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Cohort 4

Goal Two: Zero Hunger: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. Choose one or more of the targets of goal two. What are your observations and recommendations for addressing this target in your host country, based on your experience?

Since coming to Uganda, I have been amazed by the amount of agriculture that I have seen. Driving from Kampala to Jinja, we drove through tea fields, corn fields and small plots of land being cultivated for corn, potatoes, vegetables, and other food products. It appears that small-scale/subsistence agriculture is practiced widely. When examining the food system in Uganda, however, it is important to keep in mind that I have been here for just over one month, and have remained relatively immobile within the country. Other than a quick sojourn to Sipi, where I saw yet more agriculture, including coffee and rice production, I haven't really seen much of the country. According to the World Food Programme, under 20% of Ugandans live in poverty, most of Uganda enjoys good agricultural yields, more than three quarters of Ugandans are employed in agricultural work, much of the agriculture is small-scale, and 9 out of 10 women depend on agriculture as a means of food security and livelihood.¹ However, there is regional variation, with reports issued from INGOs regarding food insecurity in North-eastern Uganda in the Karamoja region, which has a different climate, experiences drought, and is chronically underdeveloped.

It is important to examine the implications and assumptions made behind the wording and drafting of SDG#2 and its targets. For example, to "end hunger", as identified by the goal, would be quite simple. Currently, there is enough food produced within sub-Saharan Africa to ensure that every person has sufficient caloric intake and nutrition.² All that would be required is the political will for a charity-based approach to ensure that the food that is produced is distributed to those who need it. USC Canada, a Canadian NGO that focuses on rural development and small-scale agriculture, explores how the concept of food security does not discriminate between how food is produced or procured, nor does it distinguish between locally produced or internationally imported food products. The concept of food security still posits 'food' as a commodity, and one that is best served through international commodity market mechanisms. Creating better market regulations for food pricing and distribution, such as in the later targets, is important. However, giving food away, determining food prices on international markets, or stocking more food on shelves would do little to create a sustainable food system. Examining the underlying assumptions behind 'ending hunger' and how it will be achieved (whether through integration into international markets or supporting local food systems) is important.

The concept of food sovereignty views food as a right, prioritizes food production, and believes that small-scale food producers are at the heart of the food system. The concept of food sovereignty would ensure that sustainable, and ecologically sound agricultural practices are put in place and that regions become self-sufficient for food production. Target 2.4 and 2.5 of SDG #2 address the goal of creating sustainable food systems, investing in rural infrastructure, maintaining climate change resiliency and genetic diversity. From what I have

¹ World Food Programme, 2016. Accessed on July 31st, 2016 at: <https://www.wfp.org/countries/uganda>

² USC Canada, 2016. Access on July 31st, 2016 at: <http://www.usc-canada.org/the-issues/food-sovereignty>

seen, many small scale producers in Uganda do their best to operate within a sustainable, locally-based food system.



Figure 1: Maize, potatoes, bananas, coffee and veggie production at Sipi Falls.

While in Sipi, I spoke to a small-scale food producer who said that people there save the seeds for certain crops, maintaining a relevant and genetically diverse local seed saving program. However, they are still dependent on international commodity purchases, such as buying GMO corn seeds from Kenya, and selling coffee beans to private enterprises on the international coffee market. Per pound, coffee prices can range between 10,000 - 20,000 Ugandan Shillings, depending on market demand. The corn, which is drought-resistant, is harvested and saved until a "rainy day" when household food stores have been depleted and families turn to posho (corn bread) as their staple food item. Target 2.a, 2.b and 2.c are important targets to ensure that small-scale producers are protected from large-scale producers, international corporations and other market actors. Of equal importance would be to improve drought resistance and agricultural resiliency without relying on GMO crops, such as incorporating agroecology techniques, formalizing local/regional seed banks, and focusing on local agricultural inputs.

In the villages surrounding Jinja, small-scale food production and subsistence agriculture is everywhere. While certain commodity items are bought in trading centres, it seems like a fair amount of food is both produced and eaten within the villages. It is incredibly important to ensure that the relation between farmers, their agricultural practices and the environment, are strong and sustainable. A few weeks ago, I read in a local newspaper that the Ugandan police had evicted people from their land along the highway between Kampala and Jinja for a tea company. The people who were evicted were small-scale, subsistence farmers. The tea company claimed that they had legally bought the land from the land-holders but they had refused to leave. In other instances, I have heard of people "purchasing" land that is based on "culturally deeded" land, however, they don't have an official deed to the land and could be evicted at any point, creating a precarious situation for small-scale food producers. Formalizing recognition of land rights and examining land distribution would improve food security in the region.

Promoting and supporting urban agriculture is another element that I think is important to achieve Target 2.3. There is lots of urban agriculture in Jinja. Small plots of land between and around homes are used to cultivate crops and it appears that if people have access to land and agricultural inputs, then they can keep their family much more food secure.

The SDGs and their targets are all closely interconnected and intertwined. For example, Target 2.1 mentions the need to ensure sufficient and safe food for infants. In Uganda, the maternal mortality rate remains high, at approximately 360 deaths per 100,000 births.³ The adolescent fertility rate is also high, at 150 per 1000 women.⁴ As breast milk is the easiest and most nutritious way of ensuring proper nutrition for infants, it seems that there is a link between food, nutrition, access to health care, education, poverty, family planning, gender, the environment, etc. It is impossible to separate one goal from another or to isolate certain variables/interventions that are needed to achieve sustainable development. Creating a sustainable food system that recognizes food as a right and ends hunger for all cannot be achieved in isolation.

³The World Health Organization, 2014. Access on July 31st, 2016 at: http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/epidemiology/profiles/maternal/uga.pdf

⁴ The World Health Organization, 2014. Access on July 31st, 2016 at http://www.who.int/maternal_child_adolescent/epidemiology/profiles/maternal/uga.pdf