



ZISIZE

Newsletter - December 2018



Dear Friends & Supporters,

How to measure success? Zisize has never been very good at this! Monitoring and evaluation, targets, inputs, outputs etc etc are things we have had to embrace in order to meet funders' expectations but it is not an area in which we can claim expertise.

Many years ago, 2006 I think, when Zisize was still in its relative infancy, we held a workshop where each team was tasked with coming up with something that would encapsulate what we felt Zisize should represent and strive towards. One team came up with a song:- "Under Zisize's umbrella, wrapped in the warmth of her arms, no child will ever be hungry, no child will ever be harmed, each child will know it's supported to be the best person it can, under Zisize's umbrella, wrapped in the warmth of her arms" So have we achieved that in the areas in which we work? YES! Who says so? - the important people, the community and beneficiaries who see and feel the changes made in their community, their schools, their families and their lives. One such was a former peer educator at oHHoye High School

"I'm proud of what I am because of Zisize life skills programmes which you provided while I was at oHHoye High School. Look at my work - is it not making you proud? I'm so confident now, that people invite me to be the master of ceremony in weddings and parties. I'm printing TShirts and golf shirts, doing photocopying and I charge R1 per A4 paper. I did not go to tertiary because I wanted to start my business straight away. I focus on what I'm doing. I'm now a bread winner at home. I'm what I am because of the life skills programme. I gained a lot. I'm able to make good decisions. I'm so happy that you came here. I always wanted you to know that you moulded my future, thank you so much".

In October this year Zisize was honoured by a community driven event to say thank you for 20 years of service. I will quote some of the speakers, but as you read, you need to take this as a thank you from the community to yourselves, because without the money you donate, very little would be possible and nothing on the scale that has been achieved.

Zisize has a brilliant team of committed staff in South Africa but I have to pick out three of the many who go above and beyond what is expected of their job role. Hlengiwe Mthimkhulu, co-founder of Zisize and now its director: She is a power house who gets things done, gets people on board and spends more time dipping into her pocket to help others than complaining about the fact that her salary has been static for many years. Nombuso Buthelezi, Zisize's finance manager, who as I write, is in hospital following a caesarian. She was still working up to the evening before admission and is even now emailing me from her hospital bed! It was she who motivated local firms to donate to a family for whom we built a house with Janet Solomon's donation.



Bongani Mngomezulu, who once gently berated me for wanting to replace food parcels with food gardens by saying “hungry people have no energy to dig, first we must feed them until they are strong enough to work and then we must continue to feed them until the crops bear fruit, THEN we can stop food parcels” He was right.

“The food that Zisize gives me helps a lot because I’m not well, sometimes I don’t feel like working even in the garden. The treatment I’m taking makes me feel tired but other days I do go to the garden and work there. My children help me as well. I do not like to be fed because I have hands - it embarrasses me when I’m given food, but I do not have an alternative because of sicknesses. Zisize really saved my life, otherwise I would be dead by now because I was taking the treatment without food sometimes. I do not know what would have happened if my children did not report about it at school. It is hard if you do not even have an ID everything becomes dark but it won’t be like this forever, Siyabonga”

Bongani is enterprising, remember Zisize means “self help” so when lack of water meant gardening was not an option for many crops, he encouraged those with poor water access to grow yellow maize, which is drought tolerant and can be eaten when ripe and soft but mixed with sorghum and sunflower seeds to make chicken feed thereafter, which they package and sell. He encouraged others to start rearing free range chickens and to sell the eggs and chickens. Where there is water he trains people how to grow seedlings for sale and to plant. Below is one lady’s comment:

“If it wasn’t for Zisize we wouldn’t be still surviving, it has been really hard, it never came into our minds to do a business from nothing. Zisize has opened our eyes to look for something around us that could help us have an income. It was really dark. They just helped me to see that germinating trees and flowering plants doesn’t need money but I could use the waste material and look for a safe place and a shade under trees. I started and people buy these trees. I think my business will grow and I’ll be able to help myself.”



I smiled when I heard the following from Induna Vilane of Department of Traditional Affairs at the October event!

“We did not know that Zisize would be what it is today. We thought that Mrs Mthimkhulu and Niki Lee wanted to do their own business. We thought that they wanted to use our pictures to ask for money from overseas for themselves. We are owing Mrs Mthimkhulu and Niki Lee an apology. We started realising when we saw their services in our communities and so many Ingwavuma people getting jobs which they would never get because there are no job opportunities around Ingwavuma. We saw orphans and vulnerable children given uniforms, food, clothing and going to universities. We saw child-headed households renovated, some built from scratch. We saw boreholes and food gardens in our communities. We saw Niki Lee up and down and listening to what we were saying showing an interest in us and happy to be

with the Black people, she would talk to anyone. Today we see graduates here and we have seen they are improving their homes. It is really amazing , I can talk the whole day long about Zisize but we are here from Nyawo, Mngomezulu and Mathenjwa tribal authorities to thank you whole heartedly and to let you know that your services have changed people's lives". Siyabonga.

One such 'improved home' is that of Dennis Ntimbane who said at the October event:-
I'm from a child headed household, it was hard, yes very hard. I was the eldest at home. My parents died when I was in a very low grade in primary school. Zisize's intervention in our lives started in a very early stage. They never left us stranded up until I reached my goal to become a teacher. Zisize is not an organisation to us, but a parent who supports you from birth until you have feathers to fly. Zisize had mentors that were placed in schools. They were conducting life skills clubs and I was a member of that club. We would have time to talk to the mentor about our lives. There were sessions where we would do river of life and a family tree which made us talk about our families with them. I had my goal and I was made to understand that there would be obstacles in my way, but I would need to go over them. I'm a graduate today and I'm able to take care of my siblings. Even if my parents were still alive they wouldn't be like Zisize because they had nothing that would help us to tertiary education. We were very fortunate to have Zisize in our lives".

Remember "wrapped in the warmth of her arms" each child will know it's supported to be the best person it can"?

Below are Dennis' childhood home and the home he has built for his family since becoming a teacher at Mbalakelwa Primary



Since being given the use of a Starfish Greathearts mobile clinic, Zisize has been able to focus on providing confidential health advice, testing and counselling at locations near to and comfortable for community members. Their support is not confined to HIV/AIDS but any illness.

"I nearly lost my child, she was about to die. Born with HIV she was sickly, but I did not know she had been suffering with genital warts for five years. I got a call from Zisize's nurse to come and meet her at school. She explained everything to me and I told her everything about how my child must have got infected because she promised me that she was going to keep everything confidential. She told me about how my child was. I got inside the wagon (mobile clinic) and saw her, I cried so much because I already knew about the consequences, the nurse had explained everything. I had to take her to the hospital right away, but they gave me a lift in their wagon and the nurse went with me to the doctor to explain. It was so severe, the doctor referred her there and then to Ngwelezane hospital (in Empangeni 250km away) for

an operation because she was in a very bad situation. She was admitted to hospital and I was there with her. She recovered but is still very weak. Unfortunately the doctors said she might not have children but I'm happy that she is alive. I really appreciate Zisize from the bottom of my heart."

Its stigma and discrimination workshops proved an eye opener to all who listened. Its radio broadcasts have given a voice to those who feel outcasts.

One such said:-

"How did you know Zisize that we are suffering? We have suffered for years and no one gave us a platform to talk about how we feel. Yes I'm disabled but I do not like to be laughed at and undermined because of my status. People in our communities do not have any insight. I was sick and tired of the way they look at us, this has affected my children, even at school, because people remark about my disability in front of them. I was told by my child's teacher that he will never reach matric because he was not clever, I asked Zisize psychologist to do the psychological testing, I do not know what he did to him because thereafter he did not fail, he passed all the grades even grade 12, he is in FET as I'm talking. In community gatherings I'm not expected to say something because when you are disabled people think you are mentally disturbed". Baba Mathenjwa

At the October event the Department of Health (DOH) representative said:-

"Department of Health would like to thank Zisize, what I like about them is that they do not leave things hanging. They start providing services in an area and follow up with those cases until they are closed. This organization has saved people's lives especially those which DOH could not reach. They have helped to cut those long queues in clinics where you find people sleeping on benches to be seen by the doctor on the following day, because they couldn't afford go back home and return next day. Zisize is aware of the difficulties poverty presents in accessing health care so they took an initiative. Their health education has helped people know about adherence, stigma and discrimination, knowing your status, TB and other diseases. The stigma and discrimination campaign was an eye opener to us all because we could listen to what people were saying over the radio about our services, some cases have been followed up and we could see improvement because of Zisize, we salute you"

So Zisize is not just providing a valuable service but effecting much needed social change! I was so pleased at the 'don't leave people hanging' comment as that is very much Zisize's ethos to work comprehensively until people are in a place to achieve their potential, regardless of what obstacles they have to face whether that be poverty, ill health, orphanhood or abuse.

I have no quote to offer you from the Department of Social Development. They have failed the community this year. They only support 99 of the 207 creches in the wider Ingwavuma area. Organisations and community groups have to jump through bureaucratic hoops to get funding yet despite this due to 'lack of funds' they only partially funded the 99 this year, meaning staff lay offs, closures and hungry children. Zisize's 4 creches were the only ones to run normally thanks to donations like yours. Zisize took the initiative to work with individual families whose children were not at crèche by providing toys at home and training mothers.

In addition DoSD did not have the money to continue and extend funding for the Young Mothers group which Hlengiwe successfully ran.

"Zisize helped me to understand that change begins with me and I needed to change my behaviour and attitude first. I should stop blaming other people but light the candle rather than complaining about the dark. The R50 we were given by Zisize to make a business helped me a lot to think about myself and how I could survive. I started a business with R50 I was given in November 2017 but I raised it to R1100 by February because I was selling mango during the holidays at the soccer fields where people come together to watch community friendly matches. I listen very well that I should look for opportunities and use them, so it

helped me a lot. I sell school bags now because I went to Durban and bought them cheaper as I had over R1000 in my pocket. I have stopped following up the father of my child because he is useless and I want to show him that I will rise from the dust and be beautiful again”

I have not mentioned many of Zisize projects as I don't want to overburden you with too many pages! Just be aware that Zisize also runs literacy and maths training grades 1-3; digital learning grade 4; creche and Grade R training; social work interventions; feeding schemes; Ekukhanyeni cluster foster scheme; career guidance in person and on the radio; mentorship programme; community and home gardens; lifeskills clubs; student support.

“It takes a village to raise a child” is a much quoted African saying and you as member's of Zisize's 'village' have helped to raise many children you have never even met THANK YOU! Thank you to all the UK individuals who donate each month, to the groups of people in clubs, workplaces and churches, and to the UK Trusts who support Zisize - The Heaton Lee Memorial Trust. Thank you to the individuals and funders who support Zisize (Ingwavuma) Educational Trust. Without all of you, none of the above would be possible.

Our best wishes for a Happy Festive Season and a Healthy and Peaceful New Year. Siyabonga!

Niki

On behalf of Zisize's Trusts & Children

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