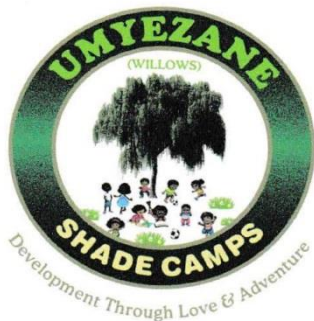


A few blocks from our parish church in Howick, South Africa, a young woman and her preschool child live in a small “maid’s room” at the back of a two-car garage. Nelisa is the youngest daughter from a traditional polygamous marriage; Sanenhlanhla is her only child.

Nelisa educated herself through studies at UNISA, the University of South Africa, that offers degrees entirely through correspondence. She is now a trained and certified social worker and is working on a management certificate.

To fund her education, Nelisa worked as a caregiver for elderly and sick retirees. Recently, she was hired by Khazimula Child and Youth Care Centre to supervise and care for 30 abused children. Khazimula was established 10 years ago to take vulnerable children off the streets of Howick. Like many cities and villages in South Africa, poor children are often left on their own to survive. Through the efforts of the Catholic Church and other committed groups, Khazimula (www.khazimula.co.za) was established at an old farm school. Nelisa and the board struggle to give the children what they need.

In March of 2017, Nelisa applied for and received an IHM Ministry Grant with the help of Peg O’Shea, IHM. The purpose of the grant was to offer environmental camping experiences for girls and boys who have been raped, are HIV-positive and/or are suffering from serious abuse. Children from Khazimula and Mpophomeni (a nearby township) have already benefited from the first of several camps.



The children visited a crane farm in July and spent the day enjoying and learning about the environment. Afterward, the children were given an opportunity to write down the things that are hurting them from inside. Nelisa and her team were on hand to support the children and to teach them strategies to cope with the harm that they have suffered at such a young age. Several future camps will follow to prepare the children to deal with their individual histories.

Nelisa is well-equipped to assist children as she is a professional Zulu-speaking woman who has sacrificed to get her education and who cares deeply for the elderly and for children. She works well as leader of her team of community workers who support her vision. With the seed funds from the IHM Ministry Grant, she hopes to begin a nonprofit organization called Willows. Her logo is a willow tree protecting children from abuse.

Thanks to the IHM Sisters who, through supporting people like Nelisa, continue the liberating mission of Jesus.

Peg O'Shea, IHM