

Lizzie is inspired by charity's



Lizzie Deignan. Picture: JoJo Harper



The cycling project has gained international acclaim



Lizzie Deignan in action. Picture: JoJo Harper



The Bambisanani 'Cycling to Success' initiative goes from strength to strength

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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 15 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



Checking the tyres

donated by the work of 'Cycling to Success'. It is such a valuable and effective way to broaden horizons."

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

cycling project in South Africa



The Bambisanani 'Cycling to Success' initiative has taken cycling to an area of KwaZulu-Natal

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."

Community member Senzo Mdlalose added: "It is so amazing to see the interest of cycling growing like this in our community. I volunteered in assisting these young people if they have some challenges in repairing their bikes. Cycling is helping 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."

David Geldart said: "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."

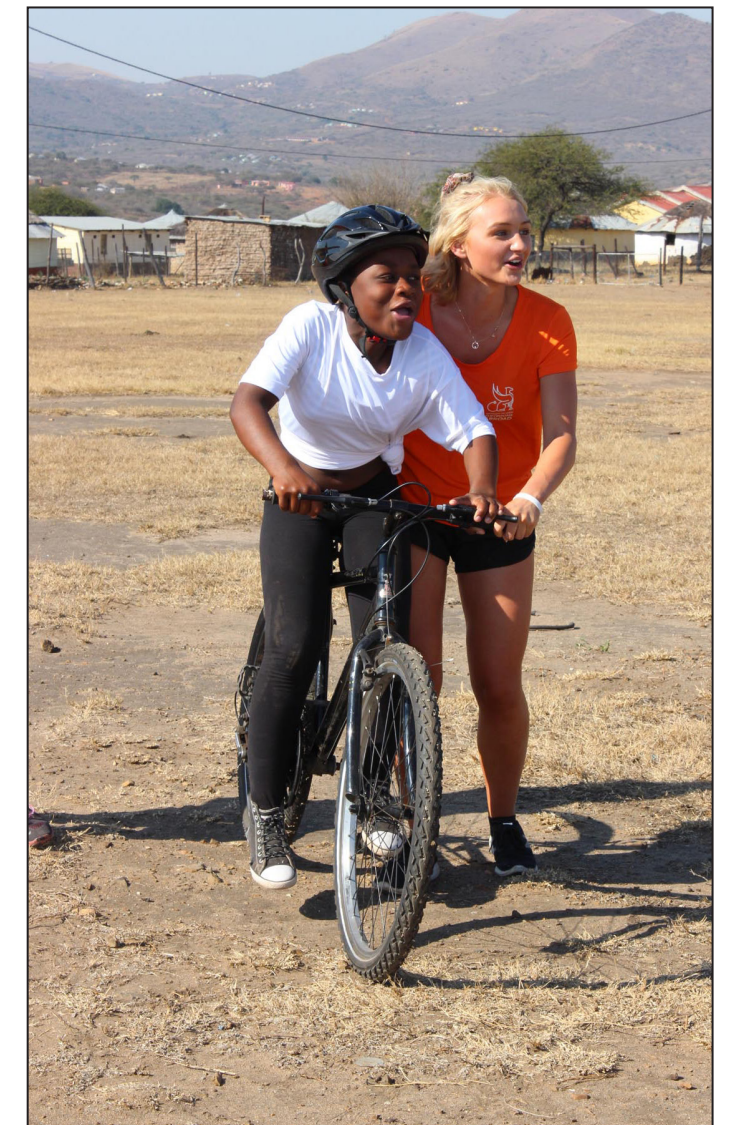
Andrew Lockwood, who is now a trustee of The Bambisanani Partnership, said: "The hub is now clearly embedded at Mnyakanya and in the surrounding community and we now hope to expand the project to further rural schools in the area over the next few years."



The project in action



Learning how to maintain the bikes



A volunteer helps teach the skill of cycling to a youngster