

## **PROPOSED SISTER CITY RELATIONSHIP — MILWAUKEE AND BOMET (KENYA)**

### **INFORMATION SHEET**

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#### **Demographics**

Bomet County is one of the 47 Counties of Kenya (created under the 2010 Constitution). Bomet town, which is a multicultural urban centre with a population of approximately 110,000, is the capital and administrative centre of the County government. The population of the County is approximately 800,000 and is mainly youthful; that is, two out of five people are under the age of 15. The ethnic composition of the population comprises the Kipsigis (the largest group), the Kisii, the Kikuyu and the Luo. Christianity is the main religion (82.7%) of the people of Bomet (the same as the rest of the Kenyan population), while the second largest religion is Islam (11.1%). Other religions are Hinduism, Baha'I and traditional African religions.

#### **Geographical description**

Bomet County is situated in the western highlands of Kenya, approximately 50 kilometres south of the Equator, and about 230 kilometres southwest of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The County is characterised by undulating topography, which can be divided into two ecological zones; namely, a hilly shelf that runs between the Mau Escarpment in the north, and the lowland plains that extend to the world-famous Maasai Mara game reserve in the south (between 2,500 and 1,800 metres above the sea level). Five major rivers traverse the County and drain into Lake Victoria (the source of River Nile) 100-odd kilometres to the west.

#### **Historical background**

Bomet County was founded as a British colonial sub-district in 1902 when the Kericho district, of which Bomet was part, was established as the main colonial administrative post in the early years of colonial rule in Kenya. In 1907, British colonial authorities introduced European settlement in parts of Bomet County to develop commercial farming (dairy and crop farming) in the region and a modern economy in general. In the 1930s, tea was introduced in Bomet County. Today, the County is the top tea producer in Kenya (while Kenya in general is ranked third as a world producer of black tea after China and India).

#### **Governmental structure**

Kenya is a republic (having become independent of British colonial rule in 1963) with a presidential system. The country is governed on two levels under the 2010 Constitution; namely, National and County government levels. The National government is headed by a President elected directly by the people, a two-chamber House of Parliament (comprising the National Assembly and the Senate) and the Judiciary. The 47 County governments are headed by Governors elected directly by the people (as the executive arm of County governments) and County Assemblies (legislative arm). These two levels of government work together in cooperation and consultation under the Inter-governmental Act as provided by the Constitution. Currently, the government of Kenya is headed a President elected in 2013 under the Jubilee coalition of political parties while the Opposition is headed the Cord coalition of parties.

#### **Structure of county government of Bomet**

The County Government of Bomet is created under Article 176 of the Constitution of Kenya and comprises the Executive and Legislature. The Executive comprises the Governor (and the Deputy Governor) and a 10-member Cabinet (Ministers) appointed by the Governor. The Legislature (County Assembly) on the other hand comprises the Speaker and 30 elected Members of the County Assembly (representing electoral constituencies called Wards). The executive authority of the county is vested in, and exercised by, the Governor and the Cabinet, while the County Assembly makes laws and plays oversight role vis-à-vis the Executive.

Towns and other urban centers, including Bomet town, operate under the Urban Areas and Cities Act and managed by a Municipality Board consisting of eleven members, six of whom are appointed through a competitive process by the County Executive (with the approval of the County Assembly), while the other five are nominated by (a) an umbrella body representing professional associations, (b) an association representing the private sector, (c) a cluster representing registered associations of the informal sector, (d) a cluster representing registered neighborhood associations in the area and (e) an association of urban areas and cities.

The Executive (the Governor and Cabinet) is mandated by law to assist a city or municipality its planning, formulation, reviewing and implementation of its development plans, etc.

### **Bomet development trust (bdt)**

BDT is a newly established organization (following the devolved system of government in Kenya in 2013) and registered as a Public Trust with the specific aim of initiating and implementing development programs in Bomet County in partnership with various stakeholders, including the county government of Bomet. The policy-making organ of BDT is an elected Board of Trustees, consisting of the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and a maximum of nine members. The day-to-day running of BDT is vested in a CEO and staff working under the CEO. However, these positions are yet to be fully filled as BDT is at its infancy stage.

### **Educational system**

Kenya's public education system is 8-4-4, that is, 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and 4 years of college or university education. This was introduced in 1985 after many years of a quasi-British system that had existed since Kenya attained independence from Britain in 1963. At the primary level, students take the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) and at secondary, the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE). However, some private schools in Kenya offer a system of education similar to the British system of education with ordinary level exams, "O-levels" taken at the end of 4 years of secondary school and advanced levels "A-levels", taken after two years of high school. Kenya has several world-standard public universities such as University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University.

### **Areas of mutual interest**

Bomet town and County can offer rewarding opportunities for investment and trade to the residents of Milwaukee under a sister-city relationship. There are also social and cultural possibilities that can be explored. Similarly, Bomet could gain a great deal from the experiences and rich history of Milwaukee in a sister-city relationship. Areas of mutual interest include:

Direct tea exports to Milwaukee. Currently, the bulk of tea produced in Bomet is exported to Egypt, Pakistan, United Kingdom, Afghanistan and Sudan

- Investment in horticulture. Bomet has the ideal climate for horticultural crops
- Fresh fruits and vegetable export to Milwaukee. Tropical fruits include bananas, passion fruit, avocado, chillies, pineapple, onions, leeks and peas
- Investment in energy. There are large rivers in the County that can be harnessed to produce hydro-power generation
- African traditional hand-made artefacts could be exported to Milwaukee for cultural exchange and tourism
- Importation of manufactured goods from Milwaukee
- Investment in American education. Kenya has a shortage of American college education system yet it is in high demand (many Kenyan students travel to USA every year for this kind of education)

**Details of communications**

The Bomet Development Trust (BDT) is the non-governmental organization that has been mandated to lead the sister-city relationship project in partnership with Pan-African Community Association (PACA). BDT is managed by a board of trustees headed by the Managing Trustee. The organisation enjoys the support of the County Government of Bomet, the Bomet Chamber of Commerce and the farming community of Bomet.