



# ZISIZE



## Newsletter - December 2020

Dear Friends, Supporters & others who may be interested!

What a year this has been! Not just for Zisize, but for the whole world, where lives have been severely disrupted, and in many cases ended, by the Covid 19 virus. Zisize Educational Trust began the year in a very precarious financial position, such that all staff, including those earning less than R3000 (£150) a month agreed to take a 15% pay cut to keep the organisation's projects alive.

On St David's Day I organised a Welsh themed fund raiser and am very grateful to friends, neighbours, fellow choir members and family for making it such an enjoyable and successful day. With the proceeds we were able to buy winter clothes for Zisize's children and food for the feeding schemes.



Then late March came and Covid hit! Initially at Level 5, many staff were not allowed to work. Schools and crèches were closed. Some Feeding programmes were disrupted by the army, who, charged with policing 'non-essential movement' would stop children on their way to get food and turn them back to home. Hunger, a daily reality at the best of times in Ingwavuma, grew exponentially as thousands of children, reliant in normal circumstances on their daily school meal for survival, had no access to a meal. I confess to losing sleep in those first few weeks worrying about children without food, but gradually things improved, thanks to people like Terry Mackey, John v.d.Linde and Action for Ingwavuma who donated emergency food funds and Eshowe Rotary Club partnering with Boikano to provide e-pap. Then the big donors came to the rescue, Solon Foundation, Elma Foundation, Tshikululu and Kavod Trust gave a huge boost which enabled us to expand help to more children and families in need. Also,

Government helped by temporarily increasing child support grants which reduced the number of children we needed to help a little.

Zisize's auxiliary nurse, Hlobi, was involved in a road accident on her way to work which resulted in multiple injuries, months in hospital and permanent paraplegia. Extremely generous Swiss friends of Bea Abersold very kindly donated funds to enable a specially adapted building to be created for her next to her sister. Vielen dank x

Thanks also to Dr Jeff Davies, Zisize UK's treasurer who still managed to do the accounts, even after suffering a CVA and to Hlengiwe Mthimkulu, Zisize SA's director who continued working even from her hospital bed when she had a very severe infection and both her and Nombuso Buthelezi, Zisize SA's financial manager, who worked from their beds when laid low with Covid. Neither have taken a day's leave all year! We truly appreciate their dedication.

I need to also thank the Somerset West ladies from Masks That Matter who made masks for Zisize staff and Ekukhanyeni children; Trish who both cut and donated material; my friend who made hundreds of masks and donated a % to Zisize, despite having no other income herself at that time; Dr Jess who took orders, collected money and distributed masks and has been a conduit for many donations of clothes etc. I have been amazed by people's generosity to those less fortunate in these difficult times. Ekukhanyeni staff went on to learn how to make masks and sell them locally, even customising them with logos!



Ekukhanyeni children playing in their masks

Education Programmes were disrupted as schools and ECD centres closed for several months. However, after the initial strict lock down, mentors were able to recommence home visits in



May and worked not only with families made vulnerable by extreme poverty, HIV, alcohol abuse etc. but also focussed on 75 pregnant women and girls in the Bhaya lengane project, and children under 4 years who would normally have been at crèche. A programme to educate mothers in good early years' development had begun last year when lack of government funds caused many creches to close. Mothers are taught about nutrition, hygiene, the importance of play and stimulation, affection and reading to children. When mentors visit they also read books and play with the children. Toys have had to be very carefully sterilised during the pandemic.



When Zisize's creches opened in September it was to a whole new regime! Sanitising, masks and social distancing.



Zisize's nurse and Wellness Wagon has operated throughout 2020 and has been able to distribute sanitary pads to 200 girls. 9042 people received general health and/or Covid 19 screening. 98 people were counselled and tested for HIV. 188 children were checked for immunisation and 64 children were referred to hospital for health concerns beyond the scope of a nurse. Top photo of the Wellness Wagon in use pre Covid



And this is post Covid, outdoors, asked and socially distanced



Nurse distributing sanitary towels

Community and home gardens were also able to continue under lockdown as food production was deemed one of the few essential services. Women have been encouraged to form and register co-operatives so that they can get seed money to start multi-pronged projects: organic gardening, eco-tourism, B&B in traditional rondavels, traditional medicinal herbs, cassava and indigenous seed nursery. Covid 19 has made everyone think of how to help themselves going forward, which has always been Zisize's ethos.



Below women removing stones from a plot of land so they can plant



The number off food parcels distributed during this crisis has increased more than threefold. The impact of no school meals had a knock-on devastating effect on all the family, especially those who, without an ID document, are not entitled to government grants. Adherence to ARVs has also been affected in many individuals because without food the medication makes them feel very sick and dizzy.



*'I have six children. When I got sick, at first I thought I had "idlozi", I stayed with the traditional healer for a long time. I don't know how I survived because when they took me to hospital I had a CD4 count of 2! (A healthy person might be 1000 and 200 necessitates ARV treatment). I recovered but I'm not strong enough to work. I applied for a government grant for the sick but I was told they only give those who have both TB and HIV. We are starving sometimes. We only survive with grants for two of the children. Zisize has made a huge impact in our lives during this Covid 19 time. They give us monthly food parcels to supplement what we buy. We only buy 10kg beans, 50kg mealie meal, 5lt cooking oil, washing soap and nothing more. I got better when they first brought the food parcel. I think I had lost hope and that affected my health. I felt stronger and was able to walk around the house. Zisize was sent by God to help us'* A food parcel beneficiary.

Socially distanced feeding schemes are a sad sign of the times but I was glad to see them keeping safe. At first they were given takeaway packs and sent home to eat but once schools resumed, they wore masks and stayed to play, a welcome escape from some of the stresses experienced at home



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 the French Huguenot Church in London Foundation, UNISON branches, Just Trust, the children of Byron Road Primary School, Medway Towns Soroptimists, Aids Hilfe Bern, members of Highland Place Unitarian Church and more than 100 individuals, you know who you are!

Zisize Educational Trust wishes to thank those above and also Dept. of Social Development for social work salaries, Dept. of Labour for assisting with partial salaries for those not able to work during lockdown, DG Murray Trust, ELMA, Gordon McKenzie, Janet Solomon, JHS, John v.d.Linde, Kavod Trust, Mary Oppenheimer & Daughters Foundation, Nicky Lewis, Ryan Jordan, Solon Foundation, Starfish Greathearts, Tshikululu, Victoria Freudenheim, Zoe Sarojini Trust and numerous other individuals who responded to the dire needs this year, including Andre from Australia, Arthur & Vera from Switzerland and Kittie from USA.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a healthy and joyful festive season on behalf of Zisize in both South Africa and Wales and thank you for making a difference to our children's lives and may 2021 see the end of Covid and be a good year for all of you and for Zisize.

*Siyabonga, Thank You, Diolch yn fawr*

*Niki*

On behalf of Zisize's Trusts & Children

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