

ASA-PROJECT: STADTOASEN-SCHÜLER-BAUWAGEN

A project of the LA 21 Partnership Aachen - Cape Town

Final report of the southern participants (25th of June 2004)

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1. INTRODUCTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS FROM CAPE TOWN (SOUTH AFRICA)

NOSISA MERILE, horticulturist

"I am a greening fieldworker for Abalimi Bezekhaya (an NGO based in Cape Town) doing greening at schools & community street greening. I also run training courses for the interested youth and adults from all the areas of Cape Town townships. We at Abalimi are also doing 4-day-workshops with schools in order to integrate school playgrounds with them. I also promote tree planting by celebration of Arbor Day every first week of September."

MBUSO SHANDU, arts & culture educator

"I work for a small environmental organisation called School Environmental Education Development (S.E.E.D.). Seed is based in Cape Town. We are working with primary schools in Cape Flats. Potential schools are selected from a five-day-workshop with teachers that come from 16 to 20 different school . We have got a partnership agreement that we sign with the selected schools like Luzuko in Guguletu, Sakumlandela in Khayelitsha and Westville Primary School in Mitchelsplain, to name the few."

2. AIMS OF THE ORGANISATIONS THE PARTICIPANTS COME FROM

Aims of ABALIMI are:

- to empower survivalist & groups leading to sustainable urban agriculture & greening movements
- to show individuals and groups from disadvantage communities in the Cape Flats the link between their survival and the active improvement
- to show them, they have the confidence to initiate and sustain food growing and greening activities
- to get them to recognise these actions as an entry point to other development activities that can improve their lives.

MISSION STATEMENT:

- Abalimi is a community environmental organisation based in Cape Town, working to empower the disadvantage, the poor and special the women.
- Abalimi believes that with support, the target group has the ability to transform their lives and their urban and rural environments:
- Abalimi assists by providing agriculture and horticulture commodities and training, project implementation and organisation building support, and facilitation of development partnerships and research.
- By forming grassroots associations and networks the empowered people will actively seek out lobby for resources and support that will strength their self-initiatives in both their rural and urban homes.

Aims of S.E.E.D.

- S.E.E.D. seeks to address the problem of malnutrition by re-establishing and extending the food garden initiative. In addition to feed learners stomachs, the school garden is a practical teaching resource across all learning areas.
- S.E.E.D. establishes a book called "THE Organic Classroom" which will support Foundation Phase educators in starting and growing a school garden.
- S.E.E.D. works in partnership with a broad teacher-driven initiative to pioneer innovative relevant and engaging teaching methods that are rooted in the new Outcomes-Based Education system.
- The organisation`s work is constantly inspired by the teachers who have boldly transformed their learning environments. The model school they are creating continue to inspire whole communities and fundamentally change the learning experience for children.
- S.E.E.D. promotes Permaculture as a means of understanding, establishing and maintaining sustainable system around the food garden.

3. PROBLEMS TO ENCOUNTER DURING EVERYDAYWORK IN CAPE FLATS

- sandy soil, which is poor and need lots of attention
- poor weather conditions especially strong south easterly winds ("It is very hard to deal with that")
- water is very badly organised at schools
- lack of practical ideas around environmental issues
- lack of motivation and participation ("learners and Teachers need a lot of support")

4. INTRODUCTION OF THE ASA-PROJECT IN CAPE TOWN

"Towards the end of 2003, when we had our staff meeting Leigh Brown, the S.E.E.D. project co-ordinator told us about this project. We have been told that Germany need two participants from South Africa in Cape Town. She gave us forms to apply, but no one from us (fieldworkers) had interest to apply.

One reason for me (Mbuso) was I could not imagine myself selected on an open selection of that kind. But one day when I was sitting in my room I saw these forms and I decided to fill them, fortunately it was not late when I submitted them. When the opportunity finally fell in my hands, I was so happy and took it with both hands, and open mind.

Soon after that I was introduced to Grace Stead (LA 21 co-ordinator of Cape Town). She told us about Stadtoasen and Bauwagen in details, and also introduced me InWEnt, Local Agenda 21 and the Aachen-Cape Town-Partnership. It was a lot in a very short space. These meetings made me realised that yes this is it. We are really going to Germany and this is a life time opportunity and chances like this do not come that often to an ordinary person like me in South Africa. Everyone close to us could not believe this when we told them."

5. EXPECTATIONS AND FEARS

Expectations

“We would like to start by say that many expectations might sound ridiculous to someone reading this, but if you are in our point of view may be you will understand e.g. the level of Germany and South Africa are not the same - economical wise it's the also different and many may other points...

- we had a picture in mind where school kids brainstorm the idea if approved and after that lots of machine working of that
- we thought there is no land left for gardening, may be there is a certain kind of system in place that is used to produce fruits and vegetables
- we didn't think to find lots of African people here
- we were also expecting huge scares from World War II
- we thought less people are interested in gardening, because of high technology and modern civilisation”

Fears :

“Most of our fears were based on little knowledge and assumption, and also some prejudice...

- Germany is full of anger and very violently
- Language is too difficult
- We would have a big of culture shock and soon think about home
- Lots of racial harrasment by police
- Not feel welcomed at all
- Unfamiliar food”

6. ARRIVAL IN GERMANY

Our first few days

“Our journey from Cape Town was good there were no problems everything was fine. We thank all the people who were organising the whole process.

Excitement was over after we arrived in Germany and met our new friends Helene Hüttinger, Norbert Kuntz and Sven Daniels who were patiently waiting for us at the airport. We had the common question in our minds which was: Well now we have arrived - what next? But that question was answered quickly by Norbert when he asked us to join them on the following day when they had to go and finish work on a school in a nearby town called Eschweiler .

Our second day in Germany at Eschweiler gave us a mixed bag of filling when I (Nosisa) noticed that my handbag was searched by school kids. In that incident I lost my cell phone and my wallet with my driver's licence. Unfortunately nothing could be done because the school was closed for Easter holidays. That was a shock for us, but we never made a big story of it, we constantly focus on what we came for.

Days after we were introduced to the members of Local Agenda 21 in Aachen:

Josefine Ebel the InWEnt programme-officer, Brigitta Hollman from World House (26 organisations) and Ecology Centre, Gabriele Schütz-Lembach (she works for the City of Aachen, Department of Ecology), Nika Stützel from the Aachen University, Peter Blum a politician of the Liberal Party (FDP), Jay Jay =Jürgen Jansen an ASI member (Aachen –South Africa Initiative) and the Bauwagenteam (Helene, Norbert and Sven).

We received a very warm welcome. It was so interesting to attend the partnership-meeting to find how strong the relationship is between Aachen and Cape Town . This was proved by the number of good activities that has been happen between the two cities and also the duration of existence in this friendship . It was amazing – it still is amazing!

In the spirit of mankind and humanity we will never forget to mention the kindness that the Stadtoasen team has shown to us starting from the moment we met at the airport to our first meeting with the whole group of a excellent team: Angela Fiege, Helga Blenk, Anette Sommer, Andi Korn, Elizabeth Ruppert, Susanne Krawczak and of course Helene, Sven and Norbert. We have been introduced to their work, to their families and friends, really words cannot explain this`` SITHI NANGOMSO`` Days has been moving very fast to learn more. Coming to Germany we can say was a blessing in disguise. It was a worthwhile experience.”

7. THE STADTOASEN-BAUWAGEN

What is a Bauwagenproject ?

This answer will based the primary on ones understanding about the project. Answers may differ from person to person depending on which position one choose to tangle this. We will start by describing the Bauwagen alone. This is a German term meaning moving trailer. One part of the trailer can serve as a place where small group discussion can take place and also for brainstorming. The other part of the trailer can serve as a place where pupils could keep tools. The first part should also have lot material like pens, crayon, papers etc. It should be a save place where all working material is stored as mentioned above.

The project is the team of people who see to it, that all planning, organising, work with kids and many other things occur. One or two should be permanent and the rest can do voluntary work. To keep everything together the learners should meet once or twice per week to plan , do report and keep updated about everything. In the beginning we mentioned that the trailer moves from place to place. So each project is set to last at least not longer than four months in each school .After the project has finished then it can move to another place, thus it is called the Bauwagen (a moving trailer).

How does it work in Germany ?

This is a good idea for the contact. School teacher, parents and pupils are responding to the project. Although the trailer can draw the attention of kids from time to time, at the end this can result to clear understanding to kids the purpose of the Bauwagen to their school yard “I`ve been also part of the project, so for me it works good.”

8. BAUWAGENPROJECT AT WILLI-FÄHRMANN-SCHOOL - ESCHWEILER

The Bauwagenproject in Eschweiler is one of the projects that was already started when we joined it. In this case our participation has been entirely physical, because planning and designing was done already by the time of our arrival. Stadtoasen did already a great job at Willi-Fährmann-School in Eschweiler. Although we joined later, the Stadtoasenteam showed us the plan and designs around the school grounds. When we joined the team we did a lot of planting, especially designing a children`s tunnel using willow-cuttings. We planted seed grass, helped in finishing the creation of the barefoot-path leading to a sandy playground. Lastly we constructed a wooden foot-path that was a symbol of working together connecting the animal-farm of the school and the schools playgrounds.

That was a great challenge because time was running short. We nearly forgot to mention that the Bauwagenproject has been running simultaneously with the animal-farm-project. So we were rushing for date of the opening of the animal-farm with the invited guests including the Mayor of Eschweiler and other dignities. Their task was to witness and applaud good partnership between school and NGO projects.”

Co-ordination in Eschweiler

The process of the work at Eschweiler had been reported in all weekly meetings .There has been good work relation at all time between the co-ordinator Norbert Kuntz and the co-workers at Stadtoasen. We will personally applaud the high level of good working relationship between the principal and the Stadtoasen team, and that influenced school teachers to encourage learners to participate in the transformation of their school grounds at all levels. If one read the above point with understanding, one will notice that there is a proper link starting from top to the bottom (principal, Stadtoasen. down to the learners). We would also like to mention that the work at Eschweiler school reach the ending of a high note. If circumstances allows us to see the school in two years later...

9. CURRENT BAUWAGENPROJECT

Currently we are busy at a primary school called Grundschule Laurensberg. The school is situated on the suburban area of Aachen-Laurensberg. The Bauwagen moved from Eschweiler on 29th of April to that school. At that school the difference is that the parents spend their time to their school kids working in the project together with us, teachers and their kids during the weekends.

10. OUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE BAUWAGENPROJECTS

It was every interesting to be part of this project. Working with primary children is the most exciting part in post experience, so even here it was the same. If we could perhaps speak the language well, this could have been more enjoyable. Financial support is also not a big problem. I think there are more people willing to support financially the environmental projects. There was no time fixed for working hours, sometimes we worked in the morning, at other time in the afternoon to evenings and also over the weekend and that was very interesting. I will agree that work has to be finished at some point, but we always worked in a very relaxed mood. That was very good . Each and every time after work every ones contribution was appreciated and to hear that its healing spiritually and also gives you more power on the next day. We had a very good experience.

We were also invited by our partners to join them when they are doing a workshop with learners at school as the first step in a Bauwagenproject, to see how they did their planning with the school learners as the whole. To us that showed good understanding and find people´s expectation before you start anything.

11. FUTURE PLANS - Cape Town Bauwagen

This project has future plans that will serve as guide lines starting now till its operational in Cape Town. Some of those plans we are busy with them right now. To start with the near future we will attend a fundraising workshop, that will help us to be able to raise funds in all angles.

We will have a clear time plan and also have clear vision and we will achieve that by fixing goals. We will have to achieve the above between the time from now till to the period of our departure to Cape Town. Between July and August 2004 we will start checking possible schools that will be appropriate to start the project with.

During this period everyone of us (Nosisa ,Sven ,Mbuso and Helene) and any interested should start look for potential funders e.g. companies and in all other possible areas. Informing local community and government about the project is also one of the essential aspect. We will also have to find money to get start the project and keep on going. Meeting with school government body and school parents also will help us to start. Companies sometimes won't be able to fund money but they may give us practical aid which will be more than welcome.

A constant evaluation has to be done on a website. Will be set up so people with interest can get the information about the project and its running on day to day basis. Sven, Helene and Helga Blenk from Stadtoasen will contact University, SDA, BDB and other organisations in Germany for help. Since they are also members in some of the mention structures.

The suggested time plan frame that we will come up with help us to identify the school that be possible to work with, raise funds that will enable us to start run workshops and evaluate the work done. This will immediately kickstart when Sven and Helene will arrive. Everyone feels this will be a success and so a follow up ASA-project is suggested and the application should be submitted before the 11th of October 2004

For Bauwagen to work in Cape Town the time in each school should be longer to accommodate normal delays (p.e. bad weather conditions) and other unforeseen problems. This could give the project good result and that will attract big companies and the community at large. The time can be minimised as the project gets stronger.

We strongly believe that Bauwagen need its own office. There all administration affairs can be conducted. One person should make it a point that he or she attends to the day to days running of the projects. Buying a trailer with wheels like the Bauwagen in Aachen will be a big disaster, because of many reasons a container will be a good substitute for the trailer.

12. OTHER PROJECTS IN AACHEN

AACHEN EAST - BARBARASTREET

We came to know an area owned by a city-owned housing organisation named gewoge (Gemeinnützige Wohnungsbaugesellschaft) where we met a social worker (Heidrun Langecker). The area (Barbarastreet) is part of the community Aachen East.

At Aachen East we also met Ina Kunz, who works there for city council. She is a geographer. They have a new idea which is geared in developing together people living in the city. Other aim is to pull strength from professionals skilled and unemployed to work together. Ina, Heidrun and others are doing great work. It's also interesting to see City of Aachen (govt), NGO's (Stadtoasen) and people working together in their different policies in try to improve the City and lives of the people living in . Also not forgetting politics of area division, how people divide themselves like borders and cultures e.g Turkish, Germans, Dutch and other foreign countries.

As before we mention about working with community of Aachen East at Barbarastreet, they started their vegetable garden for social purpose. It was the joint effort of kids, parents and Stadtoasen. It was great because all those families are migration nobody knew each other so the idea was to bring them together through working in the gardens.

UTROPIA

UTROPIA is a project of an environmental organisation called NABU we were introduced to by Norbert Kuntz. The people of UTROPIA also work with schools and they have also groups of kids that they work with in the surroundings (the NABU-Kids). Their logo is a pumpkin puppet called "Kalle Basse". They choose a pumpkin because they believe it can grow all over the world.

First we visited the Utopia-people when they had their regular meeting. There they asked us to come and visit them when they are working at schools with school kids in the gardens. Ina Sukkau and Christina von Stosch are both working in the UTROPIA-project, so we were working close with them since we were introduced to the project. We visited two of the UTROPIA-gardens in different occasions.

On the second time we went to the two schools where Ina and Christina work and we held workshop sessions about the work at ABALIMI and S.E.E.D. in which we got a lot of support from UTROPIA- and Stadtoasen team.

We will not forget to mention that we also share the stage with UTROPIA team after the signing of the "Memorandum of Understanding" of the LA21-Partnership between Aachen and Cape Town. We could tell all delegates about our work with Stadtoasen and in Capetown and they also got the chance of talking about UTROPIA.

What we have learnt about these two organisations (NABU and Stadtoasen) which are both environmental organisations working on similar issues is, that they are not competing as one my think – instead they are complementing each other at all times. That shows good spirit and it is something most of us we have to learn.

WORLDHOUSE

Birgitta Hollmann from Worldhouse also invited us to meet the executive committee members of the organisation. They told us about their work and also about history of the house. We met some few projects were there at that moment. Greenpeace has a wonderful project done by the youth. It was also interesting to hear that we are not the first partners from Cape Town, they had one before (KERIC) but their partnership collapsed.

13. ASA-SEMINARS

Recently we have attended first ASA seminar which was held in an old castle called Burg Lohra. This was a weekend seminar which was attended by participants from all over that include Africa, Europe, Asia and South America. It was interesting to see how ASA can strength their wings and actively function worldwide. We will give few important topics of the seminar i.e.

- (1) Historical background of ASA
- (2) Global stereotypes and diversities
- (3) Sustainable development
- (4) Cultural exchange and global food
- (5) Evaluation and desparture.

It was a great exposure and experience gaining to share and learn about our countries development and discuss global difficulties.

The second seminar was between the 24th May and the 29th of May 2004, in a small town near Darmstadt. This seminar was bigger than the first one. It included the north-south-participants. All ASA participants who will be going to different parts of the world had to meet and share their countries social, political and economical status. We also had the opportunity to hear and listen from participants who are coming from countries with political difficulties. This was also a good seminar.

14. FAMOUS LAST WORDS

THINGS WE LEARNT

- When people stand together and support the ideas that they all feel common about it at least that create weight, and their voices are heard, e.g private company wants to buy an old park, people feel against that and they showed their protest by staying kids event there during Easter weekend.
- Working as team it does not mean that you will always agree with ideas especially professionally but eventually you have to find the ending point peacefully.
- We may leave in different parts of the world but sometimes we are faced with similar problems (structures).
- In really practical terms of working seriously one has to start very small.
- In all the problems that you have also you got solutions.
- Work first no delays with fixed dates and project the future.
- Personal global issues.
- Lots about exchange students and how we should view them this was a really eye opener.
- There is life everywhere one may think to go to.

CONCLUSION

It would be good to point out that beside the work that we were busy with in Aachen, we also enjoyed our stay. It is also our wish to see the same opportunity extended to more southern participants. It is also noticeable that soon we will be coming back home we are looking forward to bring new ideas.

EXCITING MOMENTS THROUGH OUR STAY IN GERMANY

- When we were selected to be part of the project
- Arriving in Germany and meeting new people
- When we saw our flat and realise that our German colleagues really care about us
- When we had the first meeting at InWEnt with the partnership-people and realise that there is range of people who knew about our arrival
- We have been personally happy when we knew that Mr Norbert is around us
- When we had our first german lesson at Vaals with Gabriele
- Meeting Sabine Schönberg-Ehlen and Stadtoasen staff and their friends and family
- Working with kids - especially Danny boy from Eschweiler
- When we were invited on a concert at Kelmis at Belgium.
- When we played drums with Andi myself and Anette`s son Tim at the event at Benediktiner Platz. He is good player.
- To meet Frank Schotte and Sven Daniels connected me (Mbuso) with the internet
- Barbeque at Helga`s place was great !!
- The night we (Helga, Frank, Nosisa & Mbuso) met Harry Gwala High school choir
- Renewal of M O U
- Meeting with Grace and Ossie at Aachen
- When we went up to the wind solar energy pumps
- When I knew that this is an on going project process.
- Exchange flowers by lilac potatoes with Utopia project
- The maize at the place where three counties meet
- Maastricht tour to tunnels (man-made caves)
- Castle exhibition for flower gardens at Belgium

This is the last point:

Lots of good and exciting moments are stored in our memories (human software)!