Bana Ba Ditlou

(BaBaDi)

Children of the Elephants

*(draft proposal of the non-profit project)*

v. 3.

A response of the Catholic Community to the growing problem

 of

orphaned, hungry, neglected, malnourished, abused

HIV infected, dying of AIDS

and otherwise vulnerable children of the town of Kasane-Kazungula and Chobe area

St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Mission

Kasane – Botswana

January 2010

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6. **Reasons for the project, urgent need**

In the border towns of Kasane and Kazungula and in other villages of Chobe area there are many children who have lost their parents, who have no fathers or have single, often irresponsible young mother; children whose parents have no jobs, who drink in desperation, whose parents die of AIDS, whose parents don't care, or don't know how to care, who abandon their children, who don't give them enough food and clothing, who push their children to become "street-kids" - dodging school or failing in school; children infected with the HIV, children going hungry, frustrated, angry, trying drugs, even being involved in criminal activities and prostitution, being sexually abused ... but constantly seeking love and attention, looking for quality time and dreams of a better future.

Many of those children in need have been visiting our Catholic Mission located in the most socially disadvantaged part of the town called Kapamadi. Their growing number seeking some kind of help, attention and meaningful stimulation, with the associated troubles (breaking into our mission facilities, church, toilets, damaging water supply, flowers and landscaping) was a constant reminder of the necessity and urgency of the project.

1. **Original idea**

The project was initiated by Mrs. Judy Hepburn and other members of the Catholic community of Kasane several years ago. Originally a kind of feeding centre for hungry children in association with a pre-school was planned. The architectonical plans had been prepared and permits from the authorities for building of small facilities arranged.

Unfortunately, the pre-school component could not be realised because of the concerns related to bat infestation in other buildings of the mission. Nevertheless, a small play ground with a jungle gym for children was organised with the help of donors from abroad.

Because of the lack of funds the building of facilities reached only the foundation and slab level. Meanwhile, another sponsor donated some funds but specifically for the food in the future feeding centre.

1. **Maturing and finalising of the idea**

I n 2009 the new Parish Pastoral Council of St. Francis Catholic Mission in Kasane had regular monthly meetings and children and feeding centre for them have been always on the agenda. Slowly it became clear that the feeding centre alone would not be enough and the importance of activities for children receiving help became obvious.

The establishing of the OVC (Orphans and Vulnerable Children) project in the mission was a very important step providing the necessary psycho-social component of the project – screening, assessing and monitoring of children. The OVC is an independent project but it will be incorporated into the new project as a vital part of it. Presently the OVC employs eight people who managed to establish assistance to more than 120 children in need. The OVC doesn’t provide activities for children but their involvement is crucial. The OVC is funded by the CRS (Catholic Relief Services) from the USA, via the Catholic Vicariate of Francistow.

Finally, towards the end of 2009, the idea reached a degree of clarity and maturity needed for further fundraising activities and establishing of the project. We felt that the original idea of a feeding centre for children has to be expanded by providing activities for them together with other ways of keeping them "out of trouble, street life and idleness", accompanied with various forms of psycho-social support. We would like to stimulate the children in educative and creative ways to enhance their development and chances for a successful future.

Still in 2009 we received the first donations for continuation of building small facilities of the project from Mr. Pius Syriac from Gaborone and for the renovation of the play-ground from Mr. John Curtin from Canada.

7th January 2010 a German businessman Lars Gorschlüter visited Kasane to discuss the possibilities to establish the project and to secure the future sustainability. Since he has been involved in conservation projects in Botswana, he proposed to make conservation or education for conservation an integral part of the project. This idea fits very well in the already recognised principles and structure of the project.

1. **Name of the project**

The proposed name of the project is “Bana Ba Ditlou” (in short BaBaDi) which in Setswana, the national language of Botswana, means “The Children of the Elephants”. The name is based on the well known fact that Kasane area is a place of thousands of elephants – the largest elephant population in the world.

1. **Mission Statement, Vision of the BaBaDi project**

“Bana Ba Ditlou” wants to make a positive lasting difference in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable children through social support and creative stimulating activities,

enhancing their life opportunities, dignity and self-esteem rooted in Christian moral values.

Our main aim is to help the pre-school and primary school children. However, there are many children just about to finish their primary education. This seems to be the most dangerous period for them, especially for the girls. There is also a growing problem of “out of school youth”. Our children will be growing fast, and so, hopefully, our project with them.

As for now, the hungry and malnourished children will be provided with food. When not in school, we want to provide creative activities for them, keeping them busy, inspiring, stimulating and developing them, and keeping them out of streets, trouble, abuse, crime and antisocial behaviour. We would like to see them growing into responsible, good and dignified people; believing in themselves, and ultimately managing well their lives; getting jobs in the local tourism and safari industry; becoming good and responsible parents, wives and husbands, artisans and artists. We would like them to become the future HIV-free generation.

1. **Governing body – Board of the project**

The project will be governed and monitored by a board consisting of:

* five delegated members of the Executive Committee of the Parish Pastoral Council of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Mission in Kasane
* Coordinator of the OVC project
* Coordinator of BaBaDi project
* Priest in charge of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Mission in Kasane

We would like to invite some of our sponsors to be the honorary members of the board.

The board shall meet at least once per quarter to evaluate the project and to discuss current issues. The board will have powers to employ and to dismiss the project coordinator and other staff, to give direction and to monitor activities and finances.

1. **Services & Activities provided by the project**
* Feeding centre for hungry and malnourished children - In order to protect the project from abuse, the OVC staff will provide the screening and assessment of every child involved. In this way we will help those who really need it most.
* Socio-Psychological support – this component will be provided by the OVC project. This includes: screening and assessment of children in need connected with the family background and school performance evaluation, assistance to the sick and HIV positive children, medication monitoring and several other related services.
* Recreational, game and sport activities – integral part of the programme provided by Bana Ba Ditlou. Some organised activities might take place outside of facilities of the project, but always under supervision.
* Cultural and creative activities – these activities may include traditional music: dance, songs and instruments, drumming; performing arts, choir, marimba band, flute & guitar group, theatre group; other arts like carving, drawing, painting, sculpture, pottery, basketry and other skills.
* Educational activities – We plan to initiate some hobby clubs to teach children about many things and perhaps some of them will become fascinated and later could follow this passion as a life career. We would like to have a birding club, mammals club, fishing club and likewise; safari and conservation club; bush skills-survival, bush food & medicine, tracking and safari skills; cooking and backing for girls. We might also have a history and archaeology inputs.
* Moral & Spiritual support – we would like to provide our children with the system of values that would protect them in life (HIV-AIDS, crime, prostitution, trafficking and pornography), that would guide them and make them responsible, self-controlled, disciplined, industrious and happy.
* Conservation - Conservation component will be an integral part of many activities: some recreational, some cultural and often educational. This component is very vital for the future sustainable conservation efforts. Our children are the future guardians and stewards of creation.
1. **Facilities envisaged**

Facilities: Building with kitchen, office, storage room, reception and shaded veranda

Play-ground for children – partly provided

Toilets – already in place and operational

1. **Staff envisaged**
* Permanent coordinator
* Cook, cleaner
* OVC staff will be providing the psycho-social component of the project
* Possibilities for volunteers from Botswana and from overseas (already some people are interested from Poland and from Germany).
1. **Legal matters, legal ownership**

The project has been developed and established by the St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Mission in Kasane. The Mission, therefore, will be the legal owner of the project.

The project will be operating in the legal frames of the Republic of Botswana.

It will be a special responsibility of the Board of the project to protect children under their care from any kind of abuse, especially sexual abuse. Any proven wrong doings in that regard must be immediately reported to the appropriate civil authorities.

1. **Funding needed** ( we are still working on it, this is rather the ultimate project estimation,

the figures are not final, not confirmed, will change! Some items will be stages of the project development and are not crucial to start)

* Infrastructure – building\* P80.000,- to be confirmed
* Utilities: water & electricity connection\* P5.000,- could be less
* Furniture\* P15.000,- ???
* Kitchen & catering equipment\* P15.000,- ???

Total cost of infrastructure P115.000,-

* Sport, game equipment P5.000,-
* Artistic equipment: paper, paints, brushes, pencils... P5.000,-
* Musical instruments: traditional and classical P10.000,- (marimba, drums...)
* Educational aids, books, charts P5.000,-
* Bush equipment: binoculars, ... P10.000,-

 Total cost of equipment, tools P35.000,-

* Ongoing feeding programme – monthly\* P2.000,- ???
* Ongoing salary for the coordinator – monthly\* P4.000,-
* Ongoing salary for the cook – cleaner - monthly P500,-
* Ongoing maintenance – monthly\* P500,-
* Accommodation for the coordinator – monthly\* P2.000,- ???
* Utilities (water, gas, electricity)\* P1.000,-

Total cost of running the project - monthly P10.000,-

**Yearly total needed 120.000,-**

**\*** *considered crucial for establishing and running of the project*

1. **Financing & Sponsors of the project**

“In Kind” Sponsorship, assistance in activities, education, programmes:

\* Cooperation with wildlife filmmakers and photographers in Botswana

\* Cooperation with Wildlife Department

\* Cooperation with Tourism Department and Tourism Board

\* Cooperation with Safari Lodges & Tourism Companies

\* Cooperation with artists

\* Involvement of celebrities & government officials

\* Cooperation with Snake Park & environmental educational centre

\* Cooperation with established conservation programmes

\* Cooperation with church organisations

\* Cooperation with other related NGOs in Botswana

Financial Sponsorship:

- Local sponsors

- Safari companies& lodges

- Insurance companies & Banks

- Business people

- Major shops

- Private donors

- Foreign sponsors

 - Safari companies

 - Church organisations

 - Business people

 - Private donors

1. **Website & other communication channels**

A website of the project was launched at the beginning of January 2010.

The present web address is: <http://banabaditlou.homestead.com/index.html>

The e-mail address: mareko.svd@info.bw

Telephone: (+267) 62 52 631

Mobile phone: (+267) 72 19 14 72

Fax: (+267)

1. **Bookkeeping and accounting, banking**

The daily running expenditure shall be recorded by the project coordinator in a special cashbook kept in the project office. Receiving donations, authorising payments and cheques shall be done by specially appointed treasurer, preferably member of the Board.

A special non-profit bank account of the project shall be opened at First National Bank (FNB).

If possible a cheque current account and a separate saving account shall be opened. The accounts shall have minimum of four signatories from the Board, two of them shall be necessary to perform any bank operation.

1. **Future developments – Trust, NGO?**

If the project runs well for the period of one year, the Board might consider registering the project as a Non-Profit NGO or trust.

The present location of the project does not allow any further infrastructure development, or very limited development. If the project proves successful for longer period of time and if the need for expansion becomes necessary, the Board might consider efforts for a new location.

At the moment the project is in the right place – the most disadvantaged part of Kasane. In the future, the possible new location should also be close to people and children in need.

1. **Expected impact and results of the project**

Already now, the OVC project alone assists more than 120 children.

It is difficult to predict the outcome of the project if it comes to numbers. We think that even if we could help and inspire just a dozen of children at any given time, we might help a lot of them in the long run. We hope to help especially those children that are in the most difficult social situation now. The results of this work will be immediately visible.

However, the most important results of the project will not be very obvious initially, but the project might make a difference in the entire life of some of those children.

If we manage to achieve that, the project will be successful.

We are also aware that once the project is running, other children, who are not necessarily in social need, but who stay nearby, will most probably come to be part of the activities of the BaBaDi project as well. This would be a welcomed development. As a principle therefore, the project will be opened to all children willing to come and participate in provided activities.

1. **Epilogue – Note on conservation**

Botswana is one of the few remaining places in Africa with vast areas of incredible wilderness and wildlife. It is a treasure that many people from around the world come to see. The country became one of the prime safari destinations with booming tourism industry. And yet, on the fringes of these areas there are people, whom most of the visitors would never see, people of this country, owners and custodians of those wonders of nature.

However, many of them still do not benefit from the opportunities around them, especially many young people - out of school, unemployed, living in poverty and desperation, sometimes pushing them into prostitution, crime, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual irresponsibility and so often HIV-AIDS.

The true victims of this situation are children.

Most of them have never been to the national parks to see their fascinating animals. So, why should they care about them, they are dangerous, they are for the rich and visitors...

We recognised already some years ago that true conservation efforts must be always accompanied by social and development efforts among the local population.

By helping our children we are doing a long term conservation work, especially if we help them to see the value of their animals, if we help them to own them and to appreciate them - among others, as a treasure and asset that might help many of them to have job in the future in the local tourism industry and necessary supporting services.

We want to expose our children to the beauty of nature as an aesthetic value and not just dangerous threatening reality and potential source of bush meat. We dream that some of our children would become best safari guides, biologists, ornithologists, herpetologists, officials of Wildlife Department, nature photographers and filmmakers. We believe there is no better way to ensure the success of long term conservation of natural resources in Botswana, in Africa.

*Prepared by Fr. Mareko Marciniak, svd*

*The date of this draft: 30th January 2010.*