



# ZISIZE



## Newsletter - December 2021

Dear Supporters, Friends & Family,

Another challenging year draws to a close - The Covid pandemic variants are slowly working their way through the Greek alphabet as we in South Africa gradually progress down the levels and towards a more normal (though masked and socially distanced) way of life. The whole country has experienced 'load shedding' - a euphemistic way of saying planned power cuts that last 2.5 hours a time and at one stage were 3 times a day. Poor Ingwavuma, in addition, suffered service delivery protests, with roads blocked by demonstrators and rocks, so it was impossible for some staff to reach the office, which had to close for two weeks; riots where all the shops and banks were looted and some set alight following Zuma's imprisonment for contempt of court in July; and water shortages, where it had to be tankered in. After the riots they were unable to buy food anywhere locally, nor were they able to buy petrol as the petrol station was destroyed, so it became a mission to get food, even from areas which had not been affected, without the petrol to get there.

Despite all of the above, Zisize, under Hlengiwe's leadership, has continued to work to improve the lives of its beneficiaries, being creative in tailoring its delivery to meet changing circumstances brought about by the pandemic. There are too many projects to include in one newsletter, so this year I will focus on education, with a passing reference to other projects.

Government Departments, it seems, have suddenly realised Zisize not only exists, but is doing amazing work. As a result, Zisize has been asked to work in a much wider area with social work outreach in Hlabisa; a mobile ECD project in Mbazwane by the coast; a primary school project in Mtubatuba (a 2 hour drive from Ingwavuma towards Durban) and closer to home, a women's project in Bhambhanana, spearheaded by Hlengiwe. I wish we could clone her, and worry that she will collapse one day as she does far too much.

Education Programmes were disrupted, as once schools re-opened, the children attended in rotation. A study found that between March 2020 and June 2021, most primary learners in South Africa lost 70%-100% of learning relative to 2019, this from an already low level of achievement in many parts of the country. Teachers became reliant on parents to work with their children who were missing at least half of the time they would normally be at school. However, there was resistance to this from parents who had not been consulted or trained and felt teaching should be done by teachers. Zisize stepped in to be a bridge between schools and parents, providing workshops on the importance of parental involvement. Zisize had dialogues with parents that encouraged them to realise that children should be developed holistically and time could not be wasted as it would have a devastating effect on their futures. During those dialogues the culture of reading was promoted. Parents were encouraged to establish bedroom 'libraries' and were trained in shared reading, individual reading, reading aloud, reading for enjoyment and integrating reading with other learning areas. These workshops lasted many hours because once they were engaged, parents became very interested and had many questions to ask.

*"If it was started like this from the beginning, our children in High Schools wouldn't have problems with reading and information. This training has been an eye opener. We should have had Zisize long ago to help us because teachers were just giving our children work to do*

*from home but never trained us on how to help or told us how important it is. We are going to help our children now we understand.”* said one Mtubatuba parent.

Ingwavuma teachers received refresher training sessions on classroom corner libraries, book reviews, writing stories, reading aloud, telling stories, dramatizing stories and to use the same terminology as that provided to parents, so that they would be able to talk one and the same language. Teachers at Mtubatuba, received a training session for the first time and were very motivated.

*“ If this training was done right from the beginning of the year, we would be far advanced with our children, even the pandemic wouldn’t affect us that much, thank you Zisize. Could you consider settling around Mtubatuba now not Ingwavuma?”* said a Head of Department in one of the schools.

Zisize has been encouraging parental involvement in Early Years Development for some time via playgroups, crèches and when DSD funding failure caused crèches to close, mentors conducted individual home visits to pre-school age children and read and played with them and their carers, providing books and educational toys on loan. This year this has been taken a stage further. The Department of Social Development purchased a vehicle for Zisize, similar to the Wellness Wagon used by the nursing team, but equipped with educational toys, effectively a mobile crèche. This is to service an area near the coast which currently has no preschool provision and where children are often unable to attend school until they are 10 years old and able to walk the long distances to the nearest school. The mobile classroom visits 5 areas for one day each a week. Ten new staff have been taken on and trained as mentors to work with carers/parents to continue the work at home. As with all Zisize mentors, these do not focus on just one aspect but take a holistic view and provide advice on nutrition, hygiene, stages of childhood development and to identify and refer when problems require intervention from a social worker, nurse or psychologist.



Another example of innovation and adapting to changed circumstances is the career guidance programme, which normally would take place in High Schools, starting with Grade 10 pupils, who, having decided on a career, would then be helped to choose relevant subjects for study to matric. However, schools were not open to outside visitors so Zisize trained schools’ life orientation teachers to carry out the work Zisize staff would normally have done, helping grade 10’s with career and subject choices, helping grade 11 and 12 with university options and applications and bursary applications. When schools opened for external visits, Zisize was able to speak with 2070 pupils. In addition, Zisize took to the air on Radio Maputaland and reached an audience of 130,000 and the whole of Umkhanyakude - a huge portion of north

east KZN. The shows were a success and Zisize has been receiving positive feedback from listeners. Even parents and other older youth have been encouraged to register at university, or go back to school to sit or re-sit their matric exams. Zisize received Smses and whatsapp messages seeking information and support following broadcasts. Parents have shown more of an interest in their children's future because they were motivated through listening to the radio broadcasts. Some local parents have even started accompanying their children to the career's office at the Centre, unheard of previously. 179 youth were helped at Zisize Centre.

The Solon Foundation has supported this project for many years and it was so heartening to hear this from their representative in South Africa:-

*"If I can tell you the truth, Zisize has the best career guidance in the whole of KZN. I've visited so many career guidance programs around KZN, even outside South Africa, but I haven't met a successful one like Zisize's. It's amazing. I've seen even out-of-school youth going back to school, others are in tertiary. You guys should be proud of yourselves; I wish other organizations doing this program would connect with you and learn".*

As most of the UK donations go towards food and food production, a short report on food gardens and message from a beneficiary of a feeding scheme and food parcel so that you know the difference you make.

All five of the 2021 food gardens were a success because they have boreholes. They grow various vegetables. One of them grew dry beans and they harvested 500 kilograms! They kept some beans for themselves and sold the rest. People bought their produce a) because theirs was cheaper and b) after the riots they had nowhere else to buy, as shops were looted. They have grown potatoes now which, as there is a current shortage, will also be in demand.



I remember hearing how Zisize was described as a snail by one induna and initially being offended, thinking he meant slow, whereas in fact he elaborated and said wherever a snail goes it leaves a visible trail behind, and this is what Zisize does, leaves a visible trail. Below illustrates this

*"I was just passing and saw Zisize car and the group of people having a meeting. I decided to join this group but I'm not from the same area, I just wanted to listen to what was being discussed because it might help us as well. I have seen other areas where Zisize provided services, people are better than us. They are able to live because of this organization. I wonder what we could do to get the support from you as well. It is very dry where I'm from. You identify the need and intervene. We will be willing to learn and work hard to change our life style for better like this community "*

Zisize has had eight applications from different communities, including that of the man above this year, requesting a community garden because of what they have seen achieved, but we couldn't assist them all as it requires significant start-up funding, but thanks to the Just Trust

who sponsored Zisize- The Heaton Lee Memorial Trust's application, one community can be helped with funds from the Network for Social Change.

*"I'm in the university now and I don't know how I managed to be here. No one is working at home. Our only hope was Zisize Educational Trust, because we used to go to school on holidays and have food there. My mother would cook for us to eat once a day. I used to wake up at 3am daily and go to fetch water from a water source, sometimes we would go there in the middle of the night because the water flowed better when there was no one fetching. At the same time, I had to do my school work and be at school at 7am for morning lessons. Zisize gave us hope because we knew that they will bring a food parcel, even if the previous one was finished, but we would know that it will come. I worked hard, maybe I was sleeping for only 3 hours per day when I was doing matric. I thank Zisize for many things; food, uniform and assisting me to get a NSFAS student grant"*

As ever, none of the above assistance would have been possible without your help.

Zisize The Heaton Lee Memorial Trust in UK would like to thank Action for Ingwavuma, The French Huguenot Church in London Foundation, UNISON branches, Just Trust, Network for Social Change, Medway Towns Soroptimists, schools, churches and more than 100 individuals.

Zisize Educational Trust wishes to thank those above and also Dept. of Social Development for social work salaries, ECD mentor salaries and the mobile creche, materials for the women's development group; Casme, DG Murray Trust, ELMA Foundation, JHS, Kavod Trust, Solon Foundation, Starfish Greathearts, Strate Foundation, Tshikululu, Victoria Freudenheim, Zoe Sarojini Trust and several generous South African individuals who donate monthly, annually or in response to the dire needs this year.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy and joyful New Year on behalf of Zisize in both South Africa and Wales and thank you for making a difference to our children's lives.

Siyabonga, Thank You, Diolch yn fawr

Niki

On behalf of Zisize's Trusts & Children

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