



# Ons Plek Projects

providing hope instead of street life

P O Box 3506 Cape Town 8000  
Tel: 021 465-4829 ~ Fax: 021 461-0530  
email: [onsplek@new.co.za](mailto:onsplek@new.co.za)  
website: [www.onsplek.org.za](http://www.onsplek.org.za)  
NPO No. 009-578

Affiliated to Cape Town Child Welfare Society



*Cooling off at Kirstenbosch Gardens*

## Easter 2009 Newsletter

## A Message from one of our Volunteers

Some two or three weeks have now passed since I returned to Denmark after a six month stay in Cape Town, and I have gradually again become used to the Scandinavian winter where everything is grey and rather cold. The amount of hours where the sun is to be seen in the sky at this time of the year, can be counted on one hand. These changes of climate that actually are quite familiar to me, have certainly contributed further to my missing Cape Town.

It has been a fantastic time for me in Cape Town. Especially working together with all of you and certainly being together with the girls at Ons Plek. It has been an instructive experience, giving me both personal and professional knowledge and insight. It has been overwhelming for me to see how much you can achieve just believing in your own procedure, your will, and that you are sure to be doing the right thing in trying to change something from bad to better. When I compare with procedures in my native country, Denmark, it seems to me that Danes often take things for granted and for that reason tend to forget to help each other.

I consider it a privilege for your institution to have so many volunteers and interns attached that can contribute to, for example, school work or to just be a breath of fresh air on a hard day. You hear so many tales and explanations from the girls during the days, so not everything can be successful and it certainly takes a strong mind to make it.

This goes for the staff, but certainly for the girls, too.

I would like to thank you all very much for letting me be part of your girls' home and for your patience in helping me understand the reasons why you're acting the way you are. I have learned a lot and become much wiser as to possible pedagogical procedures and I humbly hope to have left a small trace in the mind of somebody.

(The editor has to comment here: "And don't we all hope for this").

**Cilie Kirkebjerg**  
Volunteer



*Boxing session  
with a volunteer*



*Crafts with college students*

### **Overheard in Ons Plek's office:**

Pam holding up a 3cm wide role of donated toilet paper off-cuts: "Sharon I know economic times are bad, but has it come to this??"

**Note:** We do appreciate the donation of off-cuts and contrary to one's first impression, they are useable.

## Ons Plek Projects

Director  
**PAM JACKSON**

Unit Manager Siviwe  
**YUMNA VAN DER SCHYFF**

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](mailto:onsplek@new.co.za)  
website: [www.onsplek.org.za](http://www.onsplek.org.za)

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

We invite you to visit Ons Plek  
(refurbished after the fire)  
and Siviwe, to meet  
the housemothers and the  
young girls in their care.



*Pam Jackson*

## Director's editorial ...

# Climbing through the Hole in the Fence at Home Affairs in Nyanga

In the past I've written about the Ons Plek Project job description, which translated into practical activities can mean:

- Dancing through the revelers in a shebeen in search of an elusive parent.
- Exchanging city slicker high heel shoes for bare feet on a muddy hillside in rural Eastern Cape while accompanying a child on a home visit.

The latest addition to the job description is being hoisted up to and through a hole in the fence at Home Affairs.

Our newest childcare worker, X, so code named in case we are sued, accompanied one of our foreign national children, code named Y, to the Home Affairs Department in Nyanga. Social worker Carmen, knowing the queues are long had booked an appointment with an **official** for a **routine** renewal of Y's **legal** papers. With foresight and her usual efficiency, Carmen also gave X a signed, typed letter on our letterhead stating appointment time and name of the official.

On arrival, X encountered the circumstances which the media have been highlighting for months, i.e. Foreign Nationals thronging outside the gate, waiting for hours to get in with no queue and no system to do so. Very few of them ever make it through the security guards. And we know getting into the building is only the first of a series of difficult hurdles.

Eight hours later, X and Y returned having been refused entry by the security guards despite the letter and appointment. Before trying again the next day, Carmen phoned to ask if the official could come outside to fetch X and Y into the building. The official agreed. X phoned her when the security guards again would not let her in.

The official asked to speak to the security guard but the Head guard refused to take the phone and 3 others followed his example. Finally the fourth guard whispered to X and Y to follow him around the corner. He explained they are all scared of the Head guard and helped them climb up and through a hole in the fence around the building. Talk about doing one's job with dignity! And do I give a merit in this year staff appraisal for seizing the opportunity for flexibility? Once inside the official helped them.

~

A desperately needed resource which is also hard to get is always a recipe for money changing hands. With so many people who can benefit financially by keeping the paperwork slow and limiting access to the process at all it's not surprising reform in Home Affairs is also slow. But queues outside other Home Affairs in the City move?

The duties of security guards are however carried out in the public eye. That there is no queue but always only a milling unruly crowd already shows that standard of security. Somehow in other Home Affairs centers in Cape Town queues exist and they move forward even if slowly. How come authorities cannot do something about this one?

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Talk about  
doing  
one's job  
with dignity!

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### Parents' Lunch Report

During the December holidays, on our program we planned lunch for the children's parents as a social event for both parent and child. It was a way to build a strong bond for them. The children prepared items for them to show their parents and their yearly items were also presented. The parents were asked for assistance in donating some luxuries, which are not expensive, which they brought.

The children were to from the big gate welcome the guest and hand them the program, offer tea/cooldrink and showed their seats. This was new to everybody both parents and children because the children giggled as they were doing this and parents were thinking these children are too young to ask how they are, because they just said to them they are naughty, teasing them.

As the whole event started the children were prepared to do some items for the parents e.g. dancing, poem recital. Then it was also for the parents to do something for the children of which they did not expect but was open to the idea. The parents were provided with all the resources they would need to make puppets. At first they wanted an explanation of what a puppet was and they were given an explanation. As the parents were busy being assisted by their children they were complaining that they feel that they are back at school and how difficult this was, but through being encouraged they finished their puppets. As they were finished their 2<sup>nd</sup> tasks was explained to them that they need to come up with a story using their puppets and they only had 15 minutes to prepare and have a show for the children.

As they went out they were observed how they interacted as a group of parents and the children also observed their parents. They came back after 15 minutes with a very solid story and that went well with their story. About a woman coming to Cape Town seeking a job and finding a place where house could be built and about buying clothes because she only came with what she had on and how she had no one and decided to buy a cat which helped with eating the mice in the house and she also planted some flowers to make her house look very nice.

For the children this was truly amazing, because they saw how their parents worked together and came up with related puppets and story.



*Tada - the end result!*

### What our Hospital Service is really like ... Just One Example

A 16 year old girl (Nelly) has been a resident at Ons Plek for 2 months.

On 2/1/09, she was on her way to Khayelitsha to spend the weekend with her brother. The taxi driver was speeding. The driver lost control of the vehicle, resulting in the taxi rolling onto the side of the road. Two young ladies died in the accident.

Nelly was unconscious for a while and woke up whilst the paramedics were attending to her. She could not move and was rushed to GF Jooste Hospital in Manenberg.

Nelly spent the night sleeping in a wheelchair. She was discharged on 3/1/09 with a diagnosis of "soft tissue injuries" and a few pain-killers. Her relatives fetched her from hospital and she returned to Ons Plek on 4/1/09. It was very clear that she was in pain, she could hardly walk and she could not move her neck.

On 5/1/09, Ons Plek childcare worker, with assistance from another girl, took Nelly to Robbie Nurrock (state Day Hospital) in Cape Town where persons with no medical aid should be assisted. Her medication was almost finished. She was having trouble sleeping and the pain was not subsiding. The staff at Robbie Nurrock turned us away because they were only helping patients who had made appointments, as there was only one doctor on duty. We were told that we could return tomorrow, but

that there would be no guarantee that we would be assisted.

Nelly was in so much pain that we decided to take her to Somerset hospital. Staff at Somerset took her for X-rays, which confirmed the "soft tissue injuries". They changed her dressings and gave her a neck support. She was told to return to Robbie Nurrock in two days' time for dressing of her wounds.

By 6/1/09, two days and three hospitals later, the pain killer medication was again finished but the pain was still severe. Ons Plek staff then bought more tablets in desperation. Subsequently Robbie Nurrock supplied more tablets and made a physiotherapy appointment.

Nelly slowly recovered. This experience again leaves us wondering how people who don't have resources cope:

... without medication  
... without money to go to three hospitals  
... and forced to sleep on a wheelchair with injuries so great one can hardly walk.

And ~ it raises certain questions:

- How can Robbie Nurrock staff copewith only one doctor?
- How can the doctor cope?
- Is this lack of money, or lack of capacity to use the money properly?

**Carmen De Vos**  
*Social Worker*

## ~ Success Stories ~

### **Noxolo was admitted to Ons Plek in 2000 ...**

Noxolo was abandoned at age three and was placed at Elukhusulweni Children's Home in Khayelitsha. She was transferred to our care after Elukhusulweni closed down in 2000.

Noxolo has the physical and developmental features of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. She had a psychiatric assessment at Alexander Hospital and was diagnosed with early Taurette's Syndrome and partial complex seizures. She is a low moderate to borderline severe mentally handicap child.

Noxolo was prone to getting aggressive fits, in which she swears profusely, pinches, kicks and blows mucus. Ons Plek staff ensured that they consulted quarterly with her psychiatrist, whilst we administered her daily medication. Ons Plek's childcare workers were responsible to keep a diary of all her seizures to report to the psychiatrist. Her medication dosage was increased and the seizures become less frequent.

Noxolo has made much progress since her admission to Ons Plek. She is able to communicate much better and is able to understand limits and boundaries. She is well known by all staff and volunteers at Ons Plek. We have observed that she is brighter than she appears to be. Sometimes she would cry or start swearing when all attention was not given to her or when her demands were not being met. With positive reinforcement we were able to guide her with behaviour modification, proving that she is able to identify right from wrong. Staff continuously encouraged her to wash, dress and feed herself (under supervision) and she now eagerly assists with drying the dishes.

During her counselling sessions she enjoyed looking at pictures and remembered people long after they had left our facility. She enjoys puzzles, swimming and most of all, music.

In August 2000, she was accepted at Mary Harding boarding school. For the first two years she attended school as a weekly boarder, and would come home weekends and school holidays. There-after, the school transport collected her for school until she completed her education in 2008.

The social worker made contact with more than 30 facilities, of which she didn't meet the criteria and was only placed on one waiting list. The facilities either cannot accommodate an aggressive individual or monthly fees are required. We wrote to the Department of Health for guidance on further management but received no response to date.

Ons Plek's social worker found out that certain individuals, known as Rose Parents, accommodate mentally and physically disabled adults (similar to foster care). Ons Plek's childcare workers took Noxolo to a Rose Parent for a few visits. She spent several days of the holidays there, as well as two weeks in January and February 2009.

Noxolo will be having a farewell party with Ons Plek staff, ex-staff

and girls on Friday 20/02/09, before she departs to her new home.

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### **Lerato was admitted to Ons Plek on 4 January 2001 ...**

Lerato disclosed that she was raped by her father and physically abused by her mother. The police did not accept the report of the rape, as they did not believe Lerato due to her being moderately mentally impaired, with features of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and bipolar disorder.

Over the past years, Ons Plek made contact with maternal relatives living in Cape Town and with her paternal grand-mother in Eastern Cape, but nobody wanted to take responsibility for Lerato.

Prior to Ons Plek's intervention, the family did not understand Lerato's medical needs. Ons Plek had regular discussions with her relatives to educate them regarding Lerato's medical conditions and the importance of continued compliance with her medication. The family now has an understanding of a special needs person and is better equipped to deal with Lerato.

A childcare worker regularly took Lerato to the Eastern Cape to spend the June and December school holidays with her granny. The granny expressed their desire for Lerato to move to the Eastern Cape.

Lerato will be discharged from the Child Care Act and will depart after the Christmas Party. Ons Plek will guide the family to apply for a disability grant.

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*Everyone has  
to write something ...*



## Sandvlei Holiday Camp ...

The Ons Plek and Siviwe girls have, over the past 5 years, been privileged to attend an annually sponsored camp at the Sea Scouts Base in Lakeside, Sandvlei hosted and facilitated by Fiona Ross and her Team!

The following is an extract from Fiona's email to her Team of "magic makers" ...

"To all the magic makers a BIG thank you!

... to Warren, Greg, Tess from 2005

... to Gailyn, Warren, Mareli, Joy, Tots and Greg from 2006

... to Shona, Norby, Greg, Betty, Tots and Giles from 2007

... to Martine from 2008

... and my darling Lee who consistently supports me on all these crazy weekends.

Last night I did a slide show at Ons Plek of all the camps run from 2005 - 2009. The girls were screaming with delight over the memories!

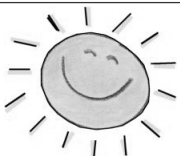
- Remember getting rescued by Greg — we were nearly on the other side of the lake ...!
- Do you remember getting flour on your face after bobbing for apples?
- Do you remember looking for Nomsa along the beach when she got lost?
- Look how young I looked back then! Look at that big bum! Look at you with no hair!
- Do you remember the smell of the sea at Froggy Pond?
- Oh, Tam-Tam was so cute ...
- Remember the treasure hunt! Remember the chicken braai?
- Do you remember the small fish in the lake at Silvermine?
- Doggie ... woof! Doggie ... woof!

It was such a wonderful evening to see their smiles and enjoy them laughing at the good memories that you helped make. And Nomsa adding to the chorus by squealing and rocking away.

Here's to many more camps. We've got a good thing going."



"To all the magic makers, a BIG thank you!"



### We acknowledge with joy our Major Donors:

\* SMILE-A-CHILD (City of Cape Town/PAWC)

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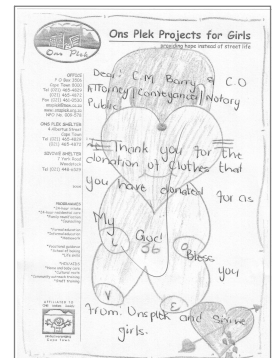
## Ons Plek Projects ~ Easter Newsletter 2009

We dedicate this page to all our donors. Thank you for your continuous and valued support.

*This list includes financial and other contributions received from September 2008 to February 2009*

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Cape Town Sewing Centre	Passing Trains	Wicra Holdings	
Dermar Designs	Ray & Berndtson Odgers Limited	Winwin Group, The	<b>DETAILS UNKNOWN</b>
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Good Hope Seminary High School	SDV Pharmaceuticals	New Birth Fellowship Bonteheuvel	Antaya March; Glencore Internat.



## OUR WISH LIST

### FINANCIAL DONATIONS FOR:

- Transport costs for the girls to get to school
- Transport costs for the girls to get to educational outings/camps
- Medical expenses for the girls eg. eye tests

### TOILETRIES:

Sanitary pads, roll-on deodorant, toilet paper, Vaseline, hair straightener (**must be mild**), toothpaste, shoe polish (black), shoe brush, Nitagon lice shampoo (clinics no longer supply this and at R68 a bottle it has become rather expensive)

### UNDERWEAR (Brand New Please!):

Panties and bras for girls ages 5 - 18 years  
Socks for winter

### STATIONERY:

Photocopy paper (white), A4 coloured paper, A4 hard cover books, plastic sleeves, examination pads, Flip files, calculators (Scientific)

**For School** (60 of each item at the beginning of each new year):

Blunt-nosed scissors, Pritt sticks (40g), space cases, ball-point pens (black, blue and red), homework diaries

**For the House:** Blackboard

### BEDDING:

Sheets and duvets

### UKONDLA (Homework Program):

Magazines (Huisgenoot, You, Drum, Vukani, Bona)

**Camera and Film 24 exp.**

### PLEASE CONTACT US RE THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

- Laminating machine
- Power Point projector



## 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  
Branch: ADDERLEY STREET  
Branch Code: 201-409  
Account No: 620-529-16908  
In name of: ONS PLEK PROJECTS  
Swift Code: FIRZAJJ 461

Monies being deposited from overseas (telegraphic transfer) must please make a note of the swift code.



*The baby in the house*

## HAVE YOU MOVED?

Please advise us of your change of address if you have moved home or office ... it's so disappointing when 'thank you' letters that the girls have written, or our newsletters, are returned to us!



*Stargazing*

## Message from one of our young girls ...

*Wow! What can I say? I have made it!*

I have reached the crossroad. Who have thought I could make it this far. Completing matric is not hard, it is actually very easy. The generation of today makes everything look impossible while everything is possible. Finishing matric. Matric is not the end of your education, but only the beginning - Yes! I finish my matric and am very happy but this is where my life starts. This is the point when I ask myself what do I want to do with myself and where do I go from here.

Only one person has the answer to those questions and that person is me. I know where I come from, I know where I am going and I sure know what I want. No one can ever take away what I have completed and matric being one of them. Before I put down my pen and save my ink, I would like to thank the people that have made all this possible for me, that have shaped me and made me who I am today. Ons Plek, thank you very much for giving me the love and support in time of need. Thank you for also providing my needs and wants. One day when I have made it to the top I can proudly look back and proudly say I'm who I am because of you. To all the people who helped me with my homework, I can never find the perfect gift to give but all I have for you is a big THANK YOU and may you help more to come as you have done with me.

Thank you to all ... **Emma**