

Bambisanani Partnership Founder attends Vatican 'Sport for All' Summit

David Geldart, a former teacher at St Mary's Catholic Academy in Menston and the Founder and Chair of the internationally acclaimed, multi-award-winning charity, The Bambisanani Partnership, was invited to attend to the Vatican's recent *Sport for All* Summit.

The aim of *Sport for All*; *cohesive, accessible and tailored to each person* was to promote the social and inclusive dimension of sport in society. It is a response to Pope Francis' encouragement of sport that is socially responsible and his appeals to foster sport as a means of human, educational and spiritual growth. On the final day of the summit, delegates signed a Sport for All Declaration in the presence of Pope Francis.

More than 250 people from 40 countries were invited to participate in the landmark event, which brought together leading figures from international federations, professional sports leagues, government officials, faith-based organisations, non-profit organisations, media companies and educational institutions. This included, amongst others, Thomas Bach, President of the International Committee, Andrew Parsons, President of the International Paralympics Committee, Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Angelo Melo, Director of Policy and Programmes UNESCO, Stanley Mutoyo, CEO African Union Sports Council, Tim Shriver, Chairman of the Special Olympics, Stefanie Reid, World Champion Paralympic Athlete, Tegla Loroupe, United Nations, UNICEF and IAAF Sports Ambassador.

The main purpose of the summit, which was organised by the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life in collaboration with the Dicastery for

Culture and Education, is to urge sports and politics, international regional and local, to embrace the Declaration by committing to work for the integration of people in society through sports, especially those with physical, intellectual and relational disabilities, migrants and refugees, prisoners, young people, girls and women and all those who find themselves marginalised or disadvantaged.

With over 40 years' experience in Catholic Education and an international reputation for his work in Physical Education and Sport, David Geldart was in no doubt about the importance of the event;

'I have spoken at Conferences throughout the world and been involved with a variety of national and international projects but the opportunity to contribute to this Summit at the Vatican has been the greatest honour of my career. On behalf of the entire Bambisanani Partnership team I was delighted to be able to speak about our work in South Africa using the power of sport to promote education, health, global citizenship and leadership. Throughout the summit's varied activities, I worked with some of the most remarkable people that I have ever met – people that clearly got great things done – all had tremendous vision, positivity, faith and determination – people using the power of value driven sport in every corner of the earth to make a difference for both individuals and communities. The consensus gained during summit enabled us to unveil the most significant of Declarations on Sport for All.'

The first day ended with a private visit to the Sistine Chapel and a time for quiet reflection. The final day began with Mass at the Vatican and concluded with an Audience with Pope Francis.

Cardinal Kevin Farrell gave a final speech on behalf of the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life and Dicastery for Culture and Education to deeply and warmly thank Pope Francis for his presence and support for this initiative. The Cardinal also summed up the progress of the last days:

'Over these two days we engaged in joint reflection on sport and the role that sport can play in fostering social cohesion and acceptance, especially at this time following a long and distressful pandemic. We must ask ourselves how we can change our society for the better. It was also proposed that we sign a Declaration indicating the common goals we wish to achieve, and the tasks and responsibilities we all want to assume.'

Pope Francis entered the Aula Paulo VI welcomed by the 250 participants representing all continents of the world. In his speech, he addressed the participants, saying:

'I encourage you to strive to make sport a home for everyone, something open and welcoming. In this home, never lose the family spirit, for in this way, we may find brothers, sisters and friends in the world of sport. I am close to you in this mission; the Church supports you in this educational and social commitment.'

At the end of his address, each signatory then took turns greeting the Holy Father before signing the Declaration on Sport, pledging to take-on the work, outlined over these past two days. As such, signatories committed to bringing the Declaration to life. Fundamental to this task is the understanding that this Declaration is not just a statement of principles, but a 'Declar-Action', an invitation to concrete actions for the future of society.

David Geldart is clear about the priorities:

'The work begins now. That is, realising that the vision of Sport for All, requires a commitment to cohesive sport, accessible sport, and tailored sport. In doing so, sport transforms our society and our world – recognising that our true team is the human family. Each of these categories – cohesive, accessible, and tailored – highlights a different component of the work ahead. A cohesive sport, implies one that brings people in, rather than just an elite few. An accessible sport, implies one

that is open to all, especially the most marginalized groups. A tailored sport, implies one that provides the resources necessary to accompany each individual person, just as they are. With the momentum and guidance of the experts convened at the summit, participants pledged to walk together because nobody can accomplish this task alone. Our challenge is to work with all stakeholders to build on this Declaration and move from words to action. With Pope Francis' focus on the educational value of sport I would call all schools, colleges and universities to play their part and to take up the challenge. The potential of high-quality, inclusive Physical Education and Sports programmes to make a unique contribution in this area is enormous both in terms of the individuals and society. Let's get going!

All who wish to support the Declaration can sign it on the website

www.sportforall.va



David Geldart meets Pope Francis

