

JOURNAL FOR THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 11-17, 2007
Sister Rosita Aranita, CSJ

November 12, 2007: It has been raining in the late afternoons this past month so I instructed our yardman, Maurice, to plant a Jesse hedge around the new barbed wire fence on the east and northside of our house. We had our occasional groundsman, Kennedy chop a Gravellia stump whose roots would damage our water cistern on the southside of our house.

The Luos usually surround their family compound with either pencil bushes or Jesse bushes to mark the legal boundaries of the clan domiciles. The hedges cannot be planted unless the first wife is living on the compound. Anyone who moves the boundary hedges is cursed with death.

As the visible work of transforming the homecraft center and our residence into a functional and beautiful place takes place, I focus on getting a budget to furnish the homecraft center for the sewing/tailoring classes and cooking classes. These activities will be the first activities for the women and girls living around the compound in Koyier A & B sublocations.

We have been gradually getting the facility hooked to government water as a back up to the rain catchment system. Plans to gradually add gutters on the east and northsides of the building and on the courtyard side of our residence will soon take place. Eventually a 10,000 liter tank will be hooked to the north gutters. Silvans Molo, our parish contractor, will do estimates for these additions.

Sr. Frances has been having the girls clean up the school and dorms and beautify the campus. As she improves the looks of the campus, she is taking inventory of what needs to be repaired and what equipment lying around can be revived. The facilities are beginning to look cleaner. There is much renovation needed, but money to do that is not available now.

November 13, 2007: Angie and Anika went with Sr. Frances to Kisii. The ride to Kisii goes uphill into lush countryside. This is their first trip to Kisii. They will do household and grocery shopping for the week. We've also tasked them to buy a two burner propane gas cooker after failing to find replacement switches for our borrowed gas range. We now have our housekeeper, Judith, run to Ogama market place in back of our compound for things like bread, tomatoes, avocados and eggs. It is the season for fall avocados, purple passion fruit and mangoes from Mombasa. We usually make a salad of avocados and tomatoes. Bananas are available the year round. Kisii and Oyugis are the fruit and vegetable basket for the region.

Mary and I have determined to sketch out a cabinet and cutting table for the sewing/tailoring room. We measured out lengths, widths and depths for our carpenter and I did sketches. Maurice Okombo, our carpenter, came by to collect the sketches and

get instructions about where the cabinet and cutting table would be situated. He said he would drop off the estimates in about two days.

I finished off the home craft center proposal as best as I could. We will have to price some items before we can complete the budgets for phase I.

I then turned to writing up the Abundu Village Water Proposal from minutes provided by Everist Diero, my liaison for Abundu. Now that we have a reliable budget from previous rain catchment projects, the budget for this project will be easy to put together. My handicap at the moment is a lack of a vehicle to get out to the western reaches of Karachuonyo particularly when it rains and the roads become impassable for most vehicles.

November 14-15, 2007: Met with Fr. Alloys regarding the memo I had sent to him over a week ago. He has been running to the different parish centers and homes for 2-3 masses per day. I came away determined to follow up with two written memoranda of agreement for the St. Joseph Kenyan Water Project staff's residence and the home craft center. He wanted to take over Mary's present house we thought was relegated for the home craft center director. He has two seminarians from a missionary order in Nairobi who want to start doing ministry in the parish so needs a place for them to stay. Mary acceded, too readily, I thought to keep peace.

I stressed that Father needs to consult Bishop Colin Davis who gave the money for the house to be renovated for Mary's use. I emphasized that the parish compound has quite a number of buildings where he could accommodate temporary stays of guests, volunteers, and parish groups if he fixed them. I did not think it fair for him to take buildings renovated by donors money for specific purposes.

I spent the rest of the afternoon and the next day working on the memoranda of agreement and running it by Mary. Wednesday evening, we talked about who we would invite to our celebration of Thanksgiving and where we could get a turkey. We divided up our guests and delegated who would invite them and what we would ask them to pot luck. Mary said her son Samuel can get a live turkey for us from someone who raises them in Homa Bay. It would cost us about 2,000-3,000 ksh. Someone needs to slaughter the beast!

November 16, 2007: Had Maurice our yardman mud the exposed bricks of our outdoor oven. We hope to roast our turkey in it. The outdoor oven is a dome shaped affair of bricks and mud with a veneer of cement. You open the metal door and load it with firewood to heat up the bricks. The parish catechists use to bake bread in it and sold the loaves to raise money for themselves as they get paid a shoestring if anything. The enterprise failed after a squabble over who owned the oven and equipment. Sister Christophina from the convent ended up storing the pans and other fixtures.

Today, the air is ringing with speeches, raucous music and rallying people to vote everytime a lorry full of campaigners pass by our compound. We had to cancel our

meeting with the Homa Bay Diocesan complex directors of institutions because it is the day that President Kibaki declared as the election of nominees for various offices in the country. He did this last minute less than 2 weeks ago to keep his opponents off balance. He has delayed a number of things up to the last minute to try to gain votes over his opponent Raila Odinga, son of one of the first Luo politicians of independent Kenya. The noise continues to late at night. It was hard to distinguish funeral wailing from political rallying at times.

November 17, 2007: I was disappointed that Everist Diero could not make our meeting. Evarist is head master of a Jonyo primary school and may either be politicking or getting ready for the KCPE exams for his eighth graders. Many of the educated Luos have been out campaigning for Raila and others in the district.