

**Publication:** Daily Dispatch - Main

**Reach:** 10889

**Title:** 'Selfless and generous woman making a valuable contribution'

**AVE:** R 29051.62

**Publish date:** 10 Jul 2025

**Author:** SIPHOSETHU NGCANGISA

**Page:** 3

# 'Selfless and generous woman making a valuable contribution'

**Vathiswa Mazolwana does everything from helping pupils to starting school gardens in Kidd's Beach area**

SIPHOSETHU NGCANGISA

In the farming community of Lillyvale about 30km west of East London, Vathiswa Mazolwana, 50, works to support children and families living with poverty, unemployment and limited educational support.

Mazolwana, who also works as a school garden facilitator with the Kidlinks Small Farm Incubator (KSFI), has been running an informal after-school programme since 2024.

The initiative supports about 50 pupils aged one to 17, many of whom are the children of domestic or farm workers.

Born in Butterworth and now based in the Christmas Rock area, she was moved to act after noticing how many children were left idle after school.

"Most people here are trapped in alcohol abuse and can't help their children with homework," Mazolwana said.

"There's no entertainment or safe spaces for young ones, so I decided to do something."

Mazolwana fetches the children from school using a vehicle provided through KSFI and ensures they receive meals and tutoring support.

"I work with three tutors whose stipends are supported by Sakhimfundo, through Bafana Mohale, as well as three community members who volunteer.



"The rest of us are unpaid." She started the initiative with sports.

"The girls play netball, the boys play soccer. I encourage them to try all types of sport — you never know where a child's talent might be."

But over time, she saw a deeper need.

"I realised education was just as important. Many weren't getting any academic support at home."

She launched a more structured after-school programme focused on maths, English and life skills.

"My biggest hope is to see graduates rise from this village and bring change to their families."

In addition to her work with LillyStars — the name of her after-school programme — Mazolwana teaches pupils at rural schools how to start and maintain vegetable gardens.

These not only serve as practical tools for learning, but help promote healthy eating and

self-sufficiency.

Some of the produce is cooked for school meals, some is donated to families, and some is sold at local markets.

"It also teaches learners how to run small businesses," she said.

She helps residents maintain their home gardens and plays a leading role in managing 35 community gardens across the region.

Kanyisa Deliwe, 29, one of the tutors and a crop manager and facilitator with KSFI, said Mazolwana was a role model.

"We work with different age groups, but we're united in the goal of youth empowerment. She always motivates us."

Susan Keet, chair of the Sunshine Coast Women's Group based in Kidd's Beach, nominated Mazolwana for the Daily Dispatch Local Heroes accolade, praising her consistency and reliability.

"I met Vathiswa when we visited the Kidlinks Small Farm Incubator in 2024. I learnt that she had initiated eight school gardens in the Ncera area."

Keet said Mazolwana visited each school once a week, working closely with three Expanded Public Works Programme assistants who were stationed at the schools three days a week.

"Learners take part in every step — preparing the soil, planting, watering, composting and harvesting."

Mazolwana delivers seedlings from the Kidlinks farm on the other side of the R72, uses eco-friendly growing methods, and



**SHINING A LIGHT:** Vathiswa Mazolwana from Kidlinks Small Farm Incubator empowers and protects neglected youngsters in the Lillyvale community west of Tsholomnqa. Picture: RANDELL ROSKRUGE

shares practical knowledge with schools and families.

"After her workday, she volunteers at the LillyStars programme, helps 50 children with schoolwork, prepares meals, monitors academic progress

and organises transport."

Keet said that with very few resources, Mazolwana started a lunch garden, introduced a choir and dance group, and collected books, stationery and board games for the children.

"She's a selfless and generous woman making a valuable contribution in Ncera and Lillyvale. Her tireless work deserves recognition."

"I proudly nominate her as a Local Hero," Keet said.