

Giraffe Project Spring trip 2017 to Nairobi

2017 is an election year in Kenya so when planning our 2017 on-site visit we decided to err on the side of caution, moved the trip from summer to spring and only travelled with a small team. Luckily, people looked towards the election period with some apprehension but things were quiet and safe throughout our stay.

There was only a small team this year, Jackie, 2 trustees and 4 sponsors and, of course, our wonderful office team - Liz, Lillian and Sam – joined and aided us as well throughout our stay.

Six activity clusters filled our 10-days to the very last minute:

- strengthen and enable our sponsorship programme to work efficiently
- counsel students on post-secondary career choices
- educate parents of primary students about Giraffe Education Centre (GEC)
- develop our network in Kenya
- align with the local leadership on the status of past investments and needs for the future
- proceed on our vision of more local governance

Thanks especially to our sponsors & their teens we organized the handout of all the many gifts sponsors provided along with suitcases full of goodies and supplies. We photographed all students and video-taped student messages for their (prospective) sponsors.

Jackie and Liz carried out intensive counselling sessions with GEC students and recent graduates, reviewing performance and discussing career opportunities and post-secondary Giraffe sponsorship regulations – having to balance the promotion of ambition and dreams with realism and funding constraints.

Jürgen and Jackie conducted well-attended information sessions for parents at Green Pastures Primary school in Kibera slum and Tumaini Primary in Mathare, explaining Giraffe's focus on GEC for secondary school sponsorship and promoting the progress of the school.

One of our key areas of development to fulfill the Giraffe vision is post-secondary education: be it vocational training, college, or even university. We met with local representatives of a vocational training program, discussed delivering training to GEC students with a career counselling organization and met with the Education Officer of Machakos County (the location of GEC) to learn about her views on the development of the Kenyan job market.

One of the principles of Giraffe is true partnership. John and Jürgen joined a meeting with the Tumaini Board to discuss the status and direction of that school where we sponsor almost 70 students. Similarly, a Giraffe Education Centre Board meeting attended by John, Jackie, Liz and Jürgen addressed the status of GEC and discussed priorities for future investments.

The most significant event, however, was the completion of the handover process of Giraffe Education Center from a Giraffe Europe owned and run entity to Elumi Trust, a local entity run by our long term trusted partners. This new partnership will improve the sustainability of the school as happened when we formed a similar partnership with Tumaini school back in 2012. After finishing the legal proceedings we were able to celebrate the symbolic handover of the keys in an all-students-and-faculty meeting. Of course, Giraffe Project remains deeply involved in this partnership as currently 100% of students at GEC are Giraffe funded and Giraffe continues substantial fundraising for needs of this school.

A full day of face-to-face- dialogue between Giraffe Europe and the local Giraffe team provided the opportunity to define actions to improve our collaboration and to carry out job appraisals.

As always, we come away from Nairobi with the images of still pressing needs but at the same time the deep gratitude expressed by our students and staff, their wonderful smiles and unbound optimism – which will carry us through the coming months.