

## **Youth Voices in Development– Assignment 2**

### **Goal Two: Zero Hunger**

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The whole concept of zero hunger is nice in theory but without having concrete examples of how this is actually going to be achieved that are also location specific, it is simply problematic. Drawing on my experience working in the Township of Slangspruit, I can see several obstacles for achieving the ambitious target of ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Life in the Townships of South Africa offer limited opportunities for upward social mobility as they are often plagued with high rates of unemployment. The result of previous government policies has meant that many black South Africans were forcibly relocated to Townships under Apartheid. The land was seen as undesirable to the white South Africans for a variety of reasons and therefore why it was donated, for the purpose of separation.

Many people living in Townships across South Africa today were at one point relocated there as a result of previous government policies. These areas were seen as undesirable land as the soil was often unproductive and infertile. Townships are also typically located on the outskirts of cities and in remote and isolated areas. Promoting and developing small-scale farms could be ideal for establishing local food security, but would be fundamentally ineffective if the soil is sterile. This barrier could be overcome by bringing in rich, healthy soil, however, when finances are tight and access to transport is limited, this only serves as new obstacles. Slangspruit and the whole of Pietermaritzburg are also currently experiencing an incredible drought. The Township itself has been without water for over six weeks and a water truck swings by to provide the community with their weekly rations. When water is in fact so scarce, after using what you need for eating, drinking and hygiene, there is not much left for anything else. After having challenged myself over the last six days to live on only 10 litres a day, trust me I know.

Currently many of the children we work with are undernourished and depend heavily on the school lunch program. For many of them it is the most substantial meal they will eat all day. Common diets around the school appear to offer little nutritional diversity and are based on a tremendous amount of starch and a few beans. We run a homework club after school, Monday through Wednesday. We entice students to take advantage of the program by offering apples in exchange for their attendance. There are many students who only come

for the apple. I cannot help but reflect on how this would play out in Canada. I am sure Canadian students would scoff at the promise of an apple. However, it is exemplary of the insecurity surrounding access to food that is felt in the Township.

The Township of Slangsspruit also suffers from exceptionally high rates of unemployment. This in itself poses significant challenges for overcoming hunger. When looking for employment opportunities many people are forced to look for work outside of the Township. Thus paying the cost of transport must be factored in. When one's income is already low, daily expenses like transport are significant. It also diminishes people's buying power, which just furthers their feelings of food insecurity.

I strongly agree with ending global hunger and the implementation of small-scale farms. However if it is to be addressed in the Township of Slangsspruit one must overcome the issue of sterile soil. How does a person increase their access to enough water for daily consumption and their farming practices in a drought? How is one expected to conquer hunger and become food secure when rates of unemployment are exorbitant? In my opinion of these obstacles must be properly explored and then successfully hurdled before we can truly speak of ending hunger.