

## Through the eyes of a participant



*I was busy finding ways of folding my 6'4" frame into seat 41E on board the Airbus to Cape Town. After nearly a year of 'do I, don't I' I had finally found the courage to step outside of the fabled comfort zone and say farewell to my wife and kids; Project South Africa 2007 had started.*

*If you are a new Project participant and reading this on board a plane to somewhere distant, let me tell you that you are not alone. I have been on three projects now and know that, even now, the emotions amongst the red-shirted strangers nearby has already started to bind you all together in friendships you will cherish for life.*

*These are the sort of sentiments a fellow participant Glen expressed to me as we flew to Cape Town on that first project. She also told me that in eleven days we will be back at Heathrow embracing, with tears in our eyes, and the women and men who ever so politely all shook hands with each other with just two hours ago at check-in. 'How absurd' I thought, but these thoughts changed to 'I think this woman is mad' when Glen then said eight words which now ring in my ears, "Nothing can prepare you for the emotional side". Ten days later that emotion hit me like a train.....Glen was right.*

*Project South Africa 2007 changed my outlook to life in so many ways. My wife, family, friends and colleagues tell me that even though I'm still a real pain in the rear-end, I've changed for the better. Profound clap-trap? Emotive words for a Bobby Moore Fund flyer? Or simple words from someone who thought 2007 was so good he attended the Projects in South Africa and Brazil in 2008. They were fantastic.*

*If you are thinking about taking part in a Project, I say 'do it'. If you have committed to it, I say well done and never doubt that you are doing the right thing. Raising funds for vital bowel cancer research is an achievement which is to be applauded but then to leave that comfort zone behind and actually spend time with the children in these remote regions is unforgettable. You are about to become a member of a small, exclusive club of ordinary but remarkable people who make a difference at so many levels.*

*This 'club' I speak of is always open to new members and I am always trying to encourage friends to volunteer. So far four have taken the plunge and the impact on their lives is evident, not least because they too want to do it again!*

*Let's hope that one day we meet on a Project but in the meantime let me give you one recommendation – get a few of you to sleep around the campfire; the stars of South America and Africa are awesome!*

*Good luck!"*

**Andrew Burcher**

