



Progress report Exceptional School project Sint Maarten – Global Grant 18.68450

Sister Marie Laurence Primary School

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Authors: Gert-Jan van Dommelen, John Caputo, Tanja Frederiks-Vliegen

One year ago Hurricane Irma hit St. Maarten on 6 September 2017 with immense force. Hurricane Irma, which at some point was the strongest hurricane the National Hurricane Center had ever recorded in the Atlantic, caused severe damage and devastation to the infrastructure of the island. The Sister Marie Laurence Primary School suffered extensive damage due to the passing of Hurricane Irma, and consequently was entirely looted and completely vandalized, leaving behind literally just the shell of the school.

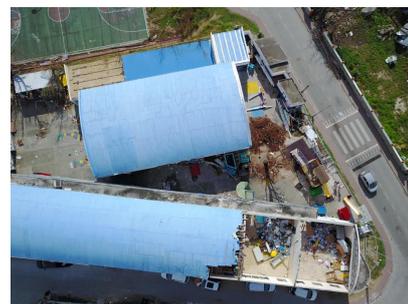


In the past twelve months lots has been done, although progress of recovery and reconstruction is slow. This progress report gives an overview of activities and progress so far.

Twelve International Rotary Clubs decided to support the “Exceptional School” project for the Sister Marie Laurence Primary school with funds and vocational support. Jointly the Global Grant 18.68450 was submitted on 21 May 2018.



Exceptional School
Inclusive & Equitable Education



The twelve Participating Rotary Clubs are:

1. Hosting Sponsor Club Sint Maarten (District 7020)
2. Coordinating International Sponsor Club Huizen Gooimeer (NL, District 1570)
3. International Sponsor Club Eindhoven Zuid (NL, District 1550)
4. International Sponsor Club Wuppertal (Germany, District 1810)
5. International Sponsor Club Arendonk (Belgium, District 1630-10)
6. International Sponsor Club Bodegraven (NL, District 1570)
7. International Sponsor Club Wall Street (New York USA, District 7230)
8. International Sponsor Club Singer Island (Florida USA, District 6930)
9. International Sponsor Club St. Catharines (Canada, District 7090)
10. International Sponsor Club St. Catharines-Lakeshore (Canada, District 7090)
11. International Sponsor Club Niagara Falls (Canada, District 7090)
12. International Sponsor Club Waterdown (Canada, District 7090).



The children of Sister Marie Laurence:

- Two months after the hurricane the children could go to school again. The staff of the school had created classrooms in the gym and the teacher's office. Every morning floors had to be dried after as the improvised roof was leaking from the rain.



November 2017: The children located in the gym and the teacher's office

- Today, September 2018, the new school year has started and the children of the Sister Marie Laurence have been distributed over two other schools, see below.



The children of group 1-5 located at the St. Dominic Primary School



The children of group 6-8 located at the Sister Magda Primary School (Dutch lessons)



Rotary support:

- Rotary Club Sint Maarten were really supporting the community and the school.
- With 200 volunteers they cleaned the island and requested the support from Rotary International. In response several Rotary Clubs responded with actions to raise funds and with vocational support using their networks and skills.



Cleaning the beach and the boulevard

- Rotary Club Sint Maarten adopted the Sister Marie Laurence Primary School and donated a new kitchen and laptops after hurricane Irma.
- Thanks to donations from Rotary Clubs in the US they were able to organize a great Santa visit and provided Christmas presents for the children.
- More news see: <http://www.rotarysxm.org/>



Rotary Sint Maarten provided a new kitchen and organized a Santa visit with presents

The Red Cross provided lunch packages for all schools on Sint Maarten. In January the budget was finished. Contact from Rotary with the Ministry in Holland helped to provide 1 Mio euro emergency money for The Red Cross so that lunches could continue till the end of the school year!





The reconstruction of the school:

- Sketches of the new school have been made and discussed with stakeholders and the school board. The new school will be hurricane resistant and will offer facilities to support the Exceptional School requirements to give more dedication to the children.
- The School Board, the Foundation Catholic Education St. Maarten, has agreed to allow multi-functional use of parts of the school for the people of Middle Region, e.g. for Sports, Music, Arts and adult education.
- Rotary Club Huizen Gooimeer had several meetings with the architect of the school and has been in close contact with the Ministry in the Netherlands.
- Funding for a new play garden has been requested by the school to the National Disaster Fund of The Netherlands. We are anxiously awaiting their decision for funding.



Sketches of the new school – source: OZ Architects

- The Dutch government in The Netherlands reserved 550 Mio euro (about 635 Mio USD) for the reconstruction of Sint Maarten. The 1st tranche of 55 Mio euro has been released. The World Bank has been contracted to supervise the right priorities, quality of plans and execution. First priorities are airport, harbor, hospital and schools. We now expect the funding for the reconstruction of the school to be approved soon.
- John Caputo, president of Rotary Club Sint Maarten, met Secretary of State Mr. Raymond Knops, the responsible minister of the Netherlands for Sint Maarten and the Dutch Antilles. They discussed the necessity and benefits for rebuilding the school.
- We also facilitated a meeting between Lisanne Addink Rotary Alblasserwaard and John Caputo. Lisanne sets up a small factory to produce bags from waste, see links.
<http://beatthebag.sx/sint-maartens-bag/>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjITUKR-LWg>



John Caputo meets Raymond Knops and Lisanne Addink

- Throughout the first half of 2018 the plans for the school have been presented to the newly appointed government representatives and other stakeholders.
- The feedback from all stakeholders is extremely positive in the sense that they all agree this is a great project which will have a huge impact on the students but also on the island of St. Maarten as a whole.
- The School Board submitted the Project Plan about this Exceptional School in August 2018 to Minister Smith, Minister of Education, to secure the necessary funding from the Recovery Funds/World Bank to build a new school campus.
- On 5 September 2018, the School Board (SKOS) sent packages of information to each individual Minister, including Mr. Smith, Minister of Education, and Mrs. Leona Marlin-Romeo, Prime Minister, with a personalized letter for each of them. SKOS is requesting a meeting with the Council of Ministers to present the project for the Exceptional School - Sister Marie Laurence Primary School.
- In any case, whether the school will be fixed or rebuilt, the plans of the Exceptional School will still stay in place and the School Board will arrange the required financial means. The goal is that within 24 months, the school can move back to its own location, opening as the Exceptional School – Sister Marie Laurence.

Status of the Global Grant:

- On 21 May 2018 the Global Grant 18.68450 has been submitted supported by 12 international Rotary Clubs and 7 Districts.
- Rotarian Mr. John De Witt, trustee representing The Rotary Foundation, visited Sint Maarten from 5-8 August 2018. He had several meetings with key stake holders, including the Minister of Education, the Catholic School Board and the school team, and the Community Council of Middle Region/Defiance, Dr. J. Arndell who supervises the care team of the school. Mr. John De Witt was very positive about the project.
- In October the Trustees of The Rotary Foundation will gather and a decision for the Global Grant will be taken.
- According to the financial plan the funding will be allocated to the specific pledges included in the project plan and will be spent over the course of 3-5 years to realize the project “Exceptional School” for the Sister Marie Laurence Primary School.



From left to right: Tanja Frederiks (project manager), Junella Prince (teacher SML), John de Witt (Rotarian), Esther Conway (Remedial Teacher), Marcellia Henry (Rotarian of Rotary Club of St. Martin Sunrise & Representative of UNESCO), Karen Wattley (Student Care Coordinator)



From left to right: Marlon Halley (President of the Catholic School Board), Marcellia Henry, John De Witt, Minister Wycliffe Smith (Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Affairs), Tanja Frederiks, John Caputo (President of ROfary Club of Sint Maarten), Rudolph Samuel (Rotarian), Pierre De Celles (Rotarian)



A personal note

This is not just about the school, this is a great opportunity for Sint Maarten, for the community of Middle Region and for the children to get a new perspective for social and economic development. It is about hope, energy and collaboration to make a better future. While safeguarding transparency, fairness and sustainability in all aspects, this is about passion for the people that need this.

Tanja Frederiks-Vliegen
Financial Manager/Project Manager

Stichting Katholiek Onderwijs St. Maarten
Foundation Catholic Education St. Maarten
A.J.C. Brouwers Road 6
Philipsburg, St. Maarten

Tel: 1-721-542-3858/1-721-542-3821

John Caputo
President Rotary Club Sint Maarten
Project coordinator project Exceptional School

Gert-Jan van Dommelen
President-Elect Rotary Club Huizen Gooimeer
Coordinator on behalf of the International
Sponsor Rotary Clubs participating in the
Global Grant.