

# a day in the life...

*This edition of a Day in the Life features two young people – one from England and one from South Africa – who are involved in the Bambisanani Partnership (featured in the summer 2014 edition of Physical Education Matters). This double feature shares their different perspectives. Notably, Sthabile is writing in English, which is not her first language.*

## Karl Verspyck

The Bambisanani Partnership is a collaboration developed by St. Mary's Menston in Leeds, England and Mnyakanya School in Nkandla, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Bambisanani is the Zulu word for 'working hand in hand' and encapsulates the partnership between the two schools. The Bambisanani Partnership has used sport as a catalyst to develop international understanding, education, health and leadership since 2006.

The Nkandla region is in the heart of Zululand and is extremely deprived with 90 per cent unemployment, 60 per cent adult illiteracy and one of the highest AIDS rates in the world with one in three adults infected. Twenty per cent of children never go to school as many are unable to afford the associated costs. Mnyakanya High School was opened by Nelson Mandela and Jacob Zuma in 2004. The school serves a vast area and many students walk two hours to and from school each day. Class sizes are in excess of 60 and the school has very limited resources. Mnyakanya has over 850 students. In June 2014, a group of 14 Year 12 students travelled to Mnyakanya to continue the work done by previous groups and to deliver another Bambisanani leadership course.

The welcome we received from the students at Mnyakanya was the warmest I've ever felt. I was so shocked that people, whom I have never met before, from another country on

the other side of the world, were so inclusive from the offset. We were formally welcomed by the mayor of Nkandla: Councillor Arthur Thamsanga Ntuli praised the work of the Bambisanani Partnership in an inspirational speech which reinforced the importance of working together with a desire to make a positive difference. He told us a message to remember was, "The greatest tragedy in life is not death, but life without a purpose." This really hit us hard as we knew that tragedy was something a lot of the students at Mnyakanya had to deal with from a very early age.

Over the week that we spent in the school we mentored a group of children and taught them first how to play three new sports. We taught the participants rugby, rounders and cricket. On the whole the group picked up these sports miraculously quickly. This meant we were able to develop the South African learners into young leaders who could independently teach these sports. This part was trickier because, although many of the children were very able sportsmen and women, leadership was something that they had never been taught before. One memory that will last with me is how hard working the young leaders were. They would give everything a go and this helped them to progress immensely throughout the Bambisanani leadership course. At the end of the week there was a sports festival for the children of the local primary school and it was the job of the Bambisanani leaders to teach the primary school children

how to play the new sports. Oh... did I mention this was all in English, the second language of the leaders and the primary school children! It was amazing to see all of our new leaders teaching and having fun. A profound moment for me was when a group of primary children was playing rounders and one of them was struggling to hit the ball. A young leader I had been coaching put his arm around the child and taught him again how to hit the ball. It was a truly magical moment.

This trip to South Africa really opened all of our eyes and all 14 of us will never see the world the same again. It has put things in perspective and made us think again before complaining over minor problems. I want to be more positive after coming back from Africa and grateful for what we have. I can never complain about having to take the bus or walk when I know that back in Nkandla there are many of the students who are walking for two hours to get to school. The whole Bambisanani Partnership is filled with emotion and the bond that we made with the young leaders in Africa is one that was as strong as the partnership itself. I hope to do more work with the partnership and help support more trips to Mnyakanya in the future. Bambisanani is the perfect way to describe the partnership because we learnt as much if not more from our Zulu friends than we taught them. I have to thank my school for the opportunity to be a part of something so special and especially David Geldart who is the mastermind behind the whole partnership.

## Sthabile Zuma

When our teachers chose us to be the young leaders for the Bambisanani Partnership, I was not sure whether to say yes or no. I was so nervous and I doubted myself in this role. All my friends were nervous too.

Bambisanani Partnership is a collaboration that developed between St. Mary's, Menston in Leeds and our school, Mnyakanya High School. All this made me more nervous because I was not having any experience of communicating with a White person, let alone a person from England. I was really confused about what I was going to do. I was even shy about our local area which is underdeveloped, full of mountains and hills.

It was only after I saw the photos of the previous Bambisanani visitors that I became brave enough to face the challenge. I started to develop that little interest when I saw the previous young leaders playing games with great pleasure on their faces. I started to develop my own ideas on how can I make our Bambisanani friends from UK feel welcomed and make them have a good time while they are with us. I was the one who had to prepare a speech to welcome them. When our visitors arrived, yooohh!!! I became so nervous and my knees were shaking. I felt some tears in my eyes, but I tried to be brave.

After assembly we were told to go to the playgrounds with our UK visitors and that is where the fun began. Our visitors were amazingly friendly, we started chatting with them, asking each other names and played different games. It was so amazing that we could not clearly understand all what they say, because of their language and accent, but the games that we were playing made us communicate efficiently. They taught us to play rounders, rugby and cricket.



It was amazing that through sport we could make friends with the young people from UK. We were even teaching each other different cultural, social and educational activities. We were taking photos together. We all enjoyed their visit and loved it so much because it showed us that people from the other side of the world are enjoying being in our country. The Bambisanani Partnership opened our eyes about the beauty of our nature, our weather and our people.

The Bambisanani partnership helps to develop confidence within us as young people, through teaching us to be the young leaders. The Bambisanani Partnership makes us feel recognised that we can do something on our own. Our Bambisanani friends from UK taught us to train other young people from our neighbouring primary school all that they taught us. We were so excited to see

ourselves leading others and training others. We felt that we were really leaders. We are still using those leadership skills in our school. We teach others many games during sports time.

In addition to all the leadership traits that we attained from the Bambisanani friends we also really had a wonderful time with them.

They were so caring and loving and full of happiness to be in our country. I remember when I was sick and could not play games, one of my friends took care of me, and she even also quit the games to take care of me. That was a big lesson to all of us, i.e. "caring for others".

The lesson that we all learnt through Bambisanani is that we should appreciate and adore our nature and what we have in our country, because

without our nature we have no name and dignity. Through Bambisanani we also learnt that we should communicate and care for our nature, because we realised that our visitors liked it, because they kept asking question about our plants, animals etc.

Bambisanani Partnership has attracted the attention of our most respected stakeholders of our country. Our local authorities, our mayor etc. have all realised the power of sport to make successful communication among people of different cultures who speak different languages.

It was very painful to all of us when our friends were leaving and going back to their country. We knew that we will never hear that interesting "hello" that they used to say. Most of us were crying because they never experienced that kind of love and care they were receiving from our Bambisanani friends from St. Mary's. But we live in hope that Bambisanani will grow further and we will meet our friends again one day.

The lesson I would like to share with everyone is that sport is a very powerful means of communication. It is also important that we must love, care and appreciate our nature and place. Bambisanani Partnership has taught us to learn about other people's lives and to believe that we as young people can contribute in changing the lives of others.

**For more information about the Bambisanani Partnership, contact David Geldart (afPE member) at [davidgeldart@bambisananipartnership.org](mailto:davidgeldart@bambisananipartnership.org)**