



Moate Community School in partnership with Moi Sorget Secondary School, Kenya



A team of five from the staff of Moate Community School left Dublin airport at 6am on the morning of the 23rd of October to embark upon a long but fruitful adventure which would result in a partnership agreement between MCS and Moi Sorget Secondary School, in the heartland of the Kenyan Rift Valley. The partnership project was made possible by the charity 'Friends of Londiani' (FOL), a registered Irish charity set up in 2002, who have been working in the local area for eight years. FOL endeavours to work for the achievement of the Development Millennium Goals in a spirit of co-operation and mutual respect, through community projects in the broad areas of health, water and education.

The group's team leader, PE teacher Iain Hatton, was on his third visit to the rural town of Londiani which for five nights served as home to the MCS teachers, Kevin Duffy, Nessa Lawlor, Bláithín Seoige, Aoife Halligan and Iain Hatton. As part of an Irish Aid funded programme to promote the achievement of the Development Millennium Goals by 2030, two other Irish schools, Mountrath Community School and Killinarden Community School, joined MCS in striking up a link with Kenyan schools.

The project base and home for the travelling teachers was St. Kizito's in Londiani, run by Fr. Martin Barry, a Corkman and member of the Kiltiegan fathers who has been living and working for decades in Londiani.

Much work was done by the teachers of MCS during their visit. Classes were observed every day in Moi Sorget, with the Irish teachers participating and answering the myriad of questions which the Kenyan students asked about life and school in Ireland. The most important task of the week was the drawing up of the partnership agreement between the two schools whose task it is to share educational experiences in the areas of Geography, History and Government and, the respective native languages of Irish and Kiswahili.

During the action packed week a teacher's seminar was held which involved the participation of all the visiting Irish teachers and up to fifty Kenyan teachers from the district of Londiani. This seminar was facilitated by FOL in conjunction with the Kenyan Board of Education. Along with the MCS teachers, the teachers from both Killinarden and Mountrath facilitated group work discussions on a wide range of relevant topics. Iain Hatton conducted a session on PE teaching strategies, Kevin Duffy gave a presentation on positive discipline, both Aoife Halligan and Bláithín Seoige presented methodologies which are part of the new programme of 'Project Maths', and Nessa Lawlor facilitated a discussion forum on learning styles and linked teaching methodologies.

Tremendously enjoyable cultural exchanges took place where the Kenyan students danced and sang for the Irish visitors. Likewise the visitors performed various Irish dances and songs and recited poetry.

Each evening the five teachers enjoyed local food and were privileged to meet some local dignitaries and historians, amongst them an 88 year old mission worker, Gilbert, who recounted tales of life in Kenya before and after independence from Britain. On one particular evening the travelling teacher visited Bethel orphanage where local children are cared for and educated under the support of 'Friends of Londiani'.

Clearly the partnership which was launched between MCS and Moi Sorget is one which will last long into the future;

such was the enthusiasm and appetite for cross cultural learning which was witnessed by all in Kenya last week. It is hope that two teachers from Moi Sorget will travel to Ireland and to MCS in the New Year, thus further strengthening the link and that a small number of students from MCS will get the opportunity to visit Moi Sorget Secondary School next year.

For further information see www.moatecs.com and www.friendsoflondiani.com .

Moate Community School, Church St. Moate, Co. Westmeath (c) 2010