

### Botshelo Project, Serowe

The Botshelo (meaning 'life') project is located on the fringes of Serowe village known as Marulamantsi. The majority of its inhabitants are people of San origin commonly known as Basarwa. They have historically been subservient to and servants of the Bangwato, the dominant ethnic group. Their relationship has been one of inequality premised on parochial patronisation. Being a traditionally nomadic people, Basarwa did not have permanent homes and so they set up temporary structures in Serowe at Marulamantsi. For subsistence they relied on selling their labour and crafts to the residents of Serowe, but continued to be underdeveloped and poverty stricken. The Botshelo Project is dedicated to the social development of the Basarwa of Marulamantsi through the provision of craft marketing, pre-school education and HIV and AIDS education. The project is composed of a number of specialised committees to sustain, care for and improve the wellbeing of its members.

Within Botshelo is a support group focused on addressing issues of HIV/AIDS, a wood carvers committee, a burial society and a pre-school committee. These committees report to the Board of the Botshelo project, which is independent of the Roman Catholic Church in Serowe. Skillshare had a development worker (DW) placed in the project prior to the arrival of the current DW, Anthony McCloskey, who is said to have laid the ground for much of the work that has been done recently. When asked about recent changes, Anthony explained that "*members of the community were used to having things 'done' for them and so would frequently issue a list of this to be done or acquired for them by the DW.*" Anthony turned this around by asking them to identify their problems and generate solutions before asking for his help. The members took on increasing responsibilities and challenges to manage their resources for themselves. Changes that have occurred in Botshelo as a result of Anthony's involvement include:

- Increased pre-school enrolment
- Increased primary school enrolment as members are able to financially support their children in school, buying school uniform, shoes etc
- Improved nutritional intake
- Improved housing as members able to build better houses from income from carvings sold
- Increased self worth on the part of children, parents and community (Basarwa and Bangwato)
- Transport support for those too ill to take themselves to hospital
- Improved values towards work from experiences they got from the project

Mr. Phakedi Jeeta, Chairman of Botshelo project and Serowe Woodcarvers said, "*if we were educated we would like this project to be run by one of our own. That day will come one day because our children go to school and are going further and further.*" Another member of the group stated, "*We have been liberated from being reliant on selling wood and being paid with alcohol which resulted in our children going hungry.*" Members felt that Skillshare International should continue with its support to the Botshelo project because they still have some way to go before being able to manage on their own. The value added was seen to be strongest in the areas of direct funding support as with the procurement of equipment and skills transfer. As with TXY, the Botshelo Project has benefited from Skillshare International's three-pronged approach, which comprises a development worker programme, support for resourcing and the Leadership Development Programme.