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The rig at Site 5A in the Stolzburg Syncline continued drilling (stratigraphically down) from the upper MdS1 in which we had encountered slumps. It drilled through MdI1 and is currently in the lower MdS1 at 302 m. MdI1 presented itself in the core as a spectacular, ca. 20 m thick (ca. 231-251 m) sequence of interbedded jaspilite, shale and laminated siltstone. Many beds are slumped and faulted. Judging from the daily drilling reports, the drill crew found this unit either “very very very hard” or “very very hard”. The rig is drilling at a rate of ca. 15 to 35 m a day of NQ3 core, 57 mm in width.



Thikho, Victor, and Phumi keep working the EOP (Education / Outreach / Publicity) aspects of BASE. Local schools classes have begun to visit the BIAS Hall more frequently, and our team has also started to visit local schools in order to teach learners about the greenstone belt, the World Heritage Site, and the BASE drilling project. Usually, most students and teachers only know about the exploitative aspects of geosciences, in particular gold mining. The existence of other motivations and the concept of fundamental geoscience research are often new to them.



We are still struggling to establish a drill site at Site 1, located in a wide hairpin on a mountainous gravel road which is used by haulage trucks. Drilling within a confined industrialized area means easy access to infrastructure but also has its challenges. First, all personnel involved had to go through a medical exam, a criminal record background check, and the mine induction; the Easter holiday and the following long pay weekend delayed progress. Unexpectedly, a stack of water pipes and some large rocks appeared on the site. But we trust we will persevere and get started at Site 1 within a few days. A flatbed truck will manoeuvre the rig through some tight spots.



Prof. Nikki Wagner from Univ. of Johannesburg, one of the two directors of CIMERA, the South African Center for Research Drilling, visited the onsite team for two days in late April. The photo shows Tony Ferrar, our Ecology Control Officer (ECO), presenting the reclaimed Site 2 along the Geotrail Road where we had drilled until March. CIMERA is the South African local partner to BASE and thus instrumental for the project. All its administrative aspects are run through it. CIMERA’s established contacts to industry service providers and government agencies greatly facilitate the operations.

Frohes Forschen!

Christoph Heubeck and Nic Beukes