

Elize Joubert

Building Hope Beyond
the Diagnosis

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Long before boardrooms really understood her leadership, and even before international forums began amplifying her voice, **Elize Joubert** was quietly putting together these kinds of care systems that, would end up shifting the future of cancer support in South Africa. It started as a simple promise of service, then it slowly became a long ten-year pathway where institutional transformation when combined with strategic governance, and a compassionate way of leading kept showing up right in the center of it all. Along the way she worked on shoring up the operational fundamentals within the **Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA)**, while also helping position the organization as one of the country's most dependable non-profit partners. Joubert carried on with resilience, purpose, and people stayed right in the middle of every decision, even when things became complicated.

What makes her a different leader is how she manages governance excellence, while keeping human empathy close by. That blend hasn't only widened CANSA's national impact, it also helped move South Africa's cancer advocacy onto the global stage in a very unmistakable manner. And now when CANSA marks its 95th anniversary in 2026, her journey will read like a clear reminder that visionary leadership can do quite a lot, when it's held up by service, hope, and this steady devotion to community care.

Discover how Elize Joubert's visionary leadership continues to redefine cancer care, advocacy, and institutional excellence across South Africa and beyond.

Building an Institution from the Inside Out

Joubert's ascent within CANSA followed a deliberate, institution-first trajectory. In 2007, CANSA elected her to serve on its first operational executive committee. One year later, in September 2008, she became CANSA's inaugural Chief Operations Officer (COO) and Executive Director of the Board, a milestone that reflected both her seniority and the organization's confidence in her capabilities.

Her appointment was far from a custodial transition. She immediately repositioned CANSA for sustained relevance in the current upgraded health landscape, guiding the organization through two comprehensive turnaround strategies and transforming it into a governance-compliant, internationally recognized non-profit operating in full alignment with King IV principles.

"I'm committed to ensuring CANSA continues with its valuable work of research into cancer risk reduction, providing cancer education, promoting health and offering care and support to those affected by this dreaded disease," she says.

Architect of Systems, Champion of People

Behind every successful non-profit is a strong support system working behind the scenes. Joubert helped build the same for CANSA's foundation and operations. She personally authored numerous national policy documents, designed the organizations' strategic business and operating models, and developed manuals and modules governing service delivery, the volunteer program, and human resources management. These did not simply fill filing cabinets, rather they created the operational backbone of a national organization serving thousands of South Africans.

Under her leadership, the foundation won back-to-back Diamond Arrow Awards in 2014 and 2015 for first overall performance in the National Survey on Corporate Social Responsibility Programs that secured South Africa's Most Trusted Charity recognition from Reader's Digest in 2014 and received the ACCA Award for best sustainability reporting in the NGO category. Its integrated report won the best report designation three times in the NGO sector. The Board of Directors reaffirmed their confidence in May 2020, renewing her five-year contract as CEO and again in 2025 extended her contract for another three years.

A Voice That Carries Beyond Borders

Joubert carries South Africa's cancer agenda onto the global stage with the same resolve she applies domestically. She attended International Conferences for Cancer Organizations held in Melbourne (1996), Atlanta (1999), Ireland (2004), Canada (2011), China (2014), Paris (2016), Kuala Lumpur (2018) and Geneva (2022). In May 2017, she represented South Africa at the NCD Alliance at the World Health Organization Assembly in Geneva. Furthermore, she also represented the UICC at the World Health AFRO Meeting in Zimbabwe in August 2017 and again in 2023 in the virtual session of the 73rd WHO Regional committee for Africa. She attended the UN High Level meeting on NCDs in New York in June 2018 and again in 2025, as a Global NCD Alliance representative.

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She serves on the executive committees of both the NCD Alliance of South Africa where CANSA stands as one of four founding members and the Cancer Alliance of South Africa, which coordinates over 30 member organizations across the full spectrum of cancer control. In April 2020, the UICC invited her to join its Global Advocacy Advisory Group. Most recently, at the UICC World Cancer Leaders' Summit in November 2025, she was called as a Table Host for moderating discussions on NCDs, cancer care in vulnerable communities, and global health equity.

Expanding Care in CANSA's 95th Year

As CANSA celebrates its 95th anniversary in 2026, the organization Joubert leads looks nothing like the one she joined in 1990. Founded in 1931, CANSA has grown into one of South Africa's most trusted health institutions and she has driven much of its contemporary evolution.

Today, the organization delivers practical, emotional, and psychosocial support through Care Centers, virtual platforms, screening services, counselling, support groups, hospital information desks, stoma support, medical equipment loans, wigs and prostheses, and direct assistance to vulnerable families.

In the past financial year, more than 2,000 patients stayed at CANSA Care Homes, 965 received home-based care, and over 2,000 home visits took place. The *Tough Living with Cancer (TLC)* program accommodated 779 parents and 189 children. This milestone year also sees them opening a new Care Home in Pietermaritzburg, a direct response to a long-standing gap for out-of-town patients receiving treatment in the region. In 2025, CANSA launched its WhatsApp Channel. This was to indicate how modernizing shares credible cancer information with the public. CANSA won a new award in February 2026 by the [Global Brands Magazine](#): 'Excellence in Cancer Support Services, South Africa – 2026'. This is a reaffirmation of CANSA expanding practical support, deepening public education, promoting early detection, and ensuring that those affected by cancer are met with dignity, care and hope.

"As CANSA celebrates its 95th anniversary, we honor the past with gratitude, we serve in the present with compassion, and we continue building for the future with hope and determination," she expresses.

Recognition That Speaks for Itself

In 2015, Joubert won two honors at Africa's Most Influential Women in Business and Government Awards, Country Winner for South Africa and Winner for the SADC South Region before claiming the Continental Winner designation for Africa's Most Influential Women in Civil Society later that year. She won the Standard Bank Top Women Award in 2016 and 2017 in the Public Service category and became one of five finalists for the Corporate Top Performing SA Business Leader of the Year Award in 2017, the only NPO CEO ever to reach that shortlist in the award's 13-year history.

In 2019, the University of the Free State and Mamello Trading honored her with a Leadership Recognition Award as one of seven senior women leaders inspiring confidence nationally. In September 2024, Diligent's global Modern Governance 100 program named her an honoree in the Mission Driven Champions category, affirming her standing as a governance leader of global consequence.

More Than a Mandate

Numbers and accolades only partially capture what Joubert represents in South Africa's cancer landscape. She has mentored numerous emerging NPOs, including providing ongoing guidance to the CEOs of the Cancer Associations of neighboring countries. She has served on task teams convened by the National Department of Health, the Department of Social Development, and the Office of the President, contributing institutional knowledge to policy spaces well beyond CANSA's own mandate. The National Minister of Welfare formally acknowledged her contribution to strengthening relationships between private and provincial welfare in the Free State.

Joubert, who hails from Gauteng is married to Francois, a civil engineer. As South Africa faces a projected doubling of cancer cases by 2030 reaching an estimated 220,000 new diagnoses annually the work she and CANSA have built together carries stakes that could not be higher. She does not approach this moment with complacency. In her own words at CANSA's 95th anniversary commemoration today is not a time for looking back, it is a time for building forward. 🌱

