

Sheena Tonkin, '07

## Marigat, Kenya

Caitlyn, Jeanna and I were able to spend our summer of service in Marigat, Kenya. Marigat is located in the Rift Valley of Kenya, which is located in the northwestern part of the country. We worked and stayed at the Catholic Mission, a Franciscan missionary organization. Marigat is an extremely rural area, with no paved roads, electricity and very little water. We were lucky to stay in the convent with three Sisters (Sister Joan, Sister Martina, and Sister Maderin) where we had running water and indoor plumbing. However, the conditions outside the convent were drastically different.



We worked at the clinic with Sister Martina, who we spent most of our time with, as well as an amazing staff (pictured above). The clinic was open at the mission for three days a week, and traveled to remote locations on the other two. On Mondays, the clinic was open specifically for HIV/AIDS patients, performing testing as well as providing what medical support was possible. Our lab technician, Richard, performed all of the medical testing for HIV and other infectious diseases like malaria. However, the clinic mainly was used by expectant mothers and children needing immunizations. Sobet and Jane were two nurses who worked at the clinic, providing maternity exams and infant immunizations. Whether we were working at the mission compound or on the road, the three of us mainly performed routine blood pressures, weighing, and chart work.



On some mobile days, we would travel to primary schools and distribute worm medication. We would set up a table, where each child would pay a small amount of money and then receive the medicine and water. The kids at the schools were extremely excited to see Americans, as many of them had never seen anyone non-African before – they would crowd around us trying to touch our skin and hair.



Two or three times a week we also accompanied Sister Martina or another member of the clinic on home visiting. This involved going to local nearby communities, including a nearby refugee camp, where we would check up on regular clinic patients and also invite others to come to the clinic. I could really see the appreciation people had for Sister Martina and the clinic on these visits – they were so happy to see that the clinic really cared about them. We were invited into one family's home, as pictured below. The small, thatched houses are not designed to hold people, as everyone spends their waking hours outside. Only the parents sleep inside the building – the children usually sleep outside, due to lack of space.



Before we went to Marigat, we collected some things to bring over with us. We brought mainly things for the children, like stickers, candy, bubbles, and balloons. Caitlyn also held a clothing drive in her home area, and while home visiting, we also were able to give some donated clothes out ourselves, which was an amazing experience. Most of the children only have one outfit that they wear until they grow out of it, so it was especially nice to be able to see them have something new. Pictured below is Caitlyn and I changing a baby into one of the outfits donated from home.

