

April 2019

Dear Friends,

From Douglas Heidema

Starch from the sago palm tree remains a staple in the diet of many lowland dwellers in PNG. It doesn't grow on the tree, rather it must be extracted by hand labor from the sago palm's core. Chopping and beating the insides of the log into a pulp, then washing and kneading the pulp results in a water suspended starch which is strained and allowed to settle in a collector basin or trough. Most often sago is processed where the tree is felled near a water source in a swamp.

Frequently women carry 20-40 lb bundles of sago on their backs to their villages which can be over an hour and half away. (customarily, men carry house building materials but not so often food) When driving along with a partially loaded truck it is hard to just pass by a group of burdened women without stopping. They always accept the free ride. "Bearing one another's burdens" can take various forms.

Back in the 1980's Buria, the former translation helper of Neal and Martha Kooyers, assisted in community development when there was little contact with the outside world. The people of the area were nomadic and did not garden. Their poor diet resulted in high infant mortality, and a short life expectancy, plus they had not heard the gospel. PIM's pioneer mission work commenced and



Young men preparing a raft of sago logs to float down river to their village.

people began building and living in more permanent houses. An airstrip was opened, a school began, health services established, and a church started. New gardening methods introduced other crops: the sweet potato, taro, greens, coconuts and corn. These were big changes and no longer did half the children die before the age of five.

Early in his time there Buria noted that some women were heading off to the sago palm groves to process sago after church. For them every day was "get sago to eat" day because they had no calendar or concept of a week. Buria introduced them to the novel concept of having one day in seven for rest and worship.

In Exodus 16, prior to the introduction of the ten commandments, God provided manna for the Israelites every morning for six days of the week. They gathered a double portion on the sixth day and it did not spoil as it did on the other days if left over. This went on for forty years until they reached Canaan. A day of rest is meant for our good.

From Penny Schering:

We spend some time with Etewe, PIM's former Sunday School Coordinator, his wife Dorcas, and two of their children this afternoon. We heard their stories from the past few years. What a blessing!! For five years he worked at heading up the pastors' fraternal in the Garasa area. They highly respect his previous work with PIM and he gets asked at various times to be a speaker at Sunday School workshops. They welcome his input and rejoice in the way he teaches. They especially like it that PIM materials have three different levels—Beginner, Primary, and Junior—so the teacher doesn't have to do the hard work of tailoring one lesson out of one book to fit the age level of his or her students.

They are presently planting a church in Miruwatu traveling there involves a ride along pot-holed roads. They have to hold on for dear life to avoid being bruised and battered inside the jeep, and the fording of a river which is swollen and deep from the addition of two other rivers a little further up its course (the Watut and the Bulolo).

"The first time I saw the river," Dorcas recounted, "I was afraid." I said, "Lord, how can we get across this alive?" But she followed the directions of the young boys who helped situate her on an inner tube. She stretched out as flat as she could, while they laid her little granddaughter on top of her and then some of their personal bags on top of that. She wrapped her arms around the child and her bags and held on tightly. Then the young boys gripped the inner tube with one hand and paddled into the rushing current with the other hand.

Dorcas prayed, "O Jesus, help me. I don't know how to swim. I am truly in your hands."

"Yes, our clothes get wet," Etewe added, "but the cargo stays dry."

The pastor of the Bulolo Church with whom their sons Joel and Hosaia are living while they attend school, is from Miruwatu. He said to Etewe and Dorcas while they were making the decision of whether to go there and start a church or not, "No, you can't go there. It is too hard to get to."

But after a time Etewe and Dorcas said, "We will go. We will try it."

Etewe was given some money to start printing PIM Sunday School materials off the flash drive Doug gave him years ago which he recently checked and found to be safe.. He'll try to work with the printing facilities at their church's Bible school. Pray for a Children's Workshop he has at Markham from 4-8 April and for another one at Bulolo from 12-17 April. Pray for strength to possibly get some materials printed before then and for good fruit to come in children's hearts from the gospel word of grace and holiness.

Thank you for your partnership with us.