

Matt McGuinness' Account of his Visit to DGS -

3 November 2010

Planning a holiday to Kenya earlier this year, I decided to do a little to help those less fortunate than myself whilst there.

I found DGS simply by putting the words "poor children Mombasa" into google and seeing what came up. Maybe it was fate, but I am very glad to have found this deserving charity.

My travelling companion Luke was not so keen, as he "doesn't really do charity" and by his own admission does nothing more than buy a poppy once a year.



Looking through the website, and reading some of the previous volunteers reviews, I was influenced by a photo I saw of the "winning football team" with Guy Tolhurst who had spent quite some time at the school. As happy as the children looked, they had no football kit!! So my idea took shape, and I sent my first of many emails to Judy asking if I could help. Silly question of course!

The next few months I spent hassling and generally bothering anybody I vaguely knew, who may have something sporty to donate. I was helped greatly by Monarch Airlines who kindly let me carry the excess baggage for free. (thank you once again Monarch Airlines). To those that had no sports clothing to donate, I reminded them that I also had a collection tin in my

local post office. This, and the non-uniform day at my local school raised enough money to buy 10 desks for the school too.

As my trip was very short, I only had two visits to DGS. The first one, on the 3rd of November was to hand out the goods, and meet the children, including the lad that I now sponsor. Some of my acquaintances at home are quite cynical about sponsoring a child in Africa, claiming that the child probably doesn't even exist. Well, I can quite categorically state that he does exist, and what a polite lad he is too. The hand out of the clothing went very well, and we all had a PE lesson afterwards. Apparently, every child got something. I didn't realise that I had squeezed so much into my bags. Tooth brushes, toothpaste, pens pencils, rulers, it all went in. Some stationery was donated by a sponsor, Sonal, who lives in the USA, but asked me to contribute on her behalf. My manager from work also kindly donated many items.



Please let me add that I am used to poverty, having been well travelled in the past, but I was still shocked at just how little these children have. Many had no shoes, and one lad was ecstatic to be given my daughter's pink trainers that she had outgrown. There was a mini scrum when socks were handed out. Items that mean so little to us meant so much to the children. Playtime was spent playing a game with bottle tops or throwing pebbles. When I think about my children and all that they have, I am embarrassed and humbled. Yet the children here are still considered lucky as they are getting fed and educated, something we all take for granted, but that doesn't happen to all children in Kenya.



The day flew by, which also included a quick trip to the local market to buy bananas for 150+ children, as well as for a few non DGS children who hovered nearby as I bought them. I went back to Mombasa that evening with nothing but happy memories, a sun burned neck and a friend who had changed his views about charities! In fact he spent that evening talking non-stop about his day and how amazing it had been. (he has now promised to help me collect for DGS in my local shopping centre in a few weeks).



My second trip to the school, the following week, was to check on the desks that I had raised the money for. It was good to see them being made, and to know that ALL the money raised goes to the school, and isn't swallowed up in admin etc.

This time I let Jacob go shopping for lunch as I stayed behind to play with the children one more time, and help them in the classroom. Before I left, I remembered another photo I saw on the web site of Guy with a goat that he had bought for the school. So yet again, he had unwittingly influenced me and I felt I had to do the same. Jacob has told me that once bought, he may keep it for milk or breeding, so maybe I won't feel as guilty as I would have done had it been bought for lunch!



All in all I had a very good time there. The children and teachers were very kind and happy.

And to anyone who reads this and is thinking about helping out...please, please go for it. I didn't have much time, but as they say in Tesco...every little helps

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