

From baby steps to big business

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In 2009, Joseph Ntuli was an unemployed volunteer with the Ubuhle Centre in Bronkhorstspuit, driving hundreds of kilometres a day in a battered old Kombi to give pre-school children a chance at a better life. Today, he owns Zableswa Transport, which, thanks to international donors and the initiative of private sector partners, BMi Research and 4PL Group, is on the way to commercial success.



Founder of Zableswa, Joseph Ntuli, standing proudly next to the Ubuhle bus transport

Joseph's story is intertwined with that of the Ubuhle Centre, which was started by Joseph and Thoko, who provided care and shelter in an old farm building for a few needy orphans and vulnerable children. It has since developed into a significant educational resource, providing social care, pre-school, an English primary school up to level 3 and after-school care for 150 pupils and children with learning disabilities, as well workshops and courses for adults.

Until BMi Research and 4PL Group stepped in, Ubuhle had been unable to secure sufficient funding to purchase a vehicle to enable children from a wider catchment area to access the desperately needed facilities. Up until then, the old Kombi (on its third new engine) and Thoko's car were the only means of transport and a meagre source of income for the Ntuli family. However, when BMi Research and 4PL Group facilitated the purchase of a new 32-seater bus, it not only got more children on the road, it also got a new transport company up and running.

BMi Research and 4PL Group had already been involved with Ubuhle Care and Development for several years as part of their CSR programme and recognised that the need for transport also provided an opportunity to establish a business that would satisfy their BEE obligations, help Joseph realise a lifelong ambition and make a valuable contribution to the community.

BMi Research and 4PL Group provided the necessary loans, surety and support to set up Zableswa Transport with Joseph and fellow director, Annah Ntuli (no relation) each holding a 50% stake.

In addition to providing ongoing funding, BMi Research, 4PL Group and Ubuhle School have formed a committee to mentor the fledgling company in its bid to expand its business both geographically and operationally. Zableswa ultimately aims to offer transport services in and around Pretoria, Delmas, Witbank and Kwandebele.

As Gareth Pearson, CEO of BMi Research, says : "It's heartening and humbling to see people in the most difficult of circumstances still volunteering to help others - and we're grateful for the opportunity to make a difference to their lives and to the community."

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