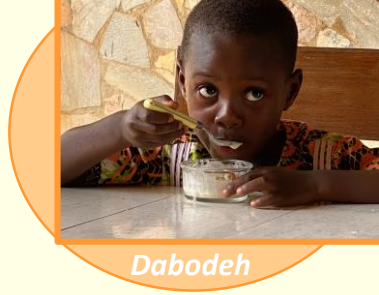




# FRIENDSHIFTS

Let kids support kids

March 2020



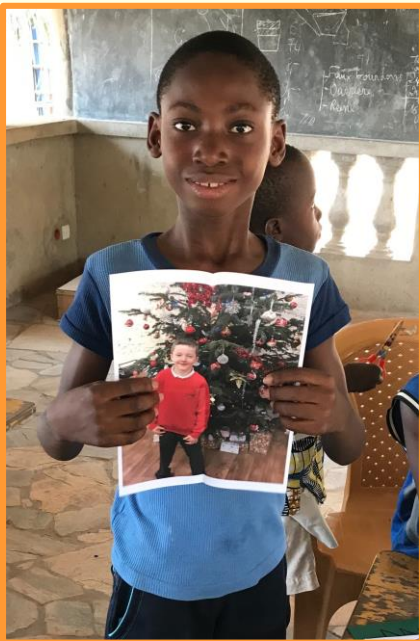
Dabodeh

## To go to Togo...

.. and experience, learn and do a lot. Together with Rémy (my 18-year-old son), Marjan van Ham (secretary of Friendshifts) and my sister Willemijn (teacher primary school) we visited our partner organisation CAST (Centre d' Action Sociale au Togo).

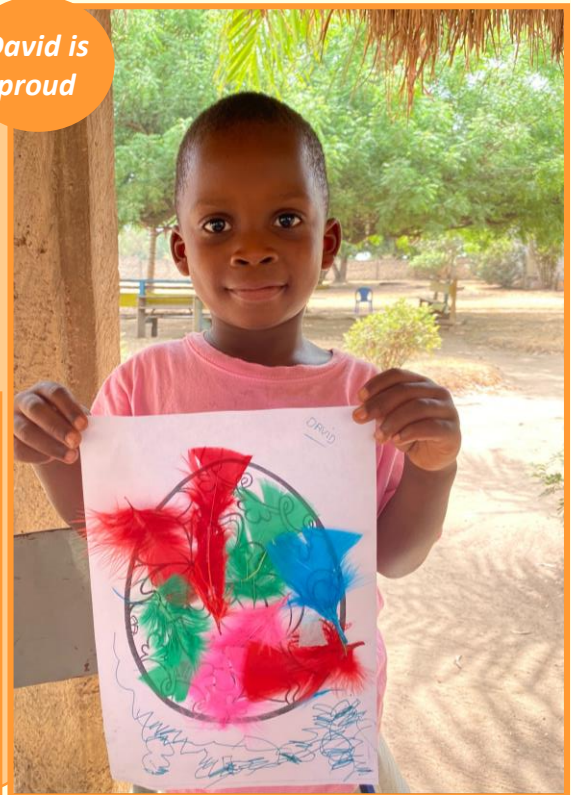
Let's start with the children. The first question Bruno (8) asked me, was; "How did they like my letter?" In November, I had left with letters from the children of CAST for the pupils of Trilium International School in France. Now I was back with their replies. When Bruno got his letter, he literally jumped for joy. Isabelle's eyes welled with tears as she read Ester's sweet words. I was touched by seeing the infectious joy of the children; as if they had received a game computer. For the rest of the day, they clutched the sheets of paper to their chests, holding on to their newfound connections.

With valuable help of Marjan and Willemijn, the children made drawings and wrote letters back. They were rather proud of their work. Completely justified. It was 40 C, the feathers clung on every surface and they already had 1,5 hours homework done.



Oooh, those happy faces.  
Fabrice and Amen

David is proud



Anna will make art work



## New experiences

During our stay, elections were held, and the school was used as a temporary polling station. After having cast their vote, people dipped a finger in ink. Once again, the incumbent president prevailed, and protests were held in the capital. Kpalimé, however, retained its usual atmosphere.

We visited a charm market, to broaden our knowledge on animism. It is difficult to describe the smell 😊. A clue: the musty scent emanated from the dry skulls cats, monkeys, dogs, lizards, chickens... A medicine man will advise which skull to crush and use in a bath to cure from an illness. We bought a consecrated pit, meant for safe travels and good sleep. It actually sometimes works.

André has voted



Animal skulls





## Contacts between children

For Peaceable School's "we are all different" lessons, children of De Wereldwijzer school, in Utrecht, will interview children of CAST. In Togo, we made a collage for their Dutch correspondents. We also played a ball game, which consisted in trying to give sincere compliments. This was not an easy task; "intelligent" was the only compliment they came up with. "Having a heart for each other" is a topic we also discussed. The children grasped this concept with ease.

## The M of...

Mick (11, NL), was keen to get in touch with a student from CAST. Therefore, he wrote a letter, and sent Lego blocks to use as educative material, which he made an "M" out of. This gift from Mick went to Michel. It was his first time playing with Lego, and he realised how difficult building blocks could be. To help him with this, Mick plans on making instruction videos.

## Boundless efforts at school for deaf

We met Mr Nestor while shooting videos in different schools for the production of a short documentary. He is committed to the well-being and education of hearing-impaired children. He teaches the US sign language to both the children and their parents, as well as volunteer teachers. In order to make a change on a bigger scale, Mr Nestor spreads word of the help he offers on the radio, at weddings, and at funerals. At his school, children showed us a few signs and sang; it was very inspiring. Abra, a 14-year-old girl, had stopped going to school last September because of the cost of transportation between her school and home, which her parents could no longer afford — 30 euros as they live 20km away. Today, we provide for her trips, and she returned to school the very next week. Moreover, we donated crutches to Labité, who attends Mr Nestor's school, but could hardly walk due to a back problem.

It was so great to see how we can make a difference to these children, thanks to the funds we receive.



Este (4)

Emilie



Labité



Me with Abra & director Nestor

For little Etse and big Lydia (not on photo) we make a difference by covering school fees and supplies and paying for medicines Emilie Awadi is sixth months into her medical studies, which we sponsor; we have been able to provide her with a stethoscope, thanks to our medical advisor, Thérèse Pham. In September, we will be paying for CAST's students' school uniforms. We wish to support more students with exam fees and transportation costs in the upcoming months.

## Thanks for reading ❤️

Do you have any questions or remarks? Please call me at + 31 629263421.

Lots of love, Marieke

