

2023 is an outstanding year of volunteering for the Bambisanani Partnership in South Africa

Following a break of three years due to Covid 19 restrictions, 2023 has proved to be a remarkable year of volunteering in South Africa for the Bambisanani Partnership. 41 students together with 11 members of staff from St. Mary's School, Menston, the University of Leeds, Leeds Trinity University and Newcastle College spent more than three months in South Africa delivering Bambisanani programmes using sport to promote education, health, global citizenship and leadership in one of the country's most deprived and challenging areas. In four separate coordinated visits the volunteers worked with 3,631 South African students from 33 different schools of which 17 were new partner institutions. 3,151 students from primary and secondary schools were involved in sports festivals and coaching activities and 1,135 children experienced Bambisanani Leadership through Sport programmes.

The University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University

The joint team of staff and students from the University of Leeds and Leeds Trinity University completed a four week sport and education project. The Gryphons Abroad programme saw staff and students deployed to deliver cycling, sport and leadership in schools in the Nkandla region.

In a pioneering collaboration between the charity and KZN Cycling the team successfully engaged over 2000 young people in a cycling programme aimed at empowering youth through cycling programme. The Bambisanani/KZN Cycling project runs clinics in schools throughout the year via a permanent 'cycling hub' positioned in the heart of the rural communities. The project aims to teach 5000 young people a year how to ride and maintain bikes. Mzamo Khoza, now a cycling development officer for KZN Cycling, is a former pupil of Mnyakanya High School who participated in the first ever cycling course led by University of Leeds staff and students back in 2016.



Mzamo Khoza, Cycling Development Coordinator for KZN Cycling commented:

“ Working alongside the team was more than amazing because everyone was so focused on the task in hand whilst also having fun together in the process.”

Four weeks were spent teaching cycling in seven primary and secondary schools. Children were taught the basics of balancing and steering before progressing to pedalling. More experienced riders worked on their handling and control to prepare them for road cycling and races. Students also taught basic bike maintenance to all pupils.

The final week of the university student stay was spent delivering a sport and leadership festival for four primary schools in the township of Eshowe. The festival, hosted at Gratton College saw 150 grade 7's from multiple primary schools come together to participate in a range of sessions. Leeds students delivered leadership sessions culminating in pupils designing and delivering their own games and activities for their peers. A first experience of leadership for many. Alongside this they participated in sports including football, netball and rounders. As well as classroom sessions designed by students and based on their own studies at home.

Key to all Bambisanani Partnership is the commitment creating learning opportunities for all involved; students from both countries. Parallel to the impact on South African children, the project also impacted very positively on Leeds students who had the

opportunity to develop their practical skills, broaden their horizons and learn more about different cultures. Students were invited to learn basic Zulu as well as participate in traditional singing and dancing in almost every school visited on the visit!

The project was led by Sport and Physical Activity staff members Andy Lockwood, Suzzi Garnett and Lauren Havercroft along with Ammarah Pandor from Leeds Trinity. The six students were Connor Bull, Christian Lewis, Lucy Hughes, Rachel Barton, Rhiannah McCourt and Ellen Slack.



Connor Bull, University of Leeds Sport Science student and Gryphons Abroad 2023 team member said:

“ The Gryphons Abroad project has been a real highlight of my time at university. The project taught me so much about myself both personally and professionally and allowed me to explore life in a completely different culture. I thoroughly enjoyed every single moment and would strongly recommend the project to anyone ready for a challenge!”

Andrew Lockwood, Assistant Head of Sport and Bambisanani trustee said:

“ Our work with KZN Cycling has enabled us to bring the cycling project to more schools and more pupils in the region. It has been a very special year for staff and students visiting new places and meeting new people with the support of Mzamo. The journey of Mzamo himself clearly demonstrates the long-term impact cycling can have on individuals. Alongside this our skills auditing also evidences the clear impact on our graduates who measured improvements of up to 39% in all ten of the identified skill areas.”

Newcastle College

Newcastle College is the latest UK institution to join the Bambisanani Partnership. Led by former St. Mary's, Menston student, Brogan O'Connor, the college made its first visit to South Africa this year with student volunteers.

The team of 13 was made up of 3 staff; Barry Rizza, Brogan O'Connor, Rebecca Welch and 10 students; Charlotte Stewart, Chloe Maddison, Faith Sita, Josh Young, Kieran Richardson, Meghan Haynes, Olivia Forster, Sam Oumaouche, Shalia Bond and Taylor Matthews embarked on their 30-hour journey to Eshowe, South Africa where they spent 3 weeks volunteering in rural KwaZulu-Natal. The team used the power of sport to positively impact their own lives and those of the children in the schools and orphanages they would work in partnership with.

Operating at three schools; Matholamnyama Secondary School, Ngqamzana Primary School, Vumanhlamvu Primary School and the Zulufadder Doremi Daycare Centre for orphans and vulnerable children, the group worked with children aged 2-13, hosting sports and leadership sessions while supporting other projects, such as painting the Daycare Centre.

Working in partnership with local schools and organisations the group delivered a series of sports and sports leadership programmes to more than 700 South African students. A major aim of the visit was to introduce new schools to the partnership and extend the work of the charity in one of the most challenging and deprived areas of KwaZulu-Natal. The sessions enabled students from both the UK and South Africa to develop their skills across leadership, communication, team building and confidence.

The visit clearly made a significant impact on the Newcastle students:

“Where to start! This was the most eye opening, life changing, surreal experience that made every single individual look at life back in the UK a little differently. The visit to Ngqamzana School was one of the best days of my life.”

**Olivia Forster,
Sport Coaching student**



“It was an emotional experience for everyone, certainly an eye opener for us, all in all the best experience that I have had so far in my life journey.”

**Kieran Richardson,
Physical Education and Sport
Coaching student**

A particularly powerful and poignant moment for the entire group was when a 10-year-old primary school learner shared some of his written work:

“When I grow up, I want to be a social worker, I want to help people, I don't want to see children be in crime, I want my mum and dad to be proud of me.”

Mr Ngcobo, a Maths teacher at Ngqamzana Primary School also spoke very highly of the new partnership commenting:

“I have never lived a day thinking that one day I will be so happy like I am now; we have learned so much together. This is surely the start of something incredibly special.”



The visit to South Africa was organised by Brogan O'Connor, Enrichment and Development Manager at the college and Trustee of the Bambisanani Partnership, who said:

“As a college we are honoured to be a part of the multi-award winning Bambisanani Partnership. I was fortunate to visit South Africa as a student with St. Mary's School and the Bambisanani Partnership in the summer of 2012 so I know first-hand the benefit our students will gain from being a part of the partnership. The encounters between the students were remarkable and will no doubt make a lasting impact. The visit was more successful than I could have ever imagined, and I cannot wait to continue to build on the success of these foundations in the years to come. The Bambisanani Partnership is all about creating collaborative learning opportunities for young people in both countries; we are absolutely committed to this.”

St. Mary's School, Menston

St. Mary's School have made two visits to South Africa this year involving 25 students.

A group of fifteen Year 12 students and four staff, Catherine Chattoe, Charlotte Wood, Matt Harvey and David Farmer, Deputy Headteacher from St. Josephs Primary School in Pudsey, made the first visit to rural KwaZulu-Natal. The St. Mary's student volunteers were Sean Billington, Joe Brooks, Ruby Grant, Oscar Thorning, Florence Greenhalgh, Lily Durkan, Andrew Diamond, Amy McIlroy, Carys Delahy, Freddie Falkingham, Katie Newman, Tess Yeardeley, Ben Fletcher, Eleanor Rock and Louie Dooling.

The St. Mary's students, together with support from students from Eshowe High School, delivered the Bambisanani Sports Leadership Programme to 30 students from Mnyakanya. In between delivering the sports leadership programme the St. Mary's students delivered curriculum lessons including Maths, Biology, Geography and Chemistry.

The work at Mnyakanya High School culminated with students from all three High Schools working together to plan, organise and deliver both a Sports and a Reading Festival to students of Ntolwane Primary School. 60 students enjoyed a morning of rounders, tennis and netball led by the

Mnyakanya Sports Leaders.



In addition to the work at Mnyakanya High School the team brought some new 'firsts' for the Bambisanani Partnership. On a sunny but windy Monday morning the team travelled to rural Nkandla where they organised an Athletics Festival for 11 local primary schools. The festival was such a success that it will now become an annual event with primary schools back in Yorkshire also participating in a parallel festival that will connect schools in both countries.

No St. Mary's visit to KwaZulu-Natal would be complete without spending some time the Doremi Daycare Centre where the student volunteers worked with the kindergarten learners on sports, literacy and singing. A wonderful time was had by all with the St. Mary's students also getting the opportunity to meet the inspirational and incomparable Mrs Popi Buthelezi who runs the centre.

The second St. Mary's volunteer visit to South Africa involved 10 Year 13 students: Rory Southern, Iggy Burrows, Charlotte Rawstron, Anna Ciesluk, Hannah Byrne, Daniel Sykes, Rebecca Shaw, Ruby Adcock, Lucy Charlton and Reya Wilks.

The group began their work at the remarkable the Doremi Daycare Centre for orphans and vulnerable children. In addition to sports, reading and singing activities the group organised a Bear Hunt and Teddy Bears picnic.

They went on to spend three days at Mnyakanya High School training another group of 30 Sports Leaders. This again culminated in both Sports and Reading Festivals being provided for local primary school children. This was a wonderful success with Mnyakanya students being praised



highly for their 'exceptional leadership skills' in delivering the festival. In a celebration event, student leaders from both countries were congratulated on their collaborative work and were encouraged to develop their leadership potential further.

A great highlight of this visit for everyone involved was another 'first' for the Bambisanani Partnership: a visit to Thembimfundo Special School for children with a wide range of different disabilities. The team ran the school's first ever Sports Day for the children, which included activities such as dancing, high jump and netball.

Mr Dlamini, the Principal of Thembimfundo Special School said:

“ I really couldn't believe what I was seeing. The excitement, the smiling faces and participation of all our children with different life challenges in the activities conducted by Bambisanani team was amazing.”

Such was the impact of the visit to Thembimfundo on all concerned that the Bambisanani Partnership charity will now work hard with the school community to develop a more permanent and sustainable link.

The visits had a significant impact on students from both countries:

“ We had a precious time with the UK groups. I never thought that my interaction with them would change my life like this. Sharing our life experiences with people from another part of the world made me feel as if a new page of my life was opening.”

Simphiwe Mbambo

“ I can't believe I have a friend overseas. That makes me feel important. I was very proud to be recognised as an outstanding young leader. I hope that I will be a good future leader.”

Bayanda Gcaba

“ The Bambisanani Leadership Programme is not just a one-time experience but rather a catalyst for ongoing learning and growth, it will inspire participants to continue seeking opportunities for personal growth.”

Amy McIlroy

“ Being a part of The Bambisanani Partnership has been one of the best experiences of my life and the people I have met have taught me so much about resilience and hope.”

Eleanor Rock

Conclusion

David Geldart, CEO and Founder of the partnership said:

“ I have nothing but praise for the remarkable students and staff from St. Mary’s, Menston, The University of Leeds, Leeds Trinity University and Newcastle College for their outstanding work in not only reintroducing volunteer student visits to South Africa after Covid but also for having such an enormous impact in doing so. Our work puts great store in creating learning opportunities for young people from both countries; Europeans and Africans ‘working together and learning together’ in a spirit of Ubuntu. All four institutions worked extremely hard with the local communities involved to establish what was needed on the ground then worked tirelessly in partnership to extend existing programmes and indeed to introduce new ones. These are four institutions that are prepared to ‘live their values’ in terms of Global Learning. They are helping to pioneer exceptionally powerful learning opportunities for young people in both countries. This work is far from easy. Despite the considerable challenges and hard work involved they are committed to ‘real education’ that is enabling young people to take a broader view of the world and their place in it. By any standard this is phenomenal educating that is helping to make the world a better place. Massive thanks to our wonderful team from South Africa and the UK for making all this happen and making a difference.”



The multi award winning Bambisanani Partnership has gained international acclaim for its work using the power of sport and education to change lives for the better. Over the past seventeen years more than 15,000 young people from the UK and South Africa (from primary school to university) have participated in a variety of Bambisanani Partnership programmes and projects including ‘Leadership through Sport’, Sports Festivals’ Cycling to Success’, ‘Literacy through Sport’, ‘Numeracy through Sport’ ‘Art through Sport’, ‘Learning through Football’, ‘International Athletics Challenge’ and the joint training of Physical Education teachers and Sports Coaches. The work of the partnership has been highlighted at conferences throughout the world, most recently at the Global Sport for All Summit held at the Vatican and at the International Olympic Academy in Ancient Olympia. The Bambisanani Partnership was named as International Sport and Physical Education Charity of the Year 2023.

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