



**STEP FORWARD:**  
SUPPORTING YOUNG WOMEN'S  
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT  
THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP



COMMUNITY  
MEDIA  
TRUST



**STEP**

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Across South Africa, many young women face poverty, unemployment, HIV, gender-based violence and unplanned pregnancy. One of the most effective ways to change this is by creating opportunities for them to earn their own income.

Community Media Trust, a South African non-profit, uses entrepreneurship programmes like STEP (Student Training for Entrepreneurial Promotion) to help young women gain hands-on business skills and start their own micro-businesses with seed funding enabling young women to build their self-confidence and financial independence to shape their own futures.



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“When young women have the skills, confidence and independence to succeed, the ripple effect transforms entire communities – STEP is where that change begins.”



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**Community Media Trust (CMT)** is a South African non-profit organisation dedicated to empowering communities through social mobilisation, training, advocacy, and media production.

Since its founding in 1998, CMT has worked with marginalised communities to address HIV, gender-based violence and poverty.

As a partner in the DREAMS initiative, CMT supported adolescent girls and young women to become Determined, Resilient, Empowered, AIDS-free, Mentored and Safe.

Part of this support included access to economic strengthening programmes like STEP (Student Training for Entrepreneurial Promotion).

STEP is designed to equip young women with real-world business experience and practical skills. During the 12-session programme, each participant designs, tests and launches her own micro-business and receives R1 000 in seed funding. Along the way, participants build confidence, strengthen their entrepreneurial thinking and learn what it takes to make self-employment a sustainable option. This hands-on approach strengthens entrepreneurial skills, self-efficacy, and personal agency - all key factors in reducing HIV risk and advancing gender equality.

The stories that follow highlight the journeys of young women who took part in STEP. Each one has used what she learned to build a business, unlock opportunities and reimagine what her future could hold.

CMT partners with Doorways gGmbH, a German NGO, to strengthen youth empowerment and economic inclusion. As a spin-off of Leuphana University in Germany, Doorways is a certified provider of STEP and has extensive experience in developing, implementing and evaluating the programme. This partnership enables CMT to deliver integrated, community-driven initiatives that build skills, expand opportunities and promote meaningful social change through entrepreneurship.

Doorways STEP



Up until May 2025, Community Media Trust implemented the DREAMS programme as a sub-partner to Shout-It-Now, funded by PEPFAR through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

# 1.

## FROM BRAIDS TO BUSINESS: MPHO KHUMALO

Mpho Khumalo, 24, is a rising entrepreneur who lives in Winterveldt with her mother, siblings and her six-year-old child. Her mother is the only one with a job, and Mpho proudly helps add to the household income through her expanding hair business.

Mpho began doing hair in 2021 while studying law online through UNISA. Her business became a way to earn while she studied, and she's now working to complete her LLB.

At first, Mpho ran the business informally. She had clients, but managing bookings and money was difficult. There were constant requests for discounts, and some people never paid.

She heard about STEP through CMT's Girls' Club programme at Childline in Winterveldt and decided to join. Through the programme, she received R1 000 in seed funding and practical training in business, financial and customer management. "Before, I used money recklessly," she says. "Now I reinvest in my business and plan for the future."

Thanks to her STEP learnings, Mpho opened a bank account, started tracking her income, and began saving for a wendy house to use as a dedicated salon space. She has registered the business and promotes it through Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp and word of mouth. "Compared to previous years, it is evident that the accomplishments are good," she says.

In peak season, Mpho earns up to R2 500 a month. She's still saving, still planning, and has started teaching others how to braid. One day, she hopes to run a full salon and be booked to style people at events. Sounds like a good plan to us.

"Not everyone is going to be employed, there are opportunities in entrepreneurship."



“I knew how to crochet, but I didn’t know it could support me until I was shown how to turn it into a business.”



## HOOKED ON CROCHET: ADELAIDE MACHANGA

Adelaide Machanga, 21, lives in Lekhema village in the Bojanala district of the North West with her parents and four siblings. With only her father earning an income, the family could afford little beyond the basics. Adelaide put her studies on hold and was looking for a way to contribute. Though she was skilled at crocheting, she had never seen it as a way to earn money.

That changed when she enrolled in STEP programme, and started her business, **Minky Crochet**, after the second session on bootstrapping. Using the resources available, she began crocheting in the evenings and selling her products during the day. The R1 000 seed funding she received helped her invest further and grow her product range.

She now earns about R200 per item sold. Half goes back into the business and the rest helps cover household needs. The income is still small, but it has made a real difference at home and given her a sense of purpose. “Whenever we need something, I’m able to assist. It has made things easier, especially for my dad.”

Adelaide has since registered her business, received a SARS number and expanded her offering. She has also taken a job in sales and distribution to build her marketing skills. “I have more understanding of the skill that I have, and I always push myself to learn more and advance.”

The STEP programme has given Adelaide more than just training. She found the confidence, tools and support to start earning, growing and contributing meaningfully to her family. “It’s never too late to find your passion and let it lead you to the destiny set for you.”

# 3.

## DESIGNING HER FUTURE: BOITSHOKO MOLEPHYANE

Boitshoko Molephyane runs **TM Innovations**, a graphic design business in Bojanala, where she creates logos, posters and branded items for local businesses. From event tickets to tumbler cups and hats, Boitshoko uses every project as an opportunity to showcase her designs and connect with her audience.

Before starting her business, Boitshoko was a passionate community organiser, hosting beauty pageants, charity events, and awareness campaigns. She couldn't afford a professional designer for her event materials, so started learning the tools herself and quickly realised she was good at it. What began as a solution grew into a business, but that came with its own challenges. She struggled to find clients, market her work and afford the equipment she needed.

"I heard about the STEP programme on social media, that's when I decided to participate because I believed that it would contribute a lot towards my personal and professional growth." Boitshoko learnt a lot from the 12-session business training and was given the opportunity to showcase her work on Market Day. But it was the mentorship, she claims, that made the biggest difference. "It moulded me into who I am today. It helped me see myself as a real business owner and gave me the mindset to keep going."

Since completing STEP, Boitshoko feels more focused and disciplined. She's making a monthly profit of around R2 000, and referrals continue to grow. Her dream is to continue building **TM Innovations**, motivate aspiring entrepreneurs and create employment opportunities for the younger generation. And we believe that she can do it!

"I believe that maintaining a positive mindset is crucial for running a successful business."



# 4.

## HEALING HANDS & BIG DREAMS: LEBOGANG MOROASWI

Lebogang Moroaswi, 23, lives in Soshanguve and runs **Peace of Mind Mobile Spa**, a small business offering massage treatments in a calm and supportive environment.

She started her business while studying Business Administration at Ga-Rankuwa, combining her interest in anatomy with a strong belief in the power of touch. “What inspired me is the desire to help others, a passion for holistic healing, and personal experience with the benefits of massage,” she says.

Getting started wasn't easy. As a young woman in the industry, Lebogang was often not taken seriously. “One of the unsettling barriers I faced was not being taken seriously due to my age. I was seen as someone who lacked experience in the masseuse industry.” Time management and balancing her work and personal life was another challenge.

“I heard about CMT at my college and decided to join the STEP programme. I received mentorship, business training and funding. Thanks to STEP's support, the vision came alive, Peace of Mind started running and my life has changed for the better. I had a vision but didn't have the means to make it happen.” she says.

Today, **Peace of Mind Mobile Spa** is a growing business and continues to support her family. Lebogang has partnered with other mobile spas and is seeing steady cash flow. She mentors young women in her community and is proud to have kept her vision despite barriers. “Most of them are inspired looking at the age I started the business.”

**Peace of Mind Mobile Spa** now operates in Pretoria and Limpopo, and Lebogang's dream is to grow the business across South Africa. Watch this space.



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SWEDISH NECK MASSAGE: R70

CONTACT LEBOGANG  
074 425 1345  
@peace\_of\_mind\_mobile\_spa

“What keeps me going is the consistent positive feedback I receive from clients. Their satisfaction fuels both me and the business.”

# 5.

## CRAFTED FOR SUCCESS: MOLEBOHENG MOKOENA

Moleboheng Mokoena, 24, is the founder of **Dark Beauty Manufacturing Company**, a small business that specialises in handmade bags, earrings and trays.

Moleboheng was living hand-to-mouth when she first started making earrings and trays from home. "I had a business but I didn't know what I was doing, I was just trying," she says.

Joining the STEP programme in Ekurhuleni changed her path. "The training was full of information. I learned how to handle business finances and deal with different customer behaviours. Everything was explained clearly - customer segments, business channels, revenue streams and cost structures."

Moleboheng now stands out as a creative and driven entrepreneur. She runs her business more professionally, with a formal bank account, registered business name and growing product range. Recently, she introduced laser-engraved goods and is branching into canvas prints. She also teaches two community members how to sew, using her own machine, showing innovation and strong commitment to uplifting others.

Her positivity has been as much a strength as her new business knowledge. "I haven't given up. I'm still standing, I'm still learning, and I'm still pushing." Moleboheng has a clear vision for the future: to run **Dark Beauty** full time and one day open multiple branches employing 20 or more people.

STEP has given Moleboheng the structure and training she needed to start planning for real growth. But it has also shaped how she sees herself. "I've grown mentally. I've learned to face challenges and step outside my comfort zone."

With determination, optimism and support, Moleboheng is now building a future that goes far beyond getting by.

"For me the training I got from CMT and STEP has been so effective in my personal life and business"



**THE DARK BEAUTY**  
HANDMADE BAGS AND ACCESSORIES

MOLEBOHENG ROSE MOKOENA

068 237 0575

- the dark beauty handcrafted@gmail.com
- THE DARK BEAUTY HANDCRAFTED BAGS AND ACCESSORIES
- @THE DARK BEAUTY HANDCRAFTED
- THE DARK BEAUTY HANDCRAFTED
- MOLEBOHENG (@MOLEBOHENG-MOKOENA)

# 6.

## FROM CLASSROOM DREAMS TO GLAM AMBITIONS: RIRHANDZU SIBIYA

“I’m proud of running a business.”



“I’ve been passionate about hair and nails from the age of 11,” says Rirhandzu Sibiya, a 24-year-old STEP graduate from Isithama in Thembisa. She now runs **Melody’s Glam**, a small business offering hair and nail services to her community. Before starting her business, Rirhandzu was studying education, a path she still values. But it was beauty that truly inspired her.

At first, her business focused on hair only, but finding clients online wasn’t always easy. “Social networking was difficult,” she recalls. “Sometimes clients didn’t believe the work I posted was mine. There’s also a lot of competition in this business.”

Looking for guidance and support, Rirhandzu joined the STEP programme. Over 12 sessions, she learned about finances, marketing and handling competition. She then used her R1 000 seed funding to enrol on a nail course, topping up where needed to complete a formal qualification. “It was worth it,” she says. “Now I can do both hair and nails.”

Today, Rirhandzu earns around R5 000 a month, with hair still being her main focus. “Most people know me for doing hair,” she says. “I like it. I’m running a business.”

Her income supports both herself and her family, and she’s proud of what she’s achieved so far. Looking to the future, she hopes to open her own salon and employ members of her community.

Her advice to young women is simple: “ Never give up. Stay focused and keep praying.”

# 7.

## JUMPSTARTING DREAMS: SIPHOSETHU SHABALALA

“Starting this business was inspired by my community’s needs and my own experiences growing up in a poor back-ground family,” says Siphosethu Shabalala, 25, from Zonkizizwe Extension 3 in Katlehong South in Gauteng. “I wanted to show young black girls that they can achieve their dreams despite financial constraints.”

Siphosethu was studying Fitting and Machining Engineering at Sedibeng TVET College, but lack of funding forced her to drop out. While looking for work, she heard about the STEP programme through Dynamic Nation, a CMT partner.

When she joined, she was thinking about starting a nail business. But after receiving R1 000 in seed funding, she took time to reflect. “I started brainstorming other ideas and came up with a unique concept: a trampoline community park,” she says. “I saw a gap in job opportunities, so I aimed to create something that would not only sustain me but also empower others by creating more job opportunities.”

The STEP training gave her what she needed. “The topic on bootstrapping and getting started really resonated with me,” she says. “The programme gave me the confidence and knowledge to develop a solid business plan and strategy.”

She received mentorship from her CMT facilitator, took part in a Market Day organised by CMT, and started applying what she’d learned. “STEP helped me understand how to budget and how to position my business. Even though I don’t get enough profit to grow the business yet, I still manage to save the little I have, and I know it makes a difference.”

She also runs Siyaphambili Extra Classes, offering tutoring for Grade 3 to 11 learners. “I started with free classes to build trust. Once parents saw the results, they were willing to pay.” Her tutoring services are growing steadily, and she offers small rewards like gifts and free trampoline sessions to motivate high-performing learners.

Siphosethu also mentors two girls from her Sunday school group and supports her family with her income. Looking ahead, she has a clear vision for growth. “In a year, I see my trampoline park taking shape and becoming a popular destination. In five years, I want to expand to multiple locations and establish the business as a leader in the entertainment industry. Each day brings new ideas and opportunities, and I’m excited to see how it will grow.”

“Being my own boss and making a positive impact drives me.”



## RECIPE FOR GROWTH: CHARMAINE MOTAUNG

At only 24, Charmaine Motaung, a young woman from Palm Ridge, has proven that resourcefulness and perseverance can turn a small idea into a sustainable, expanding business.

Charmaine runs Fresh Yoghurt, a small business that delivers yoghurt across Gauteng and other provinces. She started the business while completing her Business Management studies, selling on weekends and moving between areas to build a customer base. The experience taught her a lot, but without structure or support, growth was difficult.

Charmaine joined the STEP programme after hearing about it from a friend. Through the programme, she received business training, mentorship and R1 000 in seed funding. "The training was good because it came with business alignment on what to expect, how to handle money, and how to deal with over-expenditure," she explains. "They helped us understand that mismanaging finances can easily cause a business to fail."

She also received mentorship from a local entrepreneur, along with support from her parents and sister, who also runs a business. But it was the theory lessons in the STEP programme that helped her think strategically, "I now understand how to plan before an incident occurs. It gave me the confidence to manage my business proactively."

Today, Charmaine earns between R5 000 and R10 000 a month, with weekly deliveries in Gauteng and monthly deliveries to Free State, KwaZulu-Natal and North West. She supports her family and is saving to buy a container to set up a permanent shop.

She says STEP gave her the skills, confidence and motivation to keep going. Her goal is to continue growing her business and create a more stable future for herself and her daughter. "I'm super proud of the determination towards becoming an entrepreneur and self-dependent." And with her passion and determination, there's every reason to believe more success is on the way!



"My business has had a positive impact on both my family and community."