

Ray of light

When 31-year-old Happiness Notwane from North West opened her first-ever bank account, she couldn't hold back the tears of joy. She says it came with a lot of possibilities and hope. She matriculated in 1998, but has since struggled to find sustainable employment, moving from one piece job to another.

Notwane says she was very excited when she joined an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) project, as it meant that she would have a regular income to sustain herself and her family. "I have a child, and used to depend on my late mother for support. Since she passed away, the situation at home has been difficult, as my mother died while I was still studying for a certificate in computer studies, so I had to drop out."

This meant that she had to sit at home and hope for things to change. In 2010, she joined an EPWP project to clean pavements and eradicate alien plants. The project also helped with cleaning the roads around the communities.

This is when she realised that her life was going to change for the better. "I was very happy when we got our bank cards from FNB, with the help of the EPWP. I was also able to take out an insurance policy because of the account."

The stipend made a huge difference, as she is the breadwinner in her family. "Raising a child alone is not easy; and it was made worse when I didn't earn any income. The stipend made sure I could take care of my child and I also managed saved money to buy a fridge."

She still wants to continue with her studies, but money is a problem. "Since the project was stopped it has been difficult to save, because I do not have a regular income. But as soon as something comes up from EPWP, I will save towards my education. I believe in the importance of education and am always looking at opportunities to acquire knowledge."