



Off to Kenya

Six ecstatic students along with six delighted teachers are the fortunate group who have been chosen to represent their school to travel to Londiani, Kenya, this Easter! The excited group of transition, fifth and sixth year students heard the eagerly awaited news last week that they were the chosen ones. The long hard and worthwhile work has already begun to plan the ten day trip. The group are also ready to begin the next stage in the wonderful link that has been formed between them and Moi Sorget secondary school of Londiani, Kenya.

If you haven't heard of this link before, here's just a quick re-cap on how it all began. It was just the beginning of the school year 2010 when Iain Hatton, Kevin Duffy, Aoife Halligan, Nessa Lawlor and Bláithín Seoige all journeyed down to the heartland of the Rift Valley in Western Kenya. Their travels brought them to a small secondary school eight kilometres from the town of Londiani. Leader Iain Hatton, who is heavily involved with the inspiring 'Friends of Londiani' charity, was paramount in establishing contact with the Moi Sorget secondary school.

Much work was done by the MCS teachers during their time at the school, classes were observed daily and they taught the students much about Irish education, culture and vice-versa. However, the most important action by far was the foundation of the link between our two schools. The bond created aims to share educational experiences in the subjects of geography, history, government, Kiswahili and Irish. The school principals Mr Duffy and Mr Kemei signed a partnership agreement and much success has followed. Moi Sorget school organised a traditional ceremony to commemorate this historical event, a very memorable and touching occasion. The teachers arrived back to Ireland captivated by the magic and beauty of Kenya. They were bursting with knowledge and eagerly shared it with the awe-inspired students in MCS.

The next event was the huge success at the Worldwise forum in January 2011. Here Iain Hatton, joined by a group of transition year students travelled up to Croke Park and displayed informative posters, pictures and articles about the work that had been accomplished in the first three months of the link. The day was a great learning curve for all who attended. The knowledge gained from the other participating schools provided some great ideas to forward Moate's own project. The instructive day included some excellent workshops which were attended by the transition year students who described them as "fun" and "insightful". It was a great honour for MCS at the end of the day to receive an award along with Mountrath community school and Killinarden secondary school for the work being carried out in the Londiani region.

On the 7th of April 2011, Mr John Kemei and Kennedy Ongoto from Moi sorget arrived to the MCS front door. They attended classes regularly and taught students much about their school and community. John, the principal, a very funny man, was never seen without a cheerful smile on his face. Certainly there was never a dull moment when he visited class as he animatedly described in detail all aspects of Kenyan life. Kennedy was a man you felt was just full of useful knowledge. Any question a student asked he would answer in a clear, concise manner. They left a huge imprint on the students and teachers minds when they left and their presence was certainly missed.

You may have heard of the Millennium development goals? These were set up by the United Nations in order for developed countries like Ireland, to help third world countries eradicate the problems which are holding them back from their full potential. Disease, famine, poverty, lack of education and gender inequality are some examples of the areas the millennium goals try to work on. Extraordinary charities like 'Friends of Londiani' are committed to the achievement of these goals and therefore, thanks to our linking project, so are we here in MCS. On the 13th of April, Killinarden, Mountrath and Moate Community School came together to face these problems in association with representatives from 'Friends of Londiani' (Martin Ballantyne) and 'Worldwise' (Eva Creely). A number of workshops were held in Mountrath community school where teachers and students alike were shown the problems developing countries face and students were asked to try and come up with ideas on how our links can contribute to improving the lives of the people who have to suffer in countries such as Kenya. Some of the students from the class 'TY2' hosted their own workshop on 'achieving universal primary education'. The day was a huge success made all the more special because the Kenyan ambassador to Ireland Catherine Muigai Mwangi, was present. Her attendance illustrated just how important and productive events like this one can be. The ideas and information gained were valued strongly and has become a huge part of the link. It showed the students who attended how all of us can help solve these disastrous problems.

That brings us back to the present. There are many activities planned for this school year to help expand the link and educate our students on Kenyan life. MCS students will begin a pen pal programme with Moi Sorget students after Christmas to help them personally learn more about life in a developing country. The six students who are travelling to Kenya have been working very hard to prepare a workshop on the idea of 'eradicating poverty'. Yes, that may sound ambitious, however It is the first of the 'Millennium Development Goals' and you would be surprised how much work has been achieved to lower the amount of people living under the poverty line. All around Ireland schools that have links like MCS' are working together to tackle the problems associated with poverty.

The jam-packed workshop has many interesting and fun topics including a superb handwritten song on poverty by MCS student Aisling O' Neill which highlights the injustice of poverty. The workshop

concentrates on the idea of 'making something from nothing' and how one person can make a difference. The workshop will show how people have come up with ideas on how to adapt with the little possessions they have, due to poverty. There are so many ingenious examples of this and if you want to learn more simply go to www.friendsoflondiani.com, or you can attend an information night after Christmas where students and teachers hope to inform the local community on what they are doing and try to get people involved in this amazing project. Senior students from the school attended a 'Millennium Development Goal' convention in Killinarden community school in Dublin, on the 14th of December, similar to the one in Mountrath last year. Here the group of six students presented their workshop for the first time. Twenty-two students travelled up as well, those students from transition, fifth and sixth year attended other workshops on the problems of: child mortality and access to clean drinking water in the third world. The students enjoyed some singing from the Killinarden school choir, where they provided an uplifting rendition of an African song called 'Jambo Bwana' to the beat of some native African drums. This annual event, which has had a very successful first two years, is hoped to be held in MCS next year.

To try and lower the cost of the amazingly expensive trip, there will be a few fundraising activities throughout the year. On the last day of this term, a charity 'Shave or Wax' took place within the school. Some brave teachers along with a surprisingly large amount of male students volunteered for the event. The school choir happily volunteered to help out by Carol singing in Golden Island Shopping Centre. A raffle will be held after Christmas with Twelve prizes up for grabs. Every cent raised will go towards lowering the cost of the trip.

It's early days yet but the group have already organised many things to do while visiting Moi Sorget. The group leader Iain Hatton has been in contact with 'Friends of Londiani', and has arranged for the group to assist in the development work that FOL carries out; such as constructing smokeless stoves in local houses where there are serious ventilation problems, and also installing gravity rainwater systems to help provide more clean, running water for the school. They will also attend classes and learn more about Kenyan life and culture. The teachers will hold their own classes on their specialist subjects, while the students will present their workshop to a group which could range from twenty to two-hundred locals! A daunting prospect indeed. Hopefully, however, the students will have had plenty of practice by then as they aim to host the workshop for many junior cycle students who are new to the project, during the school year.

The school is extremely proud of the link so far and aims to get the whole community involved through the enthusiasm of its students. If you want to find out more please log on to the MCS website or the Moate Moi sorget Facebook page and don't hesitate to contact us if you have any ideas you would like to put forward.