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Letter from the Director

Dear Friends,

This month we have decided to focus on the unseen heroes that we have right here in Maun. These people are essential to the organizations that we work with. We salute and thank them all for the dedication and determination that they bring to the work place every day. We hope you enjoy understanding a little bit more about them.

Additionally, the Community Bus has been on the road for a month. Obotseng has taken to her role as bus driver and caretaker with panache and we are delighted to have her as part of our team. Remember, there is a social media 'Spot the Bus' campaign running and would love to hear from you (probably easier for those based in Maun)!

Currently, we are gearing up for Botswana Travel and Tourism Expo (BTTE) in Kasane. If you happen to be attending, please drop by our table and meet us in person. We would be delighted to speak to you, share ideas, suggestions and stories.

Lastly, due to the time of the year, we are rolling together a November/December edition of this newsletter and a January/February edition. In between, please follow our partners' activities on our Facebook page – we hope you enjoy watching the impact that your contributions make. It is with great delight that we report on them! Please enjoy this month's read.

Ruth Stewart, Director of Travel for Impact

Month at a Glance



MAWS Outreach to Northern Botswana



WAR Hosts First Drama Competition



Desert & Delta Safaris making impact at Tsodilo Junior Secondary School

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Travel for Impact (TFI) is an independent social enterprise that links the travel industry with local community projects in Northern Botswana.

With each night spent with one of our travel partners, at least USD1 is donated to Travel for Impact. These donations are then distributed to the wonderful organizations illustrated below.

Since launching, TFI has made partnerships with a number of community organizations and we are delighted that this number continues to grow.

For more information, please visit our website at travelforimpact.com or follow us on Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram





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Crafthood-unite.com

Women

Crafthood

Crafthood is an independent initiative launched by Travel for Impact with seed funding from Southern African Regional Environmental Program (SAREP). Crafthood is a centralized marketing and sales platform for weavers in the District. The aim is to support weavers in establishing an independent livelihood, and in turn, support immediate needs within their household.

Moya: 'I have a talent for weaving baskets, why should I let it go to waste?'

Crafthood, an initiative launched by TFI and SAREP, aims to promote Botswana's beautiful handcrafted baskets, as well as the amazing women who create them. Moya Rata, from the Boesja Ward, Maun, is one of the project's recipients.

How long have you been weaving baskets?

I started weaving baskets at a tender age of 10 years old. My mother was a teacher at Botswana Craft in Etsha 6 so when I came home from school, I would find her sitting down weaving amazingly gorgeous and breathtaking baskets of all colours, sizes and shapes. I then started watching how she weaved and that is how I learned to weave. Now, I can make all sorts of beautiful baskets.

Where does the love come from?

I was intrigued by how a simple palm can be made into something so spectacular. That is where my passion grew; I knew that with that palm, I could make something amazing out of it, something that will catch another person's eye. The other reason is that my mother weaved baskets for a living. She raised us with the money from the baskets. All our needs were met just from her selling these baskets, so I saw that baskets can also be a livelihood.

What challenges do you face?

Our main challenge is the market for baskets. Since we don't have a lot of places to sell the baskets, sometimes, because we need the money, we must sell the baskets at a lower price. If I say, 'the basket is P50,' someone will complain and want me to sell it for much less, not taking into consideration the size, design, or the amount of time spent making it. People don't always remember that I also must make profit out of this – this is my livelihood – we must travel outside Maun to get the palm to make the baskets.

There are also some health challenges. We get sore backs, shoulders and very rough hands because of the needle. Apart from TFI, we don't have any other support which is hard. More help would help open the basket market even more.

What has your relationship with Travel for Impact been like?

I started working with Travel for Impact in 2012 when I started attending their workshops. Before, I would just charge any price that came to mind without looking at the value of what I have made. TFI provided a platform for us basket weavers to know the value of our baskets; they helped us make uniform measurements for basket weavers

across Botswana. They taught us that before you sell, look at the design and sizes. I now know that when I charge, all these have been taken into consideration. This way, baskets are not sold at a very low price while they could be worth more. Nowadays, I am satisfied when pricing the baskets.



Where do you see your relationship with Crafthood going in the future?

In the future, we hope to have a Crafthood shop/market. That way, we can have a sustainable income and we will be able to raise our children. I hope to get invited to exchange programs where we can teach people abroad how to weave baskets. I also wish that basket weaving would grow so we can offer basket weaving classes here. Most importantly, I wish to have a market to sell our baskets so we can also can donate to the less fortunate.

I have a talent for weaving baskets, why should I let it go to waste. I want to share my talent with the world.

[Interview excerpts translated from Setswana]

Women



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WoMen Against Rape (WAR)

WoMen Against Rape (WAR) was established in 1993 in response to a prevalence of gender-based violence in the district of Ngamiland. WAR is a crisis centre that deals with society's most vulnerable: women and children. Since their inception, they have handled over 600 cases of violence and shelter women and children.

Inside WAR's Shelter

We had the opportunity to sit down with a truly inspirational woman, Baboletse, from WAR. Baboletse's relationship with WAR began in 2005 when she started volunteering in the office. After three years, she was promoted to 'Shelter Matron' and she has been working at the shelter ever since.

The shelter matron is responsible to oversee the wellbeing of women and child residing in WAR's shelter; an immense responsibility. Baboletse explains: "You have to welcome the clients when they arrive, give them a tour, read them the regulations and rules of the shelter, and help to teach them skills. You are also the gardener, the cleaner, and the cook."

However, the role of shelter matron extends beyond supervisor. "If there are just kids, you are there as the house mother. You do everything for them" she says, "laundry, cooking, preparing for school and even doing assignments with them when they come back from school."

Perhaps the biggest challenge is accommodating many different people. "We accept women, kids who come alone with no parents, and women with their kids" she says, "so you have to teach them all that we have to be one family; we have to be there for one another. When one is sick, we have to stand together."



This goal presents challenges when dealing with people daily. "Sometimes there are some that don't want to do their duties" she explains, "one can wake up with a mood and you have to talk to her and find a way to bring her back."

Despite these challenges, WAR's shelter is a necessary part of the organization's fight against gender-based violence. "I'm proud to work at WAR," Baboletse declares boldly, "WAR has opened my eyes...WAR taught me to be a strong woman; WAR taught me to be an independent woman; WAR taught me to know that women should not depend on men. Even if you are married, you should work hard, you should not just say, 'I am married.'"

Baboletse explains, "I chose to work hard... I was working and volunteering with my whole heart at WAR. When they saw that, they thought, 'we can use her, she's got skills, she can work.' That's why they promoted me."



Over 120 kids participate in Students Against Rape's first Drama Competition!

On Saturday, October 29th, WAR's Students Against Rape (SAR) initiative hosted their first drama competition. The inter-school competition was attended by over 120 kids from five schools: Maun Senior, Moeti JSS, Tshwaragano JSS, Tsodilo JSS, and Sedie JSS.

The theme was: 'Parent-Child Communication on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health' and the event featured a DJ, food, prizes, speeches, and most importantly, great performances!

Congratulations to Maun Secondary for first place, Sedie JSS for second, and Tshwaragano JSS for third! The kids had an amazing time and are excited to participate next year.



The community bus transporting kids for the event



Tshwaragano JSS celebrating third place!

Culture & Heritage



Polokong
an effort to assist Maun's destitute elderly

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aglowpolokong.org

AGLOW - Polokong

Despite tremendous efforts to provide social security to the country's most vulnerable populations, hindrances such as walking long distances, and some day-to-day activities present many challenges for the elderly. AGLOW-Polokong aims to change the lives of these individuals by making home visits, providing basic necessities, and giving loving attention.

Sitting with Lesang

Sitting in the living room, we can smell the food cooking. "I am still cooking so I have some time," Lesang, a volunteer for AGLOW, says as she sits down to converse. Born and raised in Maun, Lesang has been working at AGLOW since 2014. Today, she is preparing food that will be distributed to elderly recipients throughout the community.

This is all part of AGLOW's mission to give dignity and love to Maun's elderly. As an AGLOW representative, Lesang's duties extend beyond preparing and delivering daily meals. During visits, she often cleans their houses, helps bathe them, and offers support in any way possible. "Most of them have no family to visit them" she says, "they are lonely in their home... [so] we sit with them, we talk to them. They can also feel the warmth."

However, working with the elderly presents many challenges. "This is a high-risk job," she says. Many of the homes AGLOW visits are not in good condition, and oftentimes many are sick. Additionally, working with the elderly takes patience. "You need to have compassion," she says, "you need to have love." Lesang clearly demonstrates both these qualities. When she is not around, they will ask 'where is she?' and 'what is

happening?' "I think it is because of the bond and the love they have of me," she says. She finds this relationship incredibly rewarding, "when they are laughing, when they are accepting me... that is where I get my joy."

Working with the elderly, Lesang hears plenty of stories. "One man in Boseja," she says, "is always caught up in current affairs... he will tell me stories of China or Russia... he will tell me stories of the chiefs and how Maun was." Additionally, some of the clients have nicknames for her and another client insists that Lesang is supposed to get married to the President!

Not only is AGLOW providing food and other essentials, but they are building relationships; they are spreading warmth. After seeing the impact made, Lesang believes that AGLOW will continue to grow and make a difference in the community. "Right now, we cannot even reach 1% of the elderly around Maun," she says, "AGLOW will grow... They will reach out to many."



Children



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Bana Ba Letsatsi

Bana Ba Letsatsi (BBL) is a rehabilitation centre that offers a place of safety and support for vulnerable children. The organization provides daily meals, clothes, transport, medical attention, and hygiene facilities, as well as counseling, skills training, and also reintroduces children to the structure of education. BBL has helped many children reintegrate and it continues to be a safe-haven for children throughout the community.



New Auntie at Bana Ba Letsatsi

"I started volunteering at the age of 18; that was many years ago," says Taboka, the Executive Coordinator from Bana Ba Letsatsi (BBL). Although Taboka works with kids now, she was initially trained on HIV/AIDS in the church. "Back then, HIV was seen as a curse from God," she says, "people who were HIV positive were seen as promiscuous, as prostitutes." It was not until the former President Sir Ketumile Masire urged the church to unite that an active role became apparent.

At the age of 23, Taboka saw firsthand the role the church has in the fight. "I remember one pastor from Uganda who got HIV from a blood transfusion" she says, "that really opened up the eyes of church leaders to say 'really, we have been so unfair to these people but to tell the truth, they are not promiscuous - even pastors can get HIV.'"

Inspired by these actions, Taboka, along with a friend, started mobilizing church leadership and young people in Francistown. They founded a counseling and recreational centre called Basha Lesedi – an organization that is still running. This organization disseminates HIV/AIDS information, Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH), and other health related information through theater.

Her work continued when she started volunteering for the Botswana Christian AIDS Intervention

Programme (BOCAIP) where she eventually became a counselor after attaining her degree in Youth Development and Early Childhood Development. After working with BOCAIP for nine years, she joined the Botswana Red Cross Society for six years. Then, as of last year, Taboka started working as the Executive Coordinator at Bana Ba Letsatsi.

"I don't see anyone, anywhere doing what we are doing"

Though BBL is much different than her previous experiences, Taboka is thrilled to be a part of such an amazing organization. "Bana Ba Letsatsi is an amazing place; that's what I'm always telling people. I don't see anyone, anywhere doing what we are doing."

Although there are other rehabilitation centres, BBL was founded to address the AIDS pandemic. "Parents lost tons of children," she says, "a family might lose five or six daughters and each daughter has maybe five children." As such, the responsibility often falls upon the grandparents. However, how do you make sure that each child's individual need is met when you are taking care of that many kids?

Currently, BBL has around 45-50 kids that come in for meals daily. They also have 79 children that they directly work with and next year, they expect to have 150.



Not only is BBL addressing daily necessities, but they also have several new projects to address sexual reproductive health. For example, the 'Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights' project will work within ten local schools.

"we want to give them the skills to say no to certain things, to be assertive, and to be able to train their peers"

"We've seen a high rise in teen pregnancy," she says. By conducting girl empowerment meetings in the schools, "we want to give them the skills to say no to certain things, to be assertive, and to be able to train their peers."

Taboka is just one of the amazing, dedicated staff working at BBL. We are proud and honoured to work alongside this incredible organization.

Children

Omphile: 'Wildlife is a Lifestyle'

Few people appreciate nature as much as Omphile. We had the opportunity to speak with Omphile, a guide from Ker & Downey Safaris who in his spare time, volunteers at local non-profit organization, Bana Ba Letsatsi.

Along with Moses, his co-worker, Omphile runs the 'Wildlife Club.' During low season, the two guides visit BBL once or twice a week to teach the kids everything from animal behaviour and plant species, to conservation and climate change.



Omphile (far left), Moses (far right)

Omphile is so passionate about this project because it allows him to teach kids about the exciting wilderness in their own backyards. "Although many of these kids come from villages on the outskirts of the Delta," he says, "many don't have the advantages of coming out into the bush."

Omphile, who has been a guide for ten years, wants the kids to understand why he is so passionate about nature. "I love it!" he exclaims, "Every morning you're excited about a new day... getting to see the animals – it's such an amazing experience."

Through the club, the kids participate in activities, lessons, and even prepare presentations. Although Omphile was a little uncertain how the kids would react to this, their response was beyond what he could have expected. "I gave them an assignment to research about trees" he says, "to some people, trees are just trees. I



wasn't expecting the excitement I got... You should have seen the excitement!" The kids came back with facts, stories and even different uses for the different types of trees.

Not only do they regularly visit, but on occasion, Ker & Downey sponsor all the kids to visit one of their camps. The kids are treated to walks, game drives, and even boat cruises. "You could tell from their smiles... we made a change in those kids."



Moses at the Wildlife Club

Partnered with BBL, Omphile is excited to see this program continue to grow. "The management, the staff taking care of the kids, are great... we're all fighting for one goal: to make a difference in these kids," he says. He hopes that these gradual steps will one day result in something great: "my dream is to see some of these kids to be guides in camps or managers."

The Wildlife Club is just one way that Omphile and Ker & Downey are giving back to their community.



(From left to right) Georgie (KDS), Taboka (BBL), Moses (KDS), Fran (KDS), MC (KDS)



Omphile (right)





NCONGO Hosts Human Rights Training

On October 25-28, NCONGO members were invited to join in a human rights training. The group discussed human rights issues facing the people of Ngamiland. Together, they came up with strategies to advance human rights for some of population's most vulnerable.

This training was part of the Ngami Rights Project, a three-year project supported by the European Union.



Children

'It helps maintain their dignity:' Desert & Delta Safaris Continues to Support Tsodilo Junior Secondary School

Sitting in the office, we hear the recess bell ring and watch as students rush to meet their friends. Across from us, Mr Lubinda, the guidance counselor from Tsodilo JSS smiles at us, eager to discuss how Desert & Delta Safaris (DDS) is making a difference in the school.

Beginning three years ago, Desert and Delta Safaris (DDS) started sponsoring Tsodilo Junior Secondary School. They began by sponsoring an annual motivational safari trip for 20 kids (10 top achievers and 10 disadvantaged) and providing 10 kids with uniforms, bags, stationary, and school supplies.

Today, with Travel for Impact as the liaison, the relationship between DDS and Tsodilo JSS has grown even stronger; DDS has since taken on an additional 10 kids to sponsor with supplies.

"It helps maintain their dignity"

These uniforms and school supplies are going a long way for the students who need them. Student Guidance Counselor, Mr. Lubinda, explains that students used to come into the office with tattered clothes and torn shoes.



However, since DDS's contribution, "they now have smiles on their faces – they look like any other student," he says. The donation of these essentials "helps maintain the students' dignity;" now nobody needs to know that they come from poorer families. This has gone a long way to boost their self esteem and helps them focus on their studies.

"It helps all the students' motivation"

Furthermore, Lubinda has high praise for the annual motivational safari trip. Not only does this trip give students the unique opportunity to learn about the country's diverse wildlife, but it also helps with the students' studies. "It helps all the students' motivation," Lubinda explains, "there is a sense of competition and all the students work hard to be able to go on the trip." This excursion provides incentive and encourages the students to study hard and make school a priority.

Sponsorship from Desert and Delta Safaris is part of a five-year plan and the relationship continues strengthen. "DDS has made a tremendous impact on our students" says Lubinda, "we are very appreciative!"

Conservation

MAUN ANIMAL WELFARE SOCIETY



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Maun Animal Welfare Society (MAWS)

Founded in 1998, MAWS aims to protect Botswana's wildlife through domestic animal care. To accomplish this goal, MAWS offers free veterinary services to low-income villagers across Botswana. In addition, they also reunite and rehabilitate lost, found, and stray animals. MAWS is actively preventing the transmission of diseases from domestic animals to wildlife.

MAWS Mobile Outreach: 'They are doing it all out of love'

"Come through and meet John and Helen," Tana, MAWS co-founder, says as we walk through the clinic door. Inside, on a far table, I see a veterinarian focused on what looks like a routine procedure.

The vet, John, looks up from his work and warmly nods before returning to the task at hand. On my left, I am greeted by Helen. "You've caught us at a good time," she says, "we just got back." John, a semi-retired vet, and Helen, a retired Dentist, originally from North Yorkshire, UK, have been volunteering with MAWS for the past month.

For the past week, they, as well as clinic hand Keneilwe, have been traveling throughout Northern Botswana providing veterinary care to rural villages. Outside of major towns, there is often little to no veterinary assistance. This mobile clinic provides care to animals who would otherwise never receive treatment.

The team traveled to the villages of Shakawe, Ukusi, Samochima, Sepupa, Botshabelo and throughout the panhandle area performing both vaccinations and sterilizations. As it is a mobile clinic, they were often performing surgeries in unusual places. "The day of, you never know where you are going to set up your clinic and you don't know who is going to show up," John says. "You have to improvise," Keneilwe says, "sometimes we had to just find a tree and set up."

However, the community did show up. "One day, John performed twenty surgeries!" Helen says. Not only did many show up, but many were revisits from the year prior. "They remembered us from last year and came back for the next vaccination," she says, "that's when you think, 'Yes! We're getting somewhere!'"

MAWS is getting somewhere. Not only are local populations responding, but initiatives like the Mobile Outreach are actively protecting Botswana's wildlife. With vaccinations and sterilizations, "you don't get packs of semi-feral dogs roaming the countryside not only attacking goats, donkeys, and people, but also attacking the local wildlife," John says, "also, the disease control side helps."

Throughout South Africa, rabies has led to the eradication of huge populations of African Wild Dogs. "My worry is that that scenario could happen in the Okavango Delta... whether through disease or rabies. By controlling domestic population and building up a buffer zone of vaccinated dogs, we are taking a huge step forwards."

After such a successful month, John and Helen are both excited to work with MAWS in the future. "I can't thank the clinic staff enough" John says, "they're devoted, dedicated, and put an awful lot into this clinic." Helen furthers these sentiments: "their hearts are completely in it... they are doing it all out of love."



John, Helen, Keneilwe, and Tana



In total, 100 dogs and cats were vaccinated and 62 were sterilized!

Our Community

Bush Ways Foundation Hosts First 'Masterchef Junior Competition!'

On October 8th, Bush Ways Foundation, in collaboration with the Okavango Cooking School, hosted the first ever 'Master Chef Junior Competition' at Matswhane Primary School. The event raised funds to ensure that all children of the Mabele and Muchenje villages would have access to safe transportation to school every morning.

The event had face-painting, awards, raffles, and other fun events. With the help of the Okavango Cooking School the participants all created beautiful pieces of culinary art (that also tasted good).



Local Events



Global Expo

Date: November 23 – 26

Venue: Gaborone

GEB is a major trade and investment platform offering exhibitors an opportunity to do business in one of Africa's stable and fastest growing economies as well as the Southern African region.

<http://www.globalexpoco.co.bw>



Tsau Primary Family Fun Day Fair

Date: November 24

Venue: Tsau Primary School, Tsau

A Family Fun Day that provides a fun space to celebrate the end of the 2016 School year while tackling issues around HIV and raising funds to support Tsau Primary School.



Francistown Food Festival

Date: November 26

Venue: Francistown Old Stadium, Francistown

Time: 10:00 am

Enjoy good food, great entertainment, and have a greater appreciation of the Francistown lifestyle. If you are a lover of food, a farmer or an entrepreneur, stalls are available for you to come and showcase your products and services.

For inquiries, please contact (+267) 71266776



Massive Jumble Sale

Date: November 26

Venue: Maun Quarries, Boseja

Time: 9:00 am



Jumble Sale

Date: November 26

Venue: Outside Taura's Pharmacy, Maun

Time: 8:00 am

Please bring donations (books, furniture, clothes, kitchenware, etc) to the following drop off points: Powerserve (Sue), Health Hut (Heidi), The MAWS Clinic, Ngami Toyota (Pat)

For pick-up, please contact 74520441



Gaborone International Jazz Festival

Date: November 26

Time: 4:00 pm

Venue: Serokolwane Lawns, Gaborone

Contact: +267 71 320 920



Botswana Travel & Tourism Expo

Date: November 29-30

Venue: Kasane

Botswana Travel & Tourism Expo (BTTE) offers a unique opportunity to the Greater Europe travel industry to establish business partnerships with the Botswana tourism industry players.

Contact: marketing@botswanaturism.co.bw

Our Travel Partners

Our travel partners are the cornerstone of TFI and without them and their extraordinary generosity, TFI would have just remained a dream. Our partners represent every aspect of travel to Botswana and each offer an unforgettable holiday in this breathtakingly beautiful part of the world.



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‘Bed Bank for Charity’ Supporters

The bed bank encourages suppliers to donate bed nights to Safari Destinations, who in turn sell these bed nights on, passing the proceeds to Travel for Impact to support charities with their core costs. Both Travel for Impact and Safari Destinations would like to express their gratitude to the following companies for their generous support of the bed night bank:

