themselves at the centre of this stage, picturing those in the wings who deserve to share the spotlight. She then challenged the audience to bring those individuals forward, sharing the recognition and accolades that the spotlight bestows. *“As leaders, we must reflect on whether we are sharing the spotlight or overshadowing those who deserve recognition,”* she continued.

Pamela’s stage can also be interpreted as a step or moment in a larger journey, symbolising personal and career growth. She reminded the audience that we are all on this journey together and challenged them to consider how their fellow travellers perceive them during their interactions, explaining, *“For me, I want them to speak of the honour, pleasure and mutual growth they experienced during our time together.”*

### Act Two – It Takes Courage to Encourage Others

The next step involves encouraging others to seize their moment to shine. By doing so, leaders can experience the joy of drawing people towards their potential rather than crowding them out. As Pamela explains, *“It is not about delegating to let go; it’s about delegating to grow. Good leadership is as much about being in the shadows as it is about being in the spotlight. By allowing others to receive recognition, we are not placing their success above our own; we are ensuring their efforts get the acknowledgment they deserve.”*

## Act Three – Success Belongs to Everyone

“The pride a good leader feels when a team member exceeds expectations after being given a moment in the spotlight is unparalleled,” Pamela enthuses. She identifies this process as essential for building mutual trust, confidence and respect, because “when the team shines, you shine!” In this act, her message is clear: “Good leaders are humble leaders, who find strength in the knowledge that it is not all about them.” This is a habit and skill that Pamela emphasises needs cultivating, as it can transform not only your life but also the lives of those you touch.

“By shining the spotlight on your team, you watch the stage come alive as they follow your lead and invite more people to step out of the shadows and join them front and centre,” she continued.

In many ways, sharing the spotlight is akin to watering a garden. Once you begin, the garden grows and develops a life of its own. If you continue to nourish it, the garden will thrive—often in unexpected ways. This was the key lesson Pamela imparted during her keynote speech: share the spotlight and watch the talent in others be recognised and flourish. They, in turn, will gain the confidence to share the spotlight with others, creating a ripple effect that nurtures a far greater pool of individuals than the initial spotlight-sharer could ever have imagined.

### Call to Action: Unleash Your Showman

Pamela referenced *The Greatest Showman*, praising its portrayal of the power of uniqueness and the importance of celebrating it, as well as the willingness of the main character to share his spotlight.

*“She Is Forestry SA provides a platform that shines a light on all of us. We must do the same by stepping aside and allowing others to shine.”*

She reminded the audience to honour those who have shared their spotlight, naming the late Dr Jaap Steenkamp, Kerry Davies and Michael Hlengwa as mentors who shaped her talents and ensured she received recognition from them.

Pamela closed her keynote by asking the audience, “Are you sharing your spotlight? Are you leveraging the talent, diversity and potential within your team? If not, remember that the collective output of a team far outweighs anything a single individual can achieve as a solo act. I challenge you to take some time for honest reflection: am I doing enough to uplift others? If the answer is no, I strongly encourage you to set aside time to develop a plan that will enable this.”



**“At Mondi we believe that by embracing diversity we unlock our full potential. That is why we value our collaboration with She Is Forestry SA, which not only celebrates this richness of diverse talents in our industry, but is cultivating a resilient community anchored in shared learning and continuous growth.”**

**– Nelly Ndlovu, Mondi Zimele CEO**



# Five Years of Championing Women in Forestry



**Makhosazana (Khosi) Mavimbela**  
Executive Director of FSCC and Director and  
Coordinator of She Is Forestry SA

In 2025, we will hold the fifth She Is Forestry SA webinar, aiming to reach an audience of over 500 participants – the number needed if we are to surpass last year’s incredible registration figure. This milestone marks a significant journey that began the year before our inaugural She Is Forestry SA webinar. When FSA and FSCC collaborated on a Women in Forestry Webinar, which laid the groundwork for establishing She Is Forestry SA as a nonprofit organization, paving the way for four subsequent webinars.

Now, as we prepare for our fifth webinar, we envision it as a pivotal moment for our organisation, steering us in an exciting new direction. Over the past five years, we have advocated for gender equality, entrepreneurship and social stewardship, gaining insight into both the opportunities available to women in our sector and the challenges they continue to face. We recognize that gender-based barriers are not only external – imposed by society – but also internal, stemming from perceptions that limit us. We have witnessed firsthand the remarkable influence of our forestry role models on the aspirations of the next generation, alongside the entrepreneurial spirit demonstrated by both small-scale growers and corporate forestry companies.

Building on this knowledge, we aim to establish a more targeted set of objectives for She Is Forestry SA over the next five years.

Our key initiatives will include:

## Mentor Me

An initiative creating online mentoring opportunities that leverage our network of women in the sector. Initially, these will feature mini “TED Talk”-style clips where successful women share their insights. Additionally, we’ll develop a resource centre for women to exchange professional development book recommendations, podcasts and other valuable materials. Toolkits covering essential skills like CV writing, time management and public speaking, creating accessible resources for personal development, will be created through collaborations with industry experts.

## Broadening Our Reach

The positive changes observed at our five She Is Forestry SA schools demonstrate the social stewardship impact our organisation has had. We will continue to support these schools while seeking partnerships with organisations like FP&M Seta to enhance maths education in rural areas.

## A Platform to Promote

We plan to launch a dedicated section on our website to showcase entrepreneurial activities within our sector. This directory will help industry members source speakers, prizes and promotional items while supporting sustainable forestry initiatives.

As we move into our second 5-year cycle, we will continue with the initiatives that have defined She Is Forestry SA to date:

## She Is Forestry SA Awards

These awards will continue to celebrate women's achievements in our sector. This year, we will introduce a new category – Resounding Contribution Behind the Scenes – recognising the unsung heroes whose contributions are vital yet often overlooked.

## Forestry Role Model Videos

We will continue to produce these videos, focusing on making them useful resources for promoting forestry careers and female role models.

## Enabling Entrepreneurs

We are committed to fostering entrepreneurial activities in our sector and will work with industry partners to develop toolkits to equip aspiring entrepreneurs with the necessary skills.

I am proud and humbled by how far our organization has come in five years. Our webinar has expanded not only in audience size but also in the depth and impact of its content. While our core team may have diminished, the commitment of our remaining members reflects a strong sisterhood. Our efforts have extended beyond borders, addressing period poverty, absenteeism, and facilitating STEM education in our five schools, opening students' eyes to a world of possibilities. I am excited about the future. We have the chance to create meaningful change in the lives of others. While gender equality will always be our guiding principle, we are also committed to addressing all inequalities, creating platforms that uplift others and fostering a brighter tomorrow.



**“When I think of all She Is Forestry SA has achieved, I am often reminded of the African proverb, ‘If you want to walk fast, walk alone! But if you want to walk far, walk together.’ Somehow the ladies behind She Is Forestry SA have achieved the impossible and have walked incredibly far in a short space of time. I am proud to take my seat amongst these women.”**

**– Nonhlanhla Buthelezi-Onverwacht,  
Shamwari Consultancy CEO and  
She Is Forestry SA Director**

# The Achievement of Gender Equity in the Forestry Sector is a Collective Effort

**S**outh Africa's forestry sector, like many others in the country, remains sorely underrepresented by women. According to Statistics South Africa, 23% of people employed in the science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) fields are women, which is lower than the global average of 35%. Furthermore only 17% of women in STEM roles hold leadership positions.

The South African government is firmly committed to promoting gender equity and has implemented a comprehensive framework to advance women's empowerment and gender equality. This commitment is enshrined in the Constitution and reinforced through various policies and legislative measures. While significant strides have been made, ongoing efforts are essential to overcome existing challenges and achieve true gender parity.

South Africa's 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) are mandated to drive skills development in the sectors they serve. The Fibre Processing and Manufacturing SETA is responsible for this role in the country's fibre processing and manufacturing sector comprising 13 industrial sub-sectors, including clothing, textiles, footwear, leather, general goods, forestry, furniture, pulp and paper, printing, publishing, print media and wood products.

The forestry sector is one of South Africa's key industries, contributing significantly to economic growth, job creation, and environmental sustainability. Yet, for many years, this sector has been male-dominated, with women facing systemic barriers to entry, progression, and leadership. Today, however, we are witnessing a powerful shift – women are not only entering the forestry industry in greater numbers but are also redefining its future through innovation, resilience, and leadership.

At FP&M SETA, we recognise that gender inclusivity is not just a matter of equity. It is a catalyst for progress. Empowering women in forestry enhances productivity, strengthens communities, and ensures the sector's long-term sustainability. Through our skills development initiatives, strategic partnerships, and dedicated funding, we have been at the forefront of creating opportunities for women – whether as forestry technicians, researchers, entrepreneurs, or industry leaders.

Despite the progress made, challenges remain. Women in forestry still encounter limited access to resources, leadership opportunities, and mentorship. It is our collective responsibility – government, industry stakeholders, and training institutions – to break these barriers and foster an environment where women thrive. FP&M SETA remains committed to this cause, continuously working to equip women with the skills, confidence, and networks they need to excel.

Our financial and non-financial support for 'She is Forestry SA' since its inception five years ago is just one of the many ways that the FP&M SETA has demonstrated its support for capacitating women in the forestry sector as they work to take their rightful place in the sector.

Whilst we can celebrate what has been achieved a great deal remains to be done. By nurturing talent, driving policy change, establishing meaningful partnerships and investing in women-led initiatives, we can build a more inclusive and innovative forestry industry that benefits us all.

As the FP&M SETA moves into a new strategic period, our eye is firmly on the gender equity target and we invite our numerous stakeholders to join us on this exciting journey.



**Dr Felleng Yende**  
**CEO FP&M SETA**



**“FATO NPC would like to congratulate She Is Forestry SA on its 5 year anniversary. It has been amazing to have been part of this journey celebrating and supporting women in the forestry industry and we identify with the founding philosophy of empowerment through education, knowledge and skills.”**

**Pamela Naidoo, FATO CEO**



**“With the She In Forestry SA initiative celebrating 5 years since its inception, the South African Wood Preservers Association (SAWPA) pledges our continued support and encouragement of the entry and participation of women into the forest products and processing subsectors. May those who are already leading the charge be an inspiration for others to become part of the industry.”**

**Bruce Breedt,  
SAWPA  
Executive Director**

**“It has been an incredible experience to witness the unfolding of ‘She Is Forestry’ from conception to where it is today. The brand, and all that it stands for has grown from strength to strength. The last thing we can do is to be complacent. We have just scratched the surface, there is a lot of work still to be done, which requires focus and consistent commitment to the cause. Well done to the directors and everyone involved behind the scenes.”**

**Itumeleng Langeni,  
MTO Group Chief Stakeholder Relations Officer**



