LEARNING ABOUT PRINCESS LUNGI

We recently caught up with Lungi, who works alongside the Therapy Department in Zithulele Hospital.

JRHF: Please could you tell me a bit about your background?
Lungi: I'm Lungiswa Zunguzane. I was born in Talimofu location and grew up there. After junior school, I went to boarding school in Mthatha. It was difficult when I was at high school because in 2003, my dad had problems at work and stopped working, but I continued to study because my brother paid for my studies to continue even though he was studying and doing a part time job. [After school] I was doing a computer course and I started looking for a job. I started working at Rumdel Construction in 2009 and in 2010, I went back to Mthatha, where I got a job working at a factory making toilet paper. After five months the manager promoted me to floor manager as I was working hard and I was interested to learn everything that you could do at the factory. I was curious about how to do things perfectly. But it was difficult because the other workers had been there for a long time and they didn't like that I had been promoted so quickly. I had to go to the floor manager and ask to step down. He said “no”, because I was working hard and was passionate, but I looked for and got a job at another factory, manufacturing building materials. In my new position I was a floor manager; I was the only woman among 15 guys! I worked there until I had to come home in 2012 because I didn't want to put my child in day care as I was breastfeeding her, so I stopped working and came home.

JRHF: What did you do after that?
Lungi: I didn't work until 2014, I was just at home, bonding with my child. I was doing some part time jobs with the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) during election time. I started as an IEC fieldworker, but then they promoted me to dealing with registration paperwork. Then they promoted me again to be a Deputy, then after the last local elections, I was the Presiding Officer. I am still the Presiding Officer. It doesn't interfere with my work with Jabulani as I only do it on the weekends. I am proud of my job with the IEC.

JRHF: And amongst all of this, you started working with Jabulani?
Lungi: I started with Jabulani on the 12th January 2015. I remember the day; it was amazing for me. I could not believe I was working for Jabulani. I had brought my cousin's child to hospital on the 8th of January and Dr.
Taryn Gaunt asked me if I could help her with translating into English. Then she asked if I was interested to work for Jabulani because they were advertising at the time for translators and the closing date for applications was that day. I was interested and Taryn called John immediately and explained the situation; that I didn’t have my CV on me. I was worried that my English would not be good enough but I helped Taryn with a few patients and she said my English was good enough. I came for an interview on the Friday and I was so nervous as there were a lot of people – 18 people! I didn’t think I would get the job as the others looked so confident. I was sweating, but they put me at ease. I got a call the same day, offering me the job. I was jumping and hugging my mom. My mom said to me, “You must work hard… Respect the patients because you are going to meet different, new people. Respect the patients, respect the elders, respect the little ones, and also your managers”. I took my mom’s advice.

JRHF: That sounds like good advice from your mom! The role of translator has now changed to Clinical Team Assistant (CTA). Can you explain to me what you do in your job?

Lungi: As a CTA, I’m working with the physios. I have always worked alongside the physios and I have been taught many things. I translate for consultations with patients, I measure crutches and walking frames, how to look at a seated patient in a wheelchair and see if they’re seated correctly. I even did training last month for the other CTAs about walking aids. It was amazing – I was surprised that the physios thought I knew enough to do the training by myself! I am able to issue all crutches and walking aids if the physio is not around. I teach the patients how to use them and the exercises they need to do, and I’m proud of that. I can step in for the physios in quite a lot of what they do now. They call me a Physio’s assistant.

JRHF: I know you particularly like the groups that are run with patients. Can you tell me a bit more about this?

Lungi: I like the Learning Difficulties, Intellectual Impairment, and Cerebral Palsy (CP) kids groups. I run the groups with a therapist, but I can also take responsibility for some things. I can chat with the mom’s about how to handle the kids. I learnt a lot from when Malamulele Onwards came here; like how to position kids for feeding, how to sit a child, turn them; as there are different levels of CP and you learn to do things differently for different levels.

JRHF: Your face lit up when you were telling me that the physios call you a “physio’s assistant”. Is becoming a physio’s assistant your dream for the future?

Lungi: I would like to be a physio's assistant; I would really like that. I want to go to school to learn. If I can have the money, I want to study to be a physio assistant. I need to find out more about that and find out how I can go back to school. Last month my brother graduated with his Honours degree and he always motivates me.

JRHF: If you do go and study, where would you like to work one day?

Lungi: I’ll come back to Zithulele as I want to work for my community! This is close to my home, and I want to stay with my family. This is where my journey started.

We would also love to see Lungi go and study to further her career. She is a pleasure to work with; a complete professional and has a heart to serve. It was great to be able to catch up with her this month and we hope you’ve enjoyed learning a bit about her and the work she does in our team.

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**TEAM UP TO CLEAN UP**

Since 2008, World Cleanup Day* has been celebrated on the 15th September each year, and it’s become a global effort of over 20 million people across 150 countries, to clean the world in order to: save lives and cut crime; make nature beautiful again; protect wildlife; strengthen communities; and launch a clean future. It is a day that celebrates unity and shows the impact of what can be done when people join forces.

Part of the intention of the World Cleanup Coalition, is to “open the world’s eyes to the waste all around us and to the seriousness of the problem”, thus challenging “trash blindness”. This is certainly a big challenge for us in and around Zithulele Village. Although Jabulani have now managed to contract the municipality to collect refuse from Zithulele once a week, they will only collect from one location (our Refuse and Recycling Centre) and will only take rubbish that is secured in refuse bags. This is a challenge for most households as the cost of refuse...
bags on a low income means that this is simply and understandably not a priority for most members of our community. Furthermore, there have been no municipal waste removal services for so long, that breaking the habits of dumping rubbish in the streets, open pits, burying or burning it are going to be habits that take time to break along with a lot of education about the dangers of these methods of waste ‘disposal’. To be honest, it almost feels like an insurmountable challenge at times, but we needed to start somewhere and World Cleanup Day provided a good impetus to start community education.

As is often the case, we decided to start the education process with the children with whom we work. The learners who attend our Zithudlala afternoon programme spent the 6 weeks leading up to World Cleanup Day learning about different aspects of the environment. Making use of the incredible Planet Earth DVD series, the learners were exposed to different aspects of the world’s natural wonders. Youtube videos provided a slightly bleaker outlook as learners were shown how humans are polluting the world and how plastic in particular is destroying our oceans. A trip to our Refuse and Recycling Centre provided a good chance for education and questions, and the learners, under the able guidance of Ayanda our Zithufunda Promoter, arranged their own weekend visit down to local Lubanzi beach to learn about the ocean life in the rock pools.

We celebrated the actual event a day early in Zithulele, to capitalise on people’s availability on the Friday. Staff from Zithulele Hospital, Axium Education, Sihamba Sonke, Philani, teachers and learners from the Zithulele Independent School and Jabulani’s Zithulele Preschool, joined forces with the full Jabulani staff team to collect litter around Zithulele. Armed with gloves, refuse bags and more durable bags for glass, we took to the street in force, collecting about 100 bags of litter!

There was music and laughter and a lot of fun to be had amidst the dirtiness. During the morning, the learners from the Zithudlala programme also entertained the community with a fashion show in the street, showcasing garments including tops, skirts and shoes that they had upcycled from rubbish. The local ward councillor even blocked off the road with his car for the fashion show and joined the festivities, as well as getting his hands dirty collecting rubbish alongside us. This is definitely an event that we will repeat each year, along with other initiatives, to improve the awareness levels and waste disposal methods of the wider community. Here’s to combating “trash blindness” and creating a cleaner, healthier, safer tomorrow for our community and our world.

*Find out more at www.worldcleanupday.org

**SUPPORTING RURAL HEALTHCARE**

One of the biggest ways in which we provide on-going support to Zithulele Hospital is through the employment of supplementary staff, who assist where existing staff are stretched and taking strain, or who take up roles that allow clinicians to focus on being clinical. We employ 19 staff who work in the hospital, on the HIV and TB programmes, as Clinical Team Assistants (previously called translators; name changed to reflect the diversity of their role), in the pharmacy and as an OPD Clerk Assistant. Our clinical team assistants facilitate good communication between clinicians and patients, thus contributing to improved health service provision and also provide assistance to ensure the smooth running of consultations in the hospital’s Out Patient Department and Casualty; our pharmacy helper provides stability in a department that has experienced significant staffing level changes over the years; and our employment of an OPD Clerk Assistant has allowed continuity of Personal Assistant support to the Clinical Manager, which has become a vital component to the on-going progress and development of the clinical team at
Zithulele. We also support four hospital interns with a small stipend each month, while they gain experience that will hopefully lead to employment in the future.

In terms of providing consumables to support the hospital, we continue to try and get the balance right between supporting but not alleviating the Department of Health from their responsibility to provide resources and services. However, when procuring things through official channels proves impossible or poses a risk to getting the “job done” or the sanity of the clinical team, small interventions from our side can make a significant difference. The therapy department is one place where outside assistance remains imperative for them to be able to support patients usefully and thoroughly. Many of the patients with whom they work have physical impairments that compromise their functioning. Assistive devices facilitate and promote independence and meaningful participation in their everyday lives. Ideally, these devices would be bought from companies who specialise in making this kind of equipment but due to a lack of funding through government Health Department channels, these devices are usually made by the therapist themselves, often using recycled or scrap materials in order to make them cost effectively and at no cost to the patients.

These kinds of devices include: long handled sponges to assist patients who have lost the function of one side of their body (as a result of a stroke, for example) to wash themselves; universal cuffs to assist patients who have limited hand function to hold their spoons, pens and toothbrushes; anti-spill plates to assist patients who have lost the function of one side of their body to control their food on their plate and eat with one hand; built-up grips to assist patients who have difficulty forming and maintaining a small cylindrical grasp to hold their cooking and writing utensils; button hooks to assist patients who have lost the function of one side of their body to button their shirts; and tap turners to assist patients with arthritis or other conditions that prevent wrist movement to open their taps. These devices help with major and minor daily tasks, however no matter how big or small the task is, the difference it makes to a person’s life is enormous.

Click [here](#) to see the list of items that would make a big difference to the work of the therapy department. If you are able to assist with donations we’d love to hear from you at info@jabulanifoundation.org and hopefully we’ll be able to get your donated items to Zithulele.

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**AT A GLANCE**

**A FIRST FOR US**

Taking advantage of some of the beautiful photos taken by staff and visitors over the years, we’ve produced our first ever Jabulani calendar. Each page showcases a different programme and provides a brief description. If you are interested in purchasing one at a cost of R150, please contact us at info@jabulanifoundation.org. Unfortunately they may not be available in your specific area as due to the current state of the postal system, we’ll be relying on Zithuleleans to deliver them around the country as people spread out around the country to visit family and friends over the festive season.

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**ACT NOW FOR A BETTER TOMORROW**

One example of how we choose to enable and enhance what others do best, is our decision to support the Zithulele Independent School with raising funds. The school is a separate non profit organisation but their Public Benefit Status is still stuck in bureaucratic channels and therefore South African donations to the school do not carry tax deduction benefits for donors. As education is close to our hearts, we’re helping to break the cycle of poverty through our “Send a child to school” campaign. If you’d like to donate to this life-changing opportunity, click [here](#). A donation in a loved-one’s name is a great Christmas present option for those who already have all they need.