If you visited Ikhaya Lencwadi (Home of Books, Zithulele’s Community Library managed by Jabulani) on a week day afternoon, you may find a lively circle of primary school learners playing Fly-Fly-iBhabhatane* just outside; or a heated Spelling Bee on the go between the shelves inside; or a Grade 4 girl reading a story aloud to the rest of the group; or many pairs of little hands colouring in sausage dogs after reading Odd Dog Out. They are attending Zithudlala, a fun after-school programme that Jabulani’s Zithufunda Promotor, Ayanda, runs from the library. “Zithudlala is about learning through fun,” says Ayanda. “We use games and songs, arts and crafts and create our own stories”.

Creating stories is an important part of literacy, of developing confidence, and giving children an opportunity to imagine. As Ayanda says, “when a child writes a story, they create their own vision. They imagine their stories in their own different ways. It’s important for them to have responsibilities in their own learning. They shouldn’t just have to listen to a teacher or a facilitator all the time. At Zithudlala, the learners have their own voice”.

Ayanda’s passion for empowering learners to create and share their own stories is not just about developing imagination and confidence but also about developing the resources we need for isiXhosa literacy: isiXhosa stories set in our context, to which learners can relate.

We have rearranged the library space this year, and it’s given us some fresh motivation to fill it up with the kinds of resources that will really benefit those using it. We have set up a writing corner, and are choosing monthly themes for book displays. In the adult fiction section, we are hoping to increase the number of books written by African writers, and in the children’s section...all the isiXhosa books we can get! The library normally closes at 5p.m. but we also recently opened the library after work hours, so that Hospital and NGO staff could visit after work. This was a fun event, and we are planning more. On darker winter evenings, gathering in a Home of Books is a great way to warm the soul.

Watch this space as the Zithulele Library story continues to unfold. We have lots of plans to keep improving our library space, to make it a place where stories come alive so if you would like to contribute in any way, email Nathalie@jabulanifoundation.org.
A HOME OF HER OWN

Noluthando was working in Cape Town when she had a stroke. She returned home, unable to continue working and “feeling so sad...I had given up on the idea that I would be okay again”, Noluthando told Nosakhiwo, one of our Rural Ability Programme Community Disability Workers who found her at home in a state of hopelessness. She was reliant on others to cook her food and fetch her water and although living with relatives, these relationships were tense. Her temporary Disability Grant was also about to expire.

Nosakhiwo referred her to an Occupational Therapist from Zithulele Hospital, who visits Nosakhiwo’s closest clinic. Here she learnt techniques to adapt activities and was also given a specifically modified chopping board to make it easier to prepare vegetables for cooking. She was booked for a Disability Grant assessment and later started receiving a permanent grant. She was able to use this social grant to move herself and her eight year-old daughter out of her relative’s home and into their own hut. She started fetching water, doing her laundry and even cooking meals on her own.

In 2018, Noluthando joined a Jabulani community based savings and credit group. Before joining the group, she was struggling to buy clothes for her child and needed more space for their home than just the one roomed hut they were living in. From her savings she has been able to get clothes for her child for Christmas and has even built a flat.

Noluthando says that the savings group and our assistance to link her to health services has helped her to improve her quality of life and solve some of her problems. She appreciates the support of our programme, and says there should be more programmes like this in South Africa because she was feeling so hopeless but “then you came here to help me”. What a privilege it is to serve our community in this way.

GETTING TO KNOW AYANDA

Ayanda is from Ginyintsimbi, Zithulele, but she grew up in Pretoria. She returned to Zithulele in 2012 after her mom passed away and then continued her schooling in Mthatha. Due to financial strain, she had to move back closer to Zithulele to complete her Grade 12 in 2015. Life was hard for her, her sister and her cousin. They had no parents and were living with their uncle but he was sick and there was only his small grant for them all to live on. A lady renting on their land assisted with buying groceries, but soon got tired of being responsible for this. When another cousin got married, they had some labola money that they took to one of the local stores to keep for them in an account, so that they could buy food. Then things started to change.

In early 2016, Ayanda was employed with Jabulani as a translator in the Therapy Department, and her cousin gained employment with Axium Education (another NGO in Zithulele). The good experience she had of speaking and understanding English, from growing up in Pretoria, made her well suited for this position. Later, when a position at Jabulani’s community library for a Zithufunda Promoter came open, she boldly applied for this post.

The work was obviously very different to what she had been doing in the therapy department, but Ayanda enjoyed the change. Her mornings are spent sorting and categorising books, doing reading sessions with our early childhood development centres and the Zithulele Indepedent School, and reading to the children in Zithulele Hospital’s paediatric ward. In the afternoons, she runs Zithudlala, our ‘learning through play’ after school programme. When she took over this programme, there were not a lot of kids attending, but due to Ayanda’s unfailing enthusiasm and charisma, by the end of her first month there were many, many more kids joining in. She reminisces about how getting to know the children and developing a trust relationship was very special.
In addition to her work as our Zithufunda Promoter, Ayanda is now the Peer Mentor for our new youth development programme. Masiphakameni (Let’s Rise), is a structured gap year programme for young women. Ranging from “classroom” learning to practical sessions and outdoor sports, the aim of the programme is to expose participants to a wide variety of skills and experiences, as well as to develop their confidence and a deeper sense of identity, while providing a safe space and mentorship to guide them through this process. Ayanda has really enjoyed working on this programme. Although her official role is to co-facilitate the programme, she’s developed such good relationships with the group that they are comfortable to approach her with programme as well as personal issues. Ayanda muses that while things have been quite challenging for her these past few years, this year has seen things changing and slowly coming together. She is keen to study further but is torn between nursing or teaching – her therapy experience instilled in her a passion for health care, but although quite challenging at times, she finds the work she does with the children very satisfying. It has been incredible to see how Ayanda has grown and her skills develop over the last few years, and we will continue to walk this journey alongside her while she decides the path she’d like to follow.

AT A GLANCE

ISOLATION TO INCLUSION

After attending a conference last year, Shannon our Rural Ability Programme Coordinator, was inspired to address the issue of children with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus not going to school because they are wearing nappies beyond the early years. She liaised with the Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus (ASBAH)*, for a team to come to Zithulele for a two day training programme. Over 100mm of rain, flooded river crossings, lots of mud, and long power outages provided a rural experience that the ASBAH team are likely to remember for a while, but this did not detract from the high quality training they delivered. On day one, the ASBAH team focused on children and their caregivers, as well as our Community Disability Workers, who all learnt a lot about bladder and bowel control. A Zithulele Hospital doctor prescribed catheters to all the caregivers and they were shown how to do clean intermittent catheterisation (CIC), with one mother even trying it as a demonstration for the group. Day two of the training focused on healthcare workers from Zithulele and Madwaleni Hospitals and one of the key messages that came through was that patients with Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus do not only require rehabilitation but that there are important medical considerations that doctors need to be part of. On a recent home visit to one of the mothers who attended the training, we learnt that she is now doing CIC with her daughter who has Spina Bifida, and she hopes that through proper bowel and bladder management, her child will be able to attend school soon. Every time we are able to support someone from isolation to inclusion is a treasured experience.

*https://www.asbah-sa.org/

COMMITTED TO CARING

Jabulani has been committed to supporting the HIV programme at Zithulele Hospital since 2009. Our team supports patients directly at Zithulele Hospital, as well as providing administrative support through preparing for doctor visit to clinics. We prepare for patient visits by scheduling visit dates, checking blood results, determining what service patients require at each visit (i.e. do they need to see the doctor or nurse, just need to collect treatment, or need to have laboratory tests conducted), facilitating the prepacking of medication, and capturing patient visit information for each patient visit to the clinic. Considering that the team facilitates approximately 35 000 patient visits each year, as well as supporting the patients who access treatment through the hospital, this keeps the team quite busy. But we are not the only ones committed to ensuring the continuation of high quality HIV care. Many nurses, lay counsellors and doctors are too, and this commitment was recently demonstrated by the extra mile (or we should say kilometers?) that Dr. John Michell recently took in order to ensure that our patients’ received their life-saving medication. When roads were closed during service delivery protests and cars could not reach the clinics, John packed about 20kg of treatment packs into a backpack, and off he went to hike to the clinic. We felt pride seeing him set off and the patients and clinic staff were completely astonished to see him arriving at the clinic in this manner! It’s incredible to be a part of a team that is so committed to excellent patient care.