



March of hope as volunteers arrive to build African dream

Shane Hickey
in Cape Town

IT WAS quite a sight yesterday for the residents of the Wallacedene township.

A cheery procession of almost 1,000 Irish builders trooped past their homes with a banner proclaiming "C'Mon Ye Boys in Green" as they set about the task of throwing up 200 new houses over the course of the next week.

The massive group of chippies, sparks, roofers, plasterers and labourers has descended upon the South African city for the eighth expedition from the **Niall Mellon Township Trust** to build homes in the township of some 21,000 people.

Yesterday marked the official entrance of the volunteers to the area, which they aim to partly regenerate by the end of this week. However, severe weather conditions hampered construction and workers had to return to their hotels by noon.

This is the latest "**Building Blitz**" by the Dublin-based charity headed up by social entrepreneur **Niall Mellon**, who has built some 12,500 houses around South Africa in the past seven years.

The group of 950 volunteers, who each had to raise €5,000 to travel on the expedition, have until Friday to complete their goal of building 200 houses for families who are otherwise confined to makeshift shacks with corrugated iron roofs.

The residents gave a warm greeting to the procession, some brandishing signs saying

"Feel at Home"; while a local school majorette band performed in their honour.

Concern

There was some concern among organisers that the rain would force the teams to work later in the week due to the lost time yesterday.

"Despite much uncertainty at home, our volunteers have once again proven that no obstacle is too big to keep them from helping others," said Mr Mellon. "We brought our hearts, our skills and our traditional Irish weather, but rain will not dampen our determination."

About 6,000 families live in the Wallacedene township.



Publication: Irish Independent

Date: Monday, November 9, 2009

Page: 6

Extract: 2 of 2

Circulation: 159.363

Author:

Headline: March of hope as volunteers arrive to build African dream

Irish volunteers arriving in the Wallacedene township in Cape Town yesterday while, below right, two men get down to work on the massive building project. ROGAN WARD & NIALL CARSON

