



BUILDING A COMMUNITY

In 2022, a number of youth leaders around the world had the opportunity to participate in Fimcap's World Camp, hosted in Botswana. The camp consisted of getting to know different cultures, living in solidarity and working on the value of play.

Through working in local projects and living in hosting families, participants had the opportunity to explore these topics and truly experience the reality of daily life in Botswana, and especially the situation of the young people there. The localities that hosted the projects were Kasane, Tonota, Mahalape, Oodi and Ramotswa.

The main topic that our group in Oodi worked on was Building a Community by helping to refurbish the Community Hall that is used by so many people as a space to enjoy indoor and outdoor sports and activities. During the project, the participants teamed up with the volunteers of Chiro Botswana to: clean the hall and the surroundings; created different playing areas with games such as tic-tac-toe, checkers, hopscotch, and others; paint the wall and fence; fix the windows and build a bonfire pit.

The significance of the project was not only focused on physical work but also on exploring the culture and creating bonds through different activities such as cooking together, exchanging games, learning important phrases in their language and many more.

While refurbishing the Community Hall, we had the privilege to become a part of a new community for a short while. The people in Oodi opened their hearts to strangers and showed us the hospitality and selflessness that characterises the people of Botswana. The bonds we made in such a short time, despite the different backgrounds, are surprisingly strong.

We found family in them

We got the opportunity to work with the locals everyday and we easily got along with the team and had a blast. The experiences that we shared, the games and dances that we exchanged are something that we will never forget. We hope that you will find this article useful in understanding the importance of community and how to maintain it when you decide to plan or participate in an international activity of this dimension.

Community is built by connections between people in large and small things. The importance of it is the people in it. It is also the new people that join along the way, bringing in new ideas and energy. Attracting new people might be a challenge, but it is definitely worth it. First step is to know who can make use of this community, the people who would benefit and can bring more towards it. It is also key to evaluate the values of the community.



Keeping people in a community might also be a challenge, especially with today's distractions and many other opportunities found in society. Always listen to people's needs and never be scared to adapt and change the way things are done. Change might be scary at first, but it can bring a lot of improvements and keeps things new and fresh.

These values help us grow and progress. They help us create the future we want to experience. A community's shared values shape local interactions among members and individual's actions. A community connects people to each other to build strong relationships.

Values

One of the most important values that we worked on and we wanted to highlight is the Value of Play. There are endless ways to explore different values through play. With games being something that everyone has experienced it can be an opportunity for getting to know each other without any walls that unconsciously we may create due to our differences. Playing must take the needs of the group or individuals into account and respect the personal boundaries of the players.

Some important values you can work on are:

1. Respect for the rights, differences and the dignity of others.
2. Honesty and integrity in dealing with all members of the community.
3. Faith is what people have to encourage and comfort someone when facing serious problems or stressful situations.
4. Hospitality is the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers.
5. Conscientious pursuits of excellence in one's work.
6. Patience is the ability to wait or continue doing something despite the difficulties.
7. Solidarity or unity that produces or is based on community objectives, interests, or standards.

Challenges

While building a community you may face several challenges, these may cause that not everything goes smoothly. One of them could be a language barrier, speaking different languages in a community makes it difficult to be on the same page. But it does not make it unconquerable. More communication will be needed and it may take longer to really understand each other. Be specific when speaking and ask for clarification when it's not clear, but most of all be patient.

Secondly, the inevitable cultural differences may cause some people to collide. So the first thing that you need to have in mind is respect for one another. Reflect on the different backgrounds that these beliefs that may contrast yours are from, and try to find either a middle ground or avoid the conflicting issue so you can continue building a community.



Expectations are a double edged sword. Aiming for the worst but having faith in the best is what you'll need to keep in mind so you get the best of the experience. So many things are out of your control so sometimes you have to let go of your expectations and try to live through the experience in the most peaceful way. Maybe we can not change some problems that can come up, but you can change how you feel about them.

To help you get through the challenges it's important to take care of yourself and support the team. Because at the end of the day it's the group who makes the experience. So take a moment for yourself to reflect and create a safe space where the entire group can say its concerns and be themselves.

Fundraising

A challenge that many non-profitable organisations and communities face is funding. Having fundraising activities is a win-win situation - it can help get funds that the organisation can use for resources needed while also having it as a team building experience as the members are working together for a specific goal.

We've collected some fundraising event ideas that are sure to rally supporters around your cause.

1) Selling merchandise such as hats or sunglasses (especially if the place is sunny or hot) can be a fashionable way to promote the community. Clothing items such as t-shirts and sweaters are always a good idea as people make use of it and could be a fun conversation starter. While creating these products, it is also important to try our best to be environmentally responsible.

2) Selling meals works wonderfully. People can donate the food to be sold or you can get the people in the community to cook together and organise a sale. When working with a reservation system one can make sure to cook the amount needed, this will help avoid having food that goes to waste.

3) Other creative activities could be: an outdoor cinema, car wash, lottery, a themed market (such as Christmas, food), a fun trivia quiz, or organising a workshop that attendees need to pay a fee for, a charity race, sports competition with a prize, karaoke night.

Looking for sponsors is helpful support to get the boost one might need and to help get the ball rolling.

Farewell



Once the activity is finished, maintaining the sense of community can be the biggest challenge of all. Conserving the relationships that have been built once the participants have inevitably left is as much or even more important than creating a plan on how you want to impact the community hand by hand with the locals. The pandemic has also given us a lot of resources to keep in touch with people online by social media, online games, video calls, etc. But the organizers and participants are the ones that need to be imaginative in order to keep in touch with the people who have become family.

Conclusion

Inspired by the month we stayed in Botswana, we humbly try to help future leaders to plan projects involving international cultural exchanges and how to make connections regardless of backgrounds. Some of the topics that we want to highlight are:

- Having time to reflect on what the goals of the activity are going to be so you can have a better understanding of the values you are going to work on so both the locals and the volunteers can feel ownership of the project.
- Preparing for some challenges that may come up, specially regarding the expectations by doing some workshops before traveling is key.
- Putting effort in maintaining the sense of community after the activity is finished so the project has a deeper meaning for everyone.

We all feel so blessed to be part of the WorldCamp and experience the lesser distance that the unbreakable bonds provided. We are now attaching faces to places and that's what Fimcap is all about.

As we like to say: May the bond of Fimcap not be broken until we meet again.

Kagiso, Ma pula, Naledi, Thabo Marang, Letlhabile and Bosa.