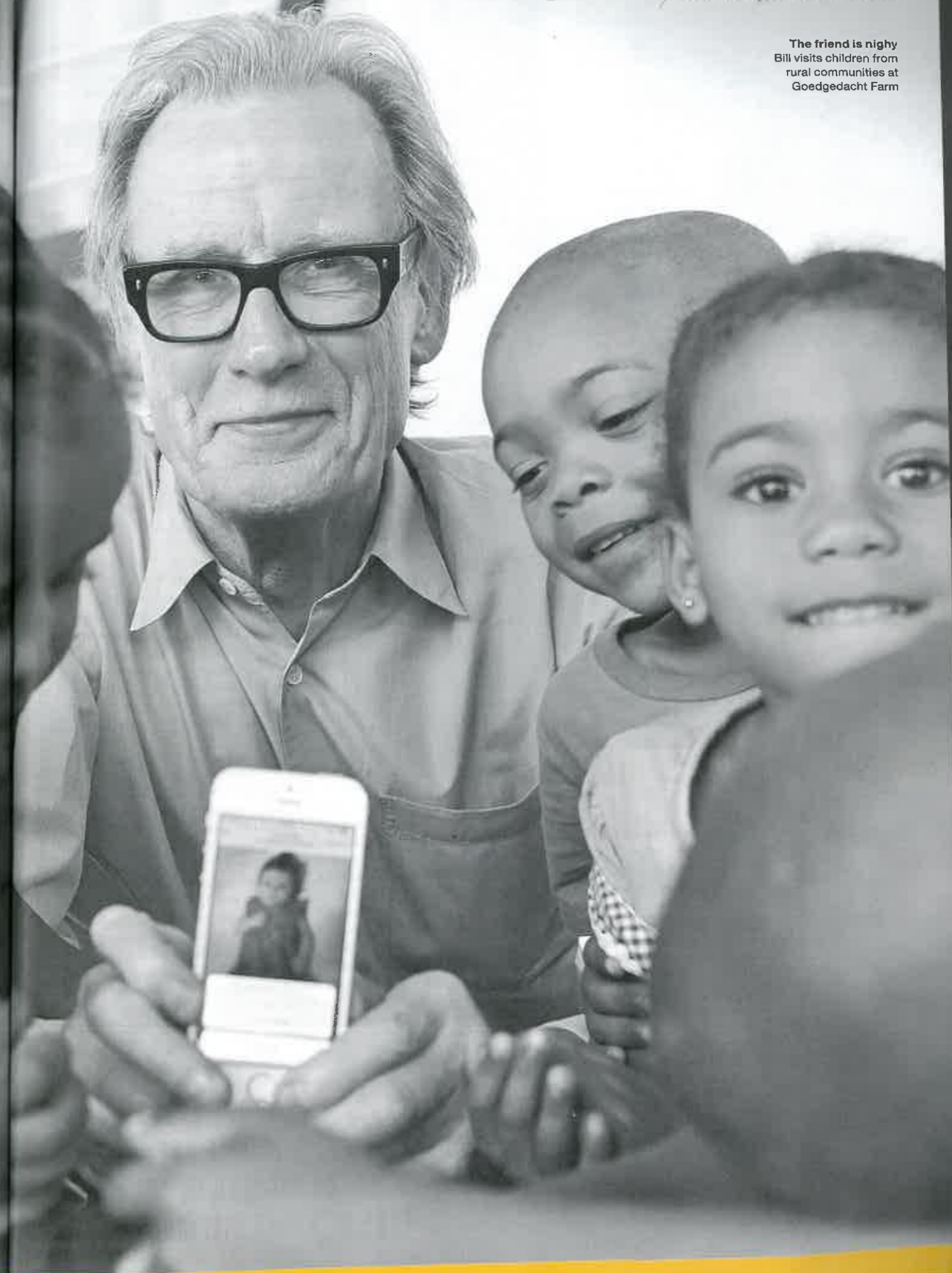
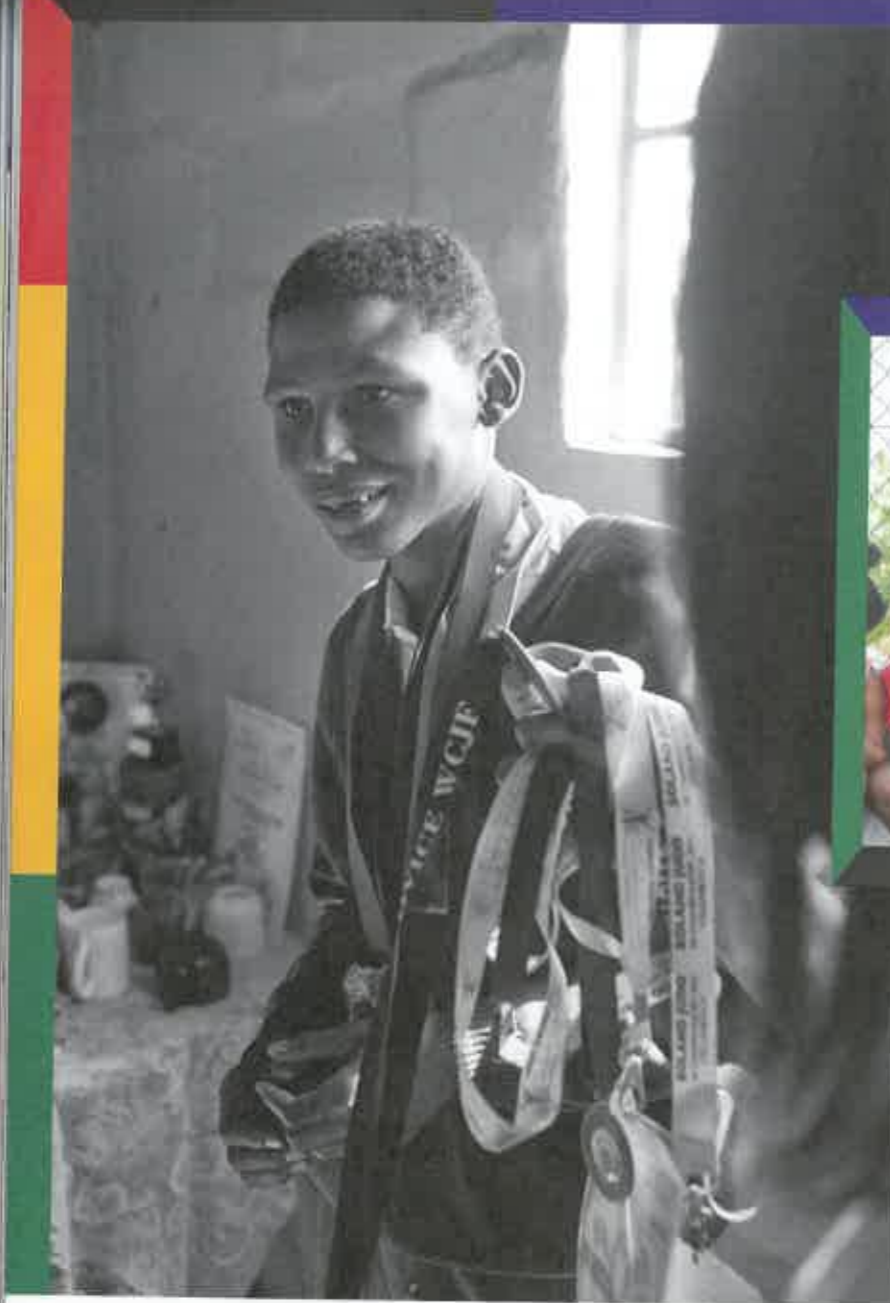


The friend is nighy
Bill visits children from
rural communities at
Goedgedacht Farm

CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

Acclaimed actor and anti-poverty campaigner **Bill Nighy** has attended four G8 summits in person – and one on screen. In an exclusive report, he meets some of the South Africans who have benefitted from Flying Start, British Airways' charity partnership with Comic Relief – which has raised £15m for projects worldwide. Photography by **Gus Gregory**





Coming out fighting
From left: Julian Malgas with a selection of his judo medals; children at Goedgedacht Farm



Flying Start's work in Africa is an incontrovertible source of hope. There are young people who would be imploding and living in a corrupt and desperate way who are now leading decent and upstanding lives. There might now be a generation of mothers who will give birth to HIV-free babies who otherwise would have passed on the condition. I had never been to South Africa before, although I knew it was a country that had great beauty and great potential. I also knew the statistics: the thousands of orphans, that foetal alcohol syndrome is endemic and that they have the highest numbers of people living with HIV in the world. But because of the funding from Comic Relief and Flying Start, there are now people in the Cape Region doing long-term constructive and miraculous things.

Our trip was a whirlwind, but it was truly inspiring and humbling. On a personal level it made me think, "Right. Let's get serious. Let's do the best we can in every area of our lives and let's be grateful for our good fortune." In these increasingly disturbing times, where the emphasis seems to be on looking out for number one, let's try and look for opportunities to

help people less advantaged than us. The first thing you see as you leave Cape Town airport is a huge slum on the side of the motorway where people live against great odds. We drove straight to Goedgedacht Farm, which is in the Swartland area, Western Cape. Ingrid LeStrade and Peter Templeton run the most extraordinary enterprise there. They rescue, rehabilitate, educate, protect, look after and encourage children with very serious difficulties, and they are deeply inspirational people. The children are emboldened by their experience – they're given hope and respect, which is often thin on the ground. Dozens and dozens of very young children go there to get fed and educated. It's a safe environment for them and Ingrid and Peter are remarkable people. I remember one of the boys on the project, Julian Malgas, who has tons of medals for judo. He had only been doing it for about two years, he's about 15 and he's got a Commonwealth medal. He was a very dignified figure; a lovely boy. He was very proud, as he should be.

Something that always surprises me when I travel is how hilarious people are. Once everybody stops being shy, people are always laughing in the face of great hardship. I've never met a kid who says, "I've had a really difficult time." Life is just not seen like that, because everybody's had a difficult time and therefore it's not an issue. The question is: what do you do now? The children I met at the Goedgedacht Trust project were crazy about everything. If you get your

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phone out, it's a quick, easy way to make friends in that situation, with any bunch of kids, anywhere. And now you can take their picture and then show them it – they think that's hysterical.

The second project I visited was Mothers2Mothers, where women with HIV administer the programme to other mothers suffering from the same condition. They encourage patients to accept the antiretroviral drugs that will help prevent them passing on the virus to their children. And it's working really well. There is no substitute and no greater encouragement than someone who's been in exactly the same position as you. They provide trust that no else would get and they've got healthy babies who are not HIV positive. The whole project was a crash course in perspective. I heard women tell their story about how they went from shame, guilt, isolation, deprivation and then – after contact with the scheme – dignity, courage, trust, before finally taking measures to ensure that their children did not contract the same virus.

The last project I visited was the Gaia Foundation at Usiko, Stellenbosch, Western Cape. Because of HIV and general deprivation, young kids often get involved in gangs. We were addressed by some of the project's success stories – one said he used to carry a Magnum pistol when he was 12. He was a member of a gang, involved in all kinds of criminal activities. Now he's been clean of drink and other drugs for ten years and he administers the project. The great thing about the projects we visited is that the people who benefit from them then go on to get involved as staff. There is no better thing to be able to say than, "I did that, I went through that. And look at me now." That shared experience is a powerful thing. ➤



What's cooking?
From top: members of staff at Goedgedacht Farm; Zim & Lindo Dread Locks, a township barber

"I'M ACCUSTOMED TO PEOPLE COMING BACK FROM INCREDIBLE ODDS AND DOING WONDERFUL THINGS"



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Story

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