

# MapLink

## A project to link students through mapping

### Pilot Summary

#### Introduction

In December/January 2009 a pilot project was carried out in Ziguinchor, Senegal to trial the use of interactive map making as a way for students in Africa and the UK to creatively communicate and strengthen their school links. By supporting students to create online maps of their own local area, partners across the world can share their own perspectives and stories about their communities. The goal of the pilot was to develop a creative and practical model for students in the UK and Africa to communicate and collaborate through mapping.

#### The Project

We conducted a series of meetings and workshops for teachers and students at Lycee Djignabo High School in Ziguinchor. In total 17 students and 4 teachers were trained. The programme began by discussing how maps could be used as a new means of communication, and what a map made by students should highlight.

Students were then supported to identify categories of information they wanted their map to contain, such as things in the community they like, problems they see and interesting places they want to share.



Ziguinchor students discussing what should be on their map



Field Day: Organising students to venture into town

A field day took the students out into the town to photograph and log details about some of these key places. Photographs are an important part of the map and help to instantly give international partners a window into their link community.

The final workshop taught students and teachers how to use the MfC Community Maps website to create their own school map, add information and photographs to this map and manage their own data.

#### How the maps work

Each partner school owns their own map on the MfC Community Maps website. Students can add their own information to their local map, highlighting things they want to share with their partner

students. Text and photographs add further context and help to give partner students across the world a more intimate understanding of the area.

Students in the UK can visit the Senegalese website (and vice versa) and explore the student created maps to learn about their partner community from the perspective of students there. The maps are owned and maintained by the schools themselves. Dynamic maps can be continuously edited and added to.

In addition to simply visiting one another's websites, students in one school can post questions directly to their partners map. These can then be answered on the map itself, providing a means of dialoguing directly through the map.



Map training day in Ziguinchor

## What now?

The pilot programme was very successful. Students in Ziguinchor were excited by the prospect of creating their own maps and quickly learned the technical skills necessary to manage and edit their online map. Since the programme students have continued adding information and photographs to their map.

Students at Fortismere school in London have seen the Ziguinchor map and are keen to get their own map up and running! Mapping ambassadors have been identified and trained to lead the map creation on the London end. The maps have successfully sparked a joint interest, and students in both schools are eager to use the maps to learn more about their partners and share about themselves.

This pilot offered the unique opportunity to trial a methodology in both the UK and Africa, allowing us to identify and overcome barriers to a truly successful linking programme. Based on the success of this pilot we are now developing a project methodology and toolkit which could be used to initiate similar programmes elsewhere. A full report is currently in development.