

Lizzie is inspired by local charity's cycling project in South Africa

The Bambisanani Partnership

Cycling star Lizzie Deignan (née Armistead) from Otley has praised a cycling project set up by Menston based charity, the Bambisanani Partnership, in one of South Africa's most remote and deprived areas.

The multi-award winning charity founded by David Geldart at St. Mary's School, has operated in South Africa for the past fifteen years using sport as a catalyst to promote education, health, global citizenship and leadership. Six years ago Andrew Lockwood, from the University of Leeds, visited South Africa with Bambisanani volunteers from St. Mary's School. This was to lead to the university becoming an integral part of the charity and the development of a most remarkable cycling project that has gained international acclaim.

The Bambisanani 'Cycling to Success' initiative has taken cycling to an area of KwaZulu-Natal where children routinely walk two hours to and from school each day. The programme has not only provided bikes but also training from student volunteers and staff from the University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University who teach children how to ride bikes safely and maintain them. A central 'Bike Hub' has been established at Mnyakanya School where the bikes and equipment are kept and the training takes place.

Professional world champion track and road racing cyclist Lizzie Deignan said:

“ I am inspired and excited to see the work being done by 'Cycling to Success'. In my case success is measured in medals and titles but in reality the most simple and brilliant success that the bicycle can give its rider is the victory of freedom. I am delighted that the opportunity to achieve freedom is being donated by the work of 'Cycling to Success'. It is such a valuable and effective way to broaden horizons.”

Mrs Pk Zondi, Bambisanani Coordinator at Mnyakanya High School said :

“ Cycling was not that familiar in our community until this initiative was introduced four years ago. Since then it has become part of the lives of many learners. During lockdown, when schools were closed, they were so excited to be using the bikes. I could not believe to see even the elder people in the community showing interest in cycling. Mnyakanya young cyclists inspired the elder, who in turn decided to fix and renew their old bikes that had never been used for years and years. Some of those old bikes were brought to these young cyclists to fix them. We do not have enough words to pass on our gratitude and thanks to the University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University for changing the lives of our young people.”



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Community member Senzo Mdlalose added:

“ It is so amazing to see the interest of cycling growing like this our community. I volunteered in assisting these young people if they have some challenges in repairing their bikes. Cycling is help the young people not to involve themselves in doing bad things. I make sure that they follow the rules of Covid 19 while they are using and fixing the bikes. I so wish that this cycling project may grow stronger.”

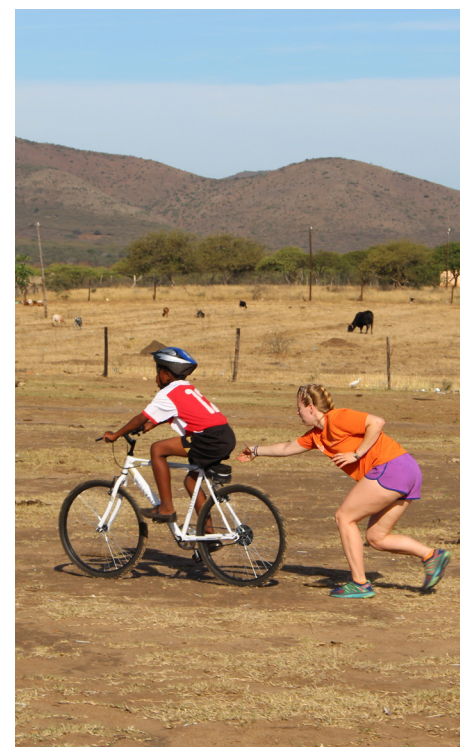


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Mnyakanya students are in no doubt about the impact of this initiative:

“ I love cycling. Sometimes I compete with my friends in a distance of about 10 kilometres or more. Cycling has become my daily activity, especially if there is no school. Many people on the road show an exciting interest in our cycling activity. We hear people hooting their taxis and others clapping their hands to encourage our cycling competition. Many people stop and watch what we do. I would like to thank Leeds University and Leeds Trinity University for introducing cycling to us.” – Asanda Gabela

“ I am so grateful that I can ride and fix my bicycle for myself. It is now easier for me when my parents send me to a place that is far from home because I use a bike to take that journey. I can ride as many times as I can, even if the weather conditions are bad. The bikes also help me to get to school earlier and faster. When there are heavy rains my books and my school uniform are not getting too wet if I am riding a bike. It is so exciting that the bikes have changed our lives for better. May God bless The Bambisanani Partnership and the Leeds university teams for changing our lives.” – Sakhile Magwaza

“ Thank you very much to The Bambisanani Partnership for donating the bikes to us, and also for offering riding and fixing training. Our lives are becoming easier with bikes. This is all very exciting! Almost all young people in my community like to learn cycling. We also use the bikes for sports and as a transport. Many people in this community have developed the love of cycling. People ride the bikes to work, to their relatives, to shops and others to school. Bikes are so helpful and save money.” – Bonginkosi Magwaza

“ Cycling is greatly appreciated by our local soccer team. The Bambisanani bikes are used by our team for physical training. Using the bikes has encouraged active participation in our fitness work. Players really enjoy using bikes for exercising and are motivated. Thank you very much to the Bambisanani team.” – Mholi Hlabisa

Parallel to the impact on the recipients of the bikes, the impression on the skills and values of the UK students is huge. Skills auditing before, during and after the intervention saw students develop 10 top graduate level skills by an average of 31% from start to completion.

“ I'm proud to say I helped teach 30 kids how to ride a bicycle in just a few days. I am however even prouder to say that a group of 30 kids have taught me more than I could have ever imagined. I discovered the perseverance the children had as well as the importance of Zulu culture in those same couple of days!” – University of Leeds student Franki Darko.

- 70 used bikes have been refurbished and shipped to Mnyakanya High School with the support of University of Leeds Security and Sustainability and the Cardinal Maritime Shipping Company
- 80 new bikes have also been purchased and shipped through student and staff fundraising
- Tools and consumables to the value of £10k have also been provided thanks to the support of the Rob Stephenson Trust and The Bambisanani Partnership
- Over 120 South African children have been supported to learn to ride and maintain bikes
- 59 University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity students and staff have been involved in the project

Andrew Lockwood, who is now a Trustee of The Bambisanani Partnership said: “

“ Setting up the bike hub at Mnyakanya has been hugely beneficial to all involved, not only the recipients of the bikes, but also the University staff and students who are able to develop outstanding professional skills and personal values through this unique challenge. The hub is now clearly embedded at Mnyakanya and in the surrounding community and we now hope to expand the project to further rural schools in the area over the next few years.”



David Geldart added:

“ This initiative has clearly had a remarkable impact both on those receiving the training and those providing it. Andrew and the university teams deserve enormous credit for pioneering this inspirational work. It has been absolutely wonderful to see cycling introduced to this remote rural area. For the Mnyakanya students, and indeed in the wider community, we have seen a growing interest in cycling as a mode of transport, for sport, recreation, fitness training and for some, a source of employment! There is a real desire in the community for this initiative to grow further and indeed in other communities close by. It is fantastic to have the support of a global cycling star like Lizzie who will certainly inspire more young people to get involved, particularly girls and women in the area. “

For more information about The Bambisanani Partnership visit

www.bambisananipartnership.org

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