

Alex Leahey, '06 Marigat, Kenya

Liz and I had an unforgettable experience during our summer of service with the Franciscan Missionaries of St. Joseph (Mill Hill Sisters) in a remote region of Western Kenya in East Africa. Marigat is a small town in the Baringo District of the Great Rift Valley about four hours from the fast pace and conveniences of a city like Nairobi; many people in Kenya didn't know where it was and even the Sisters admitted it was in "the bush." Because of its relative isolation (the one paved road ends in Marigat), many of the areas surrounding Marigat can be described as hardship communities in which individuals don't have the amenities that we are used to in the U.S. like electricity, running water, plumbing, etc. What the people of Marigat may have lacked in materials, though, they more than made up in good spirits. Despite their struggles, the people of Marigat were most welcoming and excited to share their culture with Liz and myself, two of the few white faces in the region.



The Marigat Convent: "From the outside looking in you could never understand it. From the inside looking out you could never explain it"

We stayed with one English Sister, two Kenyan Sisters, and a Kenyan novice aspiring to be a sister. The sisters are all involved in the community in different ways, but Liz and I volunteered in the mission health clinic that was run by Sister Martina, whose unyielding devotion

to her people was an inspiration. The clinic of six staff really do an amazing job of providing the best possible healthcare to the "interior" communities of the Baringo District that have no other means of care. I noticed there was a subtle clash between the modern care the mission clinic provided and the more traditional healing that tribe "doctors" would provide, often harming individuals and mutilating their bodies rather than truly healing them. Nevertheless, we took part in a small clinic/mobile clinic that provided care to communities for a radius of about 40 kilometers.



The portrait of compassion and service: Sr. Medrine, Sr. Joan, Christine, and Sr. Martina