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The following is an excerpt from Caroline's first e-mail after arriving in Kenya

I cannot tell you what an adjustment this has been for me. The way of life here is so rough. On TV, you see commercials for "Feed the Children" and there are all these half-naked kids with nothing but dirt and flies surrounding them... well, those are my neighbors. People here work so hard, but it's to find food and secure shelter and then they find a job if they can. My neighbors live in the mud huts with grass/stick roofs. The people here are amazing though. They are welcoming and are willing to give me their last bit of food or drink. I especially enjoy the kids. They have such great spirit. I saw three half-naked boys running through the field (through animal feces with no shoes) playing soccer. Their smiles are as big as can be when they yell... "habari mazungu" (hello white person).

Right now my homestay is in a rural area outside Naivasha called Nyondia. Peace Corps is HARD CORE! They make no special accommodations for us because we are Americans which I think is good. (Although, we get excellent medical treatment for which I am very thankful). We walk like everyone else. We walk over 2 hours to get to the training center for training in the morning. This is a great time for us to share stories and just talk with one another. My homestay family (for 8 weeks) consists of Mamma, Babba, 3 sisters and 2 brothers who share a room. My family is amazingly kind. They told me that if I wanted to have a friend or my parents visit, guests could sleep in their bed and my host parents would sleep on the floor. (Their bedroom floor is dirt).

These first few weeks seem to have thrown most of us volunteers into survival mode. We are all adjusting to changes in the very basic activities of our daily living including eating, bathing and sleeping. Our roof is not connected to the walls of the house. There are bats up there that fly over me at night. I am afraid one will get tangled in my mosquito net. I have had cockroaches in my bed, food, and in my clothes. I have to walk through a cornfield to get to the choo (outhouse). (The choo is just a wooden floor with a hole cut out.) My homestay sister calmly told me to look out for snakes and not to be afraid of the field mice. We have no electricity so I use my lantern. The other night it rained and the glass of my lantern cracked... who knew? Our cooking supplies consist of 4 pots (which we also wash our clothes in), 5 spoons and 2 knives. We have 5 cups too. We take baths with a bucket of water. We have rice and potatoes every night. Sometimes bread. I am lucky because I know my neighbors don't eat as well. My day begins at 4:45am when the rooster crows. I get up for my bucket bath, light my lantern and I'm ready.

Everywhere we go, we are on parade. Walking in the neighborhood, many kids follow me. Some say hello, giggle and run away, others simply walk silently next to me or behind me. Americans are novel around here. Going into town and the market is great because I get to meet so many people. We get stared at there too. People pull on us and ask us for handouts. When we tell them we cannot give them one, they say, "but why not? You come from the richest country in the world." That's really tough to hear. We do give what we can, but we simply don't have enough for everyone.

Although there are many difficult realities to face here, I really enjoy it. I enjoy the people - especially the kids. They just want someone to play with them. I love to play with them except they laugh at me because my Swahili skills are awful. I like this program because it makes us live like the people. It's tough living, but I like this place. It's beautiful and there's a lot of good work to be done!