

Quest to succeed

Ntombi Thabedi, a bright young woman from Soshanguve on the outskirts of Pretoria, is 25 years old. She lives with her unemployed mother and her younger brother.

Unlike most young people, she says she doesn't have time for clubbing and other social activities. "When I have time free, I study or spend it with my family."

Having lost her policeman father some years ago, the family is dependent on his South African Police Service monthly allowance.

She decided that they could not live like that forever. "The money we get from government is not enough. It pays for my little brother's computer training tuition and buys food. It's not enough to pay for my fees."

Thabedi is studying for a degree in chemical engineering at the University of South Africa, a course she is paying for herself. "I take my studies seriously and want to be successful one day."

Besides studying, Thabedi is also involved in an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) project called Ngezandla Zethu that does embroidery

Instead of using her stipend money to buy fancy clothes or the latest cellphone, she has been paying for her studies. "My mother cannot pay for both of us to study at the same time, so as the older one I decided to lead by example and pay for myself. I could not have achieved this had it not been for the EPWP stipend. With EPWP's help, my brother and I are both able to study.

"Education is the only option I have; I want to make my mother proud and I want to be successful so that my family can have the best of everything. This project has been very good to me and I hope many young people will have an opportunity to turn their lives around through it."