

Building trip South Africa 9 – 16 October 2010

English version

We are also ready to go (again)!

As the first group experiences her first building day in Sri Lanka, we are preparing for our trip to South Africa next Saturday. After a first attempt in April this year (the ash cloud of the Icelandic volcano prevented us to leave), it looks like this time it is really going to happen.

The following people are going to build two class rooms and a kitchen at the Springvale school:

Lidia Basile en Andreas Reutimann (Vebego CH), Vera Thijssen en Musa Öztürk (Care; Belgium), Ivonne Bergmans (Hands to Work), Suzanne Blok (Hago ZW/GZ), Patries Groen in 't Woud (Hago SSC), Suzanne Goedmakers (Board member Vebego Foundation), Jolanda de Haas (Westerveld), Wim Lousberg (Vebego International), Rienie van Mun (IBN Facilitair), Felix Narain (Fortron), Linda Overbeek (Tence), Andre Peppelman (Tence), Irene de Rooij (EMC) en Nynke Smit (Assist).

Annet van de Laak and Diana Kockelkoren will be the supervisors during the trip.

Keep yourself posted on our experiences. Our builders will enjoy it to read a message from you in the guestbook.

October 9th 2010, day 1, building trip South Africa, Kwazulu Natal,

We have met each other at Düsseldorf Airport at 2.30pm. Seeing each other again was very nice. Some of us gathered in Roermond and came to the airport by minibus. At 3.30 pm we checked in for our first flight to London Heathrow. At 6 pm our Swiss colleagues joined us. Together we ate, drank and walked around at the airport. After that we boarded the plane for the long distance flight to Johannesburg in South Africa. There were 700 people in the plane at least. We took off around 10 pm. Most of us slept very well, others did not. Fortunately we had a lot of distraction, enough movies en good service. The breakfast was English style en was very good. For some of us it came to early, because it was really greasy. We arrived at 8.30 in Johannesburg, we chatted together and become real close already. Everybody is interested in one another and the group is as one instead of having subgroups, which is really great. The atmosphere is really great!!! In a smaller plane with 110 people we flew to Durban. After quite some turbulence some of us came out of the plane "less fresh". Felix came out (Heineken?!) green and Vera needed her vomit bag almost. Fortunately she only had a white pale face. From Durban we went by minibus to Ixopo, Kings Grant, which will be our place to stay for coming week. We were very politely welcomed with a small snack and a juice. At 5.30pm we had a briefing about our building trip. At 7 pm we were entertained by a group of Zulu dancers. Unfortunately Felix his video was empty to able to film this fabulous performance. Others made some films and photo's, so not to worry.... At 7.30pm diner was served, which was splendid. The staff is really friendly and helpful. The

surroundings: - 30 degrees - Beautiful surroundings, hills, cows, sheep, beautiful valleys, the noise of crickets, butterflies and typical Dutch barns. - We sleep is beautiful, old-fashioned, comfortable, cosy and nice lodge. We have a kitchen with a fridge, where the whiskey and Bacardi is already getting to a drinkable temperature. In other words we were travelling 29 hours. We have a superb team, there is a real connection. Despite our tiredness from the long trip, we can't wait to hear our alarm clock at 6 am and finally start our building adventure!!! With kind regards, on behalf of all our group Rinie and Felix (flexible) We have met each other at Düsseldorf Airport at 2.30pm. Seeing each other again was very nice. Some of us gathered in Roermond and came to the airport by minibus. At 3.30 pm we checked in for our first flight to London Heathrow. At 6 pm our Swiss colleagues joined us. Together we ate, drank and walked around at the airport. After that we boarded the plane for the long distance flight to Johannesburg in South Africa. There were 700 people in the plane at least. We took off around 10 pm. Most of us slept very well, others did not. Fortunately we had a lot of distraction, enough movies en good service. The breakfast was English style en was very good. For some of us it came to early, because it was really greasy. We arrived at 8.30 in Johannesburg, we chatted together and become real close already. Everybody is interested in one another and the group is as one instead of having subgroups, which is really great. The atmosphere is really great!!! In a smaller plane with 110 people we flew to Durban. After quite some turbulence some of us came out of the plane "less fresh". Felix came out (Heineken?!) green and Vera needed her vomit bag almost. Fortunately she only had a white pale face. From Durban we went by minibus to Ixopo, Kings Grant, which will be our place to stay for coming week. We were very politely welcomed with a small snack and a juice. At 5.30pm we had a briefing about our building trip. At 7 pm we were entertained by a group of Zulu dancers. Unfortunately Felix his video was empty to able to film this fabulous performance. Others made some films and photo's, so not to worry.... At 7.30pm diner was served, which was splendid. The staff is really friendly and helpful. The surroundings: - 30 degrees - Beautiful surroundings, hills, cows, sheep, beautiful valleys, the noise of crickets, butterflies and typical Dutch barns. - We sleep is beautiful, old-fashioned, comfortable, cosy and nice lodge. We have a kitchen with a fridge, where the whiskey and Bacardi is already getting to a drinkable temperature. In other words we were travelling 29 hours. We have a superb team, there is a real connection. Despite our tiredness from the long trip, we can't wait to hear our alarm clock at 6 am and finally start our building adventure!!! With kind regards, on behalf of all our group Rinie and Felix (flexible)

Dagga dagga!

A lovely breakfast buffet is waiting for us. The ilanga is already shining brightly through the windows in our faces. That gives us an extra portion of good energy! Alf is waiting at the bus ready to go. On the background we hear the lyrics "We can build this thing together" on the radio. Coincidence?

After a 45 minutes bumpy ride we arrive at the building site. Meeting the school Principle with the Committee, the Major, the local builders and the community members is

inspiring. They all give us a warm welcome, sawubona, some with a firm hand shake and others with a shy smile.

And now it's time for dagga dagga! Painting, making cement, brick laying, digging like crazy in the burning sun with a good team spirit. We want to make a good progression because the weather forecast is rain. At the end of the working day we proudly look at our good result.

After lunch we have a nice get together with the children of the school. Very disciplined they say a prayer and we sing them a Dutch song in return. It's the balloons that make them all smile.

After getting rid of the dust and sweat we meet for another delicious idina. Three questions help us talking about the project and CSR during the meal. The kitchen ladies surprise us with their nice singing voices. It is nice!

Can you imagine that gift-giving is difficult? But we hopefully find a way to make four families, children and the school happy with enriching their life, also if for an instant.

Zulu English Nederlands

Ilanga Sun Zon

Sawubona Hello Hallo

Dagga Cement Cement

Idina Dinner Diner

Lidia & Suzanne G.

Wakka wakka é é its time for Africa.....

Where to begin??? So many emotions and experiences.

The morning has started with a completely different weather than yesterday. Misty, rainy and cold but yet again we started our second building day with a lot of enthusiasm. When you see the children's faces, in an instant you're motivated and get right back to work.

We finished five layers, the dividing wall and we put down the base for the windows. We straitened out the path in front of the class room, not with a digging machine but old fashioned with a pickle. Very basic but it works.

Instead of a coffee break we jumped rope with the children. We thought we could teach them something but in the end it was the other way around (what happens quite often!!!).

After lunch we took the bus to Mazongo School. There was a welcoming committee of 752 singing children, one principal, 26 teachers and a hole lot of other curious people (goose bumps!!!). They gave us a performance with a lot of singing and dancing to thank

us for building two class rooms and kitchen. All the children were wearing their best clothes but some of them didn't wear shoes and were shivering of cold. We felt a bit uncomfortable. Nevertheless it was a beautiful ceremony and there were some tears. After the official part we stayed with eight children to teach them some songs, for example "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes". After that they thought us some of their songs.

After that we visited some families at Mziki and brought them some presents. For some of us it was a warm welcome, for others it was very difficult because of the poverty. One group visited a single mom who had to raise her son but she has no income. She has no food, there's nothing in the house so it's pretty difficult to have a nice dinner around the table. At the other families it was fun, cosy and relaxed. We and the families were thankful for meeting each other and there was a lot of admiration for the strength of the families.

On the way back (which was very misty) some of us were very enthusiastic and others were feeling a little bit overwhelmed. After all an unforgettable and exhausting day full of mixed feelings.

Back to King's Grant we had a bit of a reflection with a glass of wine and a snack. After that everybody wanted a shower and their bed.

If you touch the line you're goin!!!

We have experienced a lot today and therefore a lot to tell you again:

Did you know that?

- The above title has something to do with the wire that is used to level the bricks and is said by the chief builder all day, Jali. He yells this to us the whole day with a big smile on his face.
- De front sides of both classrooms have risen from nothing.
- After painting parts of the roof of the new kitchen all morning some of the builders became high (Suus B, Lidia, Ivonne and Jolanda).
- For finishing up the walls (stuck works) a lot off sand has been done. How much? A loooooot!!! Muscle age painful!! (Andy, Felix, Linda, Ivonne (doing everything), Suzanne G. and Nynke).
- Since André has seen the kitchen where our lunch is prepared, he only eats a big breakfast and sultana's.
- The kids from the Springvale school have learned the song "in de maneschijn" by heart. We have learned "Thank you Jesus/thank you Lord" from them.
- We have a real mother Theresa in the middle, (Patries), she takes Cares of the massages, doing the hair and finding sponsor money from friends, families and colleagues for € 400,00)
- You can't understand Swiss at all... (Andy and Lidia).
- We are not that good in soccer as Affelay. De builders lost 3-1 against the kids from Springvale (soccer is difficult and exhausting and what are those small children fast and have a lot of technic. The Zulu songs and dance brought them to a higher level.

- We had a small party in the steam train and sung our voices raw (tip: read the book of Alan Payton "tears of Johannesburg").
- The use of sultana's could NOT overcome falling through the bench in the steam train.
- At 3.30pm the construction of the roof of the kitchen was painted.
- We have had 2 days of rain. Why bring factor 30 to South Africa?
- Musa played on his socks and the rest on big building shoes. We had to be really careful for the bare feet of the children.
- Suus is not able to live without her eyeliner. Even in a bumpy bus ride she is able to put it on the right spots.
- André has hit his first nail in wood ever during a good conversation with Irene.
- Jolanda has seen the biggest spider ever (7 cm). It's getting bigger and bigger....
- Irene and Nynke eat their meat like cannibals.
- Maizena becomes glue when you put it on your plate (lunch).
- Andy is over and over in front of you for a close up with his camera.
- Rienie teaches us in efficiency.
- The scaffolding is not broke down and built up, but is moved by 12 people with possible back injuries.
- Vera and Patricia did some shopping with the sponsored money for the Springvale school (the €1100 from Vera, Andy, Musa and Rienie can be spent still).
- We (Irene and Nynke) will jump into bed with a electric blanket in a short while to be able to give their outmost tomorrow again.

If we have forgotten somebody in any activity....we are guilty as charged!!

Jolanda, Irene and Nynke

After rain comes sunshine...

Yesterday night the weather was terrible and because of this there were expectations that we couldn't build today.

The day started earlier this morning.... Most of us woke up at 06.00 o'clock. When we opened the curtains sun was shining. What a surprise! Today it's Annets birthday. We sang for her during breakfast and the ladies of Kings Grant baked a lovely chocolate cake and sang a Zulu song.

At 07.45 we departed to the building site. One hour bouncing and being shaken in the bus.

Now we are knowing each other in a better way, even in the early morning we start laughing in the bus. Musa is already choosing to sit next to the Dutch troublemakers so he can get awake well. Dear colleagues of Musa... we fear that it will take several days for him to get back to normal. He complains about pain in his stomach because of all the laughing. Besides he's becoming very direct and straight to the point.

Meanwhile our building activities are starting earlier. Everybody knows his place and starts working very hard. Maybe today a little bit to hard. Around tea time it became 33 degrees. We blew bubbles with the kids and again we saw a lot of happy faces.

Around lunch time we had a CSR workshop. After a couple of days our feeling about CSR have changed in a more positive way.

Felix, Suzanne B., Ivonne and Jolanda have sieved sand all day long. Due to upcoming wind the sand was everywhere. Irene, Nienke, Vera, Andre and Suzanne G. have developed themselves to professional bricklayers. Andy, Linda and Lidia sniff up the smell of carboleum during painting the wooden beams for the roof of the kitchen.

Vera, Patricia, Andy, Rinie and Musa gave the gifts for the school to the teachers. It is not usual to express your emotion or happiness at the moment itself but the quietness and faces said everything.

When we came back to our beautiful lodge we enjoyed a wonderful sundown near the lake with some drinks and snacks.

Meanwhile we are enjoying our last evening at the Kings Grant Lodge. At the background we listened to some African music. Only half a day building left. We will miss carrying the heavy bricks of 15 kilos, each other, the kids here and the beautifulness of South Africa.

Linda & André

Final Countdown...

Friday, October 15. This week has flown by...just arrived and already packing for our way back to Holland/Belgium/Switzerland. Our last lovely breakfast at King's Grant and the last few moments of listening to the early birds outside.

So...off to the building site, again for the last time. We were trying to do as much as possible before lunchtime, because after that a ceremony was prepared for us by all the schoolchildren, teachers, parents and members of the community. The painting-team worked like crazy to finish as many planks as possible and sieving the sand has caused sour muscles for everyone by this time. It was very nice to see the roof on top of the kitchen rising and the walls of the classrooms have beautifully shown how far we came within this week.

Once more, the cooking ladies have prepared a lovely lunch for us all. The integration with our African co-workers has grown more and more during this week and that showed during lunch. It was like we'd been working together for years.

And so the final ceremony started. Thank goodness we had the weather gods at our side today, because it stayed dry all afternoon. There were Zulu dances, with a spontaneous interception by Nynke and Irene (hidden talent???). The crowd was going wild! Once again, we were amazed by the breathtaking voices of the children, who sung some traditional Zulu-songs.

When the ceremony was over, we really had to say goodbye which was quite difficult for all of us. Finally, after lots of hugging and kissing goodbye, we took our place in the bus

and waved to all the children walking down the road. About 3 hours later, we arrived in Durban in a cosy bed-and-breakfast with a beautiful ocean view.

After an intense and emotional reflection on the past week, we went to a restaurant close to the accommodation. By the time we write this blog, it's already turned Saturday and we need to say that we will be back home tomorrow...Δ

Andy & Ivonne

On our way home

At this moment we are in the plane on our way home. Parting our ways without a last message is not the way to go, so here it is. On Saturday morning not only the sun surprised us, but also the fact that we were going on a safari! The view from the balcony on the ocean was breathtaking. The Pacific ocean created beautiful waves for a nice goodbye. It was a pity that the dolphins didn't show themselves this morning. On our way to the safari Alf, our driver, shows us his home in the suburbs of Durban, monkeys were sitting in his garden. At the Tala Wild Reserve we sat down in an open jeep. The weather was nice, so time to enjoy. The first animal we saw was a giraffe, very close, we could almost touch it. After that we saw hippo's, ostrich, zebra's, impala's, wilde beasts, "Pumba's (Hakuna Matata)", many birds and other animals. We had a very close encounter with a rhino. The fact that we could almost touch them was special and emotional.

After this we had a little time to do some souvenir power shopping in Durban (30 minutes). And there was time for a nice lunch in Moyo, at the Durban boulevard. In the distance we could see the new soccer stadium where our Dutch soccer team played. Saying goodbye to Gavin and Alf was hard for all of us. At the airport we didn't have a lot of time, that was a good thing since everybody was ready to go home after this impressive experience.

We are finishing this message while we are flying above France. Thanking everyone that made this journey possible we will start our goodbyes.... Probably with a laugh and a tear.

Annet, Andre, Andy, Ivonne, Jolanda, Suzanne G, Suzanne B, Linda, Diana, Vera, Musa, Rinie, Felix, Lidia, Nynke, Irene, Patries