

How Muzi Shongwe is transforming his community one brick at a time

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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Inspired by his late father, Muzi Shongwe's passion for business culminated in Muzi Bricks and Project - a brickmaking business helping build Soshanguve - the community in which he operates.

Empowered through a four-year partnership with PPC, Shongwe's business is able to produce up to 1200 bricks a day, supplying 100% local, quality bricks to his community.



Muzi Shongwe, founder, Muzi Bricks and Project

We chatted to Shongwe this #YouthMonth to find out more about how he got started in the brickmaking business, what kind of support entrepreneurs like him most need, and his thoughts on the significance of Youth Month this year.

Tell us a bit about yourself and your background.

Muzi Shongwe: My name is Ernest Muzi Shongwe. I was born and raised in the township in Pretoria where I also completed my Grade 12 at Tshwane North College. I am the first-born son of five children to my late father Samson Dinga Shongwe and mother Sandra Shongwe whom I love very much. I stay with my five siblings.

I was once employed as a receptionist for a medical and dental centre - that is where I got most of my administrative experience training. Little did I know that one day I will have my own business.



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What prompted you to start a business in brickmaking?

Shongwe: I was inspired by my late father - after I lost my day-job as a receptionist, I had to go home and come up with a plan to survive. My father had a brickmaking machine he had bought to make bricks for our house and an old pickup truck 67 model Ford. When my father passed away, I had to make a living with what I had, so I started making bricks in 2012 and nine years later I am manufacturing and distributing quality bricks and PPC cement throughout the township.

■ **What are some of your achievements of which you are most proud?**

Shongwe: My biggest achievement will be meeting with PPC, giving me an opportunity to realise my business plans, picking me up from zero to where I am now. I will never forget the day I called PPC for assistance.

■ **How can the public and private sectors best support young entrepreneurs like yourself?**

Shongwe: By giving them equal share in the business market, formal business education and help to identify opportunities and utilise them.

■ **What keeps you motivated?**

Shongwe: Transforming my community from shacks to brick and mortar houses. Knowing I get to be part of this transformation gets me going.

■ **The Covid-19 crisis is likely to have a significant impact on the opportunities available for skills development for young South Africans. Do you have any words of encouragement?**

Shongwe: Do not give up, hang in there, it will pass. We will be alright.



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■ **What to you is the significance of Youth Month in 2020?**

Shongwe: It gives me a chance to reflect on who I am today. With my father's tools, my families love and support, I would be nothing. It gave me the courage to pickup the phone and take a chance to talk to PPC. Because of them and my family, I'm changing the shape and look of my community every day.

■ **You've been voted SA's president for the day. What's the first thing on your to-do list?**

Shongwe: If I was president, I would directly put my focus on disadvantaged communities and businesses, especially youth-owned local business.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

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