



Interview with: Phumzile (28)
Interviewed by: Nomkhosi
Date of interview: 13 December 2016
Travel: Ndwedwe – KwaMashu - Durban

Phumzile: My name is Phumzile and I am from Ndwedwe. I do not have [both] parents ... I am only left with my father. My mother died in 2009. I am 32 years old. I have two children. I finished my matric in 2003. Then I left home to come to Durban in 2005. The intention was to further my education. But I did not get an opportunity to study in that year so I started working. In 2006, I fell pregnant with my first baby, a boy, and he is 9 years old now. I have raised him as a single parent. I started working and did not want to study as I was a single parent. As the time went on I was again hit by a second stone (fell pregnant) and I had another baby in 2014.

Nomkhosi: You were hit by a stone?

Phumzile: Yes, I was hit by a second stone (both laugh). This was in 2014. She is two years old now and will turn 3 in January. For now, I am not working. I am surviving with casual jobs. I also sell stuff for which there is a demand.

Nomkhosi: What are those products that are in demand?

Phumzile: Tupperware and Avon. I sell those so that I can survive with my kids. The very same stone (of being a single parent) that hit me first, repeated with the second baby.

Nomkhosi: Does this mean that you are not together with the father of the second child?

Phumzile: My mom left me in 2009, as I have said. She played a major role in my life. I left my first baby (born in 2007) with her when he was just two weeks old so that I could start working. But she left me in 2009 and life started getting really difficult. I had to start living with my baby but I could not do this at the hostel. So I lived around about in different places.

Nomkhosi: Can we go back a bit? When you first arrived in Durban, where did you first live?

Phumzile: I came and lived with my brother at KwaMashu.

Nomkhosi: Does he own a home?

Phumzile: Yes.

Nomkhosi: Is he married?

Phumzile: Yes, he is married. But I could not stay very long there because a sister-in-law is not nice when you live with them. I am old enough to be able to figure out when a person ill-treats you. So I left and I came to live with my sister here at the hostel. And I also ended up getting my own room here.

Nomkhosi: Oh, so you have your own room now?

Phumzile: Yes, I have my own room now.

Nomkhosi: Do you not share with your sister?

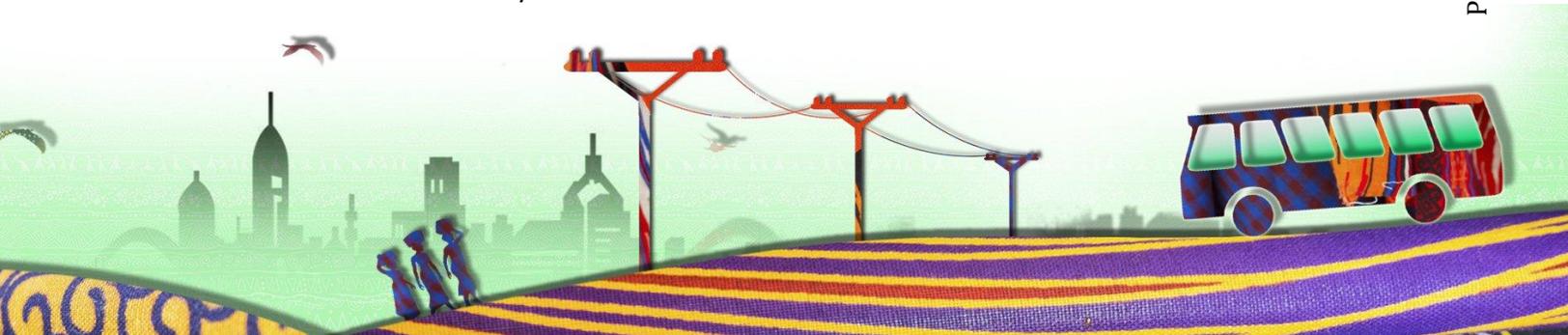
Phumzile: No, my sister has since moved out. She got married. She now has a house at Umlazi.

Nomkhosi: When did she move?

Phumzile: She left in 2010 and I remained here at the hostel. I had no other decent place to live with my baby and I would come in and go out with my baby here.

Nomkhosi: Where would you go if you left the hostel?

Phumzile: I would visit some of my friends who lived outside so that I could be with my baby. I eventually took the baby back to his daddy but he failed at taking care of the baby and my father said that he should come back and stay at home.





Nomkhosi: Where does your father live?

Phumzile: He lives at home [in Ndwedwe].

Nomkhosi: Did he live with your mother when she was still alive?

Phumzile: Yes, he stayed with my mother. He was working at Corobrick and he took pension and went home.

Nomkhosi: Has he taken another wife?

Phumzile: Not really. He has somebody but they are not married.

Nomkhosi: Does that woman live at your house?

Phumzile: Yes, she spends most of the time at home.

Nomkhosi: Do you guys get along?

Phumzile: No. We do not get along. The problem is that my father had taken my son to live with him. He never complained about this and he understood that I sometimes had work and other times did not. When this woman came my father started to change and make many demands on me. Sometimes I would get calls from the neighbours who would tell me that the child went to school dirty—you know all those things. So eventually my father took my son and sent him back to his father.

Nomkhosi: Oh, so it is your father you sent him?

Phumzile: Yes, without my permission. I understood that he was angry at me because I had another baby. Having a second baby was something that was not right with my family. I did not blame them because they were right. When I found out I was pregnant, the person who made me pregnant ran away. They knew this person as we had been in a relationship for over four years. When I fell pregnant, he said he did not know who made me pregnant. So my family started hating me a little. But my big brother, the first-born in my family, was very supportive. He was also able to give me money to buy baby clothes and the stuff that I was going to need when I got out of the hospital. He also paid for me to do a DNA test so that it could be proved who the father was. We did DNA and it showed that the child was the very person I said it was. But because I am also old now, I was not going to try and go back to a person who had previously showed me off to the whole world [*ongibukanise nomhlaba wonke*]. I would not invite him back and hug him.

Nomkhosi: Did you charge him for maintenance at least?

Phumzile: He left his job when he found out that I had evidence of his being the father of the baby. But I told myself that it was okay. One of my brothers has tender work. He took me into his company and my child was able to grow up though she was very sickly.

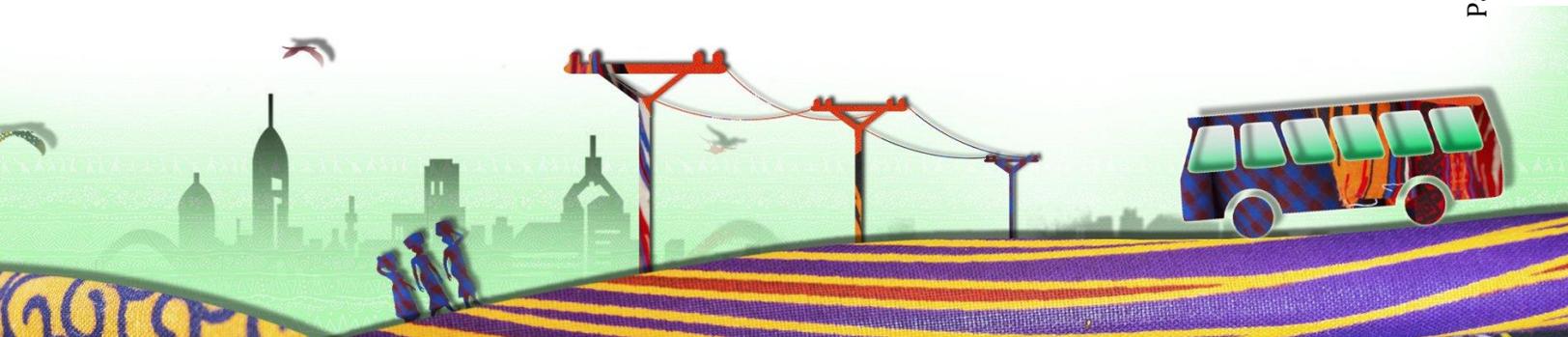
Nomkhosi: The two-year old?

Phumzile: Yes, she was very sickly. A week would not go by without her being admitted to Addington Hospital. I would go there and sleep with her. She had a problem with pneumonia but she is fine now. We continued staying [at the hostel] with her. We have taken the municipality to court so that we are able to have our kids stay here, and we are still attending that court case.

Nomkhosi: When did you start living here with her?

Phumzile: I started when she was a new-born. It was still very strict here. They did not want kids here. I brought her in. That's why I used to go up and down with her all over the place. Sometimes I would stay with my sister and my brother-in-law would have a problem with that. I would go back home to my father's house but he did not want me. He did not talk to me and he also did not eat the food that I cooked. That really hurt me. So I came back and hid her at the hostel. A friend of mine also had a small baby here.

Nomkhosi: Where did she live?





Phumzile: We were both here, hiding our babies. We realised that, no, we must just send this matter to court. Neither of us had *imuva* (homestead) and she also did not have anybody back home. She does not have a mother or a father. Who would she leave her baby with? She is self-employed. She sells her stuff in the pension outlets. So who would take care of the baby if she sent her back home? Even the father of her baby does not have a mother or a father. So we decided that we would stay with our kids here. We were not going anywhere. We went and logged a case against the municipality and there were few other baby-mamas who joined us. In total there were 26 of us, against the municipality.

Nomkhosi: So you are also part of the famous 26?

Phumzile: Yes, I am one of those 26 and I was in the forefront of trying to win the right to keep our kids with us.

Nomkhosi: Who advised you on this decision of sending the municipality to court?

Phumzile: We went to the lawyers at Diakonia. But before that we went to ask the men from Ubunye bamaHostela (residents association for hostel dwellers) and we asked if there was anything they could do to help us. They advised that we go to the lawyers at Diakonia. We were in telephone communication with Desai and he advised us accordingly. We got the lawyer, Malin, and he advised us. He told us that we could go to court with this, that, although there is a rule that children are not allowed at the hostel, under the constitution of South Africa, children under the age of 18 should not live without their mothers. We had strong reasons for wanting to live with our children. If the municipality did not like that, it had to give us proper housing where we could live with our children. So that is how we got to stay with our children.

My family does not live a decent life. My father used to work which enabled him to raise us. I have a big brother who, as I said, has tenders. He also goes to Parliament through his work. There is another one who is in Pretoria. Another one, who came before me, passed away in 2004. That was very painful for us because we had never before seen a corpse lying in our yard. Sometimes we feel that this was the reason for my mother's death. She died from heart disease in 2009. Since my brother passed away and he was the last-born son and my mother was very close to him, it really was not easy for her. She was in and out of the hospital. She cried every day and her heart was not right.

Nomkhosi: What went wrong with your brother?

Phumzile: He had headaches. He was doing second year at UKZN, studying medicine. He wanted to be a doctor. He came back in December complaining about this headache. He still suffered with in January when he went to register again and on 14 February, he passed on. It was really difficult because at this time I was also looking to get to school. Everything just fell apart. My other brother had not started working in any serious job although he had just recently got his law degree.

Nomkhosi: You have a brother who is a lawyer?

Phumzile: Yes. Now he is a judge

Nomkhosi: Oh, really?

Phumzile: Yes. At that time, he had just graduated as a lawyer.

Nomkhosi: Which one helped you when you had your first baby?

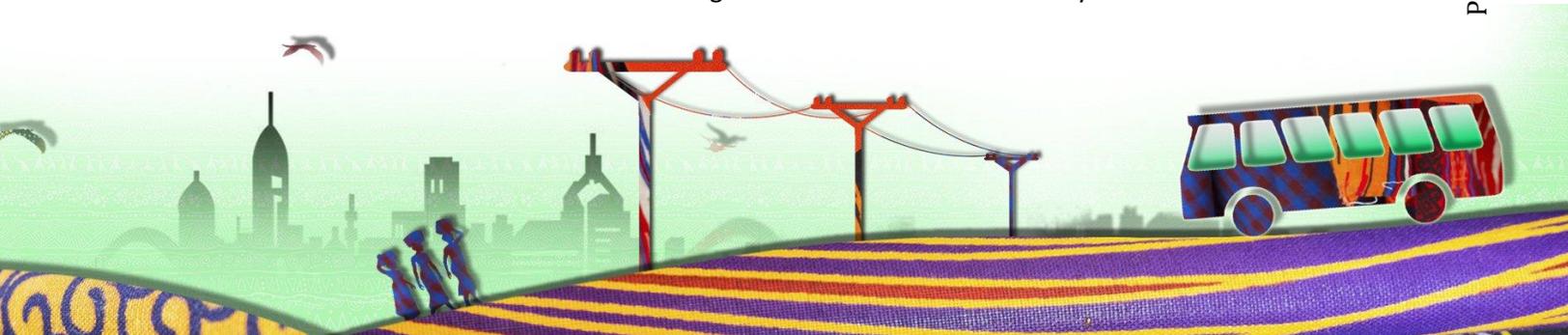
Phumzile: That was the first-born who has tenders and who has a house at KwaMashu.

Nomkhosi: Your brothers seem to be doing very well.

Phumzile: Not all of them.

Nomkhosi: Tenders, lawyer and now the medical doctor who left too early.

Phumzile: I guess they are all doing well. My big brother has tenders and he is also a member of parliament for the IFP. And the second-born is a manager at GeoChem in Pinetown. My sister does not work. She





is a housewife. Her husband takes care of her. And then the one who is a judge has a house in Pretoria. Then there is the one who died before he became a doctor; he had finished his second year. And now it is me. I always wished that one day I would become a journalist but I was not able to.

Nomkhosi: Oh, so you wanted to become a journalist? Did you pass your matric?

Phumzile: Yes, I passed my matric and they counted my points for [a degree through] UNISA. But if I got an opportunity to study now it would be very difficult for me—it would give me a lot of stress. I need to wait until my son goes to Grade 7, and the other one starts school, so that I am able to manage everything properly. Right now I do not even have a proper job to take care of everything. My brother told me straight that they accepted my first mistake but not the second one. They said they couldn't support me anymore now that they have formed their own families. So they are not that supportive of me anymore. But my big brother is better because I am the last-born child of his mom.

Nomkhosi: You are the last born?

Phumzile: Yes, I am the last-born. There is still that thing in him which tells him that I am his mom's baby and he helps me with some of the things I complain about. There is nothing that I can say the city of Durban has given me. When I left home I even did virginity testing [*hamba umhlanga*].

Nomkhosi: Oh really!

Phumzile: I used to do virginity testing. When I came to Durban, I only went there twice, once in 2005, once in 2006, but after that I did not go back there. I also thought I was clever because I fell pregnant with my first baby when I was 23 years old. I guess I thought I was old enough. Ja, so that is how it has been in Durban ...

Nomkhosi: What do you mean when you roll your hands like that (both laugh)? It's exactly what I want to hear. What did the city do to you?

Phumzile: There is nothing that I can say I gained from going to Durban, except that I got that baby. At the end, when I went to the clinic and found out that I am sick, I accepted this and my family also supported me on that thing.

Nomkhosi: What kind of sickness?

Phumzile: The kind of sickness that exist in this world now (HIV/AIDS).

Nomkhosi: This was after the first baby?

Phumzile: Yes. I found out when I had flu and my brother took me to City Hospital. I found out that I was sick. I did not feel stressed, you know. I just accepted it. When the doctor told me I just said: "Oh, wow, okay."

Nomkhosi: Were you well informed on this thing by then?

Phumzile: I used to hear about it when people spoke. I don't know why I did not feel stressed. I came straight home and told my sister that my brother had taken me to the clinic and these are my results. Instead of being stressed I encouraged my sister to go and check [her status for herself]. This is not something that I am hiding from the people. I am not even taking medication because I am able to maintain my life. I take care of myself. Serious. I have not reached a stage when I have to take medication. But that will come at the time it comes.

So while I did not come to the city and start drinking alcohol, things were harsh because I had my first baby to raise. When the second one came along I told myself that things would be fine. But they were not fine and I also got hurt when he claimed that this was not even his child. Ja, I did not have that happiness. [No one had good wishes for me. I was not given a single thing.] And although I do try to support my home it is not in the way that I would like. I still believe, however, that one day it can happen.





The kind of life that we lead over there (*ikamaygade* – you take care of yourself) (both laugh) is one where each takes care of themselves. Even if you see people living with their parents, kids get out of hand. This is not a place where you can raise a child, especially for me, and I will be living with both of them next year. This is not a good place.

Nomkhosi: Your boy will also be moving in with you?

Phumzile: Yes, he will move in with us.

Nomkhosi: Where does he stay now?

Phumzile: He used to stay with his father and his life there was not right, serious. Every time he visited me during holidays, he would always have rashes on his body. It showed that sometimes he would go for days without a bath. So I have looked for a school he will go to here in Durban.

Nomkhosi: Are you ready for that personally?

Phumzile: Yes, [I am forced to be ready]. I have to force it. If I leave the child in this situation, he will grow up hating me. He will say I have a mother but she takes care of the little one and she does not love me. She looks after the little one, even when I tell her that I am hurting.

Nomkhosi: Does that boy not live with his grandmother?

Phumzile: You mean the father of the child?

Nomkhosi: I mean the paternal grandmother?

Phumzile: No, he does not have [a paternal grandmother].

Nomkhosi: So who takes care of him?

Phumzile: He used to stay with his father and stepmother.

Nomkhosi: Do you get along with the stepmother?

Phumzile: I don't want to lie: I have never spoken to her even once.

Nomkhosi: Really?

Phumzile: Yes.

Nomkhosi: Is he married?

Phumzile: No, he is not married.

Nomkhosi: But this is somebody he lives with?

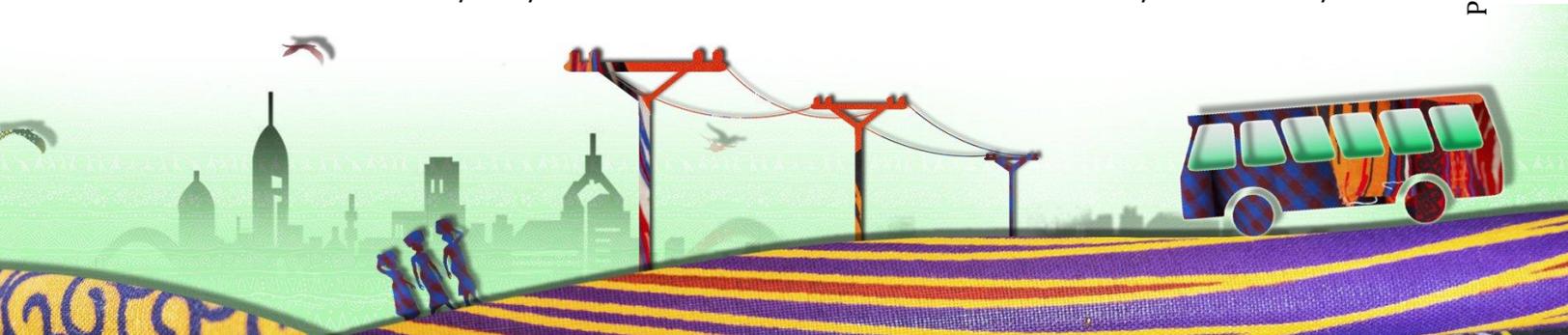
Phumzile: Yes, this is the person who lived with him but, because my child was with them the whole time, she just moved out.

Nomkhosi: Who?

Phumzile: This lady. My boy told me: "Mommy, daddy had a fight with my stepmother, and she left because I live with them and you are not that supportive." It was really a surprise to hear that I am not that supportive because each month I would send him some stuff, even clothes. Every time he came to visit me, he would come empty-handed and I would [pile things up for him], even though I am not working. So I decided that it does not help me that the child lives there and I decided to bring him back with me so that he could see that it is not because I do not love him.

Nomkhosi: So what conversations took place between you and your son, in order for you to take this decision?

Phumzile: He used to tell me that he lives on bread. Sometimes when he was visiting me and he saw me cooking, he would say: "Oh, I have not had this kind of cooked food in a long time. Daddy prepares bread for us. He sends us to go buy bread and fried chips." So I could see that he was not eating properly. He also told me that he does his own laundry. He is not old enough to be doing his own washing, especially washing a white shirt. I went to his school and the teachers told me that this child comes to school dirty. They asked me about it and I told them that I did not stay with him. They said





that sometimes he comes to school looking sleepy and they would say that it is not necessarily because he did not sleep, but it is because he is hungry. So, I saw that, no, although he is a quiet boy and he does not tell me everything, I can see that he was not alright.

Nomkhosi: For how many years had he been living with his father?

Phumzile: He lived with him for two years.

Nomkhosi: Before that?

Phumzile: He was living with my father. The situation changed when my father got the person that he is now living with. All the kids had to go away—even my sister’s children had to go. They no longer live at home—they only go there to visit. So, that’s the story of my life.

Nomkhosi: How do you think life would be different if your mom was still around?

Phumzile: Eh, it would be fine. It would be alright, I don’t want to lie. I even think I would have had the education I missed if my mom was alive because I know that even though I made a second mistake, she would not have forsaken me. She would stay with my kids and I would continue with what I planned to do. Everything would be alright if she was here. She left a big space in my life.

Nomkhosi: Since your mother passed on, who is your support system?

Phumzile: I talk to my brother.

Nomkhosi: The older one?

Phumzile: Yes.

Nomkhosi: The one with tenders?

Phumzile: Yes.

Nomkhosi: Where does he live again?

Phumzile: At KwaMashu.

Nomkhosi: How often do you see him?

Phumzile: Every time he comes to town, he always comes through to see me. He comes every day he is in town. He drives here just to come and greet me.

Nomkhosi: That’s nice.

Phumzile: He is the person that I talk to when I have a problem.

Nomkhosi: How old is he?

Phumzile: He is old. He is 53. He is my mother’s first-born. He is the one person that I am able to talk to. Serious. Even when I fell pregnant with the second baby, even before anyone could see that I was pregnant, he was the person I was able to tell that I am pregnant. I told him about my situation. He was able to understand. When others fight with me, he is always on my side. He really is the only person that I am able to talk to. The others, ay, I can’t really talk to them, for real.

Nomkhosi: When you said you were in and out of the hostel, going to your friends, where did you leave your small baby?

Phumzile: I would take her with me all the time.

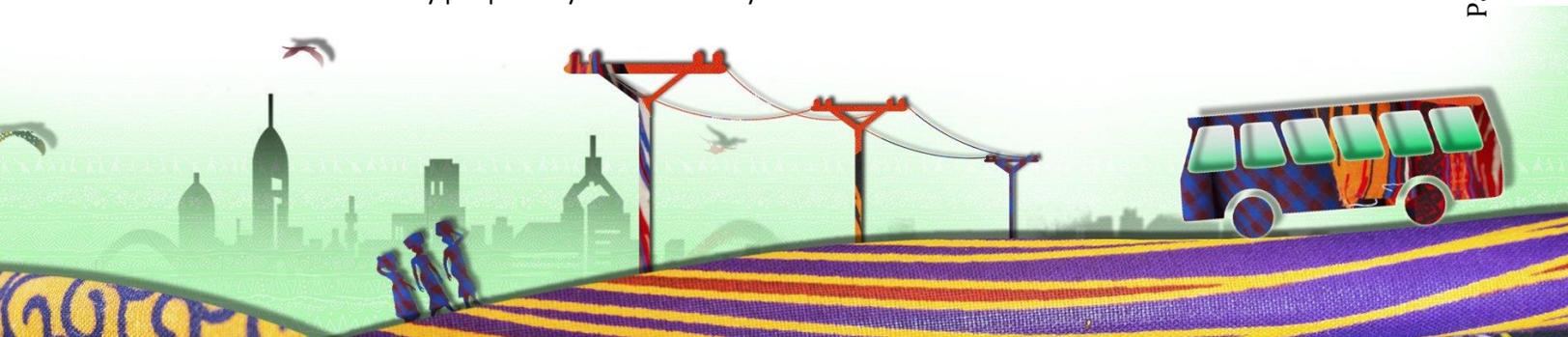
Nomkhosi: Or when you took small breaks from the hostel?

Phumzile: Yes. It was not like now at the hostel where we can stay with our children. There are many children here now and we live freely with them. I would go out with my baby so that people could see that I was not permanent at the hostel with the child, and I would come back with her.

Nomkhosi: Do you sleep with her on the bed?

Phumzile: Yes. Now I have a small bed for the boy to sleep on and I will continue sleeping with the little one.

Nomkhosi: How many people do you live with in your room?





Phumzile: There are three of us, although the others do not spend a lot of time in the room.

Nomkhosi: What do they do?

Phumzile: When you live with people in the room you end up understanding each other. They understand me. I started by chatting to them about my wish to take my son and have him live with me here. They agreed that I could bring the boy here [when they heard about] the life that he leads there.

Nomkhosi: Where will you guys spend your Christmas day?

Phumzile: It will be at home.

Nomkhosi: Where your father lives with your stepmother?

Phumzile: Yes, I have never not had Christmas at home. This is something that I always did, even when my mother was alive. I would go there perhaps on the 24th, wake up on the 25th and cook lunch for dad and then leave later that day or even on the 26th. This time I have asked my brother that we go together on the morning of the 25th, in order to surprise my father because I know he will already be complaining that nobody has come. Then we will have lunch together and go back to our places.

Nomkhosi: Which brother?

Phumzile: The one at KwaMashu.

Nomkhosi: You get along with your brother?

Phumzile: Yes, very much so.

Nomkhosi: But what about his wife?

Phumzile: We are not close.

Nomkhosi: Why don't you try to get along with her?

Phumzile: I do try, I don't want to lie. I try. But every time I call her she asks: "Who am I speaking to?" That means that the person has not saved your number and she probably does not see the need to do that. Even when you communicate with her over WhatsApp, she asks you who she is speaking with.

Nomkhosi: No!

Phumzile: She is not serious at all. Even if you feel there is not much you can talk about, you can pick up the phone to ask if everything is well. It's not a lot. So that's it. Even if I go there, I go to my brother. We do not have a bond that allows me to go to her when I have problem. Even if you tell her what you are going through she would say: "Oh, I hear." That's it. She will ask you nothing and offer no solution to your problem. So I focus on my brother. I just talk to him.

Nomkhosi: So, as we are going towards the end of the year and I have heard about your plans for Christmas, what is the way forward? Do you have thoughts on how life should proceed especially since you will start living with both your kids here? What will you do to achieve some of the dreams you once had, even if they don't manifest quickly? Whether it's Tupperware, Avon or anything else, what do you think will give you a better life?

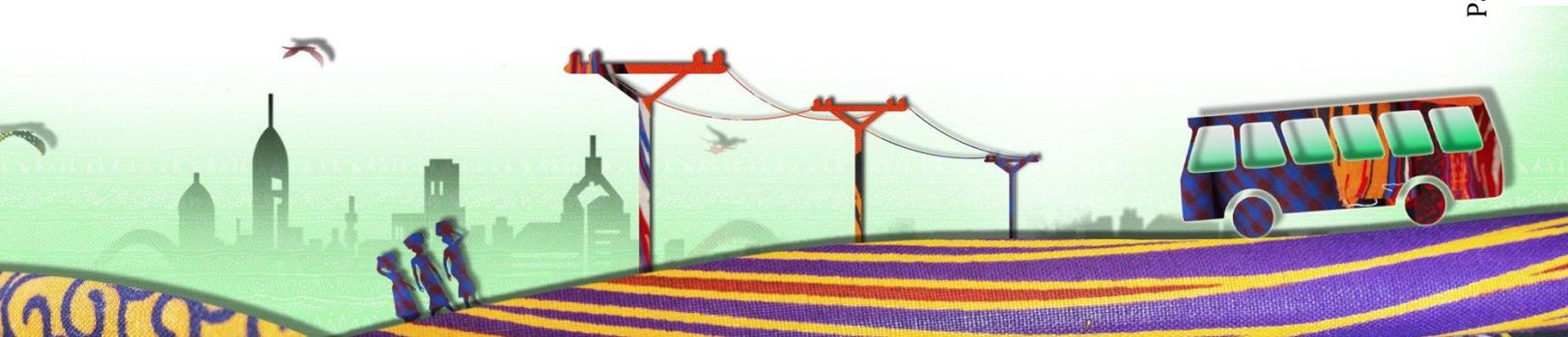
Phumzile: There is a job that I will be starting with on 3 January. I will start by being a casual worker and when they employ me permanently I will know that my wishes can become true.

Nomkhosi: Where will this be?

Phumzile: I will be a casual worker with the municipality. They promised that after six months, they will look at my performance and renew my contract. Perhaps after 12 months they will register me.

Nomkhosi: What will you be doing there?

Phumzile: I will be a team leader for the EPWP (Extended Public Works Programme). Maybe you have seen them on the road. I looked at the salary I will get as a team leader and compared it with what I would get if I am permanent. I see that it will be able to satisfy me and my two kids at the place where we live. It will also allow me to do what I want to do. Because I know that it will not be difficult for me





to get NSFAS. I have my mother's death certificate and my father's retirement letter. It's just that I need accommodation with my kids. I stay here now with my baby girl and sometimes I feel uncomfortable with the fact that there are boy children there. What if she is raped?

Nomkhosi: Eish! It is difficult to look after your child here.

Phumzile: It is not safe at all. It would be better if I can get my own place, where I can know that they are here and safe. That is where I would be starting to chart a way forward.

Nomkhosi: Okay, so the main thing with you for now is shelter?

Phumzile: Yes. If I can just get shelter, I would have everything.

Nomkhosi: Do you belong in any religious group?

Phumzile: (Long pause) Ja, I used to go to Wesley church, but I have not been there in years. I have not gone to church for many years. I do not know why I stopped. But in my heart I do believe.

Nomkhosi: That's what I am interested to know—if you have any relationship with God, if you are able to have a conversation with him.

Phumzile: Yes, I do pray when I go to bed and when I wake up in the morning. I believe in prayer in everything I do. It's just that I do not go to church. But I am able to do everything [for] God.

Nomkhosi: What kind of place would you like to stay in with your small kids? I ask because you have also spent a lot of time living in the city and life in a township is not like the life in the city.

Phumzile: Yes, it is not the same. It is not the same but life in the township is safe. When you live with kids here in town, there are many things that they get exposed to which influence their minds to do wrong things. It's better in a township because they would know that when they leave house, they go out to play. When they are here in the city there are not too many options. They spend a lot of time watching TV and playing play station. On TV they will end up watching things that they should not be watching because there is no play space. If I could get a place in the township or even in the rural areas, as long as it has water, electricity and a road close by, I could happily go back to the rural areas. [I would be happy if] I could have shelter for my kids so that they can grow in the right way, the way that I was also raised. Then they can get respect. Children from the city use a lot of vulgar language. They hear it from people who are just passing by. It is worse where I live ... they use it as if it is poetry.

Nomkhosi: Really?

Phumzile: It's worse in the afternoon when the hawkers are back from work. People do not finish a sentence without using a strong language.

Nomkhosi: Do they take a lot of alcohol?

Phumzile: Yes.

Nomkhosi: Do your kids also use vulgar language?

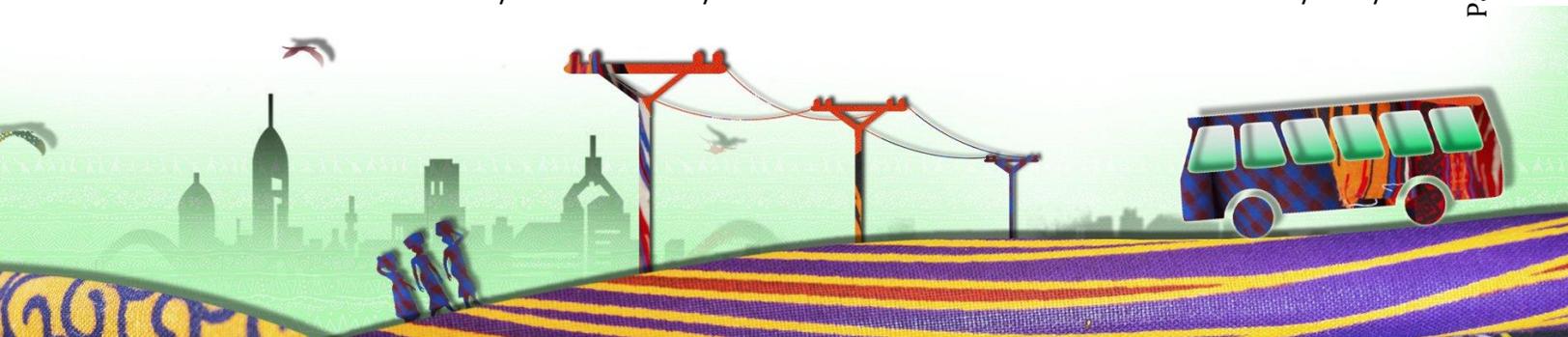
Phumzile: Yes, the small one uses such strong language and I shout at her and [threaten] to give her a hiding. She would stop and ask me if that was vulgar. And I would say yes and she would stop. Then she would start again. If anything frustrates her she uses a swear word.

Nomkhosi: She needs a good hiding.

Phumzile: The older one, because he grew up from home most of the time, knows that it is unacceptable to use swear words. But you can see that if I live with him at the hostel he will eventually use them. He will get out of hand.

Nomkhosi: So how will you protect your kids from all that? It's difficult to raise problematic kids. It is very difficult for them to unlearn these things.

Phumzile: Yes, that is why I say I need proper shelter. I need to get out of this place and get a decent place where I can live with my kids so that they can learn to listen to me and not be influenced by many





people. Really, when they stay here, I will not manage. I will be going to work and they will remain with people who will be teaching them things that are contrary to my teachings.

Nomkhosi: When you start in your new job, who will be taking care of your kids, especially the small one?

Phumzile: She will have to go to crèche.

Nomkhosi: Is there a crèche at the hostel?

Phumzile: There is a crèche at the market called Malibongwe. She will go there.

Nomkhosi: Oh, I know that crèche.

Phumzile: I have spoken to the man who signed me up for the job and told him I would like to get a night shift from 10pm to 6am.

Nomkhosi: Who will sleep with them in the night?

Phumzile: It is easier that they sleep alone because I live with those two ladies. I want to do this so that I can get them ready for school, wash them, especially the small one, and when they come back I am there for them and can wash their uniforms.

Nomkhosi: Oh my God. That would be so hard.

Phumzile: But I will do it! I will do it! This is the life which I thought would be better. I think when I am on night shift I will be able to take care of the needs of my kids and even think of going back to school myself. I will come back from work, sleep for few hours, wake up, prepare them and get ready to go back to work.

Nomkhosi: Yoh, this life seems very hard, especially going forward.

Phumzile: Yeah, it's not easy at all.

Nomkhosi: What do you think could make your life more manageable?

Phumzile: If I could get the right job, something that enables me to satisfy all my needs, I would be okay.

Nomkhosi: Do you make any serious money from Avon and Tupperware?

Phumzile: No, there is no much. There is no profit. You must make sure that you continuously have orders so that money can come in. The one thing that I live on is the child grant.

Nomkhosi: The grant?

Phumzile: Yes. This is the money that I can say really helps me. This is the money which helped me in finding my boy's school fees.

Nomkhosi: How much is the school fees?

Phumzile: R1300.

Nomkhosi: Yoh! Will he take transport or he can walk?

Phumzile: He will take transport. It is at Springfield. I will have to have R150.

Nomkhosi: Oh, it's out of town?

Phumzile: Yes. They also wanted a payslip and I did not have that. So they felt I would not be able afford that school fees. It's about R3000.

Nomkhosi: Yoh! How much is baby girl's school?

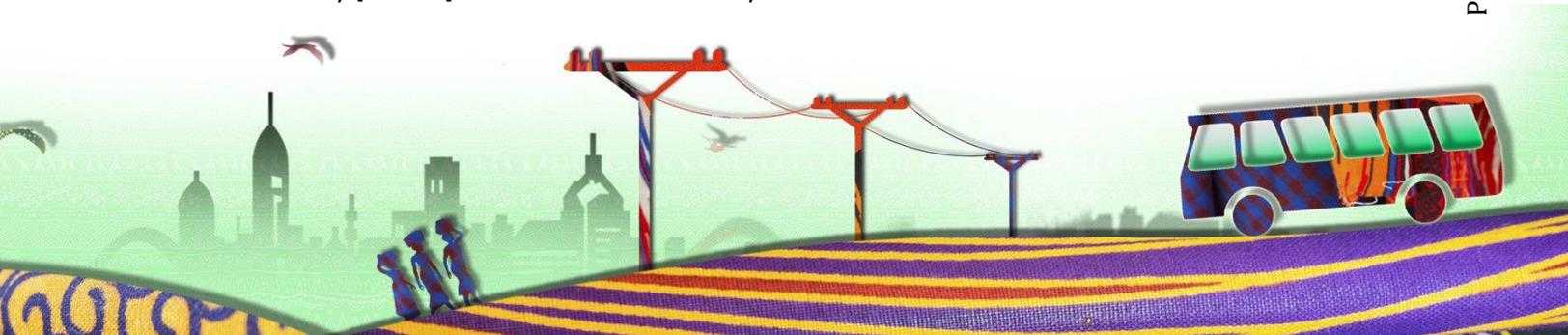
Phumzile: It's R250 per month. You can imagine that I still have to buy their snack to carry to school every day. The other one will walk to school.

Nomkhosi: Have you bought the uniform?

Phumzile: I have not bought it. I only bought the school shoes for the boy. And it is very different for Springfield HP ...

Nomkhosi: Will you ask you brother this season to help you prepare for January?

Phumzile: He said he will have to see the results of their child who is doing matric and has not yet applied for tertiary [studies] and will have to do first year. He said he will see. I do not know. Sometimes he





says that and he keeps you waiting for three months. He would say he is tied up. But I believe that there is something that he can help me with.

Nomkhosi: Have you bought them Christmas clothes?

Phumzile: No, not really. I have only bought for the girl. I have not bought for the boy.

Nomkhosi: Will you be buying for him?

Phumzile: Yes, I will see. I really don't know what I will do with him. I have started talking to him and he understands. I told him that his uniform is quite expensive and that I prefer to buy the uniform now rather than Christmas clothes. He said he understands.

Nomkhosi: You know, I really loved that boy. I saw a lot of maturity in him. I was watching him relating to his younger sister, and the sister was behaving like a spoilt brat. The boy showed that he has been raised in the right way. He showed responsibility towards his younger sister.

Phumzile: Yes, he understands. He is very understanding.

Nomkhosi: And he takes care of his little sister.

Phumzile: I told him that once I have bought him the uniform, then I will be able to buy him clothes. Anyway, one thing he wanted was to visit his grandfather (my father) and so he went home. He does not seem like a child who would be troublesome. He is not materialistic at all.

Nomkhosi: But he might get influenced when he gets here.

Phumzile: That is where the problem will start. And here ... yoh, shame ... I always say that I will have a difficult time here.

Nomkhosi: I also don't believe in that. I always tell my kids that they can start wearing brands when they start working.

Phumzile: And at the hostel kids wear brands. I left my daughter now with a friend at Tupperware. When she saw my daughter (*Olwethu, ngimuluke impithi* – I had plaited her hair) she said: "Oh, your daughter will cry when she reaches her friend Pumpkin (Pumpkin is the daughter of Phumzile's friend who also stays at the hostel) because Pumpkin has braids (*opelepele*)." And I said: "No, Olwethu will not cry. She has braids too and she looks pretty. I will tell her that what Pumpkin has on her head is the same as what she [Olwethu] has."

Nomkhosi: Your friend also seems wrong. If she is the one who starts such a conversation, how much more difficult will it be for the child?

Phumzile: Yes, she is my friend but she always wants us to have a competition. She forgets that she sells Tupperware and she also sells clothes in the pension stations. She forgets that she makes more money than me. She always feels that there has to be a competition between herself and myself. I can't buy my child Nike sneakers. I can't. We don't live the same life.

Nomkhosi: Yoh, it's still going to be difficult. You must be strong. You must just remain strong as you are.

Phumzile: It is really going to be difficult but I will be strong.

Nomkhosi: You must just know that your kids are not other people's kids and their kids are not your kids.

Phumzile: I also told her that she will not be comparing lunch boxes between herself and her friend. When Pumpkin has fish fingers and a Vienna, she must just focus on what is in your lunchbox. This is what her mother has been able to afford. All else is beyond her power. But, anyway, the parent is the one who teaches a child.

Nomkhosi: Yes, it's true but in an environment like the hostel, it's difficult because everybody is in the same space at all times.





Phumzile: And the competition is very high. At this place competition is really high. I have seen that people with school-going kids gossip about what young kids do and carry at school. They make that a joke, and I just realised how difficult things are.

Nomkhosi: You will have to be very strong in this environment. And I am really hoping that you can find the place that you need.

Phumzile: I will be trying, shame. Ja, the ward councillor that we have now has made promises.

Nomkhosi: Who is the new councillor?

Phumzile: Ntando Khuzwayo. He has mentioned that he would like for Thokoza hostel to go back to its original state where kids were not allowed inside. So he said he will try and find a place for the 26 women who lodged a case against the municipality and find places for them.

Nomkhosi: But when he is done with that 26, there will be a new list of 26 mothers.

Phumzile: It won't be easy because he said he will work with the original list which went to court. After that all those who have kids at the hostel will have to take them back to their homes because they know that kids are not allowed at the hostel.

Nomkhosi: Do you think that is the right way to do it? For kids not to be allowed?

Phumzile: Although we keep our children here, this is not a good place to raise them. There are more than 5000 people who live here. The toilets really get dirty and the passages are really dirty. There is no life there. This is not a place where you can keep a child and raise a child. The place is not right according to health standards. I think that this was the reason why the municipality initially refused to let kids live here. Health is not taken care of. Children will always get sick.

Nomkhosi: You said home is Ndwedwe?

Phumzile: Yes.

Nomkhosi: Is it the far Ndwedwe or the nearer area?

Phumzile: It is the area closer to Tongaat. It's not far. It's about a 45-minute drive. You can even leave town by taxi at 4pm and you can reach home before dark.

Nomkhosi: Okay. Thanks Phumzile. Thank you for making time to chat to me. Thank you for sharing your story with me. I wish you luck with the desires of your heart, especially with the kids. I also wish you luck with the decision to take both your kids to live with you at the hostel. That is a beautiful. You will never regret that, no matter how difficult things become because, as we say in isiZulu, *umama ufa nayo ingane yakhe* (a mother dies with her child). And it's also better that your child gets rotten in front of you instead of it being a surprise. At least now you will have some control over how they grow up. I suggest that you try the maintenance court, because it is difficult to raise kids. That small amount can make a difference per month.

