

Ubuntu

BUILDING a community

Staff of a London-based IT company stepped into a different world to fix up Vuyani Primary School in Gugulethu near Cape Town



By Annelene Oberholzer



ABOVE: This was the original Grade R classroom, a pre-fabricated building that became waterlogged in winter. RIGHT: Tired and cold but happy – the Tamar team on the jungle gym in front of the new classroom.



failed attempts at plastering it became clear local skilled labour was a better option for that job. The team lent its support by pushing wheelbarrows, digging holes and laying waterpipes. The original plan soon expanded. The once neglected basketball court now boasts bright red lines and new nets; a deck was built in front of the new classrooms to keep sand at bay; blackboards that had long lost their lustre have been replaced – and you won't find a single broken windowpane. The new building consists of two classrooms that each accommodate 33 learners. The partition between them can be opened up to create a small hall, which the school hadn't had before. There's also a new toilet block with six toilets each for boys and girls – and for the first time there's hot water on tap.

Ubuntu asked Roelf Prinsloo, divisional manager of Cashbuild, and Ravi Chetty, Cashbuild's Mitchell's Plain branch manager, to assist with material and costing. They were true pillars of strength and contributed enormously to the success of the project. They also negotiated with materials suppliers and made sure Tamar's team had all they needed. "Roelf and Ravi pulled out all stops to help us. They've supported us incredibly well," says Faan Oosthuizen who with Across the Divide Expeditions, a company that organises charity challenges, provided logistic support "A well-organised business plan and involvement by all parties made it so much easier to get involved with Vuyani," Roelf says.

So far Tamar and its staff have invested almost R1,4 million in the Vuyani project. How does headmaster Mahlubi feel about the project? "I am so grateful," he says. "My request went to Ubuntu at the right time. This is good not only for our school but for the whole community. My heart is very glad. Thank you to YOU and Tamar for this wonderful project." "I will definitely do a similar project again," Tanya says. "I'm very proud of my group. They were way out of their comfort zone but despite the rain and cold they persevered." □

WISH LIST

- Zeerust Combined School in North West sent us an envelope full of letters requesting books. Brigette Molatlhegi writes, "I am in Grade 8. With great humbleness I ask you to help us with school books. We need books for Grade 7 to 11." Give children the chance to read, Rainy Mahlatlane says. English and Afrikaans reading and schoolbooks are welcome.
- There's an urgent need for food and outdoor toys at Lethusizo daycare centre in Palmridge, Gauteng, where 30 children are cared for.
- Gert Olivier, from a farm near De Doorns in the Boland, would like to keep children on neighbouring farms busy in a positive way. He's trying to set up a band and would welcome gifts of musical instruments.

BACK at school – that's where staff of Tamar, a London-based software development company, recently found themselves.

Primary School in Gugulethu with wheelbarrows and paint-brushes. They were responding to a plea made to Ubuntu by headmaster Mahlubi Nquvamba. "Some of our classrooms are a big problem in winter when rain streams in from all sides," he said in his letter to us.

spirit and atmosphere at the school and the staff's resourcefulness despite the limitations," Tanya Goodin, executive head of Tamar, says. She also wanted to offer her staff a firm challenge. "This is the first time since the company started 12 years ago that we're doing such a project. It was time to plough something back into the community. And this is a real project with real people and real risks. I wanted to include manual labour because at Tamar we spend our time in a virtual world. I wanted to create something tangible."

Through creative projects – from shavathons to cake sales – an impressive R300 000 was raised. ON A cold winter morning, in pouring rain, an enthusiastic group exchanged computer screens for cheerful orange T-shirts, hardhats and a good dose of fresh air. There was no shortage of enthusiasm but after a few

"The Grade R classroom is the most severely affected. We also battle with sand and dust outside the classrooms which create a health risk for learners who suffer from asthma." It was the kind of challenge Tamar was looking for. Ubuntu arranged a site inspection at Vuyani for them and soon the school was told it would get two new classrooms, some sorely needed maintenance and a jungle gym for the Grade Rs. "We were so impressed by the

Tamar offered to pay for staff volunteers' flights and accommodation but part of the challenge was the staff had to collect money beforehand to cover costs of the school project.

MAIN PICTURE: Putting the new jungle gym to the test. FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Adam (Tamar) practises wheelbarrow-driving. The new classroom takes shape. Brick-laying requires skill. Tamar executive head Tanya Goodin (left) and Andrea Brown dig in.



LEFT: The children who will benefit from the Tamar project.



ANNELENE OBERHOLZER



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