

Greetings from us to all of you. It is hard to believe that we left Arizona more than two weeks ago and have already been busy preparing for our work here in Mozambique. You may already know that we do volunteer assignments for an organization called CRWRC (Christian Reformed World Relief Committee). We typically go for about 3 months to areas where some form of disaster has occurred. It may be drought, flood, tsunami, conflict or some other sort of natural or man-made calamity where suffering and hunger have been the result. In this case the calamity was both drought & flood in the same year in a place called Mutarara, near the confluence of the large Shire & Zambezi rivers in Mozambique.

The Mutarara area is prone to flooding during high rainfall years (2007 and 2008 are examples). In low rainfall years the area is prone to drought because of the sandy soil. Some years people in this area experience the extreme stress of both drought and floods. The areas away from the river are sandy and vulnerable to drought, and the river may flood due to rains in Malawi, Zambia, or even as far away as the Congo. The volume of water that passes down the river past the various dams is not well controlled and when the rainfall is too high those in control simply have to let more water go to protect the dams – the result is flooding.

Our job will be to provide assistance with organizing the upcoming food assistance project in Mutarara. The project will assist 2,000 households in three villages who were affected by last year's dry spell and then late season flooding. Seed has already been provided to these 2,000 households in December/January to create a situation where, at the end of the food assistance, the households will have a new supply of food.

Mutarara is the site of an FRB (Food Resources Bank) project promoting conservation farming. The food assistance project we are a part of is intended to support the ongoing work of the FRB project.



*Doing laundry and bathing in the Zambezi.*



*Conservation Farming*



*Environmental Assessment team*

The food we plan to provide will consist of 50kg maize and 10kg beans each month for 3 months. Food-For-Work (FFW) projects will be identified so as to strengthen the FRB seed project and the overall food security in Mutarara.

In addition John De Wilde, an environmental engineer from Canada, has been with us to visit Mutarara the last ten days in January and complete an environmental assessment. The environmental assessment is intended to help identify water catchment projects that could further promote low-cost irrigated farming in Mutarara. Our hope is that some of these ideas will be incorporated into the food assistance project as Food-For-Work projects.

Mutarara is a hot place with few amenities. We were here in 2008 and not much has changed. Our idea of luxury now includes things like running water, toilet seats and real showers. Air conditioning is kind of a dream. Last week, when we were there I think we ate chicken and (soggy)

chips 5 days out of 7...but my blood sugar is nice & low. We hope to spend some of our time in a place called Vila Ulongue, where our local partner is located and it is cooler. Access to Mutarara is still a big issue, but the road is much better than it was in 2008. But that too, is relative; it takes us about 8 hours to travel the 400 km and over the dirt road part of it (220km) we only average about 35km/hour, not fast. We hope to report some sort of update or story once or twice a month. More later. Shalom, Pete & Ila