

Ons Plek Projects

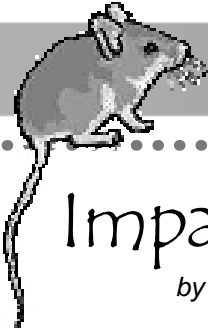
providing hope instead of street life

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NPO No. 009-578

Affiliated to Cape Town Child Welfare Society



Winter 2005 Newsletter



Impact Assessment

by Dan Brown of Learn-To-Live

Learn To Live is a special school for street children which prepares them to return to school if capable and provides appropriate schooling for those who can't manage school. Several of Ons Plek's girls attend in the initial months of their being with us. Learn To Live embarked on a program to assess their work which we are sharing with you.

We are often asked: "What impact are you having on the lives of these children?" The sector in which we work is among other things, one of fostering and stimulating developmental growth in children who have suffered trauma including having lived on the street.

Human growth and developmental are gradual processes. They are often almost imperceptible especially to those with whom the person is in constant close contact. Childhood and youth are stages in a person's life that are preeminently stages of gradual growth. It is not unusual for us to suddenly notice how tall a child has become, or how well she has learnt to speak.

In an attempt to gauge the development of each child, we started with the stated aims of our programme and then identified indicators that would help us to assess progress or regression in each of the aims. We felt that it would be more effective if we allocated marks to each indicator in order to quantify the assessment: 0 for a serious lack and 3 for excellence. A grid was developed to record the assessment. The class teacher is the only person that does the assessment for the children in her class. This does not conform to the ideal of a multi-disciplinary team doing the assessment. However, the teacher is with the child for four hours every school day and few other members of staff have direct contact with the child for any length of time. We decided that she is the one most likely to know the child. The results are not scientific but they give us an indication of how the child is benefiting or not, from our programme.

We put aside time to discuss the indicators and also how the marks would be allocated. The indicators and the grid were finalised when we were all satisfied that it was the best first attempt we could make. We soon realised that we could use the assessment to identify weaknesses in our programme. If the majority of the children scored poorly in a particular aim and did not improve by the next assessment, we would have to re-examine our strategies.

Each child is assessed soon after joining the programme and the results of this assessment are used as a baseline to compare future assessments for the same child. Each child is assessed every three months.

We have not used this system for long enough to establish whether it is successful or not. We offer it and the idea behind it, to anyone who has been thinking along the same lines. We would be grateful to hear of adaptations and new insights.

Ons Plek Projects

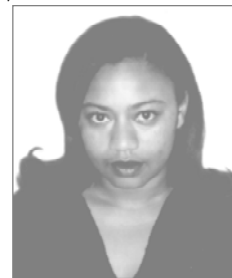
Director : PAM JACKSON
Deputy Director : RENÉE ROSSOUW

Our intake shelter ONS PLEK and our OFFICES are situated at
4 Albertus Street Cape Town
Tel: 021 465-4829
Fax: 021 461-0530
email: onsplek@new.co.za

Our second-stage shelter SIVIWE is situated at 7 York Road Woodstock
Tel: 021 448-6529



We invite you to visit the Projects and meet the housemothers and the young girls



Carmen De Vos

I completed my studies at the University of Western Cape in 2000. I worked at Child Welfare Society for 3½ years investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect. I joined the Ons

Plek team on 27th September 2004.

I admit that during my first few weeks it felt like there was not much work to be done. I soon realised how wrong my first impressions were, as I sometimes don't know if I'm "coming or going". My experience thus far has been challenging. The girls have made me see life from a different perspective and I am amazed by the girls' inner strength and will to survive despite their circumstances.

The past six months have been rewarding for my own personal growth. My family has observed that I tend to be more objective and understanding. I thank the girls, staff and committee members for making me feel like I'm **worthy as a person, and not just viewing me as a social worker. My worth counts for something.**

It has been a pleasure to work with such an energetic and dynamic team and I am really looking forward to our future together!

Carmen De Vos

PS from Pam: "Will everyone note that De Vos is spelt with a capital D — this is especially important to Carmen's husband!"

Our Director's editorial



Pam Jackson

The Town Mouse and its poor Cousin

Street children and town mice — do they have anything in common?

The town mouse, like the street child, is a city slicker whose pickings are more plentiful than those of his country or township cousins. From where I sit it looks very much like this trend is being enhanced by current interventions of state, city and City Partnership.

In 2004 the Mayor announced her desire to have no children living on the streets within 6 months. Ons Plek welcomed her intention and pledged to contribute all our experience to see that the strategy she adopted was as effective as possible. At the same time we warned that the strategy was a highly ambitious one. The strategy has since been drawn up in partnership with social services in the Western Cape.

False Impressions and Fact

When the public see children on the street year after year, many assume either that nothing is being done or that the relevant NPOs are ineffective. The children are very visible. What is not visible is the majority of children who have been on the streets and who **have** been re-united with family / other relatives and **have** left the streets. What is not realised is that there is a flow of new children onto the streets, fleeing from poverty, who replace those who have left. It is the minority of faces who remain the same year after year.

Our Plea

Ons Plek called for any new resources made available by the Mayor to be allocated to communities surrounding Cape Town in order to alleviate poverty, the primary cause of the street child phenomenon.

The Response

The Mayor's plan takes some account of this although not as much as some organisations recommend. Support is being given to projects dealing with children on the street, who are a symptom of poverty-stricken communities, as

well as to projects in the community in order to prevent more children running to the streets. But under the plan children in the city are now over-catered for through the unnecessary duplication of services.

We would like to see more and more interventions in under-resourced communities. However, it is to be noted that while this will reduce the number of kids on the street it will not stem the flow altogether due to the endemic proportions of poverty.

Another Fact

Ons Plek and Homestead (for boys) have operated as assessment centres, intake centres, referral centres and childrens homes for 17 and 23 years respectively.

Our Role in the Solution

24-hour centres which provide accommodation, assessment, education and counselling while undertaking the complex family reunification process are essential in CBDs. However they are most effective when the process is done at one place as in the case of Ons Plek and Homestead. **Living with the kids enables us to get to know them in an in-depth way which is not possible when done on an "out patient" basis.** The model as illustrated in the Mayor's publicity posters shows children progressing from an assessment / intake centre to other facilities where other processes are being undertaken. In discussions during the process of drawing up the policy this point was strongly advised against by several organisations, particularly as Ons Plek and Homestead already provided integrated services in Cape Town.



Result

The City Council and the Cape Town Partnership had been proposing another assessment centre for the CBD area in Woodstock for some years despite strong opposition from several NPOs. Nevertheless, a new assessment centre is now operating, supported by both its protagonists. This new centre, plus a new day program, run by police in Woodstock, plus several other unregistered day programs in Woodstock and the CBD mean that the ± 150 CBD children are now over-catered for! Children are currently being taken from town by the new assessment centre to their "yet to be registered shelters" in other areas, although Ons Plek and Homestead have registered accommodation vacancies in town.

There are thousands of 'township' children at risk of running away and several 100 township street children, yet a lot of attention is being given to the CBD, to the extent of duplicating the existing services.

Why?

And who is shooting who in the foot?

A Possible Answer

CBD street children receive high priority because they impact on business, who in turn pressurise politicians. Homeless people do not fit



into the plans to gentrify the CBD. Township street children simply don't count because they and the people they impact on also just don't count? **In this scenario would you rather be a city slicker town mouse or a township mouse?**

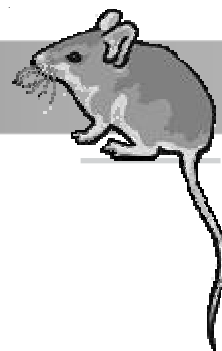
Immediate Consequences of so much Attention

The CBD street scene now consists of some inexperienced NPOs, in some cases duplicating the work of experienced services; some well-meaning but directionless do-gooders; three security and policing bodies, some of whom also do some work with the children but without professional childcare staff or goal-directed policies; a population of gangsters thriving despite all the security, all of which undermines the chances of the kids to get off the street. Mix this in with a group of children whose immediate concern is to get as many treats as they can, whose motivation for the drudgery of school or work is not high and whose ability to manipulate as opportunity probably exceeds that of your average businessman and **what are the chances of success?**

Possible Long term Consequences

- Children may flood into town to get some of the goodies
- Rewarding youth who have chosen to drop out of every other program with food, clothes, expensive games without requiring any effort on their part will result in high expectations, increased demands and possibly more crime to meet these demands
- Money now being spent on duplicating services is not being spent on township services where it is needed.

CBD
street
children
receive
high
priority



Our experience shows that a lot can be done for real change in the childrens' lives. It takes time, attention to detail and doing things in a planned, slow, hard, consistent way.

BUT ...

the motivation to help street children needs to come from a genuine wish to change the childrens' lives.

While the motivation comes primarily from a wish not to have the nuisance factor on the streets, for the sake of everyone else, the results will not be forthcoming.

PS: And, wouldn't you rather be a city slicker town mouse where the picking is rich ... than spend the days with the township mouse in the dust and poverty of the Cape Flats?

Why
duplicate
services
?

The Summer Camp ...

In January 2005 the Ons Plek girls enjoyed a 3 day camp at the Sea Scouts Base in Sandvlei, Lakeside.

Everyone was involved in some way or another — Renée helped with planning; Sharon sorted out our finances; Ncebakazi, Joyce and Ntombentsha chivvied everyone along, controlled the catering and the money and each assumed leadership of a group of girls; Yusuf the driver helped get all our stuff to the camp. Carmen and Monica came on a few of the days and there were a host of volunteers: Danie did the braaiing (chicken pieces for 26 people is no joke!), Elaine, Lance, Lisa, Gailyn and Kate helped the girls decorate plates during Arts & Crafts session; Shona and Giles enjoyed the outdoor games; Greg put his professional life-saving skills to the test during watersports; and Fiona had fun getting everything organised.

The Sea Scouts base was a perfect place to hold the camp, since it was easy to get everyone there by train and we could walk to the beach and swim in the vlei. There was also a ton of great equipment — we borrowed lots of small craft from the Sea Scouts and the girls had huge fun learning to paddle the canoes.

There was lots of fun to be had: on the first day we had games on the grass. The childcare workers and girls came up with lots of new and different games to try — skipping, clapping, singing and other ball games. One of the games we played on the last day was very popular because it involved having to cut open a bar of chocolate with socks over your hands and using a knife and fork! On the second day we had an Arts & Crafts session where the girls learnt to make balloon shapes and decorate paper plate masks. Swimming in the vlei was very popular

and poor Xolelwa felt very sorry for herself sitting out, because she was not allowed to get her ears wet. She finally promised 'not to fall in' and took out a paddleski. We also strolled down to the beach to swim in the warm sea (!) at Muizenberg. Everyone got a big fright when Nomsa wandered off in search of adventure, but we soon found her with a fantastic group search effort. A special braai that night warmed us up again and the girls learnt to braai marshmallows which was a first for many.

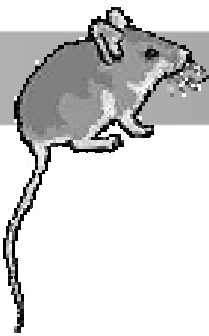
The camp food was delicious — carefully supervised by the childcare workers. Luckily we'd been donated food from Woolworths — even fancy parsley and Rosa tomatoes — delicious!

23 girls attended the camp in total:

Siviwe: Xolelwa, Nomsa, Nandi, Lusanda, Unathi, Sinazo, Mazithi, Manushka, Natasha, Bonita, Anthea, Primrose, Ntombentsha and Faloni

Ons Plek: Caylene, Lithakazi, Nandipha, Monica, Badru, Emma, Vuyolwethu, Noxolo and Jessica.

The camp was organised and co-sponsored by Fiona Ross from Learn to Lead, which is an organisation specialising in leadership development. It is the second camp we've run and certainly not the last — there is already talk of another one next summer! As a reminder, a big photo collage is hanging on the wall of Siviwe and Ons Plek — go and have a look for yourself at how the girls enjoyed themselves. If you'd like to get involved in future camps, anyone is welcome — just let Renée know.



Getting to know you ...

Lucia Oosthuysen

Ons Plek draws me

Jane Lawrence



Lucia Oosthuysen

When we moved to Cape Town in 1995, I looked for ways to use my time meaningfully. My daughter mentioned Ons Plek, having bought some of their attractive cards at a street market. I was rigorously interviewed by Renée before being accepted as a volunteer! Ons Plek brought me into contact with some astonishing people: from professional staff, to childcare workers, to committee members, to the girls themselves.

'Homework at Siviwe' called for patience, dedication and lots of love. I grew very fond of those Siviwe girls, not attending school at the time as we did 'school work', read stories and tried our hands at needlework. I was also asked to help a schoolgoing girl of about ten, with her school work. And eventually I saw her leaving school at 17 and entering the labour market. Assisting later on with the writing of Lifestory books takes one into the hearts of the girls: disappointments, hardships, but always hope for better times. I wonder about the resilience demonstrated by some stories.

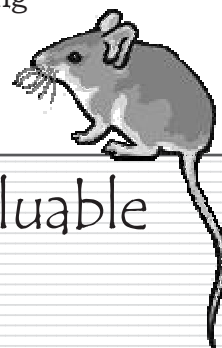
In spite of disappointments along the way, the hope remains. Is this what keeps me here?

Jane became involved with Ons Plek because of her love for children, "*it's a way to live out my life*". "*Children help to keep me rooted to the ground. It is important for me to always have contact with children and for them to be part of my life.*"

Jane is committed to the work at Ons Plek because she believes in the philosophy that underpins the work at Ons Plek; the importance of children being cared for, nurtured, loved and protected and ultimately re-united with their families.

She believes that it is important "to be present" to each girl, to listen to what they have to share and to have fun!

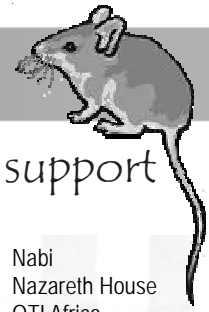
Jane meets regularly with the girls at Siviwe to pass on her love for reading. With her teaching background she is passionate about developing within children a love for reading! So she reads aloud fiction and non-fiction to the girls and this leads to all kinds of exciting discussions! According to Jane being able to read independently is extremely empowering for the girls and helps to open new worlds for them; thus making a difference to their lives!



We acknowledge with appreciation the valuable support of our Major Donors:

COMMUNITY CHEST
DEPT OF SOCIAL SERVICES & POVERTY
(for specific project *Ukondla*)
D G MURRAY TRUST (RSA)
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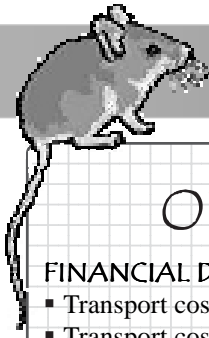
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We thank all our donors for their continued and valued support

This list includes financial and other contributions received from AUGUST 2004 to MAY 2005

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FINANCIAL DONATIONS FOR:

- Transport costs for school
- Transport costs for educational outings
- Medical expenses (eye tests, etc)

CLEANING FLUIDS:

Jayes fluid, auto washing powder, Handy Andy, Jik, Sunlight soap, black garbage bags, steel wool, fabric softener

TOILETRIES:

Sanitary pads, roll-on, toilet paper, Vaseline, toothpaste, shoe polish (black), shoe brush, lice shampoo (clinics no longer supply this and at R50 a bottle it has become rather expensive) - Gambex

UNDERWEAR:

Panties and bras for young girls aged 5 – 18 years, swimming costumes, socks for winter

STATIONERY:

Photocopy paper (white), Pritt, scissors (small for school children), plastic sleeves, pencils, pens, examination pads, Flip files, calculators

CAMERA FILM 24 exp.

Please contact us first about the following items:

- Shredder (small) for office use
- Laminating machine
- Industrial tumble dryer
- Metal blackboard



Keeping track of your donation

If you are depositing money straight into Ons Plek Project's bank account, please enter your surname AND initials, or your company's name or Anonymous (if you prefer), in the REFERENCE BLOCKS on the DEPOSIT SLIP. This information then appears on the bank statement and identifies who we need to receipt and thank for the donation.

OUR BANKING DETAILS:

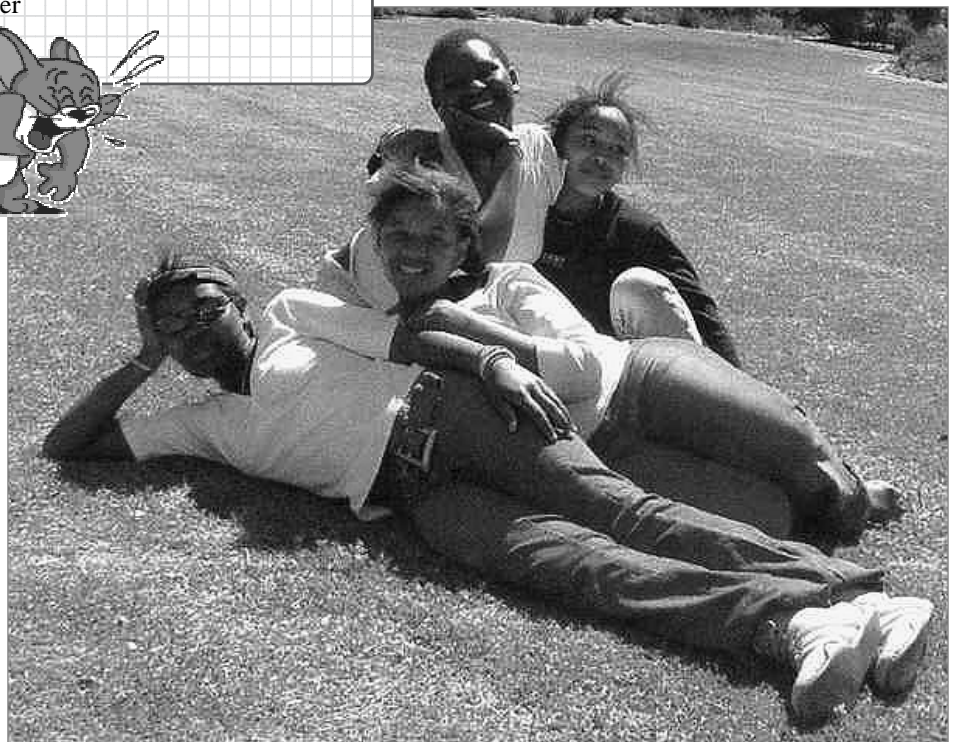
Bank: FIRST NATIONAL BANK
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Branch Code: 201-409
Account No: 620-529-16908
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We would also like to know if you have moved house or office ... so please advise us of your change of address. It's such a pity when the girls' 'thank you' letters or our newsletters are returned to us!

The Back Page



*This is the life!!
... relaxing on the
grass at the beautiful
Kirstenbosch Gardens*