

SITFE 50th Anniversary

The Sugar Industry Trust Fund for Education (SITFE) celebrated its 50th Anniversary at the Durban International Convention Centre. SITFE has been instrumental in a variety of education initiatives, but its flagship project has always been its Bursary scheme. Since 1965 SITFE has awarded approximately 10 000 bursaries to tertiary students from the sugarcane growing areas. SITFE is proud to include amongst its alumni a number of South Africa's prominent leaders including Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Bonginkosi "Blade" Nzimande; Judge President of the Western Cape, John Hlophe and KZN MEC of Health, Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo. Treasurer-General of the ANC, Dr Zweli Mkhize and his wife Dr May Mashego also received assistance from SITFE. Guests of Honour at the Anniversary event included a number of these high-profile alumni, Ms Stella Mthembu, from RCL Foods (also a SITFE Alumnus), and the former Premier of KZN, Mr Senzo Mchunu and KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs, Mike Mabuyakhulu.

In discussing the impact that SITFE had on his life, and the importance of education in general Judge Hlophe said that: "The bursary gave me opportunities which, with respect I would never have had. I think education was the only way out of poverty, it opened the doors which otherwise could never have been opened."

In support of the increasing focus on quality of life for sugarcane growers, farm workers and their families, it was announced at the event that the SITFE Trustees have decided to ring-fence number of these bursaries specifically for the children of sugarcane farm workers. As the start of this initiative, the children of 6 sugarcane farmworkers were awarded bursaries to study a variety of subjects ranging from Accounting to Hydrology.

One successful candidate was Sithembiso Ntanzu. After the death of his mother when he was in Grade 4, Sithembiso went to join his Uncle's family working on their sugarcane farm in Gingindlovu. In particular he enjoyed working with the farming equipment. Sithembiso will now be starting his diploma in Electrical Engineering at Mangosuthu University of Technology.

The Ndaba family received a double dose of good news as both of their daughters Felicia and Phindile received SITFE bursaries. Felicia will be studying Analytical Chemistry, while her older sister Phindile will be returning to the University of Zululand (UZ) to study Geography and Hydrology. Phindile had previously been supported by NSFAS which was contributing 50% of her tuition fees. The effect of the drought on the family's farm however has meant that the family are unable to cover the remaining 50% of the fees meaning that Phindile would probably have had to drop out of UZ in 2016. The current drought that has devastated the agriculture sector has been particularly bad in the Northern KZN regions where the Ndaba family are from, with cane production falling by approximately 45% in some places. It is unlikely that either of the girls would have been able to further their education in 2016 without the assistance of SITFE.

In discussing the future of the Trust Fund MEC Dhlomo said: "I think we need to not leave this to them and them alone... We need to expand this. We all should work in partnership... [SITFE] cannot do it all".



Felicia Ndaba (centre) receives her SITFE bursary from former Premier of KZN, Mr Senzo Mchunu (left) and SITFE Chairman, Mr Tim Murray (right)



SITFE Trustees (from left to right): G.D Nelson, T. J. Murray (Chairman), S. Sharma, L.K. Mhlongo, G. Stainbank, S.B. Hlela, D.N. Thompson, E.V. Nene.



Special guests at the SITFE 50th Anniversary Function (from left to right): Gcina Mhlophe (Master of Ceremonies); Portia Mpofo (SASA Director); Dr May Mashego (Former first-lady of KZN); Moira Murray; Martin Mohale (Managing Director, Tongaat Hulett Sugar); Senzo Mchunu (former KZN Premier); Tim Murray (SITFE Chariman); Mike Mabuyakhulu (KZN MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs); Judge John Hlophe; Micaela Cutts (Commercial Director, Illovo); (Judge Hlophe's partner? – ask Portia?); Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo (KZN MEC of Health), Stella Mthembu.