

SIM

Serving In Mission

Contact information:

Marcie Chapman
31103 Pine Rose
Spring, Texas 77386
marcie.chapman@gmail.com

Financial support:

SIM-USA
P.O. Box 7900
Charlotte, NC, 28241
<http://sim.org/giveusa>
Account # 031424



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Dear Friends,

Life has been very busy lately. Paul and Carol Lukins are here, along with three engineers from the Western Australian Water Corporation. They are here for about three weeks to explore the water situation in Mursiland and to investigate ways of using water more efficiently in this drought prone land. As part of the evaluation we have traveled to different parts of Mursiland, by car and on foot, to look at the land and to talk with the people.

Our most interesting travels took us on an overnight trip west of Makki to the Omo River. The first day, we visited settlements and water pumps and also mapped and explored riverbeds along the way. Several schools have been built for the Mursi in this area and although there were huts nearby the buildings looked out of place perched on these hot, barren hilltops. Towards evening we stopped and set up camp along a dry riverbed, watched closely by curious Mursi. We spent the night in the open under the stars.

The next day we headed further west to the Omo River. This is Mursi heartland, the area many people migrated from in the late 1970's. In Makki we are on the northeastern edge of Mursiland in the foothills of the highlands. Although it can be hot and dry here it is still much cooler and wetter than the land along the Omo. It was very hot and very dry over there. In these areas there's a good deal of thorny bush and grazing land but just a few places along various rivers where the soil is suitable and the moisture sufficient to grow a crop of grain. We drove along a bush track down the sloping plain to the Omo, which, in dry season is a broad and muddy, lazily flowing river full of lurking crocodiles. Just slightly downstream from where we parked was an island where there was quite a bit of cropping so we set off down a little path through the bush to have a look. The water was low enough on one side of the island that we could cross through the ankle deep water without the risk of crocodiles. It was nearing harvest time there and the sorghum plants had stretched their full length. The heads of grain were beginning to ripen -- orange, lavender, pink, white and even a dark grey sorghum. At the bottom of the plots women had piled branches to keep the hippos out of their crop

The peoples along the Omo river practice a type of farming called "flood retreat". The annual flood waters rise depositing silt and soaking the soil. When the waters recede, women plant into the steep banks and can raise a crop of sorghum there with virtually no rain.

After our tour of the island we got back to the car at around 3 pm, hot and thirsty, and began the drive back to Makki. We had a few more stops to take a more measurements and get a birds' eye view of some watersheds from the top of an escarpment. At various places along the way, I saw people I knew from Makki. All of them had walked the many kilometers out from Makki, a distance that is nothing to these very mobile people.

Back home in Makki people's first question to me was, "How is the sorghum over there?" They were delighted to hear that the harvest was good. Hopefully, because of the work of this water team, there will be many more years of fruitful harvests. Although I did very little of the actual work it was a very good trip for me as well and helped me better understand the wider Mursi context and their needs.

Grateful for your continued interest, prayers and support,

Marcie