

NEWSLETTER



CHRISTMAS 2015 ISSUE 8

Transforming Communities Changing Lives

www.bstrust.org

Lessons learnt from my visit to South Africa



There they were, outside the container of the Safe Park, the bustle of the cars rumbling past. But this didn't worry them – they were focused. If you listened really carefully, could just hear the hum of music from the leader's phone as it hung loosely in her hand; drumming the tune to the eager dancers. In time, in rhythm, the 7 girls tapped out the beat. Some wearing shoes, some in bare feet, they danced in unison and children outside looked on, mesmerised. As they danced, their focus solely on the moves, the difficulties of the day were clearly forgotten and their hearts soared. Their whole bodies expressed their emotions and joy was written all over their faces. How I wish I could have bottled that feeling of joy, of overcoming, of determination.

This was my third visit to South Africa with the Bishop Simeon Trust. Once again I was struck by the Safe Parks and how they create opportunities for young, vulnerable people to achieve their potential with such little resource.

So what did I learn as I spent time visiting projects and as I watched these children prepare for their performance at the Bishop Simeon Trust's 25th anniversary celebrations? The answer, I think, is that South Africans dance! They dance when they are happy and they dance when they are sad. Expression through the arts is integral to their whole community life.

But how can this really change lives? The Bishop Simeon Trust works with its South African partners to develop this expression of the Arts through Peer Educator groups in the Safe Parks, helping to influence behaviour and develop hope. Peer Education is a crucial confidence builder, allowing the children a safe place to have sensitive conversations and explore taboo issues. It creates opportunities to ask questions and share solutions. Through this, young people are empowered and change is achieved, which can influence the whole community and inform the policies set by agencies who wish to support them. This forum theatre provides the platform for change to happen.

I am so thankful that I had the enormous privilege of visiting our partner organisations once again in September. Over the next few pages, I hope I can bring alive the hope that Bishop Simeon Trust encourages within these children - and how we are part of a greater movement of creating lasting change within some of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Maz Brown: Communication and Marketing Officer



If you are visiting South Africa and are interested in visiting some of the projects, please do get in touch. Our brand new UK telephone number is: 0208 133 9369

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Anniversary Event: What are you investing in?

The 25th anniversary event celebrated everything Bishop Simeon Trust endeavours to achieve. Investing in vulnerable people to release their potential and provide them with opportunities that would otherwise be denied to them through poverty and circumstance. And what immense potential and talent was expressed during those few hours! Past beneficiaries and current community partners spoke, supported by the voices of choirs that have been touched by the work of the Trust. However the stars of the show really were the children, expressing what coming to the Safe Parks means to them through dance, song and poetry.

We were honoured to be joined by Councillor Mondli Gungubela, Mayor of Ekurhuleni, who summed the event up perfectly when he said:

"Bishop Simeon Trust works to develop happy children, healthy, strong and confident. For many children and youth in South Africa, they have given up on life; they live without hope. But with music, arts and sports; you feel you are worth something. 'I am something.' And you find you then have something to live for."



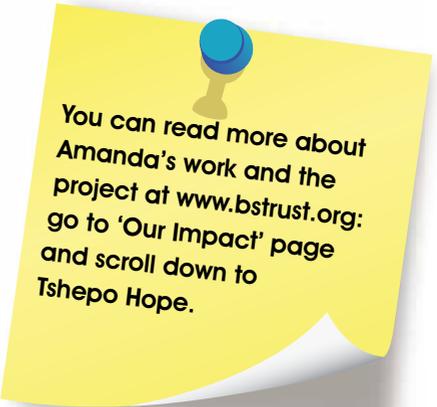
Why I love my job



Amanda is a Child Care Advocate and I met her at Tshepo Hope Safe Park, rehearsing for the 25th celebrations as seen here with her little group of children in a corner of the grounds. It was quickly clear that Amanda loves her job. She really cares about the children she works with. She knows what makes them happy, what they struggle with at home and what they are good at in school. Like the best of teachers, she also knows how to get the very best out of them after a long day at school. A few days later at the event itself I watched as she nervously lead her small group onto the stage, bursting with pride as these children danced. They moved not only themselves, but also the audience and Amanda to tears.

"I am a Child Care Advocate and my job is all about taking care of the community at Thespo Hope. We go out to the homes of the children who come here after school. We check on their situation and whether they have problems. If they don't have birth certificates or ID, we refer them to our Social Auxiliary Workers and they help. The other thing CCAs do is activities such as helping with homework and reading. At the last count, 340 vulnerable and orphaned children were using the centre. I grew up round here and came to look for a job, but to my surprise I found my passion. The need for this project is to reach out where the government cannot. It's very important. We work hand in hand with the government to meet the needs of the people.

My role is very important. The group I work with is quite dominated with girls, so sometimes we just have a girly chat where they can talk about anything. You know, sometimes they will open up more when you're just generalising and it's not too serious. Some of these children have no one else to talk to at home. You ask them, 'how was school today?' then we check on their situations and see if they have any problems. I love the kids, I love my job. I love every kid that enters that gate. I love them.'



**You can read more about
Amanda's work and the
project at www.bstrust.org:
go to 'Our Impact' page
and scroll down to
Tshepo Hope.**

Siyaphila - We are well

There really could be no better name for this small Safe Park: Siyaphila – meaning ‘we are well.’ Serving as one of the only Early Childhood Development centres within an impoverished community devastated by the impact of HIV and AIDs, Siyaphila provides support for over 70 pre-schoolers. Alongside this, they are developing an after school programme to support the older children after school. On the day we visited, the children were just arriving from school. Beauty, the programme manager and founder smiles joyfully as they arrive and greets them with a warm smile and welcoming hug.

During our visit, as well as watching the children practising their dance for the 25th celebrations, we had the chance to talk with staff and children of the hope this centre provides. Some of the dancers wrote down in words exactly what coming to Siyaphila means to them:



"I like to be here because I don't want to have the problems of being on the streets, like drugs. And I like to be here because our facilitators (the Child Care Advocates) teach us how to respect and not to go wrong at this age. I like to act and dance and sing. It is nice to be here, I like it very much. It is good." Beauty relishes in the gritty young lady that Mihalali is growing into as

she compares her to the shy girl who first started attending the centre; she is not going to let her future be determined by her past.



Mihalali is just 13 years old and wrote this all in English – her third language! Her Grandmother spoke to me about the long relationship she also has had with Siyaphila and how Beauty has really stuck by her family through thick and thin.

Her Grandmother said:

"I first met Beauty when I moved here from Free State and I was going through a divorce. Beauty really supported me, emotionally and practically too, by giving me a job here at the centre. Our community love to support Beauty, as they know how much she supports them, too. She makes the children here feel safe. My granddaughter, Mihalali, comes every day after school and she is now bringing her other friends along, too. She is a vulnerable child and gets very little support from home through lack of money, so the centre here supports with uniforms and basic needs when she is short of them. I am very thankful for Beauty and the centre here."

Where are they now?



Bronson Mokabela, now a senior marketing executive at Vodacom SA, caught up with us at the 25th anniversary celebrations:

I was one of the first beneficiaries, one of the students who had the opportunity to go overseas and study in the United Kingdom from 1994-96.

Bishop Simeon Trust made a significant difference to my life and opened up my eyes to the world. It was the first time I'd travelled overseas, the first time I'd even got on an airplane. When I left South Africa it was just after the first democratic election in 1994.

They always say you don't appreciate what you have until you go away and I got a real appreciation of South Africa. I worked extra hard to be a good ambassador for South Africa, becoming a prefect and head of house in my final year at the school, while also participating in a number of sporting activities.

When I came back to South Africa I studied at UCT in Cape Town for four years, and did a lot of volunteering in the community of Gugulethu, teaching mathematics on Saturdays. Then, when I joined Unilever in Durban, I continued my community involvement, which took me to some far flung communities and I taught there, too. For me one of my passions has always been about education and in a way I've been trying to get back to that.

I live in Johannesburg now with my family and I am so blessed to be part of the 25-year celebrations. I am a product of education and how Bishop Simeon Trust transformed my life.



Why leave a legacy?

Daphne Worraker's links with the Bishop Simeon Trust extend right back to her school days. She was a pupil at the Maynard School in Exeter, which was to partner with what would become the Bishop Simeon Trust in welcoming promising black students from the townships of South Africa during the Apartheid era. Daphne herself became a teacher of PE and knew our founder, Judith Scott. She remembers that,

"Education and anti-Apartheid were working together way back. Bishop Desmond Tutu and his supporters knew education was important and wanted it high on the agenda. It was all preparation for when Apartheid would end."

Daphne's connection with the anti-Apartheid movement came through her active Christian engagement with world development. In the 1970s, she felt deeply that the state of affairs in South Africa was wrong. Daphne's husband was a South African who had left his country of birth as a boy, before World War II. He backed Daphne's determined stance against Apartheid. Together, they engaged with world development and all sorts of situations "where things were not right".

Daphne has an abiding memory from that period, of spotting a photograph of Bishop Desmond Tutu in a newspaper and thinking,

"There he is, an Archbishop, doing all this, and yet he has no vote."

Daphne will never forget meeting Bishop Desmond Tutu at Southwark Cathedral during the Apartheid era. When she was introduced to Tutu as a fellow anti-Apartheid supporter, he instantly went down on his knees, took both her hands and kissed them! Daphne felt that this typified the man: demonstrative, spontaneous and with an unerring instinct for the right thing.

In 2004, Daphne visited South Africa with her son to find the farm in Grahamstown where her husband had been brought up. She remembers the most wonderful trip and was overwhelmed by the scale and beauty of the country. She looks to the future of South Africa with hope. Change, she believes, is coming about slowly. HIV/AIDS was a huge setback, but Daphne believes strongly that empowering people and helping them to help themselves will see it conquered.

Daphne is thankful that, due to the distinguished and magnanimous leadership of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's transformation into a modern democracy has been achieved without fighting or war:

"Coming out of a situation like Apartheid is bound to take a long time because it was so intense and a huge proportion of the population had suffered from it. I think South Africa has made great strides but still has a long way to go to ensure the well-being of all its citizens."

Daphne has committed to leaving a legacy to Bishop Simeon Trust to ensure our vital work can continue. This helps us to plan for the future and know that our work is sustainable.

You can leave a legacy too. Find out more in our useful information on the Donate Now page of our website and scroll down until you find legacy giving.

Desmond Tutu made a video for Bishop Simeon Trust this year. He, like Daphne, knows the importance of our charity. Check out his video on youtube. Find the Bishop Simeon Trust channel and click on his video.



Desmond Tutu, Patron of Bishop Simeon Trust.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tny9tpvlbVw

Fundraising - Great ideas and events to get involved in!

TRAT

Are you one of the growing MAMILs (Middle Aged Men in Lycra!)? Or indeed a budding Victoria Pendleton? We want to challenge you to be part of the fastest, fully supported charity. LEJOG - Lands End to John O Groats cycle ride. In just 6 days you can be part of the team cycling the 864 miles in only 6 days. Register your interest online www.bstrust.org/trat before the end of the year. Limited spaces available so hurry to secure your place.

Marathon

If you are more of a Mo Farah and running is your thing, we have a London Marathon place for 2016. To register your interest, please contact us at info@bstrust.org

Crossing the Divide



Our brand new campaign that travels the virtual distance from

Edinburgh to Johannesburg. We want you to join us in any way you can. Whether you can run, jump, swim, cycle, snowboard or any other way of personally travelling yourself, your miles can count towards the 6000 total miles. You can find out more on our website. Click on 'Get Involved' and scroll down to 'Crossing the Divide' to find out more and sign up.

For further information on any of the ways in which you can help,

Call us on - 0208 133 9369

Email - info@bstrust.org

Visit our web page - www.bstrust.org



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Read our blog

#BST25

We hope you have enjoyed following our 25 stories #BST25 on the website. Every 2 weeks we have uploaded a new story of how Bishop Simeon Trust



has transformed the lives of people associated with it over the last 25 years. These stories have been filled with hope and inspiration of what can be achieved when we work together and partner with each other. There's Zinzile, who attended a Safe Park and went on to be supported through university. There's Pinkie who works as a Childcare Advocate and simply 'loves her job'. There's The Maynard School who have partnered with us since the very beginning to support our work. There's Paula who receives more than she gives out through being a trustee of Bishop Simeon Trust. And there are another 21 inspirational stories to be read. You're not too late to read them, but hurry before we upload new stories of changed lives on the website. Simply go onto the website link below, scroll down and click on the person you would like to read about.

We want to thank you for partnering with us over the years to achieve so much within the lives of vulnerable children and families in South Africa. Together we are making an impact into bringing people out of poverty through education and support. By supporting individuals with their education and enabling them to stay in school, with your help we have transformed their lives and generations to come – forever.

Thank you.

www.bstrust.org/updates/celebrating-25-years

Sir Michael Parkinson CBE

Patron of the Bishop Simeon Trust



Over recent years I have built a personal connection to Lethi'themba, one of Bishop Simeon Trust's community partners in South Africa, which I have been fortunate to visit myself. They help children and their families. One recent story from there explains why my support for the work of the Trust is so strong. It is about a young mother and her 5 year old daughter, who I will call Lebohng and Dikeledi.

Lebohng struggles to make ends meet and they are often hungry. She did find work, but returning one day from her job she discovered blood on her daughter's clothing. Dikeledi had been assaulted by a relative

who was supposed to be caring for her. The relative ran away. With no support and nowhere to turn a friend recommended Lethi'themba to her.

Since Dikeledi began attending Lethi'themba's Early Childhood Development centre, Lebohng has been able to take a job in a local supermarket, which will make a big difference to the support she can give to Dikeledi as she grows up. She can earn her living confident that Dikeledi is safe, eating healthily and building a solid foundation of literacy and numeracy that will help her make the most of school. She is also developing the social skills and confidence in a loving environment that will help her to deal with the past and navigate challenges she faces in the future.

It costs just £10 per month to pay for Dikeledi to attend Lethi'themba. Make a New Year's Resolution to help the Bishop Simeon Trust support children like Dikeledi and build a better future for South Africa

Michael Parkinson: Patron of Bishop Simeon Trust.

If you would like to join Sir Michael in supporting the Bishop Simeon Trust please complete and return the Christmas Appeal donation form provided. Thankyou!

