

Dear dollmakers everywhere,  
Julie, Irene and I want to share more about our trip to South Africa, specifically the feedback from our meeting with staff of Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE) and Rob Smetherham Bereavement Services for Children (RSBSC or ROBS).

We had a very positive review and forward planning session with them in Durban, 4th April.

FIRST, YOUR DOLLS! Everyone is overjoyed with THE UTHANDO PROJECT dolls. They do make a difference to thousands of children. The attention to detail, the fact that they are brown and the creativity expressed are truly appreciated. SECOND, OUR TRAINING WORKSHOPS in KwaZulu-Natal. It is thrilling that the core groups of women trained in dollmaking will result in many more dolls being made in KZN. These workshops bring to the forefront the monumental work of the grandmothers raising the children.

THIRD, THE ONGOING NEED. Please don't think for a minute that our contributions from overseas will not be needed. There are over one and a half million children under 6, all of whom are affected (but not necessarily infected) by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Poverty and unemployment hurt millions of children. Your dolls put them in touch with another caring human being.

Our feedback session gives us guidelines for dollmakers to share with you

- The greatest need is for dolls for individual children - knitted or sewn.
- Dolls to be brownskinned (milk chocolate rather than oatmeal or fawn) and to look like boys, girls, mothers, fathers or grandparents. Yes, young boys do appreciate a doll of their own.
- To have clothing (modern fashions or Zulu traditional or African style) which can be easily taken off and put on. Not needed for babies' dolls.
- Extra items of clothing can be put in a doll's shoulder bag. These encourage play.
- A wrap around, scarf, doll's blanket or sheet could be folded at the back and tied on.
- ANIMAL DOLLS will be a great help where children are gathered, eg crèches, drop-in centres, orphanages. They are ideally grouped into families of animals for story telling eg families of lions, monkeys, elephants, zebra, giraffes, perhaps as mother, father, one or more children. Many of the KZN children will have never seen a real wild animal, so the story telling with the dolls will be valuable.
- HAND PUPPETS of humans or animals are used a lot by RSBSC. Could be knitted, sewn, made from socks and for both adult and children's sizes.
- TEDDY BEARS still cause some consternation. They are easily found in city shops, but cost too much for poor families. As the children are not familiar with wild animals anyway, a teddy bear is acceptable. Better in bright colours, not white. "Gollydogs" they are sometimes called. For the "work" of our dolls in expressive play for the child's emotional development, I must say that the "human" dolls are still the most versatile.

- TECHNICAL DETAILS. Make the dolls very strong. Check sideseams, fill to a soft firmness and ensure that the hair cannot be pulled off. Use safety pins to hold "extras" safely through transport. Where appliquéd face details are glued on, still stitch around the edge so that small fingers can't pick them off. Undies are desirable! May be knitted in or sewn as little underpants. Knitted dolls could have clothing attached through knitting in, yet sufficiently free for play.

While we were there we often thought of you all and wished that our international dollmakers could witness the delight of dollmaking by the Zulu women. The KZN workshop groups will gather mid June for their review session, where they will report on their progress in teaching others how to make dolls. We will let you know how this goes. Their own wells of creativity were certainly tapped and it will be exciting to see the expansion of dollmaking in KwaZulu-Natal.

#### GENERAL INFORMATION

We would be delighted if dollmakers or groups anywhere in the world sent us brief stories of their doings or requests. Please email to Joy. [jwhitfi@iinet.net.au](mailto:jwhitfi@iinet.net.au)

In WA a group meets in Kensington on the third Tuesday (daytime) of each month and would welcome more dollmakers. Contact Joy.

We carried 500 dolls to KZN and are now ready for packing more in Perth and Melbourne. Please keep making the marvellous dolls and revelling in the process. Thankyou to all our dollmakers and to everyone in KwaZulu Natal who brought Uthando Project closer to the children there. With love from Georgia, Julie, Irene and the team

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