

Domestic worker-turned-graduate to launch Help One Helper NPO

Born in Tonteldoos near Dullstroom in Mpumalanga, Ntombizodwa Merriam Mahlangu always dreamed of pursuing her education. However, a lack of resources and development in the rural areas, a poor education system, financial difficulty, and an unplanned pregnancy all got in the way of her dream. When she fell pregnant in 2004, Mahlangu had to pass on an opportunity to pursue her studies at Tshwane University of Technology. To provide for her daughter, she started as a domestic worker in Pretoria East in 2007.



Source: [Facebook](#)

During this time, she taught herself to use a computer and Microsoft Office, learnt to drive and found employment as a receptionist. From there, she worked as a personal assistant and a public relations officer at a large organisation in the debt regulation industry. With the support of her employer, she started studying part time in 2014. She has since written an account of her experiences, *Brightness of Diamonds through Soil*, growing up in a mud hut in Tonteldoos without electricity, living in a shack in KwaMhlanga, being a teenage mother, and working as a domestic worker.

Empowering others

Now, Mahlangu is launching a non-profit company, Help One Helper, to help others like her. Through this initiative, she aims to empower helpers (domestic workers, gardeners, nannies, handymen, etc.) to achieve their full potential and change their lives for the better. This entails providing information on how to enrol at varsity, providing career guidance and financial assistance.



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About her own experience, Mahlangu said: "I almost gave up at the beginning of my studies when I was still a domestic

worker. It's because of the assistance of my former employer who paid for my exams that I had hope and the willpower to carry on. I believe there is someone who may have lost hope due to lack of finance or information. All they need is a helping hand."

Help One Helper will officially be launched in August this year. For more information, find the NPO on Facebook [here](#).

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