

Field Notes from the GOSESO Campus

Kitobe Forest, Tanzania

www.goseso.org

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Having been with GOSESO founder Yared Fubusa at GOSESO for 2 weeks, I wish to report on the progress and needs as I see them. I have spent much time on campus- a hauntingly beautiful place high on a hill with 360 degree views of Africa's Great Rift Valley, Gombe National Park immediately across the valley, and Lake Tanganyika in the distance- wow!

The campus is fairly bustling with activities- construction, prospective students, village council members, teacher candidates, rangers, curious villagers, field farmers, etc. The progress is stunning- many new buildings and buildings in progress, benches under mango trees, gazebos, etc. The buildings are gorgeous- made of locally manufactured brick. These folks have much skill and artistic ability as well.

Installation of solar panels was completed today, so finally we will have a wired campus- a historic occasion for GOSESO! The panels were manufactured in USA, and assembled in India. The converters and batteries are from other countries. These are very good equipment and price according to the technician doing installation.

Baboons and monkeys have become a permanent part of the campus- they are great mascots and always entertaining and fascinating to study. A ranger is assigned to be on "baboon watch" as they can be quite mischievous when the urge strikes!

The people here are friendly, curious, and match the landscape with their beauty. I have shaken hands a few hundred times and struggle with very limited Kiswahili, but they are very forgiving and many want to try their limited English words with me. They are most accommodating and I'm well cared for- food is local, organic, nutritious, and delicious! Weather is very nice- highs in the mid 70's (F), lows in the upper 60's, and daily rain of short duration to keep forest happy and green.

I have spent considerable time on the Kitobe Forest trail system helping with clearing while observing wildlife and plants- spectacular birding! Yesterday we were accompanied by an ethnobotanist, one of the founding members of GOSESO conservation team. He gave me copious notes on the local flora and their many uses. The recovery of the forest from severe mismanagement and degradation is quite remarkable- thousands of new trees full of birds and butterflies replacing barren slopes of only a few years ago. The Mungonya River and its flood plain is a jewel, serving as a natural corridor linked with Gombe National Park.

My first full day was participating in teacher assistant interviews- enjoyable and fascinating. We interviewed 30 in all, selecting three whom will be great assets to the educational program. I was very

impressed with the two teachers, headmaster, and one local clergy whom I worked with on the interviews. They were highly articulate, intelligent, and professional. GOSESO is extremely fortunate to have such local talent.

In my spare time, I have been working on an environmental science curriculum, along with biology, chemistry, and physics, and geography, which are required for passing the national exam by all students, along with accreditation by the ministry of education. I am preparing a list of lab materials and text books which are also required.

I am most impressed by Yared and his relationship with his people and the land- he is truly a treasure who has earned the respect and affection of his villagers and beyond. He has contributed enormously to his village well beyond GOSESO in many ways- such as resurrecting village soccer teams which have become a main evening event attended by hundreds, and helping build another primary school for which he is the Guardian along with several other primary schools in the area.

Yared has brought much hope and pride to people of Kiganza village and the Kigoma Region through the GOSESO project. Without his humility, personality, many talents and abilities, GOSESO would have remained only a dream. His strong conservation ethic is manifest in many aspects as we hike the trails and tour the campus and village, including the building design and infrastructure.

Thanks so much for all you do for this incredible venture we have embarked on!

Jack Greene

Board Member, GOSESO USA, Inc.