

# Community Can Change the World - What Businesses Can Learn From the Mozambique Skateboarding Community

AARHUS, CENTRAL DENMARK, DENMARK, January 16, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When photojournalist and coach Simon Skipper embarked on his latest exciting project - documenting the building of Mozambique's first public skatepark, he didn't anticipate that the African skateboarding community would have so much to teach him. Alongside the international attention that Simon's photography work has generated, he has been headhunted for an exhibition by @pushforgood and @atheart in Florida. In addition, Simon has returned home from Africa with a renewed sense of enthusiasm for future projects, based on his experiences with the skateboarding community in the world's third poorest country.

Simon is one of 23 young professionals, academics and skateboarders, who have taken part in a unique project by an NGO called Skate World Better, to bring skateboarding to young people in

Mozambique. Simon's position was partly voluntary, but also in part funded by the Danish Union of Journalists and Danida. He was selected for the assignment because of his background in photojournalism, including producing large scale posters for the exterior of the University of Copenhagen, and having participated in a similar NGO project in Kenya.

The charity was set up by 3 students of African studies at Copenhagen University, and Simon's role was to document the work of the volunteers and workers, as well as the young people who will be using the new facility. He was also tasked with creating a feature story on Noel, the young local skateboard talent.

In Mozambique, skateparks are an opportunity for young people to avoid exploitation, drugs and crime. The "youth bulge" means that there are now fifteen million people under 15, and local resources struggle to cope with keeping children and young people safe. By engaging them with skateboarding, it's possible to keep young people focused on healthy activity and the community.



Skipper helps to build a skatepark in Mozambique and makes these children very happy!

While engaging with the volunteers, workers and young people as a photojournalist, Simon experienced a sense of community and support that he realised would benefit businesses and individuals the world over. He has incorporated this knowledge into his coaching, and feels that businesses, NGOs and individuals seeking personal development, could improve their productivity and satisfaction by learning from the way that other cultures approach complex projects.

“The atmosphere of community and support surrounding this project was truly electric; it was inspiring and uplifting in a way that seemed to linger long after the voluntary position itself came to an end. There is a real sense of community with Mozambique skateboarders, and people of all ages finding joy and inspiration in just taking part in something positive. This is in a country where the youth population is ravaged by drugs, crime and some of the worst aspects of modern life, yet the entire community was able to engage with this project. I couldn't wait to share this experience when I got back to Denmark,”

How businesses, project managers and NGOs can learn from the skateboard community in Mozambique:

Involving the whole community

This experience taught me that no project exists in a bubble - no matter how far removed from the wider community it appears to be. We had elderly people and neighbours as well as parents and skateboarding-obsessed kids pouring their enthusiasm into this project, excited at being a part of something positive. Opening up to the local community means inviting their enthusiasm and interest, which added an extra layer of power to our efforts. These people are extra-protective of the skatepark and the young skateboarders, because they were involved and welcomed into the process. This lesson of future-proofing your projects with the goodwill of the wider community was extremely valuable to me, and I will be incorporating that into my future work with companies and NGOs.

Remember that collectives are timeless and natural

Sometimes we can over-think the idea of our roles and relationships within a project. Humans have always worked as collectives, and it was natural to our friends in Mozambique to organise themselves alongside volunteers in order to achieve our objectives. Friendships were formed along the way, and the inherent skill sets of individuals naturally shined during this process. And the best part - it didn't feel like work at all!

Thinking more in terms of how the project functions as an organic collective as well

Simon Skipper

Simon Skipper Photography

+45 51 98 88 61

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