

# TOP LEARNERS

2021  
REPORT





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# Executive Summary

**Our Top Learner Project continues operated at near full capacity in 2021, despite covid-19. The project drastically increased ACCESS to university for impoverished high school learners and the odds of SUCCESS while at university for our students.**

## We achieved or surpassed all of our 2021 goals.

2021 has been a challenging year for our learners and students, however we all persevered.

We saw huge increases in the number of high school learners we were assisting. While this resulted in a ton of work for our team, it was wonderful to be able to help so many learners this year.

On the university front, our students struggled with online learning, but by and large coped. It was very difficult for many of them to study from their impoverished

homes. It will be such a relief to get back onto campus in 2022.

Our Masi Houses of Excellence were once again life-savers for our most impoverished students. The pass-rate at the houses was an incredible 95%!

We hope you enjoyed the graduate report we sent out earlier this year and have included a couple of those stories again here. It's just incredible to see how far some of these young people have come.

As always, a heart-felt 'thank you' for investing in these young stars. You have changed their lives forever!

**"Masinyusane has become a beacon of hope to the schooling community."**

~ Principal Sandi  
Cingani High School



## 3140 applications

submitted for university, NSFAS and bursaries.

## 80% pass-rate

from our university students in 2021.

## Masi Houses

the kids in the houses, who are our most impoverished, achieved a 95% pass-rate.



## Project Numbers



**80%**

Current Pass-Rate



**208**

Students On Stipends



**208**

University  
Graduates



**22**

Students in  
Masi Houses



**807**

University  
Students



**3140**

University Applications  
Submitted

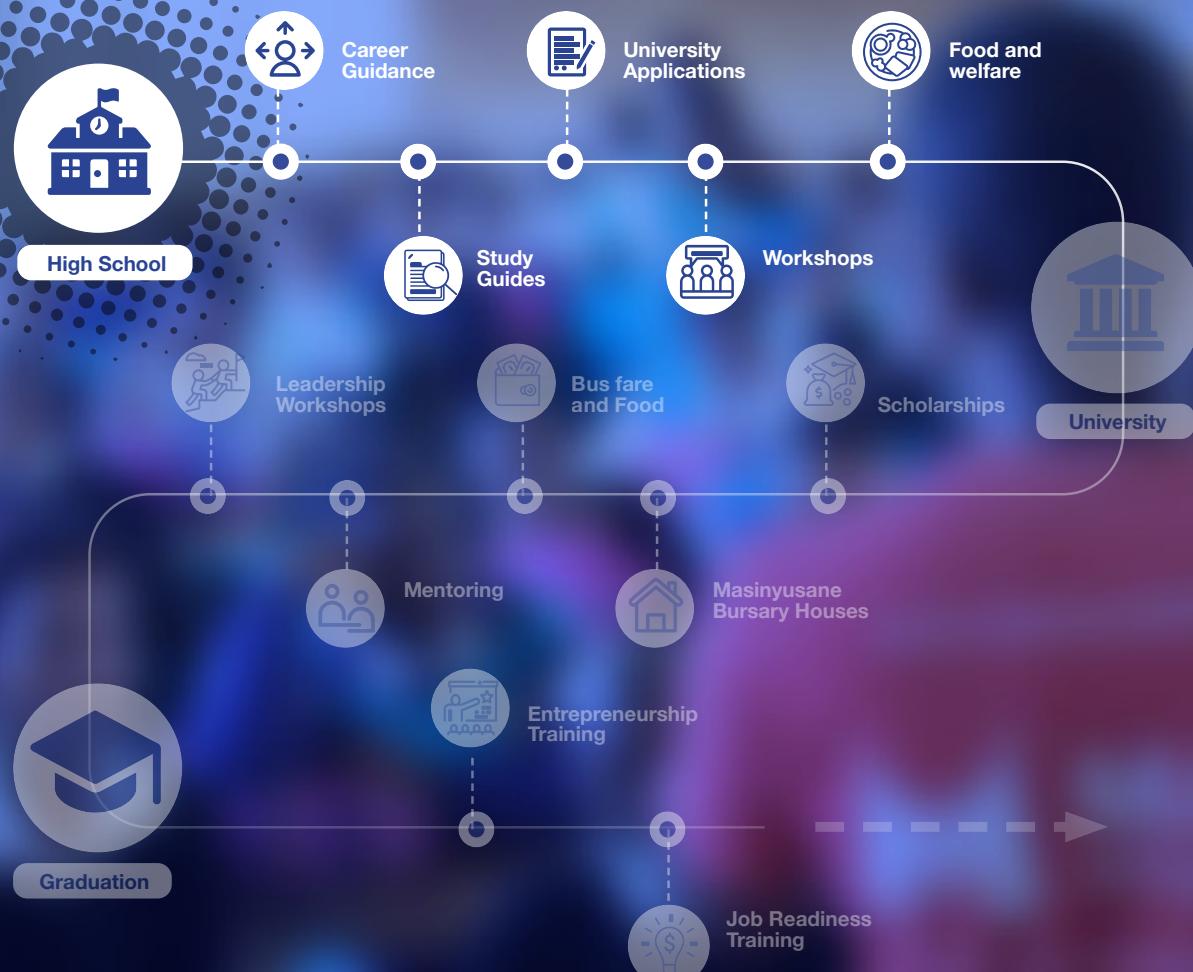
[www.raisesouthafrica.org](http://www.raisesouthafrica.org)



*Empowering Through Education*

# HIGH SCHOOL SUPPORT

to assist learners apply  
for and get into university



# High School Intervention

We are investing in ensuring **EVERY** qualifying learner from the 33 Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth) township and 8 rural high schools receives **ACCESS** to university.

Masinyusane's High School team has been visiting all of our high schools, meeting the matrics, collecting their information, applying on their behalf and explaining the steps we are taking together to get as many of them as possible admission and funding for university in 2022.

We have already compiled our 2022 database and are tracking dozens of data points on each learner. Our team has created and distributed hundreds of customised study packs and study guides.

We have seen a massive increase in the number of high school learners qualifying for university this year. Currently, there are 781 on the programme (668 from the city, 113 from rural areas).

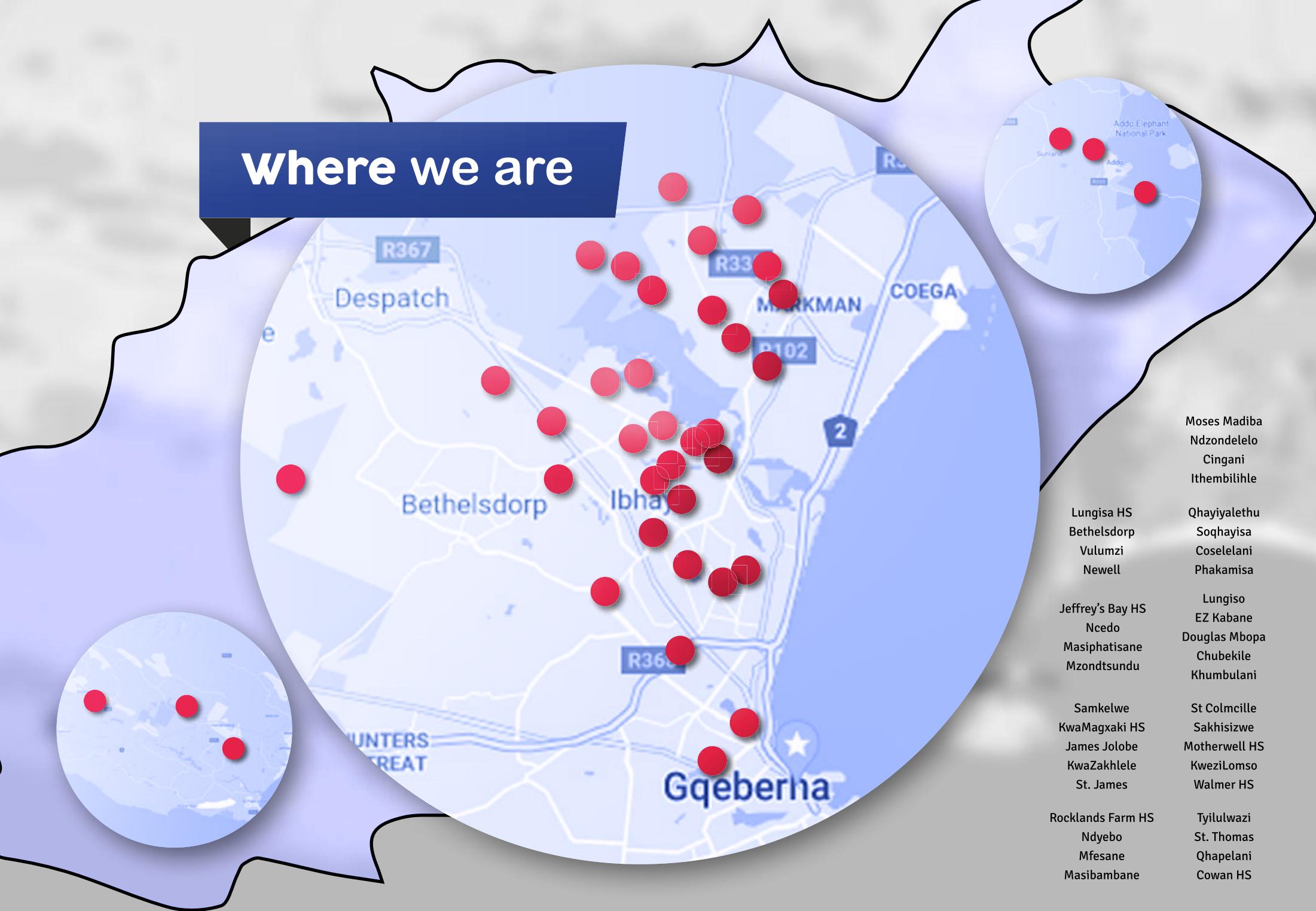
As a result, we have had to scale up our team to ensure we could provide full support to each learner. To date, we have submitted an incredible 2,344 applications on their behalf (each of which takes approximately 45 minutes to complete).

The intervention changes the lives of hundreds of students. Many will gain university acceptance whereas without us they would not have (application rates were 14% prior to Masi intervention, 80%+ after). Others will have the opportunity to travel/live/study outside of Port Elizabeth (most only apply locally). Others will have the option to choose from variety of potential fields of study.

Together, we will more than double the number of 2021 Grade 12s from these schools that obtain admission and funding to university for 2022. Your support is opening doors for each of these young people to continue with their education.



# Where we are



# Helping High Schoolers get into university

You have drastically increased our ability to enroll students at other universities, giving learners from our townships the opportunity to travel, live in another city and access other universities.

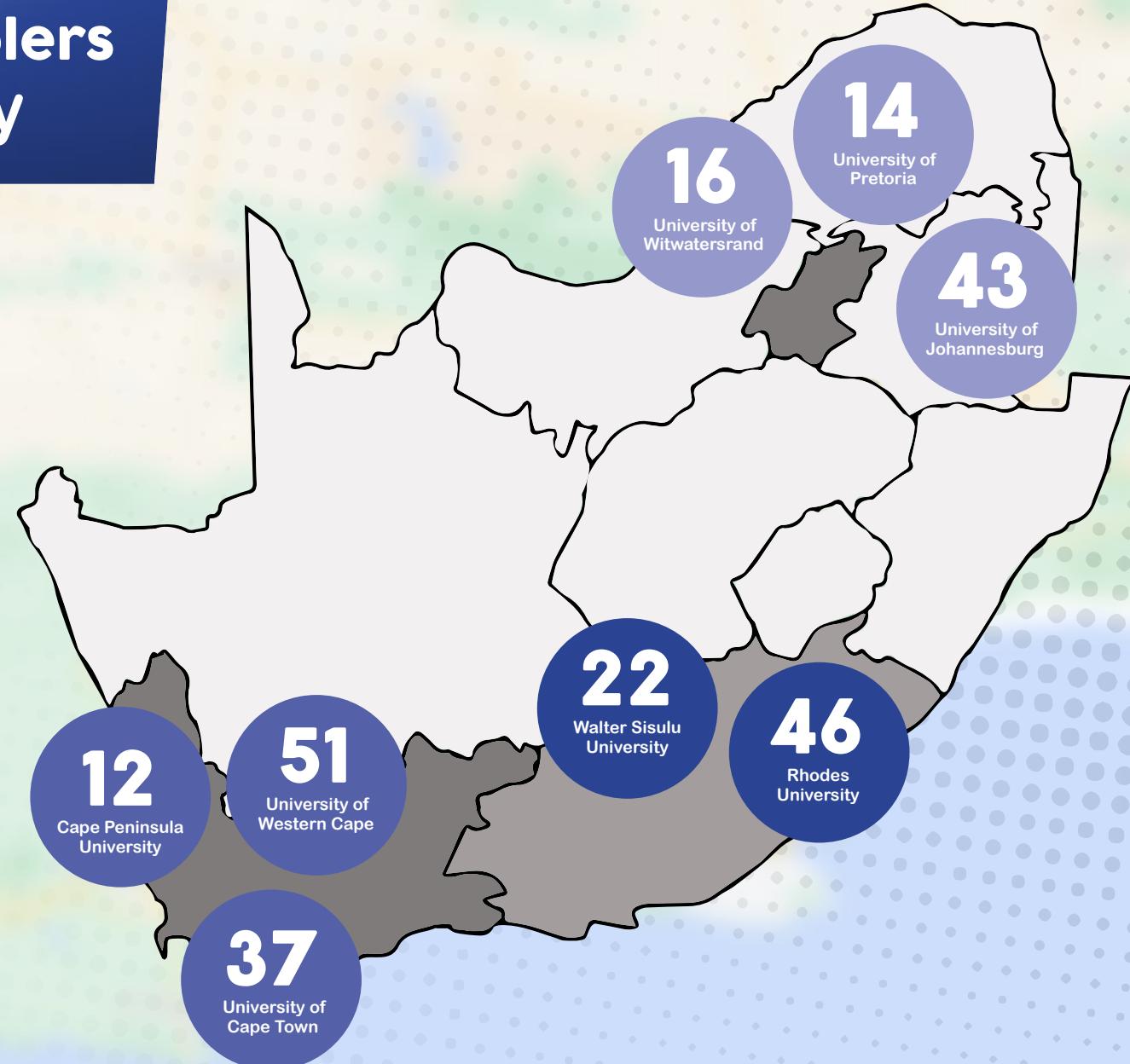
Masinyusane's high school team makes an enormous effort to unlock access to other universities for our learners. We apply (and pay fees for) up to five universities for each learner. This equates to thousands of applications each year.

However, even after being accepted, the road to enrolling at a university outside of Port Elizabeth can be difficult.

Some institutions require you to be present before assigning accommodation. One must show up in another city and accommodate themselves for a few days until the housing lists are sorted out.

Needless to say, this is an impossible expense for our students. This year, we once again bought bus tickets, paid for hostels, and provided travel stipends to all of our students.

There is no way they would be there without us.



# 2021 orientation

The transition from high school to university is a tough one. Masinyusane is there every step of the way for our learners.

There is always a lot of anxiety and uncertainty on behalf of our first year students to begin the year.

How will they get to their university? Where will they live? How do they register? What if they are on a waiting list? What if they have no bus fare? Which course should they choose?

Our orientations answer all of those questions and more. We host two separate sessions, one for those leaving Port Elizabeth and one for those studying locally.

Learners meet their mentors, get paired with Masi alumni and realise that there is a big support network waiting for them.



# UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

to assist learners apply  
for and get into university



# University Support

We are investing in a generation of university graduates that will be empowered to uplift their own families, solve their own community's problems and serve as role models to other youth.

The 2021 academic year was almost entirely done via online learning. Though engineers and science students occasionally used the labs.

It goes without say that our students are at an enormous disadvantage when it comes to e-learning. They live in crowded households without adequate study space. Many have lost family members due to covid, while others had breadwinners lose their jobs.

We provided an enormous amount of support to the students. Our mentors were in contact with them every week. Our team distributed food parcels, food vouchers and monthly stipends to hundreds of them. We also purchased laptops, data and textbooks when needed.

Importantly, we continued to keep our Masi Houses of Excellence open. These were safe havens for our most impoverished students and are the difference between these students making it through the year and not doing so.

The unique challenges of covid have made tutoring, study groups and individual support very difficult. It has also become less safe to host our typical personal development and skills workshops and leadership trainings.

Our mentors were putting extra effort into supporting the students most affected by the pandemic. South Africa has some of the highest covid-related death rates and job loss numbers in the world. The isolation everyone feels compounds this difficulty.

In times like this, we are especially grateful for our student mentors, such as Fiks, and the love, energy and support they bring into our students lives.

With your support,  
we are providing  
much needed support to  
impoverished students  
during a very, very  
difficult year.



# Masi house of excellence

Masinyusane is providing housing to some of the most impoverished students in Port Elizabeth. Without this assistance, these students would be deemed as a high 'failure' risk due to living in abject poverty.

We have kept our Masinyusane Houses of Excellence open for our most impoverished students, though strict protocols are followed. **In 2021, the kids in our house achieved a 95% pass-rate.**

The students in the house come from informal settlements, live with 10+ people in a household and/or come from homes with severe challenges. They are the 'poorest' five percent of our entire cohort of students.

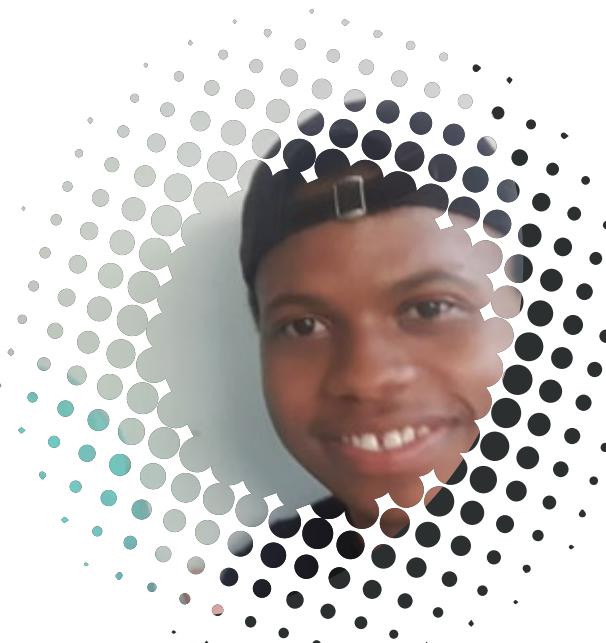
The house continues to provide the students with a safe, secure home next to campus. It includes study areas, free food, computers & internet access and daily mentoring from Masinyusane staff.

We have developed a strong culture of success, led by our senior students. This filters down each year into the first years and results in a group of supportive students that work hard, help one another and push each other to achieve.



# Tuition

You are ensuring that finances do not get in the way of promising youth from Port Elizabeth's townships in obtaining their education. Despite the Free Education initiative, a handful of students fall through the cracks every year. Without your assistance, none of them would be in university today. The following are two stories of lives changed:



## Shaza Qalela

Shaza is one of Masinyusane's most inspiring stories.

Born and raised in New Brighton, he used to study with Jim while in high school. He would go on to attend university at the University of Cape Town studying astrophysics.

When family tragedy struck, Shaza lost his funding. However, Masinyusane has him back in school as he pursues degrees in Astrophysics and Biology.

Shaza dreams of traveling to space and exploring the solar system for signs of microbial life. We are incredibly excited for his future and have no doubt he will blow us all away with his accomplishments.



## Ethel Mavaivai

Ethel remains one of our most beloved students. Her humility and gratitude are infectious.

She has finished her coursework and begun her workplace studies.

Ethel's dream of becoming a scientist are being realised. She has begun her practicals and is taking the first steps towards launching her career.

"Thank you so much for everything you have done for me, you have brought hope in my life. You made me step my legs through the university gate. I will never forget you in my life. Thank you so much."

# Mentoring & coaching

Masinyusane provides coaching and mentoring to all of our university students. We focus most time and energy on both first years and students failing their courses. This has become one of the most important aspects of the project during this Covid-19 pandemic.



The transition to first year of university is a difficult one. Our students went to high school in Xhosa speaking environments, at under-resourced schools, and were all the “big fish in a small pond.”

Once on campus, one can quickly become overwhelmed by the English medium, multi-cultural, fast-paced environment. No longer the smartest learner in the class, many of our students have their confidence shaken those first few months. This becomes even more pronounced if the March exams do not go well.

Our team works very hard to ensure we are boosting up our kids, helping them make the transition, and being there to listen when they need it the first 6 months. Our mentors have made the successful transition themselves and understand the “struggle”. While hard to measure, we often feel this support is among the most important that we can offer.

Sometimes all a failing student needs is to know that someone still believes in them. We do our best to intervene the second we realise a student is struggling. Always willing to pay for tutoring or counseling, we often find that the students simply needs a little reassurance and someone to make an action plan with them to get back on track.

At other times, more serious intervention is needed. Many of our students come from very difficult backgrounds, many having suffered serious trauma in their upbringing. These ‘ghosts’ occasionally reveal themselves when one is in a stressful environment (such as university exams). Masinyusane works with a number of counselors to ensure that our students always have access to help when they need it.

The mentoring aspect of our programme has become twice as important given the emotional toll the pandemic is having on our students. We are lucky to have such a committed staff.

Masinyusane prides itself in going above and beyond for our students and the dedication of mentors such as Fiks (above) are perfect examples.

# OUR GRADUATES

to assist learners apply  
for and get into university



# Project graduates

Since launching our Scholarship Fund, 208 of our students graduated from university. Each graduation is special; a time of many emotions for all of us. Pride. Joy. Excitement.

The highlight of every year are our graduations. Unfortunately, covid resulted in universities canceling all graduation ceremonies again.

Masinyusane decided to step in and host professional photo shoots and mini-graduation ceremonies for each family (individually due to covid). It took us two weeks, but it was worth the effort as families were deeply moved by the gesture. Those celebrations were very emotional for everyone present as most parents were celebrating the first member of their family to graduate university.

We are very excited to see the young stars enter corporate South Africa and prove themselves. While it's a difficult job environment, our graduates are resilient and many are finding ways of gaining experience.

We will keep all of you posted with the next phase in their journey. This achievement seemed like an impossible dream not long ago, but now the future looks bright.

Thank you for believing in these students and for helping to make those dreams a reality.



# Sandisiwe Jantjies

“ I would like to take this opportunity to thank Masinyusane for being there throughout my studies, for the emotional and material support they gave me. I personally do not think my journey would have been as smooth as it was if it weren’t for Masinyusane.

When I felt like I couldn’t carry on while at home, Masinyusane offered me accommodation where I could be close to campus and study peacefully. Where I felt like I was drowning, Masinyusane offered emotional support, guidance and their motivational programmes were top tier.”

Sandisiwe has worked hard to become a double graduate. Her leadership abilities led to her being appointed House Captain at the Masi House of Excellence and most recently employment at Masinyusane. Her varsity recognized her work ethic and awarded her a full scholarship for her post-graduate studies.



# Buhle Mkhona

“ Growing up I knew that I wanted to go to university but coming from a disadvantage background did not make it easy for me, masinyusane helped me by giving me the information I needed they also helped me with my NSFAS application and registration. When nsfas did not send the monthly stipends they helped out even gave us free textbooks at some point.

Honestly Masinyusane kept me going till I obtained my qualifications and even after they invited us for a nice graduation photo shoot because we couldn’t have a graduation ceremony because of covid-19. I will forever be grateful for the opportunities and support they gave me and a lot of other students.

Buhle is the embodiment of never giving up and constantly improving oneself. Studying, and periodically working at a bank, she has also invested in herself by obtaining her Code 10 driver’s licence, something which is almost unheard of by young women.



# Sibongile Gcakasi

“The Masinyusane family has helped simplify my life in every possible way. This started way back in 2016 when I was doing matric. They made sure I never stressed about my university application and they became a huge part of my life.

I remember in 2018, when I was doing my first year life was difficult, having to travel from Wells Estate to campus every day. Masinyusane helped by providing me with a monthly stipend, as financial aid was extremely inconsistent that year.

In 2019 they provided me with accommodation which made my life easier because I was close to campus, the library and had access to many other amenities. Masinyusane provided an academically friendly environment where I was surrounded by people who had the same drive and vision as me, and as a result my marks from 2019 greatly improved.

They also provided me with a mentor who did not only focus on the academic aspect of my life, but on the emotional aspect as well.

Due to Covid-19 we only had a virtual graduation but Masinyusane stepped in and organized a graduation celebration for each us. My family was so grateful.

As Alfred North Whitehead once said: ‘No one who achieves success does so without the help of others.’ I, Sibongile Gcakasi, acknowledge with gratitude the help I got from Masinyusane.”

An absolute pleasure is Sibongile. Having lost her mother in her final year of high school, tragedy struck again when she lost her dad in her final year of varsity. Surrounded by the love of the other students in the Masi House she soldiered on. Suddenly being thrust into adulthood with two younger siblings hasn't deterred her. She is continuing her education at the post-graduate level now.



# EMPLOYED GRADUATES

“

*I am so proud to be an Electrical Engineer at Engie Peaking Power Station.*

*It has been challenging, but I am learning so much.*

*Thank you to all the donors and to Masinyusane for helping me to work towards my dreams.”*

~Yonela Maqhashu



# Phunyezwa Buru



“

I am so proud to be working in a hospital and helping others.

People look to me for assistance.

Thank you for helping make this dream a reality.



### Sisipho Makwetu

Continental Tyres

Sisipho is thriving as an Industrial Engineer at Continental Tyres. She spends her days taking measurements, solving problems, optimising systems and suggesting solutions to the Conti leadership team.



### Akhiwe Mateyise

Ndzondelelo High School

Akhiwe started as a literacy coach, teaching our children how to read and write.

Six years later, he is a qualified teacher working in a local high school!



### Siphokazi Mzwakali

Lear Corporation

Siphokazi is a rising star at Lear corporation. A young, black, female engineer with confidence and leadership skills.

She has overcome so much, it is incredible to see her success today.



### Siphe Ntsundwane

PE International Airport

Sipethuxolo is working as a professional at the PE airport.

We didn't realise how important this was until he helped Jim with some ticket issues on his most recent flight to the states :).



### **Thobela Busani**

No Means No International

Thobela is a Gender-Based Violence instructor.

In a country plagued by violence towards women, Thobela has taken up the challenge of showing young men there is a better path.



### **Noxolela Mkosi**

Garret Primary School

Noxolela, also a former literacy coach, is a thriving teacher at Garret Primary School.

Outside of her professional success, she recently purchased a brand new home!

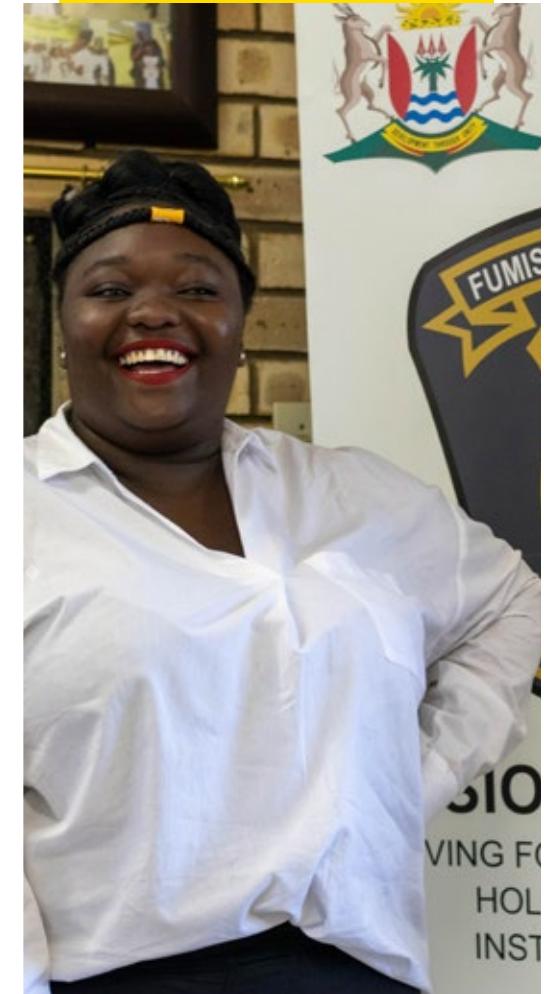


### **Sakhiwo Sithole**

Expert Engineers

Sakhiwo is an industrial engineer working to optimise machine systems and processes.

He's on the factory floor every day using machinery, solving problems and learning new skills.



### **Coceka Mabeqa**

Fumisukoma Primary

Coceka is another former literacy coach that went on to study education.

She has truly come full circle as she's now a teacher at one of our major partner schools, Fumi.

# APPENDICES

# Annexure A Implementation Plan Checklist

High School Top Learners		Status
1	Visit all 35 schools and identify Top Learners based on Grade 11 results (Jan – Mar)	Completed
2	Have all learners fill out detailed forms and develop our database (Jan – Mar)	Completed
3	Provide all learners with Masinyusane study packs, study guides, and previous exam papers (Jan-Mar)	Completed
4	Career guidance and assessment (May)	Completed
5	Distribution and assistance with completion of University application forms (July; using June results)	Completed
6	Paying of Application fees (July)	Completed
7	Distribution, assistance in obtaining documentation, and proper online submission for NSFAS applications (Sept-Oct)	Completed
8	Scanning and online data entry of forms for every student (Sept-Oct)	Completed
9	Working with admissions to ensure admission, change programmes applied for, and scheduling testing (Sept-Dec)	Completed
10	Identifying bursary-eligible learners and assisting with application process (Feb-Dec)	Completed
11	Reaching out to bursars and advocating on behalf of our kids (Feb-Dec)	Completed
12	Identification of learners most in need of housing assistance, including home visits (Feb-Dec)	Completed

**Bonus: We continue to provide a lot of welfare and covid assistance to our affect families**

**Completed**

All University Top Learners		Status
1	Host orientation for all first year students	Completed
2	Track results, academic performance, and maintain up-to-date database (monthly)	Completed
3	Intervening at the first sign that students are struggling (ongoing)	Completed
4	Distribution and management of taxi fares, welfare allowances (monthly)	Completed
5	Distribution of laptops/computers when available	Completed
6	Distribution of new and/or 2nd hand textbooks from partners	Completed
7	Home visits to learners who are under-performing (monthly)	Partial (Covid-19)
8	Running/Outsourcing Leadership, Study Skills, and/or Personal Development workshops (monthly)	Partial (Covid-19)
9	Work with University to develop systems and interventions that correlate with success (ongoing)	Completed
10	Developing a tutoring/mentorship programme	Partial (Covid-19)

Masinyusane House of Excellence		Status
1	Identify 20 Top Learners for our Masinyusane Houses of Excellence (Feb)	Completed
2	Ensuring the House maintains a culture of hard work, excellence, and success (daily)	Completed
3	Providing mentorship, tutoring, and guidance to learners in house (daily)	Completed
4	Organise personal development workshops and guest visits to the house (monthly)	Partial (Covid-19)
5	Organise monthly food deliveries to the House (monthly)	Completed

# Appendix A High School Faces



**823** High  
School  
Learners



# Appendix B University Faces

