



Mto Moyoni – Jinja, Uganda - March 11 – 23, 2006

Mto Moyoni means **'Rivers of the Heart'**. The river it speaks of is the Nile that begins in Lake Victoria and snakes its way across Africa towards Egypt. Jinja is a town that is located where the Nile begins and Mto Moyoni is a place on the banks of the river, just up from the lake. Mto Moyoni is a Christian ministry that was started by Ingrid, a Dutch woman from Holland, who has lived in Africa for almost 20 years. Most of those years have been spent working with street children in Uganda. She has an amazing life story full of joys and struggles, and the experiences in her own life have encouraged her to orchestrate this ministry. Mto Moyoni is a retreat centre for pastors and Christian leaders who need a place to go to refresh and rejuvenate themselves. It is a place for seminars and conferences, or simply a place for personal time with God. So far the ministry consists of nine guest houses and a dining hut, but they have purchased three other plots of land, with their banks on the Nile River (see next page), for expansion. Half of the team that joined us for the one week we were there were volunteer engineers and architects from the US, Hong Kong, Canada and Uganda. The rest of the team was eMi Uganda staff and interns. We had a lot of work ahead of us, trying to visualize and produce a design with Mto Moyoni's vision in mind.



Above: The project team. Below: (left to right) Ingrid, Winet, and Christine.







Site Visits: The first thing we did when we arrived in Jinja was to go out and walk around each of the three sites that we would be designing on. We took many site photos and just took in the amazing view from each site! (bottom right is the location we chose for the worship hall, opening up to that view)



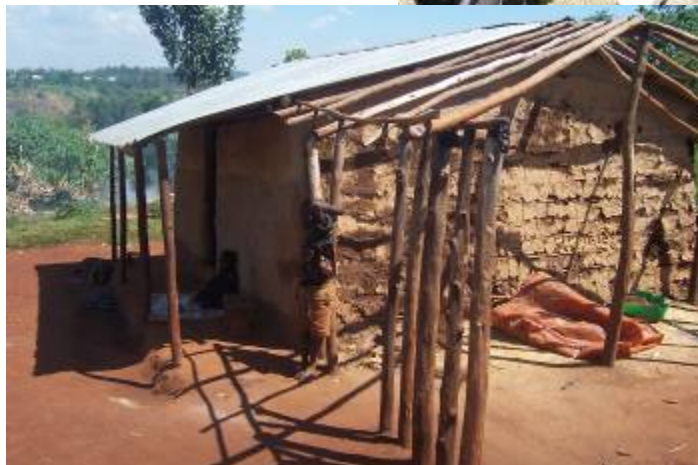


On one of the days during the week, we were invited by the groundskeeper, Peter, to join his family for lunch.

Peter is singing a welcome song with his wife Josephine, and four children (left). He made the musical instrument himself, which is kind of like a mini harp.

They live in a mud home on the first plot of undeveloped land (see bottom photo).

Many of the kids from the village, along with Peter's children, danced and sang for us as we sat under a shelter that was constructed using tree branches and banana leaves (see right). Below is the plate of traditional food we each received and used our hands to eat. The family probably eats posho and beans everyday, but because we were guests they fed us posho (white maize flour), nakati (greens), fish, millet bread (brown millet dough), and a soupy broth. Peter was extremely honored to have us at his home, and he was showing us great respect by feeding us so well. I enjoy the traditional food very much!



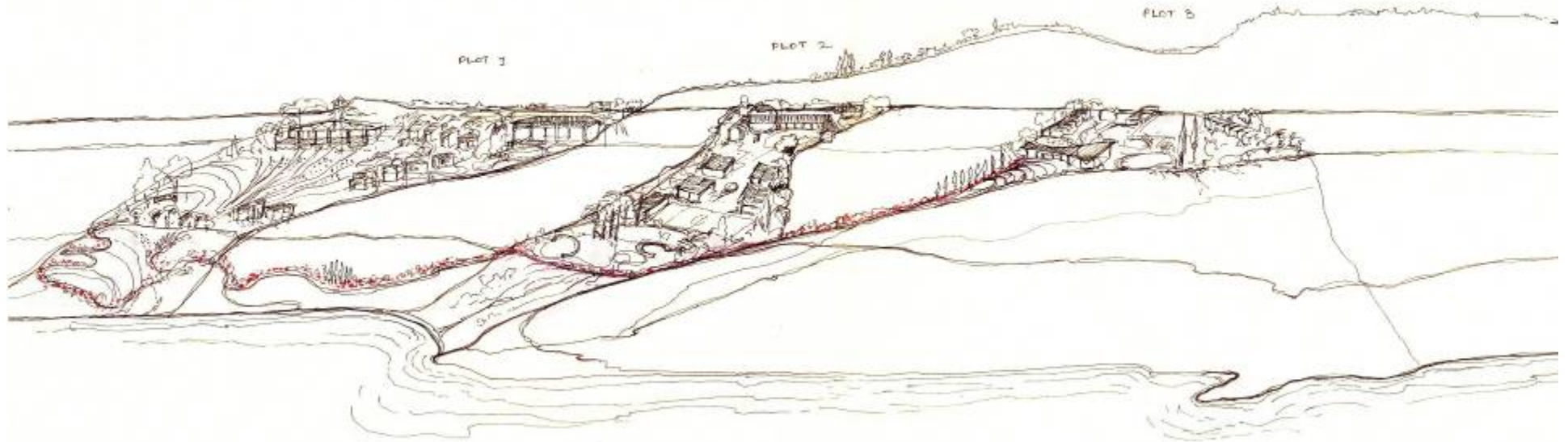
Local kids following us around everywhere!



Here we are working hard on structural design (left). It was really great to have Brad Crawford, a structural engineering volunteer from Oregon, on the trip to help with questions. We also spent some time in town researching the local building materials. Since architects and engineers generally have to be separated, the architects had their own table (right).



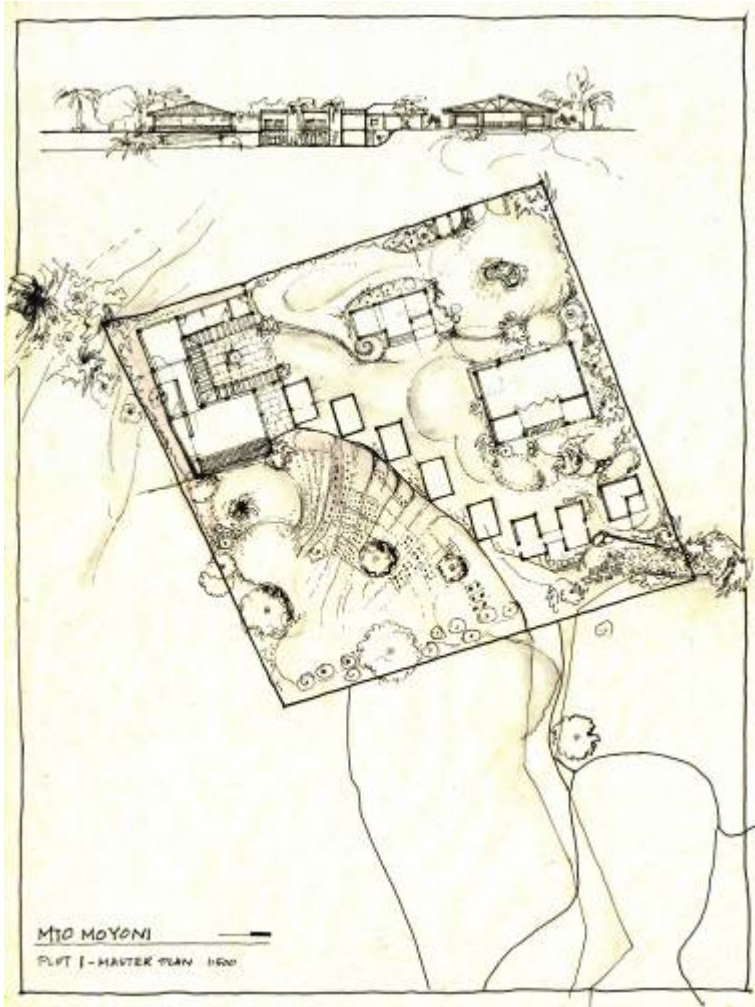
A few of the evenings, after dinner, Ingrid invited pastors from that area of Uganda, to come and give us their testimonies and life stories. It was great to hear how the retreat centre we were designing would directly benefit them.. One man, a pastor named Isaac, was living in Uganda during the reign of Idi Amin (1970's). Amin was the leader who forced Christians to leave Uganda, and he killed many of them as well. Isaac was arrested from his home one night and taken to a prison/jail. There were twenty-four other pastors and Christian men in a room, and Amin's soldiers were there pointing guns at them, trying to force them to deny Christ or else they would lose their lives. Three of the men couldn't handle it, they denied Jesus and left, but the remaining twenty-two told the soldiers that if they shot them now, they would only be placing them in the presence of their Lord that much sooner. The soldiers blindfolded the men and lined them up against the wall around the room. They started to shoot them one by one, down the line. Isaac could hear the shots getting closer to him. He was the last to be shot but instead of hitting his chest, the bullet hit him in the arm, and he fell to the ground, still living. The soldiers loaded the dead bodies onto the back of a truck, and somehow he ended up on top. They brought them to a mass grave that was almost full, and again, Isaac was thrown in last, not crushed by the other bodies and he could easily get out. The soldiers left and some men found Isaac, bleeding and crawling around in the forest near the grave. He went into hiding after that, and survived to tell his story. Despite all he has been through, he was smiling during his entire story! Now Isaac works with streets kids and has started a home for over 90 children.



This is a photo taken from across the Nile, looking back at the three plots. The plots are to the left of the rapids. This place is just absolutely gorgeous! The area between the water's edge and the edge of each site is too steep to build on. Not only that, but no one is able to build within 100 metres of the Nile waters. You can see in the drawings above, how the three plots are connected at the Nile-side by a pathway that is lined with red flowering trees. The pathway is called Emmaus' walk. It is named after the story in the Bible about the followers of Jesus who were on their way to the village of Emmaus. They are upset because they thought Jesus was going to be the one to redeem the people, but he had just recently died, and they did not know that he had risen from the dead. Jesus joins them as they are walking, and they don't recognize him, even as they are telling him why they are so unhappy. When they reach the village they invite Jesus to come in, and it is at that point that they realize who their visitor really is!

This pathway between the three plots leads people from plot 1 and 2, to the worship hall at the end of plot 3. Keeping in mind that this is a retreat centre for pastors, Christian leaders and individuals who have gone through some tough situations, or whose hearts have been hardened by the difficulties of their ministry, the walk is symbolic, because it leads them to a place where they can realize that they've never been alone, Jesus has been there, "walking" with them through their hardships and their joys.

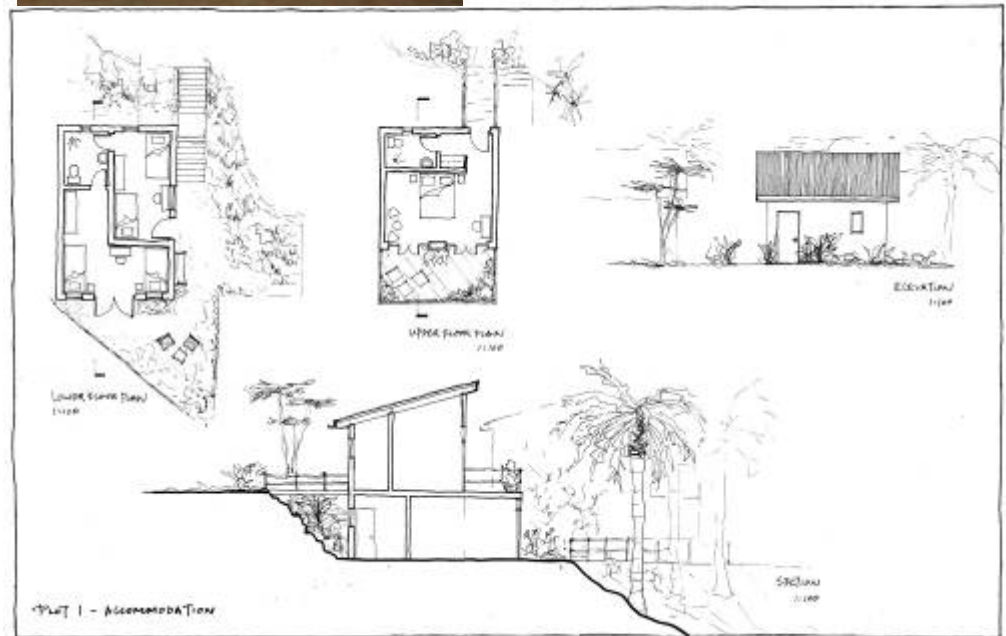


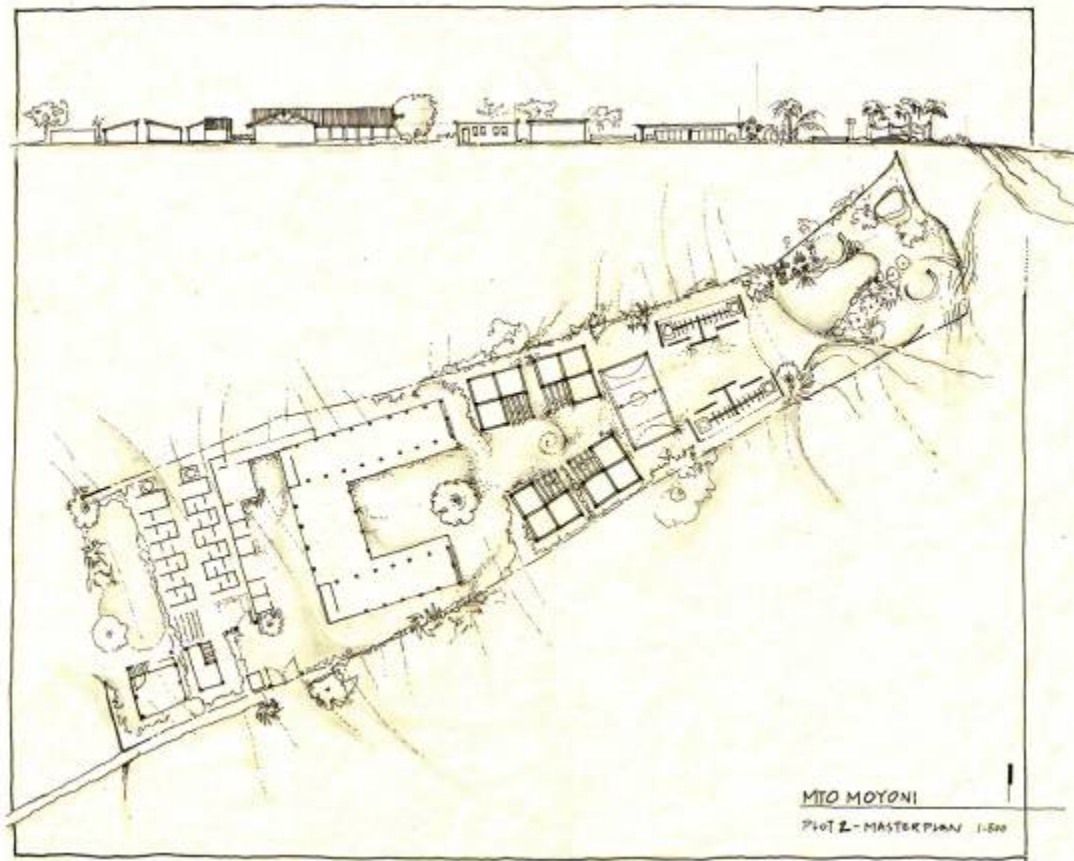


Plot 1: The accommodation “houses” were placed along the edge where the land drops off into a ravine of banana trees. Each house can accommodate up to ten people on two levels (see dwgs at right). The entrance to the site is in the top right corner and the administration building and conference centre border the entrance roundabout. In the top left corner is the kitchen and dining hall. Emmaus’ walk begins on this plot with red flowering trees that weave in amongst the grove of fruit trees at the bottom of the ravine.



The Architecture Team: There was truly an international architectural design team for this project. On the left is **Jennifer Gazebo**, a Ugandan architect who studied in London, UK, practiced in the US, and has just returned to Kampala with her family to run her design firm. Her passion is in landscape architecture which was a huge asset as the ministry was really interested in creating gardens and peaceful places for meditation. **Erica** is in the middle, and **Pearly Tsang**, an architect from Hong Kong, is on the right. She is currently working in London for two years.



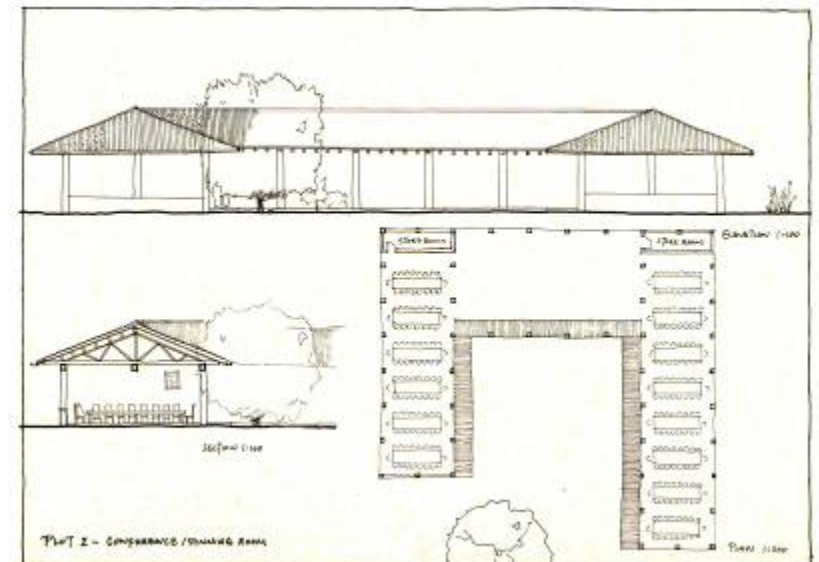


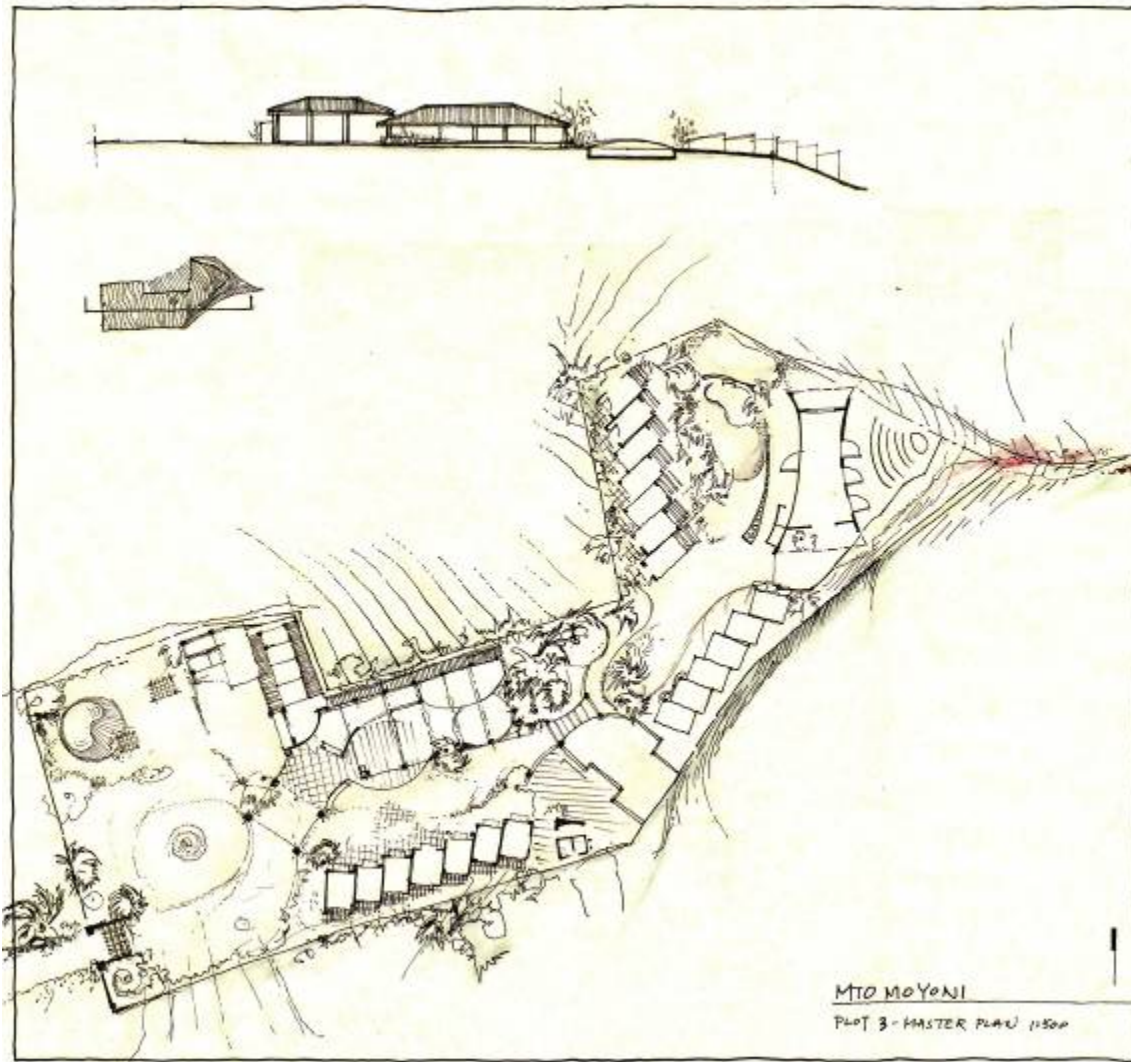
Here the whole group is walking around the site on the first day we arrived. The site was extremely narrow and we really wanted to keep a clear view down the middle of the site. Across from the site on the other side is the Nile Resort.

Plot 2: The Mto Moyoni ministry really wants their retreat centre to be affordable for people to spend time there. This site will be the focus of the first Phase of construction. The accommodation on this site is more of a dormitory/hostel situation with room for five bunkbeds in each room, separated by movable wooden floor screens. They are hoping that this type of accommodation can be for around 3 dollars a night (almost 6,000 Ugandan shillings).

At end of the site that is closest to the village (far left of the site), there is an area that can be used by that community, with a building for classes and activities.

From left to right on the site plan: the community area, the staff quarters (for the staff on all the sites), the entrance area with administration buildings, the large open-air conference centre/dining hall (see dwgs at right), the four accommodation buildings, the volleyball court, the pit latrines/shower rooms. The end of the site overlooks the Nile, and there are places for hanging hammocks and also low walls and gardens for small gatherings or individual reflection.

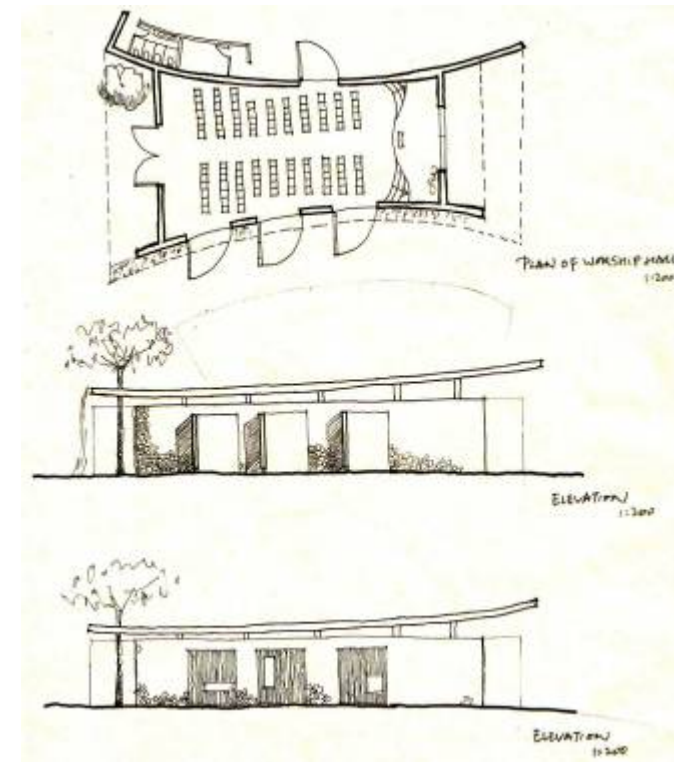




Plot 3: This site has the best view up and down the Nile River. The plan is that this site will have a restaurant and hotel, a commercial component, to financially support the programme on the other two sites. The individual units in rows are the rooms, and the restaurant is connected to the reception at the front entrance. At the end of the site (see the open area of land in the photo below) is a worship hall/chapel with an exterior amphitheatre at the side. Emmaus' walk brings visitors and guests from the other two sites, to the chapel.



A panorama from the end of Site 3, looking North to South along the Nile River.





Final Presentation: At the end of the week, all of the volunteers presented the work their work to a panel of people made up of staff at the ministry and people who sit on the ministry board (top right).

Below is a photo from the first night we arrived. A group of people at the ministry had already discussed the programme for each site and laid out where they thought they would like some of the buildings to go. It great to have something to start with.



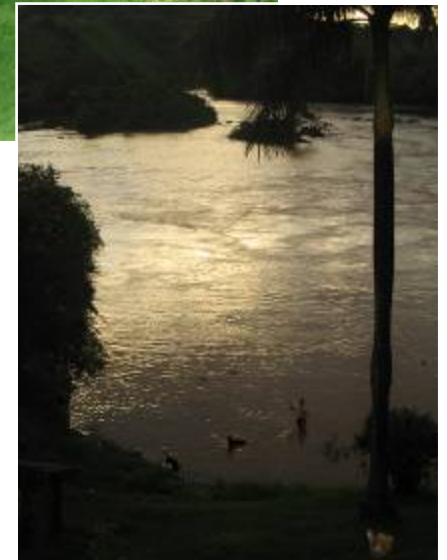
Where do we go from here? Because this is a huge project to undertake, the construction is done in phases. It was decided that Site 2 would be the first priority, and so during the week, we focused on the design of three of the buildings on that site. The architectural plans of these buildings were given to the structural engineer volunteers to design all the structural members like the trusses, beams and columns.

Now that we are back in the office we are working on the AutoCAD (computer drafted) drawings for Site 2. We will have a detailed master plan of the site and construction drawings for the conference centre/dining hall, the dormitories and the latrine buildings. The other buildings will be drawn only at a schematic design level.

With these drawings, we provide the ministry with fundraising documents to take to their supporters. The document includes the rendered drawings from our design week, the construction documents for the first phase (including all civil and structural drawings), and a cost estimate for all the materials and labour needed to complete the phase.

When the first building from the first phase is completed eMi will provide the ministry with construction documents for more buildings on that site and the other sites.





The picture above (top right) is of the retreat/seminar centre that exists at present. There are nine cabins, and we felt so spoiled when we got to stay in them for the week that we were there! The other images are taken from the cabin patio. Erica and I actually swam in that bay a couple times. It looks deceptively calm in some areas...however, it was quite the challenge to swim out to the mouth of the bay! I was happy to be there during the rainy season when the plants were flowering and presenting so many different shades of green. How beautiful!