

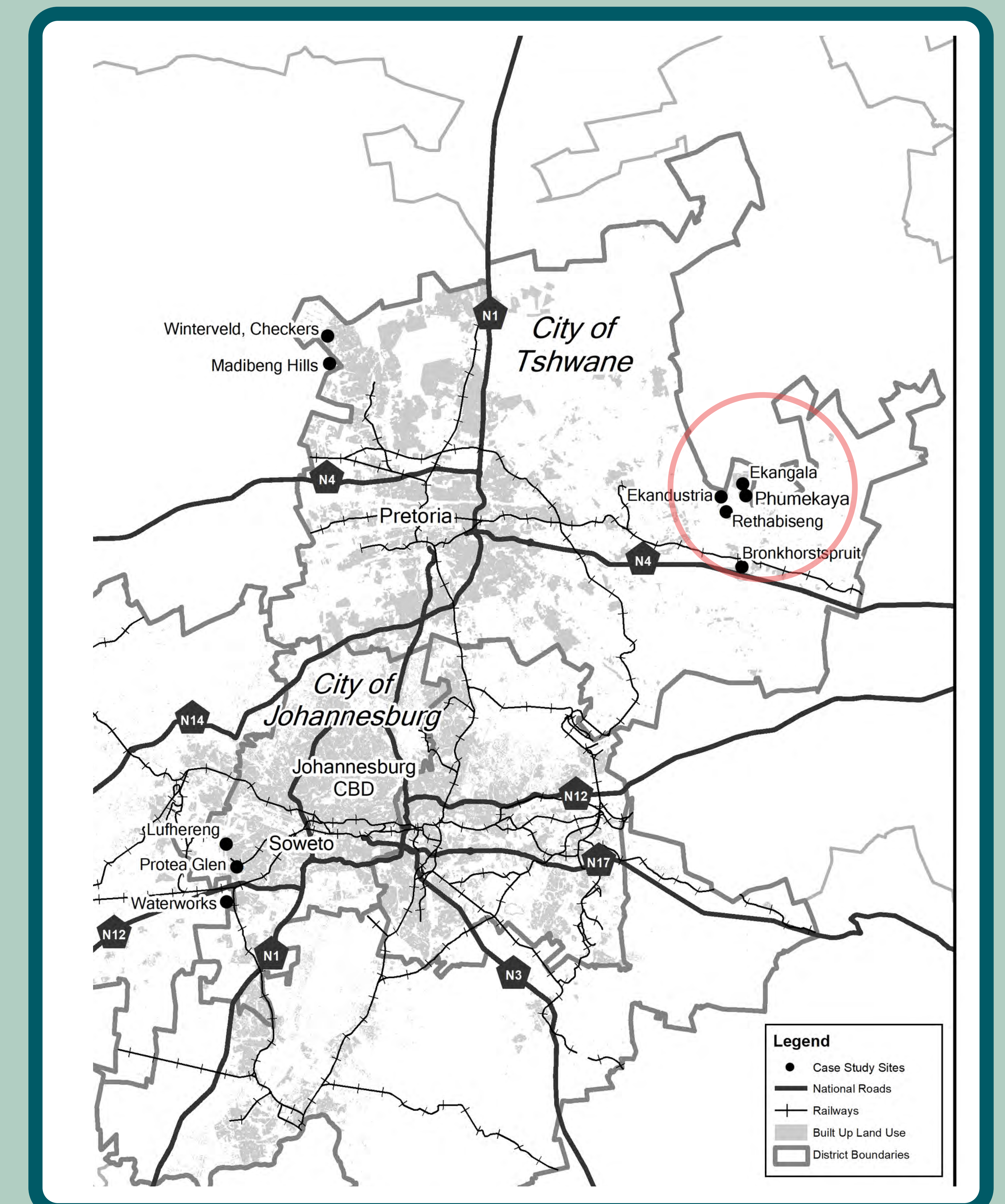
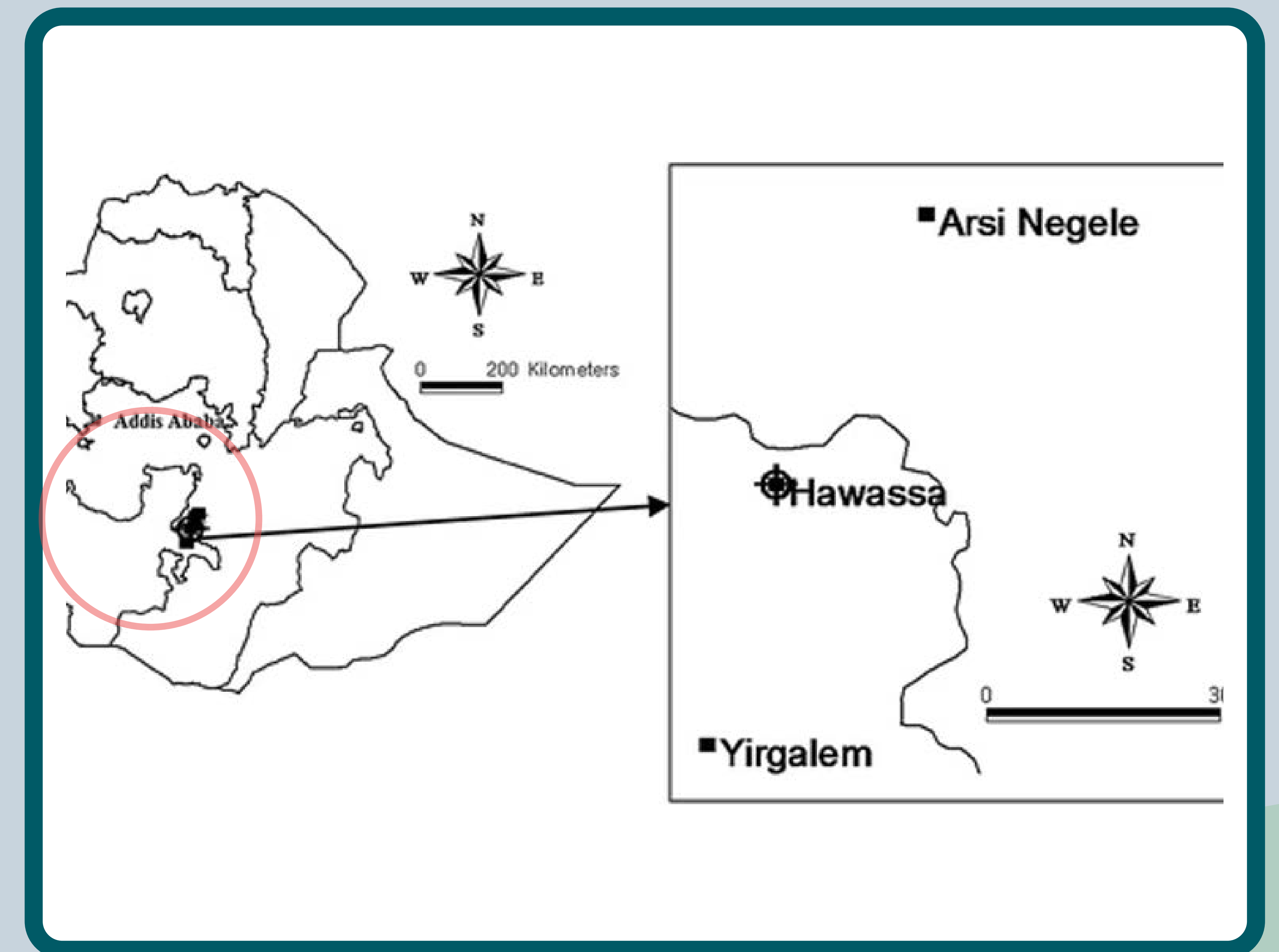
YOUTH FUTURES

Youth and the Work/Housing Nexus in South Africa and Ethiopia

This material is part of a research project titled **Youth Futures: The work/housing nexus in Ethiopia & South Africa**, funded by the British Academy. It is a collaboration between The University of Sheffield, University of the Witwatersrand, Hawassa University and Cardiff University

There are two study sites. The SA case study site (Ekangala area) is a more remote one, with far distances and high transport costs to the main urban centres. By contrast Hawassa is a consolidated urban centre. In terms of pace of change, Hawassa has rapid urban and population growth, whereas there is a sense of limited urban change (or slow decline) in the SA case.

For more information,
scan below:





This exhibition lets us into the lives of young adults living in Ekangala, near Bronkhorstpruit in eastern Tshwane.

Our main focus is on understanding their housing situations and their work.

Through photographs, videos, songs, stories, poems and interviews we also get a glimpse into their everyday lives, their dreams and frustrations.

Our study researched the same issues with young adults in Ethiopia (Hawassa), and we include a short section on their lives.



RESEARCH METHODS

Images of SA/ Ethiopian project activities

- Collaboration with 28 Youth Representatives (13 in SA, 15 in Ethiopia)
- Multiple engagements, training, dissemination workshops
- Life history interviews
- Youth trained in survey techniques, they each surveyed 15-20 other youth
- Stakeholders interviewed
- Media training & production



FRANK



Ekandustria is a declining industrial area but a few factories are still located there. Frank is one of the 23% of the youth surveyed who are formally employed. He has has a permanent job, working in a plastics factory as a trucking assistant. He plans to run his own transport business in the future.

"Being employed allows me to improve my home and start my business".

Frank had a very difficult childhood, he says growing up was "messed up and so terrible. I don't miss that life". Frank lives with his mother in one of two houses in his uncle's yard in Ekangala.

Religion is important in many young people's lives: most identify strongly with Christianity even if they were not regular attendees at church: Frank is now deeply religious:

"The church is a major part of my life, [it] helps me to understand how to deal with and approach life. Church helps me abide by rules and calms me down in every situation. No matter how hard it is, there is a voice that guides me".

Frank recorded a video about his life and was photographed by Them Again in May 2022. Scan the QR code to watch his video and find out more about his story.



Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022

Image: Them Again, May 2022

THABANG

Thabang works as a car washer from time to time but dreams of other work: becoming a social worker, or a business man in transport logistics. He's done a year's training towards boiler making and might try a diesel mechanic course. In the past he has worked as an assistant teacher and as a taxi driver..

"Nowadays we take whatever comes our way, there is no time to pick and choose". Thabang lives in an outside room of a house shared by 7 family members: his parents, siblings and their children.

Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022



A number of Youth Representatives felt parents or grandparents provided strong role models. Thabang looks up to his parents:

"Because they raised me and made me the person I am today... My mother is the type of person who works for herself. She is tailor, since I have known her. Even now, she has enrolled into a course so she can further her tailoring skills... my mother, she motivates me, and I love the way she does not give up on her business no matter how slow it gets".



Amongst our YRs were indications of a generational decline of employment, linked to the declining industrial area.

Thabang's father moved the family to Ekangala from Limpopo:

"this was the only place where he could find work".

But Thabang says that although

"there used to be factories here..they have all since been closed... My father used to work. He was retrenched from the company he used to work for, as the company was liquidated".



MOREEN



Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022

Moreen's family give her strength and joy:

“When I’m with my daughter, she brings me so much happiness and she makes me feel like this world belongs to me. Even when I’m angry she lifts me up. I look at her and feel like all is well in me. She defines love. She makes me happy in every way”.

“...(living here) does hinder making a living because there are no jobs here, and its not easy to access jobs. Whatever little is available - people fight for it, especially access to factory jobs... These days employment opportunities are sold, so you have to have money to buy a job. The way I see it, the only way to access any job is through someone else, if you do not know anyone then forget about it. We even go to the firms and sit there the whole day, hoping they will employ you and there’s no luck”.



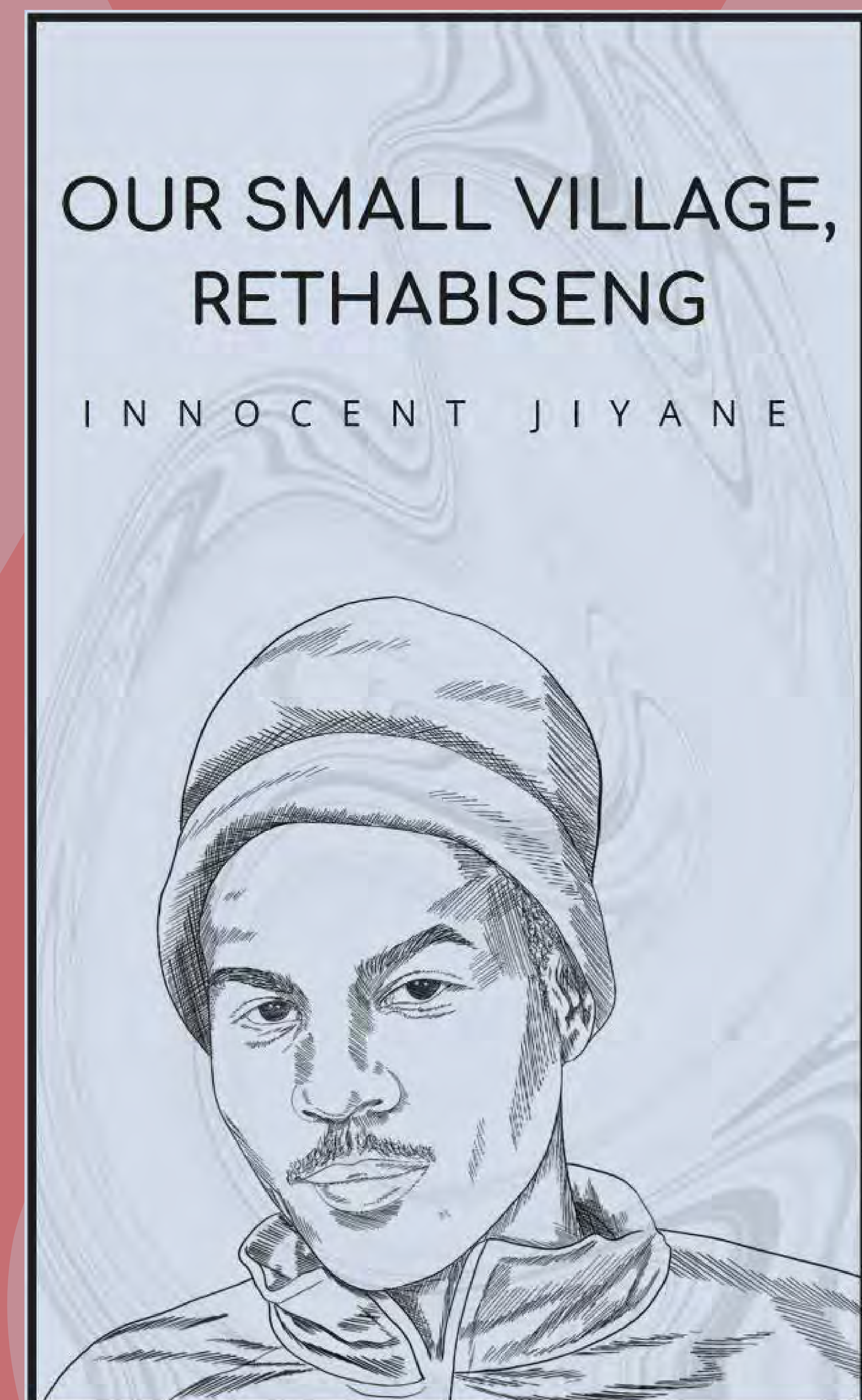
Moreen lives in an RDP house in Nkangala with her mother, her sisters and the children, a total of seven people. She shares a bedroom with her mother and her child. They use the garden to plant spinach and veggies.



Image: Them Again, May 2022

INNOCENT

Innocent dreamed of becoming a doctor, but was unable to study further because his parents were too poor: “if they had saved up money for me to go to school, maybe we’d be speaking a different story. Maybe now I would have done a course, and my life is better”. He describes his local area as not suiting him: “there’s no shopping mall... if you’re looking for a job, you need to leave here... for everything that you need, you need to travel”. But in general he says his “area is a good place and not that bad”.



Innocent lives in a back room that he built himself in the yard of the family RDP house in Rethabiseng.



Innocent’s experience of working in Midrand in the municipality adjacent to Tshwane demonstrates the difficulties of travelling to work in more central areas:

“I was spending almost R2000 plus on transport only... I would be left with almost R2900 or R3000....the other thing is you don't sleep properly... when you take a bus to Midrand you need to take the 03h30am bus in the morning...20h30pm that's when I would walk through the gate here at home”.

Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022

XOLI

Xoli alternates between her grandmother's house in Ekangala and her parents' home at Zithobeni:

"I use my grandmother's house in section I to run a business. I am using it to sell beef stew bones, detergent, fabric softener and plaiting hair. I also plait hair at my parents' house. I started the business because I needed some income. After all, there are no job opportunities. I have been in the bones business for a year. My mom also sells chickens from the house in Zithobeni".

Our survey confirmed that 'hustling' is an important income strategy for some young people: just over 20% are self-employed or have a side-hustle: various, often informal activities or short term jobs - eg. car wash, money lending, hair braiding, selling goods. Some of these are run from the home.

Xoli and her young friend
Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022



Xoli did not have the money to study social work, her preferred career. But she has developed a range of skills through volunteering, occasional employment and free courses - if she has the money for the transport to get to the training. She is grateful for her supportive parents.

"I think positive. Because even though I could not go to school to study to be a social worker my parents were there for me throughout. When I needed something they always made sure I got it even when they were not working. Without my parents, I would not have completed my matric and got my certificates".



Image: Them Again, May 2022



WINNIE

Winnie loves dancing, she dreams of being a business woman, and is currently studying towards this. She lives with her son, mother and sibling in a small shack in Dark City. They have no electricity so they rely on firewood. This means Winnie can only study during the day.

Winnie and her mother value a child support grant they each get for their dependent children. Our survey data showed the importance of social grants (directly or through relatives) amongst youth in the wider area. Sources of income vary: 62% of young people surveyed had some income from wages, 54% from social grants, and 29% from self employment.



Winnie and her son. Image: Mark Lewis, October 2022

Winnie and her mother's house, Dark City.
Image: Mark Lewis, October 2022



Winnie, Innocent
and Xoli
Image: Them Again,
May 2022

Pretty is a wonderful singer - scan the QR code to listen to her song *Kunzima* which she recorded for our project.

She now works at the same shoe factory as Moreen. She explained that: "My mom always used to say 'never run away from a problem, face a problem, find a solution'. Ja, that's the stuff she taught me".



Image: Mark Lewis, October 2022

Pretty's story illustrates the range of different housing circumstances young people experience in the area. Pretty used to live in a rented backroom in Dark City, with her boyfriend and her son. Now she and her son live along with her sister and two other children in her father's house, the same house where Pretty was born. She helps him with the chicken and egg business they run from home. Pretty also has a stand in the informal area of Bhubesini where she has constructed two rooms, but the area has no electricity and water. She'll build further when she has some financial stability.

SCAN ME



Image: Them Again, May 2022

PRETTY



Image: Mark Lewis, October 2022



THABO

Thabo lived in an outside room in the yard of his family's house, which gave some space to manage tensions with his stepfather. Now he has gained further independence in a structure in the informally occupied area. This is an advantage despite the basic conditions and the difficulty of depending on hustling and scarce piece jobs.

Thabo is a musician, poet and aspiring electrician.

Although he says "nothing is happening in my life" he also notes "I love being around people and music. "People would describe me as 'a guitar man'". He taught himself to play guitar. Thabo treasures his daughter: "she's the best thing that ever happened".



Scan the QR code to listen to Thabo's poem, spoken over his guitar melody.



Thabo's house, a two room structure, and his yard
Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022



Searching for My Soul a Home

Thabo

2022

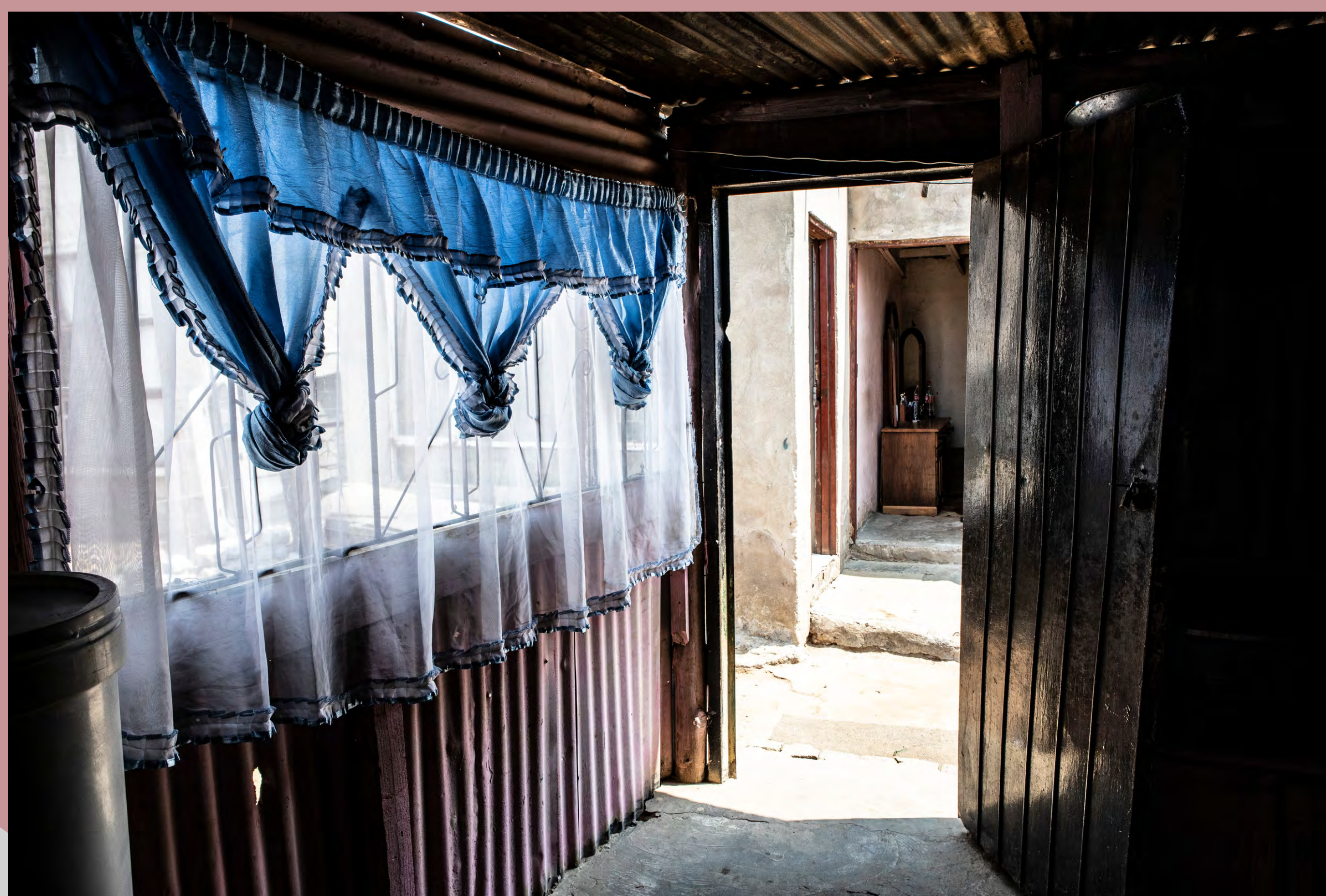


Image: Them Again, May 2022

BHEKI

Bheki works part-time as a junior technician: "I do all things electricity related". Despite not liking his area (there is no electricity) and there are "some people here, whereby we can't even sleep at night [because they are] moving all around" (such as thieves), he says "living here is good". He describes his work as nearby - but tells us that this means he only has to wake at 03h30am to get a 04h30am bus rather than waking at 02h00am...

Bheki lives in one of the three back rooms at his Aunt's adapted government-provided home. Our survey results showed the importance of these government-supplied 'RDP' houses for accommodation for young people in the area: nearly 48% of respondents live in an RDP house or in its yard. In most cases this would be a house awarded to a qualifying family member.



Bheki lives in a back room at his Aunt's home. Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022

MOSHE

Like others, Moshe has made use of social networks and technology to develop his skills - learning how to fix phones from a friend and online: "I also use a data-free app to watch videos that show me how to fix phones....I make money from that". Moshe is now working at the Shoprite depot in Pretoria, staying with his uncle in Atteridgeville.

"My plan is simple, I will buy a stand, build a house and rooms for rent, and generate income from that".

Several of the youth interviewed had not been able to finish tertiary education, often due to financial problems: Moshe says "In 2019 I went to Tshwane North college in Mamelodi, I was studying public and business management".

But he was unsuccessful in accessing the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NFSAS). "I did not have money to travel to school for exams therefore I missed my exams. I tried borrowing money but I was unsuccessful".



BUSI

Busisiwe is one of the 56% of youth surveyed who had passed matric. She sees a lot of value in education: "I have seen many people who have been able to pursue life because they are educated". Busi had hoped to become a teacher.

Take a look at Busi's short storybook
'Behind Everything, a Smile is Everything'



Busi, Pretty and Moreen.
Image: Them Again, May 2022



Busi has had various short term jobs including in factories and with STATSSA. She also used to work in her mother-in-law's chicken and egg business. She says "I loved getting a salary... the money one could use to do things ... I could even go to the mall..." She found "not working quite painful" observing that "there is different treatment between when you are working and when you are not".

Busi lives in a rented room with her husband and two children. Her husband dreams of running an NPO for orphans, the elderly, addicts, and others in need.



Busi and her children in their home.
Images: Mark Lewis, October 2022

TSHOLO

Tsholo lives at Zithobeni with her son, her parents and siblings: "It helps because I don't pay for rent". She contributes food from her job in a restaurant in Bronkhorstspuit. They also "have 5 outside rooms we are renting out. ..and also another room for a shop. That is how we generate income at home".

"I have done voluntary work...the work boosted my confidence. I was able to stand in front of people and teach them about drugs, what to do and what not to do. Also, challenges related to peer pressure". Tsholofelo interviewed a peer about youth unemployment in the area.

Young people like Tsholo are concerned that their areas lack functioning recreation facilities and have many social problems:

"My neighbourhood has violence, crime, and drug-related problems and people are always fighting. Kids bunk school. It is not a healthy environment".

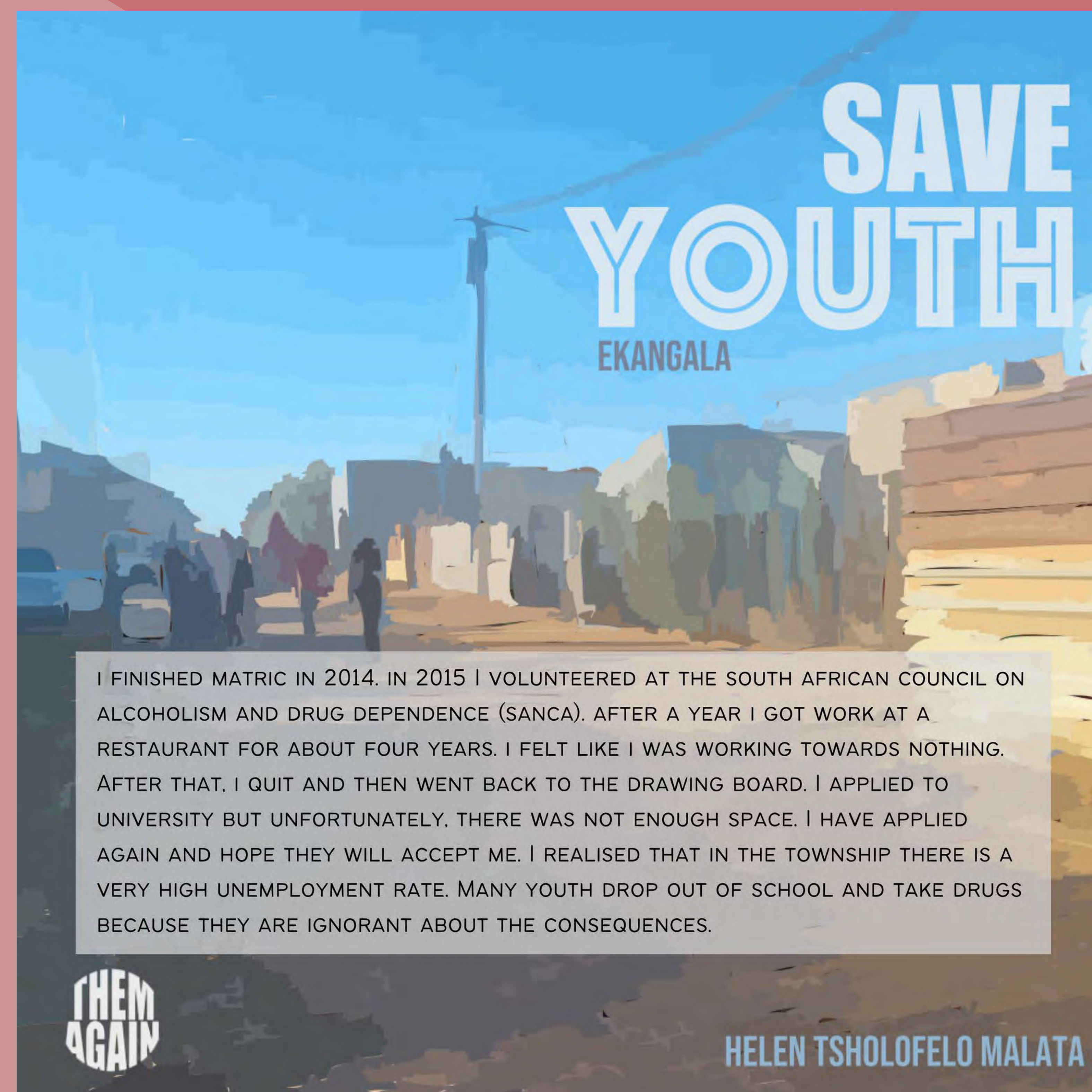


Image: Them Again, May 2022

VUYI

Social media and connectivity is very important to youth. Vuyi counts herself lucky to sometimes access wifi from a public building: "The WIFI connection is not far away, it's by the clinic. Sometimes if you're lucky you get it, it depends what side of the house you are".

Vuyi is studying criminal justice through Unisa. She has also trained as a legal secretary but has not yet found in-service training. She lives with her parents and 5 siblings in Dark City. She is close to her family.

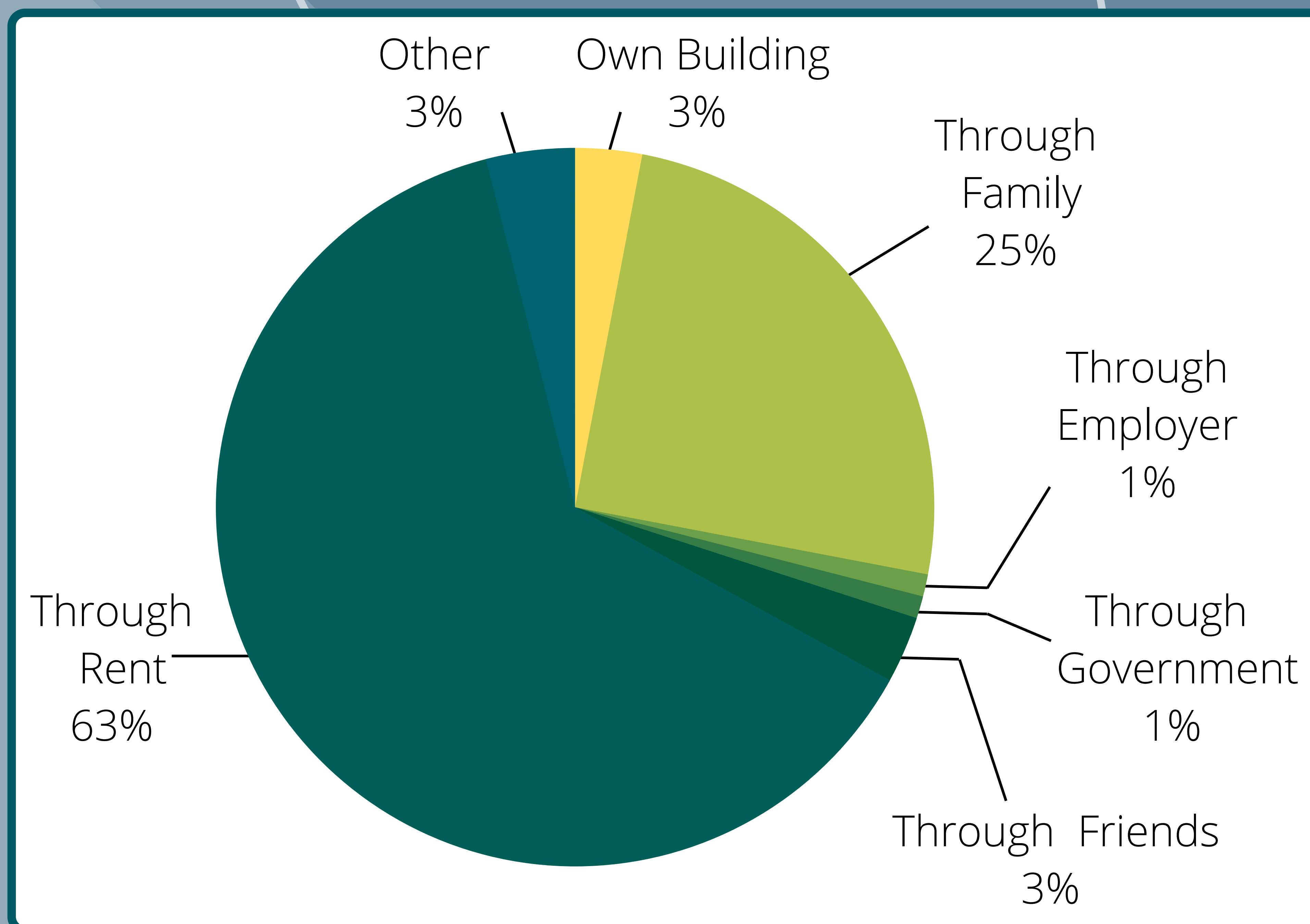
Vuyi is concerned about mental health among young people, especially related to high unemployment. Read the commentary she produced on this issue below.



HAWASSA

Our other case study was in the city of Hawassa, Ethiopia:

- In Hawassa many youth are highly educated but unemployed.
- There is a crisis in affordable decent housing.
- For young people urban living is often unsustainable, costly & cramped.
- Many youth still live with family or rent their accommodation
- Young people are highly dependent on others to survive.



Survey data showed many young people are renting, often sharing a room.

Workinhe (m, 24) is employed in the industrial park but finds the salary very low despite him having a diploma in teaching: "There's a common saying among Industry Park workers "income's in spoons while expenditure's in spades".

Image: Workinhe



Hawassa Industry Park focuses on the textile industry and is considered one of the biggest industrial parks in Africa.

Image: Sarah Charlton, 2019



Self-built housing on the peri-urban edges of Hawassa, where rooms are rented to low-paid workers.

Image: Paula Meth, 2019

HAWASSA

Key Findings - Work:

- Work is hard to come by despite significant educational achievements. Some benefit from low-waged, industrial employment, most youth 'hustle' or depend on families
- Ethnicity is a key factor in accessing services and jobs
- The employing sectors in Hawassa have grown and differentiated over time and now the private sector and self employment are emerging as key sectors of youth employment

"..when I see it from personal autonomy point of view, at this age I am still living with my brothers and sisters in my parents' house. I shared bed rooms and personal equipment with them. I think that a people with my age should have his own autonomous house, his own residence to do with a freedom whatever he wants".
(Ebenezer, m, 27, teacher)

"What I know is that if you go to government offices to get a service, the first thing they ask you is your ethnicity. And the services you will get depend on who you are". (Terefu, f, 28)

Terefu is a Bajaj (tuk tuk) driver. She likes her rented house but "it is located in the outskirts of the city....it is not convenient for my Bajaj transportation service job".

"[my home is close to my workplace. I can say, it supports my work. I can go there whenever they need me... It also allows me to work overtime, and come home late at night".
(Henok, m, 23)

Henok shows the small room he rents in a larger compound. He is an engineer in the industrial park.



HAWASSA

Key Findings - Education and Social:

- Youth have multiple strategies that make them more resilient but many of these come at a cost: such as autonomy, exhaustion.
- Youth are often trapped in "waithood" - hard to achieve all of the milestones associated with being an adult.
- Young people can experience negative emotions: isolation, loneliness and a sense of feeling trapped with blocked ambitions.
- Church and religions is highly significant for many young people, providing a critical social network and support.
- Some have difficulty identifying role models in their communities however, for some, family offers stability, close ties & comfort.
- Young people lack recreational or other activities and are often bored in their local contexts.



Zufan (f, 29) has a psychology degree and trains people on computers. She has learnt to make shoes and bags and runs a home business. She lives in a rental house "which is not spacious or commodious".
Photo by Zufan's brother.



Key Findings - Housing and Spatial Layout:

- Inability to afford decent housing independent of family impacts on independence and ability become an adult, ability to 'start life', get married
- Hawassa's spatial layout makes accessing work and amenity easier.

Bezawit (f, 24) lives in a 4x4 room in a compound with 15 other rooms. Her mother used to rent the other rooms to tenants but now they rent them to a company as a warehouse.

Image: Liben Gollo, 2022