



TOUCO Tanzania July 2016 Trip Report.

By Greg O'Sullivan, with inputs from the whole team.

Reviewed by Fr. Bruno.

Travelers / Contact Info

Fr Bruno Mgaya fabrude@yahoo.com [Facebook: \(latest posts / progress from the village\)](#)

Jon Weis jon-jane4110@msn.com

Bahoze Rutazihana rutazihanabahoze@gmail.com

Kevin O'Sullivan kos75@hotmail.com

Greg O'Sullivan go_sullivan@hotmail.com

**** Note: Please click on underlined words to link to pictures and videos ****

Trip Agenda / Goals

- Experience Tanzania, its people, culture and wildlife (safari).
- Visit all TOUCO sites to see current setup, operations, recent progress and assess current and future needs and opportunities.
- Deliver Five (5) purchased manually operated sewing machines and teach. (Bahoze).
- Be there for the delivery of the John Deere tractor, and initial training sessions.
- Transport a large quantity of donated items, including a lot of clothes and shoes (thanks St. Alphonsus among others, and some medicines (thanks D.O.E.R.S), and polyethylene (fish pond material).
- Meet the various people that make up the Upendo families and community support people, including the local Bishop of Njombe Diocese and some of the local board of directors.
- Help in any areas we saw a need as opportunity presented itself (shelving unit construction, solar system expansion at guest house, unloading dock for flatbed trucks)
- Met the Upendo children and Matrons, experiencing a little bit of what their lives are like.

Special Thanks!

[To Sisters Nazaria and Sr Feliciana Mpete](#), [Matrons Shukrani Sanga, Lea Gomano, Maria Lumande](#), [and students Ester and Merice](#) who helped make our stay at the Ibumila guest house very comfortable, cooking us great Tanzanian and American meals on the [wood stove](#) and providing good company and laughs. To David our skilled driver, who always had a smile and a laugh. Thanks to Bishop Maluma for the loan of transport and driver, and present and future support for the UPENDO project, his hospitality and gifts of locally grown Njombe Diocese Tea.

And of course to Fr. Bruno, our expert tour guide, patient and gracious host. You are doing amazing work!

Trip Details.

1: Fri + Sat.

Fly Boise-Seattle-Dubai (24 hr layover)-Dar es Salaam.

We had a 24 hr layover in Dubai and if you fly Emirates Air, you get a complimentary hotel room and meals if you stop over is greater than 10 hrs. The Copthorne Emirate's hotel is only about 5 minutes by cab, or they do have an airport shuttle bus that may have a lengthy delay.

Bahoze had problems getting out of the airport. They will not issue a temp visa to a refugee on a US travel document. The remaining 4 of us took an early evening bus tour of city, which left from the Copthorne hotel. It had multiple stops, including several markets, malls, the famous Blue Mosque, [Dubai Tower/Mall with a fountain show](#), the Palms / Atlantis resort and some beachfront.

2: Sun + Mon.

Arriving in Dar es Salaam airport Sunday late afternoon, we had delays of several hours waiting for Visas to issue. Bahoze had further problems due to travel documents and we discovered that contrary to advice given by airlines and others, travel documents are NOT the same as a passport. They require additional paperwork to be worked out months in advance, and involves letters of invitation from a Tanzanian host.

It took 1 full day to negotiate the Tanzanian Immigration system, and some fortuitous Fr. Bruno connections, before Bahoze was freed from airport detention. So we spent 2 nights at the nearby Executive Hotel. On the first night we went out to a nearby nightclub for dinner and enjoyed some local 'afro-pop' music. Kevin and Padre were moved by the music ... [video here](#).

3: Tues:

We left very early, with a local driver and a rented Toyota, loaded to the gills with 6 of us and most of the luggage. We drove 700 km, for approx. 13 hrs. We broke up the trip with a nice lunch at that Tan-Swiss hotel which is located on the Western side of the Mikumi National Park. They have a new pool you can use for a fee, and great WI-FI. In fact the best Wi-Fi we encountered in the whole country. This long drive goes through many towns and villages, and is only 2 lanes (1 each way). There is much economic activity on the road sides, and the road is heavily used, with trucks and buses and motorcycle taxis (boda-boda), 4 wheel vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians all finding a way to use it. Driving here is not for the faint of heart, and we would not recommend anyone to drive this route without prior experience. You see an interesting cross section of everything from baboons to Massie herders. Sample [video here](#).

Arriving later in the evening at [Ibumila](#), we were treated to a very warm welcome by the children, Matrons and several Nuns that were visiting to help in the [guest house](#). There is a video of a lively welcome [song and dance at this link](#).

4: Wed:

Fr Bruno, Kevin and Greg took a day trip visit to **Mafinga** (in the Diocese Land rover with our driver David).

We stopped along the way to visit [a local church](#) and get some church pew and [altar area layout ideas](#) for Ibumila's church still under construction. We also stopped and visited at the nearby newly constructed [monastery](#) which sits on the next hill over from the Mafinga UPENDO house. [Fr Andrew](#) who oversaw construction of the large and still mostly empty monastery (3 monks so far), gave us the grand tour. There are plans for a convention center next door eventually. The operation seems well financed from Italy, and was very well built with [creative flares evident](#).

Fr Andrew is well connected in the Tanzanian community and we learned about some opportunities for non-profit groups to invest in some very well priced forestry land that is being sold off by the government. On this trip we could see what a key and developing industry forestry is across this part of Tanzania. Trees grow to maturity in about 15 years and harvesting is done by portable mills. Lumber is probably in the top 5 of exported products.

There may be an opportunity for TOUCO to purchase a few hundred acres of this heavily discounted land and provide some ongoing job opportunities for the UPENDO kids as they age out of school and enter the workforce. It could also provide some reoccurring local revenue stream long into the future. It seemed like a good fit with the self-resilience promotion philosophy and this sort of thing is not unusual in Tanzania churches, parishes and NGOs.

Mafinga was [one of the first Upendo houses](#) Fr Bruno built. In 2003 with the financial help of an elderly Italian nun, a new more [modern house](#) was built which is now used. It was about 3 hour drive each way. At that site there are [many large former fish ponds](#) that are no longer in use. The water table is very close to the surface and some kind of water pump and liners for the pools would allow these formerly productive fish ponds to be resurrected to productive capacity again.

Along the drive we detoured past [a lake that Fr Bruno had harvested for his first Fish Farm](#) (Ngwazi Lake) from efforts many years earlier. The operation was of such a success that the local government had been ready to contract with Fr Bruno to operate as a hatchery.

The fish of choice for local aquaculture are tilapia and black bass.

While we were visiting here the [15 children](#) arrived home from school for the day. There are 2 matrons currently at Mafinga and a young man named Jumanne, that we met in the Mafinga township, that helps out with operations and provides some security. He was a 'graduate' from Mafinga, as was our driver David. Like the other sites, Mafinga tries to grow as much food as they can on the land around the house, lots of veggies, corn and pigs and chickens. Technology usage for all the UPENDO sites is limited by being off the power grid. Solar installations are providing light for evening and early morning use, cell phone charging for communication and limited operation of a [small TV/DVD or radio](#).

Cooking, like most of rural Tanzania, is on a wood fired stoves. Even the nearby monastery, which has grid power, [the kitchen](#) and bedroom heating is by wood or charcoal. It was interesting to see how different 'appropriate' technologies get woven into life here. Just a little thing like the new [solar panel](#), battery, and the [3 Watt LED lights](#) can make a huge quality of life improvement and things to function so much better. Students can do homework after dark, phones can be charged, radios listened to, and some English language educational videos shown.

Jon was working on [altar & floor plans](#) for the [new church](#). Construction workers arrived to continue work on the church which was on hold for several months. It was interesting to see that most construction operations large or small all involve manual tools and a lot of back breaking work. The only machinery used was the delivery truck that brought the bricks and cement from town. The building techniques are simple but effective. A level line is strung across the room, dirt is brought in on litters, dumped in place and leveled. Broken bricks are set on the dirt floor, tight together, to form the foundation for the cement to be pour over, leveled and smoothed.

Bahoze was [setting up](#) for his sewing classes.

5: Thursday:

Day Trip to **Madeke** / The Farm which is approximately 120 km from Ibumila but due to challenging road conditions the trip is about 4.5 hrs each way. There were amazing rural scenic vistas along the way. Passing through tea plantations, avocado and pineapple country. We stopped at a Matembwe Parish about ½ way along for refreshments. The farm is approximately 130 acres of very fertile land, never having been farmed before. About 13 acres are currently hand cultivated, [with pineapples](#), avocado, [cassava](#), [bananas](#), and a few other things. There is a completed [older house](#) on the property where [workers and matrons](#) and children stay when visiting, and a [new house is nearing completion](#). The farm is very scenic and has great potential to dramatically scale up farming operations with the delivery of the new tractor later this year.

6: Friday:

Trip to **Njombe**, including some shopping for supplies, and a visit to the Diocese headquarters. Jon and Greg met several of the priests, including Fr Severen and Fr. Arnold. We heard about some of the development projects Fr. Severen was involved in, which included studying some Hydro-power sites, and the large girls secondary school Fr Arnold was president of.

8: Sat:

Kevin, Jon, Greg and Fr. Bruno had a [breakfast meeting with Njombe Bishop Alfred Maluma](#). We discussed the trip, the orphanages, and TOUCO, and also the importance of Diocese support, especially with regards to continuity. If there could be a suitable understudy priest for Fr Bruno. Things were tight this year, but the Bishop promised he would be working on this request and perhaps in a year's time there would be some solution. We continued on to visit the **Uwemba** UPENDO site, visiting along the way the old house that has been condemned for demolition as part of the very large highway expansion project that was underway in various places, displacing thousands of people who had built close to this main highway. We visited the house near by where Fr Bruno had been taken care of as an orphan himself. And the house which he built over a number of years, while working as a priest based out of the Benedictine mission at Uwemba, where he visiting mission stations by motorcycle. The mission was begun by German priests, and we met the last 2 remaining priests while we were there.

At the new Uwemba UPENDO house, we toured the property, and met the matrons, but the children were off at the nearby secondary school. There was much corn drying in the fields, and cultivation of the kitchen gardens, as well as pigs and chickens. The matron Lucy Lwiva asked for funds to buy a space and build a roadside stall on the nearby highway. Cost \$175 US. Approved by Fr. Bruno and funds were transferred by phone app - MPESA (Mobile Pesa/Money) that same day.

9: Sunday:

We had another early start and made it to 7:00AM mass at the Cathedral of St. James. Fr Bruno co-celebrated mass, to a full house. At the end of mass, Fr Bruno introduced our group, explaining who we were and gave us each a chance to (spontaneously!) give a few words to the congregation that he translated into Kiswahili for us. Bahoze of course needed no translator, and was the most eloquent of the group.

After Mass, we all (including [2 of Bahoze's students Ester and Merice](#)) took a trip out to the [St. Josephs Boy's Seminary in Kilocho](#) (H.S.) property. It was a very [scenic drive](#), and the Seminary property has a large man-made lake and is bordered by pine forests. We had a nice lunch there, and [had a great tour](#) with Rector/ Headmaster at Kilocho Seminary: Fr Aurelian Mwinuka, met some of the students studying for national exams, and had some excitement when chased by some aggressive bees near the pig barn. Fr Bruno, [ever the horticulturalist](#), took away some new varieties of avocados that were later planted back at the Ibumila village.

The seminary is a boarding school – and like much of the Tanzania we visited, growing your own food was just part of the students daily life. There were many crops, from [a pine seedling operation](#) for the booming Tanzanian forestry sector, to a large pig barn, avocado orchard, and pine and black wattle trees.

Visiting St. Joe's.



Sun / Mon / Tues:

An extra [solar panel was installed](#) on the guest house by some contractors from Njombe, and paired up with a [spare battery and controller](#). The newly donated refrigerator was connected up to run on the DC battery / solar system. Note: This is the only refrigeration at Ibumila village at the current time. We used the generator that is used to run the well pump to top up batteries.

Needs for various tools were assessed, and then purchased in Njombe.
Tile shopping for the new Church.

Improvements were made to the [generator](#) pump setup, so that the generator could be stored and operate from the same nearby covered area. Generator had oil added and air filter cleaned.

Baseball was introduced and played with the both the kids and the Matrons one evening and we learned how soccer balls and baseballs [can be improvised](#)(video).

[More lessons from Bahoze.](#)

[Cute pigs](#) were [photographed](#).

The children showed us how [irrigation](#) can be done on a smaller scale during the dry season (each child responsible for their own plants).

[Shelving units were built](#) for guest house.

A clothes line was rebuilt – or was it [more than that](#)?

Local Ibumila Village Chairperson: Festo Mfumbilwa, and vice chair Augustine Mwinami, and a supporting group of Catechists from Njombe came by and visited. A [farewell dinner party](#) was held with the children attending.

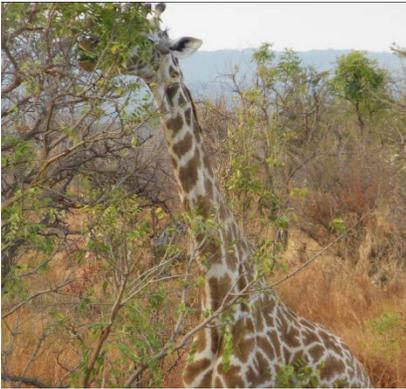
Wed:

[Tractor was delivered early](#), but with the added challenge of no way to unload implements and tractor from the flatbed truck. Solution involved [expanding a large hole](#), and [backing trailer into the hole](#) to then unload on the edge. The end result was Ibumila now has the [John Deere 75HP](#) tractor and implements ready for training and cultivation!

We left around midday and drove about 7 hrs to the edge of the Mikumi National Park where we spent the night.

Thurs: Safari

We had a half day safari trip thru the [Mikumi N.P.](#) ran by the Tan-Swiss guest lodge. We saw a wide variety of animals, including [Giraffes](#), [Lions](#), [Elephants](#), [Boars](#), [Zebras](#), [Wildebeests](#), several species of [Antelope](#), [Baboons](#), [Hippos](#), and [Crocodiles](#). We had an excellent guide [Francis](#), who got us very very [close to the lions and elephants](#) and also had some lifeguard skills later in the day back at the lodge after lunch!



Sewing.

The 5 new foot pedal sewing machines were ready upon our arrival, and within several days Bahoze had a full class of eager students, from young to old.



Future Trips / Visitors:

- 1: Useful items to bring. Headlamp. Public lighting is limited in the cities, and not there in the villages. But village life continues after dark ... and people get up before dawn.
- 2: Four mosquito nets were left unopened in the guest house storage room. There were no problems with Mosquitoes during our trip.
- 3: Malaria does not seem to be a real threat at Ibumila.
- 4: Best cell phone reception near guest house is about $\frac{1}{3}$ way from guest house to the church.
- 5: No WIFI at UPENDO sites. WIFI is a rare commodity, and usually very slow if available. texting and/or emails worked best due to limited bandwidth and sending/receiving can happen when your phone makes it thru on network. If you use you stateside phone carrier, you pay as you go per mega-bite, usually around \$2.05 per unit. Jon spent \$83.00 while in Tanzania for 10 days of texting and e-mailing on a daily basis. Use Wi-Fi when possible to avoid these costs.

Travel

Must have passport with at least 6 months left on passport expiration from date of return to U.S.

To expedite Tanzania Visa and minimize delays in travel, contact Tanzania Consulate in Washington D.C., and follow instructions to send in your passport at least 2 months before travel to have the Tanzania Visa approved and placed in your passport for the dates of travel.

The consulate will return your Passport prior to departure. Here is the web page:

<http://tanzaniaembassy-us.org/> follow the links to Visa requirements.

Recommended travel route and mode of transportation

Flights: Boise – Seattle - Dubai - Kilimanjaro OR Dar es Salaam – Mbeya.

Car/ bus from Mbeya to Njombe/Ibumila Village.

It is possible to take a 13 hour bus ride from Dar' to Ibumila, but not recommended. If you do take this route, you will pass thru the Mikumi N.P. where we did our safari.

If you go though Kilimanjaro, there are many safari options / parks nearby.

Stays in Dubai > 10 hrs include a complimentary hotel room and meals if you book thru Emirates.

