



2015 Matriculant Success Story

Bonga Ngomane Mangweni, Mpumalanga

18-year old Bonga Ngomane passed grade 12 with a bachelor's pass, and achieved distinctions in Maths and Life Sciences.

Bonga studied at INkomazi High School in Mpumalanga, situated 2 km from his home. The school is a relatively large one, housed in a double-storey building which has water, sanitation and electricity. There were 77 learners in Bonga's class.

Bonga had no problems while in primary schooling. He says he was "floating back then". However, problems started in secondary school and he failed the first term of grade 8. His late mother encouraged him, saying that "life must go on", and that he must focus on the future rather than on what had happened. His mother's encouragement assisted him to have faith that he could "do it", and he did not fail again.

The next big challenge came when Bonga's mother passed away in 2013, when he was in grade 10. His mother's death was very difficult for him. A friend helped out, assuring him that his mother loved him and wanted what was best for him, wherever she might be; he must therefore focus on his studies and get good results. With his friend's words in mind, he had a positive approach in his studies.

Bonga never considered dropping out of school because he knew that education is the "master key" that can open many doors for a person. What helped him achieve his excellent results were hard work, dedication and discipline, a positive approach to education, and a purposeful attitude in going to school.

Bonga received assistance from his grade 12 teachers, his CYCW (Sis Nqobile), and friends. His teachers ensured that he received "the best education possible" and sacrificed time with their own families and friends to come to school to teach Bonga and his fellow learners. The teachers also punished the learners if they failed to ensure that they would study hard and get good results next time.

Sis Nqobile invited Bonga to the safe park, and provided him with previous exam question papers, memos and study guides. She encouraged him and his friends to establish a study group where they could use the question papers, help each other in subjects where they had difficulties, and generally encourage each other to keep going whatever the circumstances.

Bonga's favourite subjects are Maths, Physical Science and Life Sciences. He loves these subjects because they are challenging, they require one to "use one's mind efficiently", and they are very interesting and "a bit difficult".

Bonga's current plan is to apply at the Vaal University of Technology. His dream is to be a mechanical engineer. However, his family did not believe that he would meet the minimum requirements for his "dream career" at his "dream university" Wits. They instead advised him to apply for teaching, and he did so at the University of Mpumalanga. When his family saw his results, they told him to "go for" his dream and abandon teaching. However, while he knows that he does not want to be a teacher, he is now confused because he also does not want to stay at home. Unfortunately, Wits will not consider "walk-in" applications, so Bonga will instead try at Vaal University of Technology.

Bonga applied for residence accommodation for the teaching course, but did not hear back. He does not yet know where he will stay while studying at Vaal University of Technology, but has a friend with whom he can stay while making more permanent arrangements. He applied for financial assistance for both teaching and engineering during 2015, but needed proof that he had been accepted at a higher education institution.

Bonga's advice for other young people is that they must have a purpose in studying, because otherwise they will not take their studies seriously. They must approach education with a positive attitude, work "even harder" and be dedicated in their studies.

Bonga's family was registered with Isibindi in 2009. At that time there were nine members in the family. Currently Bonga lives together with two aunts, two uncles, and an orphaned cousin who has been fostered by one of the aunts, so there are six members. It is a relatively young household, with the oldest member being his 28-year old aunt.

They live in a five-roomed house with three bedrooms. The house has electricity, but for water they use wheelbarrows and big water drums to fetch and store water or buy from the water tankers.

None of the household members are employed, and the only income is a single foster child grant. The household's financial problems became serious when Bonga's grandmother passed away in 2012, and his grandfather left the family for another woman. The grandfather is employed, but complains that he does not have enough money to provide for Bonga's family.

The family was not receiving any grants when it was first registered with Isibindi. Sis Nqobile assisted Bonga's grandmother with applications for grants for two

grandchildren whose mother had died, and subsequently assisted with applications again when the grandmother's death resulted in termination of the grants. She has also assisted the family in other ways through regular home visits, including with organising household chores, homework supervision for the children, development of a memory box when there were deaths, and dealing with family tensions when Bonga's grandfather brought another wife into the house, who was suspected of having – through witchcraft – contributed to his grandmother's death.

For Bonga, Sis Nqobile organised with the school that Bonga and his younger uncle (who was also writing grade 12) could attend the school camps organised during the June and final exams without paying the R600 fee. This was necessary because Bonga's grandfather was not prepared to pay the fees, stating that the camps were a waste of money. Other ways in which Sis Nqobile assisted included inviting them to the safe park for career guidance and providing bursary forms.

Sis Nqobile noted that, although Bonga does not want to be a teacher, he would go the "extra mile" to teach his friends Maths.



2015 Matriculant Success Story

Thabang Monakale Mangaung, Free State

Thabang Monakale received a bachelor's pass, including distinctions in Maths and Physical Science, in which he was the top student in his class.

Thabang is 18 years old and lives in a family which consists of three children and an unemployed mother. His father died from AIDS, and his mother is HIV-positive and suffers from leg ulcers. His mother struggled to provide for the family after the death of his father. She tried to earn money through baking biscuits and selling snacks, but has been reliant primarily on a single child support grant.

Thabang's matric "journey" was not easy, but was also not too tough because he had the support "that anyone could wish for". Support came from Isibindi, his teachers, and his mother, all of whom worked together to ensure that he got "the best of everything" and were there for him "from day one". The family provided support and love, the teacher provided extra morning and evening classes. As a result, Thabang never struggled with matric studies.

The CYCW provided him with question papers, paid the fee for the school camp, supplied food parcels for the family, and took Thabang to career expos to learn about different careers. In addition, during home visits the CYCW advised and motivated Thabang about life more generally.

The family was enrolled with Isibindi in 2009. Both of Thabang's siblings dropped out of school before

completing matric, and one sibling started using drugs. The CYCW has tried to assist with their problems. She also encouraged Thabang's mother to disclose her HIV status to the children. When his mother did so, the children expressed their relief as they had suspected that she was positive when they saw her medication but had been afraid to ask her. The CYCW then accompanied them all to the clinic to be tested. Fortunately they all tested HIV negative.

The CYCW assisted Thabang when he had to look for a secondary school when he finished primary schooling as his mother could not walk long distances. She ensured that he had a school uniform and study material, assisted him with writing English essays, and ensured that he attended extra classes and matric camps at school, which was where he spent most of his time during the matric year. She also attended parents' meetings when Thabang's mother was not able to attend. She ensured that there was enough food in the household so that Thabang never went to school hungry, and sent him text messages or called him during examination time to wish him good luck.

Thabang has applied to study Mechanical Engineering at the Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein campus. He has been accepted but must still secure funds to enrol. He has applied to Eskom for a bursary and is awaiting a response. His CYCW will assist him further with looking for financial assistance. Meanwhile Thabang is looking forward to a change his home situation and wants to help his siblings to finish school.



2015 Matriculant Success Story

Magdeline Masuku Thusanang, Gauteng

19-year old Magdeline Masuku obtained a bachelors pass, with distinctions in Mathematics, Physical Science, Life Orientation. Her lowest mark was 74, for Life Science.

Magdeline studied for grade 12 at Lavela Secondary School, which was 10 km from her home. The school has water, sanitation and electricity. There were 24 learners in her class.

The main problems Magdeline encountered with schooling over the years were going to school on an empty stomach, and not having textbooks for some subjects. Magdeline nevertheless persevered with support from her mother, her CYCW and a teacher, Mr Zikalala. With their support, she never considered dropping out of school. She attributes her good results to this support, assistance from the Kuthlwanong Centre for Maths, Science and Technology and her own hard work.

Magdeline's favourite subjects are Mathematics, Physical Science and Geography. She likes Maths and Physics because the "thinking out of the box... challenges your mind". She especially likes the feeling you get when you find the answer after struggling with Geometry. She likes Geography because she wants to know more about what is happening in her country and the world.

Magdeline has been accepted to study Chemical Engineering at Witwatersrand University in 2016. She chose this "because when I look around me everything is made of chemicals; plastics; perfumes, food, minerals, etc." She wants to learn more about chemistry and its impact on people and the environment. She has applied to stay in the university residence.

Magdeline applied for bursaries from the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and Studie Trust

but her applications were not successful. She is excited about not having to wear a school uniform any longer, and being one step closer to her dream of going to university, but she is worried that she may be prevented by lack of funding.

Magdeline says she has many messages for young people who are still at school, but the message that kept her motivated was: "Everyone can rise above their circumstances if they are dedicated and passionate about what they do". She sees education as a great "engine of personal development" that can allow the child of a farmworker to be president of a great nation. She says: "It's what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another." Her CYCW confirmed that Magdeline succeeded because of her hard work, dedication and commitment, and because she believed that it all starts in the mind – "if you can dream it, believe it, then you can achieve it." This belief enabled her to overcome challenges such as walking to school when it was raining, studying without electricity using candles, and not having sufficient study materials.

Magdeline currently lives with her mother, two younger brothers, a younger sister, and a twin brother. They live in a shack in an informal settlement. The shack has no electricity, and they get water from neighbours. The family is dependent on child support grants for the three younger siblings – a total of R990 per month.

The family was registered with Isibindi in April 2014. The CYCW has provided assistance in various ways, including when there were floods. In respect of Magdeline's studies, she has assisted with school work, provided past exam papers, found someone else who had passed matric to assist Magdeline when her marks were low, provided information about bursaries, and ensured that she applied for different opportunities.