‘Stepping Up to Sustainability’
Good news from across southern Africa!
“Stories of Change”

May 2017 SADC Edition
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In 2010, WESSA, with support from USAID, launched the ‘Stepping Up to Sustainability’ project, established through the ‘Sustainability Commons’ concept across Southern Africa. A ‘Sustainability Commons’ is a place that anyone can visit and experiment with low-carbon technologies, which are usually very simple and inexpensive, and are being used locally for the benefit of the community and the environment. Each of these ‘Commons’ includes a range of sustainability technologies that support more sustainable lifestyle choices. For example reducing, sorting and managing waste better, installing renewable technologies, conserving and teaching about water management, as well as, providing experiential courses on biodiversity.

The goal is simple – to put into practice the lifestyle choices we all need to make. These innovative concepts are set to expand as we all ‘step up to sustainability’ and seek to do something to minimise our environmental footprint. We can reduce our ‘footprints’ or grow our ‘handprints’ (actions for good) through our own ‘Stories of Change’.

USAID assistance has made it possible for WESSA to better respond to the environmental skills shortage in southern Africa. Over 15,000 individuals have engaged in one (or more) of at least 300 activities run in order to gain increased capacity to adapt to climate change impacts and variability. In addition, the practice of establishing 19 ‘Sustainability Commons’ with over 900 diverse technologies throughout SADC has highlighted the wide range of choices for climate change adaptation and more sustainable lifestyles at our disposal. Beyond the statistics though, there is a rich tapestry of stories that can be told about participants experiences, and how ‘Stepping up to Sustainability’ affected their lives.

This booklet has been written by people from across southern Africa who have stepped up to sustainability. “Stories of Change” are a collection of their experiences, in their own words, about the learning that took place either through establishing a sustainability commons, during training or back at home or in the workplace. Some are profound stories about how the programme awakened something deep within them – a desire to enrich the earth or contribute to saving the planet in some way. Some tell of how they found their calling in life and have emerged with a stronger sense of purpose. Many have been inspired to make small changes in the way they live and respond more sensitively to their immediate environment. Each are valuable in their own right and collectively provide inspiring insight into the value the Stepping up to Sustainability Programme has brought to sustainability across southern Africa.

We hope you enjoy the stories and are inspired by their honesty and sincerity. Perhaps you are also trying to live more sustainably? Do you have a change story to share? Whatever steps you are taking towards sustainability, inspire others and share your ‘Story of Change’ by emailing us at training@wessa.co.za
Personal development
My name is Shanu Misser and I have been involved in skills development at WESSA. I have been involved in education and training related to environment and sustainable development for the last 14 years. During that time I have interacted with individuals and communities throughout South Africa. In the last year at WESSA I have interacted with more than 300 individuals in varied training programmes linked to climate change and sustainable lifestyles.

Some key changes that I have made to my personal lifestyle has been to move towards consciously decreasing my meat intake and increasing and substituting pulses into my diet to provide the natural proteins required.

My family members are all vegetarian. As a household we make conscious decisions about the products we buy and ensure we take our own fabric shopping bags when purchasing items. Family members are all aware and make every attempt to save water and electricity. Our waste is separated at home and put out for recyclers on a weekly basis so that we support the separation at source concept.

We have energy efficient light bulbs in all our rooms at home. Our geyser has a geyser blanket on it and we switch it off every morning and only switch it on when we need it. Very seldom do we use a heater. As a household we either use a gas heater if we are forced to or we put on extra layers of clothes or use a blanket.

We grow our own vegetables at home and make our own compost. We have recently purchased a water tank to collect rain water. We still need to have it installed. Currently we are exploring the option of solar panels.
A new arrival – **Claire Herbst**

Bryanston, Johannesburg Sustainability Commons

South Africa

Throughout my involvement in the ‘Stepping up to Sustainability’ project, I have been challenged and inspired to discover new and innovative ways to reduce my carbon footprint. Our family were recently blessed with our first child and on arrival of our beautiful baby boy, we found ourselves wondering about sustainable options we could consider for our new arrival. One of the first things that really helped was the generous second hand gifts from friends and family to re-use items that their children no longer needed or had grown out of. We soon had a full toy box, a changing table, lots of exciting books to read and had repurposed my husband’s old cot with a new coat of paint. In addition, we were also thankful to receive lots of second hand clothes which our son has been working his way through!

Given how fast babies grow and how little time they spend in clothes before moving to the next size, this is a great way to save natural resources and on the purse strings! Now that he is a few months old, I have been packing away some of his newer clothes and gifts that didn’t get much wear and plan to also pass them on to new families. We are careful how much we wash and always use the economy cycle to save on water. Baby bath water can go straight into the garden or be used to water the house plants. There are so many baby products you can quickly accumulate lots of ‘stuff’ so we try to buy carefully, shop locally and opt for biodegradable products where possible. Cloths that we can rewash or cloth nappies are also a great option to cut down on disposable waste as these are one of the biggest culprits clogging up landfills. I believe you are never too young to start caring about the environment and our son is already helping me sort recyclables (well, he plays while I sort!) and loves hearing songs about animals and our rich biodiversity. Hopefully these small steps will go some way to provide a rich learning environment for our son to grow up in and help us as a family reduce our carbon footprint.
My name is Denver Kevin Baatjies. I live in Boksburg CBD and 29 years old with one child. I love outdoor activities like camping, swimming and obstacle courses, when I was younger I attended the boy Scouts.

I have learned a lot about WESSA and our environment through the courses. I have become wiser in my community by not throwing my rubbish anywhere in the streets. I have also brought about change in my community by speaking to scholars and telling them about our natural environment.

I also learned how a landfill site operates and how other people survive from the waste that we collect on a daily basis. This humbled me and made me realize that everything around us can put bread on someone else’s table.
Growing as an environmental educator – Nkosinathi Ndlela

EETDP 2016
South Africa

My name is Nkosinathi Ndlela and I am one of the participants on the USAID funded WESSA EETDP course. I work for Wildlands Conservation Trust as a Horticulturist. I do skills development trainings with the communities. The communities are taught skills that enable them to enhance knowledge in indigenous tree propagation, sustainable agriculture and alien plant clearing.

I have developed a few training manuals before, on (IAP control/ plant propagation/ climate smart agriculture), in my own way, not following most of the things that I have learnt in this course. I think the course has been an eye opener for me.

I have gained additional knowledge in both planning and conducting training. In this course I have had an opportunity to grow as an environmental educator. This course has been so meaningful to me and I feel I could make a contribution.

I am still growing as an environmental educator. At my workplace it is still a challenge for some of my colleagues especially those from HR, finance, marketing and fleet because they lack knowledge related to conservation or climate change.

I have developed the skills, confidence, knowledge, values and motivation to make a difference. In this way I can engage with different people according to different environmental issues e.g. water/energy/food.

I am looking at developing different learning programs for different environmental issues. For example by developing a training manual that is accredited. I also feel the course has improved my current knowledge in both environmental education and climate change.
Be the change you want to see in the world –
Donald Raamano

Environmental ethics and practices participant
South Africa

My name is Raamano Donald and I work for Babcock plant services. I am happy to be given the opportunity to do this WESSA course because it helped me see a lot of things the way we all should be seeing them. People are using a lot of water on a daily basis and some of the things that we use water for are things that are not so important, like splashing each other with water on the 1st of September each year to celebrate spring day. That to me is a complete waste and people don’t see it that way, they all tell you how much they spend on rent and that it’s their water.

I am glad now that we have been struggling to receive rain, people can now open their eyes and see what they were doing was wrong. I learned a lot of things from this course and I am willing to change the way I do things at home. I am now recycling and reusing things that I bought for other purposes. As a result I am able to save money and the environment.

A big thank you to USAID and WESSA for giving us this opportunity to learn so that we can be part of the change we want to see.
My name is Nthabiseng Mphela. Apart from all the challenges faced by the environment, I believe in being optimistic and that standing up on behalf of the environment is a fortune and a privilege. I am a mother of 4 children - 2 boys and 2 girls. I am a very self-dedicated employee at Ekurhuleni municipality. We tend to face challenges, some good and some bad hence I just have to face challenges. I overlook the negative things and focus on the positive. Environmental sustainability amongst our society is one of them. I am very much confident fighting barriers against a green environment and being optimistic is a practice, not a skill. I don’t expect to be optimistic all the time but I prefer looking on the bright side for any hardships. I intend to make a difference in my community for my people and very much everything that influences the environment positively, of which I am very proud.

I am very much thankful to Ekurhuleni municipality for the opportunity and the highly accredited initiative of WESSA for the positive out-look on the socio-economic issues of our society at large, regardless of everything that is happening. And lastly I would like to thank the facilitators who shared with us the importance of the environment:

- Katlego Setshed
- Zanele Khumalo
- Baleni Minetle
- Lesego Khunou
Active learning for the environment – Mmakhumo Joala

EETDP 2016
South Africa

My name is Mmakhumo Joala, a university of Free State BSC Environmental studies alumni. I was born in the North West province and have always loved environment related courses. This allowed me to relate to learners when I became a Geography teacher in 2014. I have worked as a temporary environmental facilitator to promote environmental education.

I went on the WESSA website to read more about the course and decided to apply for the USAID bursary as it is related to what I do on a daily basis and can help me grow in my career.

This course has showed me the importance of relating to people and giving information in the way that they are able to understand it, moreover, I have acquired skills of ensuring that learners and able to construct their own meaning through different methods and approaches of learning. It is easy to tell someone that his or her actions are harmful to the environment, but this does not mean that someone will immediately change his actions. You need to ensure that there is a change in someone’s life or actions by using different approaches to learning where learners become active and realize their own mistakes (learner oriented).

I was also able to achieve research skills and network with other people of different organizations to start my own organization. I also shared skills at my school. I helped learners in their school garden and sorting out waste. This has changed learner’s attitude towards the environment. I have integrated the course with the CAPS teaching plan to achieve education goals. I have encouraged the learners to be ambassadors of environmental education in their communities, this was done by encouraging them to include elders of the community in their mission to make a change in the environment. As I am also working in villages, I encouraged the learners to ensure that members of the community can understand them, meaning that they should bring certain education terms and processes to their level and understanding.
My name is Nyakallo Rejoice Molise. I am a middle aged Mosotho educationist, visionary, strategic, multidisciplinary and hardworking senior curriculum developer with an eye for innovation and pixel perfection. I hold two Master’s Degrees (Policy Studies and Governance and Curriculum Design and Development). I have worked with the Ministry of Education and Training in Lesotho since 1996 where I served as a teacher. I transferred to the Civil Service, Primary Field Inspectorate where I worked as a primary inspector from 2009-2011. Then I proceeded to the National Curriculum Development Centre to work as a Curriculum Developer. Eventually I was promoted to the position of a Senior Curriculum Developer.

I take part in many environment related activities such as water and soil conservation, climate change awareness campaigns, Disaster Risk Reduction and many more.

My colleague who was at school in Thailand, doing a Master’ Degree in Education for Sustainable Development, Mr Mako Matšela sent me the application for the WESSA EETDP Course. I remember very well how I ignored his message. I did not read it until the last day of submission when he asked me how far I was with the applications. I then applied reluctantly and sent my application to WESSA.

This course has not only opened my eyes, but has also played a positive role in transforming me as a curriculum developer. It made me discover the natural world and how to interact with it resourcefully, responsibly and sustainably henceforth assist learners, teachers and the entire Basotho community to take care of the environment. I humbly wish to pass my heartfelt gratitude to WESSA, more especially, USAID, for creating and making this golden opportunity of enrolling in this EETDP Course a reality. The course has not only transformed me as an individual, but has also enabled to extend my knowledge, skills and expertise learnt to Basotho in general in an endeavour to make the world a better place. Words alone cannot express my feelings or my thanks for all your help and if the world had more people like you it would be a better place.
My name is Nokuthula Mdletshe from Kwa-Zulu Natal in South Africa KZN. I work for Wildlands, and we deal with educating people. I had to look at my life after this course just to make sure that I fix anything that is broken as far as environmental education is concerned, reading further you will realize that I spoke about a few things that I do differently now compared to before the WESSA EETDP course.

There is a health risk from the way contaminated water caused by illegal dumping ends up in our river systems. Not only for our health but also the health of animals that depend on water for drinking and their habitat. The health of crops that are watered by contaminated water is also on a risk that will affect us as people.

In the past when it was felt that we were running low on water then a new source of water would be approached. It’s only recently that the emphasis of saving water started being serious and was implemented.

I would like to educate people about watering using grey water for the gardens and not to turn a blind eye when I see my neighbour rinsing her laundry on a running tap. I do my daily water usage audit and I also harvest grey water for my garden so that when I educate people about this they can see from me that it is doable and saves a lot of resources.
I am not the same person – Tsepiso Khena

My name is Tsepiso Khena from Impendle in Kwazulu Natal, South Africa. I was wasting water but didn’t see a problem with that, because according to my knowledge water falls freely from the sky as rain, I never thought that rain water can affect us in any way. I was always watering my garden non-stop and it took a lot of water. I honestly wasted a lot only to realise how important water is.

Since I started doing this WESSA Environment Practices course, my life has changed a lot and I now take care of the environment. I am not the same person I used to be, now I know how important water is. I use my bucket to wash my car and I use the same water to water my garden. I am also looking at changing my garden and planting flowers or plants that don’t need a lot of water so that I can save even more.

I also didn’t know that for electricity to be produced they need water. I thought they just burn, but after joining the course and knowing the importance of water, I realized that I should save water, because almost everything that is produced has water added during the process. So now I am very careful on how I use water and electricity because I can see how critical it is.

We were testing this water. I then understand because there are animals that live around and in the water that can get affected by the dirty water. When we check what makes the water dirty, we find that it’s the work of people who just don’t care about the animals and the environment at large.

From now on I am going to educate my community about the importance of water and how we can save water. I am visiting schools and raising awareness because school children also waste a lot of water everyday. At home I have already started using water wisely and I can see a difference in my water bill.

I am very grateful to WESSA and the funder USAID for giving me this opportunity to learn the wonderful things that I learnt. I am happy that even though I don’t have a job now, my life is changed and I can now make a difference. I can also forward the message to other people because the things we learnt don’t even need money to be implemented, you just need to change your attitude towards nature and everything will be fine.
My name is Zanele Makhanye, I come from Impendle in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa. I would like to start by thanking the municipality for choosing me to participate in this programme, I am not the Zanele that I used to be and I am not doing the things I used to do. I am now educated and I can share the information that I got here with my community. Everyone can implement this because it’s not hard labour, it just takes a change of lifestyle. I have a matric certificate that I did at Matomela high school, I finished matric in the year 2003, and after this I got a job at the local municipality where I heard about this course and how it will improve my qualifications and take my life to the next level.

I have a lot of things that are important to me in life, but I was a very careless person especially when it comes to waste. I used to throw papers all over without even thinking twice about what waste does to the environment. As my yard is clean I didn’t care where the paper ends. After being part of the WESSA course I was shocked when we did the waste module. We learned a lot of things about waste that helped me know my job better and also to care for the environment.

The following are the changes I managed to make in my life. I am also telling my friends about this course hoping that they will also implement this in their homes:

1. I have started my own food garden, which is re-using the idea of the food garden was something I always wanted but I was lazy to start one. Now I have managed to do it and have my tomatoes and spinach at home.

2. We were always keeping the lights of the whole house on at night even when we are not in a room. Since I did this course I know how electricity is generated and I noticed that I should change my lifestyle. It is very nice because instead I am saving money.

3. As we know that the energy saving bulbs are expensive, I am changing them one at a time each month. I will be having only energy saving bulbs in my house soon.

4. I am saving water, so because I don’t have a bath in the house we use the plastic baths to bath. I told my kids to water the garden with the water they used for bathing and because we don’t have taps where we stay in the yard, this is good because my children don’t have to go fetch water many times as it is very tiring.

Some of the things I learnt about I will implement in future, but the little I could do I am doing and it is really saving and convenient. The environment is very important and I know that if we can continue to spread the message the environment will be a good place for every living thing to live in peace and harmony.

5. I was throwing away empty tins and bottles, but now I am recycling. As a single mother I can do a few things for my children which my salary doesn’t cover.
After consider the many ways my life has changed with the upbringing from my family and pursuing a career in the South African conservation sector, I decided to rather look through the lens of my influences on people close to me, and their stories of change.

Starting right at the core of my family tree, my mother has taken up planting indigenous plant around the house whereas in the past she planted attractive exotic plants. My sister, who loves shopping, now keeps reusable shopping bags in her car, just in case she notices a nice shop on the way home from work. My dad now watches National Geographic and various other environmental shows which further expands his knowledge and agency around issues of sustainability nationally and internationally. These are a few examples of how me stepping up to sustainability has influenced others around me and changed their own stories to step up to sustainability.

I have also seen stories of change in a more ideological way in family and friends because of my environmental influences. One of my prime examples is my best friend. Listening to her advocate for environmental justice today, is a testament of how we as environmentalists touch, and change, people’s lives. The practical changes, like putting a bucket in the shower, are present, but for me, it is the mind-shift and change that makes my job so rewarding. She once explained to me that her outlook about the environment has completely changed in that she is now more aware of the impact environmental decisions have on different groups of people, and the complex dynamics that are linked to these decisions.

These are the stories of change that narrates my story of change – and without the people around me, there is no me. My story of change includes my realization, of quite a few years back, that everyone and everything is inextricably linked to each other.
I am currently working for BirdLife Botswana, an NGO conserving birds and their habitats by creating awareness, carrying out applied research and promoting beneficial relationships between birds and people. I completed a course taught by WESSA.

**The change I managed to bring in my life**
There has been a drastic change which my facilitation and presentation skills has improved. I have improved my facilitation confidence. I also acknowledge that since I take the course I have improved my reading skills which is very crucial to develop me professionally.

**The change I managed to bring at home**
I am advocating for reuse of plastic bags and glass bottles with my family and it is working well. I am improving with my shopping demand as the course has been an eye opener with regard to appreciate that the more I shop the more I create high demand of things to be manufactured. Another great change is resorting to eating less meat and more vegetables which is causing a bit of conflict with the children.

**The change I managed to bring at work**
Most importantly I learned to evaluate a learning programme which I view as an important tool as I have been coordinating the bird monitoring programme and not once have I been able to carry out evaluation. This course was a useful tool to explain and demonstrate that it is easy to carry evaluation and to develop an evaluation tool which is crucial for successful project management. I have developed for the first time an evaluation questionnaire for training workshops I host annually and I have evaluated the first workshop which gave me great feedback.

I have learnt to develop a code of conduct to conserve energy at work for example avoiding unnecessary printing, I also depend on light from windows and never switch on light during daytime. I have been hosting workshops but never been trained on facilitation process and so now I am in a better position to prepare myself well to undertake a good planned facilitation for the workshops that I host.
...continued

The change I managed to bring in my community

The change I manage to bring in my community is changing the perception of the community members undertaking the bird count to appreciate the effort of why they are to carry out bird monitoring. From October to November 2016 I started mobilising volunteers countrywide to undertake the November 2016 count and I was able to explain to them the benefits of being environmental custodians. This increased community members participation by 20% in the programme, compared to before I take the course.

Community members, in one of the remote areas in Botswana, during one of the training workshop completing the evaluation questions

Acknowledgements

In acknowledgements the course is a great tool to equip anyone from all discipline of work to make decisions that are environmentally sensitive, responsible and contributes to sustainable utilization of our natural resources. I want to acknowledge WESSA and USAID for this great initiative and recommend that the programme becomes sustainable in such that it reaches out to many who still need to be enlightened about environmental education. I also want to acknowledge the tutors for their great enthusiasm and effort in delivering the course. It was a nice team who made studying very easy for us even though there was too much workload. I want to pass my sincere gratitude to my mentor and dedicate the certificate to her because, being retired and in her early 90s and from the remote area she stayed she gave me first hand support to understand the concepts further. Thank you Doreen McColaugh - Environmental Education is the crust of your heart! Lastly I want to thank my classmates, I have learnt a lot of experiences from you and most of all I have learnt to appreciate we are all environmental educators at different levels.
The change starts with me

Environmental Practices 2016
South Africa

I’m a 27 year old male, residing in Howick KZN. I currently work at WESSA – Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve as a Reserve Supervisor. My daily duties entails; mostly reserve maintenance, vehicle inspection and assisting with environmental education. I studied at Injoloba Secondary School then further studied at Berea Technical College doing a National Diploma in Civil Engineering. Financial constraints deprived me from pursuing the qualification. Before I worked for WESSA I had previously done several courses that are not environmentally related.

Since my employment at WESSA, I learned that there are a lot of human activities that affect the environment, directly and indirectly. Some of these environmental effects contribute to a larger environmental crisis around the globe.

One of the major environmental crisis around the world is the increasingly amount of waste produced.

I personally believe that the change starts with me, in that I have taken an initiative to minimize the amount of waste that is generated in our daily lives. I have decided to refuse plastic bags at the shops and instead use my own shopping bag or use cupboards. To avoid waste material generated, I do not print out an ATM slip after withdrawing since I know I will get a message notification with regards to the withdrawal details. I have minimized or limited the purchase of goods that will contribute to a larger amount of waste produced. I have also adopted a unique lifestyle of applying the five R’s concept which is reuse, refuse, reduce, recycle and repurpose.
Reigniting my passion – Lufuno Sihadi

My name is Lufuno Sihadi. I am an assistant interpretative officer at Kruger National Park. One of my key responsibilities is to raise awareness through environmental education. I studied nature conservation with Tshwane University of technology (TUT).

I did not know that environmental education can be so much fun hence I’ve been doing it for years now. After attending the environmental educators’ course I realised that there was just so many things that I’ve been doing wrong and as a result it was killing my passion slowly. I never knew that when facilitating to a group there is a teacher or learner centred method to consider all I did was to present as it suits me unknowingly that for me to convey the message I will need to consider prior knowledge of my audience and not treat them like empty vessels. A lesson plan has helped me to facilitate like a professional because I have guidelines of what I want to achieve and how to achieve it, it works for me like a map that leads me to my destination and has made my job so easy and so much fun. I do not have to sit around and do nothing.

I have learnt that hands-on activities enhance interactions amongst groups and allow for every individual to have an input and equal understanding of the topic at hand. This has helped my learners to go back to their schools and have fun while keeping their environment clean. My lessons to the groups are no longer about my groups keeping their schools clean but their households and around communities within they live.

Thank you WESSA for restoring my passion in environmental education and capacitating me in ways to do it right. The opportunity was indeed eye opening and have made me a valuable asset to my organisation and the people I work with.
Professional development
Pursuing an environmental career - Nonkululeko Goodness Maseko

2016 Environmental Practices
South Africa

I am Nonkululeko Goodness Maseko, I was born in Standerton (Mpumalanga) went to school in Mpumalanga and came to Thembisa when I was 14 years old for my high school. I went to high school at Thuto Ke Maatla comprehensive school, but finished my matric at Ekurhuleni West College. I am a mother of a 14 year old and a 1 year old boy. I stay with my grandfather and father at home. I have been working at Ekurhuleni Metropolitan municipality since the 1st August 2011. I was hired as a general worker but in 2011 I was appointed to act as cemetery clerk due to the office knowledge I have. Working at the municipality is a great experience more especially working at the cemetery, it has changed my way of looking at things. As I’m the one who captures the record of people who have died, it has made me treasure life as a whole.

I’ve learned more about the environment and how the environment is important to us, as I didn’t know much about illegal dumping before. I’ve learned how to identify types of soil before planting something in it. I love vegetables and also love growing them, the WESSA course has taught me a lot about that and how to make natural compost.

I now respect the environment and am taking good care of it. In regards to community change, I now spread the word to my neighbours on how to take care of the environment.

What I’ve applied at work is to save water and electricity since I was also one of the people who used to waste water and electricity.

I think I’m going to apply for a relevant department, as I’m now interested in environmental development. I will keep on implementing what I have learned through the course. I would love to thank WESSA for giving me this opportunity to come and attend this course of environmental development as it has had a good impact in my life.
Walking the talk – Thulisile Gumbi

2016 Environmental Education Training and Development Practices participant
South Africa

I am Thulisile Gumbi from Sovane Area under Nongoma Town, I started my first year at Dlakuse C, Primary School and finished at Prince Bhekintinta High School. I studied a field ranger course at the South African Wildlife College and am employed at Somkhanda Game Reserve as a field Ranger which is where I heard about this WESSA course.

The risk in our community is based on waste and water. People are dumping things in the water and as a result fish, animals and plants that live in the water die. As we are facing this challenge I always make sure that I talk about keeping the environment clean whenever I am with people, even the people who come to our nature reserve. We use our resources very wisely e.g. we use gas for cooking and we have rainwater tanks for rainwater harvesting.

I also do a river clean up campaign to support the community and show them that I am ‘walking the talk’.
My name is Edna Xulu, I work at Ekurhuleni Municipality as a general worker within the waste department at Brakpan. My job description is waste picker, waste collector and I’m also a safety rep of a Depot.

I learned a lot of things from this course, like how to manage waste in a better ways rather than just taking it to the landfill site. I learned about environmental degradation and the dangers of different types of pollutions and the issue of dealing with those problems. I also learned about different types of waste and how to treat and monitor them, and the importance of recycling and using things as other tools or for another purpose (reusing).

I informed the workers about the importance of saving electricity and water, and I also teach them about the importance of recycling and how to recycle. I learned the importance of wearing protective clothing and warned workers about the risk of doing work they were not trained for.

We now save electricity by switching off appliances we do not use or need that time, we also keep the environment cleanet. Most importantly we RE-USE, REDUCE and RECYCLE.

I will apply for a better job or open my own company that will give people the opportunity to get jobs so that they can also learn the things I have learned.
My name is Zanele Mthembu, a simple down to earth woman from KZN. I am currently employed by Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. I work in the waste department as a general worker and a driver operator. I have been given an opportunity by the municipality to study this amazing WESSA course which I enjoy as it is all about the environment.

I have learned more about recycling and landfill sites. I used to go in and out of the landfill site but not know the details of how it works. I now have a lot of information about a landfill site - how it works, how it is made or started, how it is operated, and why they are far from the community. As a waste picker, at work when we see illegal dumping we used to burn it. Now when we are working and we find illegal dumping I tell my colleagues not to burn the litter because the smoke will cause air pollution. When I’m driving the truck to get to the community to collect dustbins (preventing illegal dumping), I warn the team leader to stand back while the truck is compacting. He must stand at the side of the truck so that he is safe and also to avoid hazardous waste spilling on him.

I have implemented a lot of things from the knowledge I have learned from the course. Many people around my neighborhood and myself are now proud of me, because even at my workplace, more and people get to know about nature and our environment. This will help save our environment and keep it well for the next generations.

Through this qualification, I hope to use it to become an environmental inspector. It will take me far because I am willing to take other modules that are based on the environmental course.
My name is Sarah Kgwedi, I’m a general worker at the waste management department in Boksburg. I am a cleaner at the offices and I also do other office work like helping with administration. I help the supervisors with photocopying, filing and issuing of safety clothes when needed every morning. When clients need some help on issuing 240l bins I also assist.

On this course I have learned about climate change and what causes it, understanding of the natural recourse and its importance, the ecosystem and different biomes. I now have an understanding of sustainable development, environment degradation, reasons to use different environmental tools, where and when we use tools, the methods of testing water using a secchi disk and turbidity test.

I have learned about how a landfill works, what happens inside a landfill and how the controls at pooling polluted water systems operate. I also learnt that when the landfill site is full and no longer in use, it can be changed into a recreational park. The change that I have brought through is that I can now take the skills that I have and apply them to the workplace and community. I can teach my community about the importance of keeping our environment clean and free from littering and illegal dumping.

I have completed the workplace audits and discovered that there is a lot of change to make that will save our company money and time. The dustbin / trash bin is now placed in areas that workers usually litter.

The workplace is now installed with energy saving lamps and we are using used paper at work to make copies. I realised we can use used paper for drawing or making paintings instead of throwing them away or burning them.

I will use this qualification to then do a diploma at college for more learning on an environmental practice course. After I have completed this, I will apply for a job in the environmental development field.
A call for positive change – Sizakele Shongwe
South Africa

My name is Sizakele Shongwe from Zonyama or Pongolo town. I started my class at Makhoti intermediate school and finished my high school at Biva combined. I work as a volunteer and that is how I heard about this course.

In our area a lot of people have cows and goats but the problem is they take their animals to drink water in the same river people use for drinking and it is not healthy. As a result, in the community we decided to look for a river that can be used by people only. The other one is to be used by the animals to avoid sicknesses within the community.

I asked one of my colleagues to come and teach our community about saving water and why we should save it because a lot of people think that we will never run short of water. The truth is with this kind of weather we just be really careful and save as many of our natural resources as possible.

I will use my certificate or qualification to find a better job position and study more about this course. I will also give other people the knowledge that I gained from this course. This course has helped me realize how badly I was doing things and how I can improve or change my life and way of doing things.
Yes to professional growth...No to plastics! – Zamokuhle Ncube

South Africa

My name is Zamokuhle Ncube, also known as Zama. I was born at Matubatuba in the area called Machibini in the year 9 July 1979. I live with my family and I am a father of 2 children. I studied at KwaHlabisa village in a school that is called Mpelenyane. From there I moved to Matuba to start my high school in Mawombe which is where I did my matric in 1999.

I found out about the WESSA course from my organization. When they asked if I was interested in doing it, I was more than happy to, as it compliments my work and helped me get more information on how I can make my job easy. When I get this certificate I would like to study further so that I am able to help other people and increase my understanding.

According to my experience, I have seen that waste is the biggest problem in our community. I say this because of the way it damages our biodiversity. By throwing down plastic bags and papers, it can kill the soil. This is why we have poor soil these days in our country, because we put wrong things on the soil and the soil then becomes unfertile. We then suffer and there is a problem with our food.

Previously our community were not educated but they were able to reduce the things that they were using, like plastics were used to make mats for sitting down. I focus on educating people and retailers about the importance of doing recycling and try to use paper bags again instead of plastic bags.

These are the plastic bags I stopped using

These are reuseable bags I use now
My journey of change – Loretta Floors

EETDP 2016
South Africa

My name is Loretta Floors and I live in Kleinmond near Hermanus. I’m married and a mother of two sons. I finished high school at Swartberg Senior Secondary School in Caledon. I liked music, cooking, reading and I’m an outdoor person. I work for SANBI but I’m based at Harold Porter National Botanical Garden in Betty’s Bay. The jobs I did before was different, I worked at Spar and then OK mini market but in 2004 I applied for a post at Harold Porter and my new career started. I first started in the garden as a Conservation Laborer 1 doing weeding, pruning, collecting seeds, learning how to layout a garden bed and on rainy days doing cuttings and potting up plants. The thing I enjoyed most was learning plant names. In 2006 my job changed due to a back injury I got because of an accident at work. I started to work with the interpretation officer and assist with Environmental Education. My job at the garden now is doing research for plant interpretation labels, developing storyboards, tourist guiding and Environmental Education.

With Environmental Education you interact with people in your environment you look at the issues and you need to deal with them and find solutions. The main aspect of Environmental education is to reach out and teach people about our environment and what we as humans can do to conserve and sustain it.

My goal is to conserve and sustain and improve the work that I’ve been busy with. To grow and plough back what I’ve learned into my work place, in the community and at schools and to educate the youth the importance of preserving our environment. Where I lived we have a rich biodiversity and I want to make my contribution to conserve and sustain and take care of our valuable resources.

I’ve learned A LOT through this course. Different environmental issues that we discussed and places we have visited opened up my eyes to what our environment must deal with.

A few changes I had to make at home my workplace and community:

**At home:**
I had to fully equip bathrooms in my house and I completely remove my bath from the one bathroom and just put in a shower to save water. We changed all our light bulbs at home. Put off lights when we not in a room. Put up solar panels to reduce electricity use.

**At work:**
That’s still a challenge but with our new offices and Education Centre I will help them with making the place more environmental friendly.

**In my community:**
I’ve started with Kleinmond Primary School and that’s my project to work with those learners and to start an Eco School by next year.
Kleinmond Primary School

Working with Cape Nature:

With the help of Cape Nature I could manage my Learning Programme:
Using my initiative
Using resources more efficiently - Sonny Katisa

2016 Environmental Practices participant
South Africa

My name is Sonny Mpyakhe Katisa, born in Benoni on 08 October, 1982. I grew up in Daveyton and completed my high school studies at Mabaya Secondary school where I completed my Grade 12 in the year 2000. After matric I did community service and was involved in neighbourhood watch. In 2006, I got a job at a company called SKF South Africa as a floor supervisor and got promoted again and worked as an internal Sales Representative. I studied a Marketing course and computer studies in Boston College. I love soccer, support Orlando Pirates and am a father of 2 kids.

I have learnt about the importance of the environment and the critical role I have to play in protecting and conserving it. I have learnt about vegetation loss, soil erosion, improper waste management, illegal dumping and alien plants. I have seen examples of energy efficient technologies at the O.R Tambo precinct and observed how they contribute to sustainable life style choices. I learnt about biogas, solar panels, how wetlands can help to naturally purify water and how buildings can be designed to improve energy efficiency.

The change that I managed to bring in to my workplace is that I use all my resources more efficiently. I am looking at the problems we are causing in our environment and now minimising wastage of water, saving electricity, using fuel more efficiently and reducing alien plants that are using a lot of water. I will use my qualification to further my studies and be a better person at my workplace and even at home because now I have the information I need to live a better lifestyle. I will be making more efficient choices and decisions like when I buy things in the supermarket and even growing my own products where ever possible.
Having known about separating waste for recycling for many years, I had not actively and consistently done any separation at home. This mainly because, there were no recyclable drop-off facilities where I stay.

When I joined WESSA in 2014 I started using the recycling village to drop off the separated waste I brought in from home. Because I’m in a lift club (another environmental choice!), I don’t drive to work every week, so I only take the recyclable waste when it’s my turn to drive.

My family places the recyclable waste in a big box near the kitchen door. When the box is full, we separate the waste into the various categories accepted by the recycling village. My father has become a master sorter!

The waste is neatly squashed (to save space and), packed in boxes and transported to the WESSA Recycling Village where I then place it in the appropriate bins or bags. While doing that I also look out for interesting reading material especially magazines! I take some home and return them after we have read them!

After all this time my family still puts non-recyclable waste in the bin. This upsets me a lot!
Peoples activities are crucial – Sihle Madonsela

2016 EETDP Participant
South Africa

My name is Sihle Madonsela. I am an Environmental Science graduate, starting community development work while with DAFF: Fisheries Management. I worked with communities neighbouring protected areas in Northern KZN while I was part of the Groen Sebenza programme. I am now a ‘Social Facilitator’ in EThekwini Municipality Reforestation project implemented by Wildlands in Buffelsdraai. My inspiration is to see all communities playing a role in environmental protection. At the moment I have managed to deliver a programme on climate change and ecosystem services. From my observation, climate change has an ability to impact on the natural environments capacity to offer services that many people depends on. On the other hand, the same people contribute to climate while living their lives. It is hoped that the right lifestyles can decrease the amount of contribution to greenhouse gases that cause enhanced climate change. The people’s activities are critical in this case. During the EETDP course, I have been engaging with different people discussing how they contribute and what can be done to offset the impact.

I have obtained Wonderbags™ for myself and for my family. I buy locally produced food. I use public transport and share rides. One of the things I adapted a while ago, is to take short showers and re-use before I can recycle. Other things I have done have been taking part in different activities trying to create space for conservation and community conservation initiatives to allow migration of some species and increase space for conservation.
A lifesaver at Twinstreams! – **Steve Untiedt**

Twinstreams Sustainability Commons

South Africa

Running an environmental education centre in the midst of a rehabilitated dune forest has its challenges... Twinstreams accommodates up to 110 people at a time and has to ensure that all of these visitors have access to flushing toilets; showers and drinking water. Because we are situated five kilometres away from the small seaside village of Mtunzini on the Zululand coast we have no access to municipal services and have to rely on borehole water and electricity supplied directly to us by Eskom. This water is extracted from an aquifer 50m below the surface using an electrical pump. Water is stored in large tanks and is circulated around the centre by an electrical pump. When we experience electrical outages - which is a fairly common occurrence - the taps run dry and the toilets cannot flush.

When we cater for these large groups of visitors we load our electrical freezers and fridges to the limit. Electrical outages can lead to enormous losses in terms of spoilt food and many unhappy customers.

A forest at night is a very dark place to be in - even the stars are blocked out by the canopy formed by the tree tops. Put a whole lot of city folk in the midst of such a forest at night with no electricity and panic very soon sets in.

In the initial phase of establishing the USAid sustainability commons at Twinstreams we acquired a variety of technologies that assisted us to get by when we had electrical outages. We had wonder bags; solar geysers and a few solar lights to turn to but soon discovered that these were hopelessly inadequate when dealing with large numbers of people. Then- in 2016- USAid made funds available for the extension of the commons and we acquired a ‘power buddy’ system which consists of large, deep cycle batteries and an inverter which are linked directly into the mains. Whilst the electricity is on the batteries charge up and when there is an outage the system kicks in and power is back on within a split second. This allows us to have water; keep our freezers and fridges going and keeps the lights on down at Sinkwe centre. This has truly been a life saver for us here at Twinstreams.
Hazel Clark has found that using her own hay boxes has been very cost effective and efficient. All you do is take a box, fill it with hay and then place your pot (after bringing it to the boil) into the hay. Your food will continue to cook and never burn. This is where the idea of the “hot box” came from. Another way of insulating your pots, is to wrap them in a duvet. This works just as well.
I attended a stepping up for sustainability workshop at the Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve and this workshop made me realise that I need to make a change on an individual level. I had firsthand experience of where the waste we produce goes to when we visited the local landfill site.

Throwing waste “away” does not solve the waste problem and adds to many environmental issues. My story of change involves better waste management at a household level, I have started recycling at home, I now collect and sort my waste at home into recyclable waste and organic waste. The organic waste is disposed of in the compost heap on the property where the compost is then used for gardening. The recyclable waste is sorted at the recycling village at the Umgeni Valley Nature Reserve. I have learnt that simple measures such as recycling can make a big difference if everyone did their part to help the environment and reduce their individual impacts on the earth.
Andile vilakazi conducted a three days workshop at Mpophomeni to pass on knowledge to community at large. This happened after he had attended a successful stepping up to sustainability course at WESSA, Umngeni Valley Nature Reserve. He realised that people have potential to run their own vegetable gardens in their homes but they are ignorant. We started with theory in class n we were hands on where participants made compost hips, liquid mature and they started gardening, today they are all running their own gardens successfully and making cash out of their work. This is a proof that with one home one garden initiative we can alleviate poverty.
Kristi Garland has been part of initiating a recycling programme in Volksrust, a town in the Mpumalanga province on the KwaZulu-Natal provincial border. Newcastle is the closest town that has a recycling depot and is 53 km away. And so they found a need to create a point for collection and sorting of their communities’ waste.

Paper, cardboard, plastic and tins are collected and then once the bags are full they are transported to Newcastle. Glass is collected by other members of the community to create pieces to display and sell in a local art gallery.
Lesotho Council of NGOs (LCN) uses electricity to power its operation on a day to day basis. The electricity is powered by Lesotho Electricity Corporation (LEC). On a year-to-year basis, keeps increasing tariffs for electricity consumption. As a result, LCN pays a lot of money monthly for electricity. If this money could be saved through energy efficient technologies then LCN could have the funds allocated to other administrative activities. Hence we started our sustainable commons to reduce energy.

LCN was using 48 fluorescent tubes and 5 bulbs which were used to light the interior and exterior respectively. The tubes were lighted for 8 hours while the bulbs were lighted for 24 hours. Both the fluorescent tubes and bulbs consumed 11,552Wh and 2400Wh respectively. In total LCN’s energy consumption was 13952wh of electricity per day just for lighting.

We then decided to replace them with energy efficient LED tubes and bulbs. Now as opposed to the fluorescent tubes which consumed 38 watts, the LED tubes consumed 18 watts hence their consumption for 8 hours was 5,472wh per day. Secondly we installed lights which automatically switch-on at night and switch-off during the day. They were LED lights of 5 watts as opposed to the old ones of 20 watts. This meant that our consumption for exterior lighting was now 300wh as opposed to 600wh. Mean that LCN consumption was now 5772wh per day and it was reduced to 5772wh per day. This made a total saving of 8180wh of electricity per day. LEC charges a tariff of 1KWh = R1.55. This means that LCN manages to save R12.70 of money to spend on electricity per day. This equates to roughly, R381.00 per month and R4572.00 per year. However, when this is complemented by an energy saving plan which teaches staff on better ways to use their lighting, i.e switching off lights when leaving the office for more than 30 minutes, LCN could save a lot of money. So the energy saving sustainability commons is very cost effective to the organisation. LCN has demonstrated this energy to its members i.e the NGO Community in Lesotho. This sustainability common has been shared with member of the media, print, radio, tv.
A sustainable living campus – The Birches

The Birches Pre-Primary
South Africa

The six year olds did an exercise pretending that the school grounds was an island in the sea with no adults, electricity, incoming water services or any help to survive; for the rest of their lives! They had to work out how they would survive? Indeed they did; as there are food gardens, chickens, eggs, various recycling areas, harvested rain which even flushes toilets, a homemade solar water heater and grey water systems. There is even a ‘Legotla’ (the Tree of Democracy) where children can sit in a circle on logs (from an alien tree that was cut down) to speak about rules and ‘govern’ themselves! The children are involved in Early Morning Markets selling eggs and home produce and take complete responsibility for their needs and the grounds of the school.

Recycling of cans, paper, computer cartridges, plastic and more bring in an income that fund books and ‘greening projects’ in the school. We have a ‘No dig’ garden which has been established using green waste and is producing herbs and vegetables. A more long term Fruit Forest has been established and due to winning the Saville Foundation ‘Business Plan’ Competition we have now been able to put a roof over our main Recycling Centre which now harvests rain to the Fruit Forest! In World Environment week the children placed their hand prints on the prefab walls into the school and we are now selling ‘Sustainability Bracelets’ with little hands to fund a dream ‘Sustainability Training Centre’ (a wooden ‘off the grid’ classroom) next to the Fruit Forest.
Changing the world, one small choice at a time –
Thuli Vunda

Umgeni Valley Sustainability Commons
South Africa

Since the stepping up to sustainability talk I have made minor changes in the choices that I make. This makes my story of change a relatively simple one to adopt. Cooking is an activity all families perform every day and with the use of innovative gadgets this can be made more sustainable. We have in our household a wonderbag which we have not been putting into good use. Since the stepping up to sustainability workshop, I now make use of the wonderbag however this is probably not to the best of its capability. I am part of the soup kitchen for my church, we cook the meals at home and ever Sunday after church we give the soup to the less fortunate.

The wonder tool which works as an insulator of heat has been a fantastic gadget to use for this. My aunt and I have started to make use of rain water to water the organic garden which we have developed. Although we don’t have a huge jojo to collect the water, the 100L bucket we use is able to sustain our organic garden. In this garden we have cabbages, pumpkins and chillies which we use in our home. In the past we use to use a hose pipe, this minor change has made our garden a more sustainable garden. The changes which my family I have made may be minor but if we all made these minor changes to our daily choices we would make the world we live in hugely more sustainable.
A more sustainable home – Jill Thomson

Umgeni Valley Sustainability Commons
South Africa

Jill Thomson has installed slim line Jo-Jo tanks (due to limited space) for rain water harvesting at home. This enables her to save a lot of water. Another way that she saves water is to soak their laundry in used bath water before washing, and thus saving you from doing a full cycle in the washing machine.

Jill has also installed a solar geyser to save on electricity and has found this to work very well.
I made a change choice to use water wisely and I did, however after I did water audit on the 25th of June for my family and I to measure how much water we use in a day I was shocked to discover the litres we use in a day. As a family we have implemented a new house rule to change personal habits like keeping shower less than five minutes, turn off water while brushing teeth, flush toilet when it’s necessary etc. I am glad that this change choice is also being practiced by my family.
Driven to save the world – Aristha

Umgeni Valley Sustainability Commons
South Africa

The change choices that I decided to implement were to reduce and recycle more. I started using the Wonderbag more often when cooking like with rice; instead of fully cooking it on the stove I use the Wonderbag to complete the cooking process. I have also continued to recycle the waste that is produced. I have begun to time showers now to conserve water. In the evenings only essential lights and appliances are switched on and are switched off in rooms that aren’t occupied. I also carpool with a colleague to work to save on the cost of fuel and to reduce our carbon footprint no matter how miniscule. I will continue to try to reduce, reuse and recycle as there are many more projects to tackle.
Sustainability at home – Bridget Ringdahl

Umgeni Valley Sustainability Commons
South Africa

Since we moved into our house I have enjoyed the process of trying to make my home more environmentally sustainable. This started off with ripping up some of the 2800m² of kikuyu ‘green desert’ lawn which I have been replacing with indigenous grasses, bulbs and shrubs. It has been such a reward, to watch this ‘biodiversity hotspot’grow. It is an ongoing project of expansion with the ultimate goal of reconverting most of the garden to indigenous with multiple benefits including aesthetic, biodiversity, low maintenance and being water-wise.

Alongside the indigenous garden I have started my veg garden using organic and permaculture principles, although a beginner it has been very satisfying harvesting my own spinach, brinjals, lettuce, courgettes, butternuts, beans etc and learning more about what grows best, where and when. To support the garden I have a compost heap as well as wormery. We installed a 5000l Jo-Jo tank that provides water for the veg garden during the dry months.

The wonderbag is something that we use almost on a daily basis. This is an incredible way of saving energy while cooking. I also have a solar cooker which I can only really use on weekends when at home and weather is good. The solar water heater was one of the first technologies we installed which has been an incredible saving in terms of carbon emissions and of course the electricity bill which is under R100/mth.

During the winter we use all the privet wood (invasive) that we cut down in a very efficient wood burning fireplace to keep warm.

To save as much energy and water when it comes to clothes washing, I use ceramic wash balls, which means you don’t have to rinse the washing (no soap) and therefore more energy is saved as the usual washing cycle can be shortened. This also means the grey water generated doesn’t contain any soap and I often use this one the garden during the drier months.

Plans for the future include building a pond to include a wetland and home for frogs and also a chicken coop for tilling the soil and harvesting free-range eggs. Eventually getting off the grid is our ultimate aim as well as installing more Jo-Jo tanks so that we can harvest all of our own water.

Last of all, I keep cycling to work - saving carbon and keeping me fit!
Being the smallest child in a family is hard to get everyone else influenced by you but it seems in the matter of saving water, I have rubbed off my habits onto them.

We first began by switching from bucket-bathing to showering as it saves a seriously large amount and our showerheads allow us to change the amount of water we wish to come through so now the water comes through the smallest holes.

We then decided to time how long we actually shower and so we bought a very simple, not fancy or complicated shower suction clock. Sadly our only one could suck no more but now we have an idea on how long to actually shower or else my dad shouts us.

I also make sure all taps are securely closed and that none are leaking. Clean water that we want to throw away now goes onto the plants. We also wish to purchase a JOJO tank in the nearby future to save more water.

Saving water as my dad says has saved him a lot when it comes to paying the water account. This is exactly how my shower suction clock looks like:
My name is Vivian Siga from Benoni municipality waste management. I work as a general assistant in waste collection of areas around Benoni.

I have learned a lot from this WESSA course, like how to keep the environment clean and tidy. I also learned that I can reduce, recycle and re-use some waste. I learnt that animals and the veld are important to our environment and we cannot live without them.

In my life I will never burn tyres, old clothes or paper around the community because I have learnt that burning things is not good for us or for the environment - they cause diseases in our community.

I prefer to use old tyres for gardening where I can plant vegetables for food. I think this is also one way to reduce the burning tyres within the community.

This alternative use of tyres encourages us to re-use something we call waste. I will teach my colleagues that always when they go to work they must wear full personal protective equipment. I also teach them each and every level must go on an induction to learn more about the job and how to reduce accidents, they must always keep the environment neat and clean, and illegal dumping is not allowed in the community.

I want to open a class to teach others about how important our environment is, to keep it tidy and clean and to take care of the surrounding environment. One day I see myself having a brighter future in terms of
My education dream for Wildlands – Michelle Swemmer

South Africa

My name is Michelle Swemmer. I was born in Durban but have been living in Zululand for the last 13 years. I studied game ranging and game farm management, straight after school and then became a field guide. While guiding I decided to further my studies and improve my qualifications. I then enrolled with UNISA for a degree in nature conservation. While studying and guiding I was offered a job with wildlife ACT, monitoring endangered wild dogs and other priority species, such as rhino and cheetah. I completed my degree and moved up the ladder in my organisation. I became a manager for wildlife ACT as well as the community conservation manager for the wildlife ACT Fund.

I plan on using what I have learned to try and improve our environmental education kid’s camp, as well as help mentor my staff that work with community members on environmental issues.

There is too much consumer waste or rubbish. At the moment it all gets burned at the camp, this pollutes the environment and creates an unhealthy environment and ecosystem.

In the past there was very little waste, the hunters/gathers only used what they caught and needed, everything was natural, there was no plastic and packaging. Consumerism has changed everything with lots of packaging for convenience, and little thought on how it effects the environment.

I would like to start a recycling plan for the camp, that would then feed into the main Wildlands recycling campaign, so all plastic, paper and glass are all recycled and reused.
In 2016, I was lucky enough to be offered a bursary through USAID ‘Stepping Up to Sustainability’ Project to join an accredited Environmental Educators Course. During the last 2 modules, one of the tasks was to develop a learning programme as part of a workplace assignment.

The topic that I chose was Climate Change, inspired by my passion to introduce, build and deepen an understanding of climate change and plant the seed in both kids and adults. At the end of this module, the results from our environmental audits were alarming. It was clear that just through our daily activities, we are using too much energy and wasting so many litres of water. During the course, I learned that through a few simple changes in my habits, I could save much of this water/energy without compromising on my ability to do the things I needed to. When I went back home I decided to reuse the 15 litres of water from my bath by placing it in my toilet cistern to flush later.

My name is Snenhlanhla Mnyandu. According to my experience, we as the country are at risk of completely running out of fresh or clean water. There must be more awareness of the situation. Everyone should be encouraged to save water e.g. by putting a 2 litre bottle in a water tank (toilet cistern) to save water when flushing.

I will time myself when taking a shower and make sure it is as short as possible. I will encourage my family to save water and buy a jojo tank for them so they can harvest water. In my workplace I have taught the communities I work with about planting indigenous trees and growing their own vegetables.

One of the things that I used to do was throw away vegetable peels, leave my phone on the charger when I slept and not reuse bath water. For many years, I took this, and all of my other climate change related activities for granted.
I have started to unplug the charger from the plug socket when I go to sleep at night. I collected all kitchen waste and reuse it to make my own compost. I am also promoting our indigenous plants and raising awareness on why we remove invasive alien plants.

My new audit has shown that I now save hundreds of litres of water and some money each day, just from making these small changes. I hope that my efforts, as small as they may be, may ease both the water and energy burden that we have in our country; and that my family, and my community, will continue to have access to water and energy in the future.
Our sustainable school – Buyi Cynthia Mbeje

I am Buyi Cynthia Mbeje from Richmond, I teach at Indaleni Deaf school, teaching deaf learners using SASL (known as South African Sign Language) as a means of communication. It’s a big challenge and needs someone who is very patient and hardworking.

I did the WESSA DELP (develop an environmental learning programme) course, the facilitators were Claire and Wayne Peddie. I met nice people like Sonto and Thandi and others from the Eastern Cape. In DELP I learned how to save electricity using solar devices like a solar cooker and make things using recycled waste material and how to take care of the environment.

When I went back to school, I made bricks using clay and waste paper, together with learners. We built learners benches in our school yard using these bricks, they are so strong that we even used them to build a house!

We have vegetable gardens as well as a wormery. We look after the wormery well because it gives us worm tea that we can use with our garden manure. To prepare our vegetable gardens, we use grass cuttings, the tree leaves and papers and boxes to lay on top of the garden. We do not plough anymore to prevent the removal of top soil and soil erosion.

We follow permaculture methods to keep insects away and retain soil nutrients. I have done the WESSA FEELP (facilitate and evaluate an environmental learning programme) course which is teaching me very important things like facilitation, evaluation skills and special needs education. This is helping a lot because I teach special learners and as an educator, I facilitate every day and evaluate most of the time. I am now standing in front of you without fear and I am full of confidence. This is because of the skills I’ve learned and the encouragement from my colleagues and facilitators to be a better person which has improved my confidence.
My name is Daniel Phiri and I work at Babcock. My experience has been that in my community, people and animals use the same water for drinking. The water is not purified or even tested to check its quality. The community was using the ground water which was not tested and for cooking we used wood. There are now changes where the water is beginning to be tested and we have electricity in some areas.

However, because electricity is not yet installed in the whole area some people are still using wood and some are still going to the river to get water there. I therefore gave myself a task of getting the community together to teach them how they can kill germs in the water before using it for cooking or drinking. I told them to boil the water and let it cool off and then they can drink and cook with the water.

This has helped because people are no longer getting sick from drinking dirty water. They are now getting better and the information is moving very fast to other communities. I also explained to them that we don’t need to boil water always for bathing especially during the day because we can put our water outside in the sun and the water will get warm. This saves a lot of electricity because in our community a lot of people use big pots to boil water for bathing which takes time and they spend a lot of money.

My life has also changed because I do things differently. I save water, I bought energy saving bulbs, and I reuse my plastics and empty bottles. I also reuse grey water.
Fighting for our environment – Sbusiso Mlangeni

Environmental ethics and practices participant
South Africa

My name is Sbusiso Mlangeni from Alberton, South Africa. I am working for Babcock. I always make sure that I am part of the few that fight to save the environment and save water.

These are the problems we are currently fighting in my community:

- Poor quality of drinking water.
- Poor control of water usage.
- Shortage of water in the country.
- Poor maintenance of water pipes.

In the past things were better because they were controlled in a good way. Now because of population growth, the municipalities struggle to keep up with the rate of damaged pipes in a day. This is why we end up seeing running water in our community unattended to for several days, contributing to the waste of water.

I always report burst pipes in our community. I have told my community to do this as well because when our bills water in our community then we are saving everyone from paying extra money.

I have also raised awareness because a lot of people have a bad attitude towards the environment which can affect them.
My name is Lerato Nelson Nkhetse. I am an energetic community development worker who has achieved a great deal of success in getting communities involved in beneficial activities. I am adept at organizing community events, working with community leaders and doing whatever it takes to make a difference.

I learned about the WESSA environmental education course from Lesotho’s Council of NGO’s Commission of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources Commission meeting.

The course introduced me to a number of issues and helped me to develop an environmental education programme. From what I have learned from the course, I have facilitated a number of community gatherings to sensitize them on climate change. We have been strengthening capacity of the community for climate change adaptation in agriculture. This was done to equip villagers to improve the resilience of livestock production systems under extreme climatic conditions in Lesotho. We have stabilized community livelihoods that have been adversely affected by climate change through: improvement of small-scale industries; promotion of sustainable crop-based livelihood systems in foothills, lowlands and the Senqu River Valley and promotion of conservation and rehabilitation of degraded wetlands.

At work I have started training colleagues on environmental education so they have a deeper understanding of our workplace. Through various activities, they have investigated environmental issues and risks in their communities, which are of relevance to their work. We can then develop resilience and adaptation strategies through education, training and action projects.
My name is Mauchly Makhanthisa. I stay in Germiston and work as a regional overseer in the Brakpan area for Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. I started working for the municipality in 2003 as a cleaning vehicle driver.

In 2007 I was appointed as a regional overseer. Currently I am acting as a waste management officer in the waste department of services development.

Since July 2016 I found myself attending the WESSA Environmental Practices Course. I have learned how we play a role on using the resources in the natural environment, how invasive spices degrade our land, how soil erosion and overgrazing affect our environment and how illegal dumping contributes to global warming.

Energy saving appliances/ lights have now been installed in my work place. All workers are aware that they should not dispose of waste anywhere. They have started to recycle and sell the waste for lunch money.

The municipality is now involved in eco-energy initiatives and cleans all the illegal dumping hotspots.

Sorting of waste starts from the source (home). The community have now opened their own recycling facility and have sponsorship from a local company to hire 10 people to work there. From here I now have a qualification that helps me to be better and knowledgeable.

What I have changed in my house is the following:

- Installation of a solar geyser
- Installation of energy saving light bulbs
- I have now started a garden at home
My water wise message – Minentle Baleni

EETDP participant 2016
South Africa

In the past, I did not understand the need for natural resources, the environment, and the need to protect them every day. This all changed when I finished my degree where there was a focus on natural resource management and the introduction of sustainability. From that point on I was interested in the environment and natural resources and the small changes one can make in the environment.

With that interest I got to develop more interest in water as one of the natural resources. I learned what affects water and the national to global changes that affect water. As I come from a rural area, I noticed changes in wetlands, seasonal streams, and the springs. We mainly depended upon to get water to sustain our livelihood.

With that I noticed there has been a lot of water shortages. But with that interest, I did not know how to go on and spread the word to other people, to let them know about the value of our natural resources, and to take action on that.

Then this year I had a chance to be one of the participants in the USAID WESSA funded programme in Environmental Education Training and Development Practices. This has brought a huge difference in my life as to how to understand and educate people about environmental issues to take action. The

From there I chose to focus on water scarcity with primary school learners. My hope is that if we teach them at a young age with activities they understand and actions that do not require difficult implementations; it will be easy for them to practice at school and at home the tips on how to save water. From there, with help from Rand Water, learners received plastic cups and bottles to use instead of the running tap. I also adopted water saving tips where we save the cold water that comes before the hot water.

From the course I also learnt you have to understand people before educating about the environment and the changes taking place. I hope from now on I will join community groups where I can share information and interact to promote sustainable living.

I also wish to be involved in other environmental education programmes to ensure that all the knowledge that I have gained is shared with other people.
Botswana

My name is Molopi Amogelang. In our churches in Botswana, I have noticed that in the past we mainly depended on traditional ways of doing things. An example can be a pit latrine which according to me breeds about flies leading to poor hygiene. Energy when compared to today was not very well saved as it was mainly not used.

Today we are more fortunate with the modern ways of interacting with water, waste, energy and biodiversity. In our churches we don’t utilize much water or energy except for when there are events. Even then, conservation of resources is key as workshops are carried out to educate people, waste is disposed of safely and drainage tools are put into place to conserve the environment.
I am Mzotho Zibuyisile Mgomezulu. I was born at Bonjen area, my area is Cezwana. I live with my family. I found out about this course from my organization who asked if I would like to do it to build up my skills and change my life. I agreed to do it and if I get the certificate will add it to my CV so that I can be able to apply for a better job and be able to change the situation at home.

I have noticed that we have a problem with how we use water and we don’t have enough information that helps people to know about the environment. We have never taken good care of the environment. I noticed that people in my neighbourhood have planted alien plants which absorbs a lot of water and they don’t even know that those plants use a lot of water. I have been educating our people about these things so that they know what they should plant and what not to plant in their gardens.

I have been thinking about the growing rate of population - we must really think carefully about everything that we do because somehow it impacts on the environment. I am always educating the learners who visit our nature reserve about these things because kids grasp information easily. They also don’t make unnecessary arguments about this topic because being young, they are ready and always happy to learn new things. It is really working and I noticed that this also helps them learn more about the importance of plants and what we need them for.
My name is Ndimakazi, I work at Babcock. I have realized that in our community people who sell fries and cooked food dispose of their waste cooking oil in the water and as a result people end up not having drinking water. I also realized that people are scared of the people who do that because they are big rich guys. As we know, oil creates a layer in the water and as a result the animals die and the water is evaporated. The other bad thing about this is that when the water is gone then the soil also dies and we cannot plant anything on that soil. I don’t like what is happening in my community and want to start an awareness campaign so that we can find a new place for dumping or we can give the oil to people who might want to use it for other things.
My name is Nosphumelelo Banda, I stay in Roodekop Ext 31, Germiston. I am a mother of 2 kids and I work at the Ekurhuleni waste department as a general assistant. My proficiency in 4 languages enables me to communicate well across cultures. I bring willingness to work in a team in any organization or team. I am a hard worker, self-motivated, disciplined and an excellent organizer. I learnt on the WESSA course that burning waste releases climate changing gasses such as Carbon Dioxide and Carbon Monoxide with other harmful substances.

I have encouraged my community to do recycling even though other people have said that “it is a dirty job and only for crazy people and foreigners” I have shown them how they can re-use, recycle and reduce waste to make money out of it.

My community is happy to be working together to fight poverty. There is no more illegal dumping and the clean spaces are now being turned into multi-purpose parks with the help of our Mayor and community. Everybody is making use of these parks which are equipped with exercise equipment and enjoying getting money from recycling waste to put food on their table for their family to stay healthy.
My name is Steve Arowolo, I work at Green shift Africa and stay in South Africa. I was a participant on the USAID funded WESSA EETDP course. Based on my experience, energy is a huge problem. Access to proper affordable energy is one of the biggest problems in Africa, and poor energy management is also an issue. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on research to understand the impact on communities at large. As such, I have started the Green Shift Africa forum and we are launching a five year project on Green Entrepreneurship Education.

Our attitude towards energy usage and management needs to change, people need to be educators and enlightened about choices they make in the way energy is utilized. Green Shift Africa is educating

The Green Shift Africa forum has the following aims:

- To train and educate 5000 people over a period of 5 years on the various green skills expertise needed in the world.
- To empower young Africans with green skills, with a view to helping them start and implement businesses that are environmentally friendly.
- To address the problems of unemployment amongst youth and young adults.
Change our environment to change our life – Ulisha

South Africa

My name is Ulisha.

The environment is possibly one of the most pressing and debated concerns facing society in the 21st century. Research has provided insights into the relations between humans and their environments. Throughout history, humans have been affected by and affecting the natural environment, but we can also be agents of environmental change. How did my husband and I change our attitudes for environmental change in our home?

1. Electricity – The CFL's that we used before were 20W. But now most of the lights in the house have been changed to the Phillips Hue LED which is maximum of 9 Watt lights. These lights have a dimmer that allows you reduce power consumption and light intensity as needed. They are also set on a timer to go off at a set time so you don't sleep with the lights on. We also have sensor lights in certain rooms, the light comes on when you enter and goes off after 5 minutes of inactivity.

2. Efergy – The Efergy is an Internet connected power measurement clamp which allows you to monitor your power usage over time. You have access to graphs of both current and historic data that help you to track your usage and see where you can cut and you can also see unexpected electricity usage, like we found, when our geyser was overheating.

3. Recycling – My husband and I have made a concerted effort to recycle as much as we can. Bins have been set up for plastics, cardboard, glass and tins and once full it is taken to the local recycling depo. Electronic waste, CFL's and batteries are also disposed of in the correct way and not just thrown in the dustbin which is bad for the environment.

4. Buying locally produced products. But what does buying local actually do for the environment? Let’s think about it, how far would you like your food to travel to get from where it is grown to your plate? Think local …. Think Global. Transportation used to transport the food, the extra packaging and pesticides / preservatives used to sustain the travelling of these foods. All of these produce more greenhouse gases which is not good for the environment. Thus buying locally grown food is better for the environment. It requires less fossil fuels to transport, generating fewer greenhouse gas emissions than conventionally produced food.

These have all made a difference in our life and the environment and can definitely make a difference in yours.
Becoming more energy efficient – Jaliel Mookadam

South Africa

My name is Jaliel Mookadam.

I am currently employed as a Provincial Subject Advisor who is responsible for the coordination of Social Sciences in the province.

As you probably know, environmental education is a key component in the curriculum. It has been ingrained into all the subjects. As a result, in order to deliver the curriculum according to policy, one has to know and thus teach key environmental concepts to learners.

My relationship with environmental education dates back to the time when I started teaching Geography in the early 90’s. However I began to get a deeper understanding on the role that education should play in fostering sustainable education practises in learners with the introduction of the NEEP (National Environmental Education Programme) which launched to coincide with World Summit on Sustainable Development. I am still currently involved in the Gauteng off-shoot which is called GEEF.

Due to my participation in this programme, it began to dawn on me that there should not only be a theoretical approach to understanding sustainable environmental practices but there should be a degree of practical implementation. With the energy crisis of 2008, this was the trigger for me to see if I can implement some change in my household to reduce my reliance on the state energy grid. This would in some degree reduce my carbon footprint as well as saving me some much needed cash.

The first step was to introduce LED lighting in my house. Initially the measurable difference in electricity consumption was minimal but for me it was a step in reducing my reliance on the National grid.

The second initiative was to introduce solar heating to my home. After many hours of research and advice from people in the know, I decided to go for it. I installed a 300 litre solar geyser at a considerable cost. My electricity consumption was markedly less immediately. After a period of 12 months I had begun to see a return on my investment – the money I saved from less electricity consumption negated the cost of the solar geyser. After six years of using this geyser I can safely agree with the adage – ‘short term pain for long term gain’.

The journey for me in reducing my impact on the environment is not over. The next part of the journey will be to investigate to further reduce my electricity consumption. This could involve exploring the use of bio gas for cooking as one possible measure. There is however a bigger challenge that I need to address and that is my household water consumption. However, even though the drought was a disaster for the country, one positive outcome is that it has made us all aware of the importance of conserving water.
The Bonamelo Primary School recycling project – M Zikalala

Environmental Practices 2016
South Africa

My Name is M Zikalala and I am a teacher at Bonamelo Primary school. Last year I attended a course called Fundisa for Change conducted by Shanu Misser (WESSA) and Caleb (Rhodes University) which focused on teaching Climate Change in Natural Science Grade 7 to 9. I would like to share our schools story of the environmental practices we are involved in.

Recycling is a practice of converting waste into reusable materials. It involves 3Rs which is Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

We felt as a committee that there is a need to take care of our environment at the same time educating our learners about the importance of looking after Environment we live in. When you go around all our community, you find waste of many kinds. We than said as the Team let’s take action.

We identified Recycling as a measure to take part in saving our own Environment, at the same time educate everyone that it is all our responsibility to save the Planet Earth.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Plastic bottles</td>
<td>Collected by learners and stuff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. White paper</td>
<td>Used at school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tins</td>
<td>Used in our feeding scheme (tin fish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Milk boxes</td>
<td>Used in our feeding scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other boxes</td>
<td>Packaging apples, bananas and other fruits used in our feeding scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why Recycling?

- It is everyone’s responsibility to dispose of waste or get rid of waste correctly.
- We are reducing waste disposed all over the place.
- It link with our curriculum Natural sciences Grade 7 Term 2 under Sorting and Recycling.
- It is the fundraising for our school.
- We are taking care of our environment and avoid unnecessary outbreak of any sicknesses because of waste.

The workshop that was organized by WESSA really capacitated us. Now we are putting what we gained from the workshop into practice. We hope we are contributing towards a cleaner environment and reducing global warming.
Providing a place for plastic – **Lydia Groenewald**

South Africa

My name is Lydia Groenewald, and I am a former DEA YES (Youth Environmental Services) participant and Groen Sebenza intern at WESSA.

As much as I want to avoid buying plastic products, they just always seem to end up in my shopping cart and ultimately in the dustbin to be taken away and buried somewhere else in a big hole called a “landfill site”.

The thought of over-exhausted landfill sites and plastic taking forever to degrade really concerns me, so I have started throwing all my plastic (generated from groceries) into a 5l plastic bottle, which will ultimately become a plastic brick, to be used as an alternative brick for building. Sonica, a former WESSA Youth Leadership Development programme participant inspired me to reduce my waste in this way.

Our goal is to donate these bricks to a school that will use them to build extra classrooms.
Stepping up to water saving for a better world – Charissa Jaganath

WESEA
South Africa

One of my favourite parts of the day is taking a long, hot shower every evening. For many years, I took this, and all of my other water-dependent activities for granted; flushing the toilet regularly, brushing my teeth with no concern for the water being used, and soaping my hands with the tap running when washing them.

In 2012, I was lucky enough to be offered a bursary through the USAID ‘Stepping Up to Sustainability’ Project to join an accredited Environmental Educators Course. During the 5-day course, one of our tasks was to complete a water audit throughout our time there, tracking how much water we each use during the course of the day through washing, flushing, eating and drinking. At the end of the 5 days, the results were alarming, showing that just through my daily activities, I was using hundreds of litres of water each day!

During the course, I learned that through a few simple changes in my habits, I could save much of this water without compromising on my ability to do the things I needed to. I decided to fill a 2-litre plastic bottle and place it in my toilet cistern to save 2 litres of water every time I flush, without me even noticing the difference! I started to take shorter showers and switched off the shower between soaping, and did the same while washing my hands. I started to use a cup when brushing my teeth, and collected the water from washing my fruits and vegetables to water the plants outside.

A new audit has shown that I now save hundreds of litres of water each day, just from making these small changes. I hope that my efforts, as small as they may be, may ease the water burden that we have in our country; and that my nieces, nephews, and my future children, will continue to have access to water as I have had while growing up.
Portia Silindile Mbhele – Muntuza Full service School

Environment is about nature, in my school we are in a programme called SEEP and ECO School. Last year September I attended a workshop that was conducted by Fundisa for Change and WEESA in Howick. I found the workshop beneficial and very rewarding. I learnt a lot of things like Climate Change and the actions we can take to reduce Carbon Dioxide we produce. We need to plant more trees in our areas because they increase Oxygen.

Methods we use to prevent water wastage

As a school we make sure that all leaks are prevented from our taps. We use grey water to water our gardens (water that has been used).

Plants and Vegetables

When planting out vegetables we ensure we do companion planting like we plant chilies with cabbage and so we hope to control pests naturally. We also have a herb garden and have the indigenous plants like impepho, Inhlaba (aloe) and many others they are very helpful to our traditions.

Our school is a Green School Project.
My name is Lesego Khunou. I come from Soshanguve in Pretoria. I am 25 years old and have a qualification in environmental education. I grew up loving to teach and interact with people which is why I did this course. I am a very patient person, down to earth and very humble. I love music and I can sing. I have been one of the privileged people who was part of Groen Sebenza and now I am with WESSA. I am happy because I learn new things everyday through the wonderful people I met.

As a person who is concerned about the environment I do a lot of things to make sure that I save the environment and I educate people about it. I am a very talkative person so spreading the message is something that is easy to do for me. We currently recycle cans at home and our community knows about it, so they bring cans to my house almost every day. I changed the bulbs in the house and we are now using the energy saving electric bulbs. We use bags for our groceries most of the time and just keep them safe for using some other time. We have started a garden at home which we only water on Saturday afternoon after doing the laundry. The garden looks very healthy and we use used tea bags to fertilize the garden. My mum always brings used coffee to put on the garden, we sometimes also add vegetable pills for the garden.
I have also taught my family about saving energy especially if you are not in a room you are not allowed to leave the light on. We always keep our switches off if we are not using the plugs. There is a difference in the money that we pay for rent compared to what we used to pay a few years ago. A message to everyone who will read this story is that I would like you to practice what I also practice. I promise it will work for you as much as it works for me and my family.
Our school saving water – Isagontle Primary School

South Africa

As we know South Africa is a water-scarce country. It is faced with a challenge of water demand by various activities of economic development and rapid increase of population. Our school has undertaken various strategic capacity building initiatives such as 2020 vision for water and sanitation education projects, example ECO and water sanitation (Basha le Metsi)

Isagontle Primary School, has many ways of saving water, learners are allowed to use toilet basins to wash hands, they use basin rather than toilet taps, toilet taps are always kept locked. The water from the basin will be used to irrigate the garden, the learners used buckets to collect drinking water from the taps and after that taps at the school premises are locked for some time. Teachers encourage learners to bring water bottles for themselves, and also collect gray water with 2 litre bottles from home to irrigate the garden at school. Learners bring 2 litre bottles with lids, they pour in water from the tap, make a hole on top of the lid then turn the bottle upside down on the soil around the seed bed. They do this to keep the soil moist for about 1-2 weeks while the seed is absorbing water from the bottles. We save water and time. Another suggestion is cutting of alien plants around the school yard.

The school also collects rain water in JOJO tanks to be used for washing hands, flushing toilets, when there is no water.

The challenge we face in our area is drought. We have little rainfall and sandy soil that releases water quickly. Our climate is very hot, so to prevent evaporation of water in crops we use grass or the plant leaves as mulch. The school decided to make a bore-hole to assist as it happens that the municipality close the water without announcing. We are also proud of our food handlers (nutrition programme) in the kitchen because they also collect grey water for us.

Saving of Energy

The nutrition Programme (food handlers) use gas instead of electricity to cook. Lights are turned off in class during the day, and only switched on when it’s cloudy. When teachers knock off, all the electrical appliances are switched off, like the air conditioners, computers, photocopy machine, during winter heaters are only allowed in the staffroom and not in classes.
My name is Elijah Shikukumwa, an environmental educator at the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET). Having worked for NaDEET for more than two years, and attending a WESSA environmental education course a year ago has opened my eyes and made my life more sustainable and also improved my lifestyle. Living and working here means you have to practice sustainability at all time hence the NaDEET Centre philosophy “we practice what we teach”. Here I use solar electricity, save water when showering, washing dishes and gardening. I cook using solar equipment such as solar cookers and solar ovens and also keep a proper waste management system, as I would always remind participants “always make your pockets your dustbins when you are on the go” by appropriately sorting out rubbish it could be reused or recycled. The skill I have acquired from WESSA have improved my sustainability practices, especially in terms of planning lessons, designing activities, choosing different teaching approaches for different participants and also implementing lessons. Up to now I have helped create a couple of games and implementation of them has never been easier.
My name is Lucia Ntshalintshali from Escort. I work at Emadolobheni Primary School in Loskop Area in the deep rural area near Drakensburg Mountains. I teach English and Natural Sciences in Grade 6&7. I enjoy teaching Natural Sciences because it deals a lot about nature and environment. I grew up staying in a farm with my grandparents who taught me lot of things about plants and animals. I developed more interest in learning about all living organisms and environment in an ecosystem. I then decided to take Biology as my measure subject in tertiary Education. I'm very kind and caring, have good self-esteem and always positive. I love challenges and to experience thing in life. Years ago, I worked in the mining industry which gave me much experience about environment, mineral resources, and renewable and non-renewable energy sources in our country. As a Natural Science educator, I like to take my learners out for educational excursions to game reserves and heritage sites. I'm a member of the School Environmental Educational Programme. I'm also involved in educating our youth and women in my community about how to look after our environmental to save our planet.

**What am I doing to Save the Environment**

At home, I educate children to conserve electricity by using it wisely, like using energy saving light bulbs instead of incandescent bulbs, switch off the lights and appliances when not in use, use the correct amount of water required in the kettle, and use other important measures to conserve electricity in our home. I also use a gas stove for cooking and solar energy in our appliances. In order to save water, I use rain water in JOJO tanks and grey water for watering my crops because I like gardening.

I involve my community to join the farmer’s Organisation so that they will have their own gardens. During Arbor day, water week, heritage day, wetlands day, I make presentations to educate learners and the community about the importance of saving our environment. Some organisations like SAPPI forests, Health department, Parks port from game reserve are also invited to teach people about nature conservation.
I educate people about the importance of trees as they cut down trees. In my school, we plant lots of trees with the help of our community and some are volunteering in the garden. The department of agriculture is also helping with seedlings and trees. I motivate my learners in waste management by recycling and reusing. They use waste to make beds, pillows and chairs for our Grade R learners. I educate them not to burn forests and waste as these are some human activities that release stored carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. Burning plastics could have an impact in our lives, they use plastics to make door mats.

Today we experience more flooding, drought, heat and thunderstorm because of the activities that harm our environment. People in my community now enjoy using bicycles and walking to their places of work. Learners also walk to school because they understand that using lots of transport harms the environment and we need to save energy in our country. We try to avoid air pollution by planting lots of trees.
Making and Using a Vertical garden at home

Having tried several different methods of vertical gardening at WESSA using bidim, geotextile, bags, old pallets and hessian I decided to combine the lessons learnt into a new approach. Similar designs are on the internet but this one has some unique features and seems to work.

One of the inspirations behind the design was seeing the way in which the gutters on my roof readily accumulated moisture and nutrients. This seemed to suit several several plant species that flourished in this protected if somewhat artificial environment.

Thus with some old blue piping and scrap wood picked up at the local waste transfer station, some gutter bolts, plumbing pipe off-cuts, pieces of scrap marine ply and a little silicone, this modest stand-alone, suburban garden scale vertical garden was born.

To provide the maximum growing volume of soil and lateral support I cut off only one third of the pipe, leaving two thirds as long containers that are interconnected. The off cut can be used for seedling trays.

A key feature is the slight angles that the blue pipes (they could be any colour) are tilted at so that excess water from the top trough runs down under the root systems and drops to the next pipe till finally a small pipe at the very bottom allows any water that made it that far to supply another plant situated at the drainage point. Unlike many other gardening containers, this system does not have drainage holes, instead the water runs across and down the slight inclines, allowing plants to take what they need without drowning.

This picture shows the vertical garden (which is free-standing here, but could be against a wall) planted with spekboom, about the only thing that will grow without water in the drought and consequent severe restrictions we are experiencing in Cape Town.

Previously we have had good crops of tomatoes, parsley, spring onions as well as indigenous tree seedlings.

Space or water limitations might prompt more people to adapt or improve on this simple and effective design.

This system has only three rows. More are possible depending on the place and the space.
Our school, Monde Primary, is an Eco based school. We have a very big vegetable garden where we have planted different crops. It’s not me who started it, it has been running for quite some time with its members but when I came back from the training I joined the group. It is made up of teachers, learners and some parents, who volunteer to work every day with no payment. When the food is ripe in the garden we give it to the parents who help us. Learners take them home and they become very happy when they are given these vegetables. We also take some and use it for cooking meals of learners.

We encourage our learners not to throw dirty papers on the ground. If they see them, they should collect them. In the classroom and outside, our school bought big rubbish bins where they throw their waste and we also do recycling. We encourage learners to collect empty bottles of plastic cold drinks in the community and bring them to school for a competition which is run by Coca Cola. Last year we won R15 000.

This money helped us to buy teaching materials for the school. There is an area where we put our waste as learners can be lazy to do projects in their homes. When they need to do projects we just instruct them to fetch material and come and do the task in class. So things are much easier now. We save water too as learners no longer go and drink under taps using their hands. We have big buckets full of water next to each and every classroom, where they drink and wash their hands. I want to extend this Eco project to my community, where we will make our own vegetable garden so people can be helped and have something to do. Even those who are in need might take something and feed their families. Another thing I enjoyed most was being taught learning through play. I apply it a lot in my classroom and my learners enjoy it a lot. The pics about our garden are not good this year, we haven’t done much but I promise soon, soon, soon you will see something that I will truly be proud of.
All is not lost - Jabulani

Environmental Practices participant
South Africa

I am Jabulani living in Benoni, I went to school in the township, and hence I did not finish my schooling because of segregated Education. We had to leave the country and lived in exile, only coming back to South Africa when segregation came to an end. I worked as a waiter to make ends meet. Luckily I got employed in the Municipality, living well with my family in this changed South Africa is a blessing.

Learning about waste, the impact it has on the environment and how to deal with the problems we see on a daily basis has helped me to see how we are subjecting the earth to destruction. I have learnt that all is not lost and we can try to produce minimal waste whereever possible.

I realized that I can re-use some of my waste to benefit us. I re-use my cool drink bottles to put water in the fridge instead of buying water bottles, the plastic wrappers from bread I re-use for freezer bags.

I use my vegetable peels in my garden. If you look at my little booklet where my story is being told, it is one page divided into six pages to be efficient with my resources. I believe if I show that I know what I am made of in the world of environment, the doors of knowledge will start to open.
My name is Themba Ndima from Thokoza, working for Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality in the waste management section. I am working as a contract monitor around Thokoza, Phola Park, Eden Park RDPs, Greenfield Palm Ridge formal and Palm Ridge ext. 1 till ext. 9 including Riverside and Promise Land.

I have learned about life cycles, ecology, eco-systems and photosynthesis the way animals, plants, soil and humans interact with and support one another. Biodiversity, water purification, invasive and indigenous plants and the reason behind planting trees and other types of vegetation.

I have learnt about the impact on the environment caused by illegal dumping, burning gasses, industrial smoke and carbon dioxide produced by cars and trucks.

Causes and impacts of illegal dumping on human health and the environment, pollution (soil, water and air), different types of environmental assessment tools for example high, medium and low level tools. It was important to note that landfill sites must be kept far from residential areas because they have a certain operation period and the end use is rehabilitation. The reason behind the separation of waste, the importance of recycling and the different types of waste such as air pollution.

The workers and community will benefit from the knowledge I received from these studies, in terms of education and awareness because I can do my job from a more informed perspective, really understanding some of the issues so I can educate my community as well.

While rendering service to the community, I am also educating them with the knowledge I got from this course.

Environmental change must be felt. I will also ensure the workers recognize the importance and the usage of safety protective equipment provided. I must ensure that every person around me takes a serious look at the environment so we have also started a recycling program in the workplace.
Illegal dumping issues – Mongezi Desmond Mfuleni

2016 Environmental Practices participant
South Africa

My name is Mongezi Desmond Mfuleni, I work at Brakpan, Ekurhuleni Metropolitan as an Assistant Driver. My responsibility as a driver is to collect illegal dumping from different areas and load litter picking bags.

I learnt about the importance of keeping the environment clean, and how to manage waste and that we have different types of waste, how to deal with the problems concerning waste and illegal dumping. I learned about different types of soil, the standard operational procedures with regards to waste collection and disposal within the community.

The change that I managed to do in my life and the community is that I started an awareness program with my community about the disposal and degradation of waste within the community at large.

At my workplace I shared the importance of re-using and recycling, for example to reuse empty plastic bottles. I would like to see myself as an environmental specialist, helping other people achieve their goals within society.
My name is Simon Mazibuko. I live in Villiers in the Free State province. I’m a teacher by profession.

The first time I heard about WESSA, I wondered what they were all about and I was not very interested, but the first time I went to a workshop of ECO-SCHOOL, I knew that it was a privilege to meet all the WESSA tutor and students. I received a lot of experience and I have learnt a lot from the WESSA training. After two to three months, I felt that I needed to continue with WESSA. This is where I started to learn about alien vegetation, water testing and how to eradicate poverty within the community and school by making vegetable garden.

Through WESSA, I became an ECO-SCHOOL coordinator. This is where I formed an ECO-TEAM which consists of learners and community members. We identified an area within the school surrounding and applied to the Department of Correctional Services to provide the school with inmates to prepare the soil due to the fact that our learners were of young age. The learners were actively involved in planting the seedlings and maintaining the food garden. The learners learnt the names of different plants especially related to food garden that need to be planted on vegetable to prevent insects, also the skills of making organic compost. The ECO-TEAM is involved in projects such as, food garden, recycling (resource use) and biodiversity. The school received several awards for promoting greener environment. At present moment the school is competing for Diamond award after receiving International Green Flag the previous year. We have planted trees, developed a food garden, and recycled used paper which was previously burned.

The vegetables that is harvested from the garden, is used to sustain the feeding scheme and for fund raising strategy we sell vegetables and recycle paper. The vegetables are also given to orphans and vulnerable learners within the school. The ECO-TEAM has encouraged the community to have food gardens in their yard to eradicate poverty.

WESSA has equipped me with skills and knowledge on how to take care of our environment. I have attended causes such as FUNDISA FOR CHANGE which focus mainly on Climate Change and Global Warming. The Programme has given me so many opportunities, networking and making a positive change to uplift my community. The programme has made a huge impact on my life and given me a stepping stone to achieve even greater things.

Couple of months ago I decided to convert the open space at the back of my house into a garden. I monitor and maintain my small garden of life to the best of my ability and this is giving me a sense of caring for my family. In doing so, I am simultaneously promoting sustainable living my family and community.

It is WESSA who taught me that it’s my responsibility to stand up and advice about our lifestyle (i.e.) save water, save rhinos and save natural vegetation you come across. I have introduce the following theme in my ECO-CODE “WE ONLY HAVE ONE EARTH AND WE NEED TO SAY YES TO TAKING CARE OF IT”
Caring for our Natural Resources – Yonela Sipeka

2016 Environmental Practices participant

South Africa

I am Yonela Sipeka from Cedarville in the Eastern Cape. I am working for the Endangered Wildlife Trust. I enrolled for the Environmental Practice NQF L2, it was facilitated by WESSA. By attending this training, it has helped me to broaden my knowledge about our natural resources, ecological infrastructure and why they are so important to us.

In module 2 I learned about the citizen science tools that we can use to monitor the ecosystem goods and services that fall under natural resources. So now I have started to implement this in my community. I am also doing environmental awareness at schools about the importance of our natural resources, thanks to WESSA for granting me the opportunity to attend the training.
Waste management and pollution – Mbahlenle Pertunia Masango

2016 Environmental Practices participant
South Africa

My name is Mbahlenle Pertunia Masango, I’m 28 years old. I grew up at Daveyton. I work in Ekurhuleni municipality as a wetlands attendant. I like hanging out with friends. I am a big fan of Kaiser Chiefs. I’m also a mother of a very handsome boy. I have learnt a lot of things that I didn’t know from the WESSA Environmental Practices skill program. I learnt about waste management, pollution and climate change. This course will help me in my workplace because I’m working with the environment. Changes that I brought to my life are linked to recycling my waste. I am ensuring that I educate people not to dump illegally or burn waste as it will cause problems to me and my community. We are working on how to recycle and separate waste.
Our living place teach us – Mapaseka Maleka

Environmental Practices 2016
South Africa

I am Mapaseka Maleka staying at Daveyton Etwatwa Extension 15. I’m very quiet and respect other people. Living with my kids and my mother, I’m a single parent. I work for Ekurhuleni as a wetland attendant and I also do office work. I’m a Christian. I enjoy playing with my kids, watching television, reading magazines and spending time with my family.

I’m a person who is always determined to know all things around me and to respect everybody. I’ve learnt that the environment is very important to both living and non-living things. I’ve learnt about biodiversity, ecology, ecosystem and renewables. I’ve learnt about climate change and also the tools we use to measure environmental impacts. The most important thing is that our living places teach us about our environment.

I’ve learnt that the environment is very important to our community, children and adults must have knowledge on how to keep our environment clean, so that we can have a healthy life.

I have taken the message to my community by doing community awareness about illegal dumping that is not good for our children or adults to keep our health in good condition. We have done a community clean up. My certificate will help to do my specific job by teaching the community about environmental issues and safety so that our children grow up knowing our environment.
Reducing waste (and rodents!) – Kevin Marcel Mtetwa

Environmental Practices 2016
South Africa

My name is Kevin Marcel Mtetwa. I was born in KZN Durban, am 40 years old and I’m married. We have been married for 11 years now and we have 2 children, my first born is 20 and my son is 16. I’m currently living in Johannesburg. I work at Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipal as a general worker. I have been working for the municipality for one year and two months.

First and for most I had no idea that what we do can harm the environment until I sat in the class of the WESSA course. I now know that carbon dioxide that is produced by my car can cause such harm to my environment as well as the air. I have been burning coal, plastic and copper without knowing how harmful it is to the ozone. I had no way of knowing or telling when the environment was being degraded. I went on to learn about environmental management tools and why we use them. I was introduced to examples of environmental tools. For example, how to do an audit to find out more about things that are happening in my work place that are having a negative impact on my environment.

Well I have been learning a lot of things that I used in my life and the environment to know which can cause danger or harm me or my community. I have learned to recycle and re-sell my waste which has helped me and my community to minimize waste in my household. This also helped reduce rats and other rodents that like waste. In my community we have cleaned all illegal dumping and now use the space for parks, gardens and sport fields.

I believe the qualification I have achieved will give me a good start with my career. Since I have done the course, I feel I am now well-equipped and can apply for any post within this faculty.
Our environmental rights and responsibilities – Noria Maja

I am Noria Maja. I live in Tembisa and work in Ekurhuleni municipality as a supervisor (regional overseer). I am married with four children. I would describe myself as a loving person and I only focus on positive matter.

I have learned about the environment and sustainability living. It has helped me to identify environmental impacts everywhere I go. At work as we clean up the illegal dumping, I want us to rehabilitate that land. I can identify alien or invasive plants that are absorbing more water than indigenous plants.

I also learned to protect the environment by using section 24 of the bill of rights (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa) that covers sustainable living.

I have learned about biodiversity between living and non-living things that are part of the environment and that we cannot survive without. I also realized that as much we need the environment, we are also the ones who are always polluting and not taking care of nature the way we should.

When we collect illegal dumping, I make sure that all my colleagues have or are wearing their PPE. This is the protective clothing given to them by the municipality to ensure they are protected from any danger they could experience while working.
My name is Phineas Koloi. I work at Nigel solid waste as a team leader. I believe in kindness and respect and I work every day to improve myself by getting as much knowledge and skills in terms of the environment as possible. I am confident in my abilities to produce proper work, I am loyal and honest in everything. My strength is that I am self-motivated and I have a positive attitude.

I learnt many things on the course which are linked to my workplace such as management tools. I learned that training is very important in terms of how to behave and how to share with other workers. I have learned to solve problems and write reports in my work. I learned about rainfall, climate change and types of soil.

This picture to the right was taken when we went to a landfill site as part of the training. I am a team leader of waste pickers but there are a lot of things I saw when we came for an educational trip here. This is what made me realize that we need to take care of the environment and reduce the amount of waste we produce on a daily basis that can be re-used or recycled. Currently, I have started sorting my waste and when its collection day my waste is always nicely packed. I also don’t have a lot to throw away as I reuse most of my things for other purposes.
My name is Zandile Verna. I live in Phalaborwa, Limpopo, South Africa. I studied Environmental Sciences in the University of Venda, graduating in the year 2015. I am currently doing an Honours in environmental monitoring with the University of South Africa. I am an Environmental Educator intern at Phalaborwa Foundation.

I found out about the WESSA course from a friend who sent me the forms and advised me to apply. As an environmental sciences graduate, I did not have enough knowledge on environmental education. This course has helped me understand the relationship between people and the environment. It has helped me understand that we cannot separate environmental issues from social issues. The visits we made to different places during the course have helped me see and view things differently, not only based on my work but also on a personal level.

The course has enhanced my critical and creative thinking skills by engaging me on different topics. As a curriculum developer, before the course I did not have enough knowledge on curriculum development especially linking the curriculum to the national curriculum. The course has given me knowledge and skills to develop a curriculum, lessons and learning programmes that will be used in the Limpopo and Mpumalanga province in 2017.

The course has also help develop healthy lifestyles, encouraged responsibility and action taking to better the environment. Module two, which looked at environmental ethics, has encouraged a sense of responsibility, that as an environmental educator, I also need to be an environmental ambassador, live by what I preach and also change my lifestyle and be environmentally conscious at all times.
Touch, taste hear smell to experience – **Rachel du Raan**

Environmental Educators Course 2015
South Africa

My name is Rachel du Raan and I am an environmental education coordinator at the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF). The Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) is an interactive environmental education programme designed and implemented by the GCF, a Namibian registered trust, and developed in collaboration with the Namib Desert Environmental Education Trust (NaDEET).

KEEP aims to inspire young Namibians to care for their environment by giving them the opportunity to reconnect with nature through a targeted field-based environmental education programme.

How do we do this? We take primary school students from the capital Windhoek for an outing to Daan Viljoen Game Reserve where we turn the bush into their classroom. During a 3km hike the students are taught how to identify animal and plant species, track wildlife and investigate their signs. They also tackle topics such as water, waste and littering, and the importance of healthy eating.

A day with KEEP is definitely not a day away from formal education as many topics are closely linked to the national school curriculum.

The KEEP kids get to touch, taste, hear, smell and experience – a fundamental part of their development and a fun way to get all that information to ‘stick’.

Perhaps most importantly, we encourage the students to become problem solvers by tackling some of Namibia’s biggest environmental issues. With all that learning there is one very important thing that is never forgotten – having fun!

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all” – Aristotle

KEEP had a fantastic first year in 2016 with almost 2,000 primary school students from the Khomas Region participating, representing 13 schools and groups from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Feedback from educators and students alike has been overwhelmingly positive and these numbers are already set to increase in 2017.
Working closely with the schools has highlighted the need for a dedicated EE programme in the region. Less than a third of all the schools and groups that have joined so far currently offer any kind of environmental activities and even fewer have the resources to otherwise expose their students to EE opportunities. With many schools in the region being over prescribed and under-resourced, EE might just continue to slide further down the priority list. GCF is committed to making sure this does not happen by keeping EE and conservation firmly in the forefront of education and providing a fun, educational and exciting environmental programme.

These children will become environmental problem solvers. With enough support and encouragement, the future of the Namibian environment is looking positive and the team of GCF is proud to do its part for this. To find out more about KEEP, visit our Facebook page (Khomas Environmental Education Programme) or by looking at the Giraffe Conservation Foundation website [https://giraffeconservation.org/programmes/keep/](https://giraffeconservation.org/programmes/keep/).
I am Mafuza Nkomo from the rural area of MKHEMANE village where we have a beautiful environment of indigenous forest and wetlands.

In my village we have a beautiful environment but we don’t know the importance of the environment where people are throwing rubbish things into the wetlands and cutting down the indigenous trees because there is no one teaching them about the importance of the environment.

In 2012 I joined Environmental and Rural solutions as an Environmental Control Officer in the construction project under Alfred Nzo District Municipality. My role was enforcing compliance to contractors and also supervising in the wattle clearing under Umzimvubu Catchment.

In September 2015, I decided to join a training offered by WESSA together with other organizations LIMA, CSA & EWT to learn about how to manage our natural resources. At that training I learnt a lot because I was not aware about the importance of wetlands, rivers, soil, trees, water, mountains, rocks and grass. They are key natural resources that we have to protect and maintain to keep our area in a good environment. I also learnt that the EGS (Ecosystem goods and services) toolkit is an easy way of monitoring the change of the environment by looking at the landscape then characterizing it into different units and selecting suitable tools to use at each monitoring point. In this way you can change a disservice to be a service and look at the results afterwards.

In my village I am showing people how to avoid destructing the environment. I show people how to close dongas using our natural resources to avoid problems down streams. I am also teaching kids that water is life, without water there is no life we have to protect our catchment.

After the training my mind was open and I was able to share the knowledge with other people, especially those in the rural areas who have a lack of knowledge. Construction people come and do whatever they want to do in these communities. Now I want to commit myself to stick to the leaders of the community showing them the way of protecting their area, keeping the catchment clean so that even downstream, it remains a good environment.
I'm Thabo Madlala from Underberg. I work for Endangered wildlife trust. Through the WESSA course I learnt a lot, mainly about Ecosystem goods and services. To me the methodology is very useful because it help us to understand after working hard that what we are doing is right or wrong because we put a lot of effort in different ecosystems trying to improve or maintain them. By using this methodology it is easy to see the change. They use easy tools and you cover a lot of ecosystems in one method. So I have already started my hiking club in my area. We do hiking and environmental education. I believe using EGS in our club will be very useful, it is also making people see the result of human impact. I'm looking forward to spreading the use of these tools and living in a sustainable way that will have no harm to the environment.
My name is Wiseman Madlingozi, I am born and bred in a rural area. As a village boy we grew up herding and swimming in the river dams. I started working for water in 2005 clearing alien and invasive plants. When I was working for water I never knew whether I was an environmentalist because I was working to get some money so I could live with my family or I could make a living for my family. When I was sent by ERS and WESSA to attend a workshop on natural resource management I realized that I was very involved in resource management. I also noticed that after I have learnt about wetland that it is the water factory that stores and purifies water.

I have decided that I should also educate the young growing ones about the importance of wetlands, how they should be kept clean without being disturbed because people used to throw waste in wetlands.

I also taught them that wetlands function as water storage. They store water seasonally because during the drought season they release purified water to the rivers which is used by livestock and human beings to drink. Because of the spongy material of wetlands, water is sucked and stored in the ground. During heavy rains, the floods cannot erode soil in the wetlands because of this advantage.

No one on earth can live without water. I am very proud of both ERS and WESSA that I have spread out my ideas about how nature needs to be treated.