

FROM GUMZANA TO GREATNESS: THE INSPIRING JOURNEY OF BIZANA'S YOUNG AUTHOR ONELA MNDIYATA



Fezisa Nzabe

On a quiet Saturday morning, 10 August 2025, the Pondoland Times office in Bizana became the stage for a moving conversation with Onela Mndiyata, a young author from Gumzana village whose journey into writing is as heartfelt as the verses she creates. Raised by a single mother in a home where love was abundant but resources scarce, Onela's path to authorship has been one of resilience, faith, and unwavering determination.

Onela's love for words began in primary school, where she poured her imagination into classroom essays. Her gift, however, was not immediately something she considered a calling. It was only after moving to Johannesburg and meeting other writers through her cousin that she began to think more seriously about her craft. Her turning point came at AD Tshayingca S.S.S., when her Life Orientation teacher, Mrs. Nogwina, read her poems and offered life-changing encouragement: "This is great talent — you could publish a book." Mrs. Nogwina not only supported her emotionally but also helped financially. Before leaving to take up a principal's position at another school, she entrusted Onela's mentorship to Mr. Ndayeni, who, along with Principal Mr. Khumbaca and Ms Maka, remains a guiding light in her literary journey.

Her debut collection of poems focused on love — a subject she felt many seek but often fail to find. One standout piece, "True Love, Where Are You," was inspired by her own reflections, noting that even within families, love can sometimes feel elusive. That poem led her to perform on stage at an O.R. Tambo commemorative event, where she earned second place, a trophy, and medals. Performing was a different challenge from writing — especially at an event, where she was told moments before going on stage that she could not use her prepared notes. Nervous but determined, she performed from memory, once again securing second place.

Growing up, her mother (Nontle Mndiyata) sustained the family by selling



goods and relying on a social grant. Their one-room home, though filled with love, presented real hardships — particularly when the roof leaked during the rain, forcing Onela to protect her manuscripts from water damage. Her greatest motivation is to build her mother a proper house. "My child, build me a house when you grow up," her mother often tells her. It's a promise she carries in her heart with every poem she writes.

For Onela, success also means surrounding herself with people who lift her higher. She values friends like Limise Qokozo, who motivates her, offers honest criticism, and helps keep her grounded. She also thanks Nokulunga Mndiyata and her cousin Thimna Mndiyata as people who supported her. She believes that being around positive influences shapes better decisions, and she holds firmly to her Christian faith as a moral compass. Onela's work is deeply personal, often mirroring her own life experiences. She writes for a broad audience — from poetry to short stories, and now exploring novels. Her upcoming novel tackles the harrowing subject of child abuse, delivering the message that victims must leave abusive environments and that women should strive for independence. "Even if you are a mother, do not rely on someone who mistreats you. Learn to stand on your own and be proud of something you achieved by yourself," she says.

She also advocates for schools to include more practical subjects such as drama, fashion design, and crafts. In her view, these skills are essential in a country where job opportunities are limited, giving young people tools to create their own livelihoods. One of her biggest hurdles remains financial. Sponsorship is hard to come by, and self-publishing demands funds she often struggles to raise. Yet her focus remains on inspiring young people to recognise and use their talents fully.

For Onela Mndiyata, every word she writes is both a step toward her own dreams and a beacon for others to follow. From Gumzana's dusty paths to literary aspirations that span beyond Bizana, her story is a reminder that talent, when nurtured with perseverance and heart, can break through any barrier.

70 LEARNERS HOSPITALISED AFTER GOBISIZWE SCHOOL FOOD POISONING

Eastern Cape Department of Health deploys emergency medical teams and helicopter to assist affected learners



Alithemba Magaba



Approximately 70 learners were hospitalised following a food poisoning incident at the school, prompting immediate medical response.

EMS responded rapidly, transporting affected learners to various hospitals, including the deployment of a helicopter for critical cases.

Some students received drips, and critically ill children were airlifted for urgent care to manage their condition effectively.

The Eastern Cape Department of Health has confirmed a food poisoning outbreak at Gobisizwe Agricultural School in Ngqeleni, which led to about 70 learners being hospitalised on 13 August 2025.

Emergency Medical Services in Mthatha responded quickly, transporting affected learners to Nelson Mandela Academic Hospital, Mthatha Regional Hospital, and

Ngangelizwe Community Health Centre. Paramedics attended to the children both on the ground and in the air, with a helicopter dispatched for critical cases.

According to the department, some learners were placed on drips, while those in serious condition were airlifted to medical facilities for urgent treatment. The rapid response aimed to stabilise the situation and ensure all affected pupils received immediate care.

The incident has raised concerns over food safety in schools, with calls expected for a thorough investigation into the source of the contamination. The Department of Health has assured the public that the matter is being addressed, with further updates to follow as more information becomes available.

Mr. Siyanda Manana, Director of Communications for the Eastern Cape Department of Health, confirmed that all emergency protocols were followed to safeguard the health of the learners.

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ADVERT DATE: 15/08/2025

ERRATUM

PROJECT NAME	CONTRACT NUMBER	CLOSING DATE
Procurement of mobile Contracts for 5 Years	WMM-LM 21/01/25/02 PMC	09 September 2025 @12h00

Please note that the bid number for the above-mentioned project that was on paper on the 8th August 2025 has been changed to **WMM-LM 21/01/25/02 PMC**

All other requirements and information remain the same.

ENQUIRIES

Enquiries are addressed to Mr. Z. Khala @039 251 0230 and SCM enquiries to Supply Chain Management, @039 251 0230, email: khalaz@mbizana.org.za

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