

## Kintore Trust Award 2016-17 Volunteer Report

Before you read my short report, I would just like to take a moment to express my heart-felt gratitude to you for helping to make my year of volunteering in Botswana possible. I would like you to know that I have worked very hard throughout this year to ensure that every penny that you invested in me didn't go to waste and in doing so I helped to give an education to boys from very poor and troubled backgrounds in Botswana. I sincerely hope that you continue to support such voluntary work in the future, as by doing so you will continue to give hope and a future to those who would otherwise have very limited opportunities in life.

I have just completed my year of volunteering at Bana ba Metsi School which is situated at the very north of Botswana. The school is a rehabilitative centre for boys who have dropped out of state education and who require assistance to re-enter mainstream education. Every weekday morning the boys attend classes everyday so that they can sit their Primary School Leaving Examinations at the end of their Standard 7 year, and in the afternoons the boys all participate in practical work (building, carpentry, mechanics, etc.) in order to allow them to develop skills which may lead to future employment for them. As a volunteer at the school, my responsibilities involved teaching remedial classes in English and Maths to the boys who were not able to keep up with the work the mainstream classes were doing; I supervised manual work every afternoon (with the boys we collected firewood and river-sand, moulded bricks, did some building and did any odd-jobs that needed doing around the school); I was responsible for the boys' first aid and for taking them to the clinic when they were sick and looking after all of their medication; and I was also responsible for the boys' organising the boys' entertainment outside of working hours.

My most memorable experiences when working at Bana ba Metsi were when we took the boys to take part in local community events. For instance, I once had to take a car load of boys to play their marimbas in Ngrange in honour of the village's chief who had decided to step down. It was really magnificent to witness all of the traditional dancing and singing throughout the day, and everyone in the crowd really enjoyed listening to the boys performing their marimba songs too. Another community event that I attended with them was the local sports day, in which our school competed at volleyball, chess and football against all of the other schools in the area. I coached the volleyball team alongside one of my fellow volunteers for a whole term to prepare the boys for this event. There was visible excitement on all of their faces every time we trained for this competition, especially when the boys received donations of sports shoes and knee protectors to help them with their volleyball training. In the end, the volleyball team finished 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 8 schools, which was a very respectable effort. My other memorable experiences of working at Bana ba Metsi are centred around teaching my remedial classes and supervising the daily manual work sessions with the boys, as I bonded incredibly well with the boys over the course of my year and I derived great enjoyment out of spending time with them inside and outside of the classroom. My favourite lessons to teach were the ones when I was able to incorporate competitive games into their work, such as corners or bingo, as that always brought smiles onto all of their faces as they worked hard to win a sticker or two.

I have learnt a great deal from my year of volunteering in Botswana and I believe that I have matured massively from the experience. From a teaching standpoint, I have become much better at explaining difficult topics in simple terms so that everyone can understand and I have also learnt how important it is to remain patient with the learner and to encourage them continually to help them to remain positive, even at times when they're really struggling with their work. Moreover, I have become much more self-confident in myself and in my ability to use my own common sense to make on-the-spot decisions, as the nature of my work at Bana ba Metsi meant that I was often left to my own devices to solve problems and to sort out disputes. Living and working in Botswana has also taught me to appreciate both the intrinsic similarities that bind us all together around the world and also to embrace the various cultural differences which are the foundations of our identities. Furthermore, conducting manual work every day at Bana ba Metsi has helped me to become much more practical as a person and thus much more confident in my own abilities to try and conduct practical work around the house in Scotland without simply calling in a handy man to do such tasks. Lastly, I feel like I have learnt to value how good oneself can feel when helping others and because of that I hope to be able to engage in more volunteering opportunities in the new future.

Here is a link to the blog I kept throughout the year:

<https://zanderinbotswana.wordpress.com/>