



Hi Sandra, thanks for the chatty email. Just something we want to share with you. I may have mentioned that we were in the process of buying a piece of land for our domestic, Gladys so that she can relocate away from the not too nice an area she now lives in - also, complications with her deceased ex-husband's other spouse etc has made it difficult for her. So we embarked on this saga of finding a piece of land and after many weeks of meeting various people whom, as soon as it was perceived that we were helping Gladys, land prices would double or quadruple... Anyway, we eventually found a piece of land in a tribal trust area called Tshabalala and bought it for her. I arranged with the Induna to have the land cleared and fenced and paid a deposit on this and then African time set in and we just had to wait and wait - eventually some desperate phone calls elicited a response and last week I went to the plot and found a man and his wife busy clearing it. She carried her baby on her back while she worked with her husband. I talked to him and found out that despite having been told that a water connection can be made, there was water available only from a stream about a kilometre away - and no electricity connection available as yet. OK, so I asked him to continue working ( he has no fulltime job) and he showed me where they lived and the next day Kirsty and I went to visit them to discuss further work that I wanted him to do. He was busy clearing his own piece of land and by the way, his name is Cephron, his wife is Meisie ( Afrikaans for 'girl' ) and the cutest little 3 month old baby called Angel. We are used to seeing people living in shacks. We drive past them every day. We see them coming up from the river with wheelbarrows loaded with drums of water for drinking and washing and planting. One becomes to a certain extent acculturated/accustomed to this daily scene. But still, when you walk up to their home, which in their case is a mere shack, made from rough cut timber and a corrugated iron roof, 2.5m by 2.5 m, with the only furniture being a bed, no tables, no cupboards, no windows, the cracks between the wooden slats that make up the walls allowing in light, dust and I am sure rain, when that is to come, it is then hard to believe that we live in the most advanced country in Africa.

We returned with some goodies for them - simple stuff, some of that first parcel of baby clothes you sent us, still too big for little Angel but she will get there, some of little Abbygails old clothes, clothes from Kirsty and Megan for Meisie and some of my old clothes for Cephron, some WATER that comes straight out of our tap but which is like manna for them, groceries - just bread, maize and mabela meal, some cooking oil, creams and soaps and insect repellents, an old table we had and when we bring it to them Meisie just bursts into tears and Cephron just keeps on saying 'At last I see God...'. We also deliver some seeds ( cabbage, pumpkin, spinach etc) because Cephron is determined to grow his own veggies and has already cleared the ground for his first crop. They have only been there for a couple of months.

It's still early times but we are going to try and get Meisie to run a small Spaza shop - a very informal shop that will stock basic stuff like biscuits ( there is a high school down the road from them and lotsa kids walk past their home back from school and from experience we know they usually have a few rands to spend on cooldrinks, biscuits, crisps ) , veggies, water, ( yes we now collect all those empty 500 mill plastic bottles - coke, water, whatever, they are filled with tap water and sell for One Rand) even cooking oil. When I was in The Central African Republic and Gabon, we saw how the local roadside traders would sell really small quantities e.g. cooking oil in small plastic bags (100 mil) that could be bought here at the Spaza for say 3 Rand, rather than having to buy a whole bottle at R20. You really need so little to get it up and running but far too often, even that little is too much for the poorest of the poor. We will fund the initial outlay and teach them to keep the profit and plough it back until such time as they need to buy more stock and can do it from their own incomes. Who knows where this will go? Gladys is also the grandmother of a brand new baby from her daughter Filis, - name is Megan-Sue because Meg was the first person to provide the new baby with clothes and nappies - and we even visualise that because Filis needs to get back to school, Meisie can be the child carer and she will have to be taught the skills required to look after not just her own Angel, but who knows, maybe even a crèche for locals sometime in the future.

Best wishes, Julian and Kirsty Kotze 02.08.08