Zizi Afrique Foundation

2023 Annual Report

Enhancing Collaboration for Collective Impact in Education

2023 at a Glance

90, 608	Youth reached through interventions
47, 753	Children reached through interventions and studies
15, 000	Institutional Leaders reached
13, 494	Teachers and instructors reached through training and workshops
4, 596	Parents reached directly
996	Partners from government, CSOs and academia
530	Conference participants
115	Media engagements (interviews, articles, coverage)
60	Educational Institutions reached
8	Learning/Policy Briefs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Messages	1-2
Action Points for 2023–2025	3
Pillar One: Research, Evidence Generation and Learning	4
Pillar Two: Advocacy for Policy Change and Implementation	10
Pillar Three: Innovations for Policy and Practice	18
Financial Highlights	23
Celebrating Team Work and Excellence at ZAF	26
Looking to the Future: 2024 and Beyond	28

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ALiVE	Assessment of Lifeskills and Values in East Africa
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
Co-Pi	Co-Principal Investigator
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EE4A	Education Evidence for Action
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
KATTI	Kenya Association of Technical Training Institutions
MoE	Ministry of Education
NAEGs	National Accelerated Education Guidelines
PAL Network	People's Action for Learning Network
PLUS	Policy Learning on Universal Secondary Education
TVETA	Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority
TVET-VaLi	TVET Values and Life Skills Working Group
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
RELI	Regional Education Learning Initiative
VaLi	Values and Life Skills
WYD	Whole Youth Development
ZAF	Zizi Afrique Foundation

Board Chairperson

Dr. Kahaki Kimani

2023 in Review: Outlook, Progress, and Looking Ahead!

Despite the ever-changing global landscape, we have remained true to our vision: guaranteeing that all children and youth learn and prosper, particularly those who are left behind. The year 2023 will remain a special one in Zizi Afrique's history as it marked our evolution from a small Kenyan organization to a mid-sized African organization. It was a remarkably successful year as it laid a solid foundation for us to move to our next level of impact.

Our path to leading collective impact work in Sub-Sahara Africa was clarified through the mid-term review of our Strategy 2021–2025. Overall, we celebrate four milestones: our sharpened strategic focus; the boost in our collective impact course; the growth in leadership capacities; and the stronger organizational sustainability.

Sharpened Strategic Focus. In September 2023, Zizi Afrique completed a midline evaluation of its 2025 strategy. The overall result was that the organization was on course in most of the impact areas and even ahead in others. This externally-led process yielded 10 key reflections to guide our work through October 2023–December 2025. The findings emphasized the organization's transformation into an ecosystem-builder, with emergent tweaks to the organizational values, advocacy approaches, and areas of emphasis. We present these reflections to the attention of our partners in a subsequent section of this report.

Zizi's Collective Impact Course. Achieving the vision of quality, equitable, and inclusive education in Africa is an enormous challenge that can only be resolved through aggregation. Building collective energy among the players focusing on education system reforms has emerged as a strategic focus, with a call to scale the collective impact work of the organization. This clarity was obtained from the mid-term strategic review process, and now informs Zizi's work moving forward. Our 2024 work is now based on sourcing for increased funding to African-founded and African-led organizations to work collaboratively in resolving the biggest challenges to our education. Zizi Afrique then becomes an ecosystem-builder, led by the principles of mutual growth and collective impact.

Growth in Leadership. An organizational audit in late 2022 supported by The LEGO Foundation highlighted leadership development as a priority for Zizi Afrique. With support from the Children Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) in 2023, Zizi Afrique implemented a leadership pipeline program for 22 staff members. We now celebrate the outcomes of this process, visible through increased self-awareness, appreciation of diverse leadership styles and postures, better team cohesion, and faster decision-making. Additionally, the Executive Director and two Directors underwent varied leadership and well-being training programs supported by our funders: Imaginable Futures and CIFF. These capacities have come in handy in making us a thriving African organization.

Stronger Sustainability. In 2023, we received our first-ever unrestricted grants. We are grateful to four of our funders for this level of trust. The Board responded by establishing a sustainability policy for the organization that guided the establishment of an endowment fund. Additionally, the organization fully operationalized the four directorates (Research, Innovations and Practice, Advocacy, and Operations). A senior management team was established, with stronger capacities for leadership, resource mobilization, and engagement.

As we celebrate these milestones, the Zizi Afrique Foundation Board expresses gratitude to our collaborators in governments across Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, and the new frontiers of our collective impact work in Malawi and Cameroon. We appreciate our 100+ organizational partners who believed in and worked with us, the Zizi Afrique leaders for their vision and diligence, and the Zizi staff for their tenacious focus on achieving impact for Africa's education. We remain focused on our Vision 2025, tightening our connection to context in delivering quality education to Africa's children.

Executive Director

Dr. John Mugo

What the mid-term review told us: Keep the Vision, Sharpen the Focus!

Zizi Afrique Foundation has existed as an independent organization since August 2018. The initial years sought to establish the foundations for impact-at-scale, exploring the prospects for competency-building in areas of foundational literacy and numeracy (early transition) and technical and vocational training (late transition). In late 2019, the development of a strategic plan commenced. However, this process stalled with the pronouncement of COVID-19 in early 2020, and the organization moved to survival mode, adapting rapidly to respond to the crisis of learning over the emergency period.

The strategy-development process got back on course in October 2020, and the inaugural 5-year strategy was launched in October 2021. Four things defined the focus of the organization: competences for learning, working, and living; support to the education system; focus on the children and youth furthest behind; and impact through collaboration and community building. With this direction, the organization has sustained steady growth, from working in only a few counties in Kenya in 2020, to driving collaborative system-change work in three countries. We moved from just three programs in 2020 to nine programs in 2023.
The year 2023 marked the midpoint for the strategic period journey. The Board commissioned a midline evaluation in May and the process concluded in September 2023. This review has concluded that the organization is on track to achieving its strategic targets for 2025, across all three strategic pillars. A few insights emerged from this evaluation, which touched on the effect of CBC implementation and the position taken by the Kenya Kwanza government documented in the report of the Presidential Working Party on Education Reforms (PWPER), to the global shifts in education funding that require a re-positioning of the organization. As an organization, Zizi has grown significantly since 2021, with major expansions in funding sizes, programmatic and operational scope, as well as leadership and staffing capacities. Given these changes, the evaluation arrived at three conclusions.

First, Zizi's mission remains relevant to both the achievement of the vision and the socio-political context. The organization is well positioned to ride on the increased attention in the education and youth sectors in the East Africa region to equip children and youth with competences. However, three implications emerge from the changes in context. Second, there is a need to align areas of work to the contextual realities, especially regarding the new governments and changes in the political economy. Third, the new government may require a re-examination of Zizi's engagement approach, while facing it straight with an ever-closing civic space and working with schools

Action Points for 2023–2025

1

Retain Zizi's Vision but sharpen the mission. The organization shall focus more on foundational skills, referring to literacy and numeracy, but also other foundational, holistic development skills and values that children and young people need. The mission of Zizi Afrique will be summarized as *Consolidate-Innovate-Engage.*

2

Breathe life into organizational values. Strike a balance between process (how to) and impact (what), with values serving as the bond between these two components. Intensify focus on embracing inclusion and diversity and establish a clear mechanism of living the organizational values.

3

Deepen work around strategic levers of Zizi's mission. Achieve better and deeper evidence consolidation, illuminate sustainable and scalable innovations, and go for better-purposed engagement, through a pipeline (as opposed to segmented) approach to the education system.

4

Be more strategic in advocacy and intensify engagement. Re-focus to establish a continuum that embraces co-creation with all stakeholders and sustain use of evidence as Zizi's signature contribution to the crowded space.

5

Retain the Zizi brand and leverage partnerships for visibility. Develop one overarching, human-touch story, which becomes what Zizi is known for, then let other stories always come under this, to achieve consistency. Leverage existing and prospective collaborations and partnerships to tell the impact story more aptly, distinctly, and consistently.

6

Embrace and embed Gender, Equity, and Inclusion. Embed a holistic gendered approach to programming. Beyond just data disaggregation, embrace the GEI principles right from the office to the priorities that are set, the way implementation is organized up to reporting.

7

Scale the posture and positioning of Zizi as an African organization. Sustain the Afrocentric/Pan-African posture and seek out partnerships that embolden African organizations. Create larger alliances and collaborations across Africa through peer-to-peer reviews/learnings/exchanges.

8

Manage succession and flatten the power structure. Continue with efforts to de-personalize the brand of Zizi from the Executive Director to achieve greater devolution and a more horizontal power structure. Facilitate greater capacities and visibility of the next leadership layer, as well as an intergenerational approach to staff mentorship for growth at all levels.

9

Upgrade the MEL plan and capacity. Review and upgrade the Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework to ensure that reporting is fully aligned with the strategy. Expand capacities to capture data, and platforms that enable real-time reporting, data generation, and sharing.

10

Embrace a growth ambition and face fundraising with greater courage. Achieve full documentation of approaches/innovations and use these to review the fundraising document and stories of impact. Approach growth with increased courage, not hold back where opportunities are available, and revise the fundraising and growth ambitions upwards.

Overall, the organization approaches the year 2024 with great optimism, targeting growth and expansion to the region, and hopes to establish impact collaborations in more countries in Sub-Sahara Africa, including Malawi and Cameroon. The organization will narrow its focus to fewer areas of change in policy and practice to achieve impact for millions of children.

SECTION 2: SUMMARY OF OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2023

Pillar one
Evidence Generation and Learning.

Robust evidence is critical in realizing transformational change in learning outcomes, particularly for vulnerable children. For the last six years, ZAF has carried out numerous studies on foundational learning that have produced appropriate data and evidence. In 2023, she immersed herself in evidence generation, packaging and sharing, besides creating partnerships.

We enhanced our work in strengthening the education evidence ecosystem

Key Result 1

We leveraged the co-creation approach to conduct two experiments with the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Kenya

It is underscored that successful scaling happens when ideas and approaches are allowed to develop and grow on a small scale while generating the evidence to inform their impact. Moreover, identifying partnership opportunities, especially with organizations that work in the same space and decision-makers is critical for scaling. Thus in 2023, Zizi Afrique collaborated with the MoE to co-create and implement initiatives and promote the uptake of data and evidence.

We implemented the Policy Learning for Universal Secondary (PLUS) Education to support 100% transition from primary to secondary school.

The Policy Learning for Universal Secondary (PLUS) Education aimed at generating evidence and testing the levers of transitioning to secondary school. The initiative is anchored on the 100 percent transition directive that aims at getting every learner who completes primary school to transition to secondary school. It is unique in that it focuses on how effectively the policy can be implemented while catalyzing the use of evidence for decision making. By partnering with the Directorate of Secondary Education, the community, and the local administration, PLUS generated evidence from 2900 households and learners spread over four counties: Bungoma, Murang'a, Marsabit, and Nairobi. It utilized the evidence to create a community-based surveillance system in one sub-county in each of the identified counties. The surveillance aimed to document and understand in depth the levers of transition while also testing how effectively the 100% transition policy could be implemented, leveraging on the 2022/24 transition window. In 2023, the surveillance tracked about 6,409 learners as they transitioned to secondary schools and generated evidence crucial in informing policy and guiding transition in the context of the Competency-Based Curriculum.

PLUS validation forums at Sololo, Marsabit County and Cheptais, Bungoma County

We embarked on an initiative to unlock the use and users of education data.

Secondly, leveraging on the Education Evidence for Action, Zizi Afrique began working on a project to unlock the use and users of data in the education system. ZAF envisions democratizing the use of education evidence by expanding the use (scaling up) and users (scaling out) of data to include sub-nationals. The initiative hopes to shift the traditional mindset and practice, where education data flows from lower units such as schools through the system to the national level, while policies, guidelines, and directions flow back to the lower levels for implementation. While this is good, empowering lower levels to use key data and evidence to inform their decisions while considering their context is powerful in improving learning outcomes. To this end, the initiative will work with education and policy stakeholders at the national and sub-national levels to build their capacity for data analysis, synthesis, and translation while at the same time exploring opportunities on how they can better utilize data to inform foundational learning.

Key Result 2

We expanded our evidence pillar and ventured into two new areas of work

The Future of Work

The first area seeks to move evidence beyond schooling to the labour markets. Under the Future of Work, ZAF will seek to set up an observatory to generate real-time data and evidence on labour markets, particularly connecting youth skills with employers. The data will inform forecasting of future job demands, and necessary interventions (investments and policy) that can match the needs of the labour market while at the same time informing training needs, hence positioning TVETs to produce skills that are relevant to the labour market.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

The second area focuses on the fundamental role that the first years of development, (0–3) years, play in foundational learning. These years are crucial for cognitive, physical, and socio-emotional development thus the urgency to understand these years could not be overstated. ZAF will partner with three counties to understand the Early Childhood Development (ECD) space.

Key Result 3

We hosted three Regional Conferences to advance foundational learning

ZAF hosted three conferences that offered a platform to share and address challenges in foundational learning in Africa .These conferences were: the Values and Life Skills- Africa (VaLi-A) conference; the Africa Evidence Forum on Foundational Learning; and the 5th Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) Biennial Conference.

The Values and Life Skills- Africa (Vali-A) Conference

The Assessment of Life skills and Values (ALiVE) is an initiative of the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) Africa, under the life skills and values thematic cluster. ALiVE held the first ever conference on Values and Life skills in Africa (VaLi-A) from 21st–23rd June 2023 in Nairobi. The conference, themed ***Unlocking the Power of Values and Life Skills in Context,*** brought together 185 participants from eleven countries. Among the participants were representatives from government institutions, UN Agencies, civil society organizations, researchers, universities, and practicing teachers. The conference aimed at supporting ongoing efforts of Africa's education systems to successfully integrate core competences in their curricula and assessments. The conference also saw ALiVE launch its second phase which has three pillars including the Assessment Shift, System Shift, and Learning Hub.

ZAF Executive Director giving welcome remarks at the inaugural Values and Life skills-Africa (VALi-A).

2023 Africa Evidence Forum on Foundational Learning.

The Africa Evidence Forum on Foundational Learning was held from 3rd to 4th April 2023, in Nairobi. The conference, themed *Delivering Stronger Foundational Learning for All Children Post COVID-19*, sought to explore what works in foundational learning and how effective strategies could be scaled up in low-resource contexts. The conference brought together over 100 evidence producers including: development partners, academia, officials from education ministries and researchers from selected Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. During the conference, participants shared and discussed the body of evidence on what works to strengthen and transform foundational learning.

The conference resulted in the following key resolutions:

- Need for the creation of What Works Data Hubs to inform operationalization, assessment efforts, aligning of emerging policies to national goals and system thinking for education sector planning.
- A call to identify cost-effective interventions and system-level reforms in education.
- A call for country education leaders to collaborate with local, regional, and global education stakeholders to identify programs that are multifaceted and adaptable for scale-up informed by data and learning.
- A call for increased funding at pre-primary levels.
- Need to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms, parental engagement, and community participation for improved accountability in school systems.

The 5th Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) Biennial Conference

The 5th EE4A Biennial Conference was held at the Tom Mboya University in Homabay County from 28th to 30th November, 2023. The theme of the conference was ***Revitalizing the Evidence Community for Kenya's Education.*** In attendance were 210 participants drawn from the Ministry of Education, the Commission for University Education (CUE), academia, development partners, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and members of EE4A. Unique to this conference, was the attendance of 40 Deans of Education from Public and Private Universities in Kenya.

The conference saw evidence producers share evidence on four key sub-themes; Higher Education, Competency-Based Curriculum, Education Technology and Partnerships in Education. Some of the recommendations were as follows:

1. A national education research agenda be developed through research collaborations.

2. Increased financing for education research through the revision of the National Research Fund Act, and creation of a special education research fund that could be co-funded by development partners.

3. The government establishes a CBC transition policy to avert challenges that the transition to Junior School has faced.

4. A joint study to be commissioned to explore what PhD students researched on, methodologies used, recommendations made,their applicability and the key learnings.

5. A partnership framework for the education sector be developed. This should include an inventory of non-governmental interventions, protocols for data sharing, and reporting.

Pillar two
Advocacy for Policy Change and Implementation.

The advocacy pillar aims to use evidence to influence key players, decision makers, and stakeholders to bring out system shift and support change in policy and practice in the education space.

We worked with others by using evidence generated to mobilize and persuade strategic actors to pay attention to the crisis of learning and training.

Key Result 4

We strengthened our leadership in the movement for values and life skills.

All the interventions that ZAF participated in were built under a solid foundation of collaborative efforts. This is because we believe that as an organization there is very little we can do alone and that together we can do much more.

The Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE)

The Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) is a collaborative initiative of 8 East African organizations that focuses on **enhancing** life skills and values in education systems. ZAF Collaboratively **developed/adapted contextualized assessment tools** for 6–17-year olds**; generate evidence** by conducting assessments and collating evidence from other life skills approaches (both in assessments and nurturing); then **use the evidence for learning and public policy advocacy.**

The ALiVE Collaborative in 2020 only had four partners under one leadership. These partners worked on a shared vision of developing assessment tools and growing the capacity of East Africans on these competencies. The four partners, under the leadership of Dr. John Mugo, led a team of 47 experts comprising educators, researchers, teachers, MoE officials, CSOs and musicians, to develop tools.

By 2022, this team had finalized the tools and was ready for assessments. Having tested the theory of collaboration, ALiVE further collaborated with 55 Community-based organizations and 800 teachers/teacher trainees for the assessments. Through this collaboration, 45,442 adolescents were assessed, and 35,000 caregivers/parents visited at their homes and sensitized on their contributions towards supporting their children to acquire life skills and values. While ALiVE had already created a movement through collaborations with others, it became increasingly strenuous to have only one leader to hold the ship together, hence the Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) model was recommended and adopted to bring in more senior members in a 'collaborative' leadership that has yielded great results.

By 2023, ALiVE expanded the leadership to one PI and three Co-PIs for its Phase 2 and also partnered with more organizations. Currently, ALiVE is being implemented by eight organizations across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania.

The eight organizations aim to ensure that all children are acquiring life skills and values. Through this work, ALiVE has formed strategic partnerships with the national curriculum and assessment institutes, six pre-service teacher training, and three departments of teacher education in three universities. As a result, ALiVE is at the center of the curriculum review work happening in Zanzibar, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Further, ALiVE tools have been reviewed and incorporated into the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) toolbox, a global network of members working together to ensure that all individuals have the right to a quality, safe, relevant, and equitable education. The ALiVE website is already in place with learning modules and ALiVE tools.

In addition, in 2023 ALiVE hosted a successful conference attended by 184 participants from 12 countries who now have a better understanding of the East Africa education space and are our allies in championing for system approach on life skills and values as well as the broadening of foundational learning to include holistic skills.

Key Result 5

We strengthened our engagement and influence within the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) space.

In 2023, we witnessed the synergy and agency of stakeholders in the Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET) through the VaLi network. Our role involved coordinating this network as a secretariat, convening members, and drafting two policy briefs on thematic issues around TVET. During the year, VaLi also hosted thematic meetings to discuss TVET industry linkages, youth employability, and access to TVET opportunities for persons with disability, with a focus on youth.

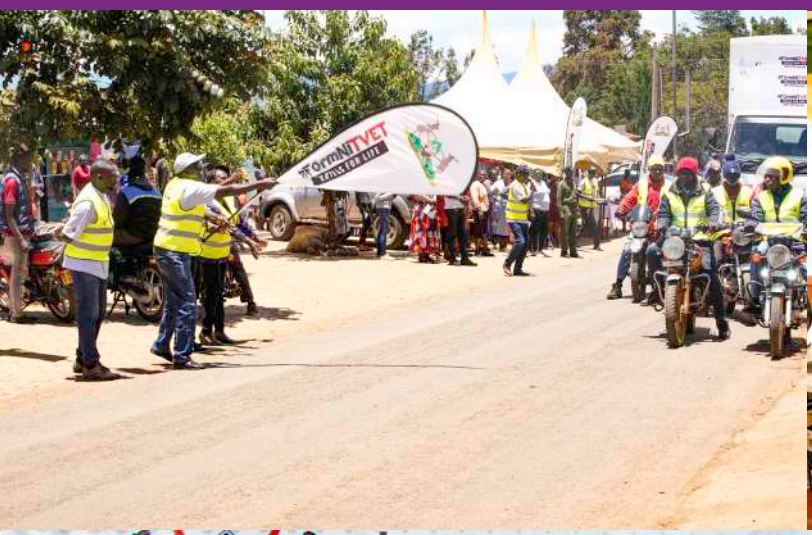
In addition, ZAF and VaLi partnered with the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA) and packaged sector-specific guidelines on Safeguarding, which will be rolled out across over 2,300 TVET institutions, benefitting more than 500,000 trainees.

We engaged the Ministry of Education Technical and Vocational Education and Training (MoE-TVET), Technical and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TVETA), and Kenya School of Technical, Vocational Education and Training (KS-TVET) to unlock three pivotal policy areas: TVET-Rebranding, Value and Life Skills (VaLi) integration in curriculum and safeguarding for the TVET sector.

We supported the government in developing the National Integrated TVET Communication and Advocacy Strategy (NITCAS).

ZAF, in collaboration with other development partners under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and the State Department for TVET (MoE SD-TVET), spearheaded the development of the National Integrated TVET Communication and Advocacy Strategy (NITCAS). The primary objective of NITCAS was to positively shift public perception on TVET and rebrand it as the preferred choice for youth empowerment. This partnership yielded profound impact on the youth training sector. It revitalized the public's perception of technical and vocational education and instilled a renewed sense of pride and purpose within the TVET community.

As a follow up, ZAF worked closely with the State Department for TVET in rolling out NITCAS in six counties (Turkana, Kilifi, West Pokot, Kakamega, Baringo and Bungoma). This process was led by a committee nominated by the Principal Secretary incharge of TVET, and included representatives from MoE SD-TVET, the Kenya National Qualifications Authority (KNQA), Safaricom Foundation, the Kenya Association of Technical Training Institutions (KATTI), the Joint Sub-Sector Working Group for Youth and Employment, and Ujana Africa.



We supported the overhaul of the Essential Skills Curriculum for TVET instructors.

We leveraged our leadership role in Values and Life Skills in TVET (VaLi TVET) to support the revision of the Essential Skills Curriculum for TVET instructors to include life skills, an initiative led by the Kenya School of TVET. The integration of VaLi into the curriculum resulted in holistic skill development, equipping students with technical prowess as well as vital life skills essential for personal and professional growth. Additionally, a skills framework for TVET was developed and widely disseminated to curriculum institutes, leading to the embedding of Whole Youth Development (WYD) competencies in the TVET curricula.

We supported the development of the safeguarding standards for TVET in Kenya

TVETA, in collaboration with ZAF, spearheaded the development of safeguarding standards. The introduction of safeguarding standards aimed at fostering a safe and conducive learning environment in TVET institutions. Through these efforts, ZAF and its partners have contributed significantly to the transformation of the TVET sector, paving the way for a more inclusive and impactful educational landscape.

Key Result 6

We strengthened our convening stature by continuing to incubate three networks for collective impact.

In Kenya and across the continent, there is immense duplication of efforts and resource deployment in the education sector. ZAF is a staunch advocate of collaboration and partnerships for the advancement of learning for all children.

ZAF was honored to host three networks in 2023. The Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa (RELI-Africa); The Education Evidence for Action (EE4A); and the TVET Values and Life Skills Working Group (TVET_VaLi). By hosting these key networks, **ZAF has strengthened its capacity to convene and lead collaborative work in Education**

Regional Education Learning Initiative Africa (RELI Africa)

Registered in 2022 as a not-for-profit regional non-governmental organization, RELI Africa is a member-driven and peer learning initiative that brings together over fifty Civil Society Organizations from the East African regions working on education. Its aim is to enhance learning outcomes in the education systems so that no child is left behind. The RELI Africa approach is guided by evidence-based practice drawn from lessons, experiences, and insights from the network's work and collaboration. It achieves this by leveraging local knowledge and expertise to influence education policy and practice.

Membership is by invitation and comprises a diverse team from Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. It operates as a policy-influencing network, a peer-led community of practice, and an organizational strengthening initiative.

ZAF has hosted the RELI Kenya chapter since 2019 and in 2022, transitioned to incubating the RELI Africa regional network. In 2023, all RELI Africa activities were coordinated from ZAF as the regional hub. Throughout 2023, ZAF incubated and supported the RELI Africa institutionalization process that saw RELI meet several milestones including: the development of 11 operational guidelines and policies; development and launch of three country strategic plans which initiated the development of a regional strategy; an overhaul of the RELI Africa website; and successfully hosting three country convenings among other milestones.

READ MORE **HERE.**

The Education Evidence for Action (EE4A)

ZAF has been hosting the Education Evidence for Action (EE4A) since 2021. The EE4A was established in 2015 to help close the gap between research, policy, and practice in Kenya. EE4A brings together researchers, academia, and policymakers to engage, elicit discourses in the education sector, and utilize evidence for actionable and measurable planning and outcomes. The vision of the network is an education system in Kenya where research evidence informs education decisions and policys. It hopes to achieve this through biennial conferences, that provide space for sharing evidence on key education outcomes, elicit discourse and discussions on the issues, and identify gaps and action plans for engagement in between the conferences.

TVET Values and Life Skills Working Group

In 2017, ZAF conducted a study that pointed out the gaps that existed in the TVET sector. The study revealed that most of the youth graduated without skills needed in the job market. Further, it was evident that many players were working independently and lacked coordination for collective impact. Consequently, that same year, ZAF and other likeminded organizations came together to form a network to coordinate TVET advocacy which came to be known as The Values and Life Skills (VaLi) Working Group. The network engages in Advocacy for more youth to join TVET and funding for VTCs and Focus on Transferable competencies as foundation for holistic youth development. In 2023, the network under the leadership of ZAF had several notable achievements that included the development of the National Integrated TVET Communication and Advocacy Strategy (NITCAS); Initiation of a TVET advocacy campaign; Influencing the Kenya School of TVET Curriculum; and the development of three policy briefs Mapping TVET data funding, scoping conducted, and a funding plan.

Key Result 7

We contributed to the National Education Sector Strategic Plan.

At the national level, we left our blueprint in two policy documents including the National Education Sector Strategy Plan (NESSP 2023 – 2027) and the National Accelerated Education Guidelines (NAEGs). In the former, we made specific inputs on the foundational learning section of the policy document. The NAEGs have been packaged to guide education stakeholders on how to conduct remediation, catch-up, bridging, and accelerated education programs. Once its rolled out, the provisions of this document will benefit over 10 million children enrolled in primary schools countrywide.

> *The privilege of touring while monitoring and giving support to champions has enabled me to explore Bungoma West, meet and interact with new and different learners, parents, and friends. Not forgetting the warm welcome by residents, hence making my work more comfortable. Being exposed to the digital world has raised my standards. Exposure to the outside world, the opportunity to reach the administrative offices, meeting the high-profile officers, addressing congregations during official days e.g. Mashujaa day and other forums has raised my confidence. Thank you, ZAF* ***Project Coach.***

Zizi Afrique Foundation

Pillar three
Innovations for Policy and Practice.

Our Foundational Learning work is domiciled in the innovation's directorate and is guided by three strategies: i) skilling targeted audiences including teachers, learners, youth, parents, and community groups; ii) developing, adapting, and testing innovative approaches to hasten the acquisition of foundational learning competencies; and iii) scaling these innovative practices through Government and community-based partnerships.

As the year began, we not only reminded ourselves of our purpose of impacting the lives of children, youth, and families we work with but also challenged ourselves to be bold as we pushed to break the barriers to children and youth acquiring the competencies they need. This pursuit was anchored on one pillar: partnerships.

i) Partnerships with families and communities
ii) Partnerships with like-minded impact partner organizations
iii) Partnerships with system actors at the various levels of Government

In 2023, we strategically collaborated with others to strengthen our collective impact for improved foundational learning outcomes with the following results.

Key Result 8

We successfully piloted two innovations to support children left behind in literacy

My Village

In 2023, we collaborated with the People's Action for Learning (PAL) Network to pilot *My Village* project in 300 villages in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. *My Village* was a youth-led, community-based literacy intervention that enlisted youth volunteers to conduct literacy learning camps after school and during the weekends at designated community spaces. It targeted children with low literacy competences who were identified through household assessments. Eighty-six villages participated in the intervention across three counties: Bungoma, Kilifi, and Kitui.

The data and evidence generated demonstrated that it is possible to improve numeracy and literacy through cost-effective approaches at the school or community level. The project had three partners: *Kyeni Kya Waasya* (Kitui); Kaloleni Youth Empowerment Group (Kilifi); and Milimo CBO (Bungoma). The initiative assessed over 15,000 children and benefited over 3200 children on literacy in 2023 alone. Find Link

> *This project has boosted my confidence. After the training and implementation, I was nominated to be a member of the development committee in my village. Champion from Makomboani, village*

> *I happened to be in the parents' meeting where the Champion requested for learning space in the village. As the parents discussed the possible spaces available, I thought about my son's incomplete house in my compound. I decided to offer this space. I am happy to help children learn and I know that when they learn, we are safe because education helps them to avoid stealing and doing other terrible things… I am happy that I am helping a child in a small way. Parent, Sirisia, Bungoma County*

Napenda Kusoma

Napenda Kusoma is an initiative of the Kirinyaga County leadership and the South-to-South fellowship, hosted by ZAF in Kenya. The lessons from *My Village* project were used to inform the conceptualization and implementation of *Napenda Kusoma*, which hopes to scale literacy levels through the government at the sub-national level. Its vision is to ensure that by 2026, all children in Kirinyaga can read with comprehension by the end of Grade 3.

What Did We Achieve?

Through this journey, we partnered with 12,213 parents across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, and enhanced their self-efficacy in supporting learning. We witnessed parents step up to support learning. We broke the silos by initiating and sustaining a regional learning network of over 400 participants in partnership with the Africa Voices Dialogue.
In addition, we contributed to improved foundational learning outcomes of over 16,000 learners (3,290 of these directly). We also established a network of 290 youth champions and supported 76 teachers who were equipped with capacities to assess Foundational Literacy learning outcomes, facilitated targeted literacy support to learners struggling to read, and engaged communities as they nurture a culture of reading at home.

Key Result 9

We expanded our partnership with families and communities to catalyze their agency for learning

Engaging parents in their children's learning boosts the morale of the children, their attitude and academic achievements, and promotes their ability to socially adjust in life (ZAF, 2023). However, poverty, illiteracy, strained relationships with teachers and school leaders, and limited understanding of curriculum continue to impede parental participation in their children's learning (RELI, 2023).

We continued our learning and co-creation journey of the Parental Engagement and Empowerment (PE&E) framework with the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) Africa and the African Voices Dialogue (AVD) networks, working closely with Grassroots Nest for Innovations and Change (GRiC), Foundation for Inclusive Community Help (FICH), Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) and Pastoral Women's Council (PWC). We collaborated with others in co-creating a detailed version of the PE&E framework with RELI Africa and AVD and coordinated collective advocacy through networks such as the Values and Life Skills (VaLi) working group and conferences. We co-hosted impact partners at local and regional levels and spoke to parents, school leaders, and children to understand their priority issues with regard to PE&E. Led by AVD, the PE&E team convened three learn shops during the year, with an active global learning community of over 400 participants. In addition, we invited youth champions to volunteer to facilitate literacy learning in their communities. By the time we convened in Kenya in November 2023, we applied our collective experiences to finalize the first draft of the PE&E framework.

What Did We Achieve?

89 percent of the children who had attended at least three learning camps in English progressed by at least one level, compared to 86 percent in the Kiswahili cohort. Additionally, within 30 days, 45 percent could read a story in English while 43 percent could read in Kiswahili. Notably, the villages under Kiswahili intervention had the lowest learning levels at baseline and recorded slightly lower gains over the project's period.

582 community conversations were held, reaching 7,598 parents. Some offered their compounds as learning spaces for the children during the camps. An analysis of attendance data showed that there was a significantly higher number of females attending these conversations at any given time compared to their male counterparts. In quarter four of 2023, out of the villages surveyed, 72 percent of parents attending community conversations were mothers/female guardians.

Study packs were distributed to 780 learners in 52 villages. This gesture excited communities the most, and learning camps recorded increased self-enrolment from across the village.

'The South to South is a fellowship of education leaders drawn from Government and Civil Society in Kenya and Pakistan. Initiated in 2022, members of the S-S fellowship visited Sobral, Brazil to experience a Government-led initiative that has transformed learning outcomes in the Municipality of Sobral. As a result, the Kirinyaga County leadership has come together to pilot a similar initiative.

Key Result 10

We partnered with system actors at sub-national and national levels of government to support children left behind to catch up

Out of the 5 million children and youth we hope to impact by 2025, four million of these should be impacted through the established structures of the Government (ZAF, 2025). We leveraged two networks: the South-to-South Fellowship and the VaLi network.

The South-to-South fellowship birthed a vibrant local community of system actors in Kirinyaga working together to improve the literacy outcomes after their immersion in Sobral, Brazil. Their aspiration is etched in their motto of ***Every Child in Kirinyaga reading with Comprehension by Grade 3.***

A key milestone for this movement is the convergence of efforts and seamless coordination between county and national levels of government under the ***Napenda Kusoma (NK)*** initiative. In Kenya, Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) is a function devolved to the county government. Even though this is where the foundational learning competences are seeded, there is little coordination with primary schools. Issues of management, inadequate supervision and resourcing of ECDE centers, and little to no instructional leadership continue to bedevil the quality of learning in these facilities. However, with the emergence of this local movement of learning champions in Kirinyaga, the teams from both ends are working together to realize the intended child-level outcomes.

What Did We Achieve?

This initiative has contributed to increased accountability for FL by local leaders. It has brought together 21 leaders from both levels of governance who are championing a system-led reform. It has also enhanced the capacities of 116 teachers in designing formative learning assessments, material development, and targeted instruction. Overall, over 12,000 learners from ECDE to Grade 3, in 40 schools (33 public and 7 private) have benefitted from quality learning experiences and individualized support as teachers shift their classroom practices for the better.

We enjoined ourselves to learning networks for cross-cultural, cross-contextual learning exchange.

The Innovations directorate is part of the Daara Academy whose mission is to strengthen the capacities of organizations in Sub-Sahara Africa to design and deliver effective FL programs at scale, while also creating a movement of local actors for regional advocacy. Through a co-creation process, the academy developed a leadership curriculum that will guide the one-year program. This has been a useful space for peer learning and exchange.
ZAF was also the secretariat of the South-South Fellowship program by the Lemann Foundation. The partnership exposed our leadership to the transformative learning approach in Brazil, resulting in increased capacities and growth of our leaders.

Key Result 11

We accelerated our journey towards transforming Zizi into a Learning Organization.

In our journey towards becoming a learning organization, ZAF has embraced a culture of continuous learning and adaptation. Here, we highlight three key learning questions prioritized based on our experiences and progress:

Question 1

How Can Evidence Generation Drive Informed Decision-Making?

One of our key learnings revolves around the critical role of evidence generation in informing decision-making processes. Through rigorous research studies and assessments, we have gathered valuable insights into various aspects of education and youth development. These insights have not only enhanced our understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the sector but have also empowered us to make informed decisions regarding program design, advocacy efforts, and resource allocation. For instance, our research on life skills, parental empowerment, and literacy levels has directly influenced the design and implementation of initiatives such as Napenda Kusoma and ALiVE. By leveraging evidence-based learning products and dissemination forums, we are effectively communicating our findings to stakeholders, thereby catalyzing positive change in policy and practice.

Question 2

What Mechanisms Facilitate Effective Collaboration and Partnerships?

Collaboration lies at the heart of our approach to collective impact in education. Through partnerships with government agencies, NGOs, academic institutions, and CBOs, we have expanded our reach and impact significantly. Our learnings emphasize the importance of establishing mutually beneficial partnerships built on trust, shared goals, and effective communication. Co-creation with government entities has been particularly instrumental in driving policy changes and scaling interventions. Moreover, our engagement models prioritize community empowerment and accountability, fostering ownership, and sustainability beyond project lifecycles. By actively identifying and strengthening the capacities of our partners, we are creating an ecosystem conducive to innovation and collective action.

Question 3

How Can Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Enhance Program Effectiveness?

The establishment of robust **Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) systems** has been a cornerstone of our organizational development. Despite facing challenges in implementation, including reporting delays and staffing transitions, we have made considerable progress in refining our MEL frameworks and practices. Regular field visits, report writing workshops, and learning events have facilitated knowledge sharing and capacity building within our teams. Furthermore, our commitment to conducting mid-term evaluations and engaging in continuous improvement reflects our dedication to evidence-based decision-making and accountability. Moving forward, we recognize the need to further streamline our MEL processes and leverage technology for more efficient data collection and analysis.

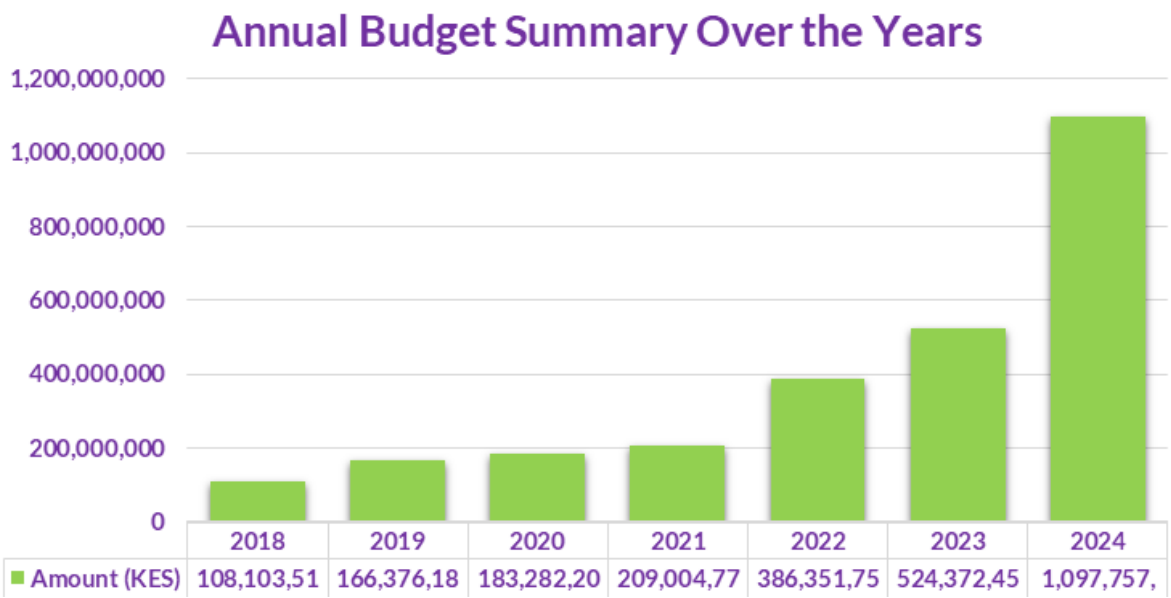
Conclusion

Our journey towards becoming a learning organization at ZAF is characterized by a relentless pursuit of knowledge, collaboration, and innovation. By addressing key learning questions and leveraging our learnings to drive action, we are not only transforming our practices but also contributing to positive change in the education sector and beyond.

SECTION 3: FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

For the financial period ending December 31, 2023, Expenditure grew from KES 340,494,751 to KES 555, 177,508 for the period ending December 31, 2022. This was supported in growth of revenue from KES **219,239,759** in 2021 to KES **882,210,187** in 2023. In the past 6 years, ZAF budget has grown from KES **0.1B** to KES **1.1B** reflecting the organization's ambition to create impact in Kenya and across the region.

a. The Budget Summary Over the Years

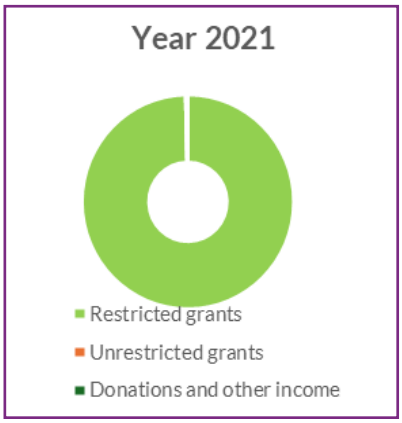


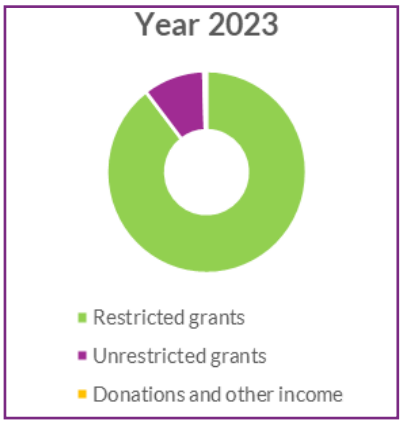
b. The Budget Summary Over the Years

	Actual Expenditure (in Kenya Shillings)		
Strategic Areas	**Year 2021**	**Year 2022**	**Year 2023**
Research	46,102,910	203,158,022	219,693,945
Advocacy	24,636,764	17,585,299	26,534,260
Innovations	28,463,577	16,022,768	111,648,526
MELS	4,045,813	3,776,848	7,409,809
Fundraising	1,516,540	1,420,281	4,817,257
Technology	3,014,418	2,012,200	8,765,319
Governance	1,093,207	6,142,739	9,686,583
People	50,555,343	81,261,330	153,248,205
Operations	6,614,010	9,115,264	13,373,604
TOTAL	**166,042,582**	**340,494,751**	**555,177,508**
Changes in Annual Expenditure		**104%**	**63%**

Revenue Raised to Support the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan

Income Source	Actual Income Received (in Kenya Shillings)		
	Year 2021	Year 2022	Year 2023
Restricted grants	218,476,172	424,873,334	790,289,410
Unrestricted grants	—	25,650,000	87,750,000
Donations and other income	763,587	896,954	4,170,778
Total Income	**219,239,759**	**451,420,288**	**882,210,188**
Changes in Annual Revenue		**105%**	**96%**





Zizi Afrique Foundation

SECTION 4

CELEBRATING TEAMWORK AND EXCELLENCE AT ZAF

2023 Board Awards

With ZAF's commitment to recognizing exceptional contributions and fostering a culture of excellence, the Board Award was introduced, applying a comprehensive 360-degree appraisal system. This initiative acknowledges outstanding achievements within our workforce. The awards for the year 2023 were four:

- Staff of the Year - Awarded to the individual with the overall top score from the 360-degree appraisal feedback and the targets' evaluation.
- Organizational Values Award - Awarded to the employee exemplifying a strong commitment to organizational values, based on the 360-degree appraisal.
- Professionalism Award - Awarded to the individual who demonstrated exceptional professionalism in their role, based on the 360-degree appraisal.
- Leadership Award - Awarded to the Executive Director by the Board, as an appreciation for his exceptional leadership style and contribution to Zizi Afrique Foundation.

Summary of Board Awards

Dr. John Mugo

Leadership Award

Dr. Purity Ngina

Values Award

Francis Njuguna

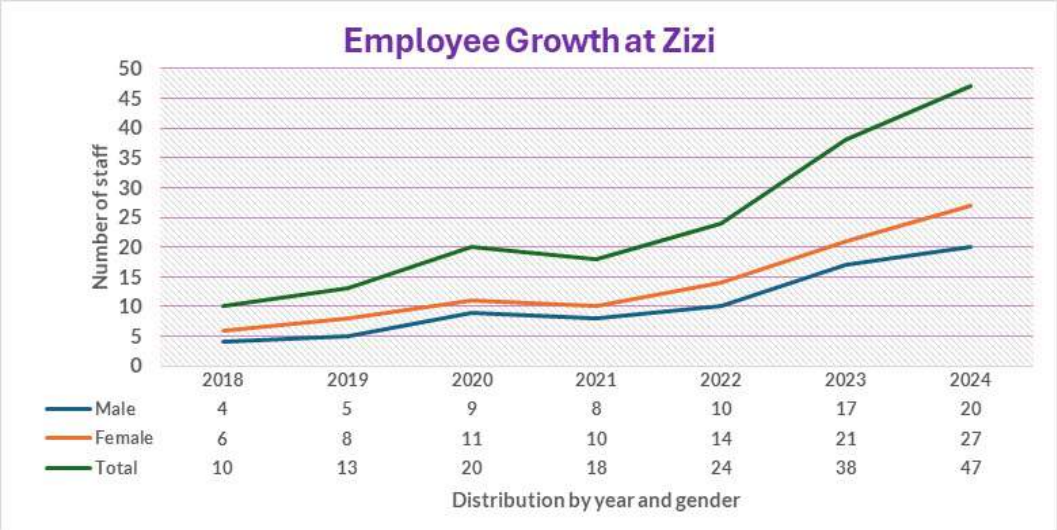
Staff of the Year Award

Winrose Bett

Professionalism Award

Key Milestones in Organizational Performance

Since 2018, ZAF's staff members have increased from 10 in 2018 to 38 at the close of 2023. (Current number stands at 47). In addition, ZAF also mentored 16 interns in 2023. See the graph below



Furthermore, diversity has been a key factor in staff growth. We have onboarded staff and interns from different regions in Kenya and across the border (Uganda and Tanzania), and have made considerations for equity and inclusion in terms of gender, age, and people abled differently. Zizi further provides leadership and mentorship sessions that have increased members' capacities. As a result, the staff retention rate was 95% in 2023.

SECTION 5

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: 2024 AND BEYOND

In 2023, Zizi Afrique remained committed to her mission of driving change through evidence-based practices, strategic advocacy efforts, and innovative solutions. Through these efforts, we have sought to catalyse the acquisition of skills for children and youth. In the course of the year, we saw the culmination of four projects: the Safaricom Scholarship Project, the Whole Youth Development Project, the My Village Project, and the Holistic Innovations for Kenya's Education project. However, with every ending comes a new beginning, and we embarked on fresh endeavors such as Phase 2 of the Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) Initiative and the Future of Work and ECD initiatives.

Through the various programs/initiatives, we were able to reach 4000 youth and 23,677 children through interventions and studies and 13,176 primary school headteachers and teachers. We wrote and published 12 research papers, signed 19 funding contracts, reached 13 institutions of higher education, 5,000,000 parents through media, and 907 government officials. We also established partnerships with 62 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Indeed, 2023 was a remarkable year. We could not be more excited for the future!

Three things define ZAF in 2024!

1. Systems Change

ZAF is putting more effort to engage, co-create, and collaborate with the system (Government). The key is to work at scale, considering that the government is responsible for educating all children and youth. ZAF now works closely with the system to build the momentum for change, to identify the root causes of the problems, and encourage agencies to work together towards common goals and to have a broader view of the problems.

2. Collective Impact

ZAF scaled up her convening power and localization edge while building on the evidence-use in education work that she has been leading since 2021. ZAF now uses ways that push and accelerate learnings collectively. A special mention must be made of the EE4A Conference that was held at Tom Mboya University in Homa Bay County, which brought together key policymakers and key academic/educational institutions, as well as the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI). A major learning for ZAF was that we cannot achieve the impact we desire on our own, so concerted efforts were necessary towards movement building and connecting with each other/other organizations to reach the millions of children that she hopes to change their story.

3. Growth Towards a Pass-Through Organization

Varied efforts were made towards positioning ZAF as an organization that supports the mutual growth of other organizations. ZAF worked and continues to work with partners and positions them in a way that they can contribute towards the change she desires. Overall, we now see ourselves on the path towards a pass-through organization that other organizations can work with for collective impact. Indeed, that ZAF is now emerging as a mid-sized regional organization, in Sub-Sahara Africa, is no mean achievement. In 2024, our aspirations are set above the bar in a bid to make a greater impact on the lives of all children and youth. To boost her visibility and impact, this year ZAF aims to:

- Strengthen the leadership capacities of the senior management team (directors) for effective organizational management and commitment to ZAF's vision.
- Enhance her compliance with all the relevant legislations and regulations regarding her operation, research operating
- procedures such as data protection and enhancing capacities for evidence synthesis and translation of research within the organization.
- Strengthen evidence-led advocacy and enhance strategic partnerships by influencing the public, policy, and media space to achieve and sustain strategic organizational goals and articulate her story.
- Expand her capacity as a pass-through, to support other organizations in the target countries to deliver collective impact.

The emergence of an ecosystem builder in the wake of localization

In 2024 and beyond, ZAF will continue establishing more partnerships with local partners, capacitating, strengthening, and enabling them, and the local communities to understand their roles and responsibilities and to understand the importance of working collaboratively and participatory ways to improve learning outcomes and to optimally use resources. ZAF remains optimistic and increasingly focused on finding solutions to systemic problems in the education space, more so those that impede the learning and thriving of children.

We acknowledge that the journey may take some time, but we are keen to leave our mark in the education space. We will brave every storm in 2024!

Hongera Zizi! | Tufurahie Mafanikio ya 2023

You welcomed the new year 2023
You celebrated your 6th birthday
Pursuing your ambitious 5-year strategy
Braving the year with courage and hope
Embracing enthusiasm and passion
Only to make a better world...
For our youth and children
Indeed, we celebrate you, Zizi!

Granting your staff members an opportunity
Taking a leadership training course
Raising self-awareness among them
Boosting your employee's performance
And to live your dream...
Embracing a succession plan
Well, done Zizi!

Fully operationalizing your four directorates
Gathering evidence through research
Testing models through innovations
Engaging policymakers through advocacy
More and more employees you onboarded
Exploring your ambitious strategy
Expanding your wings in East Africa
In Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania
Venturing in West Central Africa region
In Cameroon and Malawi
Employing the first team of international employees
Oh! Zizi, we celebrate you!

More resilient and agile you became
Building your brand...and gaining popularity
Receiving new grants and awards
Receiving your first unrestricted funding!
Convening various conferences,
The VALI-Africa and Education Evidence for Action
The Africa Evidence Forum on Foundational Learning
And counting, the success list is endless
Hongera Zizi! Twajivunia!

We are grateful to our funders

Co Impact

Conrad N. Hilton FOUNDATION

CIFF CHILDREN'S INVESTMENT FUND FOUNDATION

echidna giving

if imaginable futures

PORTICUS

PAL NETWORK People's Action for Learning

THE PETER CUNDILL FOUNDATION

The LEGO Foundation

Wellspring Philanthropic Fund

WHH WELT HUNGER HILFE

Zizi Afrique Foundation

Zizi Afrique Foundation

2023 Annual Report

For further information:

www.ziziafrique.org | info@ziziafrique.org

Follow us:

Zizi Afrique Foundation