

Newsletter 2025

Working Towards a Brighter Future in South Africa

Children First

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

★ In my previous existence as a social worker in Wales, I once had the privilege of working under Mick Millman, ★ whose background was in community work rather than statutory social work. He engaged with all sorts of groups, ★ created others, brought people together, changed attitudes and improved lives in one of the poorest, most ★ disadvantaged areas in Wales.

★ When I look at Zisize, I see the same ethos, reaching out, bringing together people with similar problems to help ★
★ each other, thinking outside the box, engaging in unconventional practices and reaching places other people don't ★
★ touch! Zisize is, to use a social work term, an agent for social change. This newsletter will focus on Zisize's ★
★ 'community outreach work' and an update on Ekukhanyeni. ★

In its earliest days, Zisize reached out to primary schools and worked with them to become 'caring schools' - an unusual concept in 1999. In addition it addressed the need for training teachers, feeding hungry children and gradually moved into communities and homes in the areas surrounding those schools. Holistic interventions followed:- social work to assist with securing documentation and grants, intervening in abuse and neglect situations; nursing expertise to encourage HIV testing and medication compliance and later full health screening for children; Psychological testing uncovered many children who had undiagnosed learning difficulties and counselling helped many bereaved and abused children; hunger was very prevalent so a combination of boreholes and both home and community gardens, helped relieve that, and in some cases, provided a source of income.

Zulu culture, which includes Tribal Chiefs and their Induna adjudicating complaints and disputes between community members, lends itself to talking through problems. The various dialogues Zisize conducts, engages all sections of the community. There have been dialogues for the whole community; sufferers of HIV/AIDS; parents of disabled children; married couples; pregnant teenagers; men and boys.



★ In 2025 Men's dialogues (above) discussed the issue of Gender Based Violence (a significant problem in South Africa) ★ and how to tackle this. They were also made aware of the importance of visiting health facilities to check their ★ status and seek appropriate treatment for any health issues. Men notoriously avoid attending hospitals and clinics. ★

Boys Assembly (above right) similarly discussed the subject of abuse to women and girls and the impact abuse has on them. Boys group meetings are held to try and divert from drugs, alcohol and violence towards girls, to encourage responsible sexual practices.

Zisize not only works with schools and their communities but with local churches, which have been encouraged to create libraries and foster a culture of reading. In 2025, dialogues were held with pastors. Topics discussed, under the guidance of Zisize's psychologist, who is also a Catholic priest, were Healthy Families versus dysfunctional families. What does a healthy family look like? What does a dysfunctional family look like and what are the consequences for children living in dysfunctional families. The other topic was Gender Based Violence - what do they know about it? What is their attitude towards it? What is its impact on women and children?

★ One would expect such leaders in the community to promote non violence towards women, to support the abused ★
★ in reporting offences to the police but sadly, in too many cases, pastors are themselves abusive to women in their ★
★ household, sexually abuse young women in their congregation and counsel victims of abuse to forgive the abuser, ★
★ pray and not report to the police. Additionally, some advise those with HIV/AIDS not to take medication but to pray ★
★ for healing instead. Educating and hopefully changing attitudes for this group is essential and would have far ★
★ reaching effects. ★

★ In KZN 1.1 million sufferers of HIV /AIDS, who were prescribed Anti Retroviral medication, stopped taking it. On ★
★ World Aids Day this year at Zisize, this was the topic of discussion. Why did they stop? Some maybe because of ★
★ advice from their pastors? Some because of the cost of transport to collect the medication? Some because they did ★
★ not have enough food or the right kind of food to enable their bodies to tolerate the medication? Some preferring ★
★ to go to traditional healers. Many reasons were explored and suggestions made to counteract this effective ★
★ unnecessary death sentence. ★

Each World AIDS Day sees awareness campaigns both small and large, some at Zisize, like these, and others in the wider community and on Community Radio.



Community Radio has been a real asset in reaching a very wide audience not just in Ingwavuma but the whole of Umkhanyakude, to inform and advise people on matters of Health, Education and Careers. They have phone ins with questions seeking advice, as well as sharing information.

The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children Campaign took place between 25 November and 10 December 2025 under the theme: "Letsema: Men, Women, Boys and Girls working together to end Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)". The theme is anchored on the Positive Masculinity Dialogue which Zisize implemented.

GBV 16 DAYS OF ACTION



CHILD PROTECTION AWARENESS EVENT BHAMBHANANA



★ GIRLS' CAMP ORGANISED BY THE QUEEN & RUN BY ZISIZE SOCIAL WORKERS & MENTORS

‘LET'S TALK ABOUT TEENAGE PREGNANCY’





★ We are very grateful to all the individuals, organisations and government departments for their support during 2025, which has enabled Zisize to reach thousands in need. Together we do make a difference!

★ Siyabonga, Thank you, Diolch yn Fawr.

★ Wishing you all the very best for the year ahead.

★ Niki

On behalf of Zisize's Trusts & Children

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