

Last September, I was lucky enough to be presented with the opportunity to travel to Uganda to see first-hand some projects supporting children in the Mukono area run by the Guildford-Mukono Link. I selected two projects that interested me most: firstly fuel-efficient stoves in schools and secondly the work of a music centre.

When all the planning was done, including getting injections, endless email conversations sorting out an itinerary and writing a plan for myself, I left for Uganda on the 14th February travelling with several trustees of the Link.

After a day in Kampala, where I met some students that the Link had sponsored through university, I left for a 30 mile drive to Mukono. This was without doubt the bumpiest car journey I had ever been on. We stopped at two Primary Schools to study their fuel-efficient stoves and to learn about their benefits. These stoves mean that the children do not have to carry wood to school each day for open fire cooking. Not only is less wood used, but it is better for the environment and the cooks who no longer breathe in the smoke.

Once in Mukono, we visited the Keenotes music centre to hand over several musical instruments (including violins, flutes and brass instruments recently retired by Surrey Arts). I also took over a mace for the brass band leader William who was so delighted.



One of the highlights of the week for me was learning African Drumming and seeing and hearing their amazing brass band and African music groups perform. Their energy, enthusiasm and expertise were truly inspiring. None of the musicians could read music and so they relied on learning all their music by ear – incredible!

I have returned to England determined to raise money for the band so that they can purchase uniforms to wear for their concerts, something they have been wanting for some time. I am also planning to raise money for St Andrew's School so that they can build a fuel-efficient stove. Over the next six months or so I will be holding cake sales at school, walking a sponsored 35 miles from Oxted to Guildford and holding a music concert in my village, Tatsfield. My target is a minimum of £400 and I look forward to the challenges ahead.

