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THE SOZO FOUNDATION: THE STORY OF A LOCAL HERO

For the average middle class South African, a first trip into the heart of Vrygrond is an assault on the senses. A rubbish dump welcomes you as you enter, litter is strewn all over the dusty roads, small tin shacks fit haphazardly next to each other, kids play together all over the streets, and stray dogs narrowly miss taxi's as they hoot on their way down the roads. This is where the Sozo Foundation has set up its offices, in two containers next to a public library, surrounded by shrieking kids and noisy pollution. Happily located there to serve the people of the community; people living in the thin, dilapidated shacks around them. And in this setting of poverty and neglect, drugs, alcoholism, abuse and gangsterism, is a story of dignity restored and hope found.

Three Programmes

The Sozo Foundation manages three programmes:

Sozo Educentre: Providing a safe space for young people (Grade 8-11) to be equipped and empowered through education by offering extra tutoring and academic assistance in key school subjects and computer literacy.

Sozo Boutique: Enhancing the physical living conditions by painting homes inside and out, laying new flooring, installing proper electrical wiring, replacing sanitary units, windows, doors and furniture. We provide basic utensils and crockery as well as appliances, bedding and curtains.

Sozo Eden: Teams of volunteers educate and train beneficiaries over a 13 week period on all the basics of organic vegetable gardening and follow up support for 1 year.

A Sozo Hero

One of Sozo's heroes is Francisca Jeftha (Cisca) (Eden garden center Manager).

Cisca is one of the newest members of The Sozo Foundation. She is a powerful and capable woman, with strong leadership attributes. She works the ground at the Garden Centre, planting seeds, making compost and lovingly making sure everything she plants grows up to be beautiful and strong.



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Cisca's life story, although far from usual, is also one of beauty and strength! Having lost both her parents at a very young age, Cisca grew up on a smallholding with her grandmother just outside the Vrygrond area. Her grandmother showed her everything she knew, not only about gardening, but also about the business of selling their produce at several local stalls. But Cisca started going the wrong way in high school and decided to leave when she was in Grade 8. She was spending time with the wrong people and started living a life of drug abuse. She got involved with a gangster who fathered two children with her. This man ended up leading the gang he was a part of, and Cisca found she was automatically a part of its leadership. Her grandmother was heartbroken at her lifestyle, and Cisca knew there were other plans for her life besides the

life of drugs and gangsterism that she was leading.

Finally they managed to break away from the gang, and from the area they were living, and moved into the Vrygrond area, away from their old friends and lifestyles. But even through her dark and dangerous background, entrenched in the power-plays of gangsterism and crime, Cisca always took time to nurture beautiful plants and flowers. This was a part of her upbringing, a gentle reminder of who she was, growing up under the loving guardianship of her grandmother.

Today, that young girl has stood up to become a pillar in the community, with a clear passion for gardens and plants. Her passion is clearly revealed, as when you enter the Eden Garden Centre, you enter into a paradise right in the heart of Vrygrond, that's been lovingly created by her own hands. This is why The Sozo Foundation has entrusted Cisca to be the Eden Garden Centre manager. She now has plans to get her son through matric and send him to college. Cisca also plans to get her drivers' license, and to finally finish building her house.

Invest in the Sozo Foundation by donating now!

To make a donation, please transfer your gift to our SPZA bank account, adding 'For Sozo'.

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