

# Migail and Morgan de Klerk of Rural Reach

 By [Ilse van den Berg](#)

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Among the inspirational African stories widely shared between our news feeds, there are the untold stories about the everyday unsung heroes who go unnoticed but are spreading hope and joy in the midst of an uncertain world.

Many organisations find themselves between a rock and a hard place at the moment, and I can't help but feel now is the time to sing their praise and raise awareness about their incredible efforts. So here's to these unsung heroes, and those whose stories will be shared in the near future.

## A heart for people in rural areas in South Africa

The road is arduous and it is long. It takes about two hours to get there, and "there" is in the middle of nowhere. Some houses become visible in the distance, but after so many kilometres of nothingness, I almost wonder if it's an illusion.



Lepelsfontein in the distance

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Morgan and Migail de Klerk

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Rural Reach, which operates in Lepelsfontein in the Northern Cape, was established by Migail and Morgan de Klerk. Hailing from Somerset West, they have always had a heart for people in rural areas in South Africa.

“The thing that struck me most while road tripping through our country a couple of years ago, was that the reason for people’s struggles was purely because of their remote locations. And that’s not something they can really do anything about. They can’t get jobs because there are no taxi routes. They don’t always have internet connections or computers or smartphones, so they can’t necessarily look for jobs.

“I knew that I wanted to make a difference in the lives of those in rural, hard-to-reach places. One night, I opened Google Maps and simply started zooming in on the West Coast region. As I kept zooming and moving the map around, I spotted a settlement in the middle of nowhere, just across the Western Cape border in the Kamiesberg Municipality in the Northern Cape. Then the name ‘Lepelsfontein’ popped up. No one I knew had ever heard of it and that was the confirmation I needed that it was the right place for us to start Rural Reach,” recalls Migail.

## Welcome to Lepelsfontein

Lepelsfontein has a population of approximately 1,000 people. There are no street lights, no running water, and no paved roads. The locals have to travel over 100km to reach the nearest hospital or shopping centre and over 60km to reach the

nearest high school (in Garies).

“The problem is that many people in these rural communities are unable to escape the grip of poverty as they do not have access to the opportunities available to them. And when they do have an opportunity, they do not have the means to act upon it. For example, most people in the town don’t have a computer or smartphone to even get information on how to apply for university. Students can’t go to school because their family cannot afford the school fees. Even if someone does get an interview for a job, there is not enough money to cover the substantial taxi fee in order to get to the interview,” explains Migail.



Teenage boy receives school supplies

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Food hampers being prepared

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## Solid relationships with locals

Migail and Morgan have been working closely with the community members in Lepelsfontein and have built up solid relationships with the locals.

“We offer practical support to the communities. This does not only mean we drive all the way there (which we do), we also tailor all our projects to meet their specific needs in order to guarantee the greatest impact. Our projects range from providing a student with internet access in order to apply for university, to fixing the local school’s plumbing system and providing them with clean water.”

Mr Frans, the renowned handy-man at the school, recalls the story of having received ablution facilities three years ago from the government for Lepelsfontein Primary School.

“The media was here, hands were shaken and photos were taken. The only problem was, they never connected the plumbing so we couldn’t use the facilities at all,” Mr Frans recalls.

Morgan and Migail and their supporters raised the funds for, and Mr Frans helped install, the required plumbing in order for the school to have working ablution facilities.



Mr Frans, the renowned handy-man

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Kids eating lunch prepared by the school

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## Sponsor a child

Another foundational project they run is the Sponsor-a-Child project. So many families can't afford the food provided and it remains essential to the wellbeing of the children. With a monthly donation of R350, a child receives a monthly nutritious food hamper to take home, as well as school fees. By the end of 2019, they had hoped to have all 22 primary school pupils sponsored. They not only managed to meet that goal, but completely exceeded it - by July 2019 all the children in the school were sponsored every month until the end of the year.

"There are 27 kids currently sponsored in Lepelsfontein Primary School (which is also fully funded for the 2020 school year) and we have funds to sponsor 62 more kids in another school. We have already made contact so the plan is to get that up and running by the end of April if possible. It all depends on this Coronavirus pandemic," says Morgan.

"We have a passion to help people," says Migail. "I truly believe, from experience, that it is greater to give than to receive. I honestly get such joy out of helping people and seeing them reach their goals in life."

For more, go to [www.ruralreach.org](http://www.ruralreach.org).

## ABOUT ILSE VAN DEN BERG

Ilse is a freelance journalist and editor with a passion for people & their stories (check out Passing Stories). She is also the editor of Go & Travel, a platform connecting all the stakeholders in the travel & tourism industry. You can check out her work here and here. Contact Ilse through her website here.

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