

Mission 15 – 13th June 2006

The Ga-Magowa Centre, Polokwane, Limpopo Province

The Ga-Magowa Centre is an organisation 25 km northeast of Polokwane in Limpopo Province. The centre was brought to our attention by Stephen Bowden. Stephen organised this trip to deliver enriched soft porridge donated by Nutritional Foods. Well done Stephen. After a few delays Stephen was unable to make the delivery himself and in stepped Otto Muller and the trip was organised for Tuesday the 13th of June, this his first trip for The Rainbow Airbridge Trust; Otto wrote after his experience:

Hi Mike,

If this world was populated by more people like Colin, Di and their team it would be a far better place to live. What they are doing with meager resources truly moved me. Their organization deserves and needs all the assistance they can get. The Ga-Magowa Centre we visited is a truly remarkable place which brings some happiness and hope to children in need. It clearly runs on more love and care than funds. My photographs don't do the project justice. Fortunately I am a better pilot than a photographer.

Kind regards

Otto Müller



Colin & Dianne Wood-Robinson were Stephen's contacts, together with Matjididi Mokono. With a few phone calls and emails between all parties concerned, the trip was arranged so that Otto was met at the airfield by Colin, plus some children from the centre. Having received the donated foodstuff, Colin wrote:

Hi Mike,

Thanks for your e-mail and thank you especially for the wonderful gift of enriched soft porridge. The children really enjoyed seeing Otto's plane come in and land. And to sit in the pilot's seat and have their photos taken - wow! We all really appreciated it. I gather that by the time Otto flew over the Centre to tip his wings in farewell there were a good number of children there to wave him off.

What Otto said about our meager resources is right. We still struggle on a weekly basis to find money for food, wood and water to feed daily the 120 kids at our five Centers. Any help you can give us would be really appreciated.



Here's a brief history of the project:

The Mponegele Ke Itirele Project was started in 2002 by a group of retired and still practicing teachers in the Mankweng area, some 25 km northeast of Polokwane in Limpopo Province. The founders had all seen the problems experienced by orphan children in their schools. Initially, the Project had tried to address far wider community issues in the Mankweng area, but had had great difficulty in attracting funding. Early in 2005, with a small donation of funding from a retired educationalist living in the UK, the Project decided to focus on supporting the orphans themselves. The Project currently has some 200 orphans on its database.

We believe that the orphans are best living in their own communities with caring relatives who have the support of the Project, however difficult this is for the relative with little or no money. We think that this is better than withdrawing the children to an orphanage. Mponegele Ke Itirele currently works with local Volunteer Care Givers each of whom lives in one of the areas covered by the Project. These volunteers are themselves mostly unemployed and give of their services without financial reward. They know their areas well and have developed excellent working relations with the orphans and their households. They deliver the food and clothes, and in some cases cook Government provided food for the orphans. Initial funding came from those who originally started the Project (most of whom are living on teachers' pensions) and from three retired British people who formerly worked on an education project in the area.

Here is a list of items the orphans need.

Milk powder for under 3 year olds
Infant cereal
Blankets
Soya mince
Tinned food
Packet soups
Tea bags
School shoes – boys and girls all sizes
School shirts – white all sizes
Black school shorts and trousers – all sizes
Black school pinafore dresses – all sizes
Warm jackets – all children's sizes
Warm jumpers
Flannels and small towels
Toothpaste
Tooth brushes
Shoe polish
Candles
Educational toys – for skills development
Readers – all ages in English and Sepedi
Pens, pencils, crayons, paper
Colouring books
School bags
Plastic or tin plates and cups

An interesting time was had by all; thanks, go to Stephen and Otto for their contributions on this trip, all images have also been supplied by Otto.

