

MEDWAY AND MAIDSTONE SOROPTIMIST'S AGM



Zisize Update

Working Towards a Brighter Future in
South Africa

Zisize's beneficiaries and I are extremely grateful for the support you have given ever since our earliest days. Thank goodness for that Welsh flag in the ICC Durban!

What began as my sabbatical venture to make a small difference in a remote rural area in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa has evolved into an organisation, headed by the amazing Hlengiwe, employing 76 staff, most of whom had never had employment previously, but have now been trained to provide an excellent service to thousands of children and their families.

Zisize's programmes today

Zisize works holistically in 11 communities. Each community has the following:-

1. Feeding schemes based at a partner primary school for the most needy children. This operates each Saturday, Sunday and daily in school holidays. Covid 19 presented a huge challenge. With schools closed for six months, children on the scheme needed to be fed 7 days a week as there was no school meal provided by government during that period. Numbers doubled and days trebled! Finances became a nightmare!

Feeding schemes during Covid

Nurse sanitising and trying to explain social distancing



Very early days when children had to return home with their meals so were given takeaway boxes





It took a while for the masks to be distributed as no one could afford to buy, so Zisize staff made them



I was both heartened and saddened to see this socially distanced meal. The 'keep safe' message had got through, but how unnatural for children.



As months went by kids began to eat at school and take the opportunity to play together again



Hunger and starvation during the first wave became a bigger challenge than the risk of Covid 19 infection, though infections now are very high. Families who had subsisted when their children were fed at school Monday to Friday, no longer coped and the need for food parcels increased.





“I will never forget the day we got the first food parcel from Zisize. We had absolutely nothing left. I had cooked the last mealie meal and beans that day. I couldn’t speak to anyone. I felt like running away and leaving the children alone at home. Zisize car arrived late in the afternoon. I didn’t know they were going to deliver the food for us. I thought the food was for someone else. When I was told the food was for us I nearly fainted , I cried. I told them that we had nothing left. I had tried to organise but in vain. I thank Zisize a lot. I used to sell cakes at school to survive. Schools are closed and there is no income. My son and I are on ARV treatment , its very hard to take treatment without food. You become sick. Thank you very much”

It is thanks to supporters like you that we are able to respond to situations like these – THANK YOU

Our hope is that in time there will be less need for food relief as more and more families are helped to grow their own food. The food garden team were busy throughout lockdown creating more community gardens along with the provision of boreholes, as lack of water is a major issue in Ingwavuma. Most community gardens are worked by women which often gives them a small income as well as food. Other food generation programmes are free range chickens and seedling nurseries



“Where would we be without Zisize and their Bongani. I’m able to train others now because of Zisize. I was trained by Bongani. I have onions, green peppers, tomatoes, spinach and cabbage in my garden. I make tomato stew with phuthu and the children like it. I sometimes mix it with eggs from my chickens. I couldn’t learn from my parents because they died when I was still very young and I was the eldest at home. Zisize has made a big difference in my life.”

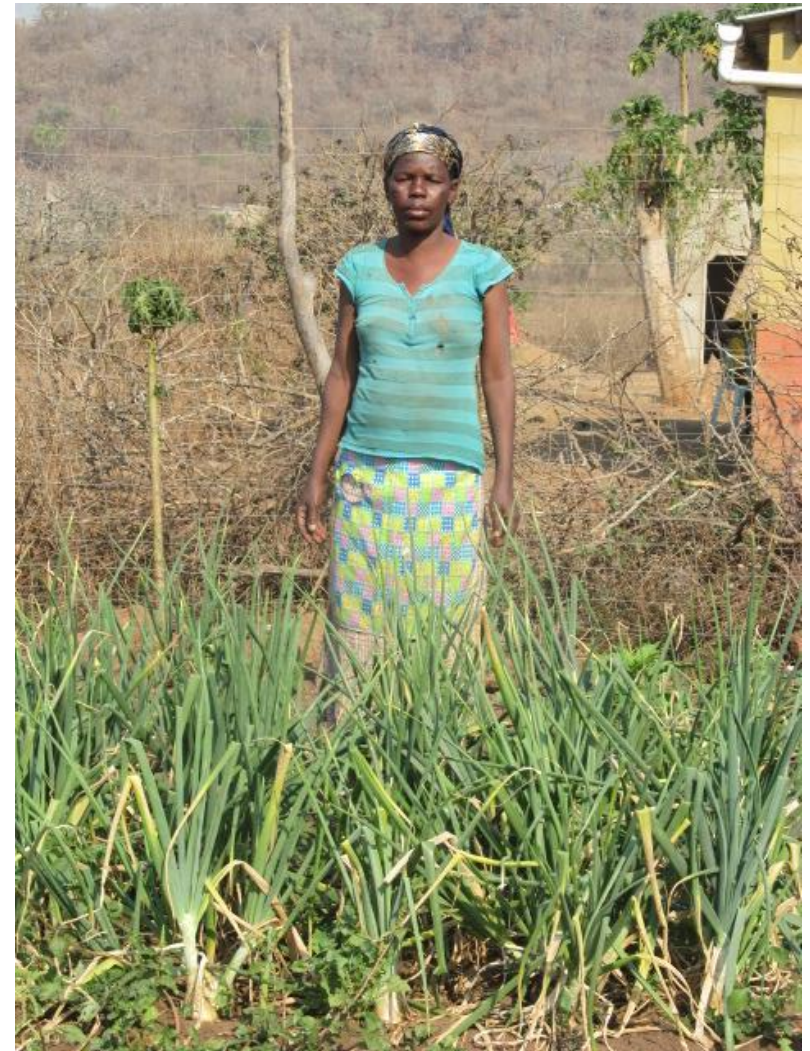
Women clearing ground of stones for new community garden



Nonjinjikazi Established Community Gardens



Home Gardens – many hundreds of households have been helped to create a home garden but these are dependent on rain or water carried from streams.



The Health Care Team were also very busy during lockdown. They operate a mobile clinic called a Wellness Wagon donated by Starfish Greathearts. They visit schools, communities and households and deal with the full range of health issues. During Covid they, along with the mentors were active in educating the 11 communities about the need for social distancing, hand washing and wearing masks.



In addition they delivered sanitary pads to girls and continued with general health checks and HIV counselling and testing. The confidentiality and care Zisize staff offer is very much appreciated.



The Healthcare team, aided by mentors, visited sites where people still gathered, the shopping 'mall', pension day pay-points, funerals etc, to spread the government's Covid 19 protocols and advice, as most people have no access to TV, internet or newspapers. They leafleted and used loadhailers and also appeared on local radio.

The advice to isolate if showing symptoms of Covid 19 presented impossible challenges to families who lived in large numbers, often in one room. One family of 22 were such, and there was huge concern, so thanks to a generous donor, a 4 roomed house was built for them. If one got infected they could stay alone in the original hut.



Before



The benefactor donated sufficient funds to build this house for them and complete 3 others



After



This family exemplifies the holistic way Zisize operates. No one in the family had any legal documents. Their grannies died and there were no death certificates because they had no IDs. Their descendants are suffering the consequences, for without ID there is no financial help from government. The mother, whom the children live with, is disabled and HIV positive; her sisters died of AIDs and left their children with her. She defaulted her ARV treatment because she had neither the money nor the strength to travel to the clinic.

Now, in addition to a leak proof house with 4 rooms,

1. Zisize's social workers are dealing with the issue of obtaining Identity documents, which in turn will lead to child support and foster grant applications.
2. Zisize nurses transported the mother to clinic and explained her condition and she has re-started her treatment. They provide adherence education and support.
3. The food security team started a food garden and provides a monthly food parcel.
4. The education team has provided support towards education needs, all the children have been registered at the nearest schools, uniforms have been bought.
5. For economic strengthening, Zisize has started training them in chicken farming so that they will be able to start a chicken business to survive.

Education

- Career Guidance
- Primary literacy and numeracy and digital learning
- Early Childhood Development

CAREER GUIDANCE

Radio was also the vehicle through which we were able to continue assisting young people with career choices, subject choices and the way to apply for university and student grants. Zisize's career's officer gave talks and answered questions on phone –ins which prepared high school students to make choices and applications when things began to return to some semblance of normality in September.

For me, the success of the student programme is the most rewarding tangible proof that we (and that includes all of you) have made a life changing difference.

Kids who might not have completed primary school due to poverty were provided with a range of supports which enabled them to complete primary school, high school and achieve good enough marks to enter tertiary education.

72 orphans and vulnerable children have successfully completed either a degree or diploma course with financial support from Zisize and the majority are professionally employed, supporting their extended families and living in homes like these. They belong to two young people who have returned to Ingwavuma to work as teachers and are uplifting not just their families, but the community.



Primary education took a severe knock last year due to schools being closed from March to September and only partially opening then. In normal times training is given to Grade R (reception) teachers in pre-reading and numeracy skills. Grades 1 to 3 teachers are introduced to the Molteno mother language Bridge to English programme and helped with numeracy which is a huge weakness. To address this further we introduced digital learning where lessons are provided by first class teachers online and children use tablets to access this and submit their work. This has produced some amazing results, but 2020 was a wash out!

Early Childhood Development

Zisize has five 'creches' i.e. nursery classes, and also provides training for 11 community creches.

However many community creches virtually closed in 2019 through lack of government funding, and were prohibited from opening during lockdown, so Zisize mentors began working with mothers in their own homes, providing play equipment, story books and showing mothers how to play with, talk to and read to their young children or themselves read if mothers are illiterate.

Zisize creches in normal times





Mentors are the backbone of Zisize. They live and work in their communities, are the link with schools and refer significant problems to Zisize's professionals while dealing with many themselves. They cover Health, Early Childhood Development, Education, Home Food Gardens, supervise feeding schemes and offer emotional support to vulnerable children. Below are two reading with children at home during lockdown



While we aim to keep families together, there are times when the abuse or neglect is so severe, removal, either temporary or permanent, is needed. Ekukhanyeni cluster foster home currently caters for 19 children



Pre-Covid

Post Covid wearing masks to play



A lot of work is done to encourage holistically healthy families. Social workers in UK would be horrified at some of the attitudes and practices in families in Ingwavuma. Children, especially girls, begin working at a very early age, collecting water, firewood, washing clothes and rarely get to play, though are now encouraged to attend school, which was less the case 20 years ago . They are also too frequently the victims of sexual abuse which has worsened during lockdown where there is no escape to school and male relatives remain at home. These issues are tackled via community dialogues, individual work with families, support groups and lifeskills groups where children are taught about their rights and responsibilities. Zisize works closely with tribal authorities, who still hold much power in this deep rural area so that they understand the constitution, The Children Act and what Zisize is doing and when they support us, it has most impact.

Peer support is offered to sufferers of HIV/AIDS, abuse, parents of disabled children via support groups and also Zisize peer educators are present in 3 High Schools to counsel their fellow pupils.

In addition to dealing with existing problems, Zisize social work team has trained the mentors to work alongside them with pregnant women and girls in a programme called 'Ibhayi lengane' meaning baby's blanket which has a preventive focus.

The program has helped to educate young mothers and their families on the importance of loving the baby while still in the womb and of the whole family supporting the pregnant girl. In the three high schools which are part of the program, the intervention is a supporting pillar for girls who are pregnant and have found the going tough, as they are stigmatized and discriminated against, by both teachers and other learners and often ostracised by their families. Prior to lockdown the mentors had sessions with the pregnant girls, talked to learners and the teachers on how their discrimination affects the unborn babies and leads to the girls dropping out, which will later destroy the future of both the unborn baby and the mother. It was not possible for the clubs to meet during lockdown but individual home support was given.

To conclude I will give you the speech of one Chief's Induna at a community meeting and once again offer our thanks to you for your support, as does he.

Siyabonga – Thank You! Niki

“This organization should be called ‘UMNENKE’ meaning ‘THE SNAIL’! The reason I’m calling them a snail is because where they have gone past they leave things shining like the substance that is secreted by the snail when it moves. We have seen very big changes in Ingwavuma. Their work is visible. There are so many families where we have seen an improvement. They tell us that it was due to Zisize support. They have opened our eyes to see the difference and that we could do something to help ourselves. I so wish we had more organizations like this one in Ingwavuma, they are amazing. I look at things differently, it’s true that if you stay in a dirty place you hardly realize that its smelling and you need to move away from that, a person sitting in a dirty and smelling place for a long time ends up not smelling that bad smell until somebody comes and pulls you out from that smell. You start smelling it when you are out of it. Zisize comes and pulls you out, then your mind opens up and you start helping yourself. Something that you should have done but because of poverty ,everything is shut down, even your mind gets stuck. I thank you and all those that give you money to run these services, you are really making a difference”