
Basketball Diplomacy in Africa: An Oral History Project with FIBA Foundation

Transcript: Ramah Mumba & Petrina Aron

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The FIBA Foundation is the social and legacy arm of FIBA that addresses the role of sports and particularly basketball in society, preserving and promoting basketball's values and its cultural heritage. The FIBA Foundation believes that basketball has the power to empower, educate and inspire youth and facilitates this by implementing Basketball For Good projects around the world. In our eyes, all actors initiating positive change in communities through basketball are part of the Basketball For Good family.

The following interviews all feature Basketball For Good advocates in Africa and show the heart and soul of the Basketball For Good Family.



Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

Could you both please state your name, age, and a little bit of your background in terms of how did you first arrive in the basketball world, either in playing the sport or in and around the sport?

Petrina Aron

I am Petrina Aron, and I am turning 21 in August this year. I joined the Basketball Artists School in 2011. I'm going to my 11th year now being apart of the wonderful family (BAS).

Namibia is not a developed country, where people are taught what basketball is or are shown different sports. BAS came to my primary school, and then I joined the physical education lesson, it was actually a PE lesson type of thing.

I went there [Basketball Artists School] not knowing what basketball was or where it would one day get me. I just went there to have fun. They [Basketball Artists School] came back to our school and they were choosing a few participants who did good or who had capabilities of knowing the sport or learning more, people with the skill. I wouldn't say that, I knew basketball from a long time. And when they came, I joined in." I knew nothing about basketball. They are the ones who introduced basketball to me as a sport.

Ramah Mumba

My name is Ramah Mumba. I'm the director for the Basketball Artists School, which started in 2010. But I have been in basketball much longer than the program. I started basketball at a very young age. I come from a basketball background as a family, we played basketball. I played basketball for my school. Then I think when I was around 16, 17, while playing basketball, I started coaching basketball as well. I just started coaching people younger than me. And I think that's where the passion came in, where I realized that I can do more in basketball, rather than just playing.

I think I started taking it a little bit more serious when I turned 21, 22, 23 somewhere there. And then I met an expert from Germany who came in Namibia for a project on basketball—that's how we linked up—and he told me about a project that he wanted to start, which was the Basketball Artists School. I didn't really know much about it, but I really loved it because it had basketball in it. The whole concept was to use basketball as a tool to change people's lives. I love the concept. And I've been part of BAS ever since 2011. So it was a great journey. Basketball is a great journey for me.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

One of the questions that's come up is the question of basketball in school versus professional basketball, if there's even an option or semi pro-ball? What was the situation when you were growing up, and how has that changed, if at all?

Ramah Mumba

I've been in basketball for quite a long time, especially Namibia where the population is around 2 million, 2.5 million, and back then it was even much less than 11 years ago. The sport was not that popular in Namibia back then. Yes, it was getting up here and there. But as a country, we just don't take basketball that seriously. And I think the facilities and opportunities are not there, the exposure to it. So, has basketball grown since then? Yes.

Definitely one thing we don't have is a professional league, we just have the social league. But something that started way back, and then it stopped, and then started again, was schools in basketball.

Ramah Mumba

One project which was initiated by the Federation, and also the Basketball Artists School, is to start a basketball movement. And that's how we also got involved with FIBA Foundation, when they heard about the Basketball Artists School and us going to schools because we felt we can produce more basketball players.

One thing we definitely wanted to intensify was basketball in schools, because we do have relationships with schools. And that actually worked out pretty well. So, basketball is now officially growing in Namibia but at the grassroots level, mini basketball level.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

Thinking very broadly, what does basketball mean to each of you and what has propelled your continued work in and around basketball?

Petrina Aron

Well, for me, it's not about the sport, really, the basketball itself. As Ramah said, in Namibia it is not a professional thing or something you can earn money from doing. For me, it is the Basketball Artists School Foundation itself that really kept me going. It's the reason why it brought me back again to basketball. So, for me, I wouldn't say it's the sport itself, but the Basketball Artists School Foundation itself, because we go around the three aspects of education, basketball, and life skills.

But for me, from the Basketball Artists School, what really attracted me was the life skills part because of my background, and I felt I could relate to many that are also part of the program. And basketball was just a tool for me to also have fun or enjoy. Of course, it is a great sport, and I love playing basketball. But to me basketball just means life, it saved my life. It gives me joy. And it brought me to a place in my life right now where I never thought I was ever going to be.

Ramah Mumba

What basketball means to me is change. Growing up, I also went to certain African countries. And then being in Namibia, I saw basketball as an opportunity to change people's lives. That's why I got attracted to the gentleman who started BAS because he told me the concept. I was already coaching for another school. So, when he told me about the concept, that we're going to be working with underprivileged kids, I just said, "You know what, I want to be a part of that. I want to be a part of that vision."

I never knew where the program was going to take me. So, I told him, "Let me just try it out." I never said, "Let me be in." I just said, "Let me try it out." But I've never looked back. That's one of the reasons why now I'm the director of the project. Because being in the project for that long, I realized that I can actually make a change in people's lives using basketball, because I knew that basketball would not take any of the players professionally or earn an income. And I said, "Basketball is fun, but why don't we use basketball as a tool to really get the people out of their situations?" And for me, that's the greatest thing that has ever happened. So for me, basketball means change.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

This is a really great point for the record. Tell us exactly what is Basketball Artists School? What it does today? And how has it changed since its inception in 2010? So to give us a sense of a bit of both the BAS, its evolution, as well as how it's been evolving, perhaps in conjunction or as a result of other changes over the past decade?

Ramah Mumba

As a staff member, and the management of BAS, because that's how I came to BAS in 2011. The BAS when it started was a program that catered to school-going kids in the rural community called Katutura, where they are underprivileged kids. The basis was to use basketball and try to see what we can do for the kids. We went to quite a number of schools surrounding the area and we selected the kids from grade five. The initial plan then, with Frank Albin, who is the founder of the organization and German expert, was we start the project with grade fives, and then grade six, grade seven. We integrate seven, and then from grade seven, they can go to other programs. That was the initial plan.

What we offered was education. So when they come, the first thing they do, they have lunch. And then right after lunch, we have a meeting, and then we have tutorials, which is education. And then right after that we have basketball. It always interchanges on Fridays... The program is Monday to Friday. So Monday to Thursday is education and basketball. Fridays was allocated for life skills. So it's life skills and basketball. And the motto of BAS is basketball... I mean,

Education First, Basketball Second. We'll always do education first, then we do basketball second. But basketball, the concept is to use basketball to attract the kids.

It really worked out. After grade seven, now, it was grade eight, when they had to go to secondary, we informed the parents and the kids, "You know what? We have to go select new kids. So, you guys go to another project." When the next year came, they all came back to BAS and said, "We want to stay." And we were, "Whoa, guys, the program was not intended for that." And so Frank and I, we were really shocked, "What do we do now?" So he came to me and said, "Look, it's a work in progress. Let's plan for BAS for older kids now." So that's how we continued with the first group we had. Now they were grade eights. We postponed the selection of new kids because, "Alright, let's build a program to sustain them."

Of course, we started asking that, "Why did they come back?" And almost all of them said, "We feel this is the only place we have." Imagine they say that, "We feel this is the only place we have." And they said, "This is where we feel like family."

And yes, I am Namibian, but I've never really grown up in Katutura. I grew up in another area. So I didn't really know much about Katutura. As much as I love basketball, I started going in another area to really get to understand the participants who are in the program. I learned quite a lot because we started going to their homes and we realized that all of them came from broken homes. All of them came from homes where they have no father, all of them came from a home where they're living seven, eight in a house. And it's a very, very small house where the mom has to work three, four jobs just to sustain all of them. And they're some of them who have never seen their parents before, both their parents. So I feel like I underestimated it, what we're doing for them.

We were surprised when they said, "We feel this is a family." And that's what they wanted, that family aspect, because at their houses their mother is not at home. It's just siblings, and many of them are in the streets. They didn't have that attention that they wanted. BAS was giving them

that. We didn't know that, but BAS was. And that's why, when they were in grade eight and nine, we realized that there's another aspect we need to add to BAS, which is to intensify life skills, because we felt we need to teach them things about life, because there's certain things that they just never knew. Which is the truth. The mothers never told the girls anything about teenage years, the boys were never told by their fathers anything, and we now became their fathers and their mothers. We realized that we need to do more, and I feel the program now started to evolve, in the sense of, let's really start to focus on their individual lives. Let's find out each and every one of them what they're really going through.

Of course, there were a lot of problems that everybody was facing. I mean, growing up in an environment where there are thieves, where there's drugs, where there's rape, where... It's really difficult, it's really, really difficult. And because of that, we realized that most of them were also not doing well in school because of these pressures. It really affected their life. So, BAS became a safe haven for them, that when they come there, they feel, "You know what? I'm finding the place where I'm loved." Because that's one thing they mentioned, that they feel they were loved. It was not really about the food that they were getting, and the basketball, it was just that attention that they never got. And we felt they got that parental type of attention that they were not getting. Look, their parents are really doing the best that they can. But of course, it's their situation that they cannot really focus on all their eight kids or all their three kids, it is just really tough.

That's why most of the parents really appreciate what BAS does, because we give them what they are failing to give them. And they don't really have a problem with that because they can't. They're rarely at home, they're working from Monday to Sunday just to feed them. Even that lunch that we provide at BAS means the world to the kids, because not all of them get that opportunity. BAS started to evolve because we realized that many of them never wanted to leave to another program. BAS was not really planned to continue that far with the same people. So now, Petrina is a testimony of one of the people who started 10 years ago, and she's still part of the program, but not as a beneficiary. But as a volunteer to give back, because that's how much BAS means to her and others.

We started getting more kids. Now we develop the program where when we get kids, we are keeping them for as long as they want to come to BAS. And in 2014, through some sponsorship, we finally built our own place. Before we were in other places, it was not really our home. 2014 was one of the greatest things that ever happened to BAS because we built our own facility where we can be here whatever time we want. For the kids, it was the greatest thing that ever happened to them. There's so many things I can say about BAS but let me give it to Petrina for her side. What she can talk about BAS.

Petrina Aron

I can definitely attest to what Ramah just said. Mostly the aspect of feeling at home since I grew up in a boarding school from grade four until grade seven. A school just across or close by the Basketball Artists School Foundation, the way the program is. I'm one of the kids that did not grow up with my mother or my father, but they are in Windhoek. I lived with my aunt my whole life. Even after I finished my primary school and went to high school, the only place where I really felt there was someone to talk to or where I was loved or where someone will have time for me or ask how was school? Or how are you doing? Or do you need help in something? Or if I was maybe emotional and would come to me to talk about whatever situation I was going through, it was at BAS.

I lived with my aunt; it was only the two of us. And I was afraid. She never really had time and we didn't really have much to talk about, we never had much to say or words to exchange, apart from just greeting. It's like we were strangers living in one house. And that's why I always looked forward to coming to BAS, because I would go to school for morning, 7:00 until 1:15 and then I'll come to BAS and then when I went over to high school, I always like staying late at BAS. It was always fun, you don't even see how time flies because you're always doing something, always being productive, or talking to someone because you know that when you go home, it's just you alone, lonely and no one to talk to, and nothing to really do.

Being at BAS with the different kids, we do sometimes exchange our stories, and we talk about what they're going through and how our houses are. And there are some times where maybe we would go to someone's house and just whether we escorted them or we went there for something or to pick up something. And then you would see how people are with their families. When maybe the other person arrives home and maybe gives the mother a hug, or since most of the people here just live with mostly their mothers and not fathers, maybe you'll see them giving hugs. I always felt emotional and felt bad, "Why can't my aunt and I be like that, even if she's not my biological mother, why can't We just get home and then we sometimes hug or talk or smile, but it was never the case.

So that's why I always look forward to coming to BAS. That is why I came back to BAS so that I pay forward and also give back to BAS for what they have done for me. Because I know there are so many people going through the situation I am going through, or I went through. And the feeling I get when I'm at BAS, I want someone else to feel the same way. Of course, BAS can only accommodate as many, so not the whole of Windhoek. So we are trying our best now to look for... Or to make programs, or to do something for kids that are out there that cannot be part of the program. But that's why in the beginning, I said for me, basketball means... It's my life.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

Petrina, when you first started coming to BAS, how many other kids were there? And then Ramah, how many do you have today and what is the age range? So we can just get a sense of how that's evolved?

Petrina Aron

I was part of the second group. In the beginning, there were 12 girls and 12 boys. But there were some that dropped out in the beginning, then now they added us and then we were 12 boys, 12 girls. That was the beginning when we started.

Ramah Mumba

Now we are about 50 with three different groups—actually four, because now we have Petrina's group who are now called the volunteers, because now most of them are a group of I think 10,

who are volunteers, who have come back to volunteer. Then we have the seniors, then we have the juniors and then we have the rookies. That's how we do it. The next group, we selected them in 2014. The other group we selected them in 2017. So there's a possibility in... Not this year, but probably 2022 we're going to select new rookies.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

And it's pretty much split between boys and girls. Am I correct in that assumption?

Ramah Mumba

Yes, we always try to make it 50,50.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

How do you view basketball in terms of helping to promote, particularly gender equality, Sustainable Development Goal Number Five, in terms of it's a sport that in many cultures, although not all, has never really had the same stigma as being too masculine for girls to play. In what ways do you see basketball as perhaps helping to level the playing field a little bit for girls and women in ways that sports maybe like football or rugby might not be able to do in quite the same way?

Petrina Aron

For us in the beginning, when we started, we all practiced together, we did the same things. And until a certain point where now the boys grow bigger than us, and then we have to split. But I feel what we do is, giving equal opportunities to both the girls and the boy child and not saying the boys must do this because they are men, or the girls must do this because they are ladies. I feel we became strong, or we became tough because of the harsh practice, or should I say, the difficult things we had to do. I feel we didn't have that thing of, "I'm a girl, I can't do this. Or he's a boy, he can do that." When it was time to play, we played. And until, a certain point, we always played against each other, where... Some girls were even better than the boys and that's why I feel it was always competition.

We still play against each other. It never brought this thing of, "No girls, what, what." Of course, there are some times when the boys are playing, and then maybe one girl says, "I want to play." And they're, "You can't play." Because they have already made maybe, guy teams, then of course, you have to be, "No, let me prove myself or let me... Because I also want to play or something like that." But that's what we do, that we make equal things or opportunities for both the boys and the girls. And then, of course, the ones who always works hard always achieves of course.

Ramah Mumba

... maybe just to add on to that. I think the beauty of basketball is that it is a sport where it is known that men and women can play. I think it's up to basketball organizations or basketball teams to just utilize that. When you introduce basketball, in many cases it's going to be the males that are going to be part of it. So I think it's more to promote it with the girls. But I think it's also, the problem that I realize why you'll find that more girls are not part of it is because you would see a lot of male coaches. And that's something that... So naturally, the girls will be like, "Do I really want to play for that team or join that." So something that I feel BAS did well, is as much as we develop the boys, we develop the girls as well, as coaches not just as players. So Petrina is a coach.

When we go to schools, we take an equal number of female coaches and male coaches, so that when you go to the school, many of the girls will automatically just run to the female coaches, and the boys will run to the to the male coaches. And I think that's one way that basketball can make sure... I just feel they're not so many female coaches out there when I saw in other programs.

I think the beauty of what we do at BAS is because internally in BAS we host our own clinics, officials and coaching clinics, and we always encourage the girls. We make sure that the girls are participating because, look, most of the women they always say there are not so many women in sports. But then we say, "Hey, make sure that there are also women who are coaching and who are officiating." Because when girls see that... I feel girls they tend to have growth... They get

motivated, and they like to see role models of other women doing that. So I think for basketball, that's what's needed, role models, examples. Then a lot of girls will definitely be there. I think that's one way to solve it.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

It's not just about what you see on court, but it's actually in and throughout the entire game-

Ramah Mumba

Definitely.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

Switching gears, a little bit. I'd like to talk a little bit about the intersections of basketball and diplomacy. The communication, representation and negotiation that occurs on and off the court. And how do you view the intersections of basketball and diplomacy as it relates to Africa? Either more generally or Namibia, more specifically?

Ramah Mumba

Well, as I said, with basketball in Namibia, it's not that big. I do believe that basketball can be used as a tool to do so many things. So, I think with the diplomacy part, well, I haven't really thought about in that line. And I think, maybe that's why I'm struggling a bit on that question. But I just feel especially what I've noticed with basketball, I think also the image of it also plays a role, the image of basketball. And I think that's one thing we as also the basketball in Namibia, specifically BAS, we try to make sure that the image is upheld in a right way. So that it also makes it easy in certain avenues to make sure that basketball still wins. So I think the image part of basketball, I think it's very, very important, because then it can help with the diplomacy of it. And-

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

What is the image of basketball in Namibia?

Petrina Aron

In Namibia, we only have one league. It's called the **Khomas** Basketball Association.

Ramah Mumba

I think genuinely basketball, what we've seen in Africa, this is what I've seen, that it's more of a sport where people don't have manners. It's a gangster type of sport, because that's what parents actually said that. So to be honest, I was wondering where they got it from, but also saw in the time I was playing, that's the image that was there as well. Many parents, let's say who are educated, would not want their kids to play basketball. They would rather them play another sport, because they say that the other sports codes are more disciplined. I do believe it did tarnish the image of basketball at one point in time in Namibia. And I think, through these programs at BAS and there are other programs as well, it's not just basketball. But there are other small programs as well.

What we try to encourage is to build up values that you would have in life, that will also help you, as a basketball player, when they see you, they'll be like, "Oh, you're a basketball player? Oh, okay." So they can associate with certain values with you when you're a basketball player. I think that's what we struggled a lot in Namibia to change, the perception that people have. So that's why you'd find that there are also certain organizations that will not associate with basketball. Which is actually not a good thing. And I think having programs like the Basketball For Good, it really also helped with the image because then it's you're using basketball for good. It's not just for bad you can also use it for good as well.

The image of basketball with what I've seen was not really good, but I think it's getting better with these programs like BAS and these other programs that are there. And also the fact that we went into schools to preach about what basketball can do for you with true life examples like Petrina and others, to say that you don't have to... Basketball does not have to be... Will not make you into a bad person or make you have bad manners or not have values of life, but you can actually be different, be what you want to be.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

So super interesting in that, it actually is a bit of a diplomatic tool in a very broad sense. To what extent do you think that Basketball for Good Programs can help differentiate between, say, basketball development, so the growth of the game and basketball for development?

Ramah Mumba

I think with BAS we do both. But we focus more on Basketball For Good, what we used it for is to develop the participants life, you understand? Because basketball was not that popular, we're thinking that look, if we want to use basketball as a tool, let's make it popular with the kids. Let's make it popular in the community. Then you are developing their skills in the beginning. They get hooked to the sport. And then our main objective is for their lives, we start to develop their lives through basketball. So, I do believe that both components are very important because at the end of the day, they came for basketball, they didn't come for their lives. But because if you come there and say, "Okay, guys, we want to change your lives through basketball." I think many of them will not come.

Petrina Aron

... they won't understand.

Ramah Mumba

But if you come there say, "Hey, you want to be a very good basketball player?" "Yes, I want to be a very good basketball player." Then you get them with that, through that, but then you know as a coach, your objective is, "You know what? I want to make sure that I make a difference. I want to make sure I make a difference." Because the thing is, as much as you can develop their skills in basketball and they become very good basketball players, the situation does not change. That they are still in an underprivileged place, they still are not seen as worthy, they're still living in a bad place, they're still living in very horrid conditions. So, at the end of the day, it doesn't help, because now, when you talk about an opportunity for them, it's only basketball.

What other opportunities can you get besides going to Europe, going to the States? Maybe now the league that has started in Africa, maybe that can be one of opportunities. But there's so many other countries, there's so many other very, very talented players. So we don't really have the expertise in Namibia to produce very good players. So let's just use what we have, which is, let's develop their lives. We do have the basics to introduce the sport, maybe not make them pro players, but we can focus on an aspect of developing their lives. So then, the concept of Basketball for Good, really works well for Namibia, in my personal opinion, because we cannot really produce pro players, but we can definitely produce players that can make a difference in the community.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

What impact, if at all, do you think the FIBA-NBA Basketball Africa League is having or might have on basketball across Africa, whether it's in Namibia, or more largely? And the ways that Basketball For Good Programs could be perhaps put in more the spotlight or can be used more broadly?

Ramah Mumba

I think two years ago, 2018, we had a Basketball for Good Project, which was a mini basketball convention, which was actually held at BAS, it was for the whole Namibia, but it was held in Katutura. That was one of the greatest things that we ever experienced with FIBA Foundation. And because of that one event that we had to introduce mini basketball, it really opened up so many avenues to expand to other places to make sure that we do Basketball For Good projects. I feel such things are very important to have conventions or events, so that it attracts the people there. Then the real work starts after the event. In a way you now really have to go to the schools...

I think that's something that BAS really did very well, that after the convention, which was held at BAS, the school started wondering, "Wow, we love this sport." And the good thing is that we invited schools that never had basketball. That's what mini basketball is for, to introduce basketball to young kids so that they get interested in it. So, I think just using that platform where through this Basketball For Good projects, that you just have these events in different places,

different African countries. I feel to have that spark will... With of course having the committed people, can push the projects in different areas and different schools.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

Which leads me to another question that you both referenced several points earlier and that identity, and how basketball helps to create not just a family, but also an identity in and around being part of the sport. In what ways, if at all, do you think basketball can play a role in helping to create a pan African identity? If at all?

Petrina Aron

Well, for me, I know that the environment plays a very big role. I will always talk now as a participant, or volunteer, or a beneficiary of BAS. My experience is that, if it wasn't for the environment of BAS, us being here, being taught values and having life skills, and just being kept productive every single time and day is either we are playing basketball, we are doing life skills, or we are doing education, or we are having maybe board games that will always make us bond or bring life to us or bring joy to us. If it wasn't for that we were going to be involved in many other things in the streets. For instance, in a street or in a community, people do different things, as you said there are people doing drugs, and there are so many drinking alcohols. If we were not kept here, we would all have been busy with other activities out there, because we're not going to be doing anything with our time.

No one will just choose to be in the house. I think we'd rather hang out with friends. And as we all know; friends can influence you or you might end up doing things you're not supposed to do. I feel the environment of BAS played a very big part in my life that as I was here for a long time. It started becoming my lifestyle that it wasn't the first option to go out or do whatever it is, the first option will always be: what do I have to do at BAS? Even maybe on a Saturday, that's when you stay home. But from Monday to Saturday, even sometimes Sundays, we are at BAS or we always choose to come back to BAS. I feel environment plays a very big role. You become who you hang out with or where you hang out with. And of course, I'm not talking like we are saints where we don't maybe go out somewhere or we don't do other things out there.

Now we must not just say we are always at BAS. But I feel we are who we are because of the environment we were in. And for me, I believe it was a very... It is a very good environment. That even some people who did or who maybe were involved in things when they were not part of BAS ended up changing, because I feel as you joined BAS because of all the life skills and all the knowledge you're getting from here, you do question or you will have a guilty conscience going to maybe abuse alcohol, or do drugs or stuff like that. In the end, you will always have basketball in the back of your mind or let me say BAS that, "I can't do this. And then I'm coming back to BAS and then I'm in this life skills classes while I know that certain day hours example doing drugs." So I feel environment plays a very big role and the environment shapes you.

Ramah Mumba

And just to add on to that, already that looks like an identity that has been placed. That you can actually create an identity to say, "Okay, what do we want basketball players to represent?" And if we say what basketball players to represent, players with specific values, I think it's very much possible to instill that in the practice sessions, in the program. And I think that's what BAS did. So as BAS, we do have a specific type of identity. But we feel just BAS is not enough. I believe that we can actually spread this identity throughout basketball. I think that's what we want to do in the projects with the schools that we give them a bit of BAS. Which of course came from basketball. I think it can create a very good platform to solve actually quite a lot of social issues in my personal opinion.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

Finally, the flip side of that coin, what are the challenges of Basketball for Good Programs in Africa broadly speaking, and in your opinion or experience, what is then the unique relationship or opportunity that basketball can provide?

Petrina Aron

Starting with the challenges, well, definitely sometimes when you are practicing, or when you're in the gym, or playing basketball, sometimes you have that thought in the back of your mind, "What am I doing this for?" You know you're never going to go professional, or you never put

food on the table while playing basketball. And the pressure at home like parents, mostly for females, parents will be, "No, you're a lady, you must stay at home. You must cook or you must do this. Don't come home late, you might, this, this might have been there." So many complaints that comes with being a lady in the house, because the parents would just expect you to stay at home while the guys should be the ones to go out.

And being at BAS, sometimes you will feel, "I think my parents..." I mean, doing basketball, you'll feel, "I think my parents are right. Let me just go do other things rather than playing basketball because it do not really take me far." And I feel that's why we don't have so many female players, in my opinion. And so that is one of the challenges that you will have, that pressure at home, and also for you as yourself, why am I playing? And so that's one of the challenges I actually had, or sometimes I'll be watching other European or just teams like America, or just developed countries, how the girls are, how they play.

And then I'm really so inspired. And then I think of my situation, I don't think I'll ever reach this platform to play example, Olympics, or friendly game somewhere. It's just so nice to see them play and then you wish, "Oh my god, I wish I was there." But then you go back and remember your situation, "You know what? Let me stop holding on to that or having a dream or oh, my God I want to reach one day to the Olympics and stuff and rather use what I have." So that was one of the challenges.

Ramah Mumba

I think another which is common in Africa is facilities. That definitely plays a big role. In the end, and I think that's what makes it difficult to develop basketball, is because unlike soccer, you just need an open place. With basketball, yes, you can play bare foot, but it's difficult. You need some shoes; you need a hoop, and you need a ball that bounces. That's one of the challenges we also face with the programs. That support, because basketball is not that popular, to get that support even just in your local place where somebody can say, "You know what? I'm going to fund this project." I think that's really also pretty difficult. So, I think these are, as she said, female side, facilities, and just funding definitely.

Petrina Aron

To add on, on the funding and facility part, I used to play Under 17 for Namibia. There were some times where we only had a one-week camp, only five days before the competition because there isn't the money and no one is willing to always put in time just to do it for free like that. And then the facility, being there the whole day, we need to eat, we need maybe transportation to go from here to here. Of course people do try their best to make things happen. But I feel those are some of the challenges I had or I experienced when I used to play Under 17.

Petrina Aron

That there are some times where you would really see that the people are struggling even to get you lunch or sometimes you wouldn't eat. You would come with your own food because there isn't enough things to cater for all the expenses around. And we were actually even privileged that they didn't cut the girls team, because usually what happens is, sometimes the girl's teams are cut. They say maybe if it's the competition, they will be, "Okay, the girls team is not going because the funding is not enough." And they would rather take the boys because they feel the boys have much competition or to say, then the girls stay. So those are some of the challenges also I have experienced myself.

Dr Lindsay Sarah Krasnoff

Thank you. That helps to provide a much better understanding of some of the challenges that are there and it's certainly something to consider. Parting shot: looking into your crystal ball in 10 years from now, where do you see or where do you hope basketball in Namibia and in Africa more broadly will be between continued programs such as the BAS, continued Basketball for Good Programs, through FIBA Foundation?

Ramah Mumba

Maybe I can start. I would say 10 years from now, what we actually also envisaged was to grow basketball in Namibia, definitely. I don't know how we are ranked right now. But part of our vision was to make basketball a number one sport in Namibia. This is one of our biggest. And we just feel we can develop, we can do it. And at the rate that we're going that now we're in schools,

I think we've really started somewhere. And I think that we are at the right path. So in 10 years from now, we see Namibia being a country recognized for basketball, for the first time. We would like to see it in the media, participating in international competitions, especially in Africa, hoping that, of course, as Africa continues the [Basketball Africa] league, we do hope that in 10 years, there are going to be leagues also for youth age groups, under 15, under 13.

I think that will be really great because it will motivate the African countries to now start developing the younger ones. So right now, yes, there is a senior league, which I think it's a beginning. So, of course, what I think is that, I hope in 10 years that basketball in Africa, in terms of the opportunities will grow. With that, I believe that Namibia we'll also make sure that we develop basketball, and as BAS, as a program, of course, our aim is to change as many lives as possible.

That's our biggest goal as a program and to develop more people in the rural areas, because they're the ones with no opportunities at all. We want BAS to be a place where we provide opportunities for those who don't have. Hopefully, we'll have more centers, we want to have more centers, because of course we can't have so many people at BAS. So we are hoping that in 10 years, we can expand the program. So from having 50, we can have 500, with having 100 volunteers. That's how we see BAS in 10 years.

Petrina Aron

I really want to venture in being a life skills coach, because I also feel this really plays a big role. And in the end, you can be a very good player, but if you don't have morals or respect on the court, because it's not just about you being a good player, it's everything combined. And if you don't have manners, but you're a good player, it doesn't really mean anything. And as Ramah said, "Getting basketball known to as many people as possible mostly in the rural areas, where they are people who don't have courts, who don't even know what a basketball looks like." And just introducing basketball all over the country and really making a difference in people's lives. Not just through the basketball itself, but also with life skills, with education, with whatever people have to offer, or whatever we have to offer to them.

And also having club systems and having more leagues in Namibia. As I said, we only have one club or one league, which is called the Khomas Basketball Association. It's everyone combined. It's the younger ones play against the older one, there is no really age limit or the age range. So we would like to also... I would like to see something where there are clubs different, age divisions where you really see kids competing against each other and where you really see talent. And also hopefully one day, getting players some way to play internationally or to represent internationally and not just training people to just play Namibia and then their dreams end there, because we do have some really good basketball players here but unfortunately, they are going to just stay here.

END

Interview with Ramah Mumba & Petrina Aron

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