

## **Taking the plunge**

Growing up in an abusive family, William Mdopo was exposed to a lot of negative people in his formative years. While this might sound like a recipe for failure, it inspired 47-year-old Mdopo to make a success of his life despite the odds against him.

Besides the violence, he says he had to watch helplessly as people close to him died of HIV/AIDS-related diseases. Her mother's death made things even worse. That was when he realised that a positive mindset was all he needed to survive.

Through all the hardships, he has always wanted to work in a catering environment. "Even in high school, I was doing Home Economics with the girls. I knew I wanted to be in the food business one day."

To make ends meet, he worked as truck assistant and a petrol attendant to support his family. Realising that his dream was disappearing in front of his eyes, he decided to take the plunge and pursue his lifelong dream.

"I joined the Yabonga Initiative in 2010, working at their bakery, which was funded by the Expanded Public Works Programme. Since I began working there, the skills I've learnt and the environment have made my life easier. I'm a supervisor – I have four people working under me and I'm living my dream. Through this project, I've realised my potential."

Mdopo has been saving most of the stipend money he is getting from the project. "My dream is to have my own bakery, so I'm saving money towards making that a reality. If all goes well, I will realise that dream and employ a lot of people from the community."