

Charity founder meets Pope

By Claire Lomax

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THE founder and chairman of The Bambisanani Partnership David Geldart recently met with Pope Francis at the Vatican's global Sport for All Summit.

The summit was organised by the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life in collaboration with the Dicastery for Culture and Education at the Vatican under the title Sport for All; cohesive, accessible and tailored to each person.

The aim 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.



David Geldart meeting with Pope Francis

The main purpose of the summit was to urge sports and politics 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 more than 40 years' experience in catholic education in Menston 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 and

meet Pope Francis has been the greatest honour of my career," he said.

"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 Bambisanani Partnership emerged in 2006 from a British Council/Youth Sport Trust initiative linking UK and South African schools through physical education and sport. The link between St Mary's High School in Menston and Mnyakanya High School, which serves one of Kwa-Zulu-Natal's most deprived rural communities, went on to become embedded in the lives of both schools, inspiring young people in many areas of the curriculum through joint learning activities.

Bambisanani is a Zulu word meaning "working hand in hand" and aptly describes the work and vision of this inspirational partnership that uses sport as a catalyst to promote education, health, global citizenship and leadership.

Those who wish to support the declaration can sign it at sportforall.va