

DOWN to EARTH

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Visit to Tanzania



We have just returned from a visit to Tanzania, primarily to spend some time with our teams, visit projects, attend the official hand over of the Ibumu water project and for me (Sue) to attend the EITZ AGM. It will be impossible to share with you all that we experienced. We were gone 16 days; it took a day and a half to get there and the same getting home. We were in two (Mwanza and Iringa) of the three regions we work in but also met the staff from Tanga. We visited 14 villages, saw 9 projects and attended two of our Partner churches for Sunday services! It was a very busy but incredibly rewarding trip.

We experienced how these projects are having a real impact on people's lives and circumstances. Every place we

went, we heard testimonies of how life had changed for them. We were always welcomed warmly and treated way better than we really deserved. Their generosity was overwhelming - giving us gifts most places we went. Some we were able to bring home and others we took great delight in being able to share with our team.





I have space to choose one thing for now as I need to leave some room for Linda to share!

The VICOBA (**V**illage **C**ommunity **B**ank) is a component that is part of many of our projects and one that has a great impact not only on the people in the group but on the community as a whole. We heard many stories of how, by coming together and working to help and encourage each other, they had achieved great things. When they look back, they can say they have done it themselves. We simply provide a box, 3 locks, some books and our teams invest time in training them. They make their own rules as a group to suit their economic

environment. Some things are standard, e.g. a share is 2,000 TZshillings (70p), but the number of shares each person can buy in any particular week varies from group to group. They don't have to buy shares every week but they do contribute to the community fund each week and the emergency fund each month (those amounts also vary between groups). There is a system of fines set by the group, for instance if you come late you pay a fine, mostly because the box can't be opened until everyone is there and this helps people arrive on time. Each month people have the opportunity to take a loan, which they pay back normally in 3 months, with a much smaller level of interest, normally around 10%, offered anywhere else. So, for the year, the money in shares is being constantly used by the group to develop small income generation activities, and at the end of the year each person gets back their shares and the interest is divided up between them based on shares. They have a lump sum of money which can be used for example for school fees or towards building their house. The community fund can be used by group members if something



Each different colour container represented one of the funds



has gone wrong at home and they are struggling. This they can borrow but pay back without interest. The emergency fund is a gift if it is needed. At the end of the year the community fund is used to improve the community in some way. One group told us how they had provided cement to help build the primary school.

This is all really good but the thing that excites me the most is seeing how the group interacts together. They are truly representative of the community, all faiths and none. The one group we visited met in the Anglican church (our partner church in the area) but the chairman at the time was Muslim and the Pastor of the church was just a group member. There was a good gender balance among the other committee members and people were given the opportunity to grow. It's a fantastic example to the wider community.

Being a visitor came with some expectations and in each visit I was asked to give a short speech. It was helpful that it was generally after the group had shared with us, so I was able to encourage them on what they had achieved and generally give greetings. One thing I did say to all the groups was how good it was, after hearing about them, to be able to see them in person and how much easier that made it to pray for them. The thing they were encouraged about was that I told them that you were praying for them and that I would encourage you to continue.

Thank you so much for your interest and prayers for our ministries. You are helping us make a difference.

Sue Fallon

Update on Ibumu

For me (Linda), it was very difficult to decide which part of the trip to focus on! I have met such amazing people and heard so many great testimonies about the difference that the work of EI TZ has made to the lives of people! Ibumu did stand out for me as it is the only place where I have been before, and it was super for me to see the progress in the secondary school and in the village as a whole.

I was part of the short term missions team from my church in 2015, where we helped the community build a Science laboratory at the secondary school, at that time not yet in existence. Now, 7 years later, it was great to see with my own eyes how well the school is doing and that the Science laboratory that we helped with, is now completed, fully equipped and in use!



I was struck by how much the village has changed since 2015. It is still familiar and welcoming, but it is also growing and developing. The village now has electricity. The original stoves group has adapted, as the fuel efficient stoves are no longer in demand and are engaging in IMARIKA activities. Their tree planting nursery that was fledgeling in 2015, is doing so well! They have planted trees in the village to help with afforestation and

for fruit. They have sold seedlings and made a profit, from which they bought a corn threshing machine! Their current avocado seedlings have been grafted and are looking healthy!



The new water project that EI has completed and handed over officially on 9 November, while we were there, now offers a good supply of water to many watering points throughout the village, and works alongside the old water system that is still functional. The handover ceremony was a joyous occasion! It was wonderful to be part of that *Sherehe* (celebration)! The village of Ibumu expressed their gratitude for the water in song, dance and acrobatics!



A roving Science trophy, donated by my church with the purpose of encouraging the school and reminding them we are praying for them, was also handed over to the Headmistress at this ceremony. It was very well received, also with a dance!

Linda Fitzmaurice



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