

JOURNAL FOR SEPTEMBER 23 TO 29, 2007
SISTER ROSITA ARANITA, CSJ

September 23, 2007: I prepared a Mexican style lunch with an African twist of guacamole, salsa, pea soup and chapatis. Mary Lieta showed me how to mix the chapati flour, roll it out and fry it.

In the afternoon, Monica Agala's mother came by to visit and thank me for sponsoring her daughter's education. After she left, Sr. Frances, the new principal dropped in to inquire about prices for our solar system. The quotes Bishop Colin Davis gave her were too expensive. Apparently Bishop Colin Davis had chosen and hired the contractor who was working on her house. The contractor was overcharging her congregation for work done. As a result, the visitor's room and bath will not be able to be completed.

September 24, 2007: Mary Lieta opens our week days with an hour of Kiswahili and Dhuluo language classes. They have been very useful. We can now greet and take our leave in either language. I have been concentrating on Dhuluo since that is more frequently used here.

We all caught a ride with Fr. Aloys to Homa Bay to go to the internet café first then do our weekly food and household shopping. Since we do not have refrigeration, we can't stock up on perishables. Our visitors and villagers have provided us with enough dry beans to last for a few months. Beans and eggs are our primary source of protein. When we visit the villages, we always get chicken or tilapia.

September 25, 2007: Our main agenda today is to facilitate the Koyier A & B Village meeting. The elected officers and the committee met with us to report on their progress in organizing themselves as a community based organization. Angie is our main liaison with this village. Francis Ogola, the chair, conducted a good meeting. All officers and committee members were introduced including the A & B clan elders. Angie distributed the census form which the clan elders will help fill. After considering several names for their CBO, the group chose "Koyier/Komuga Development Project. Their first goal is to secure clean and safe water for the village. Other possible objectives that the group brainstormed were: Prevention of water contamination/environmental conservation & improvement; Reducation of Poverty through income generation projects.

The president then called for the collection of donations from villagers to pay for the registration fees and transportation of officers to Kosele. He asked those present to sacrifice extra and advance more money to pay for the CBO registration and travel costs. 580 schillings were collected. Francis hopes that the registration will be completed by next Tuesday or by next Friday. He mandated the village representatives of the 7 clans to go directly to their designated members to collect the other half of the money needed. He proposed that officers come up with 50ksh/month and members 20ksh/month.

Francis described what documents are needed for the registration and opening of a bank account. He wants the Mrs. Aguku Boas to check all their documents before going to Kosele. He will contact the District water engineer to him attend the next meeting.

September 26, 2007: We headed for Adiedo but got waylaid in Kandiege while Fr. Aloys tried to pull a pick-up truck out of the mud. Luckily, a team of cattle arrived. Their owner whistled commands and the cattle came to a stop in front of the stuck vehicle. The first pair of cattle had their yoke and chains removed so they could be used to haul the pick up out of the mire, the sisal rope first used had snapped. The vehicle was jerked out of the mud in no time.

We got to Adiedo before 1 p.m. after Angie successfully maneuvered the truck through a trail gone bad. Mary Lieta videotaped the roughroading, lurching drive through a thicket gone beserk with the recent rains.

By the time we finished our late lunch, some of the villagers had assembled under our meeting tree. Fr. Aloys crashed for a nap while we met with the villagers. I basically updated them about Homa Bay Rotary having to decline sponsorship of the borehold project and our having to identify a new Kenyan Rotary to take over the sponsorship. The villagers chose to go ahead with the rain catchment project first using multiple Rotary funders then supplement it with the borehole project later. The proposal will be revised as two different proposals and forwarded to respective Rotaries in the U.S..

We were directed through s shortcut along the primary school to the main road. Fr. Aloys took over driving to Simbi. When we got to our destination, I stayed in the car to admire the filled, but defunct lake from my vantage point in the back seat while everyone went downhill to the waters edge. Water fowl dotted the large lake, some floating flamings afar and a flock of cranes flew over to the other end of the lake. Little children came up to the truck to greet me shyly then scitter back to their mothers who sat nearby the road resting. Cattle, sheep and goats grazed on the lush slopes of the concave crater lake.

September 27, 2007: We walked to TeresaAnudo's home above the Siburi pond. It was a beautiful day. Teresa is the 4th wife of a deceased polygamist husband. She is a stonecutter who educated her 6 living children through her hard work. One of her sons is a seminarian with about two years more of theology before he can be orgained. Teresa is a devout Catholic and a member of the Monica Womens Group. She is the chief disciplinarian of the young children at the parish mission mass on Sundays.

After lunch served by herself and her youngest daughter, she demonstrated how she chisels stone out of the quarry behind her home. Teresa can carve about 50 foot long stones a week. She said a man does double that amount in the same time. She said that women who are menstruating cannot do this kind of work because the

vibrations of hammering would prolong bleeding. She has been doing stonework for 20 years now after her youngest child came of age. Teresa was so honored to have us visit her in her home that she built herself. It is of quarried stone, corrugated iron roof and mud floor. She keeps her home very tidy and attractive covering all her furniture with hand crocheted work.

September 28, 2007: Tom, the electrician returned to adjust our solar system and work on Mary's solar system that went dead. They discovered a fried lizard between the panel and cord to the battery. The system functioned well after the offending carcass was pried away.

It was a work day at home until the solar energy dissipated at late noon. Three of us had been working on our computers. This was rationale enough to purchase a set of panels and other related equipment to alternate on days like this or whens the sun shies away.

September 29, 2007: The Marit Womens Group met today to determine criteria for scholarships for applicants from universities, colleges and secondary schools. Now that their bank account is in place, scholarship money collected in the United States can be banked under this account. Other monies for the completion of the Home Craft Center and the "Adopt a Grandmother" can also be wired to this account:

Swift Code: BARCKENYXXX03051

Account No.: 10011366

Bank Code: 03

Local Bank Code: 051

Sister Irene O'Neill called with the happy news that we now have a donor for our 4 wheel vehicle purchase for the Kenyan Water Project. It will be owned by the Marit Womens Group. The vehicle may be purchased in the U.S. and shipped to Kenya. It may take a month for us to have the vehicle. This is very timely as Fr. Aloys' truck has been dying gradually even after many repairs. He has been very generous with his time and vehicle about taking us to our destinations.

Angie and Anika attended the Marit Womens Group meeting. I prepared lunch for them while Lucy attended to the preparation of their honey. Kenneth and Stephen had donned protective clothing to harvest the hives belonging to the various groups. She heated the honey combs and scooped the wax out of the pots over an outdoor fire.

It stormed in the late afternoon diminishing our solar power even more.