



## The (repatriated) kids are alright

HEINEKEN repatriate Ida Rutten was anticipating that each of her three sons would have a period of adjustment when repatriating. But even an intuitive parent is never sure exactly how their kids will react.

### A new normal

"After 12½ years of expat life, my husband Mark and I were keen for our boys to experience 'normal Dutch life'. But, of course, it wasn't so normal for them!" says Ida, who didn't rush back into working long hours so she could 'check in regularly' on her three sons. "Obviously, it was the first time living in the Netherlands for them and they experienced different emotions."

### The odd one out

"For starters, my youngest, who was only two when we first left for Kinshasa in 2012, wasn't used to the weather. He was basically cold for a year! But he also had struggles at school where he couldn't always follow what teachers or classmates were saying to him even though he spoke Dutch. It made him feel like an outsider," says Ida, who adds that her youngest son now fully grasps the local vernacular (and has inevitably picked up some words a parent doesn't want to hear).

### The social butterfly

"By contrast our middle son responded well to repatriation. He was something of a loner in Lagos but became much more sociable at home. He just sees kids playing football outside and heads out the door to join in. In Lagos, and Kinshasa, everything was pre-planned and the kids went everywhere with a driver. By contrast, play dates here are much more spontaneous and he clearly likes that."

### The long-distance cyclist

"To be honest, when repatriating, I was most worried about my eldest as he was a pre-teen and joining secondary school. But I feel like his biggest challenge was keeping up with his friends on the bicycle!" says Ida, who greatly appreciates the education her sons received in DR Congo and Nigeria.

### The constantness of home

"All three are open-minded and always ask 'why' rather than judging a situation. Now that we're home, they're gaining a new perspective on life. They're now part of a community that is not transient and looks to the future with a long-term outlook. One day Mark might be offered another assignment, so who knows what the future will bring, but for now I am delighted they're getting to experience the constantness of home."

*Photo: Ida's son Daan waves goodbye to Lagos*