Zizi Afrique Foundation

Zizi Impact

Issue 7: July 2024

Greetings from Zizi!

The year is past the halfway mark. The months seem to fly by, but time does fly when we are having fun. We had an eventful second quarter and are delighted to share our achievements and progress so far.

In this edition of the Zizi Impact, we explore the strategies ZAF and its partners are employing to accelerate the incorporation of values and life skills in education curricula in East Africa. We also share how we continue to leverage data and evidence generated from the Whole Youth Development (WYD) program to unlock youth development and economic opportunities through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) skills. We inform you how our evidence and data are enriching discourses on education locally and beyond and how ZAF is supporting access to education and the acquisition of foundational skills.

Moreover, we tell you why we are sharpening our focus on gender, knowledge management, organizational learning, and staff well-being. We also tell you how ZAF is responding to the most vibrant generation in town, in light of the recent Gen Z movement.

Finally, in our ongoing series of getting to know the People at ZAF better, we profile Dr. Purity Ngina, the outgoing ALiVE Manager in the story, *From the Lecture Halls to Life Skills Assessment: The Story of the Courage to Be and to Do.*

Exciting things await. Happy reading!
Editorial Team

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Accelerating the incorporation of Values and Life Skills in the curricula in East Africa.

Through the Action for Lifeskills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) program, ZAF and her partners continue to employ multiple strategies to accelerate the incorporation of key competencies in the curriculums and educational assessments across Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

Working with curriculum institutes to entrench life skills and values in the curricular of 3 countries in East Africa.

ZAF has established formal partnerships with the curriculum institutes in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania (Mainland and Zanzibar) through policy advocacy and capacity-building initiatives aimed at sharpening curricula and building capacities for governments to embed values and life skills in the education system.

In Kenya, ZAF collaborated with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) to review and finalize Values-based Education (VbE) materials. ZAF developed the pilot plan and ideated an innovation for developing life skills that aligned with the Whole Schools Approach. In Uganda, similar engagements are ongoing with the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) and the Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) to strengthen expertise, clarify curriculum elements, develop skills progressions, and build assessment capacity for life skills and values. In Tanzania, we are collaborating with the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE) and Zanzibar Institute of Education (ZIE), through technical working groups, to prioritize and integrate competencies into the curriculum. We inform how these skills are developed across different educational levels, shaping their nurturing and assessment within classrooms.

ALiVE supporting technical officials from Tanzania Institute of Education in revision of curicullum

Endorsement of the ALiVE initiative by the Ministry of Education in Zanzibar.

The Ministry of Education and Vocational Training (MoEVT), Zanzibar, has formally endorsed the ALiVE initiative, paving the way for collaboration with various departments to integrate life skills into the new curriculum. This includes developing a life skills framework and an in-school assessment tool for learners aged between 6–12. We held fruitful workshops with selected teacher training institutions to identify gaps in the current curriculum. These workshops provided invaluable insights into areas that needed improvement. Our partnerships with major teacher training institutions have resulted in the development of modules focused on nurturing and assessing life skills. Additionally, our engagement with the State University of Zanzibar (SUZA) resulted in the successful integration of 21st-century skills and life skills into educational courses and programs in Zanzibar.

Reforming teacher education to strengthen the focus on life skills and values.

We have established key partnerships with five institutions of higher learning in East Africa. They are Kenyatta University, Makerere University, Kyambogo University, University of Dar-es-Salaam, and the State University of Zanzibar. Additionally, in Kenya, ZAF is working with the Ministry of Education through Machakos and Eregi Teacher Training Colleges to co-create new teacher-training approaches for primary schools. We reached an agreement with KICD, to work together to revise the teacher education curriculum.

In Tanzania, ZAF and her partners are supporting the State University of Zanzibar to conceptualize, contextualize, and embed life skills and values in the revisions of their Bachelor of Education training.

These collaborations aim to develop stand-alone modules that focus on nurturing and assessing life skills.

Teacher education trainining at Eregi TTC

The Action for Lifeskills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) Academy launched.

To increase the number of experts who are competent to embed competencies in the curriculum and assess them, ZAF and her partners under the ALiVE program have launched the ALiVE Academy. As part of laying the foundation, the ALiVE Academy recently conducted a nine-week workshop led by Professor Esther Care, where 13 Master Trainers were trained on 21st century skills. These trainers, mainly from local experts in Phase One, are now capable of training others, reviewing and revising curricula, and providing technical advice to organizations like PAL Network. The trained Master Trainers have been reviewing and revising curricula in Uganda, Tanzania, Zanzibar, and Kenya, focusing on integrating life skills and values into other learning areas.

The academy, the first of its kind in Africa, aims to build a critical mass of experts with knowledge and expertise in incorporating key 21st-century competencies in the curriculum.

ALiVE Academy workshop led by Prof. Esther Care

Promoting Values and Life Skills in East African Schools

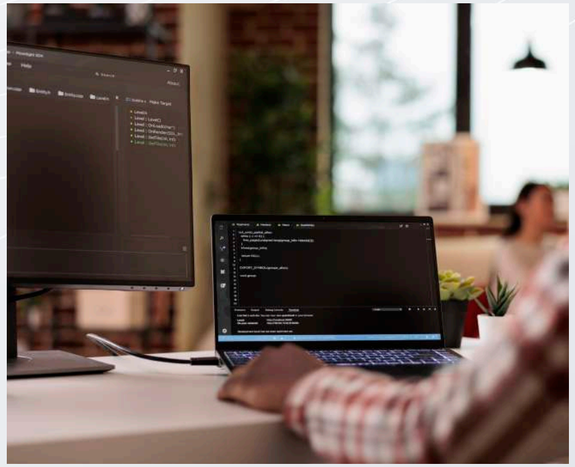
The 2022 ALiVE assessment revealed significant gaps in the acquisition of values and life skills among adolescents aged 13–17. The study recommended a Whole School Approach (WSA) to nurture life skills and values.

To address this need, the Learning Journey with Schools (LJS) project was initiated with a focus on nurturing these competencies among 6–12-year-olds in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. The project aims to bring together a learning community made of RELI's Values and Life Skills (VaLi) cluster members and external stakeholders.

Additionally, the Directorate of Innovations finalized the parental empowerment and engagement (PE&E) toolkits that will guide parental engagements with head/teachers, community, and PE&E facilitators. In collaboration with RELI, the National Parents Association (NPA), the National Council of Nomadic Education in Kenya (NACONEK), and the Kenya Primary School Heads Association (KEPSHA), the Directorate has developed a comprehensive PE&E concept aimed at engaging parents who are furthest behind. This initiative aims to strengthen parental participation in their children's education and ensure they acquire essential foundational learning skills.

Open-Sourcing values and lifeskills assessment tools for greater adoption and use.

ALiVE has partnered with Strathmore University in Kenya to develop an open-source platform for assessment tools. The platform will be available globally and is scheduled to launch in September 2024. All the documentation for the open-source tools has been completed including terms and conditions, instructional videos, and a comprehensive user manual. ALiVE has created a website to host the open-source platform, which will make the assessment tools more visible, more accessible, and better promoted.



Unearthing and addressing the gaps in incorporation and assessment of life skills and values.

ALiVE conducted classroom observations and discussions with teacher educators, teachers in teacher training colleges, and Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE) institutions to identify gaps in integrating and assessing life skills and values. An area of focus is reviewing courses and supporting ECDE. The initiative involves reviewing diploma courses to integrate ALiVE modules and exploring additional support for ECDE teachers to ensure these modules are effectively embedded in their training programs.

ALiVE is currently creating and testing three key modules: Introduction to Life Skills and Values, Integration and Pedagogies to Nurture Life Skills and Values, and Assessment of Life Skills and Values in teacher training colleges and universities across East Africa. It also conducted a study to gather evidence about nurturing interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa. It analyzed 168 works and plans to share the findings in July.

ALiVE is also collaborating with the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) to incorporate its tools into datasets addressing Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Social Skills (SS) measurement challenges, making these tools more useful in wider contexts.

ECD Stakeholder Engangement in Siaya County

Assessment of Life Skills and Values among Adolescents in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

As part of the efforts to ensure that learners acquire 21st-century skills and values that would enable them to learn and thrive at school and later in life, the ALiVE project continues to generate evidence on the levels of proficiency in life skills among children in East Africa. The assessment of life skills and values is among the many efforts ALiVE undertakes to play its role in easing the implementation of competency-based curricula across East Africa.

In April 2024, the Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) conducted assessments for life skills and values in Taita Taveta, Nyeri, and Kisumu counties in Kenya. The assessment targeted adolescents aged between 13 and 17 across 1,125 households in the three counties. In May 2024, Uwezo Uganda partnered with the Luigi Giussani Foundation (LGF) to pilot tools for assessment in Jinja, Kasese, and Oyam districts in Uganda reaching a total of 1,125 adolescents aged 13-17. The pilot is expected to not only enable further generation of data on these competencies but also be used to yield a repository of tools for the ALiVE open-source platform as well as those that can be used by partners to evaluate programs that focus on life skills and values integration and nurturing. In June, a total of 1,878 adolescents were assessed in Tanzania and Zanzibar covering 1,430 households across six districts (3 in Zanzibar and 3 in mainland Tanzania). The targeted adolescents were assessed on competencies of problem solving, self-awareness, collaboration, and respect. The exercise was coordinated by the Milele Zanzibar Foundation (MZF) in Zanzibar and the Organization for Community Development (OCODE) in Tanzania mainland. Currently, the teams are analyzing data for a report that will be released later this year. ALiVE sought to assess three life skills (Collaboration, Problem solving, and Self-awareness) and one value (Respect).

ALiVE assessment of Life skills and values in Taita Taveta-Kenya

Unlocking youth development and economic opportunities through TVET skills across Kenya.

In the second quarter, ZAF rekindled her collaboration with the TVET Curriculum Development, Assessment and Accreditation Council (CDACC) through workshops with industry experts and sector skills committees for occupational analysis and packaging of Horticulture Level 3 & 4 curricula. Also, ZAF engaged the Kenya School of TVET (KS-TVET) to finalize revisions of the essential skills curriculum, picking up from last year in readiness for a pilot with trainees.

Empowering Kenyan Youth in Agriculture through Green Skills Training

The green business project organized a series of county advisory group meetings at Makueni Agriculture College, Bukura Agriculture College, and Latia Agribusiness Training Centre. These meetings aimed to formalize and structure the advisory group established in November 2023. The advisory committee, a collaboration of green business partners, county government officials, project mentors, the Ministry of Interior, partner TVETs, trainers, and graduates, reached 53 participants who discussed the findings of the green business studies.

May 2024 saw the successful completion and validation of a midline study report by project partners titled "Empowering Kenyan Youth in Agriculture through Green Skills Training". The findings are also being used to support engagement in Kenya and globally and was presented at the 7th Africa Evidence to Action Conference (E2A) 2024 at ISSER.

In June 2024, discussions with TVET-CDACC led to the review of the horticulture level 3 and 4 curricula. Outcomes from project studies and feedback from implementing TVETs were incorporated, and industry experts developed occupational maps and curriculum development charts for horticulture.

Advancing youth employment in the Hospitality and Tourism sector

The Future of Work (FoW) project in partnership with the Global Development Incubator (GDI) convened a stakeholder engagement forum with key actors in the youth employment space on 26th June 2024 at the Sheraton Regency Hotel, Mombasa. These key actors comprised employers in the Hospitality and Tourism (H&T) sector, trainers, civil society organizations, and policymakers at the national and county levels.

Among other objectives, the event brought together the stakeholders to learn and understand the youth employment space and the potential contribution of the H&T sector to youth employment. It also aimed to connect the ecosystem players with a view of identifying opportunities (if any) for supporting the ecosystem to amplify the urgency for evidence-led advocacy strategies and approaches in addressing youth unemployment.

The forum was attended by participants from GDI, employers, youth representatives, national and county governments, and training institutions (Technical University of Mombasa, and Mombasa National Polytechnic). There are ongoing engagements with the donor and partners and new collaborations, such as with the University of Nairobi's African Center of Excellence for Inequality Research as an advisory partner.

In the third quarter, the Future of Work project will hold a co-creation workshop to validate the research tools, review research questions, and prepare for a baseline survey. Other activities will include forming the research team, training, and recruiting research assistants, collecting data, disseminating results, and finally setting up the labor market observatory.

Future of Work stakeholder engagement in Mombasa County

Using Data and Evidence to Enrich Discourses on Education Locally and Beyond

Evidence from ZAF research and the implementation of education innovations continue to enrich conversations around supporting the acquisition of foundational skills in Kenya and beyond.

ZAF at the Nation Leadership Forum 2024

ZAF's Executive Director, Dr. John Mugo, was part of the high-level panel in this year's edition of The Nation Leadership Forum held at the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD). The forum, dubbed "NMG Leadership Forum", seeks to encourage dialogue on key issues affecting the country such as economy, agriculture, health, governance, and financial markets. This year's theme was "Global Perspectives in Kenya's Education Reforms." Please watch the debate here.

ZAF's Whole Youth Development (WYD) work highlighted in the British Council's podcast

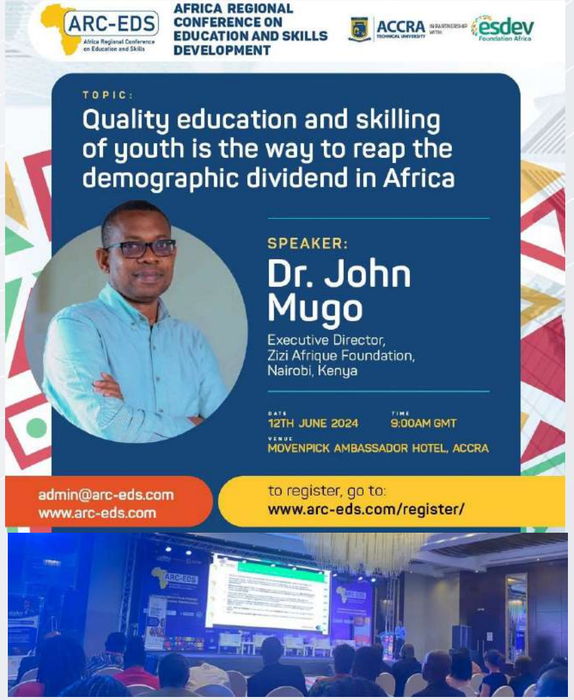
In a podcast episode, "Youth Skills in a Rapidly Changing World", hosted by Christine Wilson of the British Council, ZAF's Executive Director, Dr. John Mugo, and Ms. Beria Wawira spoke about the need to equip young people with essential skills to face modern challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

The conversation was a spotlight on ZAF's work which is actively seeking to bridge this gap through the Whole Youth Development program, which focuses on holistic youth development, that involves mentorship, quality education, and funding for disadvantaged youth. The program also emphasizes close monitoring of academic and personal growth and encourages participation in sports for holistic development. Through targeted actions and impactful programs, organizations like Zizi Afrique are making significant strides in preparing the next generation for the future.

ZAF was featured at the Africa Regional Conference on Education and Skills Development 2024

ZAF's Executive Director gave the keynote address on the statistics of youth and employment at the 2024 conference held in June. The Africa Regional Conference & Exhibition on Education and Skills Development (ARC-EDS) is an initiative of the ESDEV Foundation Africa and was organized this year in partnership with Ghana's premier Technical University, Accra Technical University. The conference sought to provide solutions to the pressing challenges of unemployment and skills development for employability among Africa's youth population.

Additionally, it sought to advocate for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a viable pathway to empower young people with entrepreneurial knowledge and skills, contributing to reduced unemployment and dependency in Ghana and Africa.



Supporting Access to Education and Acquisition of Foundational Skills

In supporting the acquisition of foundational skills, ZAF continued to strengthen engagement around the 100% transition project. In addition, ZAF embarked on the preparatory work for the new Early Childhood Development (ECD) project through stakeholder forums and meetings.

Upscaling efforts for a 100% transition to secondary school

ZAF continues to support the community-led initiative to ensure a 100% transition to secondary school. In June, the Policy Learning for Universal Secondary Education (PLUS) initiative engaged stakeholders from Chepatis, Kahuro, Dagoretti, Sololo, Laikipia North, and Ithanga Kakuzi sub-counties. The goal was to share valuable lessons from a community accountability initiative aimed at ensuring a 100% transition to secondary school and to lay the groundwork for tracking student retention. Over two hundred key stakeholders including education officials, government representatives, heads of institutions, and community leaders participated in these efforts.

A dedicated team of 145 youth volunteers has been tracking the retention of students from the 2022 and 2023 KCPE cohorts. By the end of June, this effort had reached over 5,000 students from ninety-six primary schools, with visits to over 2,000 households and sixty-three secondary schools within the sub-counties. This initiative underscores the importance of supporting student retention beyond their transition to secondary school.

Laying ground for Early Childhood Development work

In our last edition, we introduced you to ZAF's Early Childhood Development (ECD) initiative which aims to consolidate evidence for advocacy and leadership in ECD in the context of nurturing care (children 0–3yrs). The ECD initiative held four forums to introduce the project to key stakeholders and explore an implementation plan. The first meeting involved the national stakeholders, with the participation of the Ministries of Education and Health. The other three meetings were held with the leadership and stakeholders of the County Governments of Siaya, Samburu, and Mombasa where the project will be implemented

Building a Strong and Transformative Organization for Greater Impact and Systems Change in Kenya and the Region

Informed by the mid-term review of its Strategic Plan 2021–2025, ZAF began a journey of transformation that reviewed her approaches in areas such as gender, organizational learning, advocacy, and leadership capacities.

Strengthening our focus on gender: Towards a gender transformative organization

ZAF began the journey of transformation towards becoming a strong organization, from being gender responsive to a transformative one. This focus will enable us to anchor gender equality as a guiding principle in all our organizational procedures and activities. To achieve this, we have deliberately begun an inward-to-outward-bound assessment through a gender audit to assess the key areas of improvement and opportunities that we can leverage to promote the understanding of gender equality in the organization.

To set the ball rolling, a Gender Audit of the organization was carried out. The report indicated that generally, ZAF is a gender-responsive organization and is making great strides in actualizing the equality agenda within the organization and in the people/community ZAF works with. Additionally, we seek to position and identify our role in strengthening gender in the ecosystem. ZAF is part of and coordinates the Gender and Education Dialogues (G&EDs), a collaborative of nine organizations working in the Gender space in Kenya whose focus is to create a platform for collective impact on gender and education that will eventually lead to a girls' education movement.

Recalibrating our Knowledge Management architecture: A new approach to how we work

ZAF recognizes the importance of integrating knowledge management into our work. We are committed to learning and redefining how we manage and leverage our knowledge to ensure that the foundation's programs and activities are evidence-based, relevant, and impactful. It also helps to foster a culture of learning and continuous improvement within the organization. Our approach is three-fold: developing and maintaining a knowledge management framework; improving and maintaining knowledge management systems; and enhancing business intelligence within the organization.

In the second quarter, we developed and launched the new Zizi Afrique website. The website is a modern reflection of our work and we are modeling it into a knowledge repository for external dissemination of our work. This will include comprehensive dashboards expounding on our work and our research findings, a central database for all data sets produced within the organization, and knowledge management infrastructure— particularly Microsoft 365, our solution of choice. This has resulted in uploading key organization reports and documents within the intranet to enhance security but more so to promote collaboration within teams. People are now able to seamlessly work together, track changes, and accomplish more much faster.

As an organization, we are looking forward to continuing our learning journey on effective knowledge management. Our goal remains to empower our work and how we tell our story with the ever-growing power of technology. We invite you to interact with our platforms to see what we do and how you could be part of the change.

Towards a learning organization

ZAF has been implementing a process of institutionalizing a learning culture within Zizi Afrique and its partners. This approach focuses on developing a learning system through Organizational Learning Capacity Assessment (OLCA), identifying learning champions, creating learning tools, and providing training. Lessons learned so far highlight the importance of structured learning systems, customized tools for documentation of learning, and comprehensive training. By the end of the year, each directorate aims to demonstrate evidence, embed evidence use, engage with the government, transition to sub-granting, and secure unrestricted funding. The top management plays a crucial role in ensuring that learning is purposeful and integrated into regular meetings, impacting the organization and its partners. These efforts aim to create a sustainable learning culture that can be a model for other organizations, driving change and impact within the Regional Education Learning Initiative (RELI) and beyond.

Prioritizing staff well-being: A look at Zizi Afrique Foundation's wellness initiatives

At Zizi Afrique Foundation, we prioritize the well-being and cohesion of our staff through physical and mental activities. Every Tuesday and Thursday, our team participates in fitness sessions designed to promote physical health and overall well-being. In addition, Zizi staff members also take chess lessons to take a stimulating break from routine, sharpen their cognitive skills, and promote strategic thinking. The lessons serve as an opportunity for our staff to unwind while engaging in friendly competition, further enhancing camaraderie within the organization.

A key highlight is our monthly hiking program, which commenced in March 2024 at Karura Forest. A venture to William Hill Hike (Mai Mahiu) and Kenton Nathan (Kijabe) respectively. These hikes reinforce our commitment to staff wellness and work-life balance while fostering a sense of unity and shared accomplishment within the organization.

ZIPAL staff on a hike at Oloonongot creater in Nakuru County

Tuning into Gen Z: How ZAF is responding to the new wave

The Kenyan public discourse has recently been dominated by the word "Gen Z". Also referred to as the Zoomers, it is the demographic cohort succeeding Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha and refers to people born between 1997 and 2012.

In what started as a protest against the Government's proposed Finance Bill of 2024, and later moved to other governance-related issues such as corruption, bad governance, and now an agitation for regime change, Gen Z in Kenya have without a doubt shifted the thinking around governance forever. By leveraging the power of technology to mobilize, share, and access information, the group has taken leadership of governance conversations in ways that have astounded the government, the public, and the region.

One thing is for sure, the re-awakening of Gen Z means that they will have a long-term influence on how leadership and governance are exercised. Therefore, as an organization, we have taken steps to ensure that we adapt to the changes by deliberately creating spaces to listen to the Gen Z in our organization and in the communities we work with. At our mid-year retreat, we had a café session moderated by Gen Z to get to understand their worldview and a follow-up discussion to brainstorm on a national values movement. Finally, there is a planned session with our board members to get Gen Z input on how the organization could work moving forward.

Past Events

SDP Daara Retreat

SDP Daara Retreat (28th - 30th May 2024): The second Daara Learning Retreat was convened in Naivasha, Kenya, to hone the initiative's delivery towards its vision. The aim of the second learning retreat, building on the first retreat held in Cape Town, South Africa, was three-pronged. It included: i) the need to build pedagogical excellence; ii) successfully moving to scale; and iii) bolstering institutional and/or organizational fundraising capabilities. The retreat drew members from different organizations such as the Zizi Afrique Foundation (ZAF), eBase, Associates in Research and Education for Development (ARED), LARTES-IFAN, Lead for Ghana, Shule Direct, The Action Foundation (TAF), Rays of Hope, Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) Africa, Funda Wande, and The Education Partnerships (TEP). Also in attendance were representatives from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Railway Training Institute (RTI), funders, USAID, Echidna Giving, and Better Purpose (the coordinating partner).

International Working Group Learning Roundtable

International Working Group Learning Roundtable: Dr. John Mugo, The Executive Director, gave a keynote address titled, "Situating IWG Guidance in Large Efforts to Strengthen Quality and Use of African Research." The objective of the roundtable was to identify ways IWG members can promote the uptake of the revised Guidance and develop its potential impact.

Upcoming Events

EAC-RELI Education Conference
August 12th – 14th 2024

August 12th – 14th 2024: The Inaugural East African Community Regional Education Conference Commemorating the AU Year of Education "Educate an African Fit for the 21st Century: Collective Action for Quality, Inclusive and Life-long Learning in East Africa." Register here.

RELI Convening
August 15th, 2024

August 15th, 2024: The RELI Africa Regional Convening. The 2024 RELI Africa Regional Convening will be taking place in Arusha. It will bring together members of the network from Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania to share knowledge, review progress, and plan for the next year.

4th Edition of Sara Cup
September 29th, 2024

September 29th, 2024: The 4th edition of the annual Sara Cup, established in 2021, is scheduled to take place at Nairobi Primary School. This event celebrates Dr. Sara's contributions to education, facilitates networking among key stakeholders, and serves as a fundraiser for the Tenda Wema initiative. The previous tournaments have attracted high-level participation from key stakeholders. We welcome everyone to participate and contribute to advancing learning outcomes for children furthest behind.

From the Lecture Halls to Life Skills Assessment: The Story of the Courage to Be and to Do

In this edition, we feature Dr. Purity Ngina, the outgoing Regional Manager for the Action for Life Skills and Values in East Africa (ALiVE) Initiative. She has for the last 3 years steered the project which produced the first contextualized tools for measuring values and life skills in East Africa.

Before joining Zizi Afrique Foundation, she was a Mathematics lecturer at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Strathmore University. She recently got appointed to a Public Service role. As we congratulate her on her new appointment, she shares her reflections on her experience working for ZAF and what it has been like to lead such a groundbreaking initiative.

What would you say is your passion?

I am passionate about girls and women's empowerment and keen to see more girls and women pursuing STEM careers. During my leisure time, I run a high school mentorship program aimed at demystifying mathematics and inspiring girls to embrace STEM courses.

Can you tell us about a significant turning point in your career or life that led you to where you are today?

My life took a very different turn when I joined Zizi Afrique Foundation (ZAF) in February 2020. I had spent 24 years preparing to be a mathematics teacher for high school and university students and I was good at it. Very competent indeed! I remember vividly how my friends, mentors, and mentees were shocked by my decision to jump ship. Little did they know that the vision of ZAF, of all children learning and thriving, resonated and still resonates with me on the transformative power of education.

How was your transition during this period?

My transition to the organization was quite challenging, given it was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, I was determined to make a meaningful impact and focused on ensuring that the youth left behind acquired hands-on skills through TVET. Working with community leadership in various counties including Mandera, Wajir, Nairobi, Tana River, and others was both demanding and rewarding. The opportunity to offer full scholarships to youth lowest on the pyramid and seeing the transformation it brought to families and young people always brought me tears of joy. So far, over 2,000 young people have benefited from this cause, which has made the transition truly fulfilling.

Please describe a challenging project or initiative you took on in your career and how it contributed to your professional growth and development.

A few months after joining ZAF, that is September 2020, I transitioned to work on a new project, dubbed the "Assessment of Life Skills, and Values in East Africa" (ALiVE). This groundbreaking initiative, though complex due to its focus on the assessment of core competencies, has been instrumental in my career growth, leadership development, and social capital. I remember when the Executive Director mentioned this new project and asked if I was interested. I did not hesitate to say a loud YES, even though I had no idea what it would entail. Embracing new challenges is one of my character traits and I always believe that if someone else has done it, or could do it, then why not me?

My supervisor did not disclose that this project would span Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda and that I would be collaborating with eight other organizations, each with its CEO, leadership structure, and vision. He also did not mention that we would only achieve impact through collective effort. In retrospect, if he had revealed all these details at once, I might have declined, opting to continue working

Please provide an example of a significant milestone or achievement that you have accomplished within this role.

The ALiVE initiative was designed to address gaps identified in the implementation of competency-based education. These gaps included limited contextualized assessment tools for core competencies, a lack of clear understanding of core competencies in context, and few experts (curriculum development, assessments, and researchers) in the field of core competencies and values. Through this program, we have achieved significant milestones. We developed two sets of contextualized assessment tools for evaluating problem-solving, collaboration, respect, and self-awareness. These tools have been used to assess 49,000 adolescents in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. We have authored a book, and have been included in three book chapters, and eight peer-reviewed papers. Additionally, we have visited 40,000 households to engage parents on their role in education, particularly in nurturing values and life skills. Furthermore, we have contributed to the decolonization of the African movement by rigorously training 47 East Africans on tool development, competency-based curriculum development, teacher training, the future of teaching, action research, and many other areas.

Please highlight three key lessons learned while at Zizi Afrique Foundation.

One: Leadership is key to achieving collective impact. Every time I speak with the Executive Director, he always talks about collaboration. He often would say to me, "Purity we cannot do this as Zizi Afrique, we need other people. We are not competing; it is about children learning." Though collaboration is not easy, ALiVE has achieved all this by working collectively with others. I invite other leaders to harness the spirit of togetherness and Ubuntu, only then will we eliminate learning poverty. For sure if you want to go far walk with others.

Two: Do not point fingers, act. The implementation of any new curriculum will always face challenges. It is easy to blame others, often the government, but have you ever asked yourself what contribution you could make if you acted? What if you supported your neighbour's children in learning to read, opened your family library to them, or shared your ideas for improvement with schools? This is what acting is all about.

Three: Through the ALiVE program, we continue to make improvements through the system, working with teacher educators in teacher training colleges and universities, curriculum developers, item writers, and researchers. Only through such concerted efforts can we make progress.

What is your parting shot for ZAF staff?

The courage to be and to do. Any person or organization needs courage to disrupt the status quo. At Zizi Afrique, we venture into unchartered territories with the hope of a win. It may not always be the case, but the lessons learned are all worth it. In the 21st century, one needs the courage to try new things

What is the closing message you would like to leave with the readers?

As I leave Zizi Afrique and ALiVE, again at a very delicate moment not due to COVID-19, but during the rise of Gen Z, I carry with me lessons of courage and collective impact to my new assignment as the Commission Secretary/Chief Executive Officer of the National Gender and Equality Commission. To any young person struggling with the decision of letting go of the familiar—what you studied in school—I encourage you to have the courage to try new things. You never know how much you are capable of until you do it.

What is your mantra?

"The courage to be and do is what we all need to thrive."

Zizi Afrique Foundation

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