

Inspirational charity says 'two-way' learning is key to success

The Bambisanani Partnership

This summer saw forty five volunteers travel to one of South Africa's poorest regions to expand the work of the multi-award winning Bambisanani Partnership charity.

Students and staff from St. Mary's School, Menston, The University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University developed existing programmes and introduced new ones based on using sport as a catalyst to promote education, health, global citizenship and leadership in rural KwaZulu-Natal. Over a four week period the volunteers taught, coached and mentored hundreds of South African students in a variety of Bambisanani programmes which included Sports Leadership courses, cycling initiatives, Sports Festivals and other curriculum areas. The partnership's commitment to 'working together and learning together' proved to have a most significant positive impact on students from both countries.

The thirteenth annual visit by St. Mary's to South Africa was led by Brad Dobson supported by Catherine Chattoe and Charlotte Wood. The St. Mary's student team were Louis Adams, Tom Allan, Harmonia Ebrahim, Charlotte Falkingham, Rachel Farmer, Lydia Giedrojt, Stephen Ginty, Ciaran Hammond, Ellie Lamb, Adam Metcalfe, Lucy Moorby, Ben Patterson, Will Sammon and Isabel Wilks had prepared for 18 months for what would be an incredible venture and significant learning experience.



Empowering students in developing leadership skills is one of the key aspects of the Bambisanani Partnership and through their ten day visit, the St. Mary's students, supported by students from Eshowe High School, mentored thirty Mnyakanya students through the Bambisanani Leadership programme. Using sport and education, the programme aimed to provide the Mnyakanya students with the necessary leadership skills and confidence to organise and deliver a Sports Festival, a Reading Festival and new to the programme, a Writing Festival, for 120 pupils from Ntolwane Primary school. As part of this process the Mnyakanya students were taught how to play, teach and organise competitions in hockey, rugby and short tennis. The leadership course was a tremendous success as was evident when the Mnyakanya students delivered three outstanding festivals. It was a learning process that empowered students from both countries and all with a real spirit of teamwork and mutual respect. The funding for all the equipment for the Sports Leadership and Festivals at Mnyakanya was provided by Manchester based international Shipping Company, Cardinal Maritime, who have been long term supporters of the partnership.



Additionally, as part of the visit, the St. Mary's students delivered lessons in a wide range of curriculum areas, ranging from science to mathematics. The lessons were full of enthusiastic Mnyakanya learners with teachers from both countries praising the students for the exceptional quality of their work.

At a special partnership celebration ceremony, Mnyakanya students received their much deserved Leadership Awards. Students from Mnyakanya and Ntolwane Primary School were presented with a series of annual awards from the John Paul II Foundation for Sport and the Lawrie McCauley awards for football and writing. Ten days of intense hard work and learning culminated in the St. Mary's students volunteering at the uMlalazi Day Centre for AIDS orphans and vulnerable children run by the Zulufadder Children's Trust. Here the students organised a variety of

sports, games, singing and story sacks which all proved to be a tremendous success.

The visit had a remarkable impact on St. Mary's students.

Rachel Farmer:

“Bambisanani was an amazing opportunity. It taught me a lot about myself and the people I worked alongside. It gave me a unique opportunity to experience a very different culture. I met many inspirational people in South Africa and it was a proud moment watching the Mnyakanya students teach hockey, tennis and rugby to the primary school students. We saw them develop throughout the time we worked with them, growing in confidence and becoming great young leaders in their community. I believe that sport is the ultimate bridge between two different communities, as it bring us together allowing us to get to know each other, learn from each other and most importantly have fun together. I admire all the South African students I met for their commitment to learning and their striving to improve their community.”

Tom Allan, Head Boy:

“The visit to South Africa was the greatest 10 days of my life. The trip allowed me to become an effective leader, able to work with children but also inspire them to become leaders. It was so rewarding on the day of the sports festival watching our team of leaders from Mnyakanya teach the children of Ntolwane Primary School. Coming away from this experience, I've made friends for life.”



Miss Charlotte Wood, teacher from St. Mary's:

“ It’s been an emotional journey for everyone involved and I’m sure the realisation of what the students have experienced won’t sink in for a while yet, and when it does it will be memories that last a lifetime. It’s been a pleasure to experience the visit with them.”

As part of their respective International Volunteering programmes, The University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University are key members of the Bambisanani Partnership with both institutions making has a most significant impact in recent years. This year the two universities worked collaboratively on aspects of the programme as well as also developing particular areas of interest and expertise.

The University of Leeds team was led by Paddy Craig together with colleagues Lisa Naylor, Suzzi Garnett and Andrew Lockwood. Students, Emily Faux, Charlie Stevenson, Sofia Ravanis, Jess McCarrick, Izzy Bull, Freya Bourne, India Greenbury, Beth Jenks represented a diverse range of university departments and courses.

The Leeds Trinity University was led by Nicola Arjomandkhah assisted by Sheila King. Students from Primary Education courses included Hannah Bewley, Mia Bogush, Georgia Gould, Phoebe Huggan, Claudia Jordan, Lauren Macarthur, Lizzy Marks and Beth Skelton with Jake Almond, Harriet Bryant, Adam Lambert and Ammarah Pandor representing Sport related degree courses.



Every aspect of the visit proved to be a huge success, with all volunteers thrilled by seeing the increase in the children’s skills and confidence as well as with advances in their own learning and world view.

Week 1 saw students from both universities deliver the highly acclaimed ‘Cycling for Success’ programme at Mnyakanya High School. Now in its third year the programme teaches students how to ride and maintain bikes. This skill is often life changing for the students, as many live as far as 2 hours away from the school which creates a barrier to their education. This year, as a result of the project 35 children learnt to ride bikes, 6 children trained as bike mechanics and 20 bikes plus spare parts and tools were shipped to the school for continued use by the students. The cycling programme was made possible with funding from the North Yorkshire based, Rob Stephenson Trust and shipping by Cardinal Maritime.

In Week 2 students delivered the Leadership through Sport programme as well as additional curriculum lessons and sports activities to children from four primary schools in the Eshowe area: Gratton, Holy Childhood, John Wesley and Little Flower. This proved to be a remarkable success with no less than 175 children gaining the award.

The sports equipment that had been used to deliver the course, again generously provided by the Rob Stephenson Trust, was donated to the participating primary schools to facilitate ongoing sports development and sports leadership activities.



Alongside these projects, eight Leeds Trinity Primary Education students spent time in two South African schools as part of their ‘alternative placement’ module. Week 1 saw the students work across grades four to seven in Ntolwane Primary School in Nkandla, with class sizes averaging around 70 to 100 pupils. A range of subject areas were covered, including Geography, Maths, Physical Education and English. In Week 2, the students were then allocated a specific grade to teach at John Wesley Primary School in Eshowe, presenting an opportunity to work alongside local teaching staff, and to learn more about the country’s education system and culture. They had the opportunity to develop lessons based on the South African curriculum and were able to link this with football related resources such as the ‘Premier Skills’ (developed by the British Council in partnership with the Premier League) on topics such as ‘Healthy Eating’.

Moses Xulu, a teacher from Ntolwane Primary School, highlighted the benefits for all involved:

“ The student teachers and leaders made a fantastic contribution in the classrooms, in sports and with the marvellous Festivals. Both learners and educators benefit from this exposure; the talents of all involved are nurtured by the experience. My students from all grades told me that they have benefited in so many ways not least by experiencing friendship, sharing and love.”

Alan Stuart, Principal of the John Wesley School, praised the impact of the programmes:

“ ...you have made an incredible impact on the lives of so many youngsters of Eshowe. Your efforts could be described as tireless, positive, enthusiastic, meticulously planned, generous and highly professional. We look forward to similar interactions in the coming years.”



Mrs Pk Zondi, Bambisanani Coordinator at Mnyakanya:

“ It is difficult to think of suitable words to explain the importance of this partnership. Our learners lives really changed and will never be like before. They learnt so much about leadership skills in different sports and about riding and maintaining bikes. Our learners have gained confidence in leading their peers in different school activities. They have become very helpful in the community when it comes to fixing of bikes. The young people from both countries developed their leadership skills together; in this partnership everyone gains. The partnership brings so much to our school, our community and to our country.”

Students from Mnyakanya also valued the experience:

Melokuhle Mdlalose:

“ We learnt a lot of things from our UK friends. We learnt many sports games like hockey, rounders, rugby and tennis; we also learnt how to ride and fix the bikes. This was all a wonderful experience because we are now able to help anyone who has a problem with his or her bike even in the community.”

Asanda Gabela:

“ I am so excited about what we learnt from the UK students this year. I am very proud that I can now play different types of sports that I have previously only seen on a television. I can now also fix bikes for myself and for my friends.”

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Philasande Buthelezi:

“ We miss all the students from Leeds so much! They taught us many leadership skills such as communicating, active listening and how to train others in different aspects of life. We learnt the skills and rules of using the bikes. Everything was amazing!”

Magwaza Sakhile:

“ Our visitors from St. Mary’s and the two Leeds universities were so kind, funny and patient with us. We were like brothers and sisters when we were together. We learnt so much from their discipline and about the importance of listening to others. I never thought that one day I would be able to ride and fix the bike, but today I’m proud that I have all those skills. I wish to thank the Bambisanani Partnership for changing my life.”



Students from Mnyakanya also valued the experience:

Lizzy Marks:

“ It’s been such a privilege to have this experience and work alongside some amazing schools, teachers and students.”

Georgia Gould:

“ I have learnt that I have the ability to achieve more than I thought I could. I have learnt that I am more adaptable and flexible than I thought.”

Mia Bogush summed up her experience saying:

“ I have honestly had the best two weeks of my life! I have loved being able to teach and meet such amazing children who are so grateful for their education. I have learnt so much about South Africa as a country but also about myself. What I have learnt will stick with me forever and I can’t wait to share the information with others and hopefully inspire them to go and make a difference by international volunteering. I can’t wait to get back into a UK classroom and share the skills I have learnt!d for my friends.”

University of Leeds lecturer and Bambisanani trustee Andrew Lockwood:

“ We work with hundreds of South African students with the aim of raising aspirations through leadership and activity. It is a student led project and once in a lifetime adventure, where the students gain a range of skills and experiences which set them apart for life after university. The programme not only helps the South African students to develop new skills, but it also increases our students’ skills. This year, over the course of the project, our students demonstrated an average improvement of 31% in 18 key employability skills. This will help them to stand out from the crowd once they leave university, making them attractive to top employers. Not only this, it is an experience they will never forget.”



Emily Faux, one of the University of Leeds students:

“ The visit was more than I ever thought two weeks could be. I learnt so much about the challenges that so many people face and I helped to make a genuine, sustainable difference with the university’s partner schools. I made incredible friends and have memories to last a lifetime.”

Fellow student Jessica M’Carrick commented::

“ There is no better way to gain skills and push yourself in a teaching environment, whilst having fun and making friends. Truly an incomparable experience that I would recommend to all.”

Founder and Chair of the Bambisanani Partnership charity David Geldart was full of praise for all involved in the visit:

“ The students and their teachers and lecturers have made a real difference to so many people’s lives through their selfless volunteering in South Africa this summer. In doing so they have learned and grown so much. Creating ‘two way learning’ is a fundamental element of what we are about. The commitment of St. Mary’s School, the University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University to the partnership and indeed global learning is simply phenomenal. Our supporters and sponsors, both here in the UK and in South Africa have enabled us to make a real difference in the world and deserve great credit and our sincere thanks. Based on ‘working together and learning together’ we have ambitious plans for the year ahead and are looking forward to expanding our programmes.”

For more information about the Bambisanani Partnership please see:

www.bambisananipartnership.org

