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Topic Four: SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture

1. Drawing upon your knowledge, experiences and observations in your host country, discuss how SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) relates to the three other SDGs (Good Health and Well-Being, Quality Education, and Gender Equality) you have written about.

One of the biggest problems facing the students at Slangspruit Primary is a lack of adequate nutrition and food, and of course, without proper nutrition learning and retaining information is even more challenging. For many students the meal that they receive at school is either the only meal they have each day or the most nutritious. This ties back into quality education, because it doesn't matter how good your teachers are, or how wonderful the school is if all you can think about it how hungry you are. It is most noticeable after the lunch break at the school, and many students are visibly more attentive after they have eaten.

Improved nutrition is a tricky area to tackle, especially in areas where poverty is rampant. For example, in Slangspruit, it is much cheaper for the students to buy unhealthy candies/ sweets than it is to buy fruit or vegetables. As a result, you just need to look inside the mouths of students to see the results of poor dental hygiene, which further compounds the issues that they face, and if your teeth are constantly in pain, eating is very unappealing. To a much lesser extent of what the students face, I cut my tongue on my teeth, and for several weeks eating was an irritating experience, so for students who I have seen gingerly holding their mouths, eating must be a truly painful experience. Building on improved nutrition is gender equality, because if someone in a household were to get the most nutritious food, it would be the older males first, because after all South Africa is a patriarchal country, and this extends across race and social status in the country. So for example, in many houses it is the older males who eat first, and then down the familial chain to the youngest. Enough of the depressing and dreary problems, let's talk solutions.

One way that Ukulapha is combating these issues is by adding vegetable proteins and spices to the government lunch programme (which is basically starch and nothing else), which serves to add basic nutrition to the students diet, thereby allowing them to develop more. In addition to this, there is now a school garden which is administered by a community member, and the vegetables from the garden are added to the school lunches (so more beans, tomatoes, etc.). In doing so, this ensures that should funding dry up for the vegetable proteins, the school will still have access to a sustainable source of vegetables, as the garden is located on school grounds and the gardener reports to the administration. This garden is the first step on ensuring that vegetables and sources of nutrition are sustainable, because now there is access to sources of nutrition that no longer rely on outside help. But it is also very tricky, because quick and fast solutions are so very tempting, and sustainable long-term solutions take more sweat, blood, and tears (and there are no immediate results!). So in addition to working with the community, ample stores of patience are required in ensuring that agriculture and access

to nutrition are sustainable, otherwise it is just a band aid solution that will fall off and the wound will just get infected all over again, sometimes even worse than before.

The long and the short of what I've been discussing is that all of these SDGs are hopelessly tied together, which means that solving one would mean solving the others as well. After all, if girls are being served food last at home, odds are they aren't eating as much as the rest of the house, or if the education that students are receiving is sub-par, they won't be getting the best kind of jobs meaning that they will not be eating as well, nor will they will be as "equal" as those who are able to eat better and have better jobs. So when it comes to trying to reach the SDGs here in South Africa, it's going to take a lot of effort from both the state and civil society, because no single SDG can be solved in isolation of the others.