

Chapter 10

Namibian-Dutch Municipal Partnerships

At present there are three active municipal twinning partnerships between Namibia and the Netherlands: Rundu and Nieuwegein; Gobabis and Smallerland; Otjiwarongo and Heusden. All concentrate on development co-operation. This chapter addresses these municipality twinings. They appear to be much more than an official relation between politicians and civil servants. In the Netherlands as well as in Namibia a large number of schools, NGOs and other institutions as well as individuals are involved and value these relationships highly.



Marianne Ros

Marianne Ros studied History at the Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen. In 1994 she came to Namibia. She lived in Nyangana and taught History at the newly established St. Boniface College in Sambyu until 1998. With her husband she then moved to Windhoek where she became part of the founding team of Catholic AIDS Action (CAA). Developing its Prevention Office, she co-ordinated the My Future is My Choice programme for CAA, in collaboration with UNICEF and various Ministries, until 2001. She now lives in the Netherlands and works for a Foundation that aims to stimulate integration processes within Dutch society.

Mutual respect and understanding



Being the former mayor of Gobabis, Ismael Pijoo Nganate has inside knowledge on the concept of city twinning. In 1995 his town entered into a meaningful relationship with the Dutch Municipality Smallerland. "The relationship is based on mutual respect and mutual understanding," says Nganate. "It was and is very valuable in changing of lot of people's lives in Gobabis."

Back then town twinning was a new thing in Namibia and Gobabis was the first to embark on a path of co-operation with a foreign town. The relationship was sparked after a Dutch visitor and a Namibian regional councillor exchanged addresses which eventually led to a letter from Nganate to the Dutch mayor of Smallerland about the possibility of city twinning. "In the same year I went to The Netherlands with a delegation of four people to discuss the arrangements. I decided that we should embark not with the idea of Smallerland giving a fish, but teaching us how to fish." Shortly after his visit, a Dutch delegation flew to Namibia. "The Dutch mayor had a political relationship in mind, but the women in his delegation were shocked by the poverty and suffering in Gobabis." Their actual tears inspired a more developmental sort of twinning resulting in a shipment of for instance wheelchairs and clothing late 1995. Soon other projects were started amongst which a housing project in Gobabis named Mapanga. "Every year 25 houses were built first for the council workers and later for the broader community earning between N\$ 0 and 2500. To me housing was very important. In order to improve life one first must have a place to live.

"Other projects involved the funding and use of Dutch volunteers to provide a normal life for street children and a center for disabled children. "Many Dutch volunteers still walk the streets of Gobabis," claims Nganate. But Gobabis is not the only Namibian town with ties to a Dutch municipality. After his post of mayor Nganate became the vice-president of the Alliance of Local Authorities in Namibia (ALAN) and struck up a partnership with its Dutch counterpart The Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG). "In a meeting of Dutch, Belgian and Namibian delegations we discussed the concept of twinning," remembers the former mayor. The result: ties between in total five Namibian and Dutch towns. The cornerstones of these relationships, says Nganate, are not the politicians, but the citizens. Politicians come and go and might instigate a twinning "for their own image", but the citizens who see to the person-to-person relationship stay. "Therefore I'm very thankful that these people have sacrificed much having their own problems and change the lives of other people."

Interview and photograph by Arjan de Boer

Dutch towns consider the ties with their Namibian counterparts as a powerful tool in improving citizen's knowledge of and involvement with international co-operation. Parallel to an official twinning relation through the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), private initiatives among citizens are stimulated. They aim to inform and mobilise people and organisations within the municipalities. Awareness and fund raising activities by working groups, schools, churches, companies, service clubs include art auctions, sponsored athletics and dinners, Christmas and book markets, fairs, collections. Schools are prominent stakeholders, not only in raising money; they twin with Namibian counterparts and include Namibia in their curricula as well. Personal exchanges and visits in both directions are another feature of these partnerships.

Municipality Co-operation for Development through town twinning is also an official programme of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) that receives funding for projects and programmes from the Netherlands Government. Municipalities share expertise and experience and make funds available to facilitate and strengthen local governance as a key factor in the development process. The 458 Netherlands municipalities have over 800 international ties, 65 of these are with African towns.

In 2003 the Dutch government decided that the bilateral aid programme and also the support under the regular twinning programme of VNG for Namibia and a number of other countries would be ended in two years. An exception was made for a programme to support local government in dealing with HIV/AIDS issues, considering that the fight against HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa is a priority. Hence, the municipalities of Heusden, Nieuwegein and Smallerland will receive official government support to carry on with their town partnerships until 2008. The programme was launched in 2005. Co-ordinating committees representing the most important local HIV/AIDS activities and actors are being established, and expanding the town twin programmes by involving a third partner in South Africa, thereby becoming city triplets, is planned as well.

Gobabis and Smallerland

The oldest Namibian - Netherlands municipal partnership is between Gobabis and Smallerland. Gobabis, situated some 200 km's east of Windhoek, is the main service centre of the semi-desert Omaheke Region. It has some 16 000 formal residents and in addition an estimated number of 10 000 informal inhabitants. Smallerland, in the northern Dutch province of Friesland, with over 54 000 residents, consists of Drachten, its largest community, and several surrounding villages.

In the late 1980's Smallerland formulated a policy plan on foreign aid in conjunction with a counterpart town in a developing country. The aim was to develop a strong personal relation with a municipality in the South. Friendship, instead of only a formal programme, should contribute to raise the community's awareness on global issues. Smallerland had actively supported the anti-apartheid struggle and it made sense to keep up assistance in southern Africa in the post-apartheid era by inviting a town from this region for this partnership. Gobabis, which has several similarities with Smallerland, came in sight as a partner through a personal recommendation.

The first phase of the co-operation was characterised by getting acquainted, to become friends, to establish reciprocity. A process with ups and downs. On a municipal level Gobabis was assisted in exchange of information on democratic processes. Some of its officials visited the Netherlands. Gradually some project priorities were formulated. It was only after five years, in 1995, that the first official visit from Smallerland to Gobabis took place and a more official relation was established, with the signing of a Friendship Treaty. Gobabis mayor, Mr. Pijoo Nganate typified this treaty as "Do not give us fish, but teach us how to fish".

Since then initiatives to co-operate with Gobabis and its people accelerated. Projects focus on municipal organisation, and even more so on improving the situation of the most deprived and vulnerable groups, e.g. assisting the Epako Old Age Home and street kids. In the project named 'Sida Sores' ('Our House in the Sun') day care is provided to handicapped children. Smallerland is very proud of this project, in which parents are expect-



Smalingerland Village

Between the centre of Gobabis and Epako township, this sign leads to the housing improvement project that has been the core of the co-operation for many years. Many inhabitants of the poor settlement near the town are now housed in better accommodation. Photo by Harry Balgobind.



Sida Sores, Our House in the Sun

These are the rondavels of the Sida Sores centre, where handicapped children receive care and education. The project involves parents and other care givers to teach and assist them to raise these children. Photo by Harry Balgobind.



A full stomach for street kids

The potjies are boiling to prepare a proper meal for street kids. The co-operation between Gobabis and Smallerland aims to improve the situation of the poorest and most vulnerable inhabitants. People living with HIV/AIDS, street children, the aged and jobless residents of the poor townships are the direct beneficiaries of many activities. Photo by Harry Balgobind.



Celebration of ten-year partnership

On 29th October 2005 the 10-year twinning partnership of Gobabis and Smallerland was celebrated. A large delegation from the Netherlands, led by Mayor Van der Zaag, travelled to Namibia to participate. The celebrations started with a procession of vehicles and participants from the centre of Gobabis to the stadium in Epako township. The picture shows some of the fire- and refuse trucks that were donated by Smallerland to Gobabis. Photo by Huub Hendrix.

The visit of President Nujoma to Nieuwegein

The Utrechts Nieuwsblad newspaper reported on 28th March 1998 about President Sam Nujoma's visit to Nieuwegein, the sister town of Rundu. In the article Dr Nujoma is compared to Nelson Mandela. A member of the former Komitee Zuidelijk Afrika confirms that Dr Nujoma has not forgotten his friends who supported SWAPO, before the Netherlands government followed suit. Dr Nujoma is reported to say that he thinks Nieuwegein is a suitable partner for Rundu, because both are new towns. He also states that he admires the many planted trees and waterways in Nieuwegein. The photo shows president Nujoma planting a tree in the "Rundu woods". On the left is Mayor Laan of Nieuwegein. Reproduced from "Utrechts Nieuwsblad".



Burgemeester Laan van Nieuwegein en de president van Namibië Nujoma planten glorieus samen een boom in het Nieuwegeinse "Rundu-bos". Foto: Peter Arns (Bart) 144

Bomen planten met Namibische president

Door Rita van Grollenboom
Nieuwegein

Een stiel van op 's tien zwarte bladzijden, begeleid door twee keer zoveel foto's, bezield zich glorieus een weg door Nieuwegein. En de stoer van Ivoosien met daarbij de Namibische president dr. S. Nujoma.

President Nujoma bezoekt Nieuwegein in het kader van de vriendschap tussen Nieuwegein en de qua inwonersmaand verplichtheid stad Rundu in Namibië, zuidelijk Afrika. Na een bezoek aan het Milla Eduardus Centrum, waar een tentoonstelling over Rundu is ingericht, plantte president Nujoma glorieus samen met burgemeester Laan een boom in het "Rundu-bos" in de Nieu-

weginse wijk Galeop. Na afloop schudde hij hartelijk de handen van de leerlingen. Daarna ging de stoer naar het gemeentehuis van Nieuwegein. Achter de rijksoverheid was het wijkcentrum publiek zich al welke gaat er nu wel en Nieuwegein gemeentelijk mocht zijn.

De Namibische president Nujoma doet een beetje denken aan Nelson Mandela. Ook hij streeft naar de apartheid en voor de maatschappij. In 1990 werd Namibië een republiek, met aan het hoofd de voormalige Nujoma. Ontlangt het bij de oververkeeringen opstroom van meerderheid bebaald.

Het bezoek van Nujoma aan Nieuwegein werd door het Nederlands Instituut voor Zuidelijk Afrika, waarheen het Koninkrijk van Zuidelijk Afrika, aangegrepen om de president de archiveren van het Koninkrijk over de

Namibische ambassade bij het Koninkrijk te overhandigen. Een woordvoerder van het Koninkrijk bevestigde eraan dat de huidige president van Namibië tijdens de tijd voor onafhankelijkheid vaak naar Nederland is gekomen voor steun. "En dat is hij niet alleen," aldus de woordvoerder van het Koninkrijk. "Wij zijn al verschillende keren te gast geweest in zijn paleis in Windhoek."

Investeren

De president bevestigde op zijn beurt de Nederlandse bereidheid voor haar steun aan de Namibische staat voor onafhankelijkheid. Daarnaast deed hij een beroep op bereidwillige steun, maar dan in economische zin. "We zijn nu hier om Nederland al in te zetten om te investeren in ons land," aldus president Nujoma. Hij noemde het gesprek dat hij een-

der drie week had met minister Prokx van ontwikkelingszaken "vruchtbaar". Maar ook de vriendschap tussen Rundu en Nieuwegein is hem dierbaar, met alle die tussen vier andere Nederlandse gemeenten en plaatsen in Namibië.

Nieuwegein is een stad naar zijn hart. Niet als Nieuwegein in Rundu een nieuwe stad, zo benadrukte hij. De president was vooral onder de indruk van de vele bomen in Nieuwegein, maar ook van de waterwegen. De aanleg van kanalen heeft zijn bijdrage aan de ontwikkeling van de stad. Hij heeft nu wel van handhaving, maar ik weet niet van wie."

ed to be involved as well, not only in the daily tasks but also in workshops and courses to enhance their knowledge and skills in raising their children. The housing in traditional rondavels offers warmth in wintertime and coolness in summer.

Also the private initiative working groups in both Gobabis (Gobabis Working Group) and Smallerland (Werkgroep Ontwikkelingssamenwerking Smallerland) (WOS) initiate activities. The extensive and solid community basis, formed by the commitment of inhabitants, schools, students, housing associations, old people's homes and other sectors, is a source of pride to everyone involved. The WOS, which has 17 board members, uses the projects to inform the public.

Annually, at least 10 volunteers and students from Smallerland go to Gobabis for practical work and to assist in various projects. To celebrate the first decade of the signing of the agreement in October 2005 over 40 Smallerland residents travelled to Gobabis. Meanwhile a high number of Gobabis representatives have visited the Netherlands to participate in municipal training programmes on various topics such as waste management, civic participation, social housing. Exchange programmes between participating churches in Gobabis and Smallerland lead to visits in both directions by pastors and church leaders.

As for the planned focus on HIV/AIDS activities in town twinning programmes, the WOS will concentrate on awareness raising by small-scale projects. Furthermore, in order to assist vulnerable people obtaining a sense of perspective, support will be given to income generating projects.

The foundation for the co-operation remains the friendship between inhabitants and organisations of both municipalities.

Rundu and Nieuwegein

Rundu is the bustling centre of the Kavango Region in the north of Namibia, a region four times as big as the Netherlands with some 180.000 inhabitants. Nieuwegein is a young (1971) medium sized commuter town

in the centre of the Netherlands, in the province of Utrecht. Rundu and Nieuwegein are municipal partners since 1994. Common features are its number of inhabitants, some 60.000, and their location along a river, respectively the Kavango River and the Lek. In mutual consultation municipalities and citizens from Nieuwegein and Rundu have initiated and supported development co-operation activities, at municipal as well as community level.

When the twinning started it took some time to get to know each other and to understand the differences. One such striking difference was the size of the administration, which was very much smaller in Rundu, though the number of its operational staff was much higher. Another difference was that town council Nieuwegein has a more prominent role in policymaking than its counterpart in Rundu. Through the years the twinning's character evolved from donor-oriented to know-how exchange. It is currently more professionalized and institutionalised as well. In 1998, when H.E. President Nujoma paid a state visit to the Netherlands, the President of Namibia spent some time in Nieuwegein.

To assist Rundu in the process of decentralisation of governance the two municipalities have drawn up successive agreements to strengthen Rundu's municipal capacity for service delivery.

Although progress is slow at times and projects are small scale, Nieuwegein regards the long term character of the relation as benefiting Rundu's institutional and community absorption and its sustainability. In the Solid Waste Management Project for example, Rundu involved women of the Donkerhoek, Safari en Nkaramwe areas to address the growing waste problem. Nieuwegein's transfer of technical expertise, its donation of waste containers plus the active involvement of the women resulted in a much cleaner environment. Now, other parts of Rundu want to implement such a project as well.

The Working group Nieuwegein is mandated to stimulate and co-ordinate Nieuwegein's civil society initiatives and efforts for the town twinning. It regards its town link to Rundu as an important "window on the world" through which the citizens of Nieuwegein can discover other cultures and ideas. It receives subsidy of the municipality, works closely with it and complements its



Mayor de Vos in Rundu

Mayor Cor de Vos of Nieuwegein is pictured here between the women who participate in the sanitation project that is supported by Nieuwegein in some low-income areas in Rundu. The local community is involved in refuse collection and other activities to improve sanitation. Photo by Marijke Bosman.



A house in Sauyemwa

This is a house in one of the neighbourhoods where the sanitation project helps to improve conditions. In the background is the Kavango River. Photo by Marijke Bosman.

activities, e.g. through linking local schools, hospitals, Chambers of Commerce, libraries and employers, resulting in, among other, educational exchange projects and donations to Namibian counterparts.

In the 2000-2001 project Steun Scholen Rundu (Support Rundu Schools), a wide variety of sectors and individuals from the Nieuwegein community participated in fundraising activities and raised over one million Namibian dollars to build classrooms in a number of schools in Rundu. Its Namibian counterpart is called Working Group Nieuwegein.

Rundu has identified HIV/AIDS as one of the major threats to its development. Both municipalities and Working groups Nieuwegein and Rundu, having witnessed the growing impact of the pandemic, are very motivated to pull their weight for the future HIV/AIDS project. In Rundu an estimated 21% of the population between 13 and 45 years old is HIV positive.

Otjiwarongo and Heusden

Otjiwarongo and Heusden form the most recent town twinning that started functioning mid-2004. Otjiwarongo (Herero for 'the Pleasant Place') lies north of the central part of Namibia. Various national roads converge in this agricultural and ranching centre. The town has about 28 000 inhabitants. Heusden, a rural municipality with some 43 000 citizens in the southern province of Noord Brabant consists of the villages Heusden (originally a fortress town dating from the 8th century), Vlijmen and Drunen.

Responding to a request from Heusden's city council to become active in development co-operation, the municipality consulted with the VNG on options concerning international municipal aid. Learning that programme subsidies were available, and after an exploratory visit of Otjiwarongo municipal staff to the Netherlands, Heusden decided to support this Namibian town. The partnership concentrates mainly on two areas.

Otjiwarongo's municipal Multi Purpose Help Centre (OMPHC), built with support of a Dutch NGO called STOP AIDS NOW! and Rotary Amsterdam South, is as-

sisted in management and implementation of activities focused on HIV/AIDS. HIV prevalence among Otjiwarongo's adult population is estimated to be 17%. The Centre provides day care support for some 40 orphans and vulnerable children, ranging from very young to secondary school age. They receive food, while the Centre provides space for making homework, play or sport. The Centre also runs a home based care project, involving fifteen trained volunteers, providing simple medication and aid materials to home based HIV/AIDS infected. There are prevention activities as well, involving and focusing on young people. To sustain the activities of the OMPHC in future, the two co-operating partners put much effort in strengthening the (financial) management and administration capacity as well, including exploring opportunities for income generation. Former President Sam Nujoma is patron of the OMPHC.

A committed group of volunteers, civil servants from Heusden's municipality, undertakes to inform their community about Otjiwarongo stimulating to support the OMPHC in cash and kind. Substantial financial contributions have been received for the Centre already, amongst others from one of the Schools (D' Oultremont College), which has linkage with the Otjiwarongo Paresis Secondary School.

Apart from support to the Centre, many efforts are made to also strengthen Otjiwarongo local government's capacity, concentrating on HIV/AIDS related youth, care and construction activities, and addressing unemployment. While equipped with a generous number of staff for operational tasks, the town expressed a need for support to its organisation and management processes. By sharing know-how and experiences with its Namibian colleagues Heusden attempts to cater for this request. During mutual visits of professionals concrete administrative and practical issues involved in running a town are compared and reviewed. Professionals from Heusden are voluntarily stationed in Otjiwarongo to share hands on experience.

Heusden cherishes the positive and enthusiastic way in which the bond with its Otjiwarongo colleague has evolved. Together with the lessons learned, this forms a solid foundation for future co-operation.

In an article in Die Republiek about the co-operation between the towns of Heusden and Otjiwarongo the Chief Executive Officer of Otjiwarongo, Mr Manfred Uxamb praises the opportunity that he and some of his officers had to spend a few weeks with their counterparts in Heusden. He also mentions the Multi-purpose Help Centre that is supported by Heusden. In the picture we see Mayor Henk Willems of Heusden offering a pair of wooden shoes to Mr Uxamb. Reproduced from Die Republiek.

Otjiwarongo en Heusden: vinkel en koljander

SEDERT Otjiwarongo 'n tweeling-ooreenkoms met Heusden in Nederland gesluit het, het die kapasiteit van munisipale werkers van dié noordedorp aansienlik verbeter.

Drie munisipale amptenare van Otjiwarongo het onlangs 'n besoek aan die Gemeente Heusden gebring om 'n Internasie-opleidingsprogram van twee werke by te woon.

Dié program is deel van die ooreenkoms tussen die twee dorpe se munisipaliteite vir die uitbreiding van werkers se vermoëns.

Die opleidingsprogram is bygewoon deur die waarnemende hoof uitvoerende beampte van die Otjiwarongo munisipaliteit, mnr. Manfred Uxamb, mnr. Dirk van Niekerk van die gemeenskapdiens- en dorpsbeplanningafdeling en me. Agatha Mwati, senior ekonomiese beplanner en skakelbeampte.

Die kostes van die program is deur die munisipaliteit van Heusden gedra en die kursus is rondom die spesifieke take van dié drie amptenare gestruktureer.

Volgens me. Mwati het hulle baie kennis opgedoen wat direk by die munisipaliteit op Otjiwarongo toegepas kan word.

"Die bestuur van die munisipaliteit sal egter die konsepte wat geleer is, in konteks moet plaas om die opleiding van waarde vir ons dorp en die land te maak."

Die ooreenkoms met die dorp in Holland het tot gevolg gehad dat ander beamptes van die Otjiwarongo munisipaliteit aan programme met betrekking op ander taakbeskrywings binne die munisipale konteks in Europa kon gaan deelneem.

Een van die beste voorbeelde van samewerking tussen die twee munisipaliteite is die ingebruikstelling van die veeldoelige gemeenskapsentrum wat in die Orwetoewi-woonbuurt van Otjiwarongo gebou is.

"Die sentrum word aktief deur die munisipaliteit van Heusden ondersteun en geborg. Hulle voorsien ook in die sosiale en maatskaplike behoeftes van Orwetoewi se inwo-

ners."

Die sentrum sien tans na die behoeftes van mense wat MIV/vigs onder lede het en weeskinders om.

"Berading en tuissorg vir die mense word by die sentrum gedoen en nagenoeg 40 weeskinders word op 'n daaglikse grondslag daar versorg."

Die Senior Sekondêre Skool Faresis het vanweë die tweeling-ooreenkoms met die D'Oultremont College, 'n hoërskool in Heusden, ook met programme begin om MIV/vigs-lyers by te staan.

"Die sekondêre skool het 'n vipklub gestig en D'Oultremont het rekenaars geskenk om die saak van die klub te bevorder. Fondse wat deur die kollege in Nederland ingesamel is, sal eersdaags aange-

wend word om die sportvelde van Faresis op te knap."

Die munisipaliteit van Heusden het, sedert die tweeling-ooreenkoms onderteken is, verskeie organisasies daarvan bewus gemaak en 'n groep wat as die Vriende van Otjiwarongo bekend staan, is uit die geledere van die instansies op die been gebring. Die organisasie ondersteun reeds verskeie projekte op Otjiwarongo.

Volgens mnr. Mwati is die tweeling-konsep 'n ideale wyse waarop globale netwerke geskep kan word waarmee behoeftige dorpe 'n dinamiese wêreld kan aanpak.

Dié gaan volgens mnr. Mwati nie net oor die finansiële ondersteuning nie, maar ook oor die magdom kennis wat mense ingevolge sulke ooreenkomste kan uitruil.



Die burgemeester van Heusden, mnr. Henk Willems, het tradisionele klompe aan die waarnemende hoof uitvoerende beampte van die Otjiwarongo munisipaliteit, mnr. Manfred Uxamb, tydens 'n onlangse besoek aan die dorp in Nederland oorhandig.



The Multi-Purpose Help Centre in Otjiwarongo

The centre in Orwetoveni in Otjiwarongo was built with funds from Heusden. It helps people living with HIV/AIDS and provides daycare for orphans in the area. Highly qualified volunteers from Heusden are currently in Otjiwarongo to help improve the services the centre offers. Photo by Ans van der Griendt.



Happy children playing

The children who receive daycare in the Multi-purpose Help Centre enjoying the break. Photo by Ans van der Griendt.

WHAT KIND OF BLACK MAN ARE YOU?

Eddy Schenkens, a Heusden official, visited Otjiwarongo in 2004. Dark-skinned and from Surinam origin, this visit was his first acquaintance with the continent of his remote ancestors.

This poem expresses the many profound and sometimes confusing impressions the visit made on him, in which the encounter with an old black man stuck out. The man tried to speak with Eddy in various Namibian languages, none of which Eddy comprehended. Finally the man gave up and said, indignantly, "What kind of a black man are you?" This question kept following Eddy and served as inspiration for this poem.

*What kind of black man are you
When you stand.....
In my Namibian sand..
Looking at the joyful children of this land
Staring at You with hunger
and sickness in their eyes...
staring at you....yes...!
What kind of black man are you ...
If you walk away..... blind....*

*What kind of black man are you..
If I speak to you....
With all the words I know....
Whith all the signs I show..
And you don't even understand...
One....?
Saying to you*
*Look....see.... feel....sense...
yes.....
What kind of man are you..
If you walk away in silence?....*

*What kind of black man are you
If you stand...
On my Namibian sand..
If I stare at you..
With my old and weary eyes....
Reaching for your help...
In Herero, Oshivambo, in San, in Himba, in
Afrikan and in Damara....
yes... what kind of black man are you
if you only see me...
through the eyes of your camera??...*

*What kind of black man are you ..
if you look at my Namibian sky
and see my far horizon,
hear my hungry children cry..
see their poor sick mother die
yes.. what kind of man are you..
When in the evening you sit
at your expensive diner
And do not even ask why?...
What kind of man am I?....*

*What kind of black man are you
When after just one week you fly
Over my Namibian hills
Into your peaceful sky..
Never to look back again....
Never to turn again.....
Maybe never to see me again....
Yes ... what kind of man are you
If you never tell the world of me.....again!....
What kind of man are you.....?*

Eddy Schenkens 18-11-2004

The partnership received national attention in the Netherlands when a Dutch celebrity hosted a television documentary of her visit to Otjiwarongo.

Partnerships between towns in Namibia and the Netherlands have grown from humble beginnings to interesting networks far beyond official relations between

politicians and administrators. Schools, churches, private business, NGO's and private citizens have become involved. Apart from products of this co-operation, such as new institutions and improved services, the many personal contacts between the participants are a contribution to mutual understanding and lasting co-operation between the two countries.

Namibia Contact

In 1996, a group of Dutch people, who have had close ties with Namibia during the late decades of the last century, decided to establish an independent committee to bring Namibia under attention in the Netherlands and to develop a network between these two countries. This group, *'Namibia Contact'*, currently consists of eight people who have been working as experts in Namibia for education and health organisations, in ethnology and in the Netherlands diplomatic service while one is Namibian by birth. *'Namibia Contact'* tries to strengthen the image of Namibia in the Netherlands by applying their knowledge and experience.

The contribution of the Dutch government to the development of Namibia is being closely followed and whenever appropriate *'Namibia Contact'* makes its voice heard. The committee therefore keeps close track of the developments and official relations between both countries.

'Namibia Contact' tries to focus on a broad range of aspects like art, economy, cultural and social aspects, health care, tourism, land reform, nature conservation and wildlife. They do this by organising lectures, expositions and seminars, exchanging experience and knowledge between Dutch and Namibian nationals. *'Namibia Contact'* co-operates with the Namibian - Dutch municipal partnerships and maintains also a close relationship with the Dutch Embassy in Namibia and the Namibian Embassy in Brussels, Belgium.



At a percussion workshop facilitated by *'Namibia Contact'*

Mrs Sophia Nangombe (left), at the time counsellor at the Namibian Embassy in Brussels proved to be a talented player. 'Namibia Contact' fosters development and relations between the Netherlands and Namibia by organising a range of activities including lectures, expositions and seminars, experience and knowledge exchanges on topics like art, economy, cultural and social aspects, health care, tourism, land reform, nature conservation and wildlife.

During the past years, *'Namibia Contact'* stimulated an educational program about Namibia in Dutch schools, it helped expatriates and students to find their way in Namibia, organised 'home lectures' (for example on HIV/AIDS) and held two important seminars which attracted publicity both in Namibia and the Netherlands. In 2002, a day about local government and tourism was organised in the *'Wêreld Museum'* in Rotterdam.

The Mayor of Rotterdam Mr Ivo Opstelten together with one of the former mayors of Windhoek, Mrs Vivienne Graig-McLaren discussed the issue of "diversity in local government". Furthermore, there were lectures about wildlife and tourism and the development thereof, art and photography expositions, Namibian crafts being sold, a children's program and a life-performance by Namibian singer Jackson Kaujeua. The Ambassador of Namibia in the Benelux, Dr Zedekia Ngavirue, was the guest of honour of the day. This day was an enormous success and was visited by around 800 people.

In 2004, a seminar on the land reform in Namibia was organised in the municipality of Boxtel with three lectures, one of which held by Dr Chris Brown, director of the Namibia Nature Foundation and Member of the Technical Team of Ministry of Lands. After the lectures participants split up into three groups to further discuss the issue of land reform in depth. Additionally an art exposition was organised and a percussion workshop, in which Mrs Sophia Nangombe, at the time Councillor at the Namibian Embassy in Brussels proved to be a talented player.

'Namibia Contact' will continue connecting the two countries through exchanging "contacts" between its people on subjects of interest to them. Both countries have a lot to share in their contrasting beauty and diversity.

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Additional Reading

There are few books that are directly related to the subject of this book. This section therefore contains a small selection of general books in various languages about Namibia and the Netherlands. Information about the current relations between the two countries and general information for visitors can be found on the Internet. A good start is the site www.nederlandnamibia.net, which will be available in June 2006.

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