

100 Goals for Peace
South Africa
Franklin and Marshall College
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<http://www.the1goal.org/blog/>

Using funds from the Davis Projects for Peace we launched a program entitled 100 Goals for Peace, a one week long program Khayelitsha, Cape Town, South Africa. The goal was for one hundred at-risk girls to participate in public health workshops, life skills sessions and soccer tournaments designed to educate, inspire and provide a safe space during winter holiday with the hopes they will apply the knowledge learned during this week to make a positive change in their own lives and in the community. Additional funds for this project came from campus fundraising events at Franklin and Marshall College that included a South African Braai (similar to an American Barbeque), a soccer tournament in which thirty teams participated, a movie screening, an event combined with malaria awareness that involved “trapping” willing participants under a malaria net and releasing them after thirty minutes or until members of the campus community paid thirty dollars, as well as personal letter writing campaigns.

There were 80 girls enrolled, between the ages of nine and nineteen, who were subdivided into eight teams coached by an employee of Amandla EduFootball, a local not for profit organization that uses sport as a tool to foster education centered around women’s health. Key elements of each day were life skills sessions and public health workshops. The life skills component of the program were developed by Amandla who has used them extensively prior to our arrival and work to instill values such as respect, teamwork, trust and identity while also improving soccer skills including dribbling and passing. The workshops were taught by the non-profit organization, Medical Knowledge Institute, on public health topics specifically tailored to women’s health including puberty and body changes, healthy relationships, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STI), rape, confidence and goal-setting. The subject matters can seem overwhelming and even controversial for girls the age of our participants yet they were approached with upmost respect in a safe, confidential environment where the participants were positively engaged and felt comfortable voicing concerns and asking appropriate questions. Much of the information presented was new to the girls, which is key because what the girls learned during these sessions is applied to the real world when the girls protect themselves and learn to stay healthy and make positive choices. It was fulfilling to see relationships blossom between the coaches and the players. Both parties learned more about a new culture and gained respect. By forming strong bonds with people from such diverse backgrounds one learns not to judge a person by where they come from, a skill essential to promoting peace is one that can be transferred to many situations at home.

An obstacle we encountered was the language barrier. The local language among Black Cape Townians is Xhosa and while students learn English in school they are often not highly conversational until high school. While there were plenty of translators around to run the program efficiently it made having more personal conversations with younger kids a challenge. At the beginning of the program we also struggled with time management. While there was a clear schedule for each day that outlined exactly when certain activities were supposed to happen we found both the Amandla employees and the F&M students struggled when it came to sticking to that schedule closely. This was typically because we allowed certain activities to run overtime, which many of the kids enjoyed but ended up being unfair to both the participants, and the employees who needed to be home by a certain time. As time went on this problem lessened because more people started taking responsibility to ensure the day ran timely and smoothly.

An improvement we want to make for next year is teaching the boys, who’s programs took place in the two subsequent weeks after the girls, about contraception in their health workshops. This was a central point of the girls’ workshops, which proved to be effective, but we must be careful not to send the message that contraception is not the sole responsibility of the female. We have high hopes for the sustainability of this program.

During post-program evaluations nearly one hundred percent of the participants indicated they would return next year because they learned, had fun and had a safe place to stay during days off from school. The operations costs are relatively low for the amount of services the program provides and we hope that Franklin and Marshall College will begin to support at least part of these costs through donors. We feel this program is valuable and worthy of funds because the impact it has on the participants is that it teaches them responsibility, respect, leadership and fosters positive health choices, which will have a direct impact on what they bring back to their community.

To me, peace is the concurrent existence of people who respect one another's values, privacy, rights and belongings. It is a place where all people have equal opportunity for upward mobility and success. People know their self-worth and actively seek to help others. Our project contributes to peace because it brings participants into a peaceful setting where the burdens of a tumultuous society weigh hard even on its children. It helps girls learn about themselves, how to respect themselves and others and educate them on ways to keep healthy. This is key because before one can help others they must help themselves. The Chris Campbell Memorial Field promotes peace in a powerful and unique way in that it markets its services to a large audience. In a community with high prevalence of unemployment, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS the field is a place that values the positive potential in each individual and focuses on health, education, self-worth, respect and giving back. Our project contributes to short-term peace for the participants because it gives them a safe setting.

This project has changed me for the better. I had witnessed levels of poverty similar to that in Khayeltisha but never an organization working so effectively to bring change on a large scale. Amandla uses grassroots techniques and works with the incredible people who live in Khayelitsha to understand and address the problems that affect the community. Working with these people who are doing so much to better the lives of others was awe-inspiring. Khayelitsha is a place with high unemployment, HIV/AIDS rates, where drugs and alcohol are commonplace and teenage pregnancy can be a reason why girls do not finish high school. Instead of being discouraged by these staggering facts as an excuse to further the cycle of poverty, the employees of Amandla work to change the community for the better. Many of them must fight their own personal battles while also fighting on the behalf of others. Their strong combination drive, passion, commitment and tenacity are rare and admirable. This type of experience makes people from the Western world grateful for what they have. I found this to be particularly true because I do not think I would be nearly as good of a role model as the Amandla employees if I came from their situation.

Thinking about myself in this way helped me remember what values are most important to me, the type of people I wish to surround myself with and the type of work I hope to do in the future. In addition to personal reflection I also thought about how this project affected my worldview. Each day we went to the field to work we drove as a group from city center in Cape Town, where we stayed, out to the township. This drive brings in a city that reaps the benefits of South Africa's emerging market status but quickly transitions to one of extreme poverty, a stark reminder not only of Apartheid but how, in my opinion, the government has failed a key demographic. There is a mural in Khayelitsha that reads, "the people shall share in the country's wealth", a quote taken from the Freedom Charter. Looking at these works, ironically yet purposefully placed on a bridge that overlooks miles of aluminum shacks, the inequality is blatant. A government should not be able to be bought and citizens of a country should not be ignored because they are of a low socio economic class. Black South Africans in particular, after all they have suffered at the hands of their government, must be acknowledged and given the essential right to dignity so they may improve their own lives.

