

The Connor Diocesan team which travelled to Connor's link diocese of Yei in Southern Sudan, has arrived back safely in Northern Ireland bringing with it the greetings of Yei Diocese.

The team, comprising diocesan accountant David Cromie and Communications Officer Karen Bushby, was led by the Ven Stephen

Forde, Archdeacon of Dalriada and chair of Connor Council for Mission. The trio saw first hand the benefits the new school in Mongo village, built with funding from parishes and individuals in Connor, has brought to people there.

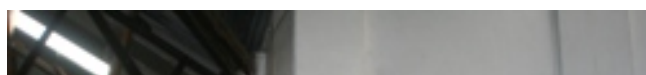


The school, with airy classrooms and offices, replaced a crumbling building and mango tree classrooms. The team witnessed the joy and gratitude in the faces of every member of the Mongo community, from the smallest toddler to the Boma Chief and his elders – it was a joy and gratitude expressed in prayer, colour, music and dance and the day spent in Mongo was simply unforgettable.

The team's aim was to lay the foundations for a META (Mission Experience Team Abroad) visit to Yei led by the Bishop of Connor later this year.

During their seven days in Yei, the team visited various projects supported by Yei Diocese, including the Martha Health Centre and the Yei Vocational Training College, and joined in worship in services in English, Arabic and the local Bari language. The participated in a conference in Yei Cathedral for 700 P7 school leavers and had a private audience with the Commissioner of Southern Sudan. David worked daily with Diocesan Bookkeeper Samuel Dino, and Karen met with Yei MU and interviewed survivors of the 20-year civil war which ended with the signing of a peace agreement in 2005. She also recorded the reality of life in Yei in pictures, words and video.

The team's schedule was organised by Bishop Hilary Adebé Luata of Yei, and



He and his wife Maria Joyce and all diocesan staff and pastors extended a very warm welcome to the Connor team.

The only hitch in the trip – which saw the team fly from London to Entebbe, and then onto Yei via the Ugandan town of Arua – was that they checked

their luggage in in Belfast early on the morning of Sunday January 17, and they did not see it again until it emerged from the nosecone of a small Eagle Air prop plane at Yei Airstrip at lunchtime on Saturday January 23! It's amazing how one can get by with a spare of the essentials and a packet of Omo!!



Full reports and photos will appear shortly. There will also be a special focus on Yei in the February edition of Connor Connections.

Meantime, a meeting to launch the Connor Diocesan META to Yei, scheduled for July, will take place at CMS Ireland, Dargan Road, on Monday February 8 at 7pm. Anyone interested in joining the META, which will be led by Bishop Alan and Canon Cecil Wilson, is urged to attend the meeting when the Connor Team will talk about their experiences, and the areas they have identified where Connor Diocese can continue to offer support as part of the ongoing partnership with Yei.