

15-year-old dream comes true for young entrepreneurs

By [Chris Gilili](#)

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A dream came true for young people in Duncan Village when the Masikhanyiselane bakery opened its doors last week in Gomo, East London.



Bread is always needed, says Ntombikayise Rasmeni, co-founder of the Masikhanyiselane Bakery in Gomo. Photo: Chris Gilili

The project was started as a co-operative 14 years ago by a group of 13 young people who met at the same church. All of them were from Duncan Village and all were unemployed, says one of the founders, Mangaliso Mpolongwana.

Today two of the original founders, Mpolongwana and Ntombikayise Rasmeni, are left and five others have joined. “We hope the bakery will create employment for other young people from Duncan Village. We wanted to do something that will include everyone. We can employ those young people if the community supports us by buying the bread,” says Mpolongwana.

“Bread is always needed,” says Rasmeni, “so there is a market everyday. And ours is cheaper. A loaf is R7.”

But the way to success has not been easy. “We started by baking with our own stoves and made scones, which we sold around Duncan Village.

“We could not get funding. But we were so determined to make a success of this, so we never stopped. We were 13 back then. Some quit and others got jobs, but the remainder kept baking and hoping that we would succeed. We have no education, but our drive is all we need to continue.”



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The Eastern Cape Development Corporation (ECDC) bought the cooperative a big oven and machines in 2011 to the value of R551,000. But the cooperative had no electricity and the machinery gathered dust.

“Another challenge was space. We worked from a two-roomed house, but were determined to make a success of it,” says Rasmeni.

The group approached the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality which renovated and expanded the premises and brought in electricity.

Ntombizine Cekiso said today the biggest challenge was transport. “We have to walk all day and take this bread to local shops, schools and creches in Duncan Village and Gompo. Some shops are hesitant to sell our brand, since it is not branded. Those are things we hope will improve as time goes by.”

For now they only make bread, but want to expand and bake everything that a bakery would offer customers. They share what they make and reinvest part of the revenue in the business.



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The Buffalo City Municipality assisted with refurbishment of the building, and installation of electricity.

Communications manager Samkelo Ngwenya said the municipality had spent a total of R1 million to revamp the building, fence it and put in electricity. The co-operative would also be assisted with training to ensure its sustainability, he said.

“We saw potential in their unique idea. And the fact that they never waited for anything but were always hard at work.”

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