

This is not so much a project as it is a life calling and ongoing work for me. I have lived in **Botswana**, Africa for the past 3 years and have committed myself to the people of Botswana indefinitely. I oversee the work of an organization called **The King's Foundation**. We use sport as a tool to develop children physically, emotionally and spiritually. Sport is an extremely unique vehicle for facilitating change on so many levels.

"Sport has the power to unite people in the way little else can. It breaks down racial barriers, it laughs in the face of all sorts of discrimination. Sport speaks to people in a language they can understand." **Nelson Mandela**

Botswana, like so many other Sub-Saharan African countries, has been greatly impacted by **HIV/AIDS**. The average life expectancy in some of these countries is estimated to be just north of thirty years of age. I have encountered various situations where older siblings have quickly become responsible for entire households. Combined with an apparent apathy for children - kids are raising kids. The implications of this are many but one in particular is that children are not being taught **foundational values** (honesty, respect, hard work ethic, integrity, commitment etc.) that will enable them to be responsible contributing members of society.

African leaders, including Nelson Mandela, have made public pronouncements that sport is one of the best vehicles for providing, not only alternative activities for young people, but also one of the best ways of **building self-esteem** and **developing leadership skills** among Africa's youth.

For a **typical King's Foundation event** we converge on a local soccer field armed with various sports equipment and enough locally trained volunteer leaders to handle the expected number of children. On average we can expect 100-200 children but in some situations we commonly exceed 350 children. Whatever the number, children are divided into age groups, assigned a coach/leader and then engaged in a rotation of sports activities. **Children** have time to bond with their coach, learn new sport specific skills and to simply be children for a few hours. After a few hours of sports we bring the entire group together for a time of drama, singing, testimonies, dance etc. This is our opportunity to be very deliberate in teaching specific values, allowing local social workers to share HIV/AIDS specific messages as well as share our personal testimonies with the children.

When we began our work in Botswana we focused on conducting our programmes (described above) on weekends and school holiday times. These are times when children are inactive and have very little to do. Over the past 3 years we have seen our programmes include **weekly activities** in underprivileged communities, regular programmes for disabled children, partnerships with community based groups to strengthen existing feeding programmes, the establishment of primary school PE programmes, regular activities at orphan care centres, week long programmes at our refugee camp etc. Follow up and sustainability are important to us as an organization and thus partnerships and **leadership training** are essential.

In 2007 The King's Foundation conducted its first annual **National Sports Leadership Conference**. NGO's, teachers, pastors, government workers, sports coaches and existing King's Foundation volunteers from around Botswana came together in Gaborone for a week long residential conference. It was a great opportunity to learn new skills and to network with like minded individuals/organizations. We will continue to invest much into the leaders of Botswana and hopefully facilitate cohesion amongst various groups working with children throughout the country.

UK Origins

From 1991-2002 The King's Foundation was primarily focused on child development in the UK via children's holiday programs called "**King's Camps**". In 2002 short-term teams of college aged sports coaches traveled to Botswana twice a year to work alongside local volunteers in underprivileged communities.

What began with short-term teams developed into two permanent workers from the UK and Canada (myself) being placed in Botswana in 2005. The focus of these coordinators was to not only conduct regular sports programs for children but to train up local leaders and work themselves out of a position. As of 2008 our paid leadership team consists of three coordinators from **Zimbabwe, Botswana and Zambia**. My role has evolved into a mentoring / overseeing role. These coming years it will be important for me to establish formal operational structures and financial support for our expanding work in Botswana.

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