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SDG's: Goal's 2 and 17

I spent my first month in South Africa trying to figure out how things worked around me, and how I could integrate myself in the mix without causing too much commotion. Figuring things out involved subsiding my culture shock, contextualizing everything I've read about colonialism and apartheid, and working out the logistics of my position at Ukulapha. It has now been over two months, and I can safely say that I've figured out what's going on around me. Subconsciously, I've found myself repeatedly returning to one word throughout this process: sustainability. Currently, sustainability is all I seem to think about. Sure, I'm essentially here as a resource mobilization coordinator; my underlying goal being to raise as many funds as possible for Ukulapha. However, the more I figure out what's going on around me, the more this question of sustainability seems to be my greatest challenge. Understanding the ins and outs of Ukulapha has meant that I've had to ask many tough questions about sustainability.

Right now, my work involves creating a strategy and structure for Ukulapha so that the organization's objectives, message and mission are intelligibly communicated to its publics. With good communication also comes some necessary re-structuring of the organization's many functions. When it comes to Non-Profit Organizations, this can be tricky, especially if the Executive Director and Donor's aren't fans of change. Instead of discussing all of Ukulapha's projects and how there is much room for improvement where sustainability is concerned, I will be discussing the question of sustainability through the current food security programs that Ukulapha conducts. Ergo, I will be discussing goal 2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture. Working with Ukulapha has stressed the relevance of this goal (and so many others) to the 17th SDG, which is to strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

The two goals are closely interconnected, especially based on my observations at Ukulapha. Right now, Canadian donors (many of whom are big organizations) have teamed up with Ukulapha to provide extra nutritional supplements for school lunches, an end of term wholesome lunch for every student, a milk program for the younger students, as well as establishing a vegetable garden on school premises. It is undeniable that these partnerships have filled many [otherwise empty] stomachs over the past few years. The question, however, does arise about the sustainability of these sorts of projects. Because

the global partners of Ukulapha are all individual entities unrelated to one another, the effect has been that a lot of money and effort is being spent but no sustainable work is being accomplished. This sort of thing tends to happen in the charity model of donations, which is what has been happening at Ukulapha. As an intern who is very new to the development sector, but not to the communications sector, it has been hard tackling this issue head on. It's clear to me what needs to be done, but navigating the bureaucracy of boards and donors has been tricky. I say issue because it's especially problematic when an organization that claims to be human rights based catalyst for development operates in this fashion.

What instantly came to mind when this dawned on me was the river code. The river code is broken down into two scenarios, the first being the charity approach to development, and the second being the human rights based approach. Projects where things are done for the people (e.g. carrying someone on your back across the river) is ultimately giving handouts without consulting the recipients. The other method involves holding someone's hand and assisting them across the river, ultimately allowing them to identify their own problems or needs, analysing causes and effects together to find solutions to those problems, and using their own knowledge and resources to assist where there is a need. So the question then arises, how can Ukulapha follow the river code, creating ownership, confidence, empowerment, self-reliance, sustainability and independence without getting rid of its many global partnerships?

What I've proposed (that appears to be a work in progress) is that we find a way to combine these projects so that we're actually working toward achieving an SDG by following the river code. Handouts will soon be digested, forgotten, and ultimately ineffective development work. One of my fellow interns has started a Garden Club, where students are involved with this school garden, which currently sits as an uninteresting exhibit on Slangspruit School's property. Teaching the students, teachers and community members about sustainable agriculture is important, and can seamlessly be implemented by Ukulapha. Also, actually using the vegetables from the garden in the school lunches instead of receiving extra supplements from Canadian donors is also something I see for the future of Ukulapha. Partnership with the local community is more important than finding a global donor who wants to send hand outs. This means that global partners who are wanting to support grassroots NPO's like Ukulapha must be more responsible and accountable in implementing their overseas programs. If partnerships start and end with just a cheque, sustainability can't be achieved. Goal 17 is especially important not only for achieving food security, but for so many of the SDG's. Strong, human rights based global partnerships are vital in addressing (and ultimately achieving) all of the SDG's.

