

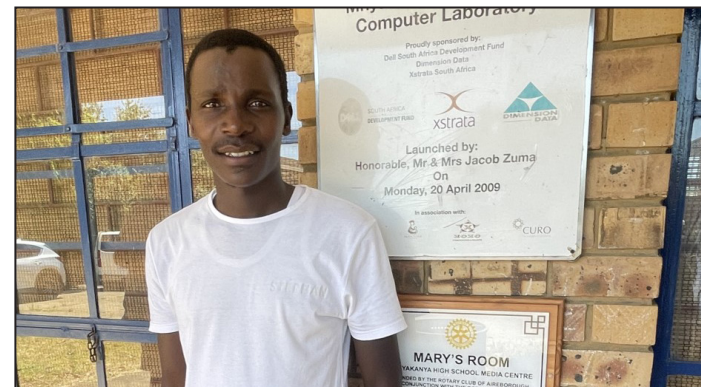
Visit to South Africa by St



Girls receiving the sanitary kits



Girls receiving the sanitary kits



ICT teacher at Mnyakanya



Athletics coaching



Ntolwane

MEMBERS of the Bambisanani Partnership team have recently travelled to South Africa in a post-Covid "Research and Development" visit to reinstate programmes and to develop new ones.

Catherine Chattoe, Bambisanani Partnership co-ordinator at St Mary's, Menston, Barbara Pounder, Bambisanani trustee, and Brogan O'Connor and Barry Rizza from the very latest Bambisanani partner institute, Newcastle College, were able to spend valuable "in person time" with old colleagues and friends, as well as establishing new contacts and relationships. This follows on from a very effective Research and Development visit made by Bambisanani team members from the University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University last year.

A key element of both trips has been to plan and prepare for the resumption of student volunteer visits later this year. For Newcastle College these would be the first student visits ever to South Africa. Student visits from all four Bambisanani Partnership UK based institutions have subsequently been confirmed to the Nkandla region of KwaZulu-Natal from June to August this year.

The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education has been an important Bambisanani partner since the inception of the initiative 17 years ago. This has been led by chief education advisor, Tony Moodley. The team were able to meet with Tony and his colleague Priscilla Guliwe to be updated on the challenges faced in the deep rural areas.

After three years it was an emotional return to longstanding Bambisanani partners Mnyakanya High School, Ntolwane Primary School and to Doremi Day Care Centre for orphans and vulnerable children.

Again, based on local needs, existing and potential programmes were discussed. The visit to Mnyakanya School was aptly timed so that Catherine Chattoe and the team could support the final part of the

International Rotary Grant that provided Mnyakanya High School with equipment for an ICT suite of 40 computers and the finances to fund a teacher to deliver the newly-introduced Computer Applications Technology (CAT) course at the school.

Catherine and the team were on hand to help set up and install the final 20 computers into the suite and meet with the newly-appointed CAT teacher, Phakamani Mbambo. This development, over several years, has contributed to a significant improvement in educational attainment at the school.

Just before the outbreak of Covid, the partnership had started to explore the idea of working with Thembinfundo Special School to develop a programme of adapted physical education and sport. The opportunity to visit the school, see the children and meet with the principal Mr Dlamini simply could not have been replicated by any number of Zoom meetings.

Barbara Pounder, who is a specialist in this area, said: "The meeting and whole experience was very positive. There is enormous potential at Thembinfundo Special School to support considerable curriculum development and to create volunteer opportunities for UK students."

"To work with children with such a range of special needs in such a warm and encouraging environment could be one of the ways the Bambisanani Partnership makes a significant difference in the future."

Several meetings also took place with "new" schools that are keen to join the partnership. These meetings enabled the team to listen to different partnership possibilities and to explore other areas to develop the Bambisanani cycling initiative, Cycling for Success, which teaches young people how to both ride and maintain bikes.

A major area of success for the partnership during the Covid years was the development of the Bambisanani International Athletics Challenge that linked primary

Mary's Menston and partners



Doremi Day Centre

schools in the UK and South Africa in fun Athletic Challenges. During the visit the team were able to visit Vumahlamvu Primary School and provide a Training Workshop for teachers from schools already part of the programme and for schools that will join the programme this year.

A particularly rewarding part of the visit was when Catherine and her team were able to deliver handmade kits designed to help girls who are menstruating. More than 80 South African girls were gifted a kit that provides menstrual care and allows them to manage their periods so that they can attend school every day.

The kits were made by a group of volunteers from Aireborough Rotary Club and delivered by the Bambisanani team; the two institutions have been working closely together for 17 years. The South African girls were delighted with the kits and many said it allows them to live their lives with dignity.

Other valuable meetings took place with Nick Phillips and Graham Chennells from Eshower Rotary Club. Nick and Graham are experienced in rural development projects and have supported and guided the partnership in a range of projects and programmes over the years. Their insight and advice are a phenomenal asset to the partnership and greatly appreciated.

Visit leader Catherine Chattoe said: "The whole experience was so invaluable, existing connections and friendships have been strengthened and very importantly new relationships have been formed during the visit. We had worked really hard with virtual meetings during the last three years to maintain existing relationships and indeed to develop new ones but nothing quite compares to the very special human connection when meeting and spending time with people in person."

"The visit has enhanced the capacity of the two countries to work together, existing programmes can now flourish and new ones will be created. The vision for

the future looks very exciting."

Bambisanani Trustee Brogan O'Connor added: "The visit has been absolutely invaluable for me personally, for Newcastle College and, of course, for the ongoing development of the partnership."

"Reconnecting with old friends and creating new contacts was a great learning experience for me. That experience will now certainly lead to a visit to South Africa by staff and students from Newcastle College this summer as we become the latest members of the partnership from the UK."

"As with every visit to South Africa we have returned home with great positivity, motivation, and a greater understanding of a fascinating culture; all four of us are inspired by the possibilities that lay ahead."

"We now have a clear vision for the future of Newcastle College as a member of the Bambisanani Partnership and we will be spending the next five months working towards making that a reality."

David Geldart, founder and chair of the Bambisanani Partnership, said: "Massive thanks must go to Catherine, Barbara, Brogan and Barry. They have worked extraordinarily hard and have clearly moved the partnership forward, creating a tremendous platform on which to launch our most ambitious year to date."

"It is difficult to believe that they did so much and achieved so much in such a short time."

"Their outstanding work will create so many more opportunities now for educators and learners from both countries to 'work together and learn together' in the true spirit of Ubuntu and Bambisanani. Their enthusiasm, determination and proactivity are inspirational and are the very reason that we are continually able to achieve so much."

"Thank you also of course to our amazing and rapidly growing team in South Africa who were so welcoming and made the week so positive and productive. We will build on this."



The computer room being set up



Delivering the computers