

Building trip South Africa 13 – 21 April 2013

English/Deutsch

Ready to go!!

Finally! The countdown has started! We are getting ready for our last trip to South Africa on 13 April 2013.

The following people are going to build a class room and a kitchen at the Kintail Primary School:

- Gedieke Vermeulen – CSG
- Luc Brouwers – Fagro
- Jolanda Blom – Fortron
- Richo te Kaat – Hacron
- Kees de Rooij – Hago
- Jörg van Gils – Hago Rail Service
- Ophélie Depoortere – Makkie
- Daniëlle Klinkenberg – Proper
- Kim Hendriks – Sherpa
- Klaas Bosman – Westerveld
- Jos Trienekens -Vebego
- Henk Nulkes – Vebego Airport Services
- Michael Nussbaum – Vebego CH
- Miranda Schouten – Vierstroom Hulp Thuis
- Laura Verhoeven – WML Facilitair
- Brigitte de Langen – Yask AI

Sylvie Franken 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!

First message from South Africa

A first message from the building trip to South Africa, Saturday, 12.30 hours, meeting point Schiphol. De red colored group gathers together, the adventure is about to begin and the group members begin to know each other. The journey commences at 15.30 hours, with the biggest airplane of the fleet. The facilities on board were fantastic and everybody looks at his personal screen before him/her. Tons of information, films, games flip before our eyes. Before we know it, the six hours flight are over and we land in Dubai. A short night ahead, after a drink in the bar, of about 4 hours sleep.

At 07.00 sharp the group meets again in de lobby of the hotel. Everybody is there but Klaas. Klaas is still in the bed. Kees gave up trying getting him out of the bed. Diana finally kicks the door which finally gets him up. After completion of the group we go for a group breakfast. Michael from Switzerland arrived with the night flight and has joined the group.

At 10.25 hours the second part of the trip commences. But first we have a little time at the airport. There are so many cultures. It is different from Schiphol Amsterdam. We fly from Dubai to Durban, South Africa, a flight of 8 hours. After that we still have a 2,5 hours busride to go. We see lots of broken cars, little shoulder fires and lots of people on the sides of the streets. The bumpy bus trip, makes Miranda and Gedieke almost throw up. At about 21 hours we arrive at the hotel. Everybody is excited about the location Kings Grant. By now everybody starts knowing each other a bit. We know each other by name and it starts getting a fun bunch. Tomorrow we meet the children and teachers at the school.

Miranda and Daniëlle

One day, two stories

Blog 1 (ENGLISH)

Today we experienced our first day of building. Instead of going late to bed like some of us did in Dubai, yesterday most of us went to bed on time. So this morning the group was fresh and ready to start. We had breakfast at 6.45 am and at 8.00 am we made a small trip by bus to the building site: Kintail Primary School. The ground floor was already made so we could immediately start with the nice work: building up the school and the kitchen. Nice work, but pretty heavy. The high temperatures combined with the unusual work for the most of us, made it pretty heavy. The first meeting with the children and also with the construction team made it much more easy. Personally I was very impressed by the hospitality and the happiness of the people here. The young kids, the youngest was only 5 years old, have to walk 2 hours to get to school. Nevertheless you don't hear them complain, they are happy to be there and they are very grateful with for the help of the Vebego Foundation. Like most of the colleagues I suffer from muscle pain, but the good work we will leave behind, make things much easier. Already it is an amazing experience and we still have a whole week coming up. Even having to miss out on Sundays match is not important anymore. All people who really know me, know how special that is for me.

Kees de Rooij

Blog 2 (ENGLISH)

Finally it was time, today we could start with our building project. Already the road to the building site was a special experience. Nature was overwhelming, the same goes for the people. When we arrived at the building site we received a warm welcome from the kids and our fellow builders. After giving Vebego-shirts to the African builders, the building team was complete and we could start to build. After a short briefing we started to move the bricks closer to the building. It was nice to experience that all of us had their own opinion how it could be done best. But finally the train started moving. After a short briefing on "how to make Dagga (cement)" we could start building.

About 10 o'clock it was time for a cup of coffee. We needed it! Project Build, the Principal and the builders also joined us on our coffee break. It was an emotional moment, more over because it will be the last time here for Vebego. Vebego Foundation meant so much for South Africa.

In the end a lot of work has been done on the first day with temperatures above 30 degrees. After a short evaluation of the day it was time for a delicious diner at Kings Grant.

Tonight we will go to bed early, because we have to get up early tomorrow morning. J

Richo te Kaat

Why make it harder than it is ☺

Today, at 6.50 AM the alarm clock rang. My roommate, Jos, jumped out of bed and he tells me he was feels totally fit. I have to admit that while getting out of bed I felt muscles I didn't know that they exist. These are the consequences of the first day of hard work in the full sun. However, with the second day on the building site waiting for us, the muscle pains did not disappear, but they are forgotten. After having a great breakfast at Kings Grant we left at 8.00 AM for the building site. After half an hour we arrived and received a very warm welcome form the builders. They were apparently looking forward to our presence and that gave us a very good feeling. It's clear that the ice is broken. They approach us, give assignments (Dagga Dagga) and are making fun of us. Which is good? We made a great start: moved 300 bricks from A to B, split the teams and assigned them to team Classroom and team Kitchen. I am very impressed by the progress and the atmosphere. And the best was still to come, which was giving presents to the children. They were very excited getting the balloons, frisbees, jump ropes, etc. I have never seen so much happiness. It brings so much joy to play with these children and to look at their beautiful smiles. After that, we started working hard again, enjoyed a great lunch and after that the light went out for nearly all of us. Clearly we were hit by the 40 degrees in the sun, physical work and emotional moments. Thanks to our African builders we made a lot of progress and are performing according plan. At the end of the day we visited families near school in Kwazulu Natal. Another emotional moment. They live in a primitive way. Such poverty. But when you look in their beautiful eyes, you still see happiness. We can learn from them.

After lunch an old friend visits us: Peter. He is the initiator of our first project in South Africa, Mziki. Together with him, Diana, Danielle, Jos and Gavin (from African Exposure) we went back to Mziki to observe the project. I (Jos) got in the car with Peter. An extraordinary ride, on which Peter tells me about his frustrations. The government did not commit to their promises, the municipality is more concerned with internal affairs . The inhabitants are not important in their point of view. From the hill we had a good view

of the project. All 385 houses have been built, but according to Peter, the houses build by Vebege are the most luxurious and are of the best quality. The view is phenomenal . We are looking at the project from two sites and afterwards we looked at the project from the farm. We don't regret that we chose this project in 2006, but unfortunately the people do not put energy in it. They don't take care of their own development. It is even worse, houses are being destroyed and the roads are not being maintained. The workshop is still a skeleton, although they planned a school and a brick plant. Emotional moments in a fantastic country with beautiful views, frustrated by corruption and individuals' own interests. It is a shame and very sad! But, let's not forget we also build five schools of which Kintail School is the last one. We offered more than 1.000 young people a chance to develop themselves. Today, again, I realised our presence makes a difference, on a small scale, for individuals.

Luc and Jos

Mittwoch

Es ist wieder ein neuer Tag angebrochen und wie immer begannen wir den Tag mit einem ausgewogenen Frühstück und lauter motivierten `Handwerker` ! Doch war heute den Hobby-Handwerker eindeutig die Strapazen der Tage zuvor anzusehen. Die Temperaturen waren wieder sehr hoch angesagt und dies war für alle eine Herausforderung.

In der Schule angekommen wurden wir wie immer professionell von den Bauprofis Vorort instruiert und (fast) alle bekamen einen ihren Fähigkeiten entsprechenden Job zugewiesen. Heute wurden neben vielen anderen Tätigkeiten auch die Dachbalken geliefert und diese mussten mit einem Schutz angestrichen werden.

Das grosse Highlight war wie die Tage zuvor, das Spielen mit den Kinder während ihrer Pause. Manchmal hat man das Gefühl, dass der Enthusiasmus noch um ein vielfaches steigt, wenn es um die Kinder mit ihren leuchtenden und unschuldigen Augen geht. Die Kinder waren heute viel zugänglicher und wurden auch ihrerseits aktiv mit uns in Kontakt zu treten. Dies war für alle Beteiligten ein schönes wie auch befriedigendes Gefühl .

Heute verliessen wir die Baustelle bereits ein bisschen früher, da Diana und Silvie ein tolles Event organisierten. Wir durften mit einem historischen und dampfbetriebenen Zug eine wunderschöne Strecke abfahren, wobei die Lokomotive schon in einem sehr ehrwürdigen Zustand war und mehrere Anläufe benötigte um den Aufstieg zu meistern. Wieder im Bahnhof angekommen wurden wir dann super verköstigt mit super Pizza`s aus dem Steinofen.

Solche Tage werden immer in Erinnerung bleiben und motiviert für neue Taten.

Aus dem Bauteam grüsst Euch ganz herzlich

Michael

Thursday

Thursday, our 4th day. A week goes by very quick when you get so many impressions. After a nice breakfast , we're ready just before 8, ready to leave. For the first time this trip , weather is not on our side, the sun shines somewhere else and here it's raining.

A visit to Dowdle School, the project from our colleges who did the trip before in October 2012 is on our programme. Half way our journey we suddenly see a big fire on the side of the road. Karl is explaining that the farmer is burning the sugarcane controlled, before harvesting. By this process the sugar is going into the canes, that rises the outcome of the sugar. During the short stop for pictures the wind is turning, the reason why we got all the ashes around the bus. This was a reason for Brian to wash his bus in the afternoon.

Arriving at Dowdle school we got a good impression of how our project will be when it's finished. Also there our colleges have built a kitchen and a classroom. At this moment everything is in use, the little children were singing a song for us and we were allowed to admire the result. The feeling is good when you see that everything we built here is in use and it's giving the children from this neighbourhood a change to go to school.

After this visit we drive to our own school. The builders are hiding for the rain, which is coming which is pouring down. But that's not stopping the fun. Full enthusiasm are they dancing their Zulu Dance, maybe it helps the weather ghost to be happy.

We join the children's lessons. It's unbelievable our group 5 and 6 years old are having a lesson in English. The little ones know all vowels and know all forms and know how to write them down. Their spirit to perform is enormous. When the teacher asks who knows the answer, all hands are rising and the children snap with their fingers to attract the attention from the teacher to show that they know the answer.

Half past 10 coffee time. Service here is very good. Nice sandwiches are ready and everyone is having a juice or a cup of tea/coffee. Another highlight is coming. The roof beams who arrived yesterday and we painted are now placed. That's how reached the highest point. This was an official moment, we raised the flag of the Vebego Foundation and toasted with a can of coke.

The rest of the morning we cleaned the building place and the man started digging with a trench around the kitchen for the foundation off the veranda. Suddenly there's a visitor, the grandmamma of one of the schoolchildren, she really likes to see us after the stories she heard from here grandson. She came walking dressed in traditional clothes. She is posing for pictures and is surprised that woman are also helping to build.

Daniëlle and I are cheating and we join the little ones in class and sing some songs together. Especially the song "we dance in a circle with boys and girls" everyone was joining the song. After half a hour the teacher wasn't back and we took over the lesson. We draw some pictures on the school board and the children had to guess what kind of animal it was, after this they had to write letters on the board. Regretful my drawing is not so good, my pig was not recognised and they believed it was a Cat.

Writing this blog I realised it's almost impossible to write down everything we experienced. And then one special point for today. From the money we raised we went shopping with a list of wishes from school. It was super we could fulfil all the wishes from the principal. With a loaded car we drive towards Kings Grand to experience our last evening. The things we have bought we will write down tomorrow in our next blog.

I stop this blog with a very nice feeling, hearing the voices of the children and see the laughs at their faces which I'll never forget.

Miranda

Good bye

Thursday evening we had a CSR workshop, the assignment was quite difficult.

We were supposed to be the staff of a sugar cane company. This company had an amount of 100.000 euro to spent for the foundation. The functions we had to divide were director, marketing manager, HR, OR and finance. We could chose out of different good charity with all a different budget. The discussions we had were nice discussions, it seemed to be quite difficult to make a good choice. The other difficult part was that we had to consider the 3 P's (people, profit, planet). After this exercise it became clear to us how difficult it has to be for the Vebego Foundation to make their decision (for real). It's a pity this was the last time the Foundation went to South Africa, but after this exercise we understand them better.

The next morning at Kings Grant we had our goodbye. The suitcases are going together with us to the building site. The whole staff of Kings Grant is singing a song for us and dance their Zulu dance as a goodbye. After this a Zulu handshake follows and tears a rolling down the cheeks of some of us.

As soon as we arrived at the building site, we start working. The weather is on our side, it's dry. The girls are painting and the man foresee the builders with dagga dagga and bricks. They walk just like their South-African colleagues with wheel barrels full of bricks.

The atmosphere at school is different than normal, it's clear something is going on. Furniture is carried from one place to another and children are running from the left to the right. In the meantime it started raining and looks like it won't stop at all. So the only thing to do is dance, sing and play with the children. Also the builders are joining and the atmosphere is great.

After lunch we start with the farewell ceremony. It's very impressive. We'll try to write down what we've seen, felt and heard, it's almost impossible to describe.

The words from the principal were great "We may forget what your said, but we never forget the feeling you give our school, it's like we are flying now". Also Sylvie does some words and everything we bought from the money we raised and handed over. These are school uniforms, pans, a cooker for the kitchen, balls, new shoes, toys etc. etc. With all the money we raised it's even possible to pay for some extra jobs for this project, like tiles in the kitchen and a ceiling for the class room which is very nice to do.

The children are dancing and singing, some Zulu parents showed up in traditional clothes. The dance they were rehearsing during the week is marvellous. Some of us were practising this dance also and know the steps although most of the time react to late. Some of you will see them showing this at home. Laura and Daniëlle go for it.

The real goodbye arrived, we shake hands followed by warm hugs. We could see the building team from Jacob is really touched, we can see at all their faces. But o.k. here we go. In the meantime the roads changed into dirt tracks, we don't come far because after about 50 meters the bus and trailer are stuck into the mud, it almost looked like the bus would flip over. So everybody out of the bus so the trailer could become lose from the bus. With a lot of horsepower our strong guys, brought the trailer down. What a great co-operation.

On the way to Durban it won't stop raining. What a big difference it is with Kintail and the area we were the last 5 days. Our hotel has a view at Sea. The sound is beautiful, because of the bad weather the waves are very big.

1 hour after we arrived we have a group session. Diana has made her own story from the past week. We're sitting on the veranda of the hotel and hear the Sea at the background. Diana asked us to close our eyes and listen to her story. She starts her story with arriving at Schiphol and this way she takes us through the whole week. It's a beautiful way to experience the last week again. It has been a privilege to join this beautiful trip with a great group of people. As the principal from Kintail Primary School said.: we may forget what you said, but we will never forget how you made us feel

Laura en Kim