

## **Isabel Garro's Journal**

### **First Try!**

4-Jul-2007

Well, I just wanted to say Jambo and let you know we just have 26 days left to arrive to Kenya. I hope Brithis Airways lets us fly to London despite the strike, as we have to make our flight connection to Nairobi there. Talk to you all soon!

### **Ya estamos aqui!!**

2-Aug-2007

Hola a todos,

Se que prometi escribir en ingles pero no tenemos mucho tiempo. En fin. Acabamos de comprar un movil Keniata por si alguien nos quiere llamar. Aqui los moviles cuestan unos 20 euros aprox... increible. Poddeis pedirle el numero a mi hermano.

En fin. Por ahora deciros que ya tenemos destino. Nos alojaremos en Rogain y vamos a trabajar en el orfanato e St. Paul's. Es un orfanato con 50 ninios de edades comprendidas entre 1 y 15 anios. Nos vamos a alojar con una familia local. La madre se llama Esther y tienen una ninia pequena. Eso es todo lo que se por ahora!!!

espero poder contaros mas cosas pronto. Un beso fuerte a todos y hablamso pronto!

Isa

### **First try in English!**

10-Aug-2007

OK, so I will try to explain a bit of what we have done so far. We live with a host family in a rural area called Oleakasasi, which is a half hour away from the closest town, named Rogai. The host family is great. I had a weird feeling at the bigining. I would suggest you share almost everything with your family to show your support, even knowing that you have paid for being placed there. At least for us, after buying a couple things for the family, such as toilet paper, jam or chocolate, things began to go pretty smooth. So we have electricity, which is great and a real previlige in our town, but not running water. So the wrorst part is the bathroom. You just have a whole in the floor, hidden by four walls made of metal sheets, and that is it... i will avoid explaining what you can see from the whole or the smell.... but let me tell you, you get used after a while. There is no light in

the bathroom, as they are built outside, so you have to use a flashlight when there is no light. You turn out pretty virtuous when you have to manage to do everything with a flashlight in your hand and trying not to touch anything!! :)

Ok, so regarding the orphanage, I just have good words. The kids are amazing. They hug you, they tist your hair, they take your hand and want you to play with them.... it is great. To be a muzungu here, which is how they call white people, is almost like being a super star. All the kids call you while in the street and say How areyou? and you have to answer fine!. So we have to go now but I still have a lot to tell. I will try to write on sunday. We are going to the Masai Mara!! I will get back soon!!

### **Time goes by too fast!!!**

16-Aug-2007

I can't believe today is already 16th!!! So we are back in town. Today I came too, as I have been feeling a bit weak this days and I decided not to come to town yesterday. I just have an annoying flu since Monday and I have to be careful with all the kids around. Muzungu's flu is not good for them!!

Oh, well, so things are going well and fast! The works that we have done so far are the following:

- The floor for the hanging lines is already done. We have covered it with this thing called slubs that makes the surface stay clean and is cheaper than cement.
- A guy has build the hanging lines with black pipe and some wire and today I painted it with this special paint that avoids it to rust. Then tomorrow we will paint it with red paint and it will be almost ready to use!
- The entrance is almost finished too. We have covered it with this slubs as well and they just need to finish that, hopefully today. So the kids are already playing on it and yesterday we started practicing some dancing. The kids love it!! and it makes everything look better and be less dusty and dangerous.
- The future playing ground is already clean and ready to be covered with the slubs. We have asked for a quotation to make some swings and a slope for the kids. The will like that for sure! Every time you ask the kids to paint a house the paint a swing with it!
- The kitchen is going well too. We have two people working on that and hopefully it will be ready before the week ends. We still have to look for a freezer and some furniture and a stove. We will see how fast we can do that.
- Then, the new store house. We are demolishing the old kitchen and we will build a new little house there to store all the kids clothes. They have all those on the girls bedroom now and you don't want to know what you can find under all that stuff! We will just build a couple closets and that way we will be able to organize all their clothes.
- More. We are still thinking about the way to solve the cleaning area. What

they have now is a bunch of plastic buckets in front of the bathrooms and they just clean there, bent on their backs. They have to bring the water (maji in kiswahili) to the washing area, clean the clothes and then take the clean stuff to where the hanging lines are. So we want to think of a solution to make everything easier, cleaner and better for the kids. We will probably go to Nairobi to see if someone has thought about this before. Maybe someone has invented something before us!

- We have just visited Doctor Richard because one of the boys, Bosi, has Neumonia and Malaria. So we have agreed with him to have a Medical Day, on August 23rd, when he will come to St. Paul's and check all the kids. Some of them need some medication and they would not take them into the doctor because medicines are pretty expensive here. Hopefully we will be able to make some of them become a bit better.

Well, this is all that I can think of for now!! It has been quite a hard work and sometimes is not easy. Today we had to fire three workers because they wanted to be paid double from what we initially told them. After an hour argument the guy that manages the works said that he would pay the extra of his own money but that this was a Children's home and they could not expect us to pay them more than arranged.

Oh, well. I have to go now. I will talk to you soon and hopefully we will have more things to tell! Thank you everyone for your help that has made this possible.

Besos  
Isa

### **Just 4 days left...**

24-Aug-2007

I can't believe it is already 24th.... Today is Friday and I have promised I would take the kids swimming today after washing all the clothes that were left in the corner room. The new washing area is almost finished. We have built it closer to where the water tank is. It will be great. It is right by where we put the hanging lines, which are already working and painted with the Spanish flag. We have known that the people from St. Paul's have ordered a plate with our names to thank all that has been done. I guess we should just extend those thanks to all of you, friends and family, who made this possible.



So today we are back in Rongai. We still have a lot to buy. Some more materials, presents for the party (we will try to give a present to each one of the kids, as it was Santa Claus's day. We also have to order some food for the party. Esther, our host mom, will make the cakes. We convinced her to start selling bread, cakes and all those marvelous things that she makes

and now the whole town wants a piece of bread from her. The guy that is selling the bread in town called her yesterday, at late afternoon, and asked her for more bread because they had ran out of it. We reminded her that now, that she is on business, she has to save part of the money so she can buy new flour and sugar to make more bread. I made her a business plan with all the details. Hopefully she will become famous soon and she will be able to prove that Kenyan ladies can also make money.

The swing is already in the playground. They brought it yesterday, on a donkey!!! we have wonderful pictures of that! it was so funny. And the kids can't wait to play with it. The cement has to dry so they won't be able to play with it until Sunday. I hope they will be able to wait.

And yesterday we had the Medical Day at St. Paul's. Doctor Richard Wama came and checked all the kids one by one. Some had high fever (a two month baby had 40 degrees fever!), some had Malaria, other had amebas and parasites inside ears and throat... What can you do... Here they just take you to the doctor if you are about to die so. Oh! and I forgot to tell you that the other day two people from the Children department came for an unexpected inspection. So they began saying that they would close St. Paul's if no one wanted to show them around and so we had to say that we were in charge (cause Margaret, the Director, was out for a meeting) and we had to explain this people what was going on. They were amazed of what had been done and congratulated us. I am just telling you this because since the beginning, you always get good words from everyone, and you hear that God has brought you to do this and so and so, but this was the first time we could really realize, from people that are used to seeing this type of things, that things were being done properly and that it was a real good job. So congratulations again to everyone for your help because we wouldn't have been able to do it without your help. I wish you could see this... I can now say this will change our lives...

I haven't talked about Irene yet (see attached photo). She is one of the girls from St. Paul's children home. She is six years old, almost 7, and her birthday will be in September 25th. Her mother was a model who used to be a prostitute in Mombasa and did never take care of the kid. They would take Irene to bars, when she was one or two years old, and give her beer or spirits so she would sleep and not bother. Her aunt, a drunk drug addict that also lived with Irene, did not take care of the girl either. So some neighbors saw the situation and they decided to call the police and report about this. The kid was taken to St. Paul's when she was around three and has stayed there since. Irene's mother died last December and she was taken to her funeral. She does not know who her father is and will probably never do. Another girl, Victoria, does have a mother and a grandfather. They came to St. Paul's the day before yesterday. They want to take the kid with them. The only problem is that last time they did, the kid was bitten to death and run away from her own mom and went back to St. Paul's. But they are her family. The grandfather, an old retired teacher that has been looking for his family since they disappeared 14 years ago, does not want to go away without the kid now. In Africa, they believe that grandchild are a guaranty for elders because when you retire, the grandchild have to take care of you as long as you live. So the weird thing here is that you don't even know

what is better: having a family or just forgetting about it. Victoria does not want to go with her family. She wants to stay with her friends at St. Paul's. She is fed there. She likes it there and receives love. But if the grandfather brings today a paper from the Government or the police saying that he is Victoria's family and that she has to go with him, there will be nothing we can do... even that is ironic.

So I still have 48 more stories to tell you. We have taken pictures of every kid to show you all when we go back home. We know all their stories. All their lives. The only thing we are not sure about is their futures... I guess that will still be on your hands, believe it or not. We will try to find Sponsors back home, to pay for the kids education and food... I hope we will find your response again. As for us, we have already in mind what will be our mission... I have never been so sure...

Well, I have to go now. We still have to buy many things for the party. Hope you are all well and see you very soon (maybe at the airport????). Take care and see you very soon.

Kubusus,  
Isa

**Last night!**  
28-Aug-2007

Well, I guess our time is over and now it is the turn of others to continue what we have done so far. I hope I will get to know the next volunteers placed in St. Paul's Children Home, here in Rongai, so we can get some update.

I have read some journals asking for advice. I remember myself going through all the journals trying to find all the tips for this adventure... well, I guess I have run out of tricks after this! If you are volunteering, just make sure you have just a few things with you. Do not forget to bring some baby wet towels (I don't know the name for that in English) because you might not be able to take a shower everyday. Bring one pair of comfortable shoes, a pair of flipflops and other nices shoes that you can use for special times. Make sure you bring sun block (I am already peeling), water purifying tablets (I am not sure about the English translation for that either), long pants and enough t-shirts and socks to at least survive for a week. I haven't been able to wash much while here, as we were too busy to arrive home on time to have enough light to wash! Do not fear about bucket shower or not toilet bathrooms. You end getting used to it. Make sure you carry a money belt, a scarf and at least three sweaters. It can get pretty chilly here and you get a cold easily while standing around kids. And over all: do not forget to bring a good dosis of humbleness and humor. Things are pretty different here. People do not hurry or do things the way we do. They take their time for talking, for dealing, for doing business, for getting ready... they enjoy and use the "hakuna matata" (no problem) for almost everything. Make sure you do not leave without taking a picture of the

beautiful smiles of kids. I have never seen such smiles up in muzungu land. Understand the needs of people and take your time to listen to every problem they tell you about. At the same time, do not offer money to solve people's problem: offer them a fishing rod. Take your time to talk to elders. Do not expect same attitudes or answers to what ever problems you may face. You might get dissapointed and will not learn out of that experience. Accept and enjoy the way things are done here because you are representing your country, where ever you come from. You would not like to see foreigners comming to your country and asking for things in the way they think they should be done. But at the same time make sure you give suggestions and answers to those willing to hear. And overall, know that there is a lot you can do to help here.

My first feeling when I got to the orphanage was that there was little that I could do for anyone. I thought things were just different and that I had no clue of what to do to help. I though this was like a new subject that you had to learn before you could actualy act or say anything about it. Like when surrounded by professional people and you feel there is little you can teach others or do to help. But after just a few days, you realize you have many ideas and suggestions to make! It is an overwhelming feeling actualy... Just make sure you talk and suggest in a proper way. And if you end up feeling that something is not right, say it aswell and explain your self.

I have laughed and cryied in Kenya. I have been dissapointed and proud. I have learned and taught... So please, just make sure you have a bag big enough to take all of that with you.

Kukumbatias,

Isa

### **Home, sweet home...**

31-Aug-2007

Hi everyone!

We made it home! While doing the check-in we were rewarded with two Premium Class seats for being such good volunteers :) so we had a wonderful flight to London. The wine, Champaign and unbelievably comfortable seats made us forget for a little while the bitter taste of leaving the Orphanage behind. But do not worry! We used the time to think about future steps!!



I know many of you have been reading our journals through out our trip. This link (the GVN journal one) will only work for another month. So after that, we will keep you informed on our Website. For those who don't have the address yet, you can write it down now:

[www.azcoitia.es/kenya07/home.html](http://www.azcoitia.es/kenya07/home.html).

So as said, we have already thought about future collaboration steps. First of all, I know you all want some pictures of all the changes done in St. Paul's so we will upload those in the mentioned Website. We also plan to scan all the receipts and bills and make a profit and loss account to let you know our balance so far. As you know, transparency is our motto!

Then... future collaboration! We have taken pictures of every kid in St. Paul's so the idea is to build a profile for every kid and hang them on the Website. We would also like to build a website for St. Paul's in the future, so volunteers placed in St. Paul's Children Home can follow the work done so far and continue it. But that will have to wait a bit!

First, we will try to find sponsors back at home to support the expenses for the kids to go to a good school. So we will let you all know how much it would cost to let a kid go to Acacia Park School, which is supposed to be the best school nearby. We are also trying to find about other ways of collaboration such as sponsoring a kid to study abroad. We are thinking about that our selves! We are still working on the documentation needed and proper process to do it, so as we find out, we will keep you informed on the Website.

Remaining thoughts about our trip... I guess they are hard to compile. It has been nice and difficult to be back at home. It is great to be back and see our families and friends but at the same time, we can't stop thinking about the kids. Once in Madrid, while we were driving home, we couldn't help feeling overwhelmed with everything that surrounded us... So many signs on the road... So many lights, infrastructures and facilities... It seems as we, muzungus, have no limit on spending money in things we might not even need. Ironically, we don't even realize how many things we have. It should be compulsory to travel to developing countries once in your life. That way everyone would think things twice before spending lots of money driven by the consumerism stream. After giving names and faces to all those called "poor", it is hard to accept the way you used your time or money before. And over all, it is almost impossible to think about this experience like a one time thing on life. This experience, for sure, will be the first step of many others.

Please, do not hesitate to write us if you want any other information. We will keep you posted through our Website for now on. Thanks for following us all this time and hope to see you all soon... maybe in Kenya!!

Kwaheri and kubusus to all,

Isa