



Bambisanani Partnership

Working Together, Learning Together



st.Mary's
Menzies



Mnyakanya
High School



Sawubona!

Report on St. Mary's visit to South Africa June 2017

Registered Charity
Number: 1163461

Follow us online!



Sawubona!



Report on St. Mary's visit to South Africa June 2017

Bambisanani
Partnership

Fourteen St Mary's students embarked on a journey to South Africa this summer to deliver a leadership programme to a high school in one of South Africa's poorest rural areas. The multi award winning Bambisanani Partnership, founded by former Assistant Headteacher David Geldart, is now in its eleventh year, and continues to develop its pioneering work with Mnyakanya High School and other organisations in the KwaZulu-Natal region using sport as a catalyst to promote education, health, leadership and global citizenship.

This year's visit was led by Mrs Catherine Chattoe and Miss Elle Jackson, with support from Mr Tom Hamill and two lecturers from Leeds Trinity University, Chris Howley and Diane Maguire.

St. Mary's students Ewan Copsey, Tadhg Collins, Laurence Patterson, George Powell, Larissa Meggitt, Pauline Hall, Rosie Egan, Lorna Gilroy Turner, Ezra Cheng, Megan O'Connor, Phoebe Kendall, Niamh Devine, Tasha Cooper and Katie Fearnley had prepared for eighteen months for what would prove to be an amazing adventure and a significant learning experience.

Developing leadership through sport and education is one of the key aspects of the Bambisanani Partnership and throughout their ten day visit, St. Mary's students, supported by students from Eshowe High School, mentored twenty Mnyakanya students through the Bambisanani Leadership programme. The programme aimed to provide the Mnyakanya students with the necessary leadership skills and confidence which would enable them to organise and deliver both a Sports Festival and a Reading Festival for over one hundred pupils from Ntolwane Primary School. As part of this process the Mnyakanya students were taught how to play, teach and organise competitions in rounders, netball and rugby. The leadership course was a tremendous success as was evident when the Mnyakanya students delivered two quite unbelievable festivals. It was a learning process that empowered students from both countries in a real spirit of teamwork and mutual respect.

Additionally, as part of the visit the St. Mary's students also delivered lessons in a wide range of diverse

curriculum areas ranging from History to Biology to classes full of enthusiastic Mnyakanya learners. Teachers from both countries praised the students for the 'exceptional high quality' of the lessons.

At a special presentation ceremony and partnership celebration, Mnyakanya students received their much deserved Leadership awards and students from Mnyakanya and Ntolwane Primary school were presented with a series of annual awards from the John Paul II Foundation for Sport and the Lawrie McCauley awards for football and writing.

Ten days of intense hard work and learning culminated in the St. Mary's students volunteering at the Zulufadder Orphanage for AIDS orphans and vulnerable children. Here the students organised a variety of sports, games, singing and 'story sacks' which all proved to be a tremendous success.



The 2017 team with Mr Beardsley on the day of departure



Pauline leading some shared reading at the Festival

The visit had a remarkable impact on St. Mary's pupils:

LORNA GILROY TURNER

My visit to South Africa was an invaluable opportunity and I will never forget the memories I gained from the experience. Whether it was visiting the primary school and being welcomed by a wave of young children each giving us hugs or high-fives, or making memorable, lifelong friendships with the students at Mnyakanya High School, each one of us in the team has truly been changed for the better by the outstanding partnership.

The Sports Leadership aspect of the programme was especially significant to me, as it allowed me to grow as a person both in confidence and leadership, as well as showing us how eager the South African students were to learn new things. As part of the rugby team, we coached a small group of students on how to play, teach and referee the game. During the Sports Festival on Wednesday, the St Mary's team watched with awe as we saw the Mnyakanya students coaching the primary school students with such enthusiasm, confidence and knowledge (considering most of the High School students had never played rugby before!).

The visit to Zulufadder orphanage on Thursday also stands out to me, as the children there were so happy and welcoming to us. Despite not having very much, when we gave the children our gifts for them they shared out the presents and played with one another, each spreading even more happiness both among us and the children.

I know I am not just speaking for myself when I say that the experience has a special place in my heart, and exceeded all of my expectations which I previously had about the visit. As a team, we have been gathering ideas about how to go back to South Africa or fundraise for the leaders over there, making Bambisanani a truly life changing visit which I will treasure forever.



Lorna at Zulufadder



Working together during a lesson



Lorna teaching the digestive system to students at Mnyakanya

ROSIE EGAN

Wide and infectious smiles is the lasting image when I look back on Africa. The experience as a whole was one of the most life changing of my life. Although we spent most of our time teaching the children there, I think we ourselves learnt the most about the sort of people we are and the sort of people we want to be. One thing I certainly have brought back from Africa with me, and has impacted me greatly is the amount of positivity shown everywhere we went. Children who had next to nothing smiled wider than I've ever seen and it really put things into perspective for me.

Ten days there felt like a year and knowing that every single morning, waking up to the African sunrise, that whatever I did that day would make a difference, was what I needed to start each day off.

One of the most impacting moments for me, was the orphanage. I've never met a happier group of children and in the mess of glitter, bubbles and gladiator swords, presents we had bought for the orphans, I felt the happiest myself I've been in a very long time. I experienced more love on that day than you could in a lifetime and one particular girl captured my heart the second I got there. She spent the entire day calling me mummy. My heart shattered when I had to leave her as we moved on. I left with a lump in my throat and a huge smile on my face and although it broke my heart, I made such amazing memories there.

As the visit progressed, so did our group and one of the best memories is how close we became as a group and family. The down time we spent round the campfire and on an evening was amazing because we all became so close. This was one of the most emotional parts of leaving Africa as we knew that we wouldn't be spending every single day together as a team anymore and it certainly broke mine and everyone else's hearts. I honestly couldn't have asked for a better group of people to share such an incredible experience with.



Rosie reading at Zulufadder

PAULINE HALL

I think everyone who went on the Bambisanani 2017 visit would agree with me when I say that it was an incredibly humbling experience: most importantly, working with teenagers from Mnyakanya High School who were so unbelievably committed to succeeding as leaders, shown by their enthusiasm for learning and their respectful nature when they listened to you because they wanted to. What also struck me was the constant optimism that all students emanated: despite attending a school with few resources and living amongst poverty, they were so positive about their future and revealed a drive to succeed that you rarely see in young teenagers. On the Wednesday, our last day at Mnyakanya, I was really surprised when two students – Lorna and Asande – had written me letters to say goodbye. I found what they wrote incredibly moving and the letters prove how we all formed the most profound of friendships with the students. I definitely learnt much more from the students at Mnyakanya than they learnt from me.

Other than the friendships made between the students at Mnyakanya and ourselves, all 14 of us now have a relationship which I find really difficult to explain because it has materialised out of the overwhelming emotion and awe we all experienced and shared with one another – and those feelings are pretty indescribable. I loved the company of every single one of my peers and couldn't have wished for a better group of people to have travelled to South Africa with. We were also really lucky to be accompanied by such amazing teachers who were so generous, so understanding and so encouraging for the whole visit. I'm so glad that I not only got to meet the most extraordinary students from Mnyakanya, but that I discovered how amazingly compassionate and giving every sixth former on the visit was and I feel privileged to know them as my friends.

The only aspect of the trip I was most nervous about was my lesson. Larissa and I had decided to do Henry VIII's wives, knowing that this was an interesting subject that could be taught in 45 minutes. We taught a class of mixed ages and it was evident that the lesson was quite challenging for some and, in hindsight, I wish that I had chosen a more fun activity to do. In truth, I was slightly disappointed with how my lesson went but Mr Hamill's genuine praise and approval of our lesson made me feel so proud and I was happy that students had gone away actually having learnt a great deal. It was Rosie and Katie's music lesson, however, that I think I experienced an overwhelming sense of fulfilment and contentment: the noise, enthusiasm and joy in that room was so serene. I was surrounded by hopeful, genuinely happy young people and I loved that because it was reassuring to know that not everyone in the world has to be a cynic.



Pauline reading at Zulufadder

KATIE FEARNLEY

It is clear to anyone and everyone that I am a rather musical person. I sing practically everywhere I go; there is never a time where you can't hear me and I grab any chance to be on a stage; so when I decided I was teaching a music lesson in South Africa, I became quite excited. Rosie and I did most of the preparation at home and decided to do our lesson on rhythm. We had many ideas but time restricted us, so had to select the best few.

Sunday night was where the preparation started in South Africa: cutting and sticking, but most importantly making our junk band. We thought it was important to show the South African students how to make instruments out of their local resources; we used empty bottles and rice to create maracas, used pencils and pens to tap together on tables and finally used empty bottles to scrape a pencil down to get a strange noise.

Monday afternoon we started our lesson. The children were so enthusiastic before we had even begun; it was quite inspirational to see how eager some children were to be in a lesson and really made me think of how much English children take for granted. As the lesson progressed it was very emotional as we taught the African children to sing 'I like the flowers', one of my favourite songs that holds a lot of memories from back home. The children could split into a four-part round of a song that was new to them, it was incredible to be a part of and a memory I shall never ever forget. Everyone in that room had a smile beaming from their faces and many people were crowding around the windows and attempting to come join in. For me, knowing that I had brought so much joy to these people through so little of my time was very rewarding and one of the key highlights of my visit to South Africa.



Katie on the first day of the Leadership course



Katie found a friend at Zulufadder

GEORGE POWELL

To put it simply my experience in South Africa was one that will stick with me forever. It was 10 days that changed my life and the only thing I would change about is that I wish we could have stayed for longer.

Every part of my time out there was amazing but for me working at Mnyakanya High School will always stand out. Whether it was coaching tag rugby or giving a lesson in poetry, I found that the South African students' attitude to learning was unbelievable, they were always focused and made teaching or coaching as easy as it could have been. This focus meant that my group of students managed to pick up tag rugby very quickly - which was a big achievement considering most had not even seen a rugby ball before - and managed to deliver an exceptional session on tag rugby to children from Ntolwane Primary School for which I was incredibly proud of them.

Undoubtedly, the toughest moment of the visit came when it was time to say goodbye to the students at Mnyakanya. It was difficult to believe how close we had become to the students after just four days working with them. It also became apparent how tough life is for them, as the simplest of gifts could produce the biggest of smiles, and more broadly, the impact we had on the lives of those students just by being there, which really highlights the importance of the Bambisanani Partnership.

In conclusion, my visit to South Africa has not only been the best ten days of my life but ten of the most important and gave me experiences that will impact me for the rest of my life. I made friendships with both members of our group and South African students who I will never forget and will hope to always stay in contact with. .



George at the Reading Festival

EWAN COPSEY

When looking back on my time in South Africa, I fail to avoid every possible cliché that I was told to steer clear of in the last six years of English education. It was a genuinely life changing experience and one that I will never forget. From the people we met in passing throughout the week, to the regular coach driver, there was never any negativity within the group.

These days were filled with an unmeasurable amount of emotional highs. The sheer joy the locals got from being around us and interacting with us was something so monumental in the visit, but was as simple as breathing. Although the week was filled with unparalleled highlights, there was one particular event which stood out for me.

The welcome to Zulu culture induced raw emotion that brought me to tears of joy and gratitude. Because of this intimate welcome, it made it a million times harder to say goodbye. The last day in Mynyakanya High School was one that I'll never forget; the rich culture was highlighted as the majority of the school football team performed traditional Zulu dances in front of an audience of pupils and teachers alike, who couldn't contain their excitement at the fast paced drumming beats that made the entire school hall quake.

We were showered with handmade gifts that helps truly appreciate the little amount of wealth in the surrounding area of the school. Although we were aware that poverty was prevalent in the area, there was never any signs of anything but welcoming people, who live their life to the fullest and appreciate everything they're given; whether it was knowledge in a subject area, or a small trinket to show our appreciation of their hospitality. But in the honest truth, they gave me so much more wisdom, and have had such a larger influence on my life than I could have given them or could have imagined.



Ewan teaching Maths



Ewan bringing the book to life at Zulufadder

NIAMH DEVINE

There is so much to say, however no description could highlight the true extent of how immense the experience was. The people so welcoming, unassuming and humble in such an unforgiving environment. This was especially shown in our first visits to the primary school and Mnyakanya High School, where both the leaders and other students radiated their joy for our presence from the moment we stepped through the gates. I saw from beginning to end, the true impact Bambisanani has on everyone it engages with. Some of the leaders told me of the impact we have on them, but I truly believe they impact substantially more on us; all other problems you went in with, seemed so small, irrelevant and insignificant compared to the reality surrounding these children.

The orphanage made a huge impression on my experience, particularly when I was holding a child in my arms and she instinctively called me "mummy". Utterly heart-breaking yet so pure in its symbolism, it added to the harsh reality of life for some of these kids. This changed my perspective on what is important and emphasised how genuinely lucky I was for my own family, also that I was from a western world where my biggest problem is what to wear for school, not when my next meal will be.

South Africa has enriched my view of the world and opened my eyes to what is going on around me, it has hopefully enriched my actions and helped re-evaluate what is truly important. I have made some long lasting friendships through this experience and some bonds I hope to last. Personally, I believe this experience as only truly understandable if you have seen it yourself, it's subjective to you and you alone. Finally, I would like to express my overwhelming pride for my South African leaders, great pleasure in their achievement and a profound sense of joy they have given me on this trip; something I could never reciprocate fully.



Playing netball at Mnyakanya

PHOEBE KENDALL

Of all the life changing experiences the Bambisanani visit offered me, I think the one that was most overwhelmingly potent was our venture to the Zulufadder Orphanage.

Surrounded by singing and dancing young children, our minibus pulled up to the orphanage, managed by the wonderful and inspiring Poppy, and I immediately felt my eyes brim with tears. One by one we stepped out of the van and entered a crowd full of ineffably high spirited and energetic infants who welcomed us all with huge hugs, well as huge as they could manage with their little arms. Each child had a large smile encompassing their whole face, and they ran to help us in any way they could. Two tiny girls: Nakwashi and Ntando came to my aid, taking my backpack and my Story Sack straight from my arms and carrying them into their classroom, signalling for me to follow. I then met Poppy, who was the most welcoming of all! She wrapped her arms around me and screamed, crying "Thank you! Thank you!", before we had even entered, she then ushered me into the one of only two classrooms the children had where suddenly the sound of fifty singing children filled the air. Now the tears could no longer be contained and they began to pour down my face as my heart struggled to cope with such awe and wonder, of how these children who have lived through such difficulty can still manage to be so upbeat and openhearted.

After some beautiful renditions of 'Frere Jacques' and 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes', we then went outside to play. The children taught us some of their favourite games and songs including 'My Teddy Bear' and 'Ride my Pony', both of which we loved and continued to play and sing throughout the rest of our visit – even at the airport while waiting for our plane! We were then given the opportunity to spend a few hours simply playing with the children and giving out the gifts we had brought from home. The children's appreciation and sheer excitement over every gift they were given filled my heart with gratitude and was definitely the most life altering moment of the whole visit for me, changing the way I viewed my own life when I returned home.

Mr Hamill quoted the Elbow song in his blog, stating "one day like this a year would see me right", however after spending even just a couple of hours in Zulufadder I believe that really, one day like that in my entire life will change who I am for ever, and I believe it would do the same to anyone else who had the opportunity to take part in the Bambisanani Project.

Being asked to write about my favourite memory of the trip is a challenge; considering I experienced pretty much all emotions. One being pride, that I truly never felt as much before. Love that now has a deeper meaning than before, and gratitude, a feeling that is much stronger than ever before.

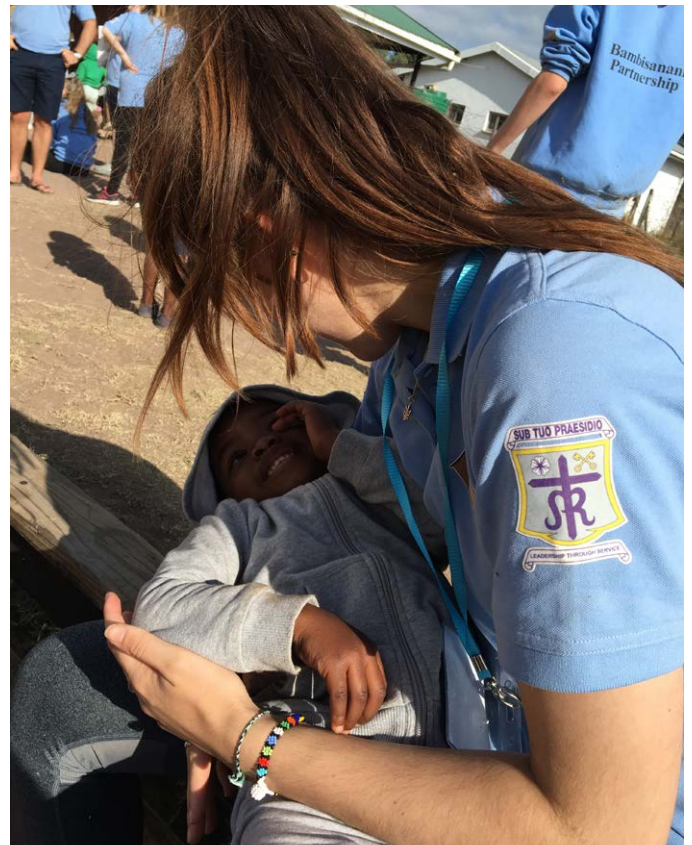


Phoebe during a Biology lesson

LARISSA MEGGIT

Cliche? Probably. But nothing like the challenge of having to say goodbye. Even though it was only the start, the first visit was to the primary school which obviously had to end in a goodbye somewhere along the line. Something I was already dreading. Goodbyes are always a struggle for me but having to say goodbye to a mass of small, innocent faces, swarmed around you as you try to leave a classroom, definitely didn't make it much easier. Although at the time I found it hard to leave, the time apart has comforted me, knowing that as a group we were giving as many children high fives and hugs as possible. But as an individual I knew that I was giving them as much of my love and attention as I could, which was all they needed, a simple act of kindness. Something that was continuously recognised and valued throughout the visit. Yet in return they managed to fill a big part of my heart, and a big part of my face that was stretched with a smile. The image of those humbling happy faces will be cherished and simply never beaten or forgotten.

At that moment, as I looked down, trying to give as many hugs as I could, I realised this was the start of the BEST days of my life with the most supportive group of people I could spend my time with, who cherished every moment as much as I did with these incredible human beings.



Larissa at Zulufadder

LAURENCE PATTERSON

Looking back at the trip to South Africa and all its thrilling, unique and special moments, I have one memory which, on a personal level, beats everything that I had experienced in the ten days we spent out there.

It came on the last day of visiting Mnyakanya High School; after the successful sport and reading festivals where our Sports Leaders proved their enthusiasm for education as they taught the newly learnt sports of netball, rounders and tag rugby to a sea of hyperactive infants from the local Ntolwani Primary School. After the primary school students had left, each clutching their own personal story book which St. Mary's had given them, it was time for the leaving assembly. A vast array of talent was put on show from capturing poetry to an aggressive and impressive Zulu dance which sent the whole room bouncing and nearly took the roof off!

I had the privilege to perform in front of both schools and I had never experienced anything quite like it. Back in England, whenever I have sung in front of a crowd there is always a deathly silence as the audience watches on, however this is not the Zulu way... far from it. The Mnyakanya High School students sung, clapped, cheered and joined in with every word throughout my performance, the sheer energy created in the room blew me away and it was truly better than anything I had ever experienced. I was even joined up on stage by a Mnyakanya student as the rhythm and energy became too great for her as she burst out into

dance. The atmosphere was unique and so powerful. Throughout the time we had spent at the school, we learnt that sport was a special way to connect with the South African students but what I learnt is that song has the same effect, as both sides of the Bambisanani Partnership united in the room in celebration of each other's cultures.

After the assembly came the goodbyes, where gifts were shared between newly formed friendships and the inevitable tear was shed. I'll never forget the overwhelming sense of positivity and praise which the Mnyakanya students showed me and the rest of the St. Mary's students. They were so grateful for the time we had spent with them and I was equally grateful for them opening my eyes and teaching me how to be fearless and show enthusiasm in all aspects of life. On the coach back to Sugar Hill Manor, a wave of emotion swept over me as I really felt like I had made a difference in those people's lives because they definitely made a difference to mine.



Fun during algebra lesson

TADHG COLLINS

For me, this trip was the culmination of my involvement with the Bambisanani Partnership over the past 6 years. The journey to South Africa raised my excitement a lot, but it didn't quite hit me where I was until we visited the primary school. From there on in, the emotion just kept building up, from seeing the workings of a Zulu tribe, to the Safari. It felt like we had been in South Africa for a long time when we started teaching sport on the Monday, and over the following days it was amazing to see the African students develop into incredibly competent leaders. Interspersed between the sport we taught our lessons, and there were a few moments which have totally changed my outlook on life. The first being when George and I taught an English lesson to a group of students to whom English is only their second language. The second and most hard hitting, was helping in the maths lesson, and coming to the realisation that the calculators used were funded by the charity, and it put a real meaning behind all the fundraising that happens in and around school. On the Wednesday, after the sports and reading festivals, it was time to say goodbye to our students, and my somewhat stony exterior broke down entirely, as the full weight of what the four-day leadership course meant to them really hit home. The next day was just as emotional, as our brief visit to the orphanage made an incredible impact on the totally different reality they live in. Through the trip, and especially the last days, the reason the partnership is so important has become very clear to me. Bambisanani is not just a charity, as we do not just aid them, their resilient spirit has changed my outlook on everyday life. We have so much we could learn from them, and I hope to go out again, as I feel there is a massive need for this kind of work.



Tadhg helping Mnyakanya students

MEGAN O'CONNOR

As I reflect upon my trip to South Africa, I feel extremely grateful for being given the opportunity, as it was a trip of a lifetime. I have no doubt that there will never again be a point in my lifetime where I will feel the same kind of joy as I felt on this amazing trip.

Every day brought a new challenge for me, whether it was missing home or tiredness. However, this trip allowed me to realise the potential I possess. It made me realise the kind of person I truly want to be. I was allowed the opportunity to teach a lesson to a group of High School students as well as help teach them sports. They were so eager to learn and wanted to do well, they listened intently and when the day came for them to hold the sports festival, I couldn't have felt more proud of them.

This trip has impacted me in a huge way, and the people I have met and the places I have seen will stay with me for the rest of my life. To be truthful, it was hard at times to listen to the children at the high school, learning how one child had to walk three hours to school and three hours home every day just to receive a basic education shook me. Many people in the UK, take advantage of the simple privileges they receive every day and it has allowed me to become more grateful for the life I have. One other thing, is that never in my life have I tasted such delicious food, both at the guest house and the restaurants we dined at. My favourite was at the game reserve, we ate the most delicious food whilst looking upon the most beautiful view I have ever witnessed. The game reserve brought a new experience for me, as we saw some of the most magnificent animals in their natural habitat. It was amazing, elephants, giraffes, zebras and many more. It was a once in a lifetime experience.

Reflecting on this trip brings a tear to my eye, as I experienced so much joy yet so much heartbreak. The children at the orphanage were never without a smile on their face. With a child in each arm and another tugging on my jumper, I have never experienced a joy like it in my life. They were so happy and excited, not a single one of us had a moment when we weren't carrying a child. This trip has provided me with so much, both when I was there and even after I returned. I have learned so much from this trip and I will be forever grateful to St. Marys for allowing me the opportunity to take part in the Bambisanani Partnership. It is something I will never forget in my lifetime, and I only wish I could do it all again.



Megan group reading



Cuddles at Zulufadder

EZRA CHENG

My expectation of Bambisanani was a lot different to how it actually turned out to be. I thought that we were there to help the children, improve their leadership skills and educate them on our own culture, and our school subjects. But instead, it was them that educated me. I learnt so many things from the trip that I wouldn't have most likely done from anywhere else, and if I didn't go to South Africa myself.

From trying to speak in Zulu whilst clicking our tongues, to stretching our legs for us to try reach the same height of the kicks in the Zulu dances – these were some of the physical things that I thought I wouldn't be able to do. Without the kindness and the encouragement from the people I met, I may not have tried to get myself involved and properly immersed with the culture. It was such a different environment to what we were used to that I thought I would have been too shy or afraid to do anything, such as talking in Zulu, in case I made a mistake, but even when I did, they were still very happy that we were attempting to communicate with them in their own language. I was also quite shocked with the great amounts of hospitality we received when we were there. I still remembered the time I got cuts on my fingers, and many of the students in Mnyakanya High School asked me if I was okay and reassuring me that it would heal. They also made sure to share their sandwiches around with us, even though it was

one sandwich that was meant to be just for them. This was very touching, since we were meant to be looking out for them and ensuring that they were comfortable with us, but they were also doing the same things for us. This then made me realize that they probably had more generosity and selflessness to them, than I or most people did, that even though they might have had less than us, this didn't stop them from being kind and doing things like sharing food with us.

I was also impressed by the hospitality given by the women that worked in our accommodation. They made sure to tidy our rooms every day, washed our clothes and they always cooked up a feast every meal we had. This was unbelievable and unexpected, as there were 19 of us that were being taken care of just by 3 lovely women. They talked to us in the times we were in the house and further let us master our skills in Zulu and told us the different South African foods. This shows how willing they were to get us to know the culture better, and was more than happy to talk to us which made me sure that the South African people were just naturally nice.

Overall, my time spent in South Africa was bittersweet. I have gained so much knowledge and a development to my own personality because of the country and the people in it, that I couldn't simply describe our farewell with just one word. So many connections and friendships were made, that I still couldn't forget the disappointment and the unwillingness to go away from people that made such a large impact in my life in a short amount of time. I hope that the mutual teachings about each other as a whole would be never forgotten by them. And I hope to treasure the memories made forever because of Bambisanani.



Ezra 'high fiving' at Ntolwane Primary School



Working with Bambisanani Leaders

NATASHA COOPER

South Africa has been the highlight of my year and I will never forget the memories and friendships that I have made on the visit. My favourite part of the visit was all the individuals surrounding me who were admirable. The students at Mnyakanya; the primary school and Zulufadder orphanage were the most inspirational people I have ever met. They have so little yet they are always positive, always having fun and appreciating what they have. I remember arriving at Zulufadder and Mnyakanya and every single person was full of excitement; seeing everyone's faces light up with happiness was truly heart-warming. We also gave them gifts like pencils, notepads, t-shirts, bubbles, balloons etc. and seeing how grateful they were with such simple little gifts, overwhelmed all of us and it wasn't long till they had us in tears.

Not only will I cherish the friendships I have made with the South African students but I will also cherish the bonds I created with 19 people who I was with 24-7. One key factor to my experience was the family connection that we had with between the St. Mary's students and teachers. Every day got better and better we'd laugh till we cried, embarrassed ourselves thinking we were professional Zulu dancers and the main moment I will never forget; the battle of the playlists on the bus journeys around Africa. Despite the distance between us we have all made friendships which will continue growing throughout our lifetime which we will treasure every day.

Everyone who has previously been on the visit to South Africa has said it is a life changing experience and for me it really was. Since we have come back from South Africa I have had a much more positive outlook on life and it has given me the thought that when I'm older I would like to do humanitarian and charity work. We have collectively been coming up with ideas to visit again or fund-raise for the sports leaders we worked with to come over to St. Mary's because we cannot overcome the withdrawal we have had leaving such a wonderful place. We all had our expectations of the visit and it 100% exceeded them.



Natasha during communication games

The Mnyakanya students also highlighted the positive impact the Bambisanani Partnership has on those who are involved in its work.

The time when our friends from UK were in our school, I felt like I was the most important person in the world. I was very happy and excited. I had never been so excited like that before!

Larissa, Ezra, Rosie, Katie, Miss Jackson, Mrs Chattoe...they were so many, and they all put a smile on my face. They were all so friendly. I was even more excited when they sang me a birthday song on the 27th of June. I felt the joy, a smile and tears of joy each day with them.

I wish to thank all of them for the sports training and lessons they offered to us.

Tshoba Sinalo



Preparing for the Sports Festival

There is a time in June 2017 that I will never forget in my whole entire life when our school was visited by students from St. Mary's of the UK. Imagine, I was appointed to welcome them and tell them briefly about our culture and my country. It wasn't easy but I was happy to do that although I was shy. All I can say, is that our visitors were so kind and patient with us when they were training us in sports. I learnt a lot about netball, rugby and rounders. I learnt to coach netball. I made friends ie Larrisa, Ezra, Katie, Pauline, Laurence, Jafih and others. I learnt a lot from all of them and do hope they enjoyed to be with us. May God bless each and everyone of them. The last day was so sad because we were crying when they were leaving. I will always miss them.

Mbambo Siphokazi



It was such a great pleasure having visitors from St. Mary's in our school. They are good people with wonderful smiles. We have learnt a lot from them including patience and caring for strangers. They taught us many leadership skills and how to be a successful leader. It will always be our wish to visit them one day and show them that we are also loving them. We have such good memories.

We remember how emotional it was the day they were leaving, and everyone was in tears.

We so wish we can also get an opportunity to visit them in the UK and experience their lifestyle.

Madondo Thandolwethu, Mashiya Lorna, Shandu Zubenathi, Magwaza Nkanyiso, Mpanza Lungisani, Gazu Hlakaniphani, Gazu Nhlakanipho, Ntuli Philiswayinkosi



The Power of Sport

ZULUFADDER

As is tradition the final part of the visit was an afternoon at Zulufadder Orphanage and Day Care Centre. Zulufadder supports orphans and vulnerable children in the KwaZulu-Natal region. This is part of the visit where reflection is at the fore. The St Mary's pupils had prepared a 'story sack' where they took their favourite children's books and with a series of props brought them to life. 'Dear Zoo' was a big favourite, each animal had its own mask and prop. The pupils also loved Ancient Rome brought to life, where centurion's helmets were passed around. It was a truly humbling part of the 10 day visit, the visit was full of song, play and lots of happy faces.

Tom Hamill, who wrote a blog for every day of the visit commented.

The pictures from today will do the experience and the beautiful expressions on the faces of the children when they met our leaders far more justice than a few words from me. I keep using the word 'privilege' in this blog, but to observe the relationships our students built in a matter of minutes, across a language barrier, was something to behold.



Wearing animal masks



Enjoying the special day



Popi with her children



Chris Rowley

TEACHER REFLECTIONS



Mr Hamill (taken from the last entry of the Bambisanani blog)

As the African sun sets on our time on the continent, our thoughts turn to the special experiences that we have shared. South Africa has a rich cultural tapestry of sport; politics; music and dancing; our students have sampled just a taste of what this country has to offer and I very much hope that they are inspired to return in the future to continue the good work of the John Paul II Foundation for Sport. Through Bambisanani, they are all part of something bigger now, something which is now part of them, something which will continue to go from strength to strength.

Our final evening together was spent strengthening the bonds forged over the past week and the previous ten years. The foundations for the 2018 visit are steady following inspiring leadership from our students. Thank you to our friends from Leeds Trinity for enhancing the trip, Chris and Diane have brought a spark of creativity and a gentle touch, respectively, to each day and built lovely relationships with our leaders and our staff; we look forward to hearing of the developments of their project in the coming years.

Our host, Graham, has been collecting interviews with our leaders across the course of our visit to supplement his next exciting project for the development of education in the Eshowe region. He found last night's accounts from Ewan and Laurence particularly moving; those types of contributions, and the resulting glowing feedback, have become the norm over this trip. The students have been constantly surprising us with their passion, inquisitive nature, and support for each other; their tolerance, acts of kindness, joie de vivre and an incredible level of emotional maturity.

Chris Rowley

To have been a part of the 2017 Bambisanani visit was an absolute privilege, and I feel extremely fortunate that my employer (Leeds Trinity University) asked me to accompany my colleague Diane Maguire and the amazing staff and students from St. Mary's. As an experience in itself, the visit allowed me to work with some truly inspirational people, and to create some fantastic memories that will stay with me for a very, very long time to come. From my time spent in the KwaZulu Natal region, I felt like I was able to develop an understanding of just how impactful the work of the Bambisanani Partnership is, and how it genuinely benefits not only the South African leaders who are involved in the programme, but also those pupils from St. Mary's, who are lucky enough to be selected for the visit.

The leadership skills that they displayed throughout, and the lessons which they delivered within Mnyakanya High School, were truly inspirational. In addition, the genuine kind-heartedness and emotional intelligence which they showed whilst in South Africa was absolutely incredible. In all honesty, one of the hardest things about coming back from the visit has been trying to get 'back to normality' in a professional sense, in that I find myself constantly thinking of ways in which Leeds Trinity University might be able to contribute further to the Partnership in years to come. The experience has certainly left a lasting impact on me, and as a result of this, I now look forward to exploring new and exciting possibilities for further collaboration between Leeds Trinity University and the Bambisanani partners for 2018 and beyond!

Elle Jackson

Reflecting on my final visit, I find myself smiling to myself at thousands of small moments, special memories and sentimental recollections. This trip was truly inspirational, our students embodied the spirit of the partnership in every way. Whomever they spoke or worked with, they treated them with respect, dignity and did all they could to be ambassadors for sport and our school. I could fill a full sawubona with my own moments of pride and praise of our students, but one memory stands out for me.

I remembered back to June, when the pupils began planning lessons to deliver at the school. They needed very little help from Mr Hamill or myself, who were supporting them, and their imaginative ideas filled me with excitement. When, on the Sunday night of our trip, we asked the pupils to prep their lessons, Mrs Chattoe and I stood back in amazement at the outstanding preparation and resources our children had made. To

then watch them teach these lessons to thirty pupils of mixed ages and abilities, as if they were professional teachers, I was beyond proud and my eyes filled with tears (a regular occurrence on this visit).

As I look back on time with the partnership, I reflect on what I have learnt about myself, young people and the culture of South Africa. This experience has changed my outlook on life, teaching and the power of partnerships across continents. I know I will continue to be part of this partnership and am proud of its work and impact.

Diane Maguire

I was delighted to be able to participate in the 2017 visit to KwaZulu-Natal for so many reasons and I found I was inspired by the students and staff from all the schools involved on a daily basis! What a fantastic bunch of people, all working towards a shared vision and making such a positive difference to people's lives in both communities. I loved all of it!

Since returning to work at Leeds Trinity the Bambisanani buzz has got around and we have students who are very keen to participate next year alongside Leeds University who are now so well established in their visits. This is one of the strengths of the partnership for me, that it is a sustainable model that just keeps on growing and developing. I think it is a shining example of global learning at its best with truly amazing and inspirational groups of people working together for the good of two communities and beyond. I feel so privileged in being able to take part in the visit and I would recommend this way of working to anyone!



Every orphan at Zulufadder received a pair of school pumps donated by the Bambisanani team.



The Bambisanani team were privileged to meet one of the first orphans looked after by Popi.



Diane at Zulufadder

AWARDS CEREMONY

After the successful sport and literacy festivals we ended our visit with an emotional yet joyous awards ceremony. Several students were recognised for their achievements.

The first three awards were about remembering people and honouring their lives as well as celebrating success.

The Laurie M^cCauley Award for Most Improved Player was presented to Bengu Bongumosa.

The Laurie M^cCauley Award for Creative Writing was presented to Lorna Mashea.

The Sibonelo Magwaza Outstanding Leader Award was presented to Mbambo Siphokazi. This same award will also be presented to a St. Mary's student, who will be announced in December 2017 at the Sixth Form Celebration of Achievement Evening.

The John Paul II Foundation for Sport (JP2F4S) Awards were presented at the ceremony. The foundation was set up to promote value driven sport. Monsignor Vladimir Feltzmann, Chief Executive of the John Paul II Foundation for Sport, said 'Good values and sport are a winning combination and together they can create special opportunities for those that follow.' The foundation and the Partnership promotes both of these. These awards were issued to students from Mnyakanya High School and Ntolwane Primary School.

The Mnyakanya award winners were Tsoba Sinalo, Magwaza Zanele, Ngubane Nkazimulo.



NTOLWANE PRIMARY SCHOOL JP2F4S AWARDS

The John Paul II Foundation for Sport: Ntolwane Sportswoman of the Year Award was presented to Mtungwa Nokubongwa.

The John Paul II Foundation for Sport: Ntolwane Sportsman of the Year Award was presented to Magwaza Mukelo.

The John Paul II Foundation for Sport: True Spirit Award was presented to Mabaso Aphiwe.



Twenty Mnyakanya students also received the Bambisanani Leadership Award after successfully completing the course. These were:

- Sinalo Tshoba
- Kwanele Mtshali
- Siphokazi Mbambo
- Zubenathi Shandu
- Thandeka Mlangeni
- Hlakaniphani Gazu
- Nosihle Goqo
- Asanda Mchunu
- Nkanyiso Magwaza
- Asibonge Khumalo
- Philiswa Ntuli
- Olwethu Dlamuka
- Asanda Mdlalose
- Bandile Ntanz
- Ntando Mpanza
- Mpendulo Mthethewa
- Lungisani Mpanza
- Nomfundo Nala
- Lorna Mashiya
- Thandolwethu Madondo

FINAL WORD

By working together with a shared vision, with equal respect and common values, the Bambisanani Partnership has achieved so much. It has provided new opportunities for so many, it has developed confidence and self-belief in those that have been fortunate enough to be involved with its work and improved leadership skills which has created new opportunities. I have seen it change the attitudes and aspirations of many; it has helped to shape people's lives in a positive way. Most significantly for me is how it has created so many long lasting friendships.

My sincere thanks to everyone who continues to support The Bambisanani Partnership.

Special thanks must go to all our supporters for their outstanding contribution to this project.

Mrs C Chattoe, Bambisanani Co-ordinator at St. Mary's





bambisananipartnership.org



Follow us online!

