



November 2010

BULEMBU REPORT 2010 COMPILED BY MISCHA CONSTANT



A BRIEF EXPLANATION OF BULEMBU

From 1938 to 2001 the town of Bulembu was a thriving mining community run by the Havelock Mining Company. Nestled in the North Western border of Swaziland, the asbestos mine provided work for 10,000 people and was therefore the main source of income for the community.

For various reasons, the community was abandoned by the mining company in 2001 and the population fell into critical economic decline. Two-thirds of the citizens of the nation of Swaziland currently live on less than 50 pence per day; twenty-five percent of the population requires ongoing food aid and the unemployment rate is over thirty percent. The main ongoing crisis is however the AIDS/HIV epidemic that is and has devastated the entire country. The AIDS rate is the highest in the world, at forty-three percent with an average life-expectancy of thirty-two years of age.



As a result, by 2011 there will be over one hundred and twenty thousand orphans throughout the country. Very few of these orphans will be cared for. Bulembu is a small community trying to give life and opportunity to a small percentage of these orphans.

In 2006 Bulembu was 'rediscovered' by a few social developers and Bulembu Ministries began. The vision:

'Empower the people of Bulembu to become, once again, a self-sustaining community by 2020.'



Bulembu Ministries has seen exponential growth of the local community in the areas of commerce, industry and education. Most importantly, ongoing care for over two hundred and fifty orphans and a target of caring for two thousand orphans by 2020.

With the ongoing engagement and investment of groups like the recent 'Court Moor Bulembu Trip 2010', Bulembu is on the way to achieving this dream.

AIMS OF THE COURT MOOR BULEMBU TRIP 2010:

To learn, engage and give with the community of Bulembu by:

- Supporting; educating and empowering a group of young people from Court Moor School in Fleet, Hampshire, UK to engage effectively and partner with the community of Bulembu through the medium of a trip to Bulembu.
- For the group to take on the emotional, spiritual and physical challenge of experiencing such an extreme of social, spiritual and cultural diversity.
- For the trip to be a pioneer project for Court Moor School (and partners) potentially to engage with the community of Bulembu on an ongoing annual basis with a trip per year, in accordance with their 2020 vision.



OBJECTIVES:

Pre-Trip:

- The young people (YP) were tasked with undertaking of a study of Swaziland, Bulembu culture and society.
- YP to build relationship/s with peers (participants) and group leaders and develop the diverse skills needed for the trip.
- General team-building and exploring different methods of dealing with 'distance' and family.
- Plan together with trip leadership team and Bulembu site team the manual 'realistic' task/s involved at the Bulembu community.
- Nine months spent primarily doing own individual fundraising as well as a few organised trip-group fundraisers.
- Begin to plan post-presentation, discussing different methods of effectively capturing this experience.
- Being able to communicate effectively and share it back to the agencies involved in the trip as well as the wider Hart District community.

BENEFITS OF THE BULEMBU EXPERIENCE TO YOUNG PARTICIPANTS:

- The experience will develop the social skills of self awareness, communication and interpersonal skills.
- In addition to this, it develops exploring and managing feelings and understanding and identifying with others.
- Incorporated with this, the young people will be encouraged to explore their own values; beliefs and world-view.
- Throughout the project the young people are actively encouraged to increase their knowledge of the wider key skills. For example: negotiation skills; working with others; problem solving; improving own learning; action planning and reviewing skills.
- The overall outcomes of this project will promote healthy lifestyles, enjoying and achieving, whilst maintaining a safe environment for the young people to push their own personal boundaries.



THE STAFF TEAM ROLE OF THE BULEMBU EXPERIENCE:

The staff team role in this project was to work with the participating young people outside (and inside) the school to develop relationships in an informal environment that may be difficult in any other scenario. This relational development was vital for the project to exist and function well. The four youth workers supported the social understanding and learning of the young people on the trip and the two Court Moor teachers involved covered the educational side of the project.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The planning of the project was a partnership between:

- The Court Moor School governors and Head Teacher
- Faccts
- Hampshire Youth Service

June Bing, Suki Binning and Mischa Constant oversaw the health and safety and risk assessments for the project. June Bing, as the leader in charge was then able to present all the Hampshire County Council (HCC) policies, risk assessments and health and safety to Steve Poynton, Head of Outdoor Education in Hampshire.

The trip was then given the go-ahead and all insurance fell under the HCC policies.

THE TRIP:

Firstly, we as a staff team, would like to highlight the work of Suki Binning; Court Moor School Community Director, in the administration and development of this project, without whose contribution the Bulembu Project 2010 would not have been the success that it was.

Recognition also goes to: June Bing; Mischa Constant; Mark Campbell and Vic Newman who gave up many hours of personal time to commit to this project.

Particular thanks go to Jo Bing and Linda Liddiard, who not only gave up their personal time but also funded their own way.

TRANSPORT:

Morton Coaches; Virgin Airways and Taman Tours were all efficient, professional and safe with no issues.



BULEMBU



ACCOMMODATION:

The accommodation was in a 'Sixties style' hostel building which has had little renovation in the last 20 years. The toilet area/s were cleaned regularly; no 'nasty-smells' from the sewer system and we mostly had hot water available. Leaks appeared in various bathrooms due to the age of the furnishings and a number of doors were missing from shower rooms, toilets, etc. The windows in many rooms were in disrepair, some not being able to shut, some broken windows and none of the windows were safety glass standard. Having said all of that, it all added to the experience and everyone slept well, laughed a lot and generally bonded together.

THE CLUB HOUSE:

The Club House is where we ate our meals daily as well as conducted group meetings and relaxation time. The building was again a Sixties style building in slightly better condition than our accommodation; however the windows were still in need of attention. Our group were the only users of this facility which was excellent as it meant the young people could make as much noise as they liked and play without disturbing anyone else. It had an open fire, very useful for the cold evenings and was always attended by one of our staff team, so it was ideal.



MEALS:

These were of a high standard and were served in the Club House daily. There is a tourist lodge a short walk from the Club House at Bulembu, where all the meals were prepared. The catering department kindly supplied our group with a complimentary bottle of water each at lunch times. In summary, we all felt more than full after every meal and thanked our friendly catering team with big smiles!

BULEMBU STAFF:

All the management and administrative staff on site were all highly professional and skilled in their field of expertise. They worked well together as a team and did absolutely everything they could for our group to get the maximum experience from the trip. We could not have asked for a better reception from the people of Bulembu. Our Bulembu 2010 experience was a few 'firsts' for Bulembu.

OUR GROUP:

This was the first British group they have had and the first groups of students of this age group (under 18) as most visitors are adults. The response in the local Bulembu schools to having such young visitors was a unique experience to all.

For example: getting our students involved with teaching the Bulembu students and organising a 'celebration' assembly was simply exceptional. The absolute sheer hard work our team of students displayed when renovating the old school had the Bulembu project manager at a loss for words in observing their enthusiasm and commitment to the two-week long project. Taking the 'bubble-wrap' off the young people and watching them work enthusiastically and effectively was educating for us as a team. Watching them compare blisters was brilliant!



Our staff team worked very well together and were so 'in tune' with our young people and the overall ethos of the trip made it an experience like no other.



EVALUATION:

We would recommend that the trip continues. For experiential learning for both team and young people it was worth it. One of the unique parts of the trip is the timing that we have fallen upon in the overall vision of Bulembu to make it a self-sustainable community by 2020. Projects and general work in Bulembu are generally incredibly fast moving, compared to other African communities. Bulembu, although developing and growing well, is still in its relative infancy. Therefore the work future groups would be doing would be genuine development tasks that are needed for the community to continue to effectively grow and develop. What we can bring as groups from our community to theirs is genuine and tangible. The 2010 trip has founded a fantastic opportunity for both Court Moor School and partners to future ongoing relationship with the people of Bulembu.

THE MAIN STORY:

A Christian youth and schools work agency facilitating a group of almost 100% 'non-Christian' staff and students to engage effectively and build relationship with an African, predominantly Christian, community on the other side of the world!

Not only were the staff and students willing to go... they raised their own funds to pay their way to Africa!

How often are we as the 'local church' in our community, able to facilitate effectively a large group of non-Christians engaging with a community of Christians?

Not only that... but then seeing each participant's life, positively and radically changed as a *direct result* of the encounter - including their own families and their local community.

This, I think sums up the incredible value of Faccts partnering in a project like Bulembu 2010 and begs us, as an agency, to ask the questions:

'Do we think it is a project that fits with our aims and values; and are we willing to be potentially committed to the partnership on an ongoing, annual basis?'

The group of voluntary, willing, young people who partnered in the Bulembu experience were from white, affluent, middle-class Britain. Most had never ventured abroad. Possibly all had never been to a developing country like Swaziland. All have had their lives changed forever and their world-view turned 'upside-down!' Many are already planning to return to the community of Bulembu and spend more time with the many friends that they made while they were out there. Most of their new friends are deeply committed Christians.

What a privilege to be part of such an experience - long may the project continue! The result: Nov. 2010 - Court Moor School and partners wish to continue the project and future trips are hopefully going to happen annually.