

Mthunzi Monthly

issue one

The magazine of the Mthunzi Centre - news, views, reviews and pictures from Lusaka

Getting Started

The Mthunzi Centre started in 2000. This was when Fr Kizito saw that the number of street children was increasing and that there was a need to build up the future for these young people.



Above: Fr Kizito

He brought about 72 children to the centre. This exercise was done by Patrick Ordadi and Joseph Mtonga.

At the beginning the number was so high that children started running away. This was due to lack of food and because the boys had become used to having money when they were on the streets and missed that at Mthunzi. They also missed the glue and marijuana they had taken on the streets.

In 2002 the number had reduced to 63 and remained at that level. A few months later the Italian organization Amani started funding various areas of the project.

The Mthunzi children started school. The children realised that education can make you what you want to be in life and is the key to success.

Tubalange basic school was the first school that accommodated all the boys.

During their schooling the boys were mocked for being intelligent and subjected to various comments, such as 'you are street kids', 'you're polluting the class' and 'however hard you try, you'll never improve at school'.

But the boys who were being mocked were the ones who became prefects and class monitors and achieving top academic places.

Today more than 30 of them are at secondary school, funded by M.A.L.I. (the Scottish group Mthunzi and Lilanda Initiative) and 13 have

*The other students and the teachers used to say:
'You're polluting the class.'*

completed. Some will go on to college.

It has been a life-changing experience.

Through exchange programmes, the boys have made strong friendships with Italians, Scottish, French and Spanish.

From 2006, the government has attempted a reintegration programme which intends to send boys back to their homes. The boys have been devastated by this programme and have asked the staff to resist it.

The Mthunzi management is now planning strategies to continue supporting all those who have grown up at the centre.

Rickon Mwiinga said: 'I hope these strategies will work because without them some of the boys will end up back on the streets.'



Above: The Mthunzi Culture Group in action

Culture and acrobatics - Mthunzi wins all the prizes

The Mthunzi Cultural Group started in 2002, just two years after the Mthunzi Centre opened.

A group known as Chimwemwe from Lilanda parish came to Mthunzi and taught a number of boys to drum and dance.

By 2004 they had stopped training the Mthunzi group, but invited them to take part in a competition at Lilanda competing against three other groups. Mthunzi came last but didn't lose hope. It continued training and was invited to compete against five other groups and this time Mthunzi came first.

The group continued to win different types of competition

in Lusaka and became well-known by many people.

In 2002 Marian Pallister came from Scotland to visit Mthunzi and was very happy with how the boys were dancing. When she went back to Scotland she began planning to take the Mthunzi Culture Group to perform there.

The boys' first cultural exchange was in 2006 when they appeared at the Aberdeen International Youth Festival and at venues in Argyll in the west of the country. In 2008, they returned and the theme of the visit was 'Our Work, Our Music'.

The group performed with young Scottish musicians who came to Mthunzi in 2009 to complete the exchange.

In 2007, Mthunzi competed in a festival at the Lusaka Playhouse, which is the biggest theatre in Lusaka. They came first.

It was at this festival that they saw an acrobatic group and decided to train in acrobatics. They were taught by the group they had seen at the festival.

As they improved, they performed for Kizito who saw how much they wanted to excel and sent two people from Kenya to train them.

They all received certificates.

Now the Mthunzi group is the best in acrobatics and traditional dancing in the whole of Lusaka, Zambia's capital city. In 2010, Marian hopes to take the group to Scotland again, when the theme will be climate change.

Walking tall

some people have even shouted: 'You use Juju!'

The boys are now able to walk long distances on their stilts which Adam from the culture facilitating group Barefeet made for them.

When Barefeet had a festival in Lusaka, they invited two Mthunzi boys to join their march past at Arcades, one of the biggest

brought great joy to the Mthunzi family.

In 2005, Augustin Lungu came to Mthunzi to teach the boys to carve in wood. They made many beautiful animals such as crocodiles and hippos.

They moved on to carve in stone in 2007, producing tortoises, soap dishes and even nativity groups.

The anti AIDS group uses culture skills to get over messages about prevention and how to live positively. Members go into the community and put on dramas to raise awareness of the issues. There are also discussion sessions.

On page two of the magazine you can read about how the culture group began. Members of the group have had nice experiences during their visits to Scotland arranged by one of our best friends, Marian Pallister and the M.A.L.I. supporters.

Treasure

The Mthunzi boys believe that people are a treasure in life. They thank all the people who have helped and who are helping to build Mthunzi's future to a higher level.

In saying this, they cannot forget Fr Kizito, who is building up the future of so many children in many different countries in Africa.

At Kizito's suggestion, the Mthunzi News team is adding to the range of skills held by Mthunzi boys. Learning to write and lay out this magazine is an exciting new venture.

Lazarus Mwanza is reaching for the stars on legs two metres long.

He is one of four young men at the Mthunzi Centre who have learned to walk tall on stilts - just one of the many skills shared by the Mthunzi residents.

The Mthunzi Centre has a variety of activities ranging from football and volleyball through acrobatics, craft carving and stilt walking to raising awareness of HIV/AIDS.

In fact, Mthunzi has become famous because of the wide range of skills that the residents have learned.

The boys have learned these skills from many different people who they have met over the past few years.

Walking on stilts is one of the more recent additions to their range of talents. This is a skill which many find unbelievable -



Lazarus walks tall - stilts are just one of the many skills shared by the Mthunzi boys

shopping centres in the capital.

The boys walked on their stilts from Arcades to the Italian School, a distance of three kilometers.

Belonging

The Mthunzi boys are always committed to each other and their motto is 'We belong to each other'.

The trophies they have won in football and culture have



Text books, reference books, fact and fiction, religious books, magazines - the Mthunzi library could be one of the best stocked in the whole of Lusaka.

The library was established in 2005 when the Ministry of Education donated around 320 books to the Mthunzi Centre.

First, a safe place was set up with shelves. Later on, the Mthunzi administration converted the room where mealie meal had been ground into a library.

In 2006, the new facility opened and Mike Mwenda was elected as the first librarian.

Since then, the Scottish and Italian friends have contributed a lot to the development of the library, donating a wide range of reading material. This includes African literature that the Scottish friends are keen to promote so that the boys are aware of their own rich culture.

Setting up and running a library are not as easy as it may seem. So in 2008, Project Concern International (P.C.I.) invited Mthunzi boys to attend an educative workshop on how to run this important facility. The boys went to the

Lubuto Library at Fountain of Hope and after the workshop the facilitators

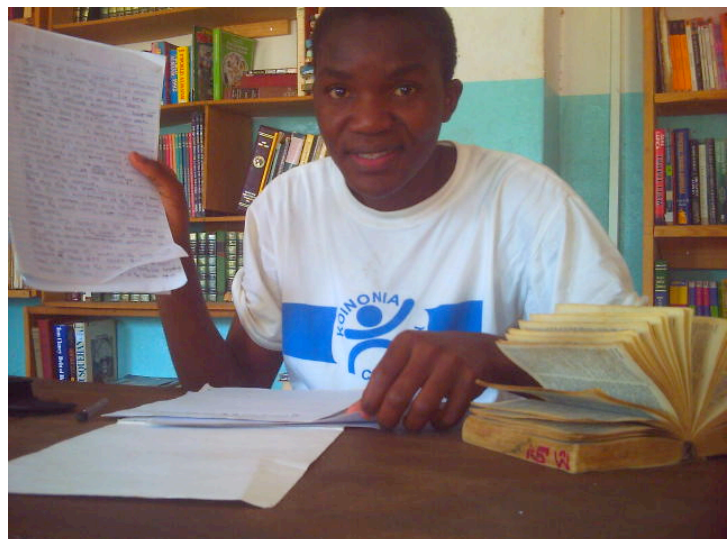
thanked the Mthunzi delegates for sharing so well.

Open door

Today the library at Mthunzi is open to outsiders, and among those who regularly use it are teachers at the local Tubalange school who come to borrow books because the school library lacks text books.

The Mthunzi boys thanks all those who are still helping Mthunzi library to develop because the believe that education is the key to success in life.

The number of books in the library has now increased to about 685 and all are cared for so that the future generation can benefit from them.



'Education is the key to success in life'

