

Free State Province

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When Free State-based 30-year-old Dorothy Dichaba's husband couldn't work anymore after he contracted tuberculosis (TB), she had to think of ways to support him and their two children.

"My husband was working and taking care of us, but now that he suffering from TB, he cannot support us anymore."

For a while she worked as a chef at a local restaurant, and began volunteering at the Morning Star childcare centre in 2009. "I was volunteering because I couldn't just sit at home doing nothing; I had to do something, even if it meant not getting paid, just to get experience and keep myself busy."

With nothing to do and a family to support, Dichaba joined an Expanded Public Works Programme project in 2010 that focused on recycling bottles. "It was difficult trying to make ends meet. We were depending on my sick husband's grant, but it was never enough."

The project has been helpful to Dichaba, as she says she could afford to buy her husband medicine when it ran out.

"When I joined the project, my husband felt better because there was income and he wasn't feeling guilty and frustrated for not supporting us as he would like to. "When I received the stipend, I would tell my husband not to worry too much because something was coming in. The stipend money went beyond buying food and medicine at home – I was able to buy things that I couldn't buy before. I bought a bedroom suite with the money I got – I had to save for some time because they're a bit expensive, but I eventually bought it. I had a bed before, but it wasn't comfortable, so I'm proud of having a new bed."

Dichaba says it has been difficult since the project ended, but that its legacy lives on. "Even though we're struggling at the moment, the project has set up many of us. Some people renovated their houses, while others bought big television sets."