

Sawubona

Report on St. Mary's visit to South Africa June 2014

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Bambisanani
Partnership

Over the past eight years, St. Mary's Menston has developed a unique partnership with a school in one of South Africa's poorest rural areas. This summer fourteen Year 12 students, three members of staff and a business sponsor, visited Mnyakanya School in the deprived Nkandla region of Kwa Zulu Natal. Their job was to further develop the collaborative work between the two schools and wider community, which is known as the Bambisanani Partnership. **Bambisanani is a Zulu word translated as "working hand in hand."** The Bambisanani Partnership uses sport as a catalyst to promote education, leadership, health and global understanding.

This visit was led by Physical Education teacher Barbara Pounder, supported by Catherine Chattoe and Giles Wilkes from St. Mary's, and Roisin Serridge from Cardinal Maritime, one of the partnership's longest serving sponsors. The students were: Beth Cotton, Anna Evans, Myles Hanlon, Megan Haskins, Helena Hunt, Megan Ireton-Bourke, Olivia Leonard,

James Smith, Emily Sutcliffe, Eleanor Thompson, Beth Tindall, Caroline Turnbull, Karl Verspyck and Jonathan Vincent.



The Nkandla region is in the heart of Zululand and is extremely deprived with 90% unemployment, 60% adult illiteracy and one of the highest HIV/Aids rates in the world with one in three adults infected. Mnyakanya School is relatively poorly resourced with classes of sixty plus. Yet despite this, the school offers an oasis of hope for which many students walk two hours to attend.

Arriving at Mnyakanya the St. Mary's team received a warm Zulu welcome from the school and community leaders. The mayor of Nkandla Cllr. Arthur Thamsanga Ntuli praised the work of the Bambisanani Partnership in an inspirational speech which reinforced the importance of working together with a desire to

make a positive difference in the world: *"You must live life with a purpose. The worst thing in life is not to die but to live life without a purpose."*



An important aspect of this year's visit was to consolidate the relationship with the well-resourced and highly successful Eshowe High School, situated approximately an hour away from Mnyakanya. To that end, five students from Eshowe were invited to join the Bambisanani Leadership Programme for the week with St. Mary's and Mnyakanya students. Nomaswazi Mabizela, Mbaliyethu Magwaza, Lindamusa Mdletshe, Daniel Ngonyama and Killian Govender joined the team and added enthusiasm, ideas and general positivity to the project.

During the visit the St. Mary's and Eshowe students mentored twenty Mnyakanya students through the Bambisanani Leadership Course.

The students from all three schools were tasked with jointly organising and delivering a sporting event in which primary school children from neighbouring Ntolwane Primary School sampled rounders cricket and rugby. Earlier that day the hall at Mnyakanya School was filled with donated books for those same children to enjoy. These events, planned and delivered by students, were a remarkable success and gave pleasure to all involved.

The intention is now for the Mnyakanya leaders to continue the work with Ntolwane and other local Primary Schools, thus building leadership capacity in the community. For the past two years young leaders from Mnyakanya have gained international acclaim by being awarded the prestigious International Diana Award for their exceptional work in the wider community. This has included creating an HIV/AIDS awareness programme.

The Mnyakanya students valued the programme highly.

“The Bambisanani Partnership is amazing. On the leadership programme I have gained skills and confidence that will help me be a leader in life”.

Mzamo Khoza

“We have made friends with people from the UK and from Eshowe High School. We have worked together in harmony. We are Bambisanani; we are working together.”

Neliswa Dlomo

“This week has taught me that I can be a leader. I have learned about the importance of partnership and respect. Different cultures have come together and have inspired each other. We are young leaders and can become older leaders in our communities.”

Sithabile Zuma

“Bambisanani has changed my world. Bambisanani is needed all over the world. Sport is a gift from God when it brings people together.”

**Andile
Biyela**

“I have learned so much from becoming a Bambisanani Leader. I have learned about the importance of teams and working together; everyone can contribute in different ways and everyone has a role to play - a Leader makes this happen.”

Nomdumiso Mdlose

“We thank God for Bambisanani - it is uniting people of different colour, race and culture. We respect each other, we love each other because of this special partnership.”

Nompilo Nene

“Nothing is impossible when we work together.”

Xolani Vilakazi

The impact of the experience on the Eshowe students was also interesting and significant:

“I had the most amazing time. My



English friends, our Mnyakanya friends and our work together was very rewarding, we are a definite partnership.”

Nomaswazi Mabizela



“In our few days together I have seen how developing young people to be confident young leaders and role models is something that can change the world. My new British friends have taught me that I can be whatever I set out to be. This has been a once in a lifetime experience, we all had great fun”

Mbaliyethu Magwaza



This year the three schools worked together on an Art project. Four of the St. Mary’s group are studying Art and together with Killian Govender, a talented

artist from Eshowe High School, a Bambisanani Mandala was created representing the hopes and dreams of all the students and staff, a great achievement in just three days.

Whilst at Mnyakanya, St. Mary’s students also taught a range of subjects and activities to students including: Maths, Science, History, Art, Football, Rounders and Netball. The St. Mary’s team brought with them much needed equipment for Mnyakanya School including books for the Bambisanani Library (opened four years ago), and resources for art and sport.

The final day culminated not only in the Festivals but also in a remarkable celebration event as Mnyakanya students proudly received the Bambisanani Leadership Award in recognition of successfully completing the course:

Andile Biyela, Neliswa Dlomo, Mbali Khanyile, Mzamo Khoza, Siphesihle Mbambo, Menzi Mbambo, Ntando Mpanza, Nokubonga Ngubane, Mpilonhle Shezi, Nokwanda Ngubane, Nhlanhla Sikhakhane, Zama Sithole, Xolani Vilakazi, Siyabonga Zakwe, Nomvelo Zitha, Sithabile Zuma, Teddy Zuma, Nokwanda Zuma, Nondumiso Mdlalose and Nompilo Nene

A number of very special annual awards were also presented in memory of two young men who have died in recent years. Three years ago, Laurie McCauley

from Otley sadly died. Laurie was passionate about sport and literature and his family donated two special awards in these areas to be presented annually at Mnyakanya School to support the partnership. The awards are referred to as Laurie’s Legacy. Both Mnyakanya winners Sikhakhane Sibonelo (Football) and Zitha Nomvelo (Creative Writing) were absolutely delighted with they described as a “truly wonderful honour.”



Another annual award was also presented in memory of Sbonelo Magwaza, a Mnyakanya student who also died four years ago. Sbonelo was an outstanding young leader who, a year before his death, had successfully completed the Bambisanani Leadership Award. In tribute to Sbonelo, each school now presents an annual Sbonelo Magwaza Award for Outstanding Leadership. At St. Mary’s, the award was won by Karl Verspyck and will be presented later in the year. At Mnyakanya the award went to Siphesihle Shange.

Two other awards were introduced this year. As a result of links with St. Mary’s, Mnyakanya School recently became the first school in South Africa to be accepted into

the John Paul II Foundation for Sport. The Foundation presented Mnyakanya with special awards for ‘Helping Others Achieve their Potential’ and “The True Spirit of Sport” to Zothani Mzobe and Nondumiso Shandu respectively.

Chief Executive of the John Paul II Foundation for Sport, Monsignor Vladimir Feltzmann also gave a personal gift of books for the school to mark his birthday. The Mnyakanya students have created an area called ‘Father Vlad’s Shelf’ in the library to house the wonderful and much-needed books.



The St. Mary’s team spent time at the Zulufadder Orphanage Day Care Centre. Zulufadder is an organisation that supports and cares for HIV/Aids orphans and vulnerable children throughout

Kwa Zulu Natal. The St. Mary’s team brought a range of equipment for the orphans and spent time singing, dancing, reading and playing sport with the children as well as serving meals. They also met Zulufadder staff and volunteers including the incomparable Popi, a Zulu lady who has devoted her life to working with orphans. She is the Playschool Manager and is enthusiasm and devotion personified. Popi had a profound effect on the St. Mary’s team causing them all to reflect on her significance as a genuine role model and inspiration.



At Zulufadder Mrs Pounder spent time with a young university student who had gone to the day centre as a young child, receiving the unique love and care that is found there.

The young man’s name was Given, his name somewhat appropriate for the opportunity he had received through Popi and her team. Because of the support he and his mother received, he is now able to study Geo Sciences at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth. Popi simply told him that “anything was possible.”

Whilst in South Africa the St. Mary’s group stayed in the town of Eshowe and there they learned more about Zulu life and South African history by visiting a Zulu cultural village, Eshowe Fort Museum and Arts Centre and the Eshowe Township. A great supporter of the Bambisanani Partnership is Durban businessman, Logan Govender. Logan accompanied the group to Hhluhluwe Game Reserve to observe wildlife in its natural habitat. The group learned about the horrific practice of rhino poaching which will see the species wiped out within the next twenty years if not stopped. The visit also created the opportunity for the students to learn about man’s



influence on the natural environment, in particular climate change. Logan also accompanied the group in Durban to experience urban life in South Africa. The aim was to focus on the extreme differences in wealth and living conditions in the city – ‘the haves and the have nots’. Whilst the group had gained a good understanding of rural deprivation in Zululand, this was their first experience of urban deprivation situated so close to urban wealth. The contrast certainly challenged students, giving them much food for thought.



The visit to South Africa clearly had a tremendous impact on the St. Mary’s students:

“It amazed me how enthusiastic students were about education. The pure thirst for knowledge is something I wish I could bottle up and take home for our students. The trip has made me more positive in general. I know it’s a sad thought, but I don’t feel that I CAN be sad about minute unimportant things when I know that back at Mnyakanya the students are dealing with life and death situations having to be a father figure aged 12. We are so lucky to live where we live and the prosperous life some of us have.”

Karl Verspyck

“My trip to South Africa told me one thing, there is definitely more to be done. Poverty is thriving and there is a continuing sadness, but I realize now how little you need to be happy, people with a lot less than us seem to be the ones with the biggest smiles. I know this is a cliché but my life has been changed. I have a clearer outlook now.”

Olivia Leonard



“It has taken me a while to try and understand the importance of the Bambisanani visit. It confirms a common goal internationally, mutual respect found in the Zulu handshake or the shy hopeful orphan that craves knowledge. Hope is what I found in South Africa, evidenced by the name given to Mr Geldart “THEMBA” (hope).”

Emily Sutcliffe

“My time in South Africa was an experience I will never forget. I have been taught so much about the reality that lies beneath our noses and which we fail to notice. The people I met were extraordinary and I cannot

begin to describe my admiration for their ability to embrace every aspect of their lives with a smile. The huge difference in cultures has truly opened my eyes and for this I am extremely grateful.”

Caroline Turnbull

“Lyuanda taught me to always go a step further to help others. When teaching the Primary children at the sports festival, Lyuanda noticed that there were a few children who were not being taught by the Bambisanani leaders, he took it upon himself when he had a free moment to teach those children how to throw and catch a rugby ball. This for me was the highlight of the trip. I felt nothing but pride that I had helped Lyuanda develop into such a selfless leader. A young man who had so much to give and he gave it freely.

Megan Ireton-Bourke

“My visit to South Africa has affected me in more ways than I could ever imagine. Witnessing first-hand the overwhelming contrast of the things I place value on here at home and the things South African students treasure opened my eyes to what is truly meaningful. Seeing my group of Mnyakanya students, in particular a young boy called Teddy try to orchestrate a game of rounders after hours of trial and error, and then to teach it to a near perfect standard, was one of the proudest moments of my life. The determination and pride in their work shown by the students has inspired me to echo these attitudes in my own work and be grateful for the support and facilities we have at home. I can honestly say

that although the purpose of our visit was to teach the young leaders at Mnyakanya, above anything they taught me”

Anna Evans

“South Africa was a trip of a lifetime. My amazing moment was on the first day of meeting our Mnyakanya Sports Leaders. Each leader was given a whistle and on our journey home we gave a lift to Precious (saving her a 90 minute walk home). As she said goodbye she thanked us and as we closed the minibus door all we could hear was a whistle blowing as she walked down her long lane home. A simple whistle and so much joy. Amazing!”

Beth Tindall

“My experience in Africa has been something I will truly cherish. It realised for me the concept of “Global Community.” As soon as we drove through the school gates, the atmosphere was wonderful. Bambisanani creates that. I felt that the time we spent interacting with the students endlessly valuable, and taught me that a simple smile can have far more impact than any amount of money. The young people of Mnyakanya have such a lively, inspiring and positive spirit, taking every opportunity and grasping it with both hands. Thank you for allowing me to see this.”

Eleanor Thompson

“My visit to South Africa was undoubtedly amazing, but I came back feeling very frustrated. The visit to Zulufadder orphanage was a cruel reminder of the disparity between our

world and theirs and left me feeling helpless. However, Popi showed me that despite hardship people can make a difference. Her leadership was phenomenal, and told me how important leadership is and what we were doing was important. Life is what you make of it rather than accepting what is handed to you. The trip has opened my eyes to the world in a way that I didn’t think possible and that is something I don’t want to, nor will I ever forget.”

Megan Haskins

“When I signed up for Bambisanani I was unsure as to what to expect and thought that it wouldn’t really affect me personally. I was wrong. The trip was fun, educational and most importantly it has inspired me to do something similar in the future. I have learned that happiness can be short lived so we have to grab it and the people we met have so little but act like they have so much.”

Jonathan Vincent

“An unforgettable experience. The Partnership has shown me that no matter how little a person has, there is no limit to the amount they can achieve. To have little or no knowledge of rugby, cricket and rounders on Monday and then run a festival in these sports by Wednesday was fantastic. I was proud of them and our school for giving us the opportunity to witness all of it.”

James Smith

“My experience in South Africa has truly opened my eyes to the extreme lifestyles endured by others. There wasn’t a point in the trip when I felt

I wasn’t being challenged, allowing me to explore my own capabilities. I am very grateful for the opportunity.”

Myles Hanlon

“I have been challenged and have learned so much. I had great fun, my eyes were opened. The mandala said it all. I am very lucky and would do well to never forget that. An African smile can make anyone’s day.”

Helena Hunt

For teachers too, the partnership is a source of learning and inspiration:

“Through Bambisanani our two communities are working together, sharing together and learning together in the true spirit of Ubuntu. The students from both schools go on from this to active amazing things in their communities. Our eyes are opened with Bambisanani - we can all see further now. May God bless Bambisanani.

Mrs PK Zondi, Bambisanani Co-ordinator, Mnyakanya High School



“Having accompanied fourteen students from St Mary’s Menston on this, my first visit to South Africa I was overwhelmed by the positive impact the Partnership had on everyone that was involved. I was extremely proud of the students’

dedication, commitment and courage and saw first-hand how working together can empower the lives of so many young people. This trip should be experienced by everyone at least once in their life. I am delighted to be leading the trip in 2015 in order to continue the outstanding work of the Partnership.”

Catherine Chattoe, St. Mary’s



“The ten day visit will be one I will never forget. For me it became a time of reflection and witness. I saw just how far our students had developed, and contributed to those not as fortunate as themselves. At Zulufadder, the St. Mary’s pupils showed their true worth, singing dancing, reading. On the final day of the visit the group were playing with the young orphans. The emotional impact on me and them was truly humbling.”

Giles Wilkes, St. Mary’s

In recent years, St. Mary’s have invited colleagues from partner schools and business sponsors to join them in South Africa. Roisin Serridge joined the team for the 2014 visit and learned first-hand about the partnership that her company Cardinal Maritime has supported for several years:

“The trip was emotionally and physically challenging but I enjoyed every minute of it. As an employee of Cardinal Maritime I was able to take part in the trip and I was incredibly excited for the more materialistic things like the Board walk and the safari. However, although I enjoyed every part of the trip, these things were the less enjoyable for me. I loved being at the School, being with the children and helping out. I felt like I got more out of the trip by being at the schools and the orphanage. Seeing what the Bambisanani Partnership does for not only the children but the community, is amazing. I found the reading festival the most inspiring for me, watching the children from Mnyakanya High School help the small children from the primary school to read in English was quite heart wrenching. I also found great joy in helping the children read the books, so much so it’s made me want to go back to College, get my A-levels and possibly go into Primary School Teaching. Going on this trip, not knowing anybody was a big thing for me to do and every student and teacher was so welcoming and lovely. I can’t thank you enough for that and especially a big thank you for the amazing opportunity.”

Roisin Serridge, Cardinal Maritime

Barbara Pounder was delighted with the visit:

“We had a fantastic team and I cannot praise them all enough for what they achieved. My colleagues Catherine, Giles and Roisin made the most wonderful and unique

contributions and the students responded in ways that continually surprise and gladden my heart. Great credit is also due to my friends and colleagues at Mnyakanya School especially PK Zonde and Mazet Langa who did a remarkable job coordinating the visit. When I see the impact of our work on young people and adults in both countries outlined in this report, it is clear that despite many difficulties and frustrations, we are making a real difference in some people’s lives. All those involved are changed in some small way and it is these small changes that ultimately make a difference. Those involved are challenged, tested and removed from their comfort zone; as a consequence they learn and grow, achieving things that they did not think possible. We have young people, teachers and schools working together for the common good: the very essence of Bambisanani and Ubuntu. Each group that goes to South Africa stands on the shoulders of those that have gone before; the expectation is to build on that platform and achieve more – the students from both countries did not disappoint and have taken the partnership to a new level this year. They have all achieved and the experience has given them a wider view of the world. I am looking forward to seeing what they do next. Special thanks must go to all our supporters for their outstanding contribution to this project.”

At an emotional presentation ceremony on the final day, Mrs Pounder reminded everyone that: *“Although we are 6,000 miles apart but under the same sky*

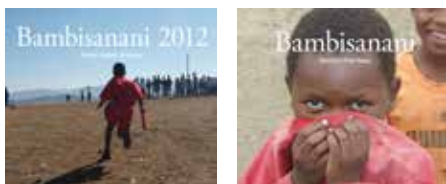
*We have high hopes for a better way
And always we will try
To keep the friendships we continue
to make
The young people growing before our
eyes
Our hands are joined, forever
entwined
There will be no goodbyes.”*

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Bambisanani Partnership Books

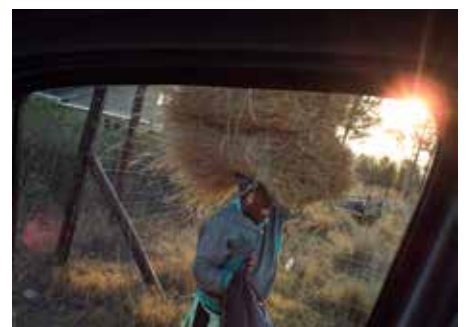
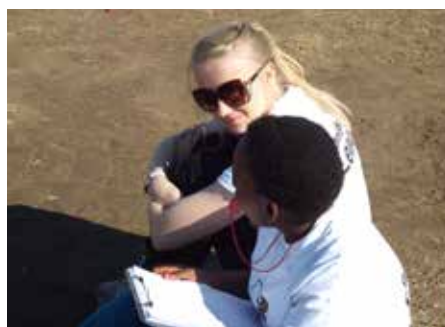


Google search for **‘bambisanani partnership our books’** to find out more and read in full online the three Bambisanani Partnership books which have been produced at St. Mary’s Menston:

Bambisanani: The First Five Years

Bambisanani 2012: Faster, Higher, Stronger

*Bambisanani: The Power of Sport
Art and Creative Writing
Competitions based on ‘The Power of Sport.’*





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“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

Nelson Mandela