

Trip to Kenya

Upon arriving at Nairobi Airport, Kenya, I found myself in a city not unfamiliar to one in the UK. It had all the characteristics of your average busy city; concrete buildings, bustling people, too many vehicles trying to squeeze down the same busy road, however, as we moved out towards the country, we began to leave the chaos of Nairobi city behind. The journey was, to be perfectly honest, the farthest thing from a comfortable one. Three students, six teachers, two Kenyan teachers and two drivers crammed into one small matatu, with about eighteen suitcases strapped precariously to the rickety luggage rack on the roof, was, as you can imagine, a bit of a hair raising experience, especially as the roads seemed to deteriorate more and more as we moved out towards Miriu. We were soon distracted though, by the panoramic views and spectacular wildlife as we travelled across Kenya, passing zebras grazing at the side of the road, and at one point, stopping inches away from a baboon carrying its young. Naturally, however, the many wonderful aspects of Kenya are balanced out by the bad; the corruption, the defined division between the rich and the poor and the amount of people living in poverty. This soon became very apparent to us as we passed Kibera; to us, this is the largest slum in Africa, but to the thousands and thousands of people living there, it is their livelihood, the place they call home.

Miriu is situated in the most picturesque setting with the glinting corrugated iron roofs of the tiny mud-walled houses, scattered randomly across the surprisingly green landscape, starkly contrasted against the rusty red of the dusty paths and roads. All of this breathtaking landscape is home to the Luo tribe, whose friendly nature we felt almost immediately. During my stay there, I came across so many extraordinary people whose sole aim in life appeared to be to help as many people as possible, despite their own challenging personal circumstances. Although the ways of life of the Luo tribe were basic, their strong community spirit and family values are beyond comprehension to the vast majority of those of us who have never had to look beyond our own needs. Everywhere we went young children came running bare footed after us up the red tracks, grinning widely. On a few occasions I brought balloons with me to blow up and hand out to some of the children as we passed; the sheer delight on their faces said everything.

Whilst visiting Miriu Secondary School, I got the opportunity to take part in a business studies lesson with a class full of Kenyan students who were of an age very similar to my own. I think that it was whilst sitting in this dusty classroom that I began to realise the real importance of education. The integrity and intelligence of the people who surrounded me was proof that with the right direction and moulding from a proper education, these remarkable people could have the chance to give themselves a brighter future. It distresses me to think that for many children in Miriu, their future is already determined by the financial circumstances of their family, regardless of intelligence and their determination to succeed in life. However, after speaking to many of the students, I began to realise that even those who have the privilege of fully completing their secondary school education, rarely make it to university due to lack of financial support. It also soon became very clear to me the importance of the sponsorship program that is currently in place at my own school and the huge impact it can have on the lives of many of the students at Miriu. The sponsorship program allows children such as AIDS orphans, who would otherwise have no finance available to them, to be sponsored by a member of our own community. This then enables them to attend school, complete their education and therefore have a better chance of giving themselves a brighter future. My trip to Kenya has made me even more motivated and determined to expand this sponsorship program

and the communications between the pupils of Miriu Secondary School and the pupils of The Thomas Adams School, Wem.

Although my stay was short, I have gained so much from my time in Kenya and have made many good friends and memories that will stay with me for the rest of my life. My experiences of life as a member of the 'Luo' tribe have completely changed my perspective on life and have given me an insight into the many different cultures and ways of life beyond my own.