



Newsletter - December 2024



Working Towards a Brighter Future
in South Africa

Children First

Dear Friends & Supporters (past, present & hopefully future),

Zisize in Ingwavuma has been operating in 15 Ingwavuma communities in 2024, 12 of them holistically. Additionally it has a Life Skills presence in 3 high schools, provides career guidance for many more, runs 2 lifeskills clubs at Zisize Centre, KwaQatha, four creches, five community gardens, runs community dialogues, support groups and has a social work presence in Hlabisa and surrounding areas. The amount of work Zisize does is impossible to cover in one newsletter, but one case will illustrate several programmes used to help just one family.

Zisize mentors, also known as community workers, are a wonderful resource, supporting vulnerable families, slow learners, teaching skills to care givers, providing home-based ECD and identifying and referring concerns to Zisize's professional teams. They are our eyes and ears on the ground, one in each community. The following illustrates Zisize's holistic approach in the community of Bhekabantu, one of the most recent to join the Zisize 'family', close to the Mozambique border. The mentor referred the family, whose children were attending the weekend and holiday feeding scheme run by Zisize, despite not being pupils at school, excluded because they could not prove their South African identity. The mentor reported back her concerns to Zisize:- health of grandmother in particular; no income; no Identity documents; hunger; children not being educated; state of the house.

The first professional to respond was the Zisize nurse, who visits these feeding schemes periodically and was able to do a full health screening on the children there. She and the mentor then walked to the children's home. On visiting, they found extremely bad home conditions, a sick old lady and six children under 17, none of whom were schooling. It transpired that the old lady's eight children and her husband had died and she was left to care for seven grandchildren, one of whom committed suicide due to the poverty and stress. The grandmother had tried many times to get a birth certificate, but failed, as a result, neither her children, nor any of the grandchildren were able to get one, so there were no government grants and all were hungry. Their only help came from the children doing odd jobs for neighbours in exchange for food. Access to Bhekabantu is extremely difficult; 'roads' are some of the worst in the area, so visits often have to be made on foot rather than by vehicle. The nurse was very concerned about the grandmother's health and the home conditions and reported back to the Zisize team.



The whole family lived in this one room, cansis were lowered at night to sleep on.

In the days that followed the full Zisize team swung into action. The social worker visited and collected information to begin the process of getting them all documented with Home Affairs, The garden trainer visited and determined that land would need to be fenced, so he will do that and then he will supply seedlings and work with the children to create a home garden; a food parcel was provided; the mentor began working with the children to teach them how to write their names and has continued home schooling them; Hlengiwe spoke to the principal of the local primary school and asked them to take the children, even though they were not documented and it is hoped this will be possible this coming year; the grandmother was taken to hospital for a full examination and treatment was prescribed. However, the nurse insisted that the home conditions were so appalling that they were not fit for animals let alone a family of 7 and that the granny could not get well in such conditions, so a plea went out for

money to build them a decent house and The Kavod Trust answered our plea. On December 6th there was a grand opening of their new home and granny cut the ribbon. Each of them has a bed and there is a comfortable living area, with cooking and washing facilities. Granny was asked if there is any talent she has that could be monetarised and she said she can make grass mats (cansis) but that she doesn't have the materials, so these were provided and she is transformed from the woman the nurse and mentor first met.



A house can transform lives. One of the first homes Zisize built was for a mother who had HIV AIDS and was expected to die within the year. It was built to give her peace of mind that her children would have a safe place to live. This was more than a decade ago - she is still alive! Do you know anyone who could help another family like this?

The poverty in Bhekabantu is extreme and money is needed to buy clothes and uniform for children there. The nurse asked a child to remove his shoes as he was complaining of pain in his feet. This is why. How I wish we could send clothes from UK, but we can't, government won't allow, so again, money is needed.



Zisize girls Life skills group had the honour of escorting the Zulu Queen, Nomzamo kaMyeni as drum majorettes to the Reed Dance Ceremony at Machobeni Palace in Ingwavuma. Their outfits were provided by Portia M, who also bought them all jeans, T Shirts and trainers (tekkies) and she provides funds to give them a meal once a week when they attend Zisize. Thank you Portia!



In less glamorous moments, the girls learned to make steamed bread and each has created a vegetable garden at home.

Each girl took a turn at mixing then kneading the dough and all made an individual loaf



A competition was held for their home gardens



Competitions bring out the best in everyone. Not only the Life Skills Girls but also Grades R to 4 from 12 primary schools took part in the Festival of Books Competition. There were so many entries it had to be held over 3 days and the Community Hall had to be used, given free of charge by the Councillor, as Zisize space (big though it is)

was not enough to hold everyone! The standard was very high and Education Dept officials in attendance were very impressed. We want to thank The French Huguenot Church in London for their donations, which enabled Grade R Literacy training and the purchase of books for classroom libraries.



Grade R Prize winner with Education officials & teacher



Quiz Time on books they have read

There were competitions for story writing, story-telling, recitation, dramatizing a book, and a quiz on books they had read.



Reciting



Drama



Excitement at winning!

I have spent a lot of time this year, updating the zisize.org.uk website. I had relied heavily on my son to assist with the technical side of things when he was alive, so it was an extremely difficult task for me, and needed the expert help of CLM Solutions. It is still not complete, but look out for a relaunch in February 2025, I have set this as my deadline! Along the way, I have been able to recover Newsletters dating back to 2001 (just missing 2015 if anyone has kept this) and it is truly amazing what has been achieved. Thank you to every one of you who has contributed over those years, both financially and on the ground.

Siyabonga, Thank you, Diolch yn Fawr

Niki

On behalf of Zisize's Trusts & Children

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