



August 2026

Dear friends and supporters of Masazane Soup Kitchen,

August is Women's Month in South Africa, where the focus is often sadly on discrimination and issues of gender-based violence. But there are also so many positive things to focus on, and it felt like the right time to bring you an interview that one of our volunteers, journalist Sue Segar, undertook recently. I hope it gives you some insight into the life and personality of one of the gogos who work so hard in our soup kitchen.

Nomathemba Booï (70) started working in the soup kitchen in 2023 when Martha Mdingi (one of our original team) appealed at her church for another helper for the project.



She lives in Mbekweni with four children – two of her own grandchildren and two of her late sister's children. Her parents were originally from the Karoo and Eastern Cape, but Mbekweni has always been Nomathemba's home, where they moved in 1964. She was the oldest child of four in her family with a sister and two younger brothers. Her father worked at Sasco, while her mother worked in the Langeberg fruit-canning factory near Paarl as a packer.

Nomathemba left school aged 15, after which she did a sewing course at Khayamandi School. She loved learning to sew, and it has stood her in good stead, as a skill, all her life. After her course, she found a job in a local canning factory, where she worked for more than ten years. She recalls working hard but also experiencing happy times with her fellow workers in the factory, and says the women there built up a wonderful camaraderie where they shared thoughts and experiences.

Nomathemba has two children of her own: Vuyani (49) and Vusomzi (42). For many years, she shared her house in Mbekweni with her sister Nomonde and their children which, she says, was the happiest time of her life. The day Nomonde died of TB was a very sad day for the family.

Nomathemba realised how strong she is capable of being when her mother became ill with a serious liver problem when Nomathemba was a young working woman. "I was working for many hours a day and I would return from work and look after my mother in the evenings. I remember our local pastor, Pastor Hans, saying to me, "you are a strong woman – looking after your mother and all the children."

Nomathemba remembers her mother as a huge positive influence in her life. "What I learnt from her was kindness. She was warm and welcoming to all people and treated them all the same. No matter who came to the house – whether it was a homeless person, or somebody who drinks a lot, but was hungry, she would always share what she had with them. She raised her children to always be respectful to everyone. That is how I have raised my children too, to pass this on to my own children and their children". Nomathemba recalls her father as a very kind man. "He loved all his children. He would even change the nappies and make food for us. He loved spending time with us. When I think of him, I have happy memories. He had the same standard for all his children and didn't treat anyone differently."

Nomathemba has always loved children, and so working in the soup kitchen comes naturally to her. She loves the way the children greet her, with respect and gratitude when they come to the kitchen. "I love it when the children start arriving. I always think, 'look how small they are'." I always talk to them and ask them how they are. "The children say, 'Makhulu, you cooked so well', she says. "And I 'say, 'thank you, my children.' I love working with these children." Friendship means the world to Nomathemba and she feels she has found this with her fellow gogos in the soup kitchen at Mbekweni. She is happy working there. "We work well together." In her spare time, Nomathemba loves nothing more than to sit in front of her house, to set up a table outside, and to make frikadelle, vetkoek and chips. This she does to sell to the local community, to make extra money. Sadly, her eyesight is deteriorating, so it is difficult for Nomathemba to do needlework anymore, something which, in the past, she really enjoyed.

We have an exciting new website! Find it on masazanesoupkitchen.org.za – at the moment this is best viewed on computer, rather than a phone. We hope to sort this and a few other gremlins out soon! This interview will be posted on our newly launched website, and we hope that Sue will bring us more interviews in the months ahead.

We are so thankful for all the donations that keep this humble project going, and which enable us to support the incredible women who work at MSK. It is they who feed the children of Mbekweni, but it is with YOUR help. Thank you!

Our special thanks go to our supporters and donors:

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